
The Duke of Wellington and British Foreign Policy 1814-1830

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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the diplomatic career of Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington between 1814-30. The Duke's significant contributions to foreign policy-making have been an area neglected by historians. Occupying a central position in British politics during this time, this neglect has distorted both assessments of his career and of the wider domestic and foreign contexts. There is nothing in the extant literature that offers a thorough analysis of Wellington's diplomatic experiences and his role in the framing and executing of British foreign policy. This work fills that *lacuna*. It takes a wide look at Wellington's involvement in the conduct of British diplomacy and highlights the crucial formative experiences during his time on the Continent 1814-18 and the impact these had for his future policies. By looking at the full scope of Wellington's foreign policy for the first time, this thesis enables scholars to have a more comprehensive view of the conduct of politics during the tumultuous years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

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Introduction

Few figures have received the attention that Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, has been accorded. Remembered as one of Britain's greatest military leaders, the Duke has been the subject of numerous biographies.¹ But most of these, and most of the wider literature on him, have focused almost solely on the relatively few years of his service in the field, especially in the Peninsula and at Waterloo. One biography devotes a mere 36 pages to the entire period from his return to Britain in 1818 until his death in 1852.² For a man who would go on to serve in Cabinet for the best part of seventeen years, in four different stints, including time as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, this is a notable omission. Indeed, his political career took up much more of his life than his military one.³

Wellington was, furthermore, deeply involved in many of the principal political questions of his day. From the trial of Queen Caroline, through Catholic Emancipation, Reform and the Repeal of the Corn Laws, the Duke played an important, and often pivotal, part in each. The politics of Britain between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the start of the Crimean War simply cannot be understood without reference to Wellington and his political views. Though neglected for a long time, this aspect of his career has had more light cast upon it in recent years, beginning with Neville Thompson's biography that focuses solely on the years after 1815 and culminating in Rory Muir's magisterial two volume biography. This was spurred by

¹ The best, and most recent, are the two volumes by Rory Muir: R. Muir, *Wellington: The Path to Victory 1769-1814* (Yale and London, 2013) [hereafter referred to as Muir, *Wellington*, vol. I]; R. Muir, *Wellington: Waterloo and the Fortunes of Peace, 1814-1852* (Yale and London, 2015) [hereafter referred to as Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II]. Others include, P. Guedalla, *The Duke* (Kingswood, 1931); E. Longford, *Wellington: The Years of the Sword* (London, 1970); E. Longford, *Wellington: Pillar of State* (London, 1972); N. Thompson, *Wellington After Waterloo* (London, 1986); C. Hibbert, *Wellington: A Personal History* (London, 1998); R. Holmes, *Wellington: The Iron Duke* (London, 2003).

² Holmes, *Wellington*, pp. 257-293.

³ Wellington is not alone in the neglect he has received. The 14th Earl of Derby, the longest serving Conservative leader and three-time Prime Minister, had no biography prior to the recent volumes by Angus Hawkins. A. Hawkins, *The Forgotten Prime Minister: The 14th Earl of Derby Volume I: Ascent, 1799-1851* (Oxford, 2009) & *The Forgotten Prime Minister: The 14th Earl of Derby: Volume II: Achievement, 1851-1869* (Oxford, 2011).

Wellington's papers entering public ownership under the national heritage legislation. Since then, it has been possible to take a much wider view of his career, further encouraged by the regular Wellington Congresses, and the ensuing publications, *Wellington Studies*.⁴ The contributions in these volumes have vastly expanded the horizons of scholars working on the Duke and enriched our understanding of the age in which he lived.

Historians looking at the career of the Duke of Wellington also have access to a veritable goldmine of published primary material – over 40 volumes of his correspondence have been released over the years. Two sets in particular form an important component of this thesis. Both edited by Arthur, 2nd Duke of Wellington, the *Supplementary Despatches (WSD)* and its continuation, informally known as the *Wellington New Despatches (WND)*, a convention followed here, they include almost all the correspondence, both domestic and foreign, of the Duke on diplomatic questions over the years this thesis covers.⁵ They make up an invaluable resource for the historian interested in Wellington's career and are supplemented by numerous other published sources, most notably, the diaries of Harriett Arbuthnot, Wellington's close friend and the wife of Charles Arbuthnot.⁶

Despite the amount of material available, and the advances in scholarship made in recent years, there remains one notable *lacuna* in the historiography surrounding the Duke of Wellington: foreign policy. This is an odd omission given the very

⁴ *Wellington Studies I*, ed. C.M. Woolgar (Southampton, 1996); *Wellington Studies II*, ed. C.M. Woolgar (Southampton, 1998); *Wellington Studies III*, ed. C.M. Woolgar (Southampton, 1999); *Wellington Studies IV*, ed. C.M. Woolgar (Southampton, 2008); *Wellington Studies V*, ed. C.M. Woolgar (Southampton, 2013). An earlier volume also arose out of the transfer of the papers to Southampton: *Wellington: Studies in the Military and Political Career of the First Duke of Wellington*, ed. N. Gash (Manchester, 1990).

⁵ *Supplementary Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, K.G.*, ed. the 2nd Duke of Wellington, 15 vols. (London, 1858-72) [WSD]; *Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, K.G.*, ed. the 2nd Duke of Wellington 'in continuation of the former series', 8 vols. (London, 1857-80) [WND]. The printed correspondence was compared with the archival copies for 1814 from the Wellington Papers at the University of Southampton and for 1828 from the Aberdeen Mss. at the British Library. There were very few differences between the contents and no substantive correspondence was left out. For the years 1819-30, the *WND* have largely formed the primary basis of the research into the Duke's correspondence on matters of foreign policy. However, the quoted material below has come directly from the Wellington Papers, using the excellent Wellington Papers Database, available at www.archives.soton.ac.uk/wellington/. Any significant differences between the published and the archival material have been noted, and the reference to both has been given in the footnotes.

⁶ *The Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot, 1820-1832*, eds. F. Bamford & the Duke of Wellington, 2 vols. (London, 1950).

prominent role that he played in its formation, and the important place he occupied in the diplomatic discourse of Europe. Yet this aspect of his career has received scant attention. Out of the 53 chapters in the five volumes of *Wellington Studies*, only two deal explicitly with this subject.⁷ Even the more political biographies of him devote almost no space to foreign policy. Thompson, for example, writes two pages on Wellington's mission to St Petersburg in 1826 and then nothing else on the question of Greek independence, the Treaty of London, the Russo-Turkish War or the Treaty of Adrianople.⁸ These were issues to which the Duke devoted a substantial portion of his time and correspondence. Foreign policy was undoubtedly the area of policy where Wellington most consistently directed his attention over these years and not to examine it in the detail it deserves leaves the historical picture of him limited in the richness of its colour palette.

This issue, however, is not one that is solely limited to the writing around Wellington. Foreign policy is always an area that is very closely related to domestic politics, but the historiography of each often inhabit completely different worlds, with limited contact between them.⁹ This distorts both, and leaves us with an incomplete understanding of the role, aims and policies figures that straddle them, such as the Duke. Paul Schroeder's *Transformation of European Politics* is one of the most important works when examining European diplomacy in this period, yet Schroeder simply says '[c]ontingent factors made some difference' to the choices Wellington's Government made during the Russo-Turkish War.¹⁰ As will be explored below, this is

⁷ M. Chamberlain, 'The soldier and the classicist: Wellington, Aberdeen and the Eastern Question, 1828-30' *Wellington Studies III*, pp. 136-51; P. Jupp, 'The foreign policy of Wellington's government, 1828-30' *Wellington Studies III*, pp. 152-83.

⁸ Thompson, *Wellington after Waterloo*, pp. 52-3. Rory Muir does go into far more detail than any other biographer on diplomatic matters, but the sheer scale and ambition of his work means that foreign policy is but one minor aspect in the rich and varied life that Wellington led. Muir, *Wellington*, vols. I & II, *passim*.

⁹ On this issue, see T.G. Otte, "'Avenge England's Dishonour": By-Elections, Parliament and the Politics of Foreign Policy in 1898', in *English Historical Review*, vol. 121, issue 491 (2006), pp. 385-428 & *ibid.*, "'Chief of all Office": High Politics, Finance and Foreign Policy, 1865-1914', in *The Primacy of Foreign Policy, 1660-2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain*, eds. B. Simms & W. Mulligan (Basingstoke and New York, 2010), pp. 232-248.

¹⁰ P. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848* (Oxford, 1994), p. 661. See J. Black and H. Kleinschmidt, 'Schroeder Reconsidered or the Limitations of the Systems Approach', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, ii (2000), pp. 257-70 for an in-depth examination of some of the drawbacks of Schroeder's approach. T.G. Otte, "'A Janus-like Power: Great Britain and the European Concert, 1814- 1853', in *Das europäische Mächtekoncert: Friedens- und Sicherheitspolitik vom Wiener Kongrß 1815 bis zum Krimkrieg 1853*, ed. W. Pyta (Köln: Bölaue Verlag, 2009) deals specifically with how Britain cannot simply be placed within a systemic view of European diplomacy in these years. For

a wildly inadequate phrase to describe the domestic factors that affected the decision making of the Duke and his ministers. Likewise, the direction of foreign policy needs to form a part of our understanding of how domestic politics developed: the deterioration of the relationship between Wellington and Canning over diplomatic questions was central to the shifting party political sands of the 1820s.

While there have been various attempts in recent years to bridge the gap between domestic politics and foreign policy in the mid-nineteenth century, these have thus far not particularly extended into the first third of the century.¹¹ This is a problem both on the general level of needing further literature to understand each aspect of policy, and a problem relating specifically to Wellington. This is because, while his biographers have devoted very little space to his foreign policy, he frequently appears in more specialised literature on diplomatic questions. The Duke forms a central antagonist in Harold Temperley's work on George Canning, figures prominently in Bruce Collins' book on British expansion in the Napoleonic epoch and is a major figure in Edward Ingram's examination of the Great Game.¹² Though works such as this go some way to address the deficiencies of Wellington's biographers, they have served to create a piecemeal picture. The absence of an overarching analysis of the Duke's experiences of foreign policy, the influences on his thought and the influence he exerted on British and European diplomacy has significantly limited our understanding of these years.

This thesis seeks to provide that analysis. From 1814 through to 1830, Wellington was central to the formation and execution of British foreign policy. Only between April 1827 and January 1828 was the Duke neither in Cabinet nor some other important diplomatic position. He served first as Ambassador to France, then replaced Lord Castlereagh as British plenipotentiary to the Congress of Vienna. After the interlude caused by Napoleon's escape from Elba, he spent the next three years as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Occupation in France – a role that straddled both

a slightly earlier period, see T. Goldsmith, 'Ignorant and Indifferent? British Diplomatic Attitudes towards Europe, 1801-4', *The International History Review*, vol. 38, issue 4 (2016), pp. 657-74.

¹¹ For example, D. Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy 1846-55* (Manchester, 2002); D. Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography* (New Haven, 2010); G. Hicks, *Peace, War and Party Politics: The Conservatives and Europe, 1846-1859* (Manchester, 2007). One exception is J. Bew, *Castlereagh, Enlightenment, War and Tyranny* (London, 2011).

¹² H. Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning 1822-1827: England, The Neo-Holy Alliance, and The New World* (London, 1925); B. Collins, *War and Empire: The Expansion of Britain 1790-1830* (Harlow, 2010); E. Ingram, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia 1828-1834* (Oxford, 1979).

military and diplomatic responsibilities. From Wellington's return to Britain in January 1819 following the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, through to Canning's ascension to power in 1827, the Duke sat in Cabinet as Master-General of the Ordnance, though his responsibilities went far beyond the formal duties of his position. During that time, he was also plenipotentiary at the Congress of Verona and for a special mission to St Petersburg in 1826. He then served as Prime Minister between January 1828 and November 1830.

Though Wellington continued to have a prominent role in British politics, including as caretaker Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary during Peel's Hundred Days, the period after 1830 marks a distinct period from what came before. This is because of two factors, one related to the Duke personally and one to the wider European diplomatic situation. His fall from power in 1830, and even more his failure to form an administration in 1832, marked an important shift in Wellington's domestic position. In both cases the conduct of his closest political ally, Sir Robert Peel, was crucial, and the Duke's realisation of his indispensability led him to thrust the leadership of the Conservative Party and the Premiership upon Peel in 1834. As never before in his career, including between 1828 and 1830, Wellington was now explicitly a party political figure, and the clear leader of the Tory peers in the House of Lords, as Peel led the party in the House of Commons.¹³ Wellington's acknowledgement of his colleague's leadership, as well as retreat from his earlier, stated, position of being above politics, fundamentally altered his role in the formation of foreign policy. This was especially the case because, as Richard Gaunt notes, '[t]he largest area of disagreement between them, perhaps unsurprisingly, arose in matters of foreign and defence policy'.¹⁴ Added to the fact that he was out of office for much of the time from 1830 until his death, Wellington clearly no longer held the influential place he had in the period this thesis covers. The realities of party political opposition to foreign policy were very different from the leading role he had earlier held in the making of it, and require their own study.

The other factor that altered Wellington's place in British foreign policy formation, and divided the period covered from that which follows, is the dramatic

¹³ See R.A. Gaunt, 'Wellington, Peel and the Conservative Party', in *Wellington Studies V*, pp. 262-85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

alteration in the European diplomatic situation. This was caused by the French Revolution of July 1830, which was followed swiftly by another in Belgium. Added to the Great Reform Act in Britain, the rising power of the press and the more confrontational and ideological portrayal of foreign policy by Palmerston, the result was that the diplomatic landscape was very different to the one he had operated in previously. Indeed, Wellington admitted that much himself. When he took over the Foreign Office in 1834, he wrote to Sir Herbert Taylor, telling him 'I am hard at work to make myself master of our foreign policy, which is certainly strangely altered in four years'. In the circumstances, he told Taylor that he was 'convinced that it is not possible to do more at present than to ascertain and observe the working of the existing system, and to see where it is necessary and possible to alter it gradually and to preserve the general peace'. In Wellington's opinion, 'if any [change] should be attempted it ought to be very gradual, and [...] none ought to be attempted that a sense of justice does not dictate and require, till we shall be quite certain that we have a Government at home'.¹⁵ Stable domestic circumstances would not come until after he had left the Foreign Office, however, and Wellington would never fully master the changed circumstances after 1830.

If 1814-30 then forms a coherent period in Wellington's relationship with foreign policy, it nevertheless contained four distinct phases within it. The first was from the conclusion of the Peninsular War in 1814, through to the Duke's attendance at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818 that ended his time as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Occupation. These years were spent, almost without break, on the Continent, and marked the high point of Wellington's influence over European affairs. As Commander-in-Chief, the Duke was in charge of the very first multilateral peace keeping force that had been seen and he exercised considerable sway over the Ambassadorial Conference in Paris, that was meant to oversee him and served as a clearing ground for any major problems in France. Furthermore, Wellington himself formed almost a part of the international system. He was the problem solver of last resort for difficult issues that could not be settled otherwise, and in this role was in the service of Europe as a whole, rather than simply a British figure. It would be

¹⁵ Wellington to Taylor, 27 Dec. 1834, *Wellington II: Political Correspondence November 1834-April 1835 (Prime Ministers' Papers Series)*, eds. R.J. Olney & J. Melvin (London, 1986), pp. 249-50.

Wellington to whom the Great Powers turned to decide the matter of a reduction of soldiers in France and its form, for him to deal with the question of the amount of reparations that France owed after the wars, and the related matter of a loan to the French Government. He would also be asked to arbitrate in the ongoing conflict between Spain and her American colonies, a task that the Duke declined due to the sheer complexity and fluid nature of what was going on.

The second phase lasted from Wellington's return in 1818 to the death of Lord Castlereagh in 1822. During this time, the habits of familiarity, personal diplomacy and frank communication that the two had formed during their times together on the Continent, and through their correspondence when separated, left the Duke as the Foreign Secretary's chief lieutenant. Time and time again they had proved themselves to be a close and effective team in earlier years and they continued in this vein once Wellington had joined the Cabinet. They shared an understanding of the way the European system operated that was almost unique to them amongst their colleagues. Without Wellington's considerable prestige, Castlereagh might well have had much more difficulty in following his preferred course. The nature of their cooperation meant that they acted together, rather than duplicate each other's efforts. Wellington would often use personal means through the substantial network of contacts he had established in Europe, and would often deploy more legalistic and military arguments to support Castlereagh's broader ones. As will be explored below, this would be most notably the case in 1820 over the question of revolution in Spain and the role of the European alliance.

The Congress of Verona of late 1822 formed an interlude between Castlereagh's suicide and the third phase that would revolve around Wellington's relationship with George Canning. It is, however, notable in one significant way: the deterioration of the Duke's relationship with Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor and leading figure in European diplomacy. Prior to Verona, it seems that Wellington and Metternich had a reasonably friendly, professional relationship. There seems to be no evidence for any particular closeness between them, but nor do there appear any causes for complaint.¹⁶ The Congress, however, changed matters. Though they began by

¹⁶ Webster notes that Metternich, along with Tsar Alexander, 'in the last resort [...] looked to him as much as to their own Ambassadors' to solve diplomatic problems while Commander-in-Chief.

cooperating to control Tsar Alexander, their relationship soon soured and Wellington would complain of Metternich's narrow-minded focus on Austrian interests.¹⁷ By the end of the Congress, Wellington felt deserted and betrayed by the Austrian Chancellor and his faith in him and Austria never recovered, to his own detriment when he came to deal with the Eastern Question as Prime Minister.¹⁸

When the Duke returned to Britain, he found a drastically altered situation. Although George Canning largely pursued the same objectives as his predecessor, his methods were very different. If Wellington and Castlereagh's formative experiences as diplomats had been based on their experiences of personal diplomacy on the Continent, Canning had no such background. A great orator, he was far more concerned with the Parliamentary situation and his tactics were geared towards it.¹⁹ Wellington's instinct was not to cultivate Parliamentary majorities, or appeal to public opinion, but instead to reach out to the Continental powers and settle matters amicably, without drawing public attention to any differences between them. Furthermore, he was aware of the weaknesses of Britain's position within Europe. While Canning viewed her detached maritime position as an element of strength, Wellington believed it could also compromise her. There always remained the prospect that the other powers would come together to Britain's detriment. This had almost happened in the closing stages of the Napoleonic Wars and the fear of a repeat was never too far from Wellington's mind. Only after 1830 would it seem that the divisions between the July Monarchy in France and the Eastern Powers of Russia, Prussia and Austria were so insurmountable that Palmerston could pursue the more boisterous policy. In the meantime, the differences between Canning and Wellington would lead to an incredibly fractious relationship, that saw a bitter and drawn out battle between them in Cabinet over the direction of policy, and eventually for the Premiership itself.

Canning's eventual succession to the premiership instead of Wellington, only to be followed swiftly by his death, inaugurated the final phase of this period, during which the Duke's formal influence over foreign policy reached its zenith after he

C.K. Webster *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1815-1822: Britain and the European Alliance* (London, 1947), p. 75.

¹⁷ Wellington to Canning, 5 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/738/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 492-507).

¹⁸ Wellington to Canning, 22 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/739/3 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 562-9).

¹⁹ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, *passim*.

became Prime Minister in January 1828. However, in many ways, his actual influence was less than it had been even while Canning had held the seals of the Foreign Office. Wellington found himself constrained by the legacies of Canning's and Goderich's short governments; by colleagues who often disagreed with his suggestions; by financial constraints; and by an international situation that was fractious and not amenable to easy solutions. Though Schroeder has commended Wellington and his Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, as the 'implausible contenders for the prize of having done most to keep Europe peaceful and on the rails in 1828-30', their actions do not justify such praise.²⁰ While the constraints on him were certainly considerable, Wellington nevertheless failed to ever get a grip on the situation. There was a distinct lack of strategic clarity, and the result was a policy of drift which left Britain facing the worst of all worlds as she had to confront Russian and French expansionism on her own. To describe them as understanding and practising 'the art of damage control, the use of pacts of restraint, and the wisdom of accepting the inevitable and muddling through', is to ignore the bitterness, anger and sense of frustration that ran through Wellington's correspondence in these years.²¹ Many of the developments during his three years in office happened against his wishes and best attempts to prevent them, from the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War, through the dispatch of French troops to the Morea, to the unsatisfactory Treaty of Adrianople and the French expedition to Algiers.

Despite the foreign policy failures of his Government, Wellington emerges from this analysis of the period from 1814-30 as a much more substantial and rounded diplomatic figure than has previously been appreciated. He was certainly not an 'Ultra', as he has recently been described, or a reactionary, irrespective of his correspondence with people who might more appropriately fit that term.²² Indeed, on certain issues he would be a proactive campaigner, as when he negotiated with the French Government to try and secure the abolition of the Slave Trade.²³ He was also a pragmatist. Seeing the threat of a bitter reaction following the return of Ferdinand VII to Spain in 1814, the Duke sought to use his influence to encourage a 'moderate'

²⁰ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, p. 663.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 664.

²² J. Mori, 'How Women Make Diplomacy: The British Embassy in Paris, 1815-1841', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 27 (Winter 2015), p. 140.

²³ See below and P. M. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (Basingstoke, 2000).

and ‘practicable’ constitutional settlement.²⁴ His advice was not followed, and when Spain erupted in revolution in 1820, once again Wellington wrote that no matter what his feelings towards the Constitution of 1812, which the revolutionaries sought to impose, he much preferred that to the capitulation of the King.²⁵ In 1826, seeing the intractable struggle then being waged in Greece, he was of the opinion that there could be no return to direct Ottoman rule. Some other arrangement would need to be reached.²⁶

Wellington tried to hold himself above the political disputes that swirled around him, and indeed held the idea of political principles in disdain. In 1828, he would complain that he would hear a ‘great deal of Whig principles and Tory principles and liberal principles and Mr. Canning's principles, but I confess that I have never seen a definition of any of them and cannot make to myself a clear idea of what any of them mean’.²⁷ This kind of attitude would be both a strength and a weakness for Wellington. While his lofty detachment had enabled him to assume an international role within the European system and then an initial position somewhat above party politics in Britain, it would go on to damage him as time went on. His reluctance to accept that he had come to play a new part as a politician was to ignore reality. As Rory Muir has argued, the Duke’s rejection of the Foreign Office in 1822 and his advocacy of Canning was the moment that marked ‘Wellington’s great refusal – the failure to accept that his active career as a soldier was over, and to embrace his position as a leading politician and Cabinet minister.’ The Duke’s reluctance was genuine and to ‘justify this indulgence to himself, he argued that whoever was foreign secretary would inevitably see the world much as he and Londonderry saw it, and would pursue similar policies. He was deluding himself’.²⁸ From then on, Wellington’s failure to embrace the concept of ‘principles’, as opposed to a more pragmatic and legalistic approach, would undermine his position as he was unable to establish a broader basis of support among his colleagues in Cabinet, in Parliament and amongst the wider

²⁴ Wellington to Liverpool, 9 May 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/417.

²⁵ Wellington to Alava, 21 Feb. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/640/21 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 98-101).

²⁶ Wellington to Bathurst, Berlin, 17 Feb. 1826, in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 113-6.

²⁷ Draft memorandum on the retirement of Huskisson and Palmerston from Office, Wellington, post-25 May 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/980/29 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 451-5).

²⁸ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. I, p. 187. Castlereagh became Lord Londonderry after his father’s death in 1821. This thesis will follow the usual convention of continuing to refer to him as Castlereagh even after the inheritance of the Londonderry title.

public. It has further damaged his posthumous reputation as a diplomat, as evidenced by the previous lack of a full study of Wellington and foreign policy.

Nevertheless, it is possible to give a more precise definition of what Wellington *was* as well as what he *was not*. In his temperament, the Duke was a High Tory. He fits within Boyd Hilton's definition of someone who 'tended to work ad hoc through influential contacts and officials'.²⁹ While Hilton refers to the economic sphere rather than the diplomatic, the definition nevertheless encapsulates Wellington's broad approach to foreign policy. Ideologically though, it is perhaps more appropriate to describe the Duke as a pragmatic international legitimist. If a rather cumbersome phrase, it identifies the key strands in Wellington's thoughts and actions through this time, in order of decreasing importance. While not a reactionary, the Duke did believe clearly that legitimate institutions were the best means of preserving peace, and monarchies on a broad foundation the surest guarantee of social cohesion. More important than domestic institutions were the norms and modes of behaviour in the international system. Wellington viewed those High Tory connections with the international elite as the primary means of preserving peace. Policy should be conducted and framed in a way that provided the smoothest path for all international partners and that avoided conflict and public breaks between the Great Powers. But, above all else, Wellington was a pragmatist. If Peel has been seen as the 'embodiment of pragmatism' domestically, the Duke was that in the international arena.³⁰ This was in a truer sense than Peel, in that he adopted new positions 'while continuing deep down to believe in the merits of the old one'.³¹ He disdained and disliked revolutions and constitutions, but realised that the former should not be opposed in France in 1830, and the latter should be adopted in Spain if it helped preserve the monarchy. Likewise, despite his earlier habits of cooperation with Metternich at Vienna and Aix-la-Chapelle, Verona demonstrated to him the folly of Congresses and he would oppose resorting to them just as much as Canning would. Thus Wellington embodied a peculiar pragmatic internationalist legitimism and rather demonstrated Richard Gaunt's warnings that the various streams of British foreign

²⁹ B. Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), p. 316. See also, B. Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815-1830* (Oxford, 1977), p. 313.

³⁰ Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?*, p. 324.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 392.

policy traditions would converge ‘in the same personalities at different periods according to contingencies and political manoeuvre’.³²

The Duke was concerned foremost with the preservation of peace, and was willing to adopt the broadest range of positions at his disposal to help ensure that. However, this pragmatism was nested within his beliefs that legitimate institutions were the best means of providing this, and within his internationalist tendencies. Just as Richard Gaunt has argued that ‘the reflective association between Ultra-Toryism and legitimism, in foreign affairs, should be seriously revised’ so it is necessary to review what we understand of the Duke of Wellington and his foreign policy.³³ This thesis seeks to do that.

³² R.A. Gaunt, ‘From Country Party to Conservative Party: The Ultra-Tories and Foreign Policy’, in *The Tory World: Deep History and the Tory Theme in British Foreign Policy, 1679-2014*, ed. J. Black (Farnham, 2015), p. 152.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 162.

From Soldier to Statesman 1814-18

For Wellington, and Europe, the spring of 1814 marked a new epoch and a new challenge. With the war finally over, the time had arrived at last to make active preparations for peace. For as difficult as the conduct of the war had been for all involved, over time it had taken on a grim familiarity. The Duke and his colleagues in government were part of a generation that had reached political maturity during the course of the war. None had any significant experience of peacetime politics. In the cabinet, a large number had served their first terms there during the short administration of Henry Addington (by now 1st Viscount Sidmouth and Home Secretary). This had spanned the Peace of Amiens with both the Prime Minister, Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool, and the Foreign Secretary, Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh, in its ranks. However, the peace had been short-lived. Most of it had been spent in diplomatic manoeuvring in anticipation of the outbreak of war once more. It had not served as much of an apprenticeship for the challenges those in office would face after 1814. War had offered familiarity; peace was now full of unknowns.

This was as true of both the peace-making process and the domestic situation. A number of different treaties had been signed and settlements reached over the course of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, including that of Amiens for which Liverpool had been responsible as Foreign Secretary. However, there had not been any all-encompassing arrangement of the kind that the chancelleries of Europe set out to create following the defeat of France by the Grand Coalition. The resulting peace treaties, of Paris and Vienna, had never been certain outcomes. At various times over the previous year, it had seemed that one or more of the continental Powers could have made separate arrangements with Napoleon, thus securing their own objectives at the expense of Britain's. Fears of this nature had prompted Lord Castlereagh to take the

unprecedented step of joining the European sovereigns at the Allied headquarters to take personal charge of the conduct of British diplomacy.

This experience of an intimate style of personal diplomacy would be an important factor in the course of events over the following year, and influence Wellington's actions over the rest of his career. The habits of familiarity engendered by their close proximity informed the decisions of the rulers of Europe and facilitated the successful conclusion of the large number of difficult questions under discussion. These did not always go smoothly and war almost broke out during the negotiations at Vienna. Concerns remained about France. Though the Bourbons were trusted, there was a continuing fear that revolution could reappear and threaten the post-war order. Just as worrying for many, Russia struck a menacing pose in the East of Europe. But peace was preserved, a remarkable achievement for all involved in the Vienna negotiations.

Yet it was preserved between the allies only to be shattered by the return of Napoleon from Elba in the spring of 1815. Everything that had been built in Vienna now looked like it could be torn down again as the French army rallied to its Emperor. His defeat at the hands of Wellington's polyglot army, however, brought a quick end to his gamble. With Wellington at the head of the victorious army marching into Paris, the Bourbons were restored once more and a second Peace of Paris was negotiated, one that would ensure the maintenance of peace with an allied army to occupy France as a security measure until the barrier fortresses in the Netherlands were completed.

Throughout the four years from Napoleon's first defeat to the withdrawal of the Army of Occupation in late 1818, the Duke of Wellington played an important diplomatic role for both Britain and Europe more generally. Along with Castlereagh, the Duke was the only British statesman on the first rank who had any experience of this new personal style of diplomacy. Yet his position was always an ambiguous one. This period followed on from success in the Peninsular War, during which he had already come to adopt a peculiar place as a British, Spanish, and Portuguese peer and commander, and he continued to play a number of roles. After a Parisian intermezzo once his pressing military duties were concluded, he embarked on a mission to Spain in his capacity as Spanish Commander-in-Chief following Ferdinand VII's return to the throne. A brief sojourn to England followed before the Duke took up his role as

the first peacetime ambassador to France, though not before he had made an inspection of the defences of the Low Countries. Throughout he remained with military responsibilities as British troops were removed from France and claims and other issues from the war were tied up. During the autumn he was briefly considered for the command of British troops in America, but was instead chosen to replace Castlereagh as the chief British plenipotentiary in Vienna. His spell in the Habsburg capital was ultimately interrupted by Napoleon's return, following which the Duke departed to take command of the multi-national force gathered in the Low Countries before eventually taking over as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Occupation from 1815-18. He finally attended the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818, not as a British representative, but for all of Europe. He was there as the Commander-in-Chief, his final active role as a soldier, but also as a statesman, and one clearly in the first rank of Europe.

This chapter will examine this important period both in the life of the Duke of Wellington and of Europe generally. In many respects, his experiences during these years were defining ones in his transformation from military commander to European statesman, and someone able to hold his own with the monarchs and heads of state of the Great Powers. As a new international system emerged out of the ashes of Napoleonic Europe, so Wellington's attitudes towards diplomacy and the conduct of foreign policy took shape. His experiences in Paris and Vienna would be the foundation of his conceptualisation of British foreign policy over the following two decades. Furthermore, some of the problems he faced, and the prejudices that were evident in dealing with them, would, in turn, provide the basis for some of his later difficulties with the cabinet.

Wellington and the Politics of Foreign Policy 1814-18

Before examining the course of affairs during this period it is worthwhile to consider first Wellington's role in foreign policy making and the nature of his relationship with the cabinet. At this time the Duke had never held office at cabinet level, his highest position within domestic politics having been Chief Secretary of Ireland. This was far from a true indication of his experience though. He had been Governor of

Seringapatam in India during his brother's time as Governor-General; a difficult posting in a newly conquered province. On his return from the subcontinent in 1805, he established close links with the government and despite his comparatively junior rank was regularly consulted by them on military questions.¹ Liverpool's and Castlereagh's confidence in his abilities and their trust in his judgement led to his appointment in the Peninsula, and enabled him to resume command after the controversial Convention of Cintra that could have crippled his career.

Over the following years, he conducted a frank correspondence with Lords Liverpool, Castlereagh and Bathurst, the three most important cabinet ministers concerning the conduct of foreign policy. He was also given far greater latitude in the conduct of his operations than most British generals.² With the arrival of peace in the spring of 1814, it was this relationship and trust between Wellington and the leading members of the government that was the main assurance of his continued relevance beyond the end of hostilities. His personal prestige and domestic popularity, of which more will be discussed later, were also important factors and helped to buttress decisions of the cabinet.

Wellington was not, however, merely a prestigious adviser. Instead, he was one of the chief formulators of foreign policy. The direction of diplomacy was firmly in the hands of Castlereagh, whose opinions overrode all other factors, but the Duke was a unique case.³ The Foreign Secretary corresponded with Wellington on terms of equals in policy making. While Castlereagh remained 'the dominating mind', as befitted the responsible minister, as Charles Webster has pointed out, 'only Wellington, whose services as a diplomatist were invaluable to him, had in any way a policy of his own'.⁴ The two worked in tandem and their views on policy were well aligned. 'I believe that your view & mine are precisely the same', he wrote to Castlereagh in August 1814. But, as he went on to explain, he also knew his place and did not seek to take a larger role or gain more control of policy if he thought Castlereagh was better placed to take the lead: '[H]owever well [Sir Charles] Stuart or

¹ For example, he was consulted by Windham and Grenville in 1806 over the idea to use sepoy to help garrison the Cape and about a potential attack on Mexico, Muir, *Wellington*, vol. I, p. 185.

² *British Diplomacy 1813-1815: Select Documents Dealing with the Reconstruction of Europe*, ed. C.K. Webster (London, 1921) [hereafter *BD*], p. xxxi.

³ *BD*, p. xxxiii.

⁴ *BD*, p. xxxvi.

I may understand you I am convinced that neither of us will explain so satisfactorily as yourself [to the French Foreign Minister, Prince de Talleyrand] the necessity of your previous interview with the ministers of the Allies & the nature of your Concert & mediation & it is desirable on this ground that you should come to Paris'.⁵

Castlereagh, in turn, valued Wellington's input. On the crucial question of the Low Countries, he refused to give an opinion on even the principle of a proposal before having heard from the Duke and from London.⁶ No other diplomat was accorded such a role. Wellington additionally served as an important sounding board for Castlereagh, especially for more controversial subjects. The Duke's intimacy with the Foreign Secretary's diplomacy and his military knowledge meant that the latter used Wellington to establish the basis of the case for ejecting, by force if necessary, King Joachim Murat, from the throne of Naples. This was even before the Prime Minister had been consulted.⁷ Following Waterloo, these trends intensified. His military prestige was so great the cabinet had to agree with him, and as the allies got to the task of settling a new peace with France, it was very clearly the Duke and Castlereagh who set the tone for Britain.⁸

Wellington occupied this position of confidence as he increasingly shared the same experiences and viewpoints on international questions as Castlereagh. The events of this entire period served to emphasise and strengthen this trend. No other British statesman, apart from the Duke and Castlereagh, was engaged in regular discussion with sovereigns and leading European ministers. The two came to share the same attitude as to what exactly the European system should be.⁹ Castlereagh complained to him in late October 1814: 'Our misfortune is, that the Powers all look to points instead of the general system of Europe, which makes an endless complication. *You* know that Prussia may be brought forward'.¹⁰ This similarity of views was a factor in the decision to replace Castlereagh with Wellington at the Congress in Vienna. As the former wrote to the Duke, 'There is no person in whom the government, the public, or myself could feel the same confidence; and as we have

⁵ Wellington to Castlereagh, Copy, 18 Aug. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/425.

⁶ Castlereagh to Wellington, 2 Oct. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 301.

⁷ Wellington to Castlereagh, Copy, 12 Sept. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/428.

⁸ C.J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh* (London, 1966), p. 155; Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p.92.

⁹ Bartlett, *Castlereagh*, p. 159.

¹⁰ Castlereagh to Wellington, Private, 20 Oct. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/431 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 357). Emphasis in original.

hitherto been, in a great measure, conducting the negotiation together, the business would be more familiar to you than to any other person'.¹¹

The Duke's personal prestige and popularity were also important factors behind this decision. Given the wide-ranging powers accorded to Castlereagh in Vienna, which the Duke would also receive, Liverpool argued that 'such a discretion the Prince Regent and his government would not like to entrust to any individual out of the Cabinet, except to the Duke of Wellington'. He continued:

In addition to this consideration, he is the only person after yourself who could be expected to have any personal authority over the Allied Sovereigns or their ministers, and his name would reconcile the people of this country to arrangements which might be viewed with considerable jealousy and distrust if concluded by any one who did not possess a large share of public confidence.¹²

The Prime Minister wrote in a similar vein to the Duke himself, noting how 'no circumstance will [...] give so much confidence at home and abroad as your having been selected to succeed him'. On the trust reposed in Castlereagh in Vienna, he added that 'I speak the sentiments of all my colleagues when I say that we should have the same confidence in you as we have had in him'.¹³

While he remained officially in a subordinate position, this did not reflect his true influence. His opinions could not be rejected lightly, and Wellington was able to ignore the repeated entreaties of the Prime Minister to get out of Paris when his safety seemed in danger in late 1814.¹⁴ Though Liverpool stopped short of giving him 'an official order for this purpose' he did stress that whilst there were advantages in him remaining in Paris, 'we cannot allow ourselves on Public grounds to place them even for a moment in comparison with the dangers to which you are exposed'.¹⁵ The Duke, although 'entertain[ing] a strong opinion that I must not be lost', was also aware of the importance of him staying. He wrote to Liverpool arguing, 'to tell you the truth I think that under existing Circumstances you cannot at this moment allow me to quit Europe'.

¹¹ Castlereagh to Wellington, n.d. Dec. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 459.

¹² Liverpool to Castlereagh, 1 Dec. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 462.

¹³ Liverpool to Wellington, 31 Dec. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 518.

¹⁴ Liverpool to Wellington, Most Secret and Confidential, 4 Nov. 1814, Copy, Liverpool Mss., Loan MS 72, vol. 22, ff. 61-68; Liverpool to Wellington, 18 Nov. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/434.

¹⁵ Liverpool to Wellington, Copy, Most Secret and Confidential, 13 Nov. 1814, Liverpool Mss., Loan MS 72, vol. 22, f. 69 (also published in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 430-1).

He went on, ‘I would likewise observe that I flatter myself I am daily becoming of more use to Lord Castlereagh here, & I am acquiring more real influence over the Gov[ernmen]t & it would not answer all at once to deprive him of this advantage’.¹⁶ In light of this, the Prime Minister could only reply that ‘the Gov[ernmen]t can have no idea of urging you to do any thing [sic] which is contrary to your feelings, and repugnant to what you consider as due to your Character [...] Though we can not refrain from looking at your personal Situation with the greatest anxiety We shall be perfectly ready to approve & support your Determination whatever it may be’.¹⁷ The Duke remained until he replaced Castlereagh in Vienna the following year.¹⁸

Wellington, then, was not just a diplomat. He was more a part of the decision-making group on foreign affairs questions than many of the cabinet, sharing attitudes on diplomacy and the European system with Castlereagh. The Foreign Secretary came to rely on him for advice and input on broad aspects of policy as well as specific territorial and military questions. He was a figure in whom the government and the wider public could place their trust, and his prestige not only helped the government in the one-to-one diplomatic dealings in which he was involved, but also in helping secure wider domestic support for some of the contentious questions that they had to grapple with.¹⁹

The Spanish Mission

Within weeks of the end of the war in 1814, Wellington’s new role as a diplomat as well as a soldier found an outlet. The cessation of hostilities, along with the return of Ferdinand VII to Spain from his imprisonment in France, served to highlight the Duke’s European position. With the King back in Madrid, various groups looked to the Duke to offer support to their causes. The Irish-born Spanish general, Joseph O’Lawlor, who had served under Wellington during the war, wrote to him in late April to apprise him that a number of Spanish generals were plotting to ‘put the King on the throne without any limited power’. He informed the Duke that ‘they depend on your

¹⁶ Wellington to Liverpool, Private & Confidential, 7 Nov. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/435 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 422-3).

¹⁷ Liverpool to Wellington, Most Secret & Confidential, 21 Nov. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/434.

¹⁸ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 19-20.

¹⁹ Wellington’s prestige had long been crucial in supporting the government – without his victories in the Peninsula, they would have been in a very difficult situation. J.E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool’s Administration: The Crucial Years 1815-1822* (Edinburgh & London, 1975), pp. 2-3.

Lordship's countenancing this plan, and everything else they may undertake'.²⁰ Similar calls were being made to Henry Wellesley, who rightly argued that 'it was impossible for me to take any active part in support of the measures which I understood His Majesty to have in contemplation'. But neither could his brother Wellington, 'holding as he did the chief command of the Spanish armies merely with a view to offensive operations against the enemy, make any offers of support of the nature suggested by the Duke of San Carlos'.²¹

Despite this, Wellington decided in May, with the agreement of Castlereagh, to set out to Spain to see if he could 'prevail upon all Parties to be more moderate; & to adopt a constitution more likely to be practicable & to [contribute?] to the peace & happiness of the [Nation?]'.²² This episode is a further example that Wellington was not a dyed-in-the-wool reactionary. As always, the tests for him were utility and practicality. Castlereagh supported the Duke's mission. His 'visit will be very opportune' given the 'Critical State' of matters in Spain. He thought that 'calling a new Cortes to revise the Constitution upon certain liberal and Moderate Principles [...] may be the best Mode of curing the present Evil'.²³ Wellington told his brother that Castlereagh had urged him to hasten to Madrid so 'that I may be in time to prevent mischief'.²⁴

The Duke also thought he would be able to have a decisive say in the outcome of the Spanish constitutional question. Although elements in the Spanish army were beginning to take different sides in the argument, Wellington reported to Castlereagh from Toulouse that he thought he 'can keep them both quiet'.²⁵ However, by that time, Ferdinand VII had already abolished the constitution and imprisoned the leading liberals.²⁶ After his arrival in Madrid, the Duke noted that the King's actions, while 'unnecessary' and 'highly impolitick' were still 'liked by the people at large'. He received assurances that Ferdinand would fulfil his promise of granting a constitution to which Wellington urged that it was a measure 'very essential to H.M.'s Credit

²⁰ General O'Lawlor to Wellington, Valencia, 22 April 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 26.

²¹ Henry Wellesley to Castlereagh, Valencia, 24 April 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 31.

²² Wellington to Liverpool, Copy, Paris, 9 May 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/417.

²³ Castlereagh to Wellington, 9 May 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/414 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 68-9).

²⁴ Wellington to Henry Wellesley, Toulouse, 14 May 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/417.

²⁵ Wellington to Castlereagh, Copy, Toulouse, 15 May 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/417.

²⁶ R. Herr, 'Flow and Ebb: 1700-1833' in *Spain: A History*, ed. R Carr (Oxford, 2000), p. 200.

abroad'.²⁷ In the end, however, the Duke's influence was less than either he or Castlereagh had previously thought, and less, indeed, than during the years of war: 'I have been very well received by the King & his Ministers, but I fear that I have done but little good'.²⁸

This episode would be the first of many such examples in the Duke's career. Despite his unique position in Europe and the fact that he had the ear of monarchs across the continent, he would find numerous times that that did not always translate into results. Yet this brief episode does display the Duke's pragmatic side, and that he was far from a reactionary. His support for moderation and the granting of a constitution show his wish to see all sides reconciled, and a knowledge that any extreme response from the Crown or the *liberales* could only end sooner or later in civil war, as was later to be proved true.²⁹

The Paris Embassy I: Wellington and the Slave Trade

After his Spanish mission, Wellington returned to England for the first time in six years. He was not there long though before he embarked for the continent to take up his ambassadorship in Paris, via a tour of the Franco-Belgian frontier intended as an 'affirmation of British support for the Netherlands'.³⁰ One of the most important matters of business that Wellington had to address as ambassador in Paris was the issue of the abolition of the slave trade. Despite his later acceptance of Catholic Emancipation and his role in marshalling the Corn Law Repeal through the House of Lords, the Duke has been more associated by historians with the regressive forces in British politics, not the great progressive causes of the age. While he certainly did not back reform for its own sake, both of these instances demonstrate a certain brand of pragmatism that marked his attitude to politics in general. Though the Wellington scholarship remains dominated by his military career, his role in Catholic Emancipation and repeal has received some attention.³¹ In contrast, the Duke's role in

²⁷ Wellington to Sir Charles Stuart, Copy, 25 May 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/417.

²⁸ Wellington to Castlereagh, Copy, Madrid, 1 June 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/420.

²⁹ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 8.

³⁰ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 14.

³¹ See especially, Thompson, *Wellington After Waterloo* and Longford, *Wellington: Pillar of State*. The most recent biography by Rory Muir does a lot to correct the flaws of earlier scholarship and

one of the other great causes of the period, the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade, has received very little attention. Even in the extant literature on the subject, the period of Wellington's embassy has not been examined in much depth, with the notable exception of Paul Michael Kielstra.³² This lack of scholarly attention means that Wellington's role in what was one of the most important political causes of the time has been unduly neglected.

While the war with France had continued, Britain had been able to extend the 1807 abolition into all the colonies captured from other Powers. But with the return of peace in the spring of 1814, it became necessary to replace direct British control with a new legal framework of abolition. While this was a straightforward process with some states, others posed more difficult challenges, especially Portugal and Spain. France though was the key power, for without her adherence to even a limited abolition, other Powers would be free to shelter behind her flag and carry on the trade. Furthermore, the cooperation of the Iberian Powers and France would be capable of blocking British progress on the issue.³³ Wellington was a crucial figure in this process in France, balancing the calls for abolition from campaigners such as William Wilberforce, his 'Saints', and Thomas Clarkson with the practical needs of diplomacy.

After years of absence in the Peninsula without break, it was some surprise to Wellington how the issue of abolition was viewed at home when he returned briefly in the summer of 1814. Earlier in the spring, a meeting of some of the leading abolitionists, and opposition members, had decided to concentrate on the issue of international abolition and suspend their agitation to refine the British abolition laws.³⁴ The failure of the first peace to secure immediate abolition had stirred the emotions of the country. Parliament was bombarded with over a quarter of a million signatures on petitions relating to the issue.³⁵ During his flying visit, Wellington wrote to his brother

has come the closest to creating a fully rounded picture of the Duke yet even here foreign policy does not receive the full attention it deserves. Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II.

³² P. M. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (Basingstoke, 2000); J. Pollock, *Wilberforce*, (Eastbourne, 2007); R. Furneaux, *William Wilberforce* (London, 1974); E. Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (Basingstoke, 1989).

³³ Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p. 26.

³⁴ Pollock, *Wilberforce*, p. 303.

³⁵ Pollock, *Wilberforce*, p. 308. The exact number is a matter of disagreement. It is given as over a million in Furneaux, *William Wilberforce*, p. 338 and as 755,000, Clarkson's own figure, by Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, p. 126.

Henry Wellesley, the British minister to Spain, about the atmosphere in the country. He was 'unable to describe to you the degree of frenzy existing here about the Slave trade'. He noted that 'People in general appear to think it would suit the Policy of the Nation to go to War to put an End to that abominable Traffick, & many wish that we should take the field on this new crusade'. The public viewed Spain in very low esteem thanks to them giving the most protection to the slave trade and despite the two nations being close allies in the war until a few months previously. Indeed, when Wellington intended to drink to the King of Spain's health at a dinner at the Guildhall, the Lord Mayor had to tell him that 'if the Toast were not positively refused, it would at least be received with so much disgust as to render it very disagreeable to me & to every well wisher to the Spanish Gov[ernment]'. Wellington was also aware of the impact that this pressure would have on the Government's ability to act as it wished. He had found it impossible to secure the subsidy due to the King of Spain on the condition of just banning the trade north of the equator. Instead, the stipulation that it should be banned completely at the end of five years was required.³⁶

This encapsulated the problem which Wellington and the government faced when dealing with the calls for abolition. A vehement public at home restricted their ability to reach an accommodation and influence the decisions of foreign states over the slave trade. It was also an indication of the limits of British power and influence. Even Spain and Portugal, two states to some extent owing their independent existence to British troops and money, were resistant to attempts to force them to outlaw the trade. Short of the military action that some advocated, but fewer would have actually supported on grounds of expense, Britain had little ability to enforce her will on her allies. Diplomacy was the only realistic option.

Wellington had to face these problems head on in Paris after taking up his appointment at the end of August 1814. The leading campaigner, Thomas Clarkson, reported to the Duke of Gloucester, president of the abolitionist organisation the African Institution, that the new ambassador had quickly mastered the literature on the topic. 'He wants little or no aid from me, as far as a knowledge of the subject is concerned', he wrote to the Duke.³⁷ This mastery was definitely needed as

³⁶ Wellington to Henry Wellesley, Copy, 29 July 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/423 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 165-7).

³⁷ Thomas Clarkson to the Duke of Gloucester, 27 Aug. 1814 in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 228.

Castlereagh's preliminary instructions had emphasised the importance of reaching an accommodation with France on this issue. 'The voice of the nation' obliged him to instruct Wellington to make another effort in favour of immediate abolition.³⁸ However, this 'voice' was not content to rest and let Wellington do the talking. Instead, campaigners such as Clarkson were eager to take up the cause in France itself and engaged themselves in discussions at the highest levels. For the cabinet, the presence of British politicians of all colours in Paris, combined with the Saints' somewhat ambiguous political position, raised the possibility of a potentially worrying combination of opponents.

This situation rapidly came to a head when news of the conversations of a leading Whig peer, Lord Holland, with the French foreign minister, Prince Talleyrand, reached London via Clarkson. In these conversations, Holland formed the impression that France would be willing to agree to the immediate abolition of the slave trade in return for the cession of a British colony in the West Indies. This was a view that neither King Louis XVIII nor Talleyrand himself had ever expressed to Wellington or Castlereagh in their confidential discussions.³⁹ Lord Liverpool, in his reply, was likewise 'strongly inclined to believe it to be erroneous'. But the fact that this rumour came to the government's attention through the abolitionists from a prominent member of the opposition made it impossible to write it off. While the 'Saints' broadly supported the administration, this was conditional on their happiness that the cabinet was doing all it could to get the slave trade abolished. Not to pursue this apparent willingness to reach an agreement on immediate abolition would open the government to attack and threaten their majority even though they knew it was likely to come to nothing. As Liverpool wrote to Wellington, 'The question of the abolition of the slave trade is become so embarrassing that it would be expedient to purchase it by some sacrifice, and perhaps even prudent to be enabled to say we have offered the sacrifice, though it should be refused'.⁴⁰

To do even this would open up a potential diplomatic can of worms for the government. Liverpool swiftly realised that Wilberforce's and the Saints' opinion that

³⁸ Castlereagh to Wellington, No. 2, 6 Aug. 1815, Wellington Mss., WP1/424 Part 1 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 174-6).

³⁹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 2 Sept. 1814 in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 211.

⁴⁰ Liverpool to Wellington, 7 Sept. 1814 in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 226.

abolition would be ‘worth anything and everything’ could easily be used by the French ‘to make us pay, not what we were ready to give, but what they were ready to ask; and we should be exposed to considerable difficulties in the refusal’.⁴¹ Jealousy and suspicion of the Great Powers combined with domestic pressure, however, in reconciling the government to make the offer: ‘I have the less difficulty in acceding to this proposition,’ the Prime Minister wrote to Castlereagh, ‘in consequence of our intention of retaining Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice. Important as the retention of these colonies may be to us, it is impossible the Continental Powers should not look to it with some jealousy and distrust. With such a mass of colonial strength and power, we can afford some sacrifice’.⁴²

The expected happened: France refused the offer of an island. Much the same situation existed as had been the case when the First Peace of Paris was being negotiated a few months before. Pride and mistrust meant that France would prefer war rather than immediate abolition.⁴³ Fortunately, the desire of Talleyrand to work with Britain at the forthcoming congress in Vienna, and the sympathy for abolition of Louis XVIII and his foreign minister, ensured that France did not exploit the offer as Liverpool had feared. However, this was not the end of the matter as it was not just an exercise in diplomacy; it was necessary also to placate the domestic audience. Wellington was issued with instructions to this effect: ‘unless the attempt is made in some shape in which it can be shown that it has been made and rejected, I am apprehensive we shall not stand well with many of our friends’.⁴⁴ In the end this caused minor problems of its own as the acting French foreign minister thought a new proposal was being put forward and thought it best to refer the matter to Talleyrand in Vienna where the offer of an island was refused once more.⁴⁵

The failure of what was, in fact, a generous offer of compensation for a non-existent French slave trade industry shows the limited ability of Britain to direct the policies of other states even on issues on which she placed a high priority, and which she had the power to enforce given the strength of the Royal Navy. However, the section of British political and public opinion sympathetic to abolition did not realise

⁴¹ Liverpool to Wellington, 7 Sept. 1814 in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 226.

⁴² Liverpool to Castlereagh, 7 Sept. 1814 in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 225.

⁴³ Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p. 26.

⁴⁴ Liverpool to Wellington, 23 Sept. 1814 in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 283.

⁴⁵ Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p. 47.

that it was not within the government's power to dictate to Europe. Indeed, some explicitly thought it was. Lord Grenville, a leading member of the opposition, the former Prime Minister who had passed abolition and who had previously been Pitt's Foreign Secretary, instead lamented to Parliament after the signing of peace that 'We were masters of the negotiation [sic] ... In this cause the example of Great Britain was all-powerful, her sentence decisive, her determination final.'⁴⁶ As Kielstra has argued, 'the ministry faced a combination of misinformation, unrealistic hypernationalism and moral absolutism'.⁴⁷

Wellington found himself caught between rampant abolitionists at home and indifference on the subject in France. As soon as he arrived in Paris he was aware of the need to cultivate opinion in favour of abolition. In a meeting with Clarkson he set out what works needed to be translated and the Duke then took up the responsibility for distributing them. But this remained an elite form of public opinion. His proposed methods were 'by publishing proper books and dispersing them among the known literary men [in Paris], whose voice was always heard, and would, he hoped, be heard successfully in the present case'. It was, in Clarkson's phrase, the '*literati*' of the French capital that the Duke sought to appeal to, not any wider conception of the public.⁴⁸

Wellington stressed this in late September to the abolitionist John Charles Villiers (later 3rd Earl of Clarendon). Having circulated plenty of material already, he got the liberally minded Madame de Staël to translate one of Wilberforce's pamphlets. His broader strategy was clear in his mind: 'If we can get those who read on our side, who are very few in number, we shall do a great deal of good'.⁴⁹ To Wilberforce himself, he detailed exactly how he believed the fervour in Britain impacted the opinion of France towards abolition. For the Duke, it was precisely because 'England takes an Interest in the question it is impossible to convey [information on the trade] through the only channel which would be at all effectual viz the Daily Press'. It was 'impossible' to get information inserted into the papers, and whatever was printed from the English press in Paris was 'with a view either to turn our principles and

⁴⁶ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 27 June 1814 vol. 28, c. 313.

⁴⁷ Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p. 29.

⁴⁸ Thomas Clarkson to the Duke of Gloucester, 27 Aug. 1814 in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 228.

⁴⁹ Wellington to J.C. Villiers, 23 Sept. 1814 in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 277.

conduct into ridicule, or to exasperate against us still more the people of this Country’.

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Wellington had a clear view of what the problem was in this case and how it needed to be addressed:

the daily Press in England do us a good deal of harm in this as well as in other Questions- we are sure of the King & his Gov[ernmen]t if [we] could rely upon the opinion of his people. But as long as our Press teems with writings drawn with a view to irritate persons here, we shall never be able to exercise the Influence which we ought to here upon this question, & which we really possess.⁵¹

In a later letter to Wilberforce, he was more explicit: ‘we must keep the subject out of discussion & publication in England if we propose to do any real good’. The government could not ‘be more jealous’ than they were concerning abolition and ‘deserve confidence, & ought to be trusted’. In these circumstances he was ‘quite convinced that the publications & discussions on the subject do more harm than good.’ While the government had achieved French agreement to abolish the trade entirely within five years, they were aware abolitionist opinion would not allow them to rest on their laurels. But for Wellington, ‘it is really necessary to leave this Interest like others in the hands of those whose duty it is to take care of it’.⁵²

In these letters, the Duke articulated his views on what he considered the place of the press in international relations. In his mind diplomacy was the preserve of the elite and not a sphere for wider participation. A vociferous domestic press, instead of strengthening the hand of British diplomats abroad, would in fact hamper them and restrict their ability to manoeuvre. For him, once the press had convinced the domestic audience, only after people had calmed down could liberal causes actually be advanced and British influence be wielded to best effect.

Wilberforce, in turn, responded to Wellington’s suggestions on this matter and he sought to restrain the British papers. He thanked the Duke, with a ‘deep feeling of kindness’, ‘for the hint you have given me concerning the tone of our English papers’ and he promised to ‘turn it to account’.⁵³ Appreciating the efforts and sincerity of

⁵⁰ Wellington to Wilberforce, Copy, 8 Oct. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/432.

⁵¹ Wellington to Wilberforce, Copy, 8 Oct. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/432.

⁵² Wellington to Wilberforce, Private, 4 Nov. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/435.

⁵³ Wilberforce to Wellington, 18 Oct. 1814 in *WSD*, p. 251.

Wellington and Castlereagh, Wilberforce and the Saints developed a deeper working connection than ever before with the Duke and cabinet, of which this is just the most extreme example.⁵⁴

On this contentious and domestically important issue, Wellington was at the nexus of the varying demands of politics at home; public opinion, morality, liberalism and diplomacy. Restricted by the need to conduct his diplomacy with the domestic audience in mind, he nevertheless succeeded in meeting their minimum demands of the French government. He further helped facilitate the development of a positive working relationship between the government and the leading abolitionists. As this case demonstrates, he was by no means as reactionary as his general image might indicate. Indeed, during his time in Paris he managed to secure the implementation of the measures of abolition to which France had agreed but to which French public opinion remained deeply opposed. He also went some way towards influencing the latter in favour of the measure. At all times, though, his conduct remained pragmatic and tempered by the needs of diplomacy, a continuous thread through his career. The tension between the practical needs of foreign policy and diplomacy, and some of the more transient political pressures of parliamentary politics and public opinion would remain a consistent factor in Wellington's role in foreign policy making for the following months, years and decades.

The Paris Embassy II: Wellington and the Settlement of Europe

Despite the passion which the issue of abolition aroused in Britain, it was but one question in the diplomacy of this period, and a comparatively minor one in the minds of the European statesmen about to convene in Vienna. Before them lay the task of piecing back together a continent shattered by a generation of warfare. The First Peace of Paris had merely settled the territorial limits of France. What was to happen to the lands that she had evacuated, and her old client states such as the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, remained to be decided. Lord Castlereagh was the driving force behind British diplomacy in these negotiations, but throughout the Duke of Wellington played

⁵⁴ Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p. 50. See also. D. Thurley, 'Anti-Slavery Activists and Officials: "Influence", Lobbying and the Slave Trade, 1807-1850' in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, eds. K. Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Eastbourne, 2009), pp. 81-92.

an important role, both as a confidential advisor to the Foreign Secretary, and then as his replacement at Vienna in early 1815.

The Vienna Congress remained overshadowed by the pre-existing concern about France if she returned to a revolutionary or Napoleonic system, and a newer fear about the position of Russia. In the minds of the British policy makers it was not France herself that was a threat but France in either imperial or revolutionary hands. Only the continuance of the Bourbons on the throne seemed to offer a guarantee of stability in western Europe to them. The concern about Russia, though more novel, had its antecedents in the worries over Russian expansion in the 1780s and early 1790s and then later, following the 1807 Treaty of Tilsit. Nevertheless, at various times during the course of the war, Britain had been willing to acquiesce in the growth of Russian power, including in the Mediterranean. With the coming of peace, the older concerns about the implications of this growth returned. In January 1815 Bathurst urged Wellington to ‘not give any encouragement for Russia to have any army or navy in the Mediterranean. Depend upon it we shall never get them out of that quarter of the world again’.⁵⁵ The extension of Russian influence additionally took on a more menacing aspect with the power vacuum that then existed in central Europe, which the Tsar looked poised to fill.

Throughout this time, France, of course, remained high on the list of concerns and fears harboured by the makers of British foreign policy. While Schroeder argues that the Francophobia of the time was no more than a latent prejudice, and certainly not an element of policy, the fear of France amongst British statesmen was an important policy consideration.⁵⁶ The victory of 1814 was not as definitive in the minds of contemporaries as it would appear much later, though this was largely associated with the threat of revolution and Napoleon rather than a geostrategic threat from France. Occasionally a more fundamental divergence of interests was acknowledged. Castlereagh wrote to Wellington shortly after arriving in Vienna concerning the ‘systematic views of France to possess herself of the Low Countries and the territories on the left bank of the Rhine – a plan which, however discountenanced by the present French Government, will infallibly revive, whenever

⁵⁵ Bathurst to Wellington, 13 Jan. 1815, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 534.

⁵⁶ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, pp. 522-3.

circumstances favour its execution'.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, a large part of the discourse concerning France was dominated by a perceived revolutionary menace and discussion about the security entailed in the Bourbon restoration.⁵⁸

A letter from Liverpool to Castlereagh in late September 1814 demonstrates the mixing of the fears about France and the pretensions of Russia. The Prime Minister communicated his concerns that the negotiations, if they continued on their current course, 'might unintentionally lead us further than we had any idea of going, and eventually produce a renewal of the war in Europe'. It was the pretensions of Russia that were behind this and Liverpool agreed that 'it may be quite true that if the Emperor of Russia does not relax in his present demands, the peace of Europe may not be of long continuance' but it remained crucial to do the utmost to preserve peace. For the Prime Minister:

In the course of two or three years it may reasonably be expected that the power of Louis XVIII in France will be consolidated, and that the revolutionary spirit which still exists to such an alarming degree in that country will in a great measure have evaporated. The people will have returned to peaceful habits, and the landed and moneyed interests will feel their fate connected with that of the restored government. [...] But if war should be renewed at present, I fear that we should lose all we have gained, that the revolutionary spirit would break forth again in full force, and that the Continent would be plunged in all the evils under which it has groaned for the last twenty years. A war now, therefore, may be a revolutionary war. A war some time hence, though an evil, need not be different in its character and its effects from any of those wars which occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before the commencement of the French Revolution.⁵⁹

If Liverpool displayed a lack of understanding of the far-reaching effects of the revolution on the society of Europe, it was nevertheless a view held by others. The need for repose was a prominent feature of the discourse between the leading British statesmen, and something Liverpool was apt to stress given his domestic concerns. Wellington himself would make the point to Blacas, minister of the Royal Household and leading minister of the *Conseil du Roi*, when he 'suggested to him the dangers of War to the Bourbon family'. However, his reply was one that would be common in

⁵⁷ Castlereagh to Wellington, 1 Oct. 1814, in *BD*, pp. 196-7.

⁵⁸ For example, see Liverpool to Castlereagh, 20 Feb. 1815, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 573.

⁵⁹ Liverpool to Castlereagh, 25 Sept. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 285-6.

later years: ‘if we were not against them there was no danger; & that in some cases to remain at Peace was more dangerous even than the most unsuccessful War’.

This dangerous dynamic in France ‘may drive [the King] to War’, and it meant that Britain had to walk a careful tightrope in dealing with that country.⁶⁰ With the French government ‘notoriously weak, disunited, and unpopular’, the military unhappy, unemployment high and Republicans subverting the government, one recently returned visitor to France reported to Liverpool that ‘this state of things moves in its natural progress towards an explosion’.⁶¹ Wellington reported back to the Prime Minister in a similar vein: ‘it is impossible [...] to conceive the distress in which individuals of all descriptions are’. Though he was ‘quite certain that the population of the Country & even of Paris is favourable to the Bourbons’, he still could not ‘see what means the King has of resisting a brisk attack of a few hundred officers determined to risk everything’. More worryingly, he believed that ‘the only remedy is the revival of Bonaparte’s System of War & plunder; and it is evident that that remedy cannot be adopted during the reign of the Bourbons’.⁶²

It was necessary to concede to France her place at the highest table of diplomacy to avoid inflaming sentiments within the country and alienating moderates, not to mention providing a balance to Russia. However, this was a delicate proposition, given that Britain could not afford to distance herself from the wartime allies and leave herself isolated diplomatically. From the start Wellington and Castlereagh were alive to the need to meet France at least part of the way. The Foreign Secretary asked the Duke ‘how far my passing a day or two at Paris [...] is likely to be well taken. It may possibly be desired to remove any impression of Councils, to the exclusion of France’.⁶³ On the French side, Talleyrand was eager to establish an *entente* with Britain so as to be able to influence the Vienna talks. Wellington wrote to Castlereagh about the prospect in mid-August, as he was inspecting the Belgian frontier:

The situation of affairs in the world will naturally constitute England & France as [arbitrators] at the Congress if those Powers understand Each other, & such

⁶⁰ Wellington to Castlereagh, Copy, 8 Oct. 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/432.

⁶¹ Major-General C. Macaulay to Liverpool, No. 17, 31 Oct. 1814, enclosed within Liverpool to Wellington, 4 Nov. 1814, *Liverpool Mss.*, Loan MS 72, vol. 22 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 407).

⁶² Wellington to Liverpool, Copy, 9 Nov. 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/435 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 424-6).

⁶³ Castlereagh to Wellington, Private and Confidential, 14 Aug. 1814, *Wellington Mss.*, WP1/424 Part 2 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 180). Emphasis in original.

an understanding may preserve the general Peace. But I think your object would be defeated & England would lose her high Character & Station if the line of Monsieur Talleyrand is adopted which appears to me to be tantamount to the declaration by the two Powers that they will be arbitrators of all the Differences which may arise. [?] must not forget that only a few months ago it was wished to exclude the interference & influence of France from the Congress entirely.

Despite fearing that the Allies ‘may be jealous of your Intimacy with Talleyrand’, Wellington nevertheless believed that ‘these Considerations are nothing when ballanced [sic] with the great object of your establishing a perfect understanding with Talleyrand on your measures & on the mode in which you will carry them into execution’.⁶⁴

The French Foreign Minister himself had earlier spoken of similar sentiments to the interim British minister in Paris, Sir Charles Stuart. It was ‘materially necessary that the two Courts should thoroughly understand each other upon this Subject, & thus enable their Ministers cordially to cooperate in defeating a System so obviously inexpedient’, that was Russia’s encroachments on Poland.⁶⁵ Indeed, suspicion of Russian policies seemed to be universal. Bathurst wrote to Wellington concerning rumours of royal marriages that were circulating around Europe, which he attributed to ‘the jealousy which exists every where [sic] of the increasing influence of Russia’. In his view though, the marriage of a Russian Grand Duchess ‘will certainly connect France with Russia, whatever Talleyrand may profess to Lord Castlereagh’.⁶⁶

The British government held the Tsar in low esteem.⁶⁷ Liverpool was convinced that Alexander would be ‘quite deaf to every appeal to justice, moderation, or the engagements which he contracted with Prussia and Austria in the course of the last campaign’.⁶⁸ Edward Cooke, Castlereagh’s private secretary in Vienna, had an even lower view of Alexander: ‘if any person gives him credit for a sincere good design, they do him ample injustice’. The Tsar’s aim was ‘not to give constitutions, but to gain power and territory’. Cooke noted that ‘when Prince Hardenberg yields to him from deference to his master, he states the Emperor to be the most perfidious,

⁶⁴ Wellington to Castlereagh, Copy, 18 Aug. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/425.

⁶⁵ Stuart to Castlereagh, Copy, No. 99, 1 Aug. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/424 Part 2 (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 181-2).

⁶⁶ Bathurst to Wellington, 22 Aug. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/424 Part 2.

⁶⁷ This was largely thanks to the very poor impression he made on his visit to London in the summer of 1814. Bew, *Castlereagh*, pp. 364-5.

⁶⁸ Liverpool to Castlereagh, 25 Sept. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 285.

treacherous, usurping character, and infinitely more dangerous than Buonaparte'.⁶⁹ Reports of Russian intrigues to stir up jealousy in the Netherlands and Britain against France mingled with rumours of a 'secret understanding between Austria' and Russia.⁷⁰ These served to reinforce suspicions of Russian motives rather than poison Franco-British relations. Wellington assured Bathurst from Paris that he 'may depend upon it there is no intention in this government to disturb the general tranquillity in any manner'.⁷¹

However, a close relationship with France was still not without its own dangers and, with a war appearing a distinct possibility in late 1814, they became a very real concern. Once again the problem was combined with that of Russia. Blacas argued that 'though the King would not go to war for Poland, the country was not disinclined to make an exertion to save Saxony'. He also threw out suggestions about increasing the size of the French army, in an attempt to fathom Britain's attitude.⁷² In late November Blacas followed through with the idea. Orders were sent out that the *semestriers*, the soldiers absent on unlimited leave, should join their units 'by which the effective army will be very considerably augmented'. Wellington was unsure whether this was caused by high rates of desertion or 'the desire of being able to assume and to support the assumption of a higher tone in the Congress'. Either way, he believed that 'it is certain that it has given occasion to the expectation of the renewal of hostilities'.⁷³

Castlereagh summed up the problems at Vienna. He saw 'no real spirit of accommodation' among the Powers, and lamented that 'perhaps it is too much to expect that this Congress should differ so much from its predecessors'. The heart of the difficulties was the sheer scale of the task before them: 'It unfortunately happens that never at any former period was so much spoil thrown loose for the world to scramble for'. But it was Russia who prevented an equitable settlement: 'If Russia had, in the abundance of her territory, been more disinterested, her influence, united

⁶⁹ Cooke to Liverpool, Dec. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 473-7.

⁷⁰ Bathurst to Wellington, 27 Sept. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 291-2; Wellington to Castlereagh, 30 Sept. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 297-8

⁷¹ Wellington to Bathurst, 2 Oct. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 300.

⁷² Wellington to Castlereagh, 25 Oct. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 370-1; Wellington to Castlereagh, 5 Nov. 1814, *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 417-8; Wellington to Castlereagh, 7 Nov. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 423.

⁷³ Wellington to Castlereagh, 21 Nov. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 440.

with that of Great Britain and France, would have made the settlement comparatively easy'. Without that unity the result was that 'there is an absence of that controlling authority which is requisite to force a decision upon the ordinary details of business'.⁷⁴ The preponderance of Russian power that blocked agreement meant that a balance had to be restored.

The pretensions of Russia and the lack of balance made some kind of agreement with France necessary. Liverpool was aware of the risks, yet saw little alternative. As he argued to Bathurst, 'the objection to thus cooperating with France is, that we thereby establish her influence in Germany and Italy. But if we dread the increase of her influence by engaging her on our side, what will she become by uniting with the Northern Allies [Prussia and Russia]?' In this nightmare scenario, France might regain the Rhine boundary. Liverpool thought that 'to this the Emperor Alexander would not object, and in his present temper cheerfully concur in it as the means of humbling us'. With Austria 'exposed and threatened', Britain would be left without means to oppose this combination. Indeed, '[a]ll Europe, from Sicily to Sweden, would acquiesce, some secretly, others openly, wishing France success'. Hanoverian troops would have to be withdrawn to protect their homeland, and Holland would make a deal 'rather than continue a hopeless contest'. As French opinion tilted in favour of war with Britain, there was only 'the influence of some personal and some national feelings, which at present operate in our favour'. Louis XVIII's leaning towards Britain, 'where he had been so recently protected, and to whose influence he more immediately owes his restoration', his dislike of the Tsar, and the French hatred of Prussia combined with the desire to preserve Saxony, were the only factors militating against the war impulse. Yet, the Prime Minister feared that 'these estrangements and motives for forbearance will soon lose their influence. Lord Wellington could make the union by personal conferences now; but when France becomes more prepared to act (and it is evident she has the will as well as the opportunity of doing so), it may no longer be in our power to give to her actions the right direction'.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Castlereagh to Wellington, 7 Dec. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 465-6.

⁷⁵ Enclosure within Liverpool to Bathurst, 15 Dec. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp. 481-2.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nicholas Vansittart, also emphasised this point: ‘After all, we can have no security against some treacherous compromise between France and Russia; and there is even a great probability that in resentment of our interference, the Emperor of Russia may be disposed to listen to some suggestion for bringing forward questions of maritime law at the Congress’.⁷⁶ If Tilsit had awakened fears of a Franco-Russian combination, these certainly had not died with the death of that union in the snows of 1812. Indeed, throughout Wellington’s diplomatic career, it would be a regular theme, even if the fears were not always as pressing as they appeared to Liverpool in 1814.

The Prime Minister stressed that it was of the ‘utmost importance [...] to anticipate the Emperor of Russia, who, having carried his objects in the East of Europe, may be disposed to purchase the concurrence of France by an acquiescence in her views in other quarters’. It was necessary to rely on the honour of Louis XVIII. He would not enter engagements against Britain, ‘provided we treat him and his government with that consideration and confidence which they regard not unjustly as due to them, and which may induce them to look to a cordial understanding with Great Britain as the best prospect of recovering their fair portion of influence in Europe’.⁷⁷ Liverpool was ‘convinced’ that ‘the King of France is (among the great Powers) the only Sovereign in whom we can have any real Confidence’. Tsar Alexander was profligate, the King of Prussia well meaning, but ‘the dupe of the Emp[eror] of Russia’. The Austrian Emperor was honest, but in Metternich he had ‘a Minister in whom no one can trust, who considers all Policy as consisting in finesse and Trick, & who has got his Gov[ernmen]t and himself [in] more difficulties by his Devices than c[oul]d have occurred from a plain course of Dealing’. He rightly pointed out to the Duke that they should not ‘conceal from ourselves [...] that an avowed Union between G[rea]t Britain & France w[oul]d be likely to be unpopular in both Countries’. In light of this he recommended that they should ‘establish a complete confidential intercourse with the French Gov[ernmen]t w[hi]ch will give to neither Party any Pretence to enter

⁷⁶ Memorandum by Vansittart enclosed in Liverpool to Castlereagh, 28 Oct. 1814, in *BD*, p. 220.

⁷⁷ Liverpool to Castlereagh, 23 Dec. 1814, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 499.

into Engagements to the Prejudice of the other or indeed into any Engagements at all under present circumstances w[hi]ch it is not willing to communicate to the other'.⁷⁸

Wellington played a crucial role in bringing about his 'confidential intercourse', more especially as Castlereagh had to deal with the wily Talleyrand at Vienna:

the difference in principle between M. Talleyrand and me is chiefly that I wish to direct my main efforts to secure an equilibrium in Europe; to which objects, as far as principle will permit, I wish to make all local points subordinate. M. Talleyrand appears to me, on the contrary, more intent upon particular points of influence than upon the general balance to be established[.]

Talleyrand thus complicated the settlement of the crucial Polish question by raising the specific issues of Saxony and Naples, where France had dynastic and strategic concerns, but 'without essentially serving either of those interests upon which he is most intent'. The 'tone and conduct of Russia [...] disappointed [the] hope' for avoiding hostile combinations. Despite Castlereagh's reservations that 'however pure the intentions of the King of France were, and however friendly, we ought not to risk so much upon French connexion', the Foreign Secretary's course was to look to the general balance by conciliating France on the one hand and basing the system on uniting 'Germany for its own preservation against Russia' on the other. But for this policy to be a success France had to be working alongside Castlereagh's policy, not against it. To ensure that she would was Wellington's task:

I have troubled you with this outline of the policy upon which I have been acting here, that you may use your own discretion, as occasions arise, of preparing and reconciling the mind of the French Government to a concert between the two limitrophe Powers against Russian encroachment and dictation. You will find their minds (at least Prince Talleyrand's is) very averse to Russia, and impatient of the notion of any union between Austria and Prussia; yet, while they most inconsistently object to such a union, they admit that it is the only mode in which Russia can be kept within due bounds.

Castlereagh acknowledged that France might not look on a German alliance with favour but, given that the union of the German Powers would be 'in its nature inoffensive', it was 'unreasonable' for her to 'impede the sole means that remain to Germany of preserving its independence'.⁷⁹ Liverpool had earlier stressed this same

⁷⁸ Liverpool to Wellington, 23 Dec. 1815 [actually 1814], Liverpool Mss., Loan MS 72, vol. 22, ff. 84-86. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁹ Castlereagh to Wellington, 25 Oct. 1814, in *BD*, pp. 217-9.

point, that ‘it is quite essential [...] to any balance of power that these two monarchies [Austria and Prussia] should be made respectable’ to be able to balance Russia (and France).⁸⁰ Wellington had to reconcile the French government to this course of action.

On 5th November 1814, Wellington took the matter up with Blacas. The French minister was convinced that Russia’s intransigence would force Britain and France to withdraw their representatives from Vienna and that ‘they could not acknowledge these arrangements, and that Europe would remain in a feverish state, which sooner or later must end in war’. Wellington, in turn, ‘again urged him in the strongest manner to have instructions sent to Monsieur de Talleyrand to lay aside all considerations upon small points, and to unite cordially with [Castlereagh] in a great effort to produce the union of all the Powers in Europe against the projected aggrandizement of Russia’. Blacas believed that Castlereagh was not acting on the key questions as expected and requested that the British Foreign Secretary be furnished with further instructions. This Wellington firmly countered. Blacas ‘was quite mistaken’ and Castlereagh’s ‘language could not be stronger [...] both verbally and in writing’ to the Tsar on the Polish question. Talleyrand was at fault, not Castlereagh, for ‘running after these small objects, instead of looking to that principal one’ of Poland. After making a bid for an alliance of Britain, France, Spain and Holland, which Wellington argued would only create jealousy and separate Britain from her other allies, Blacas at last agreed with the British position and promised to influence Louis XVIII in that sense.⁸¹ Orders were to go to Talleyrand to ‘cooperate with [Castlereagh] in every way to produce an effectual Opposition to the Emperor’s Polish Schemes’ which were ‘the foundation of all the Evil which was likely to result from the Congress’. He further noted, ‘[t]hey are quite convinced, not only that M. de Talleyrand has acted foolishly himself, but that he has led them into error by encouraging representation of your conduct and views’.⁸²

Following Wellington’s interposition at Paris, Castlereagh’s position at Vienna was tangibly improved:

⁸⁰ Liverpool to Wellington, Draft, 2 Sept. 1814, Liverpool Mss., Loan MS 72, vol. 22, ff. 19-25, (also in *WSD*, vol. IX, pp.211-3).

⁸¹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 5 Nov. 1814, in *BD*, pp. 227-8.

⁸² Wellington to Castlereagh, Private, Copy, 7 Nov. 1814, TNA, FO 27/101, (also in *BD*, pp. 228-9).

I cannot sufficiently express to you my thanks for your most useful and seasonable co-operation. You have succeeded in rendering the French influence here much more accommodating; and, if I have not been able to bring the Prince de Talleyrand to the point of common exertion, his Highness has been to me personally most obliging and conciliatory, and has ceased to thwart me as he did, possibly unintentionally, at first.⁸³

Over the coming weeks this breakthrough would lead to ‘common exertion’ between the two diplomats, eventually resulting in the treaty of 3rd January 1815 between France, Britain and Austria to counter Prussian pretensions over Saxony, even though by then Poland had been lost to Russia. A little over a month later, Liverpool stressed that he has ‘no scruple in avowing that the keystone of all my external policy is the preserving [of] the Bourbons on the throne of France’. He was convinced that ‘this alone can prevent the recurrence of the costs which we have suffered for the last twenty years, and all other dangers may be regarded as contemptible when compared with those which could arise out of another revolution in France’.⁸⁴ Yet, only six days later, Napoleon escaped his exile in Elba, so calling into question everything that had been achieved over the previous year.

Vienna to Waterloo

After being selected to replace Lord Castlereagh at the Congress, as has been seen above, Wellington arrived in Vienna in early February. For the following few weeks the Duke and the Foreign Secretary worked alongside each other while the former was brought up to speed, though little business of the Congress was done thanks to the illness of Wessenberg, Metternich’s deputy.⁸⁵ After Castlereagh’s departure in the middle of the month to return to Westminster to lead a boisterous House of Commons, Wellington took on the full responsibilities for representing Britain. With the foreign minister having settled all issues of direct importance to Britain, the Duke took on the role of a mediator in the remaining questions ‘urging the virtues and sweet-reasonableness with the philosophy that comes from detachment’.⁸⁶ The most trying of his tasks was to join Metternich and Talleyrand in a visit to the King of Saxony to

⁸³ Castlereagh to Wellington, 21 Nov. 1814, in *BD*, p. 241.

⁸⁴ Liverpool to Castlereagh, 20 Feb. 1815, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p.573.

⁸⁵ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 20.

⁸⁶ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 21.

gain his assent to the treaties that divided his kingdom – a far from pleasant experience, even if he was losing far less land than had looked likely at one stage.

By the time of this trip, however, the Congress had already been overshadowed by Napoleon's escape from Elba. News had reached Vienna on 7 March, and while it remained unclear what Napoleon's immediate intentions were (he could have made for Italy to join with Murat rather than head to France), it was obvious it did not bode well.⁸⁷ Wellington, as one of Europe's leading generals, was in the right place at the right time to have a significant impact on the course of affairs. Furthermore, he was significantly backed from the government in London and was given a large degree of latitude to decide on the spot his course. Castlereagh wrote to him instructing that:

Your Grace will be enabled at Vienna to watch the progress of this attempt by Buonaparte to overturn the existing order of things in France, and consequently in Europe; and you can judge, with reference to the state of affairs at Vienna, where your personal presence is likely to be most use to the public service. The Prince Regent, relying entirely on your Grace's zeal and judgment, leaves it to you, without further orders, either to remain at Vienna or to put yourself at the head of the army in Flanders.

Taking cognisance of the fact that officially Wellington remained ambassador to France, the foreign minister's only reservation was that 'your Grace is not to expose yourself by returning to the interior of France, unless in the command of troops'.⁸⁸ As far as the prickly question of Murat went, Castlereagh told him that the matter 'is in your hands, and you alone judge what is best to be done'.⁸⁹

Highlighting how close their views were, both sought to base the new alliance against Napoleon on the Treaty of Chaumont. Castlereagh wrote to the Duke to draw the allied ministers' attention to that treaty 'as the only safe basis upon which their conduct can now be founded'. With Napoleon's return 'there is no safety for Europe but in a close and indissoluble union of the Four Great Powers, supported by all the other States, who will rally round their standard'.⁹⁰ Wellington had already been thinking along these lines and, despite some difficulties that had delayed agreement, he eventually secured the acquiescence of the other powers to a reaffirmation of the

⁸⁷ M. Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and its Legacy: War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon* (London, 2013), p. 158.

⁸⁸ Castlereagh to Wellington, 12 Mar. 1815, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 591.

⁸⁹ Castlereagh to Wellington, 24 Mar. 1815, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 608.

⁹⁰ Castlereagh to Wellington, 16 Mar. 1815, in *BD*, p. 314.

treaty.⁹¹ On receiving word of this, Castlereagh immediately sought to ratify it. The only additional thing he sought to add was a declaration emphasising that ‘the object of the alliance and concert is to destroy Buonaparte's authority, and not to impose on France any particular Sovereign or form of government’.⁹²

Swiftly, the Duke's military nature overtook his diplomatic role. There was still significant overlap, however. Wellington's prestige by this stage was of great importance in securing specific objectives. On this head, Sir Charles Stuart wrote to Bathurst from The Hague informing him:

To say the truth, unless the Duke of Wellington shows himself and uses strong arguments to compel them to fortify the frontier, I see plainly that we shall have to combat difficulties at every turn. The want of money will be a justification for delays which proper energy might easily get over; and I know not where it is to be sought unless in his counsels.⁹³

The Duke's influence was not just limited to matters concerning the small powers, however. Tsar Alexander had floated the idea of becoming ‘Generalissimo’ of the allied armies, which was ‘brusquely refused’ by the Duke in favour of the model of command used during the final months of the war the previous year.⁹⁴ The Tsar had indicated a wish for the Duke to join as part of Supreme Command to which Wellington responded he ‘would prefer to carry a musquet [sic]’ and he was instead designated command of the allied army of British, Dutch and Hanoverian troops already in Belgium, as well as the addition of a Prussian corps of soldiers.⁹⁵ Wellington remained at Vienna until 29th March before departing for the Low Countries and his eventual meeting with Napoleon on the field of Waterloo on 18th June 1815.

Wellington and the Second Bourbon Restoration

Wellington's victory over the Emperor sealed for good that Napoleon would no longer rule France, but, beyond that, the future remained unclear. A second Bourbon restoration was not a matter of certainty and other options existed. One was a regency for Napoleon's young son, then safely under the protection of his grandfather, the Emperor Francis, in Vienna. After he realised there was no possibility of remaining

⁹¹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 25 Mar. 1815, in *BD*, pp. 316-17.

⁹² Castlereagh to Wellington, 8 Apr. 1815, in *BD*, p. 320.

⁹³ Stuart to Bathurst, 24 Mar. 1815, in *WSD*, vol. IX, p. 607.

⁹⁴ C.K. Webster, *The Congress of Vienna*, (London, 1963), pp. 155-6.

⁹⁵ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 24.

on the throne himself, this was Napoleon's own wish and he abdicated in his son's favour on 22 June. Another option was a monarchy under the Duc d'Orléans, head of the cadet branch of Bourbons and more liberally minded. The Tsar wavered between these choices before deciding his preference was for the latter.⁹⁶

However, it was not for Napoleon or Alexander to decide the future of France; Napoleon's ability to choose even his own fate had perished in a muddy field in Belgium along with the lives of so many while Alexander had had his moment of victory in 1814. In the summer of 1815 it was Wellington who had the initiative and the ability to dictate the course of events. Though there was a clear preference in the British government for the return of Louis XVIII, this necessarily depended on events on the continent and beyond the removal of Napoleon Wellington had no specific instructions. Had there been a clear preference within France, they would have been open to alternative arrangements, especially as an overtly pro-Bourbon stance would have caused domestic complications in Parliament.⁹⁷ Much depended on the circumstances on the ground and in this Wellington was the crucial figure. After fleeing the Tuileries on Napoleon's return, Louis XVIII had chosen to take refuge in Ghent, only a little over forty miles from the field of Waterloo. Following that battle, rather than take the advice of Metternich and Castlereagh to proceed to the south of France to re-establish his government, the king followed Wellington's suggestion to proceed with his army on its march towards Paris.⁹⁸

The Duke followed this up with discussions with Joseph Fouché, Napoleon's erstwhile Minister of Police, who had now abandoned him and Napoleon II to act instead as the midwife for whatever the new regime would be. Elected President of the Executive Commission by the French Chambers, he had already been sending feelers to various parties even before the Battle of Waterloo. Wellington met with Commissioners from the provisional government on 29th June. The Duke stressed to them that before he could order a halt to his military operations it was necessary that he 'must see some steps taken to re-establish a government in France which should afford the Allies some chance of peace'. After being asked what would satisfy the

⁹⁶ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 161.

⁹⁷ A. Zamoyski, *The Rites of Peace: The Fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna* (London, 2007), p. 472.

⁹⁸ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 163

Allies on that head, Wellington told them that though he ‘had no authority to talk upon the subject, even from my own Government, much less from the Allies; and that all I could do was to give them my private opinion’, but that for him, he ‘conceived the best security for Europe was the restoration of the King, and that the establishment of any other government than the King’s in France must inevitably lead to new and endless wars’. He urged that any restoration should be without conditions and that they ‘should recall the King without loss of time, as it would not then appear that the measure had been forced upon them by the Allies’. In the course of Wellington’s conversation with the commissioners he informed them that while it would be out of the question to suspend hostilities with a regency for Napoleon II, he could not comment if some other royal prince, referring to the Duc d’Orléans, were called to the throne instead of Louis XVIII: ‘I said that it was impossible for me to answer such loose questions; that, as an individual, I had made them acquainted with my opinion of what it was best for them to do, and it rested with them either to follow this opinion or not’. Seeing them again the next day he told them, once again as an individual, that ‘in my opinion, Europe had no hope of peace if any person excepting the King were called to the throne of France; that any person so called must be considered an usurper, whatever his rank and quality’ the result of which would be that he would look to war and conquest to divert from this fact.⁹⁹

Though in his communications he had repeatedly stressed that he was voicing his own personal opinions rather than those of the British government or the Allied powers generally, the simple fact that he was the commander of the army rapidly approaching Paris lent additional weight to his views. This fact, married with the failure of the people of Paris to unite behind a single alternative to the Bourbons, meant that Wellington’s view prevailed and Louis XVIII returned to Paris to a warm reception on 8th July, the day after the allied armies had entered the French capital.¹⁰⁰ However, just the return of the legitimate King was not enough to secure the future peace. The events of the previous hundred days had starkly revealed the deep divisions that remained in French society and the King would need to follow a moderate policy of reconciliation to prevent another disaster. There were serious fears on this head as Louis had fallen under the influence of the *ultras* led by his brother, and heir, the

⁹⁹ Wellington to Bathurst, 2 July 1815, in *WD*, vol. XII, pp. 532-8.

¹⁰⁰ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 88.

Comte d'Artois. A proclamation followed that held out the prospect of retribution to those who had betrayed the Bourbons. Wellington once again intervened. As in the previous year when he had urged moderation and inclusivity on Ferdinand VII in Spain, he once again argued the case of conciliating liberal opinion. This time it met with rather more success, no doubt thanks to the thousands of soldiers under his command then occupying Paris. At the Duke's instigation Louis XVIII dismissed his favourite Blacas, and appointed a new ministry with Talleyrand at its head and including the regicide Fouché to the horror of the *ultras*.¹⁰¹

Though the success of the royalists in the elections for the Chambers a few months later saw the resignation of both Fouché and Talleyrand, this is nevertheless an important episode in the Duke's diplomatic career. It indicates clearly his preference for legitimacy pressing for the return of Louis XVIII, but it also demonstrates his pragmatic and conciliatory stance on sensitive diplomatic issues. Wellington was keenly aware of the need to construct the French state on the broadest basis possible. Legitimacy meant nothing if government excluded dangerous sections of the population that might seek to change the regime once again. Wellington would hold true to this maxim throughout his diplomatic career.

Paris and the Making of Peace

With Paris occupied and Louis XVIII installed once more in the Tuileries, the attention now turned once again to peace making. The circumstances were not particularly propitious for the task. As allied statesmen and monarchs of the great powers, not to mention many of those of the smaller powers, began to arrive in the French capital they were faced by a still dangerous and fluid situation. The Prussian army was bent on revenge, their civilian ministers in no position to restrain them, French royalists were determined to exact their own vengeance and spill the blood of traitors to the Bourbons, revolutionary Jacobins and sympathisers of Napoleon had nothing left to lose and the ordinary populace was ready and willing to form mobs and pick fights with allied soldiers at the slightest provocation. A 'White Terror' gripped some of the

¹⁰¹ Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 489.

provinces of France.¹⁰² Though Fouché gradually re-established control, it was nevertheless a constant reminder of the importance of the task at hand for the peacemakers.

This was no simple process, however. The first obstacle to be surmounted was whether there was even a need for a peace treaty. Louis XVIII had been an ally of the other powers, and their declarations had made it explicit that their actions were directed against the usurper Napoleon, rather than the French nation. Given those circumstances, surely peace had already been restored by his abdication and the restoration of the rightful king? This was the argument Talleyrand tried to make to the other powers but to very little avail. The mood was very clearly running in a different direction, and to not impose some kind of peace would have been politically unacceptable in every allied country.¹⁰³ However, it was by no means clear what form it should take. The Prussians were determined to crush France once and for all with a devastating peace. Their army, contemptuous of the statesmen, were especially scornful of Wellington's role: Gneisenau denounced the 'threatening magnanimity' that the Duke had shown towards Napoleon, and the press were quick in attacking him for his stances.¹⁰⁴ Wellington and Castlereagh, who had hastened over to Paris after its occupation, intervened to provide additional civilian control over the allied armies. The Duke was certain that if the Prussians (and also Bavarians) had their way, the result would be an insurrection like the French faced in Spain.¹⁰⁵ The desire for revenge was by no means restricted to them, however. Even the British government was very much inclined towards a harsh peace and they were supported in this by the wider British public.¹⁰⁶

Wellington took a very different attitude. In his mind, the primary aim must be to promote stability in France, and by extension the wider European system. Count Nesselrode, the Russian foreign minister, drew up a memorandum with the aid of

¹⁰² Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, pp. 490-5.

¹⁰³ Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 500.

¹⁰⁴ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 93.

¹⁰⁵ Castlereagh to Liverpool, 14 July 1815, No. 7, in *BD*, pp. 342-4; Castlereagh to Bathurst, 14 July 1815, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 29. Carl von Clausewitz commented on Castlereagh and Wellington in Paris: 'for they do not appear to have come here with a passion for revenge and retribution, but as a disciplining school master with proud coldness and unimpeachable purity – in short, nobler than us.' Clausewitz to wife, 12 July 1815, in Linnebach, Karl (Hg.): *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern* (Berlin 1917), p. 401

¹⁰⁶ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 94.

Castlereagh and Wellington to submit to the other powers. For them the alliance was first directed towards the removal of Napoleon, second, to return France to the conditions of the first Peace of Paris, and finally to guarantee to France and all of Europe the maintenance of that peace and of the decisions of the Vienna Congress.¹⁰⁷ While the first had been achieved, the latter two aims still hung very much in the balance. For the Duke it would be impossible to realise them with a harsh peace. In line with the legalist outlook he would take throughout his career, he believed the engagements made with Louis XVIII left the allies with ‘no just right to make any material inroad on the treaty of Paris’ even though, for him, ‘that treaty leaves France too strong in relation to other powers’. However, his reasoning for a moderate peace was based on more than just legal grounds. Wellington argued that the object of the allies had been to ‘put an end to the French Revolution, to obtain peace for themselves and their people, to have the power of reducing their overgrown military establishments, and the leisure to attend to the internal concerns of their several nations, and to improve the situation of their people’. To demand a large amount of territory from France would not achieve any of that. Instead, the allies would have to:

consider the operations of the war as deferred till France shall find a suitable opportunity of endeavouring to regain what she has lost; and, after having wasted our resources in the maintenance of overgrown military establishments in time of peace, we shall find how little useful the cessions we shall have acquired will be against a national effort to regain them.

Thus, for Wellington, ‘we ought to keep our great object, the genuine peace and tranquillity of the world, in our view, and shape our arrangement so as to provide for it.’ In his mind, ‘Revolutionary France is more likely to distress the world than France, however strong in her frontier, under a regular Government; and that is the situation in which we ought to endeavour to place her’. The only solution that could provide security to Europe and ensure a stable government in France was a temporary army of occupation.¹⁰⁸

On both the aims of the peace and the means of achieving them, Wellington and Castlereagh were firmly aligned. Together they formed a key axis in the negotiations in Paris, complementing each other’s skills and enabling them to

¹⁰⁷ Castlereagh to Liverpool, 29 July 1815, in *BD*, pp. 353-4; Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁸ Wellington to Castlereagh, 11 Aug. 1815, in *WD*, vol. XII, pp. 596-600.

overcome the opposition to moderate terms. Castlereagh told Liverpool shortly after his arrival in response to a suggestion of combining with the Duke in the negotiations, that '[w]e had already made considerable progress in settling the course of business here. There can never be a difficulty, I trust, between the Duke and myself; and I hope it will not be less amicably arranged with the other Powers'.¹⁰⁹ Wellington and the Foreign Secretary united with Tsar Alexander to oppose the pretensions of the other powers to aggrandise at the expense of France.¹¹⁰ With Lord Liverpool and other ministers keen for a harsh peace as well, Wellington also played a key role in ensuring they dropped their demands for a punitive settlement: 'if the victor of Waterloo threw his weight behind a moderate peace it would be very hard for anyone in Britain to mount an attack on the government over it, while his opinion carried great weight with the members of the Cabinet who might not have yielded to Castlereagh's lone judgement'.¹¹¹ His opinion on military questions was impossible for the cabinet to contest and, as Liverpool wrote, they were 'disposed to place entire confidence in whatever may be the ultimate military judgement of the Duke'.¹¹²

With the British government convinced of the need to follow Castlereagh's and Wellington's policy, and the Prussians isolated amongst the Great Powers in their urge for revenge, attention shifted to the alternatives to secure the peace. The chosen method was the temporary occupation of part of France. Wellington was firmly in favour of this course of action. Not only would they provide security during the time they were in France but 'if carried into execution in the spirit in which they are conceived, they are in themselves the bond of peace'. Their presence would give security to Louis XVIII, allowing him to reform the army and purge it of its Napoleonic elements. Furthermore, the promise of the withdrawal of the force and the restoration of the occupied lands to 'the King, or his legitimate heirs or successors, would have the effect of giving additional stability to his throne'. Though Wellington still believed that France would still be too powerful relative to the other states of Europe even after the occupation, he thought that, 'if the Allies do not waste their time and their means, the state of security of each and of the whole, in relation to France,

¹⁰⁹ Castlereagh to Liverpool, 14 July 1815, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 28.

¹¹⁰ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna*, p. 171.

¹¹¹ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 94.

¹¹² Liverpool to Castlereagh, 11 Aug. 1815, in *BD*, p. 359. T.D. Veve, *The Duke of Wellington and the British Army of Occupation in France, 1815-1818* (Westport, CT, & London, 1992), pp. 12-13.

will, at the end of the period, -be materially improved, and will probably leave but little to desire'.¹¹³ Yet all of this would be easier said than done. The occupation of France, even for a fixed period, would be unpopular within that country and require a great deal of skill, and luck, to pull off without severely damaging the relations of Europe with France, and those of Louis XVIII with his subjects. It was to the Duke of Wellington that the statesmen in Paris turned to attempt this task. Castlereagh was of the opinion that 'it is certain it cannot be well executed in other hands than those of the Duke of Wellington'. He further informed Lord Liverpool that '[t]his is the view of both Emperors: the Emperor of Russia is disposed to even make it a condition *sine qua non* of his leaving a Russian contingent'. With the Duke willing to accept, Castlereagh concluded that 'His Grace having the command will render the plan less unpopular in France, and less injurious to the King'.¹¹⁴

Over the course of August, the preferences of both the cabinet at home and the Prussians for a harsher peace were overcome and affairs began to move towards a conclusion. A new obstacle was soon found though in the form of Talleyrand. On 20th September, the French minister met with the allied plenipotentiaries, with Wellington and Castlereagh representing Britain. There was to be no negotiation however, and the terms were still significant ones. France's borders would be rolled back from those that the First Peace of Paris had left them, an indemnity would be paid to the allies, as well as a contribution to the border forts to be built in the United Netherlands, and, most significantly for Wellington, France was to be occupied by a force of 150,000 allied soldiers.¹¹⁵ When Talleyrand's pleas that Louis XVIII had been an ally of the other powers and that they had no right to demand cessions of territory were rejected he attempted to persuade the king to threaten his abdication but, having only just been reinstated, Louis was not willing to take that step. This was too much for his minister. 'For my part, it would have been a renunciation of everything I had done at Vienna and would have annulled the precautions I had taken to make sure that the alliance that had been formed against Bonaparte should not be turned against us'.¹¹⁶ Talleyrand handed his resignation in on 23rd September. In his memoirs he lamented the situation and the power of the Tsar: 'There is no government, there is only the will of the

¹¹³ Wellington to Castlereagh, 11 Aug. 1815, in *WD*, vol. XII, pp. 596-600.

¹¹⁴ Castlereagh to Liverpool, 12 Aug. 1815, No. 31 (*Précis*), in *BD*, p. 360.

¹¹⁵ Zamoycki, *Rites of Peace*, pp. 516-7.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Zamoycki, *Rites of Peace*, p. 518.

Emperor of Russia. I was obliged to take the part of France against him, and I lost. But what madness! To take up the cause of France when one has only the Duke of Wellington on one's side, and not even the support of France itself, which understands nothing. France is no longer, that is what I should have realised'.¹¹⁷ While Talleyrand overestimated the nefarious influence of the Tsar who, as noted, had worked to moderate the settlement, the Frenchman does point towards the role Wellington played in calling for a lighter treaty.

The Second Peace of Paris was signed 20th November 1815.¹¹⁸ The final terms of the treaty had been slightly modified in the interim by Talleyrand's successor, Armand Émmanuel du Plessis, duc de Richelieu. An émigré, who had served the Tsar as Governor-General of New Russia, encompassing the Crimea and Odessa, he had initially declined serving in the government shortly after Waterloo, 'on the grounds that he had been away so long that he knew hardly anyone in and very little about modern France'.¹¹⁹ Coming into office, Richelieu managed to secure some concessions. Nevertheless, they were substantially the same, and on the same day a convention for the military occupation of France was signed, with Wellington being appointed to the supreme command at the same time, setting him on the next stage of his career.¹²⁰

Throughout these negotiations the pattern was set for the Wellington's first three years in Cabinet from 1819. The Duke and Castlereagh, working on spot together for an extended period for the first time, picked up where they had left off in their shorter stints in Vienna earlier in the year and Paris in 1814. They formed an incredibly effective partnership, aligned in their outlooks and understanding of the international system. Their strengths complemented each other and together found they were able to override the Cabinet in London to impose their course and bring truculent continental powers to heel. By this time Wellington was a statesman of the first order and his personal position in relation to both the British Government and the allies was only growing. This trend would intensify over the follow years as Commander-in-

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 520.

¹¹⁸ The full text can be found *Key Treaties for the Great Powers 1814-1914*, ed. M. Hurst, vol. I (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 128-34.

¹¹⁹ Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 519.

¹²⁰ The full text of the convention can be found in *Key Treaties for the Great Powers*, vol. I, pp. 108-19.

Chief, bringing his influence to new heights and laying the ground for future problems when he returned to domestic politics.

Commander-in-Chief of the Occupation I: International Arbitrator?

The three years that Wellington spent in France as Commander-in-Chief were an important stage in his career. In his last active military command, the Duke was in charge of ‘history’s first multi-national peacekeeping operation’.¹²¹ It was ‘a unique advance in the annals of military command, for the allies, in their battles against Napoleon, had never fully integrated their forces.’ Each country maintained administrative control over their forces in France but their commanders reported to the Duke and had to obey his orders on troop dispositions. In this way, ‘[b]y integrating allied forces, Wellington had command of all units should he need to employ the occupation army’.¹²² In his unprecedented position, Wellington established a large degree of control and influence over the policy of France, and occupied a position in the wider European state-system quite unlike any that any other individual has held before or since. While T. D. Veve has argued that it was only during the years of occupation that Wellington learnt ‘the lessons he needed to enter into the political arena’ (a strange assertion given the Duke’s previous political positions in Dublin and in Westminster), his tenure as Commander-in-Chief nevertheless did have an important role in shaping his long term attitudes towards foreign policy.¹²³ These years did not mark a new departure for him. They instead built on his previous experiences, especially those of the previous year and a half, and reinforced trends in his attitudes such as disdain for the press, a reliance on personal diplomacy and an increase in the sense of his own importance. Though his position was a military one, his influence extended much beyond that, and touched on his role within the European settlement itself.

Given the precarious domestic political situation within France, the Duke’s command took on an additional importance in the early months of the occupation. This was revealed when he informed the French authorities in February 1816 of his

¹²¹ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. x.

¹²² Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 20.

¹²³ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 6.

intention to completely remove the British troops and establishment from Paris. '[T]he King and the government, particularly the Duc de Richelieu, expressed an anxious desire that I should keep the head quarters in Paris.' Wellington was unwilling to do this but on their request that he 'would stay for some time after the troops had gone, and that I would occasionally return to Paris' he was more agreeable. Writing to Bathurst, he told him that, '[i]n the mean time I believe my presence is very useful to the government and to the King in a variety of ways, and gives confidence to that party which brought back the King, although not now in favour', referring to the liberal elements of France which had been ousted by the success of the *ultras* in the autumn of 1815. Wellington was very conscious of the difficult and important position he had: 'There is not much confidence in anybody either here or in England, excepting myself. But I think a very little caution, and doing no more than what is fair by the French government, will soon show them that we are not all so bad as, I must say, they have now unfortunately some reason to think us'.¹²⁴ Wellington was thus acting as the personification of British power on the spot in France, and his conduct was to play a large role in shaping the opinions of that country towards Britain. This was not just the Duke's ego talking. Webster has surmised that 'it was undoubtedly [Wellington's] influence, together with that of the Tsar [...] that carried the Government through the dangerous crisis of the early part of 1816'.¹²⁵

Not only did his broader responsibilities encompass acting as an intermediary between nations, but also as one between members of European ruling dynasties. This was the case in relation to Wellington's former aide-de-camp, the Prince of Orange and his father, King William of the United Netherlands. Concerned about dissatisfaction amongst the Belgian portion of the new Kingdom which he feared his father's actions would make worse, the young Prince wished to establish essentially his own court at Brussels. Laying out his case, the Prince wrote, 'I would request you, my dear Duke, if you approve of this measure, to propose it as a measure of policy to the King, who, by giving me the command of the troops on the French frontier, might by that means render my stay at Bruxelles likewise very palatable to the Dutch; and if you could also get your government to propose it, I think the King would agree to

¹²⁴ Wellington to Bathurst, 13 Feb. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 301-2.

¹²⁵ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 79.

it'.¹²⁶ Wellington was of a different view. Doubting the existence of substantial Belgian unrest, let alone the expediency of the idea of a separate court which could only serve to separate the Prince from his father, the Duke warned him:

Nothing would be more unfortunate for your Royal Highness's family than any known difference between the King and you; and you may depend upon it you will never be upon the terms on which you ought to be, and on which all those attached to your family would wish you to be, if you should fix your residence at Bruxelles without the King's entire consent.

Wellington further thought it was impossible for the British government to comment on the matter and told the Prince that 'It is either of a nature purely domestic, or relating to interior policy and the King would naturally be offended with his ally if the government were to pretend to give him any advice upon it'.¹²⁷ The Duke referred it anyway to Bathurst as Secretary for War, who agreed with the former's sentiments. Revealingly, he told Wellington, that it would be impossible to recommend the Prince to take the military command: 'there is such a habit of jealousy in the different Courts of Europe, that many of them would immediately apprehend a secret understanding, and be possibly misled into separate engagements to counteract an imaginary one'.¹²⁸ The old suspicions were alive and well and still affecting diplomacy during this time.

Wellington's primary interactions with the Dutch government during these years were not about familial relations but instead about the new 'barrier fortresses' to be erected along the frontier with France. The Protocol of 21 November 1815 between the Allied Powers on the fortifications of the states bordering France placed Britain and the United Netherlands conjointly in charge of those of the 'barrier fortresses', and Wellington was chosen by those two states to supervise their construction.¹²⁹ In this role, the Duke was ultimately responsible for £6.5 million (£2 million each from Britain and the United Netherlands and £2.5 million from the payment of French indemnities).¹³⁰ The surveying, design and construction of the fortifications was in the

¹²⁶ The Prince of Orange, 3 April 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 351.

¹²⁷ Wellington to the Prince of Orange, 5 May 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 390-2.

¹²⁸ Bathurst to Wellington, 13 May 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 400. Wellington forwarded Bathurst's reply to the Prince and advised him: 'that you should not now bring the matter forward, but keep your object in view, and not talk of it, nor allow it to be talked of; and sooner or later, if it is advisable, you will attain it.' Wellington to the Prince of Orange, 17 May 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 405.

¹²⁹ 'Protocol of Conference between Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, respecting the Fortification of the Netherlands, Germany, and Savoy. Vienna, 21st November, 1815' in *Key Treaties for the Great Powers*, vol. I, pp. 134-6.

¹³⁰ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 109-10.

hands both of the British and Dutch engineers and as a result there was a large scope for misunderstandings and difficulties to arise. As they both came up with their own plans, Wellington had to ensure that relations were not damaged as a result and believed that it should be up to the Dutch king to choose whichever plan he believed was the best rather than ‘force him to employ’ the British plans against his will. Wellington, with his usual disdain for public opinion, and sense of responsibility for the government, wrote to Castlereagh:

It is very easy for any man or set of men to write in the newspapers and endeavour to create a sensation in the country upon any point as one of national interest or honour; but it is the business of government to counteract these attempts, and I am convinced that no reasonable man in England can object to the principle above laid down.¹³¹

The barrier fortifications were a central part of the European settlement at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and the Waterloo campaign had emphasised their importance. The Army of Occupation was in part designed to act as a substitute until the fortresses were ready. In his dual roles as Commander-in-Chief and supervisor of the constructions, ‘Wellington was in a better position to evaluate the progress of the reconstruction project against the continued presence of the allied army inside France’. Given the intimate relationship between the two, ‘[a]s occupation commander-in-chief and untitled military advisor to the allied courts, the duke could not recommend a removal of the army until a suitable replacement was available.’¹³² In the end these took much longer than anticipated, and the Duke went on annual inspections of the fortifications until he became Prime Minister in 1828.¹³³

Wellington was also involved in a wide number of other questions during his time as Commander-in-Chief. As C.K. Webster has pointed out:

He represented, indeed, more than his own country, for it was an Inter-Allied army that he commanded, and in the last resort Alexander and Metternich looked to him as much as to their own Ambassadors. Nevertheless, his outlook and methods were peculiarly his own and it was the interests of Britain that in the long run dictated his policy, however wisely and humanely sought, though the Duke was always conscious of the great position which he held in the

¹³¹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 27 Dec. 1815, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 263.

¹³² Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 94.

¹³³ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 97.

councils of Europe and was anxious to fulfil his task, a congenial one, in the best possible manner.¹³⁴

The forum for Wellington to engage in these diplomatic questions was the Ambassadorial Conference that sat in Paris. Designed to oversee the Duke's command and for him to be accountable to, he instead dominated it. 'He was, in fact, far too big a personage to be controlled by a Conference of Ambassadors, who were in any case generally divided in policy'.¹³⁵ Writing in 1818, Wellington told Bathurst that 'it must not be supposed that the Allied Ministers here are very cordially united either in their objects or councils because they don't break out. The truth is, that I keep them together; but if I were to withdraw from Paris altogether, and particularly if I were to do so in a manner which should shake the public respect for me, you would no longer see that union of councils and objects which has prevailed here since the Peace'. Such was Wellington's rating of his own importance that he believed that 'after assassination, the greatest public and private calamity which could happen would be to obey the order of the Prince Regent', to leave Paris.¹³⁶ In 1816 Castlereagh wrote to the Duke saying, 'I have rejoiced to observe the good humour with which you have kept the Allied machine together'.¹³⁷ Webster surmises that 'By common consent [...] Wellington was *l'homme nécessaire* - indispensable not only by virtue of his command but by reason of the moral authority which he exerted over the French Government and their critics, external and internal. In the long run all the important decisions with regard to France during these three years were made by him, however he might try to disguise the responsibility'.¹³⁸ The experiences of this time, of being the trusted intermediary of statesmen of various countries, reinforced his preferences for personal diplomacy, and went along to give him an exaggerated sense of his own importance among the chancelleries of Europe.

One of the main issues that Wellington would have to deal with over the course of his tenure was that of the interlinked problem of French exiles in the United Netherlands and a vehement anti-Bourbon press that was in existence there. The problem of the exiles was a difficult one, entwined with the various declarations and

¹³⁴ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 75.

¹³⁵ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 77.

¹³⁶ Wellington to Bathurst, 25 Feb. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, p. 335.

¹³⁷ Castlereagh to Wellington, 13 May 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 401.

¹³⁸ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p.77-8.

Ordonnances issued by the French government on its own return after the Hundred Days. Given Wellington's intimacy with the Dutch monarchy, the Ambassadorial Conference looked to him to deal with the issue. In April 1816, the Duke was reporting from the Hague that the King had already 'adopted measures to remedy some of the inconveniences and evils complained of' and that he had 'expressed himself disposed to cooperate with the French government in preventing evil-disposed persons from plotting in his dominions'.¹³⁹ Writing a few days later, Wellington told Sir Charles Stuart, the British ambassador to Paris, in a letter to be communicated to the Conference, that 'taking the question as a practical one, and not upon the principle, I confess that I thought it of little importance whether two or three regicides did or did not remain in [the Dutch king's] dominions, provided they were not immediately upon the French frontier'. In this Wellington was acting as a restraint upon the Allied ambassadors and the French government. Despite this, 'if the Allied ministers think it an object', Wellington wrote that 'I entertain no doubt that I shall be able to prevail upon the King to send away the regicides entirely'.¹⁴⁰

This was disingenuous. While Wellington was no doubt convinced that he could convince King William I to expel the regicides, he had no intention of following the wishes of the Ambassadorial Conference on this question when he did not agree with the expediency of the measure. A long correspondence ensued. Wellington told Stuart, '[o]bserve that I am now reasoning the question as one of right, and I believe it will be admitted that there is no right to call upon the King of the Netherlands to send the regicides out of his country'. He continued:

I feel as strongly as others how desirable it is that all the Powers and all the people of Europe should show an abhorrence of all those concerned in the French Revolution, and particularly the late rebellion; but considering the manner in which these regicides were banished, how few of them there are remaining in Holland, and what miserable wretches they are, and that to press the matter further will be disagreeable to the King, I cannot think it desirable to do so. If there is the slightest trace of any one of them being engaged in cabals against the French government, I entertain no doubt the King will send them all away; but till we can prove that, it appears to me not worth while to notice them.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Wellington to Stuart, 24 April 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 373-5.

¹⁴⁰ Wellington to Stuart, 30 April 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 385.

¹⁴¹ Wellington to Stuart, 9 May 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 396-8.

On this question, and the related one of the libellous press in the Netherlands, Wellington took a stance that was based on the rights and duties of nations and statesmen within the international system. He was not reactionary either in outlook or in his actions, but instead was focused on ensuring fairness and realism in his suggestions. Writing to Castlereagh, the Duke told him how he ‘found all parties so warm, [on the question of the libels] that I thought it best to give in a memorandum to the Conference of Ministers, in which I have reviewed all that has passed upon it, and recommended one or two practical measures’. He noted how ‘[t]he King and the Duc de Richelieu are a good deal softened, and so are the foreign ministers, who wanted to erect themselves into a Power’. In this, Wellington was very much in line with British interests and placed his actions over this firmly within the wider context of Castlereagh’s foreign policy through to his death in 1822. The Duke was still aware that while the principles being advanced needed to be opposed, it was still necessary to take some practical steps to ‘put a curb upon the neck of rebels and traitors who have collected in’ the Netherlands.¹⁴² In all of this Castlereagh was in agreement with Wellington. He wrote in reply that he would ‘neglect no means to awaken the government of the Netherlands to the danger, I should rather say to the ruin, they will sooner or later bring upon themselves, if they do not cease in time to make their press and their territory the instruments of general mischief’. Interestingly, highlighting the gap that existed between Britain and the continent even in this early stage after the end of the war, the Foreign Secretary continued, ‘*We* may offend by our constitutional licence, because we have the sea for our frontier; but such a state as the Netherlands will never be tolerated in doing so’. Furthermore, ‘I quite agree with you [...] that Prince Metternich’s despatch on this question is very ill considered, and that the Allied Ministers must be very cautious of obeying his summons’.¹⁴³ The battle over these issues would rumble on into the next year, until Wellington finally succeeded in securing a satisfactory settlement.¹⁴⁴

Another question that was came before Wellington to help settle was that of Italian duchies. Formally the Kingdom of Etruria before their annexation by Napoleon,

¹⁴² Wellington to Castlereagh, 30 Aug. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 471. Wellington’s memorandum on the Libels published in the Low Countries, 29 Aug. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 464-9.

¹⁴³ Castlereagh to Wellington, 6 Sept. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 481-2.

¹⁴⁴ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 111.

they had been ruled by a branch of the Spanish Bourbons in compensation for their earlier loss of the Duchy of Parma. In 1814 they were granted to Marie Louise, the Habsburg second wife of Napoleon, by the Treaty of Fontainebleau. This document, however, left the issue of her succession wide open and it was possible that Napoleon's son, the King of Rome, could succeed his mother. The Spaniards opposed this and, keen to secure the reversion of the duchies back to the Bourbons once more, had refused to ratify the Treaty of Vienna as it did not settle this question to their satisfaction.

This remained the state of the question when Wellington was brought in by Lord Castlereagh to speak to the Spanish ambassador in August 1816. Wellington observed to the Marquis de Labrador that 'he must be aware that it would be quite impossible for the King of Spain either to obtain his objects in Italy, or to place himself on the same footing with the Allies in relation to France, till he should have signed and ratified the Treaty of Vienna, and should have acceded to the Treaty of Paris'. In this, Wellington and Labrador embarked from quite different starting points. Whereas the Duke believed that only once the treaties had been signed could the duchies become a subject of negotiation, and that 'till that was done it appeared impossible to attain them', Labrador believed that there needed to be 'some security for the attainment of his objects' before he could take the step of signing them'.¹⁴⁵ The Duke's view was the only one that could be proceeded with and Wellington wrote to Castlereagh how Labrador 'will sign if he gets an assurance from us that he is to have [the duchies]; that is, he will believe what we say, but not anybody else'.¹⁴⁶ Castlereagh was clear 'that *we* have done our best to settle the point in their favour' but that the British government could not consider itself bound in its support on the question and that 'there is certainly no motive for pledging ourselves blindly to such a government as that of Spain on any question, without reference to combinations and circumstances which the future may give birth, if the Allies cannot at the present moment be brought to agree in closing the question as we have proposed'.¹⁴⁷

In this question, as with so many others, Wellington was to play an important mediating role. Indeed, the instructions that Labrador had received from his

¹⁴⁵ Memorandum by Wellington, 25 Aug. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 461-3.

¹⁴⁶ Wellington to Castlereagh, 26 Aug. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 463.

¹⁴⁷ Castlereagh to Wellington, 6 Sept. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 481.

government enabling him to reach an agreement on the issue were such that they ‘compel him to terminate this question by a direct negotiation with’ Wellington personally.¹⁴⁸ The affair nevertheless dragged on into the summer of 1817. On Wellington’s return to Paris in June, he wrote to Castlereagh that ‘[u]pon my arrival here I found the question of the Italian Duchies ripe for discussion: indeed, they had all waited for my arrival to open the discussions’. Eventually an agreement was reached, based on Wellington’s earlier memorandum on the issue and Spain acceded to the Treaty of Vienna and the Second Peace of Paris.¹⁴⁹

These small episodes display the unprecedented position that Wellington occupied in the European system. The Duke himself was the closest that Europe came during this time to a formal system of arbitration. His prestige and standing amongst all parties of all shades allowed him to have a say over affairs that was without parallel. These years clearly demonstrate the importance of studying the Duke to have a full understanding of diplomacy of Europe following the Napoleonic Wars. They are also crucial context to Wellington’s return to domestic politics and the difficulties he would later face with both Canning and when Prime Minister. Having had such influence, and to have been so successful with a particular style of diplomacy, the transition to a more national role and to new styles of business would be a painful one, as will be explored below.

Commander-in-Chief of the Occupation II: Reducing the Army

Of course, for all his influence on diplomatic disputes, throughout these years his central role remained as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Occupation. In this capacity the issue of a reduction of the size of the army loomed increasingly large over the course of 1816 with Richelieu regularly pressing for it and citing the cost as an ‘unbearable burden on the French budget’.¹⁵⁰ In this question, as in so many others, the Great Powers looked to the Duke’s personal judgement to decide the matter.¹⁵¹ By October Richelieu was ‘urging in the strongest terms’ the need for it. At this stage, the

¹⁴⁸ Stuart to Wellington, 14 Oct. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 511.

¹⁴⁹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 5 June 1817, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 694-6.

¹⁵⁰ G. de Bertier de Sauvigny, *The Bourbon Restoration*, trans. L.M. Case (Philadelphia, 1966), p.153. Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 109.

¹⁵¹ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, pp. 111-2.

Duke was still very much against the idea, telling Stuart how he did ‘not think it would be expedient to make any reduction’ and certainly the Allies would not be willing ‘till they see what is the conduct of the Legislature in the approaching session’. He was not completely closed to reducing the numbers should the ambassadors feel that it would be ‘expedient’ that Richelieu could ‘announce a diminution of expense’.¹⁵² The great woman of letters, and friend of Wellington’s, Madame de Staël, also frequently harangued the Duke about a reduction of his forces. ‘If at the time of Charles II’, she wrote to him in December, ‘the regiments of Louis XIV had camped in Hyde Park would there have been one Englishman, whether a follower of Cromwell, the Puritans, or the Stuarts who would not have felt despair?’ She urged him to ‘[c]ome to us, then, come and become our liberator after having been our conqueror’.¹⁵³

Despite at the start of December reaffirming his earlier opposition to a reduction, only a few days later Wellington had changed his tack.¹⁵⁴ He told Castlereagh that his ‘opinion of the reduction as a practical measure is very much altered’. While previously he had seen it necessary ‘for the protection of the settlement’ and he certainly considered it a success in that regard, circumstances had changed. The fact that Richelieu’s government had little ‘real authority and strength’ and ‘incapacity or disinclination to give us protection’, when combined with an increasing number of scuffles between occupying soldiers made a complicated situation. Should it become necessary to ‘proceed to military execution’, something Wellington saw as ‘by no means improbable’, then ‘more harm would be done, and the cause of the King, and good government, and the world, would be thrown back further than can be imagined’. As a result of these factors, Wellington was beginning to move away from his earlier opposition to reduction, at this point advising that numbers should be brought down ‘only gradually’ due to the significant risks involved should they ever need to forcibly obtain supplies.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Wellington to Stuart, 13 Oct. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 507-8. Stuart confirmed Wellington’s view that there would be a disinclination to reduce the army until the Chambers had settled the financial arrangements. Stuart to Wellington, 14 Oct. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 511.

¹⁵³ Mme de Staël to Wellington, 1 Dec. 1816, in *The Unpublished Correspondence of Madame de Staël and the Duke of Wellington*, ed. V. de Pange, transl. H. Kurtz (London, 1965), p. 41 and *passim* for their correspondence on the matter.

¹⁵⁴ Wellington to Stuart, 3 Dec. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, p. 562.

¹⁵⁵ Wellington to Castlereagh, 11 Dec. 1816, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 571-3.

By the second week of January 1817 he had finished his conversion to the necessity of a reduction. Wellington ‘reviewed the issue from a statesman's point of view rather than from a commander's’.¹⁵⁶ The Army of Occupation had been established with a view towards both the internal security of France and Louis XVIII and as a ‘temporary security’ of the Allied powers’ territories, peoples and treaties. By the time he was writing though, ‘[t]he measure of the occupation of a part of France [...] is no longer considered necessary for the interests of France herself, but is represented as a disgraceful condition imposed by the conquerors on the conquered, unjustifiable in its objects, and the expense of which is as intolerable as the measure is disgraceful to the French people’. Thus, it seemed as though ‘the system of occupation, however still necessary for all the objects for which it had first been adopted, might no longer be one of peace’. The negotiation of a new loan for the French government, relieving the necessity of using force to procure succours, was a crucial factor in allowing a reduction under these circumstances. Though still acutely conscious of the risks of lowering the number of soldiers, given how thinly they were spread out over the zone of occupation, Wellington nevertheless conceded the reduction of the army by 30,000 men, proportionally from each contingent. Furthermore, ‘the French government shall make it known to the public in the manner most likely to produce a favourable effect on the public mind’.¹⁵⁷ This Richelieu duly did in a statement to the Chamber of Deputies on 10 February 1817, thus accomplishing ‘a major objective of his government’.¹⁵⁸

As a final point of note on the reduction of the Army of Occupation was the principle he chose to apply of a proportional deduction from all, and the minor battle he had to fight to achieve it. The challenge was opened by the King of Württemberg, but behind it was Russia. The King proposed that he would withdraw his entire contingent, and the Russian General Woronzoff informed the Duke that Russia hoped to avoid withdrawing any. The idea to remove the contingents of all the smaller nations entirely, leaving only those of the Great Powers, received some backing from Richelieu who regarded the presence of states such as Württemberg as incompatible with France’s status as a major nation. However, Wellington opposed this scheme. As

¹⁵⁶ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 114.

¹⁵⁷ Memorandum of a note on the reduction of the Army of Occupation, 9 Jan. 1817, in *WSD*, vol. XI, pp. 589-94.

¹⁵⁸ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 116 & 119.

Veve has argued, the Duke ‘recognized that if peace was a goal of all European nations, then all nations had to make an investment in security’. Indeed, he ‘perceived the important role of all of the allied contingents in the accomplishment of his army's mission of achieving tranquillity inside France’. Preventing a permanent presence of Russian soldiers in Western Europe was no doubt an added bonus for the Duke, despite the fact that to have retained only the troops of Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia would have probably provided a more coherent fighting force should it have been required.¹⁵⁹

Once the reduction in troops had been conceded, it began to look increasingly like the full force would be withdrawn at the minimum three year period, rather than the full five that had been allowed for. Before that could be achieved, however, some kind of agreement would have to be reached on the reparations France owed to the allies. As so often throughout these years, it was to the Duke they looked to come to some kind of equitable settlement for all the parties involved. In October 1817, Tsar Alexander wrote to Wellington asking him to take up the gauntlet of looking at the problem in its fullest scope.¹⁶⁰ In January 1818 this was supported by the Prussian, Austrian and Saxon governments.¹⁶¹

Simultaneously, Wellington also had a significant hand in the negotiations of a new loan from Hope and Baring to the French government. The Duke had already been a crucial interlocutor in a loan of the previous year. At the time he had shown how he was capable of acting in the broader European interest, dismissing the attempts of Alexander Baring to try and get a better price out of the French government than Wellington thought justified.¹⁶² Though the negotiations for the loan and the reparations should have been separate, the overlap of personnel meant that they were ‘intertwined’.¹⁶³ Despite the continuing wealth of France, in light of the relative dearth of the government, the loan was viewed as necessary to be able to pay the debts to the

¹⁵⁹ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, pp. 118-9.

¹⁶⁰ Tsar Alexander to Wellington, 30 Oct. 1817, in *WSD*, vol. XII, p. 119.

¹⁶¹ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 139.

¹⁶² P. Ziegler, *The Sixth Great Power: Barings, 1762-1929* (London, 1988), p. 80.

¹⁶³ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 115.

allies.¹⁶⁴ These had originally been estimated to be in the region of two hundred million francs but their final total ended up an exorbitant 1,600 million francs.¹⁶⁵

In the end the Duke was successful in achieving both the agreement of a loan and the settling of the reparations at a reasonable level. The former was the most straightforward task. Wellington did find Baring at one point claiming that he was ‘much less sanguine in his expectations of permanent tranquillity in France, and much less eager to engage in French loans’, but this was merely a ploy or a passing disquiet.¹⁶⁶ By May 1818, Baring and Hope had agreed to contract a loan of 265 million francs.¹⁶⁷

The arbitration of the reparations would be a more challenging prospect thanks to the need to balance both the demands of the allied powers and the ability of France to pay. Wellington told Castlereagh that his plan for dealing with this was ‘first to ascertain what will really and ought to satisfy each nation’ which he proposed to do by getting detailed returns and following them up with discussions with the commissioners and ministers of the relevant powers. To follow this up ‘[a]fter having ascertained as nearly as I can what will satisfy everybody’, the Duke proposed to ‘negotiate with the French government to obtain that sum in the mode which will be most advantageous to the Allies, and least injurious to the other operations of the French government’.¹⁶⁸ In this Wellington was remarkably successful. Though the Prussians, who had the largest share of the claims, objected, the Duke’s decisions met with approval in general.¹⁶⁹ The final total of Continental claims Wellington put at 240 million francs – a fraction of the original estimate of 1,600 million.¹⁷⁰ Not that this reduction was unopposed by the French government who contested the interest on the sums owed. Wellington told Castlereagh how he thought ‘that both the King and his Ministers have behaved shabbily in this concern. The Ministers of the Allies have

¹⁶⁴ Ziegler, *Sixth Great Power*, p. 78. This was potentially a mistaken notion. The domestic part of the Hope-Baring loan was twelve times oversubscribed. Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, p. 155.

¹⁶⁵ Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, p. 155.

¹⁶⁶ Wellington to Liverpool, 15 Feb. 1815, Liverpool Mss., Loan MS 72, vol. 22, ff. 145-7 (also in *WSD*, vol. XII, pp. 287-9). The extensive correspondence between Wellington and Lord Liverpool on the subject of the negotiations with Baring can be found in the Liverpool Mss., in Loan MS 72, vol. 22.

¹⁶⁷ Ziegler, *Sixth Great Power*, p. 84.

¹⁶⁸ Wellington to Castlereagh, 15 Feb. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, pp. 289-90.

¹⁶⁹ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 180.

¹⁷⁰ Wellington to Castlereagh, 19 Apr. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, pp. 484-6; Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, pp. 154-5.

certainly come down as low as they can, or ought, and they all reckoned upon and have a right to the back interest'. Despite this the French sought to 'take advantage of the general eagerness to obtain a settlement to refuse any reasonable accommodation upon the question'.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, an accommodation was reached and a convention was signed on 25 April 1818 for 'Final Liquidation of Private Claims upon the French Government'.¹⁷² With that the prickly issue of the reparations was thus cleared by Wellington with minimal complications given the scale of the task that had faced him at the outset.

The final agreement on the question of reparations opened the way for the withdrawal of the Army of Occupation at the end of the minimum three year term at the end of 1818 that the Treaty of Paris had specified.¹⁷³ Not only did the French government press for this with increasing force, but more generally, the allied powers began to see the need for an early withdrawal.¹⁷⁴ Wellington was of this opinion, seeing that with France increasingly united in opposition to the occupation, to remain longer would undermine one of its chief purposes in maintaining domestic stability and tranquillity.¹⁷⁵ As he had told the cabinet, 'the continuation of the Occupation against the declared wish of the King and every political party in France would increase rather than diminish the danger'.¹⁷⁶ It was decided that a Congress would be called to settle these matters in a final form. Though there was some disagreement on what basis to convene it, a reflection of the tenuous and unclear grounds that the 'Congress System' was based on, by May 1818 it was eventually decided to call it on the basis of the Treaty of Paris. This thus enabled the Great Powers to exclude the lesser states, even those who had participated in the Army of Occupation.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 23 Apr. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, p. 491. Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 115-6.

¹⁷² Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, p. 139.

¹⁷³ 'The utmost extent of the duration of this military occupation is fixed at 5 years. It may terminate before that period if, at the end of 3 years, the Allied Sovereigns, after having, in concert with his Majesty the King of France, maturely examined their reciprocal situation and interests, and the progress which shall have been made in France in the re-establishment of order and tranquillity, shall agree to acknowledge that the motives which led them to that measure have ceased to exist'. Article V, Second Peace of Paris, in in *Key Treaties for the Great Powers*, vol. I, p. 132.

¹⁷⁴ Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, p. 155.

¹⁷⁵ Veve, *Wellington and the Army of Occupation*, pp. 150-1.

¹⁷⁶ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 135.

¹⁷⁷ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, pp. 180-1.

The Congress met from 30 September 1818 in the Prussian spa town of Aix-la-Chappelle. The final resting place of Charlemagne, the town was conveniently located close to Wellington's headquarters at Cambrai, as well as not capable of accommodating all the hangers-on that had flocked to Vienna – a major point in its favour, not that it stopped many from attempting to press their claims.¹⁷⁸ Many of the same faces from Vienna were there at Aix-la-Chappelle. Once again, Metternich took pride of place for Austria, assisted ably by Friedrich von Gentz who would reprise his role as Secretary to the Congress. Richelieu was the primary figure attending for France and Prince Hardenberg, Prussian Prime Minister represented Prussia alongside Wilhelm von Humboldt, Prince Wittgenstein and Count Bernstorff. Tsar Alexander was accompanied by a range of figures that represented the scope of his varied thinking – from the conservative Nesselrode, to the liberally minded Count Ioannis Kapodistrias (joint Russian foreign minister and future president of Greece), as well as the two ambassadors to London and Paris respectively Count Christopher Lieven (a figure of future significance to Wellington along with his wife, Countess Dorothea Lieven) and Pozzo di Borgo – the latter having been objected to by Castlereagh and Metternich.¹⁷⁹ Britain was represented by Castlereagh himself, alongside Lord Stewart, Castlereagh's half-brother and the British ambassador to Austria. Wellington, reflecting his European position, attended not as a British representative, but in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Occupation. This did not, however, prevent his close cooperation with Castlereagh and the Duke's 'loyalty and common-sense were to be of great assistance' to the Foreign Secretary, and their relationship at the Congress to be marked once more with 'a complete harmony of outlook [...] and never a shadow of jealousy or *amour propre*'.¹⁸⁰

The Congress revolved around the central question of France. This was made up of two parts, the simpler question of the removal of the occupation and the much more complex one of France's future relations with the other Great Powers, and her desire to be admitted to the Alliance to remove the stigma and appearance of being a

¹⁷⁸ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p.116; B.E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), pp. 325-7.

¹⁷⁹ Rumours had reached Castlereagh from Stuart in Paris that Pozzo had been propagating the idea of a Franco-Russian Alliance as a 'means to give his Court an exclusive influence in measures which ought only to be determined upon by the common consent of all the Parties of the Alliance'. Stuart to Castlereagh, 7 Sept. 1818, no. 356, de Rothesay Mss, Ms 6187, p. 101.

¹⁸⁰ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 131.

lesser power. This was certainly not a matter without significant dangers. Prior to the start of the Congress, the Duke had been endeavouring to find out how France aimed to achieve her objective of admittance. The Austrian ambassador to Paris had speculated that the Tsar could well be ‘disposed to break up the Quadruple Alliance, and to connect himself immediately with France and the other Sovereigns of the House of Bourbon’.¹⁸¹ To this end the French government proposed to admit the King of Spain to the Congress, who would aid in the reorientation of the Alliance. Wellington took exception to this mode of proceeding when informed of it by Richelieu. The consequence would be ‘very inconvenient’ and ‘render all the operations of the Conference impracticable hereafter’. While the minor states ‘might submit to be led by the four Great Powers, who had made the greatest sacrifices during the war, together with France’ they would not accept the addition of ‘a Power such as Spain introduced into the councils of the Alliance’.¹⁸² This blunt statement was a reflection on how the fundamental power relationships that underpinned the international system had shifted, widening the gap between the greatest of the European states and the lesser members of the international system. Over this barrier, concerns such as dynastic feelings, as well as diplomatic positioning for self-interest by drawing on them, could not prevail.

The first part of the French question, the removal of the Army of Occupation, was dealt with very swiftly. On only the second day of the Congress the allies had signed a protocol agreeing to the evacuation and within days the Duke was writing to Lord Bathurst noting that given ‘we are so far advanced in our affairs, that I think it best to lose no time to write to you about shipping’ the stores, soldiers and horses back to Britain.¹⁸³ The question of France’s relationship to the Alliance was a more difficult one. As Nesselrode and Kapodistrias put it in a memorandum to the British delegates, the ‘double problème’ was with ‘la France étant évacuée par les troupes étrangères, de quelle manière garantir l’Europe de deux grands dangers, du retour des révolutions, et du droit du plus fort?’ The Russian ministers proposed that the Congress should come to an agreement on what the *casus foederis* of the alliance would be, as well as announcing that the ‘general alliance’, i.e. that of the Vienna Final Act, rather than

¹⁸¹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 24 Aug. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, p. 656.

¹⁸² Wellington to Castlereagh, 28 Aug. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, p. 665.

¹⁸³ Wellington to Bathurst, 5 Oct. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, p. 726. Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 184.

just the Quadruple Alliance, was based on ‘the solidarity of all legitimate sovereigns and guarantee[d] to all states their existing territories and governments’.¹⁸⁴

The disagreements that arose out of this matter were an important turning point in the international system and foreshadowed the numerous disputes between Britain and the continental powers that would arise over the following years. The fundamental difference between the nature of the British state, founded as it was, at least in the minds of many of her politicians, with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and the Russian proposal to guarantee all thrones against revolution necessitated that Castlereagh would have to oppose it. It would have been impossible for him to have carried the cabinet, let alone the House of Commons, along with him in such a wide vision of the role of the Alliance and the Congress System. Indeed, George Canning was quite adamant in his opposition within cabinet to even a minor extension of its scope. ‘He thinks that system of periodical meetings of the four great Powers, with a view to the general concerns of Europe, new, and of very questionable policy; that it will necessarily involve us deeply in all the politics of the Continent, whereas our true policy has always been not to interfere except in great emergencies, and then with a commanding force’.¹⁸⁵

The Duke of Wellington was an important assistant to Castlereagh in this dispute. It was together that the two Britons were able to overcome the arguments in favour of the wider system. ‘The Russian Ministers were unable to resist an onslaught from adversaries so experienced and determined as Castlereagh and Wellington’.¹⁸⁶ Lord Stewart commented on the massive difficulties faced at the congress and that ‘had it not been for the unwearied labour of my brother and the Duke of Wellington, their repeated conferences with the Emperor personally, it is evident that no progress would have been made’.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Enclosed within Nesselrode & Kapodistrias to Wellington, 8 Oct. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, pp. 743-51; Nesselrode & Kapodistrias, 14 Oct. 1818, in *WSD*, vol. XII, pp. 770-773. Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 185.

¹⁸⁵ Bathurst to Castlereagh, 20 Oct. 1818, in *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers of Viscount Castlereagh Second Marquess of Londonderry*, ed. Marquess of Londonderry, vol. XII, (London, 1853), p. 56. See also, Bathurst to Castlereagh, 23 Oct. 1818, in *ibid.*, pp. 60-1.

¹⁸⁶ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 152; Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 186.

¹⁸⁷ Stewart to Liverpool, private, 20 Oct. 1818, in *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, Late First Lord of the Treasury*, ed. C. D. Yonge, vol. II (London, 1868), p.

Aside from the disputes over the Alliance, and the more procedural elements of the removal of the Army of Occupation, the Duke of Wellington had one other question where he played a significant role – the question of the rebelling Spanish American colonies. The matter of Spanish America and its fate would form an important part of his later career and will be considered elsewhere. In relation to discussion of it at the Congress though, the Duke once again found himself at the centre of European affairs and representing more than just British interests. The rebellious colonies represented an intractable problem for European diplomacy, and one that sat at the centre of many strands, from issues of the rights of the alliance and non-interventionism to matters of sea power and dynastic politics. Importantly, Spain had been a fertile field for Russian intrigues during the course of the previous years and Castlereagh had built up a deep reserve of suspicions of Russian intentions at the Congress relating to this question. It was thanks to the ‘extraordinary frank speaking in which Castlereagh and Wellington were able to indulge’ with the Tsar that these fears were dispelled.¹⁸⁸ With the air clear, Castlereagh was surprised by Alexander’s next move which was to suggest that Wellington should be sent to Spain as the representative of the five Great Powers to preside over an ambassadorial conference on the matter. Not only was this idea backed by France but it was thought that even the United States, a concerning unknown in the question of the colonies, could attend.¹⁸⁹ For Wellington once more to be proposed by the continental powers for such an important task demonstrates the extent his service had transformed him into something more than just a British statesman, especially as this would have been a task completely unrelated to the military. He was certainly no longer a mere soldier. In the end the Duke declined the offer. His grounds, that it would be impossible to properly represent the rebellious colonists, reflected the pragmatism that guided his attitude to diplomatic questions.¹⁹⁰

The period from the end of the fighting in 1814 to the end of Wellington’s active military roles in 1818 established some of the patterns for the Duke’s later career. Over this time, he made the transition to a British, and European, statesman of

349. See Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, pp. 184-197 for a fuller discussion of the complex dispute over the purpose and differing interpretations of the Alliance and the Congress System.

¹⁸⁸ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 167.

¹⁸⁹ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 200.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

the first rank. His official situation understated his influence. While technically subordinate to the Paris Ambassadorial Conference, Wellington dominated them while in charge of the Army of Occupation. Throughout this time, only Castlereagh had a similar influence amongst British politicians in relation to the monarchs and ministers of Europe. Domestically, Wellington cemented his influential role in the formulation of foreign policy – one that was, in some respects, a broadly liberal policy, as his interventions over the constitutional question in Spain and his support for the abolition of the slave trade demonstrate. Moreover, it was clearly one in line with the European focus of Castlereagh. At all times his style of diplomacy was a pragmatic one. It was geared towards broad British and European aims, more of the realm of geopolitics than of concern for constitutional systems and models. He was not driven by the British domestic press, and thought it more a nuisance than the authentic manifestation of the voice of the nation. He was by no means a reactionary, nor did he want to return Europe to the days of before the French Revolution but he did not subscribe unquestioningly to the *zeitgeist* of the day. This year also established some of the outlines of the foreign politics that Wellington would have to deal with for the next two decades. The Duke and Castlereagh had to grapple with a potential threat from France, and the revolution more specifically, and a very real threat from Russia. These two states would dominate his concerns for a long time to come.

This period would also establish some of the more personal strengths and problems of Wellington's future career. Not only was the Duke's foreign policy a European one, but he became himself a European institution. He personally formed a prop of the Vienna System. Thus the Tsar could insist on him as the *sine qua non* of the Army of Occupation, and thus it was to him personally the Great Powers looked to solve difficult problems such as the question of reparations or mediation between Spain and her colonies. This very importance, and exalted position he would occupy, would in future give rise to issues at home. A personification of the Congress System, of the personal methods of diplomacy that prevailed in the immediate post-war years, as they began to lessen so would his influence. Formed as a diplomat by habits of intimacy and influence at the highest levels, once Castlereagh had died the assumptions he held from this time would make him a difficult and quarrelsome colleague on foreign policy questions as will be explored below.

A Friend and a Rival:

Wellington, Castlereagh and Canning 1819-27

From his entry into the cabinet upon his return from France in 1819 through to his resignation from it in 1827, the Duke of Wellington would occupy a central role in the formulation of its decisions. This was most clearly evident with regard to British foreign policy. His influence on this was exercised in remarkably different ways over the course of this period. While Castlereagh was at the Foreign Office, Wellington worked in unison with a friend and comrade-in-arms, who shared both similar experiences and understandings of the international system and the leaders of the other powers. As the previous chapter has shown, they were a formidable partnership and Wellington would be a crucial ally to the Foreign Secretary in a cabinet where few others shared their view points. In comparison, the Duke's relationship with George Canning could not have been more different. Though he played an important role in securing Canning's appointment as Castlereagh's replacement in 1822, Wellington would have a fractious relationship with the new minister. Indeed, their conflicts within the government almost brought it down as resignation threats were bandied about at various times. Far from the amicable relationship he had with Castlereagh, the Duke would instead act as a break on Canning, and led a substantial portion of the cabinet who were mistrustful of the latter's policies. This chapter will be composed of three parts that explore Wellington's role in British foreign policy over these years. The first will look at the Duke from his entry to the cabinet through to Castlereagh's suicide in August 1822. The second will examine Wellington's diplomatic mission to Vienna and the Congress of Verona as Castlereagh's replacement before the last will examine the Duke and Canning's foreign policy from 1823 to 1827. This will focus in particular on the broader rivalry between the two and the interrelated questions of

Spain, Portugal and the recognition of Spain's lost colonies before the next chapter will turn to look at the Eastern Question in more depth.

Wellington and Castlereagh 1819-22

When Wellington finally entered cabinet in 1819 after the end of the occupation of France and his return from the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, it was once again as a statesman, not as a politician. Of course, as has been seen, Wellington's influence was far more than that of a mere general. Since the end of the war, few major decisions on military or diplomatic questions had been taken without his input or advice, and his role in the wider European diplomacy had been substantial. Throughout he had occupied an ambiguous role, somewhat above the usual norms. This was clearly the case when he attended the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle not as a British representative but as a European one for the Army of Occupation. Upon joining Lord Liverpool's administration officially, it was also with a similar ambiguity – on the condition that he did not have to follow the line of the government:

I don't doubt that the party of which the present Gov[ernmen]t are the head will give me credit for being sincerely attached to them & their Interests; but I hope that in case any circumstance should occur to remove them from Power they will allow me to consider myself at Liberty to take any Line I may at the time think proper. The experience which I have acquired during my long Service abroad has convinced me that a factious opposition to the Gov[ernmen]t is highly injurious to the Interests of the Country; & think as I do now I could not become a party to such an opposition; and I wish that this may be clearly understood by the Persons with whom I am now about to engage as a Colleague in Gov[ernmen]t.

Wellington was aware that this might not be a popular stance to take, noting that it might 'render me less eligible as a colleague', and if that is the case then he would happily relinquish the offer with no hard feelings ' & I can only assure you that you will ever find me equally disposed as you have always found me to render you every Service & assistance in my Power'.¹ The administration desperately needed the injection of Wellington's prestige to support them and Liverpool acquiesced in the Duke's conditions, noting: 'that there are many special circumstances in y[ou]r situation which render it of the utmost importance in the event to w[hi]ch you refer

¹ Wellington to Liverpool, 1 Nov. 1818, Liverpool Mss., Loan Ms. 72, vol. 22, f. 184.

that you sh[oul]d be at full Liberty to adopt that line of Conduct which you may at that time judge most proper & advisable with a view to the Country & to yourself'.² While the principle of collective responsibility was still not fully developed at this time, it was nevertheless a large degree of latitude that Wellington was given, and it is noteworthy the implied extent that he considered himself above party politics.³ This has been linked to the prevailing Pittite distrust of party politics, unlike the opinions held within the Whigs, but it was still a strongly worded statement of Wellington's unique position within British politics, unlike that required from other figures.⁴

Upon entering the cabinet, Wellington did not hold himself aloof from his colleagues. Swiftly, the Duke was collaborating with Castlereagh and together they formed a clearing house for questions of foreign policy before being brought to the whole cabinet.⁵ As John Bew has pointed out: 'Castlereagh greatly valued the support of Wellington, whose military reputation had never been higher but whose experience of Paris as an ambassador was also invaluable to him. Wellington's underrated political skills were a theme to which Castlereagh would return many times in later years in admiration'.⁶ The Duke's time in France was such that he had far more experience than any other figure with the politics of that country. Wellington was especially qualified to comment on the long-held suspicions of the ambassadorial conference, and its determination to extend its remit. Castlereagh asked for his thoughts on the ambitions of Russia and Austria for the conference, which, in his mind, 'is nothing more than a project of Pozzo's for establishing himself as a sort of European director at Paris, and it really appears to me to be an inevitable result from blowing up the confederacy in the shortest time possible'.⁷

Wellington had distinct views on what the roles of the ambassadors in Paris should be and on what direction France should take. At a time of turmoil and unrest across Europe, including in Britain herself, the allies had to tread a careful line. The fall of the Richelieu ministry in Paris, and its replacement by a liberal one under the

² Liverpool to Wellington, 9 Nov. 1818, Liverpool Mss., Loan Ms. 72, vol. 22, ff. 186-7.

³ A. Aspinall, *The Cabinet Council, 1783-1835*, Proceedings of the British Academy (London, 1952), pp. 214-24.

⁴ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 121-2.

⁵ Castlereagh to Wellington, 6 Feb. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/617/15 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 26-7).

⁶ Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 408.

⁷ Castlereagh to Wellington, 11 Sept. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/631/9 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 75-6).

King's favourite Élie-Louis, Comte Decazes, awoke fears of future French conduct, and whether they would even adhere to the line of foreign policy agreed only months before at Aix-la-Chapelle. On the future of France, Wellington would play a strong supporting role to the diplomacy of Castlereagh. Though the Foreign Secretary instructed Sir Charles Stuart of the impolicy of interference in French affairs in March 1819, much of his time was absorbed by a difficult session in Parliament, and as a result he was 'relying on Wellington's influence to help him with the French'.⁸ In this, the Duke was perfectly placed to aid him thanks to the connections he had established over the previous three years with leading politicians and the foreign ambassadors. Already in January he had been writing to the Neapolitan ambassador to France cautioning of the danger of the French government looking for popularity in breaking with the allies, but that the allied ambassadors should not separate themselves too far from them.⁹ This stance would encapsulate his policy, and British diplomacy, over the following months.

In April Wellington responded to the letters of Decazes warning how the conduct of France was necessarily of great interest to the rest of Europe.¹⁰ '[A]vec la même franchise, avec laquelle jadis je vous parlais', the Duke told Decazes that, '[l]a triste expérience vous a appris qu'aucune nation du monde ne peut être tranquille si la France ne l'est pas'. Furthermore, 'malgré qu'il soit de notre devoir à tous de tenir un silence respectueux sur tout ce qui se passes chez notre voisin, il nous est impérieux de bien connaître les choses, et de les juger pour notre propre intérêt'. In addition to stressing the concern with which affairs in France would be viewed, Wellington also told the French minister that he had warned the allied ambassadors in Paris that they had no right to pass judgement on the conduct of the French government. For them to do so would just aggravate French feelings towards the allied powers with ill consequences.¹¹ Wellington was convinced of the importance of what happened in France for the wider world. The following year he wrote to the Austrian ambassador

⁸ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 204.

⁹ '[...] je conseillerais aux ministres étrangers qui se trouvent à Paris, en même temps qu'ils ne se mêleront guères des questions intérieures, de ne pas se séparer trop du gouvernement et du ministère'. Wellington to Principe di Castelcicala, 15 Jan. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/616/14 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 13-15).

¹⁰ Decazes to Wellington, 4 Apr. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/623/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 53-4); Decazes to Wellington, 4 Apr. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/623/5 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 54-5).

¹¹ Wellington to Decazes, 19 Apr. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/622/24 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 55-7).

saying that ‘car vraiment la tranquillité du monde, et le sûreté, et la stabilité de l’ordre sociale en Europe depend sur ce qui se passe en France beaucoup plus qu’on ne le pense dans les salons de Paris’.¹²

The Russian ambassador to Paris, Pozzo di Borgo, did not agree with Wellington’s advice for how the allies should act. In his mind, what was happening in France and the rest of Europe was a struggle for the future of the continent. Pozzo told the Duke: ‘qu’il est impossible de rester neutres dans la lutte entre le bien et le mal’. At the present time there was a ‘fédération du bien contre celle du mal’. The danger would come from timidity and not acting with decision. In Pozzo’s mind ‘[J]e suis convaincu que le seul frein des méchants est la crainte de l’intervention étrangère’.¹³ This was very different advice to that which Wellington had given Decazes. Though the Duke concurred with the Corsican as to the risks of French actions, he had a fundamentally different point of view on the role the allies should play. While it was true that the French feared foreign intervention, it also meant ‘ces cris résonneraient ailleurs, et paralyseraient les efforts de l’alliance; et on trouverait trop tard peut-être que le défaut de force morale que donne la justice dans toutes les causes avait faire manquer son but à l’intervention Européenne’. For Wellington ‘[j]e ne vois de remède à tout ceci que d’abord l’union, et puis la patience et la sagesse’.¹⁴ Only through a careful marshalling of the moral superiority of the allies could they preserve their strength and unity to be able to use it at the decisive moment, when revolution and war really did threaten the order of Europe.¹⁵

The role and attitudes Wellington took during the first months of 1819 are important indicators of his wider position. The Duke was Castlereagh’s key lieutenant. It is to Wellington the Foreign Secretary was looking to help advance his foreign policy objectives, even more than many of his diplomats. Wellington’s close intimacy with the key ambassadors in Paris, as well as the statesmen of Europe, gave his

¹² Wellington to Vincent, 12 Feb. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/640/11 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 95-6).

¹³ Pozzo di Borgo to Wellington, 10 May 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/624/10 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 60-2).

¹⁴ Wellington to Pozzo di Borgo, 18 May 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/626/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 65-7).

¹⁵ Wellington also stressed this view point to the Austrian ambassador to Paris. Wellington to Vincent, 2 June 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/626/7 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 69-71). See A. Sked, ‘Metternich’s Enemies or the Threat from Below’ in Sked (ed.) *Europe’s Balance of Power, 1815-1848* (London, 1979), pp. 164-89 for a good overview of the threats to the order of Europe.

opinions a great deal of weight and could support British diplomatic initiatives in a frank and private way that was unachievable in formal diplomatic correspondence. Yet this position hinged on his cooperation with Castlereagh. Without the open and frank exchange of views that their relationship was based on, Wellington's position was a potentially troublesome one for the British government, as will be seen below. But while Castlereagh still occupied the Foreign Office, this was all in the future. At this stage Wellington was happily passing on to the Foreign Secretary his correspondence with the continent. For example, he forwarded to Castlereagh a letter from Metternich on the status of the Italian fortifications, then under construction, that would complement those in the United Netherlands under Wellington's own supervision.¹⁶ As Europe's leading military figure, it was a matter of interest to all the allies to ensure that Wellington was informed of such details.

In this time of turmoil across Europe, it is worth emphasising that Wellington's outlook remained one of careful pragmatism. As before in 1814 when he recommended a conciliatory constitutionalism to Ferdinand VII, or in 1815 when he helped force Talleyrand and Fouché on Louis XVIII, Wellington remained well aware of the need to avoid slipping into a close-minded reaction. While congratulating Baron Vincent, Austrian ambassador to Paris, on the efforts of Metternich in Germany, the Duke also made the telling statement that 'soyez sûr qu'en politique il n'y a rien de stable que ce qui convient aux intérêts de tout le monde; et qu'il faut regarder un peu plus loin que soi-même'.¹⁷ Commenting on the events of Spain where a constitutionalist revolt was making inroads against the Crown, Wellington wrote to his friend Alava that '[c]omme vous le savez, je n'aime pas beaucoup les républiques, et surtout pas *la Constitution Española*; mais je préférerois [sic] mille fois la réussite de la révolte et l'établissement de *la Constitution*, à la capitulation du Roi!'¹⁸ It was necessary to avoid extremes. While always a conservative, concerned with the maintenance of the existing aristocratic social order across Europe, Wellington was

¹⁶ Wellington to Castlereagh, 4 Apr. 1819, enclosing a letter from Metternich to Wellington, 15 Feb. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/622/14 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 51-2).

¹⁷ Wellington to Vincent, 12 Feb. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/640/11 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 95-6).

¹⁸ Wellington to Alava, 21 Feb. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/640/21 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 98-101).

nonetheless very conscious that a careful and consensual line needed to be followed to ensure stability and avoid the bloodshed and horrors of revolution.

Though Wellington had predicted to Alava that the revolution in Spain would end with the soldiers deserting the rebelling officers, this faith proved misplaced. In March 1820 the rebels seized control of the government and forced Ferdinand VII to make the very concession that Wellington had spoken of: the proclamation of the Constitution of 1812. As Schroeder has described it, '[t]he revolution thus became an attempt by the military to impose a bourgeois constitutional monarchy on an unwilling sovereign and a backward country without the benefit of mass support or a viable middle class'.¹⁹ The events in Spain shocked Europe. Combined with the murder of the Duc d'Berri, nephew of Louis XVIII and second in line to the throne, in France and the discovery of the Cato Street Conspiracy to murder the cabinet in Britain, a dangerous revolutionary wave seemed to be threatening the continent. Even before news of the concession of the 1812 constitution had arrived, the Tsar was urging the other powers to discuss the question of Spain.²⁰ British interests were of course directly affected by what was happening in the Peninsula. Given the area's immense strategic importance, Britain could not look on with disinterest at the prospect of the intervention of another Great Power. A French attempt to use their family influence with Ferdinand was defeated by the intervention of Sir Charles Stuart in Paris, and Sir Henry Wellesley in Madrid.²¹

Wellington's intimate knowledge of Spain from his time there during the war once again made him an important international figure. In early March he was writing to the Duc de Richelieu, recently returned to office following the assassination of Berri. Demonstrating his European loyalties and obligations, Wellington assured the French minister of his backing and support.

Vous pouvez compter sur moi si je peux vous être utile à quelque chose. Non-seulement je suis attaché sincèrement au Roi et à la famille Royale, et je desire très fort que vous puissiez réussir dans tout ce que vous entreprendrez pour les bien établir en France, mais je ne prévois que le chaos pour le monde si ce qui est établi à presente ne puisse pas se consolider.

¹⁹ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, p. 608.

²⁰ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 227.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Moving onto the vexed question of Spain, the Duke observed how the revolution lacked popular support, and was unlikely to gain it, unless pushed to it by foreign intervention. Yet he also noted how the King lacked contact with the wider population as well, as everything went through military. Nevertheless, he told Richelieu that ‘[e]n mon opinion, les Puissances de l’Europe ne peuvent que rester neutres dans cette affaire’. To do otherwise would mean ‘[d]’abord le peuple Espagnol se tournera contre celui qui appellera les étrangers’. Added to this ‘la voix populaire est partout si forte contre le Roi Ferdinand, surtout en France et en Angleterre, que les efforts que les gouvernemens [sic] pourraient faire en sa faveur deviendraient à peu près nuls’.²² Later that month, the Duke would write to Richelieu how ‘ce qui est arrivé en Espagne est un triomphe pour le parti du désordre’ after news had reached London of the surrender of the King.²³

Wellington would have a much larger role to play in shaping the international reaction to the revolution in Spain than just proffering advice to Richelieu, however. No statesman in any of the Great Powers had anywhere near a comparable knowledge of the Peninsula or could speak with anything like the same authority on the subject. His belief that not only was intervention a bad idea in principle but also practically would be an essential part of the efforts of those trying to prevent it. The Duke laid out his objections in a memorandum of 16 April 1820. Ranging from the rights and obligations of the powers, to the situation in Spain through to the prospects of a military intervention, Wellington demonstrated a firm grasp of all the details. For him, the key question was ‘whether it is possible for the powers of Europe to interfere in these affairs at the present moment’. Importantly, he noted that ‘these powers must be called upon by some authority in the state, to effect some object upon some desired principle’ but the ambassadors in Spain had very little idea of what was going on and there was no ‘authority existing which could afford him such information’. Given that ‘[i]t appears then that even if interference on the part of the powers of Europe was disireable, [sic] it is at present impossible; but I will go farther and endeavour to establish as a principle that no foreign power ought to interfere in this case’. For Wellington, ‘[t]here is no country in Europe in the affairs of which foreigners can

²² Wellington to Richelieu, 13 Mar. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/642/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 104-7).

²³ Wellington to Richelieu, 24 Mar. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/642/6 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 107-8).

interfere with so little advantage as in those of Spain' [...] 'The pride and prejudice of the Spaniards, their virtues as well as their faults, are brought into action at every moment and in every transaction, and all tend to give them an exaggerated [sic] notion of their own powers and to depreciate foreigners'. Using a number of examples from his own experience, the Duke set out to show how hostile the Spanish people were to even the friendly interference of Britain during the course of the wars. Moving on to the matter of a hostile intervention, that of France, Wellington wrote how '[i]t is true that [the] result of the war may in part be attributed to the operations of the allied armies in the Peninsula. But these would form a very erroneous notion of the fact who should not attribute a fair proportion of it to the effects of the enmity of the peoples of Spain.' Despite the overwhelming superiority of numbers, 'the French government had no authority excepting on the spot on which their troops stood'. The result of this was that out of the 600,000 troops Napoleon had sent in, only 100,000 came out in any way like an army, and even then they were mostly without cannons or baggage.

Wellington then moved on to the question of 'with what force of what nation and from what quarter would we carry on our operations supposing such interference to be determined upon'. France, in his mind, was an impossibility. 'The circumstances of the late war are still too fresh in the memory of every man in Spain, and there is not an arm in that country which would not be raised against a French army'. Though this prediction was to be proved false only a few years later, the intervening circumstances of rule under the constitution helped highlight how large the gulf really was between the people of Spain and the minority supporting it. In the spring of 1820, however, this was by no means clear. If not France, then some other power would have to intervene, either through France, Portugal or via a landing in the Mediterranean. With Wellington convinced that the French government could not allow a German or Russian army to pass through it to undertake operations of this kind, it would fall to one of the other options and 'must be by means of a commanding force whether with a view to receive the support of the party in the country whose interests it is intended to maintain or to put down the adversary'. Yet the thinly populated nature of Spain, and the lack of resources on the ground would make it near impossible to collect such a force.

In short Spain is a country in which military operations must be carried on by a large force if it is intended they should be successful; and yet the country is so thinly peopled in proportion to its extent and it contains so few large towns that it is scarcely possible, and absolutely impossible without incurring an

enormous expense to keep such a force assembled, infinitely larger than that to be incurred in any other country for a force of the same strength and description.²⁴

While the Duke's contribution was not of the same sophistication as Castlereagh's famous State Paper of 5th May 1820, it was still of great importance.²⁵ Drawn up, along with the Foreign Secretary's, on the instructions of the cabinet, it formed a crucial adjunct to the State Paper.²⁶ Wellington's prestige, built to a large degree on service in the Peninsula, and his international standing more broadly, gave his voice added weight on this question. Webster has summarised Wellington's contribution as 'simply [...] that of a soldier. It did not discuss the political aspect of the problem or its connection with the obligations of the Alliance. This task was naturally reserved for Castlereagh himself, and in view of the attitude of his Allies it was necessary for him to take a much wider view of the question.'²⁷ To criticise the Duke's input on those terms is to misunderstand not only the Duke's relationship with the Foreign Secretary, but also how Wellington's influence could be best used to further the objectives of British foreign policy. Standing above the maelstrom of party politics, or at least cultivating the image of appearing to, and also with the international reputation that he had gained from 1814-18, the Duke was well placed to offer seemingly apolitical advice. By rooting it in his experiences, Wellington's memorandum was one that could construct a solid practical objection to the case for intervention in Spain. It both backed up what Castlereagh was arguing as well as offering an alternative basis for analysis should the Foreign Secretary's not be found effective. It was not a strategy that was found wanting. As Jarrett has argued, '[r]elying on advice offered by Wellington, Metternich contended that foreign arms simply could not succeed in suppressing a revolt in Spain. History had demonstrated that "foreign action has never either arrested or controlled the effects of a revolution"'.²⁸

The emphasis Wellington placed on the need to be called in to act rather than make that decision externally highlights an important thread in his thinking and that of Castlereagh and British foreign policy more generally. By stressing that the Great

²⁴ Memorandum on difficulties of military intervention in Spain, Wellington, 16 Apr. 1820, WP1/644/7 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 116-21).

²⁵ Castlereagh's State Paper, 5 May 1820, in *Foundations of British Foreign Policy From Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902)*, ed. H. Temperley & L. M. Penson (London, 1966), pp. 48-63.

²⁶ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, pp. 234-5.

²⁷ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 345.

²⁸ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 228.

Powers ‘must be called upon by some authority in the state, to effect some object upon some desired principle’ the Duke was reinforcing Castlereagh’s own argument about the purpose of the alliance and situating it within broader thoughts on international law.²⁹ The Foreign Secretary’s oft-quoted statement that ‘[i]t was however never intended as an Union for the Government of the World, or for the Superintendence of the Internal Affairs of other States’, while an important comment on the state of power relations in Europe, did not mark the withdrawal of Britain from the alliance.³⁰ It certainly was not ‘the end of that system of European co-operation which Castlereagh had done so much to promote’.³¹ As John Bew has argued, ‘[o]nce again one must avoid the temptation to conclude that Castlereagh was laying down abstract principles of conduct; the State Paper was very much conceived of as a response to the prospect of an allied intervention in Spain and to clear up any further ambiguities about how Britain saw the Continental alliance working in practice’.³² This applied also to Wellington, whose own views were dominated by the practical nature of diplomacy. The Duke’s emphasis on the need to be explicitly asked to act in Spain was grounded in an appreciation not only of Britain’s domestic situation but also the wider role of the alliance. As Esterházy reported to Metternich, ‘The British Cabinet wish, as the Duke of Wellington has often said to me, that the Alliance sleeps’.³³ This stance was not a universal rejection of intervention, or a step change in the Duke’s, Castlereagh’s or Britain’s views towards cooperation with the other Powers, but instead a practical analysis of the situation.

While foreign affairs would be pushed out of the picture in Britain for much of the rest of the year thanks to the crisis around Queen Caroline and her trial, the practical nature of Wellington’s and Castlereagh’s views would be reaffirmed in how they responded to the revolution in Naples and the proposed Austrian intervention. The Duke and the Foreign Secretary were both convinced of the necessity of swift action against the revolutionary government by Metternich. Unlike Spain, a nation that

²⁹ Castlereagh ‘made it clear that Britain’s guarantee to preserve the peace of Europe did “not apply to the question of authority now pending between Sovereign and subject” in that country. In the view of a later writer, this was a position which had its roots in Emmerich de Vattel’s 1758 treatise *The Law of Nations*. [T.P. Courtenay, ‘Foreign Policy of England: Lord Castlereagh’, in *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, vol. 8, (July 1831), pp. 33-60.]’, Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 482.

³⁰ Castlereagh’s State Paper, 5 May 1820, in *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, p. 54.

³¹ *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, p. 47.

³² Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 483.

³³ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 242.

did nothing to threaten the wider European system, the revolution in Naples could spread throughout the Italian peninsula and potentially undermine Austrian rule in Lombardy-Venetia. Crucially, however, there was a firm legal basis for Austrian intervention. After the deposition of Murat following the Hundred Days, Austria concluded a treaty of alliance with the returning Ferdinand of Sicily that guaranteed his throne. In return he promised that he would grant no constitution that did not have the prior approval of Austria.³⁴ This provided what was so lacking in the Spanish case, and explains the very different attitude that Wellington and Castlereagh took to the prospect of intervention. Indeed, the Duke told the Austrian *chargé d'affaires* Neumann in the immediate aftermath of the revolution 'that in his opinion there was not a moment to lose in suppressing the Neapolitan Revolution, and that [Austria] could now do with 80,000 men what we could not effect later with 200,000'.³⁵ The position of Wellington and Castlereagh was, as Esterházy wrote to Vienna, that '[t]he question should be treated as *special* rather than general; as *Italian* rather than European; and in consequence, as falling under the jurisdiction (*dominion*) of Austria rather than the alliance'.³⁶

Metternich could not act swiftly however, and he also could not view it as just a localised matter. Not only did he not have the necessary troops in Austrian Italy, but he was acutely aware of the difficulties that could arise in the diplomatic sphere through unilateral action. The Austrian foreign minister was 'loath to commit Austria while Russia remained free to interfere in Central Europe and while France might still emerge as the champion of the smaller Italian states'.³⁷ Furthermore, the precedent of unilateral action by a Great Power, even with clear legal rights, could set a potentially disastrous example for those two powers.³⁸ Action was therefore delayed as Metternich sought backing for Austrian intervention, the result being the Congresses of Troppau and Laibach that Britain attended merely as an observer.

³⁴ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, p. 569. See Vick, *Congress of Vienna*, pp. 250-2 for a revisionist interpretation of that clause that argues it was not as reactionary as has been portrayed.

³⁵ Neumann Diary, 25 July 1820, quoted in Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 173.

³⁶ Esterházy to Metternich, 20 Sept. 1820, quoted in Jarett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 237.

³⁷ Jarett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 236.

³⁸ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 173.

While the latter was still sitting, Wellington wrote an interesting letter to the Austrian ambassador to London, Prince Esterházy. In a startling demonstration of the sense of responsibility the Duke had as an advisor to all of Europe, even on matters that conflicted with the foreign policy of Britain, Wellington expounded to the ambassador his views on the occupation of France and his advice on what course Austria should follow in occupying Naples. The Duke told him:

Pour ce qui regarde l'occupation, je l'aurais fait durer pendant sept ans. La grande faute que nous avons faite en France est d'avoir stipulé l'occupation pour seulement cinq ans, en même temps que nous promettions de délibérer sur l'évacuation au bout de trois ans. Par l'effet de cette stipulation, et par la diminution de la force, 'occupation ne pouvait durer que trois ans. Elle aurait dû durer sept ans. Elle aurait donné le temps pour tout le monde, et surtout pour le Roi de France, de s'arranger chez lui; et elle aurait empêché quantité du mal qui est arrivé depuis qu'elle cessé.

Austria should not repeat this mistake in Naples. 'Ainsi je trouve que votre occupation de Naples est trop courte. Il aurait fallu qu'elle fût de sept ans. Il aurait été facile de l'arrêter au out de trois ou de cinq ans; mais ayant stipulé que sa durée ne serait que de trois ans, il n'est pas bien facile de la faire continuer pour cinq ou pour sept, si les circonstances le rendraient nécessaire.' Wellington further observed that King Ferdinand of Naples should have nothing to do with the command of the army of occupation. 'Il faut observer aussi que cette armée est celle des Puissances qui l'ont envoyées à Naples; qu'elle y est pour des objets Européens, et non pour ceux de Naples, à moins que ceux-ci consistent avec les premiers'.³⁹ The fact that the Duke could talk of the Austrian army in terms of pursuing European objects, when the British line was that it was solely a matter of Austrian interest and nothing to do with the wider alliance, is a remarkable demonstration of Wellington's position in international politics. As shown earlier over Spain, his advice was one that was listened to in the chancelleries of Europe. Continuing from his tenure as Commander-in-Chief, the Duke retained both sympathy and a residual obligation to the other Great Powers and saw it necessary to give his advice when asked, even when this was not compatible with the stance of the British government. While Castlereagh remained Foreign Secretary, this would not be a problem given the shared experiences and attitudes towards matters of foreign policy. As soon as another occupant was to fill

³⁹ Wellington to Esterházy, 28 Feb. 1821, Wellington Mss., WP1/662/28 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 160-2).

that office, however, more substantial issues would arise, and the differences that existed within the cabinet on diplomatic questions would become apparent, as will be seen below.

The division between the Duke's European role and his British and private one is revealed by his conversations with his close friend Harriet Arbuthnot the previous month on the discussions ongoing in Troppau. Wellington lamented to her that Britain 'had not a more efficient representative [...] than Lord Stewart, who had given great dissatisfaction by going constantly backwards & forwards to Vienna, & who has no influence whatever with the Sovereigns & ministers assembled there'. In marked contrast to his letter to Esterházy he told Mrs Arbuthnot how the allies 'have all sorts of wild schemes of establishing a general police all over Europe & sending the troops of one country to keep order in another'. For the Duke, 'any Englishman of good sense & conduct w[oul]d have been able to shew them the folly of such schemes'.⁴⁰ None of these thoughts were at all apparent in his letter the following month and hint of the dangers of taking Wellington's attitudes to foreign policy questions at face value without a thorough examination of his wider place within the broader British and European foreign policy elite.

Shortly after the revolution in Naples, Portugal became the next country to be rocked by upheaval. Liberal dissatisfaction was not the only factor at play in Lisbon during the summer of 1820. The events of the Napoleonic Wars were still affecting the course of Portuguese politics. Following the French invasion, the Royal Family had fled from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro under British protection. In return for the British efforts for them, Britain was granted incredibly favourable trading privileges in the Anglo-Brazilian commercial treaty of 1810 that gave Britain lower duties than goods even from Portugal herself. Even five years after the conclusion of the war, the Portuguese royal court still resided in the Brazilian capital and, furthermore, on Talleyrand's advice had raised Brazil to the status of an independent kingdom in 1815. As Jarrett has surmised 'The Portuguese revolutionaries of 1820 sought not only liberal reforms, but also a reduction of British influence and the return of their monarch

⁴⁰ 2 Jan. 1821, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 62.

and his court from Rio de Janeiro to Lisbon. They feared Portugal was becoming subservient to her own colony'.⁴¹

The absence of the Anglo-Irish soldier, Marshal William Beresford, 1st Viscount Beresford gave them the opportunity. During the Napoleonic Wars, Beresford had been a key lieutenant of Wellington's in the Peninsula after being made Commander-in-Chief of the Portuguese army. The Marshal had succeeded in turning what had been a dilapidated force into a vital part of Wellington's war machinery. After the war he remained in Portugal not only continuing in command but also with further wide powers in the regency. However, his position was continually under threat 'amid growing resentment from the ruling element of Portugal'.⁴² Given this situation Beresford determined on going to Rio, as he had previously, to reaffirm his authority with the king.⁴³ Wellington attempted to dissuade him from leaving given the revolution in Spain and the continuing uncertainty of her future relations with Portugal.⁴⁴ The Duke even warned him that '[i]t must not be supposed that you and your system have not enemies in the Portuguese army. Even the government have encouraged them; and how much more bold and enterprising [sic] will they become in your absence having before their eyes the example of the Spanish army'. The liberal elements in the country would not be 'unlikely to take advantage of your absence to cultivate it to forward their schemes'.⁴⁵ Beresford did not heed the Duke's advice however, and as the latter feared, the revolution erupted during his absence. Beresford was even stopped from landing on his return. After the revolution Wellington complained to Mrs Arbuthnot how he 'almost went upon my Knees to prevail upon him not to quit Portugal at present'. In the Duke's mind, 'there is no doubt that if ever Man lost a Country, he has lost that by this foolish Voyage'.⁴⁶

The issues created by the revolution in Portugal would continue to exist as a thorn in the side of British foreign policy for over a decade, deeply affecting the

⁴¹ Jarett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 243.

⁴² G.L. Teffeteller, 'Beresford, William Carr, Viscount Beresford (1768–1854)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011.

⁴³ Beresford to Wellington, 28 Jan. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/637/11.

⁴⁴ Wellington to Beresford, 12 Feb. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/640/13 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 96-8).

⁴⁵ Wellington to Beresford, 28 Mar. 1820, Wellington Mss., WP1/642/9 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 108-9).

⁴⁶ Wellington to Mrs Arbuthnot, 14 Sept. 1820, *Wellington and His Friends: Letters to Charles and Mrs Arbuthnot, the Earl and Countess of Wilton, Princess Lieven, and Miss Burdett-Coutts*, ed. the Duke of Wellington (London, 1965), p. 9.

foreign policy of Canning as well as of the Duke of Wellington during his time as Prime Minister, as will be explored below. In part this was because it remained much more of an issue in Britain's sole preserve than any of the other revolutions of these years. 'The British sphere of influence and the efficacy of British sea power in Portugal were so widely recognized that there was never the remotest possibility of intervention by any other power'.⁴⁷ Writing in 1821 the Duke commented on Portugal that:

Their policy is and must be to throw off this country; because the result of this continued connection with this country will be eventually to bring those who have revolted to the punishment which they deserve; and this country is I am sorry to say it, sufficiently shortsighted to think that its interest lays [on] the side of relinquishing the connection with Portugal. There is no road open there but a connection with Spain under the auspices of the revolted.

In Wellington's mind, it would likely end up that Portugal would form some part of Spain. Should the latter remain as a monarchy then Portugal would be absorbed as a department. Should it become a republic then Portugal would become 'one or more additional republics to the league'. He lamented that, '[i]n all this I put out of the question any resistance on the part of the King or of his family, or his nobility. They are geldings, in every sense of the world!' In a very interesting comment on attitudes towards imperial possessions in the early nineteenth century, Wellington wrote that 'It does not appear to me that anything will save [the King] in the independence of Portugal. The colonies of both kingdoms are gone; and those who have revolted must by this time have discovered that others can revolt as well as themselves; and no country in what is called a modern constitutional state can keep a dependency'.⁴⁸ Quite how Wellington explained Britain's continuing retention of her empire is unclear.

A few days after this letter, the Duke would write to Castlereagh on the recent changes that happened in France. In a damning indictment of the British ambassador to Paris, whom Wellington would reappoint to that role during his government, Wellington told the Foreign Secretary, '[a]s you don't receive very early or very accurate intelligence from Sir Charles Stuart, and you will not see Count Lieven, I think it as well to make you acquainted with the purport of a letter which he has received from Pozzo, which he has shown to me'. This is additionally an interesting reflection of the role Wellington played within British foreign policy at this time,

⁴⁷ Jarett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 243.

⁴⁸ Wellington to Beresford, 14 Dec. 1821, Wellington Mss., WP1/689/7 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 207-8).

acting somewhat as a second Foreign Secretary and an intermediary between foreign diplomats and figures and Castlereagh. Wellington told him that '[e]vents at Paris are at their crisis', with the Duc de Richelieu having been forced from office by the royalists and replaced by the Duc de Blacas. Given the circumstances that forced the change, Wellington could not 'conceive a more unfortunate event than the formation of this administration'. He feared that, '[i]n order to acquire a little popularity and a national character, they must meddle in foreign politics, and this against the system of the Quintuple Alliance', highlighting the continuing hold that a troublesome France had over the Duke's outlook towards European politics. Given all these circumstances he had 'thought it desirable to draw [Castlereagh's] attention to this change as soon as possible'.⁴⁹

In this time of revolution, one final uprising would dominate the last months of Castlereagh's life: the Greek revolt for independence. This would become a foreign policy question of such importance that it would be the central issue for British diplomacy for much of the following decade. Given Wellington's key role in its development, first as a British plenipotentiary on a mission to St Petersburg and then during his tenure as Prime Minister, it will be looked at in some length separately below. Nevertheless, Wellington's first intervention in the question is worth considering within the broader context of his professional relationship with Castlereagh, and his stance on foreign policy during this time. Castlereagh had originally taken a largely hands-off approach to the revolt. This, however, changed when it looked like there would be a strong prospect of Russian intervention. Despite the initial Russian condemnation of the revolt, the actions of the Porte had aggravated Russia and struck at the heart of her religious and commercial interests through such actions as the lynching of the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, Grigorios V, on Easter Sunday, and the detention of Russian ships in the Straits.⁵⁰ In response, the Russian government issued an ultimatum based on four points: the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from Moldavia and Wallachia, the need to distinguish between 'guilty' and 'innocent' Christians when responding to the revolt, a guarantee for the future protection of Christians and that destroyed churches should be rebuilt at the

⁴⁹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 17 Dec. 1821, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 208-9. Wellington wrote a letter to Richelieu telling him of his regret at the change in government. Wellington to Richelieu, 21 Dec. 1821, Wellington Mss., WP1/689/16 (also in *WND*, vol. I, p. 210).

⁵⁰ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 293.

Sultan's expense.⁵¹ The failure of the Porte to respond to these demands in an adequate manner in time led to the withdrawal of the Russian ambassador and it appeared hostilities would soon follow.

Into this situation stepped Castlereagh and Metternich in a bid to try and bolster the Tsar's resistance to those calling on him to go to war. The British Foreign Secretary made use of an invitation Alexander had made at Aix-la-Chapelle to take the uncommon step of writing to the Russian emperor directly. The Ottoman Empire was 'a necessary evil', that any attempt to cure would 'expose the whole frame of our general system to hazard'. Though Russia had been subject to insults, 'in proportion as your Imperial Majesty's power is undoubted, and, as the events of the late war have placed you on exalted ground, your Imperial Majesty can afford to temporize, and to suffer the tempest to exhaust itself'. Castlereagh urged on him that while '[n]o doubt humanity shudders at the scenes which are acting' throughout European Turkey, and that 'it will require all the commanding authority of your Imperial Majesty's great name and character', to hold back the tide of Russian opinion in favour of intervention, '[b]ut it is in vain to hope that we can materially alter their lot, or deliver them from their sufferings, and preserve the system of Europe as it now stands'.⁵² Castlereagh's arguments did little to affect the Tsar's course of action, though fortunately for the peace of Europe, his determination to only act with the approval of his allies ensured that any decision in favour of intervention was delayed.

The situation remained in this precarious state when Wellington wrote a memorandum to Castlereagh in April 1822. It was nearing the campaigning season so there was an added incentive by this time to reach some kind of resolution to prevent war. In Wellington's mind, it was crucial to return negotiations to the original four Russian demands, 'the justice of which is admitted by the allies and even by the Porte'. Yet the delay caused by the failure of the Porte to address them had led to an extension of the Russian demands, and 'propositions have recently been brought under the consideration of the allied ministers at different courts for the adoption of a plan for the amelioration of the condition of the Greeks under the dominion of the Porte'. The Ottoman suspicions of such a Russian plan were 'the real cause of the difficulties' that

⁵¹ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 294.

⁵² Castlereagh to Tsar Alexander, 16 July 1821, in *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. XII, pp. 403-8.

had faced the negotiations and the only solution was to move back to the original four points.

So far, so logical. The Duke's prescription for achieving this was a radical departure from his usual advice and one that entailed the risk of war: the removal of the British ambassador in Constantinople. To be done only on the condition of the Russian demands being limited to the four points, it would be accompanied by informing the Porte that 'His Majesty considered their resistance to these just demands so unwarrantable and so likely to lead to the total destruction of the Turkish government that he should not leave his ambassador at Constantinople to sanction by his presence their conduct and to witness the misfortunes which must be its consequence'. While Wellington believed this action 'will produce its effect and secure peace', if it did not, and war was the result then 'I can entertain no doubt of the result. The Turkish government in Europe will in fact be destroyed, which will probably be the smallest misfortune which will be the consequence of this state of things'. Despite the extreme nature of Wellington's advice, it was very much rooted in the same kind of analysis of the international situation as that which pervaded Castlereagh's letter to the Tsar. Such a radical step would demonstrate to the Ottomans that the British 'at least were convinced that the Emperor was sincere in confining his demands upon them to the four points originally stated; and having admitted their justice, they would be more likely to carry them into execution'. If this would secure peace then it would be worth the risks. If the Tsar did go to war then Russia's inevitable occupation of the Principalities would 'give rise to a most important question between him and the Emperor of Austria, the difficulty of solving which will be augmented by every subsequent step, and that these difficulties can end only by putting the two imperial courts in positive opposition to each other, and by the dissolution of the quintuple alliance and probably a general war in Europe'. Furthermore, the diversion of Austrian and Russian strength to the Balkans would mean that 'there is nothing which can be trusted to check the tide of revolution from the Atlantick to the Austrian frontiers'. In short, should war break about between the Porte and Russia, the result in Wellington's mind would be the overthrow of the entire international and social order of Europe. As a result, the Duke urged Castlereagh that 'we should allow no trifling consideration nor no speculation upon the advantages of having our ambassador at the

Porte at a particular period nor upon the difficulty of getting him back again to prevent us from taking a step which may preserve peace and all its existing advantages'.⁵³

A few days later, after the cabinet had deliberated on the question, Wellington told Mrs Arbuthnot how 'no person more forcibly felt the necessity of, or more anxiously wished for, peace than he did' and though his proposed course entailed the risk of complications, 'it was a measure that w[oul]d bring the Turks to reason, that they knew perfectly our power & influence, that they were indebted to the representations of our Ambassador for the retreat of the Persian army which had invaded their Asiatic provinces, & that the fear of our taking part against them w[oul]d have more effect'.⁵⁴ As will be explored below, such decision and risk taking would not be a usual feature of Wellington's diplomacy towards the Eastern Question. However, his advice at this time was in line with his wider analysis of the international situation. Coming off the back of two years of turmoil and revolution from the westernmost to the easternmost extremities of Europe, the Duke 'deprecat[ed] war from the state of Europe'.⁵⁵ In the situation Britain found herself in, the worst course of action would be to do nothing and allow the war he feared to come about. Any positive action to prevent a Turko-Russian conflict was a necessary step to prevent a general war, and the general revolution that would swiftly follow on its coattails.

The Death of Castlereagh and the Question of his Succession

Only a few months after these discussions on the Eastern Question, Castlereagh was dead by his own hand. Years of strain as pressure as Foreign Secretary and leader of the House of Commons were having their impact and come the summer of 1822 the statesman had reached breaking point. In June, Princess Lieven wrote of him to Metternich that he 'looks ghastly. He has aged five years in the last week; one can see that he is a broken man'. Even Wellington had become the subject of his suspicions. The Princess wrote that Castlereagh 'does not like M. de Lieven to talk business with [Wellington], and sometimes has been touchy about it'.

⁵³ Wellington to Castlereagh, 19 Apr. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/706/11 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 232-5).

⁵⁴ 21 Apr. 1822, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, pp. 156-7.

⁵⁵ 21 Apr. 1822, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 157.

The Duke is easier to deal with, more open, more frank, readier to be persuaded, because he has no responsibility. Londonderry thinks that he might suit us better, or that we think so; and, seeing him so intimate with me, he has got it into his head that we might like Wellington in his place: hence my efforts to get him admitted to the King's favour.

Yet, as Lieven told the Austrian chancellor, Castlereagh's fear 'lacks foundation'. 'Politically', she would just 'be exchanging one evil for another' and that anyway, '[i]n certain things, I place a hundred times more [confidence] in Lord Londonderry than in the Duke'.⁵⁶ That Castlereagh's suspicions fell on his closest colleague was a remarkable demonstration of how his mental condition had deteriorated. On 12th August, he took his own life at his Kent home, plunging the government into crisis.

With the King in Scotland, no immediate decision could be taken on what should be done about Castlereagh's now vacant offices. The most obvious solution would be for Wellington himself to replace his friend at the Foreign Office. No one within the British government knew the details of Castlereagh's policies as well as the Duke did, and none had comparable international experience. That he was in the Lords rather than the House of Commons certainly worked against him but it was not an insuperable obstacle. But Wellington rejected the idea out of hand. He told Princess Lieven that to accept the office: 'would mean deviating from my position and my career. I should be compelled to adopt the opinions of my party and my individual opinion would no longer be free. My ideas are more independent as I am now; I would rather stick to them'. In this Wellington was repeating much of the same language that he used on entering the cabinet a few years previously. He told the Princess that 'I have no ambition; so little that I am ready to take any position, even though it is subordinate, if I see that I can be useful'. Lieven argued how the position of Foreign Secretary had great weight in the formation of policy attached to it, and that 'if [the incumbent's] were not absolutely identical with those of the Cabinet, it would be easy for him, by a thousand means at his disposition, insensibly to alter the Cabinet's policy'. Yet this did not faze Wellington: 'Well, that is where I come in. I am in the Cabinet and thus I believe I can do far more general good than in any other capacity'.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Princess Lieven to Metternich, 10 June 1822, *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820-1826*, ed. P. Quennell (New York, 1938), pp. 178-9.

⁵⁷ Princess Lieven to Metternich, 21 Aug. 1822, *Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich*, pp. 198-200.

As will be shown, this proved to be startling naivety on Wellington's part. In this conversation with the Russian ambassadress, he simultaneously underrates his political role by placing himself out of the fray that he was very much a participant in, while also overrating his degree of influence and control over the policies of his colleagues. As Muir has argued, '[t]his moment marks Wellington's great refusal – the failure to accept that his active career as a soldier was over, and to embrace his position as a leading politician and Cabinet minister [...] He was deluding himself'.⁵⁸

With Wellington's refusal to consider the office, there was only one alternative: George Canning. Castlereagh's old rival – the pair had fought a duel in the aftermath of the Walcheren Affair in 1809 – would receive the entire inheritance, foreign office and leadership of the Commons, and with it a predominating voice in the affairs of the government. There was still opposition to overcome, the High Tory Lords Eldon and Sidmouth and, more importantly, George IV himself. The King had placed a veto on Canning's accession to cabinet following an acrimonious falling-out over the trial of Queen Caroline. But the Duke's decision to reject the Foreign Office for himself left them no way to reject the calls to place Canning back in office. Wellington even played an active role in convincing the monarch that it would be an honourable step to allow Canning to re-join cabinet despite what had gone before.⁵⁹ As Mrs Arbuthnot recorded, 'the King yielded to that great & powerful mind which exercises unbounded influence on all that comes within its sphere'.⁶⁰

In taking all of these steps the Duke laid the ground for five years of conflict and dispute over the entire course of British foreign policy that Wellington would be a central actor in. It marked a distinct break in Wellington's diplomatic career. From 1814 through to Castlereagh's death, Wellington was an effective and influential ally and collaborator with the Foreign Secretary. Their partnership had proved itself time and time again as a powerful tool in Britain's diplomatic armoury. From his death onwards though Wellington's career would take on a new direction. Whilst the Duke was still influential, partnership with Canning was never on the table. Instead antagonism and opposition would be the mark of their relationship. However, before this would become clear to Wellington, he would attend one final Congress.

⁵⁸ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 187.

⁵⁹ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 188-9.

⁶⁰ 10 Sept. 1822, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 190.

Wellington and the Congress of Verona

Even before a decision had been reached on the position of Foreign Secretary, it was decided that Wellington should replace Castlereagh as the British plenipotentiary at the forthcoming congress (originally to be held in Florence and preceded by talks in Vienna).⁶¹ What had made him such a strong candidate for the Foreign Office exemplified why he was the only possible choice to attend the Congress. No other statesman had the knowledge of, or intimacy with, the leading figures of the continent. After a delay caused by illness – it had even appeared his life could be at risk – Wellington eventually set off in mid-September and reached Paris on 20 September 1822.⁶² The Duke's instructions were based on those that Castlereagh had drawn up for himself. The focus was primarily on the Near East and the continuing Greek Revolt and substantial space was devoted to discussing the question and what the British response should be. Interestingly, in relation to later British policy towards Greece, it including the provision that 'care must be taken not to commit this country to any immediate or eventual concert of this nature that shall go beyond the limits of good offices: engagements in the nature of a guarantee are to be considered altogether inadmissible'.⁶³

However, events had moved on since these instructions were originally drafted and it was Spain not Greece that dominated allied discussions. The failed attempt of the royal guards in Madrid to seize power in July 1822 had brought about the fall of the moderate Martínez de la Rosa and seen the revolution there take a radical turn. Minds inevitably recalled the recent history of France when considering the events in the Peninsula and shaped their expectations and fears of future events.⁶⁴ Wellington's initial instructions did not cover this in any length, and, indeed, said how 'there seems nothing to add to or vary in the course of policy hitherto pursued' *vis-à-vis* Spain. The safety of the royal family, protection of Portugal and 'a rigid abstinence from any interference in the internal affairs of that country, must be considered as forming the

⁶¹ Princess Lieven to Metternich, 17 Aug. 1822, *Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich*, pp. 195-6.

⁶² Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 188.

⁶³ Bathurst to Wellington, 14 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, p. 186.

⁶⁴ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, p. 313.

basis of his Majesty's policy'. Wellington was instructed to have discussions with the French government on his way through Paris on Spain on these bases, 'the arguments in favour of which are too well understood to require insertion in this instruction'. It then moved on to the matter of the Spanish South America and the more specific British interests of the slave trade, Austrian debt and the recent Russian *ukase* on their possessions in North America.⁶⁵

As soon as Wellington got to Paris, it was clear that these instructions did not cover the tone that the Congress would take. Instead of the Near East, or even the Spanish colonies, the question of intervention in Spain would dominate the discussions. This became apparent in Wellington's discussions with the French chief minister, Jean-Baptiste de Villèle. France had collected 100,000 men 'fully equipped for service in the field', in the Pyrenees, ready to act. And many in the French government wanted to act. Though opinion in the cabinet was divided, many believed they 'ought to proceed at once to attack the Spaniards by what M. de Villèle called an *aventure*, or a *coup-de-main*'. The army would advance in two columns, the largest of which would march on Madrid and secure Ferdinand VII. Wellington told Canning that '[i]t was not difficult to convince M. de Villèle - as, indeed, it was his own opinion - that this plan was attended by all the difficulties and risks of any invasion of Spain under any circumstances, and that it most probably would produce no result whatever'. The Duke raised a number of objections, practical ones for the most part, such as that the King would be spirited away from Madrid rather than allowed to fall into French hands, and even if he was secured 'his Catholic Majesty would inspire no confidence' and as a result 'the cause would become more unpopular in consequence of his having being assisted by a foreign, and, above all, a French army'. Wellington believed that:

M. de Villèle was not insensible of the danger which I represented of the continuance of this state of things; and he listened with attention to all that I represented to him of the increased probability that the very evils which he apprehended would occur in consequence of the irritation occasioned in Spain

⁶⁵ Bathurst to Wellington, 14 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 284-7. For Canning's supplementary instructions on the question, and enclosures relating to it, see Canning to Wellington, 27 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 311-8. Wellington to Nesselrode, 17 Oct. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 372-3; Wellington to Lieven, 29 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/739/22 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 606-7). For discussion of the *ukase* in its broad international context see I.C. Nichols, Jr., 'The Russian Ukase and the Monroe Doctrine: A Re-Evaluation', *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 36, no. 1 (Feb., 1967), pp. 13-26 & I.C. Nichols, Jr. *The European Pentarchy and the Congress of Verona, 1822* (The Hague, 1971), pp. 229-243.

by the state of preparation in which the French government was upon the Spanish frontier, and the constant menace and apprehension of invasion.

The Duke stressed that their behaviour was not far removed from that of the European powers towards the French revolution and 'liable to be misrepresented'. Yet despite this, he lamented that 'I don't think that what I stated to him induced him entirely to alter his plan'. Looking towards the Congress, Villèle wished to know what attitude the powers would take, should circumstances force France to intervene. To this Wellington upheld the standard British response: 'I told M. de Villèle that it would be quite impossible for us to declare beforehand what would be our conduct upon any hypothetical case'. The Duke 'did not think that any government could adopt such a measure, and I was quite certain that ours could not, which was liable to be called to account for its conduct at every moment'. Added to this, any statement would need to be public 'to be of any use', which would only add fuel to the fire and give Spain legitimate cause to complain of the Congress. Though his impressions of the talks with Villèle, and with Louis XVIII and the Comte de Artois, the heir to the French throne, were that the French government was impressed with the dangers and problems arising from a potential intervention, Wellington nevertheless requested additional instructions in case the French delegation should make any proposition on intervention at the Congress.⁶⁶

The focus on the events in Spain and a possible French intervention there was surprising to the government in London and prompted a shift in strategy. It was Liverpool who initiated this rather than Canning. The former wrote to the new Foreign Secretary and told him 'considering this question as one of principle and practicability, my mind cannot conceive the case in which it would be expedient to interfere in the internal affairs of Spain by force, and I doubt the policy of interfering in any other way'. Liverpool instructed Canning that '[w]ith these impressions I own I think the Duke of Wellington cannot be too explicit in stating the opinion of his government, and of himself, as to any hostile operations against Spain. If you think it advisable to transmit to him this note, I have no objection'.⁶⁷ It was the Prime Minister that took

⁶⁶ Wellington to Canning, 21 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 288-94. Wellington also discussed the slave trade with Villèle who told the Duke that abolition was unpopular, not because of any particular value of the colonies, 'but because the abolition had been pressed upon the King by Great Britain'. Wellington to Canning, 21 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 295-6. Canning to Wellington and enclosures, 30 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 322-32. Canning to Wellington, 1 Oct. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 334-5.

⁶⁷ Liverpool to Canning, 27 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, p. 300.

the lead in in this matter, rather than Canning. This is a point that has been raised in recent historiography and that challenges the traditional version of Canning's foreign policy, first outlined by Harold Temperley, that the Foreign Secretary was determined from the outset to destroy the European concert – one of many questionable conclusions of his that will be further dealt with below.⁶⁸

Canning's instructions to the Duke on the matter of interference in Spain are worthy of quoting in full:

if, as I confess I see reason to apprehend in the late communications both from Paris and Vienna, there is entertained by the Allies a determined project of interference by force, or by menace, in the present struggle in Spain, so convinced are his Majesty's government of the uselessness and danger of such interference, - so objectionable does it appear to them in principle, and so utterly impracticable in execution, - that, if the necessity should arise, or (I would rather say) if the opportunity should offer, I am to instruct your Grace at once frankly and peremptorily to declare, that to any such interference, come what may, his Majesty will not be a party.⁶⁹

As Yamada has argued, this was not the opening salvo of Canning's attack on the Concert, but the fruit of Liverpool's intervention.⁷⁰ More broadly, the Foreign Secretary's instructions to the Duke were conciliatory to the continental powers, while conscious of the difficulties of the British position. This is apparent in his observations on the question of retaining Austrian troops within Piedmont, where the Duke was left to judge the best attitude for Britain to take on the question.⁷¹

Wellington arrived in Vienna on 29 September 1822, only to find that the allied ministers were preparing to imminently depart for Verona themselves. Given that the discussions there were meant to solely touch on the affairs of the Italian peninsula, which he was to not take part in, the Duke thought it necessary to refuse the invitation to join them and to refer the case back to London. He deeply regretted that he had not been informed of this change sooner and was concerned about the public impact: 'I cannot but feel that the inconvenience and evil which will result from the absence of a British plenipotentiary from Verona, and which under existing circumstances will amount, in appearance at least, to a total separation from the Alliance, and will, at all

⁶⁸ N. Yamada, 'George Canning and the Spanish Question, September 1822 to March 1823' *Historical Journal*, vol. 52, No. 2 (2009), pp. 343-62.

⁶⁹ Canning to Wellington, 27 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, p. 304.

⁷⁰ Yamada, 'George Canning and the Spanish Question, September 1822 to March 1823', pp. 349-50.

⁷¹ Canning to Wellington, 27 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 307-9.

events, tend in a certain degree to shake the influence which we have hitherto had over their councils'.⁷²

His initial conversations with the allies confirmed his belief that Spain would dominate the Congress. Furthermore, the wider peace between Russia and the Ottomans would be 'in a great degree dependent' on the outcome of the Spanish discussions. While Wellington found Metternich had 'an anxious desire that the Spaniards may be left to themselves', Tsar Alexander was in a far more belligerent state of mind. He believed that Spain was 'the head-quarters of revolution and of Jacobinism; that the King and Royal Family were in the utmost danger; and that so long as the revolution in that country should be allowed to continue, every country in Europe, and France in particular, was unsafe'. The Tsar was conscious of the obstacle that Britain would be and that she would possibly 'prevent the good that might be done in Spain'. For Wellington 'it was certainly true that we had insuperable objections to interference in the internal concerns of any country' but these were based on the lack of rights, except under immediate danger and also the practical question of interference in Spain. These were not merely objections based on Britain's 'parliamentary constitution', Wellington told the Tsar, though certainly that spoke against interference given that Parliament would exercise 'the right of discussing all the measures adopted in relation to that country which would not be very desirable to those concerned'.

Wellington was acutely aware of the importance of the Spanish question. In his mind, it was clear that 'our deliberations will turn almost entirely upon the affairs of Spain'. The most worrying aspect was what Russia and Tsar Alexander would do. 'The idea then which is certainly uppermost in his Imperial Majesty's mind is the employment of the Russian army in Spanish concerns, if possible; but at all events its employment'. Here Wellington identified the key pivot on which the whole Congress would turn. With Russia restless, it would be difficult to restrict the Tsar's interventionist feelings. Given the continuing uncertainty in the Balkans, and with clamours amongst the army to go to war with the Ottomans, 'it is necessary for his Imperial Majesty to attend to the progress of the Jacobins and revolutionary parties in the west of Europe, and particularly in Spain; who, while the Russian armies should

⁷² Wellington to Canning, 30 Sept. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 319-22.

be employed in the east, might destroy all that had been done in the last ten years'. The result, of course, was that '[t]he Emperor this finds himself in an embarrassing position between Spain and Turkey'. In the Duke's mind '[i]t is obvious that the contest at Verona will fall principally upon me' thanks to the Austrians and Prussians holding aloof. He did believe that he would be working alongside the French, and that they would 'firmly oppose the passage of foreign troops through France; and that they will not press very strongly an attack by France upon Spain, unless the latter should insult or attack their frontier'.⁷³

Though the Duke had identified the importance of the dynamic in Russian foreign policy between intervention in either western or eastern Europe, he had severely underrated the problems he would face with the French delegation. While he had accurately discerned Villèle's policy preferences, it was Mathieu Jean Felicité de Montmorency, duc de Montmorency-Laval who was to represent them at the Congress. The latter was the Prime Minister's rival and viewed affairs in a very different light.⁷⁴ He 'considered that the only possible decision which would assure at one and the same time the security and dignity of France would be that she boldly undertake to re-establish order in Spain, even by a military expedition if need be, and to obtain the consent and the eventual support of the conservative powers'.⁷⁵ Once at the Congress he decided to go beyond his instructions 'that he should avoid taking the initiative in bringing up the Spanish question' and instead decided to pre-empt discussion by writing a note 'in which he considered the clear possibility of French intervention and asked the powers to indicate clearly their intentions'.⁷⁶

This was delivered to the ministers of Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia on 20th October 1822.⁷⁷ Only two days before, Wellington had been quite sanguine on the matter, telling Canning that 'I think I may assure you that nothing will be done here in regard to Spain which will be at all inconvenient to you'.⁷⁸ The divergent allied responses to Montmorency's note would shatter this illusion and prove how isolated

⁷³ Wellington to Canning, 4 Oct. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 343-8.

⁷⁴ Villèle's position was further weakened by other intrigues and attacks. Stuart to Canning, 21 Oct. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/748/2.

⁷⁵ Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, p. 187.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁷⁷ Précis des Communications verbales, 20 Oct. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 403-4. Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, pp. 323-4.

⁷⁸ Wellington to Canning, 18 Oct. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, p. 384.

Wellington and Britain were on this question.⁷⁹ The Duke's initial report of the note to Canning did not demonstrate an awareness of this fact. He told him how:

I imagine that each of the ministers will answer this paper. In my answer I shall review our line of conduct since April 1820 and contrast it with theirs, and shall very civilly decline to engage ourselves to adopt any measure beforehand and till we shall have full knowledge of all the circumstances which have occurred between the two countries. I propose, besides, to point out to them that, considering the relative position of the two countries, it is not probable that Spain will declare against them, if they explain as they ought the meaning and object of their corps of observation and make some allowance for the state of effervescence of men's minds in Spain, in a state of revolution and civil war.⁸⁰

By the time of Wellington's next despatch on the matter, nine days after the note was presented, it was clear to the Duke that it was a problem of a different magnitude – and one that was still not 'yet ripe for a discussion' in conference. The Tsar had immediately declared his willingness 'to consent to all the demands of the French ministers, and to conclude a treaty with them, stipulating for the succours which he should give'. He additionally informed them of his intention to assemble an army of 150,000 men in Piedmont to await the outcome of a French intervention, ready to move into France or Spain as needed. While Wellington and Metternich cooperated in their talks with Alexander to try and 'make him feel the danger to which he was about to expose the French government and the inconveniences and difficulties in which he would involve himself by the adoption of a plan to which all Europe would be opposed' this did not mask the signs of the divergence between Britain and the other powers. Austria and Prussia agreed with the Duke that 'the best and most respectable way for France to proceed in order to preserve peace with Spain', provided they actually desired that, was 'to come to a frank explanation with Spain on her plans and objects through the good offices of England alone, if necessary; and that the allies should remain quiet and neither say nor do anything till that measure shall have been tried'. Despite this, however, 'they appear to think that if called upon by France and Russia to agree to the demands of France in case France should be obliged to cease her diplomatik relations with Spain, or is menaced or attacked, they will not be able to refuse to enter into such an agreement, taking care, however, to define the case as

⁷⁹ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, pp. 324-6 & 329-30.

⁸⁰ Wellington to Canning, 22 Oct. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/732/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 408-10).

closely as possible'. Against this Wellington tried to deploy a number of arguments, from the dangers of proceeding without the participation of Britain, to how it would 'lower the French government in the eyes of the French nation' if they should act with the backing of the continental powers as her allies but in the end he told Canning how 'I think they feel the truth of these observations, but they are not willing to resist the demand of Russia and France'. With little freedom of action, all Wellington could do was to say how 'I shall object to everything excepting that the allies should call upon France to explain herself, and then that they should recommend to her, if peace is her object as it must be that of the others, that she should ask for the good offices of one of her allies to explain to Spain her desire to remain at peace'. He concluded by summing up how:

In the different meetings of the same kind with this which I have attended, I have never yet been witness to so much difficulty and embarrassment as there has been in the discussion of this Spanish question. These difficulties are to be attributed, first to the false position in which France stands owing to the transactions of the French government in Spain since April 1820, of which they are now ashamed and therefore deny; secondly, to the false position in which the Emperor of Russia stands in this question owing to his embarrassment with his army; and thirdly, to the necessity under which the two German governments find themselves of managing in some degree the Emperor of Russia, and of endeavouring to assist him through his difficulties at home, in order that he may not be obliged to carry on a war in the east.⁸¹

Lord Londonderry supported Wellington's analysis of the difficulties in a memorandum a few days later. For him, Britain's position 'becomes more difficult at the present reunion than it has ever been on any former occasion, not only from the mode in which Austria is playing her game, which is evidently directed to keep up her assumed power over Russia' but also that of France, thanks to her 'having surrendered herself entirely to the direction of the Holy Alliance'. The result of this situation was that '[n]o doubt can now exist that the three powers are at present upon one line with France' and Britain was left in 'a distressing predicament of an entirely isolated nature'. The nature of Montmorency's approach to the other powers meant that in the end there 'seems to be no possible ground by which the Duke of Wellington can

⁸¹ Wellington to Canning, 29 Oct. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/732/13 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 457-60).

approach the position of the alliance, preserving those principles which have been declared by Great Britain to Europe'.⁸²

Diplomatically isolated, Wellington had limited means to reconcile the fundamental divergence between the attitude of Britain and the continental powers on the issue of intervention. Austria was the key power, yet 'Prince Metternich is as usual looking principally to the difficulties which press upon him at the moment'. He had to give the Tsar 'an appearance at least' of action in western Europe lest Alexander should 'return to his capital in a very bad temper with the alliance; of which the first effects will be felt by Austria'.⁸³ This was a central problem with Britain's alignment on the continent and a problem far beyond any issue of Wellington's diplomacy at Verona. Britain looked primarily to Metternich and Austria as the other key status quo power on the continent, the one most willing to play a role in both defending against any treaty revision by France, and against undue enthusiasm for intervention by Russia. Yet they were also two very different powers. Austria, with her exposed borders and her polyglot composition, as well as potentially menacing neighbours, was subject to the "security dilemma" of being unable to meet the threats it faced as any counteraction would merely increase those threats.⁸⁴ Instead, she relied on external support. Out of necessity, this was from Russia. While Austria was aligned with Britain on various questions, Britain was not in a position where she was able to aid her, either against revolutionary or external threats. Russia could help, and by drawing on her support, made her a friend rather than the enemy which she could well be. The divergence between Austria and Russia in relation to the Ottoman Empire meant that it was in her interests in more ways than one to turn her attention to counter-revolution in western Europe.

Britain's position was further complicated, and her isolation compounded, by the intrusion of the external world into continental affairs. As Otte has argued, '[t]he widely dispersed range of global interests lent Britain a Janus-like appearance,

⁸² Memorandum by Londonderry, 2 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/740/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 484-6).

⁸³ Wellington to Canning, 5 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/738/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 492-507).

⁸⁴ P. Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', *American Historical Review*, vol. 97, issue 3 (1992), p. 688. R. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton, N.J., 1976), chap. 3.

simultaneously facing Europe and out onto the extra-European world'.⁸⁵ It was the crumbling Spanish Empire in South America that muddied the waters for Britain's policy towards intervention in Spain at Verona. The drawn out battles over recognition of the rebellious colonies will be examined further below, but some points from its early stages are pertinent for a discussion of Wellington at Verona. The lack of established law and power in the New World had created a vacuum where it looked like the United States might be the first power to fill it, creating serious strategic concerns. The prevalence of piracy had further damaged British trading interests in the region, an important area of growth. As a result, the situation in Spanish America impacted on three of the areas that Otte identifies as the principal components of British power: the capacity of the Navy to project British power, Britain's financial capacity and the ability to mobilize imperial resources in times of war.⁸⁶ By allowing a rival to occupy a stronger position in the New World the strategic elements would be damaged and the financial situation was already being eroded due to the continuing uncertainty. These factors exerted a negative impact on Wellington's freedom to manoeuvre at Verona. Canning highlighted this to the Duke when discussing the possibility of Britain acting as a mediator between France and Spain. Not only were the difficulties arising from France, there were further ones 'from the position in which we ourselves stand towards Spain;- a position becoming every day more delicate and critical'. He warned Wellington 'the duties of mediation in our hands will be most inconveniently crossed by the causes of complaint which we have against her external policy' where every day word arrived of 'wrong inflicted on our commerce by vessels bearing the flag of Spain and acting under Spanish authorities'.⁸⁷

Despite this troublesome issue, Britain was far too out of step with the continental powers on just the questions relating to Spain herself for these extra-European factors to intrude too much, though they would soon enough. In a memorandum to be read to Villèle, Wellington wrote how '[i]n the course of the discussions which have taken place upon this occasion, a marked difference of opinion as to the mode of action has appeared between the continental courts on the one hand and England on the other'. Wellington looked 'to the peace and honour of France as

⁸⁵ Otte, 'A Janus-like Power', p. 126.

⁸⁶ Otte, 'A Janus-like Power', p. 128.

⁸⁷ Canning to Wellington, 8 Nov. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, p. 514.

the great object in any negociation in Spain and not any counter-revolutionary projects' but the Tsar 'considers counter-revolution in Spain as the object to be attained and war and military operations upon Spain as the only means of attaining it'. While Prussia and Austria '[i]n principle [...] concur in opinion with the English minister' in practice 'they cannot separate themselves from the Emperor of Russia'. In a deleted section of the memorandum that is not in the published version, Wellington continued to say that there was a further factor that France must consider in pursuing a course of war:

It is that it necessarily separates England from the alliance. England will not, cannot enter upon such a course of conduct; and it will undoubtedly be considered that the alliance is broken up. Is France, is Europe yet in such a state as that the quintuple alliance can with safety be broken up? Is England of no use to the alliance? Has it been considered in what manner her counsels operate upon its conduct, and her assistance and influence in forwarding its measures? Are not both of use to France in her present position?⁸⁸

Though the Duke possibly decided against the inclusion of this paragraph due to how clearly it highlighted British isolation, and potentially that it would not necessarily be entirely a negative for a French minister to see Britain removed from the alliance, it nevertheless shows the desperate nature of the British position at this point.⁸⁹ Wellington was conscious of this state of affairs, and when rumours went around about the subject of a conversation of his with a Spanish diplomat he believed it showed 'how ready my colleagues are to catch at any story which can be construed to our disadvantage'.⁹⁰

As the Congress moved into its final days, the situation did not really improve for Britain or Wellington. The Tsar, in conversations with the Duke, evaded any talk on the military side of an intervention in France, the area where Wellington could speak with most authority.⁹¹ Instead the continental powers moved towards a

⁸⁸ Memorandum to be read to Villèle, 12 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/738/16 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 519-23, without the deletions).

⁸⁹ The same day Wellington told Canning how he had been 'reproached' and Britain's 'conduct compared with that of Austria and the other allies' by the Russians in a conference over the navigation of the Black Sea and the Bosphorus. Wellington told them in reply 'that whenever we spoke our language was cautious and measured because we were determined to perform and we knew we must perform what we promised. Other powers were more free both in their words and actions'. Wellington to Canning, 12 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/738/17 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 523-9).

⁹⁰ Wellington to Canning, 19 Nov. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, p. 547.

⁹¹ Wellington to Canning, 19 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/738/25 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 555-7). Canning had, in a back-handed way, complimented Wellington in his attempts to tackle the matter of intervention on military terms: 'I verily believe that, if we escape the Spanish war, it will be owing exclusively to your experience of one; and that any other negotiator than your self would have

concerted demonstration by their ambassadors at Madrid.⁹² This was a road that Britain could not follow them down. As Wellington told them, ‘His Majesty’s government are of opinion that to animadvert upon the internal transactions of an independent state, unless such transactions affect the essential interests of His Majesty’s subjects, is inconsistent with those principles on which His Majesty has invariably acted on all questions relating to the internal concerns of other countries’. Furthermore, to act in the manner proposed ‘must involve His Majesty in serious responsibility if they should produce any effect and must irritate, if they should not, and that if addressed as proposed to the Spanish government, are likely to be injurious to the best interests of Spain and to produce the worst consequences upon the probable discussions between that country and France’. As a result, Wellington informed them that Britain could not ‘hold a common language’ with the continental powers. Instead, her role would be limited to the good offices at Madrid ‘to allay the ferment which these communications must occasion and to do all the good in [the King’s] power’.⁹³

The unsuccessful conclusion of the Congress, and the isolation Britain faced, would have a significant and lasting impact on Wellington and his outlook on foreign policy. The role that Metternich played in all of this was of central importance in the Duke’s post-mortem to Canning. As soon as the Tsar turned his attention to Spain, the Austrian chancellor ‘had felt the utmost anxiety’ about the question and he ‘looked to the assistance which he had usually received from the British ministers in these conferences as the best mode of getting out of the difficulty without putting himself very forward in the discussion’. As a result, Wellington had been urged to raise the military aspect of the question with the Tsar, which he duly did. When the Duke failed to convince the Tsar against the idea of marching a Russian army to watch Spain and France, Metternich had turned to Montmorency, who eventually did prevail. Thus ‘having got rid of the great danger of all to the Austrian government, and that which pressed immediately, the march of a Russian army through Germany into Italy, and this upon my failure by the means of the French minister, he then turned short round upon the remainder of the question’ and agreed to some kind of treaty on Spain.

reasoned *politically* and *morally* against it, to no purpose.’ Canning to Wellington, 15 Nov. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, p. 536.

⁹² Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, pp. 334-6.

⁹³ Memorandum from Wellington to the ministers of the four allied powers, 20 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/739/1 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 557-9).

Nearly up to the last moment he [Metternich] assured me repeatedly that he concurred in all my opinions and views, and particularly in that of the inconvenience which must result from anything in the shape of a treaty, and from the establishment of a conference at Paris which must be in the hands of Monsieur Pozo de Borgo [sic]. Yet when it came to the point, finding that the Emperor of Russia insisted upon a treaty in some shape or other, and that the French ministers would not object to it, he did not state any objections notwithstanding that he knew that a treaty must prevent us from co-operating even in the work of peace; and within the last week he discovered that it was impossible for the Emperor of Austria not to pronounce his opinion upon the Spanish revolution and against what was passing in Spain.

Wellington admitted that he had somewhat fooled himself that it would be possible to come to some kind of accommodation over the matter 'up to a very late period' and 'was in hopes that upon this occasion as upon former occasions truth and good sense might at last have prevailed' in the same way he 'had seen great difficulties overcome' in previous Congresses. Verona was different, though. The after effects of the British stance on Naples were still being felt which had left the three Eastern powers 'displeased and irritated'. The fact they had 'experienced no inconvenience' from the separation with Britain had bolstered their willingness to act separately. Despite this though, 'the great difficulty' which was lacking previously was 'alteration of the relations between the two imperial courts'. Wellington believed that while Kapodistrias was the Tsar's foreign minister, Austria was 'obliged to lean towards Great Britain [...] for support against Russia in its own immediate views as in the questions of general interest'. But since Metternich had secured Kapodistrias's removal, the former had become 'a great degree himself His Imperial Majesty's principal adviser' and 'in order to maintain the description of influence which he has acquired over His Imperial Majesty's councils, he is obliged to bend his own opinions and to guide the conduct of the Austrian government in a great degree according to the views of Russia'. While Metternich still had confidence in Britain, 'there is no concert nor union of counsel or of action; and indeed I must add that there is an obvious restraint in our intercourse particularly before third persons which is not desired as being occasioned by the jealousy of the Russians of the intimacy of the Austrian government with that of His Majesty'. The necessity to have pressed the chancellor on the matter of the Austrian debt to Britain had further served to worsen relations. Wellington concluded to Canning how, '[u]pon the whole you will see that the scene has changed since the assembly of the congress at Aix-la-Chapelle'. With the allies 'determined to shut their eyes' to France's intrigues in Spain and the risks of

intervention ‘there remained nothing in which I could find any opposition to the plan which they had determined to pursue, excepting the general principle on which there is a positive and de[c]lared difference of opinion between the three powers and us’.⁹⁴

This is an important document that marks a shift not only in Wellington’s attitude towards the allied powers, but also a broader change in Britain’s stance towards the alliance and Europe. Yamada has shown that Canning did not set out to destroy the Concert of Europe by using Spain as a wedge to drive between them, as often assumed.⁹⁵ The Duke’s experience at Verona, and the desertion of Metternich as he turned towards Russia, would leave deep marks on him that would later affect his own diplomacy as Prime Minister, where he would display a marked disinclination to work with Austria, as will be explored in a later chapter.

Wellington left Verona on 30th November 1822. Canning instructed the Duke to remain at Paris if his letter found him in its vicinity: ‘The temper in which M. de Villèle professes to be, affords one more chance of preserving peace, if you should be at hand to encourage him, during the first conflict of the two parties in the French government. Without such aid I fear he may be overborne’.⁹⁶ In the Foreign Secretary’s mind ‘without you neither Villèle nor we have a fair chance of success’ at preserving peace.⁹⁷ Wellington found the French minister still entertaining the same hopes for avoiding intervention as when he had passed through previously on his way to the Congress.⁹⁸ Yet, as ever in dealings with France, a deeply held suspicion of Britain hampered Wellington’s efforts. The French belief that Britain had supplanted France’s preeminent position in Spain made the Duke hesitate in offering Villèle British mediation, and in the same conversation the French minister said, in a tone ‘excessively warm’, how ‘he could assure me that France could not submit to an

⁹⁴ Wellington to Canning, 22 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/739/3 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 562-9). See Wellington to Canning, 26 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/739/11 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 586-90) for an explanation of the proceedings relating to the Austrian loan. Wellington to Canning, 29 Nov. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/739/26 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 607-8).

⁹⁵ N. Yamada, ‘George Canning and the Spanish Question, September 1822 to March 1823’ *Historical Journal*, vol. 52, No. 2 (Jun., 2009), pp. 343-62.

⁹⁶ Canning to Wellington, 3 Dec. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 624-5.

⁹⁷ Canning to Wellington, 6 Dec. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, p. 625. See also Canning to Wellington, 6 Dec. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 625-8; Canning to Wellington, 8 Dec. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 628-30.

⁹⁸ Wellington to Canning, 9 Dec. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/746/5 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 633-4).

extension of our advantages and our territory'.⁹⁹ Canning took a dim view of this 'insolence', but he withheld his ire as 'all this will keep' with the priority being to 'get a clear case for ourselves, whatever may be the issue of the present loose and perplexed negotiations between Paris, Verona, and Madrid'.¹⁰⁰ Much as Wellington expected, the French government declined to accept British mediation and instead pressed for British adherence to the proceedings of Verona, an impossibility especially as French refusal to remove Spanish royalists from the border could not but be considered as 'offensive'. Britain, Wellington told them, 'would not become parties to a defensive treaty with a Power who thought proper or found it necessary to adopt such a measure'.¹⁰¹

In the end, Wellington came away from both Paris and Verona without securing peace or preventing intervention in Spain. At Calais he wrote to Sir Charles Stuart how '[t]he fashion and habit of the diplomatick world has been lately to suspect us of selfish policy and, in pursuit of objects of this description, to imagine that we stick at nothing'. The Duke had found this at the Congress and had found that even in Paris the French ministers 'were not free from these absurd notions'. When the French government had to 'combat these notions' any time they wished to act in concert with Britain, it would always remain difficult to achieve a positive outcome.¹⁰²

Wellington's actions over these months at the Congress of Verona have been subject to a great deal of historiographical controversy. This focused around whether Wellington had betrayed Canning and consciously worked against his policy, actually urging France to move quickly against Spain.¹⁰³ Launched with full force by Lord Acton in 1888, the debate reached its height shortly before the centenary of the

⁹⁹ Wellington to Canning, 10 Dec. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/746/12 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 635-41). Canning instructed that it was the opinion of the government that, while it was expedient with suspend mention of the offer of mediation, he should make the offer and before Villèle heard back from Verona. Canning to Wellington, 13 Dec. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 649-50.

¹⁰⁰ Canning to Wellington, 13 Dec. 1822, 6 p.m., in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 650-1. See also, Canning to Wellington, 17 Dec. 1822, in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 658-9.

¹⁰¹ Wellington to Canning, 19 Dec. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/746/31 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 660-2).

¹⁰² Wellington to Stuart, 21 Dec. 1822, Wellington Mss., WP1/746/33 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 663-4).

¹⁰³ Nichols summarises the various arguments and counterarguments in Nichols, Jr., *European Pentarchy and the Congress of Verona, 1822*, pp. 277-85.

Congress.¹⁰⁴ J.E.S. Green in two articles roundly criticised the Duke's conduct.¹⁰⁵ In his mind, 'Wellington was a soldier, with all the defects of those qualities that made him illustrious. Like most soldiers, he had an exaggerated dread of democracy, and was completely baffled by any species of resistance which could not be overcome by force'.¹⁰⁶ The result was that 'Wellington fell so much under the influence of Metternich as practically to substitute an Austrian policy for a British policy at the congress'.¹⁰⁷

The evidence for this was the diary of Baron Charles Edmond de Boisilecomte, the twenty-six-year-old secretary of the French delegation. The confidant of La Ferronnays, Boisilecomte did not attend any of the crucial meetings, and was not part of the inner circle even amongst the French delegation let alone the wider Congress. The weakness of this source material has been the centre of the rebuttal of Green's argument. The evidence of more senior figures, such as the ranking French representatives Montmorency and Chauteaubriand, as well as Gentz, who once again was the secretary of the Congress, simply do not support Boisilecomte's evidence.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, as has been seen, the realities of the diplomatic situation were such that it was difficult to adopt any kind of line with effect at the congress. As H. M. Lackland argued:

in view of the absolute determination of Alexander, Montmorency, and Metternich to intervene in some way in the Peninsula (though they differed as to the method), it is difficult to see how even a Castlereagh could have prevented them doing so. What Wellington could do he did [...] he was doomed to defeat from the beginning, but he could, and did, hamper the proceedings of his opponents at every stage.¹⁰⁹

Ultimately the evidence against Wellington does not stand up. In Nichols's opinion Green's 'interpretation is based on misinformation and myth'. In the most comprehensive examination of the course of the Congress, Nichols comes to the conclusion that Wellington 'did not undermine his government's policy at Verona nor

¹⁰⁴ J.E.E.D. Acton, 'Review of J. Franck Bright's *A History of England, 1837-1880*', *English Historical Review*, vol. 3 (1888).

¹⁰⁵ J.E.S. Green, 'Wellington, Boisilecomte, and the Congress of Verona, 1822', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 1 (1918), pp. 59-76; J.E.S. Green, 'Wellington and the Congress of Verona, 1822', *English Historical Review*, vol. 35 (1920), pp. 200-211.

¹⁰⁶ Green, 'Wellington, Boisilecomte, and the Congress of Verona, 1822', p. 73.

¹⁰⁷ Green, 'Wellington and the Congress of Verona, 1822', p. 200.

¹⁰⁸ H.M. Lackland, 'Wellington at Verona', *English Historical Review*, vol. 35, no. 140 (1920), p. 577.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 577-8.

did he betray Canning, though he sometimes was indiscreet in his language. The Acton-Green interpretation of British policy at the Congress is untenable'.¹¹⁰ The mere existence of this debate highlights the need to examine Wellington's foreign policy in a more comprehensive manner. Looking at isolated incidents in his career leads to these misconceptions and perpetuates one dimensional views of the Duke's actions. Only by placing his diplomacy in its wider context can its true thrust and objectives be understood. Wellington may well have been indiscreet in his military discussions with the French, but Canning had actually pointed to these as an area where Wellington could likely have an impact. Furthermore, when placed in the wider context of his career, it is clear that Wellington was continuing his older habits of frankness with foreign politicians. His career and his command of the Army of Occupation had made him more than simply a British statesman. He had wider responsibilities to Europe and the Alliance, in his own mind at least. Whether this made him a suitable British representative is questionable, but the frank attitudes he took and the habits of communicating with European statesmen were precisely the same qualities that had set him above any other British diplomats as the only suitable choice. They would also set the ground for a long conflict with Canning over the course of British diplomacy over the remainder of Liverpool's government.

Canning, Spain and the New World 1823-25

After his return from Verona, the next period of Wellington's career would be one of the most trying he would face. He swiftly came to repent his role in ensuring Canning's appointment to the Foreign Office. The habits of communication and cooperation that the Duke had built up over many years with Castlereagh never materialised with his replacement, and their relationship was instead marked by miscommunication and opposition. The nature of Wellington's role in the formulation of British foreign policy also shifted during these years. No longer was he a positive collaborator as previously but instead his role was one of blocking and modifying Canning's initiatives. Though the nature of Wellington's contributions changed, their importance did not necessarily

¹¹⁰ Nichols, *European Pentarchy and the Congress of Verona, 1822*, p. 285. Harold Temperley likewise dismissed Green's arguments: 'there is no evidence for the charge of betraying or deliberately counterworking Canning at this time, though even at this stage an estrangement between the two began'. Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, pp. 484-6.

change with them and consequently it is impossible to understand Canning's foreign policy without examination of the Duke's role. Wellington forms the main antagonist to Canning in Harold Temperley's work on the Foreign Secretary, but Temperley never makes any attempt really to understand the former's attitudes.¹¹¹ Instead Wellington remains a one-dimensional opponent, out of step with the times. This view has not changed much in the following ninety years – Jennifer Mori, in a recently published article, described Sir Charles Stuart as 'an "Ultra" who leaned towards the reactionary Toryism professed by the Duke of Wellington'.¹¹² Such labels, so clearly out of step with the Duke's actual actions, especially mark this period.

There was certainly a divergence between the policies of the two statesmen and how they understood the international system to operate. This was not simply a matter of Wellington not realising times had moved on. Canning's policy was by no means as successful as could be assumed by reading some of the literature on him, and had he lived long enough to be forced to deal with the repercussions of his policies in the Near East then his reputation might well have been very different, as will be explored in the following chapters. Had Wellington's preferred policies been followed in 1823 then some of the embarrassing failures of that year might well have been averted. The trend was certainly to move towards Canning's beliefs in how diplomacy should be conducted but this would not be apparent during his lifetime. The pivot would come during the Duke's own administration and it would be Lord Palmerston who marked out the new way British foreign policy should be conducted.

Wellington and Canning agreed on the fundamental aims of British foreign policy. Where they diverged was in relation to how it should be conducted. Canning was of the mind-set that 'England's foreign policy could not be successful unless it was generally supported by the nation'.¹¹³ It was thus pitched much more towards the domestic audience and reflected his extensive experience in the House of Commons. Wellington instead had taken on board the lessons of the previous twenty years of the vulnerability of Britain's international position. This reflected his experience on the ground in Europe, negotiating with leading figures. He knew first-hand the distrust felt

¹¹¹ H. Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning 1822-1827: England, The Neo-Holy Alliance, And The New World* (London, 1925), *passim*.

¹¹² J. Mori, 'How Women Make Diplomacy: The British Embassy in Paris, 1815-1841', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 27 (Winter 2015), p. 140.

¹¹³ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 48.

towards Britain and that notions of ‘Perfidious Albion’ had not completely disappeared. While Wellington knew as well as Canning and, indeed, Castlereagh, that there was a divergence between Britain and the continental powers, he always sought to minimise that and make as little of it public as possible. On that head he castigated Metternich just as much as he did Canning. The Duke was conscious that to be separated from the continental Allies could lead to British interests at best being overlooked, at worst actually acted against. This had almost happened at the Frankfurt negotiations in 1813 and Wellington was determined that no comparable instance should happen again. Canning’s preference for calling on the nation to provide the backing for his diplomacy directly contrasted with the Duke’s analysis. Wellington’s inclinations towards an ordered system and a preference for a legalist approach to problems further butted up against the preference in flexibility that marked out Canning’s approach: ‘every nation for itself, and God for us all’.¹¹⁴ This divergence, and the long-running battle the two ministers fought because of it, would be the defining feature of the foreign policy of British foreign policy from 1823-25. This chapter will focus on the first years of this as the government grappled with French intervention in Spain, upheaval in Portugal and the particularly difficult issue of recognition of the rebellious Spanish colonies in the New World. The Near East, which forms an important issue during this decade, will be looked at in a later chapter and the latter stages of the Portuguese question will be examined along with the policy of Wellington’s government on it.

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The question of intervention in Spain and the related issue of the independence of Spanish America would be one of the most important faced during these years. It would also serve as the nexus of the competing policies and strategies of Wellington and Canning. Despite lingering hopes that Villèle would triumph over the elements in France urging intervention, the New Year would prove these ill-founded. As French military action loomed ever larger Canning and Wellington, in cooperation, at least to begin with, sought some way to make a last ditch attempt at securing peace. This would come in the form of a mission by Lord Fitzroy Somerset, Wellington’s secretary and former Aide-de-Camp. His visit was coordinated with the Foreign Office but was

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 470.

a private mission with the aim of trying to use Wellington's personal influence to convince the Spanish government to make changes with the hope of avoiding the French intervention.¹¹⁵ In Wellington's mind it was 'impossible that any reasonable Spaniard can doubt that the time is come at which a great effort should be made to effect those alterations which the common sense of mankind points out to be necessary' – a course further needed if any agreement was to be reached with her rebellious colonies as well.¹¹⁶

Just as during the Duke's own mission to Spain in 1814, his advice was by no means reactionary. His earnest desire was reform: to preserve what was good of the system but to make it workable and to avoid the opprobrium of other powers. As he wrote to the Conde de Toreno, an active politician, one of the original framers of the Constitution of 1812, and someone who wished to see Wellington's personal presence in Spain, 'A tous ces maux de'Espagne il y a un remède, le changement d'un système de gouvernement don't tout le monde avoue les défauts, et son inaptitude pour gouverner l'Espagne'. Wellington did not agree with the actions of France and the other powers towards Spain, something he had tried to prevent, but they should reform their constitution now so 'que le coup, si c'en est un, est donné, que l'Espagne est libre à faire ce qu'elle veut, et que les relations de la France avec ces puissances en égard de l'Espagne sont pûrement défensives'.¹¹⁷ Toreno was not the only person that urged the Duke's personal presence in these disputes during January 1823. From Paris, Frederick Lamb was writing to the Duke privately, telling him that if he presented the court of the Tuileries with a concession by the Spaniards and a 'fear of our taking part' then peace could still be saved. In Lamb's mind '[t]he best mode of doing this would be your arrival with a letter from the King. If you are not prepared to take so decided a line you must expect war'.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Canning to Somerset, 6 Jan. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/754/10 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 8-9); E. M. Lloyd, 'Somerset, FitzRoy James Henry, first Baron Raglan (1788–1855)', rev. John Sweetman, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2014).

¹¹⁶ Memorandum by Wellington to Somerset, 6 Jan. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/755/4 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 1-3).

¹¹⁷ Wellington to Toreno, 13 Jan. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/755/8 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 12-14). See Toreno to Wellington, Paris, 6 Jan. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/754/9 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 7-8) for Toreno's thoughts on Wellington going to Spain – 'C'est là l'intérêt de l'Angleterre, c'est aussi celui de L'Espagne'.

¹¹⁸ Lamb to Wellington, 27 Jan. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/754/35 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 19-20).

In the end Wellington did not embark on either mission to the continent despite Canning also suggesting it. In his own mind ‘he was too great a card to be played unless great & good results were to follow; that it w[oul]d only make bad worse if he failed, & that he did not think he ought to go unless it was ascertained that he w[oul]d be well received by all parties’. Furthermore, highlighting the Duke’s sense of his own place in the foreign policy apparatus of Europe, and of his own experience of diplomacy, he thought that if he did go ‘it sh[oul]d be upon his own responsibility, not as accredited by the Government here; that he w[oul]d go as an individual anxious to serve the Spanish nation, & free to do it in the way he judged best & unfettered by any orders from home’. Certainly he would never repeat the Verona trip ‘where his hands were tied & he was met at every step by orders from home’.¹¹⁹ These conditions were sufficient to see that he did not leave for the continent but, nevertheless, he did believe that it was through British influence at Paris where the best hope for a peaceful resolution lay.¹²⁰ Mrs Arbuthnot noted in her journal after being shown various papers by Wellington how Sir William A’Court (later 1st Baron Heytesbury), the British envoy and minister plenipotentiary to Spain, had stated ‘his conviction that the only remaining hope of peace rested upon our friendly relations with France & the influence we might have in her Councils’. This aligned completely with Wellington’s outlook. However, it would not be easy to act upon. Wellington told Mrs Arbuthnot: ‘the misfortune is that Mr. Canning has adopted a tone of great harshness & acrimony with the French Gov[ernmen]t, which much necessarily lessen our influence’.¹²¹

This influence would shortly take another blow by Canning in his response to the speech to the French Chambers by Louis XVIII. That speech seemed to confirm that French intervention would happen, and happen on the basis of the principles of legitimacy as set out at Troppau and Laibach: ‘Let Ferdinand be free to give to his people the institutions they cannot hold but from him’.¹²² Canning proposed at once to pick up the gauntlet: ‘If there was to be a war, not of armies, but of opinions, then

¹¹⁹ 3 Feb. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 211. Bathurst uses the same phrasing to Wellington in a letter in late February on the issue: ‘You are too great a card to be employed on such an adventurous mission’. Bathurst to Wellington, 25 Feb. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/756/31 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 46).

¹²⁰ See also Wellington to Lamb, 5 March 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/759/4 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 63-5).

¹²¹ 24 Jan. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 206.

¹²² Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, pp. 77-8.

British public opinion was to count'.¹²³ This entire attitude and the line Canning proposed to take jugged completely against Wellington's own preferences and views. The Duke simply did not believe in using public opinion to buttress the British position, but instead felt that to do so weakened it. Wellington wrote a long memorandum to Canning on the topic of his intended speech. For the Duke:

the question is not whether the allies have behaved well or ill, but whether the minister of the crown in the House of Commons can impeach their conduct; nay, more whether if that conduct is impeached he can avoid so far to defend them as to remind the House of their former services and of the friendly relations still existing between this country and them, notwithstanding their recent conduct.

He firmly believed that '[i]t must be our policy not to offend these sovereigns':

In proportion as we are upon good terms with them, we may hope that we shall influence their conduct in the expected contest between France and Spain, and that at all events the best mode of alleviating the evil which must be the consequence of a successful result of the invasion of Spain by France will be to prevail upon the powers of the continent hereafter to join with us to prevent France from profiting by that result by obtaining objects of French or family ambition.¹²⁴

Wellington accompanied this memorandum with a further one on the realities of war should Britain actually get involved. He felt it necessary to take these steps thanks to a conversation he had had with Canning 'in which he found him without any ideas as to the inevitable result of a rupture with France & really imagining it w[oul]d be only necessary to increase the number of our ships'.¹²⁵ Wellington believed this was simply wrong:

We may rely upon it that the first shot we may fire, whether at sea or on shore, will bring upon us declarations of war by the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia, and even the Emperor of Austria and their allies and dependants. This is the natural consequence of what passed at Verona, and we shall deceive ourselves if we do not reckon upon this consequence.

This would mean the end of British influence on the continent. Hanover would fall to Prussia, the Netherlands 'will be obliged either to declare war against us and to join what is already called the continental alliance, or to abandon his dominions; and Portugal, equally with Spain, will be occupied by a French army'. Wellington

¹²³ Ibid., p. 78.

¹²⁴ Memorandum by Wellington to Canning, 10 Feb. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/757/5 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 29-31).

¹²⁵ 12 Feb. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 215.

predicted that ‘It is the greatest mistake to suppose that if we enter this or any war, we can do it by halves, or confine our operations to one branch of our military power and resource. We must deploy our whole force, by land, as well as by sea, and after all we should scarcely have enough to defend all that we are bound to protect’. All of this without taking into ‘consideration of the part the United States would take in this war, though I think that not doubtful’.¹²⁶ Wellington, rooted in his personal experiences of war and diplomacy, took a much lower view of the role of public opinion, and of bluff, in the conduct of foreign policy. The aims might have been the same – to prevent French intervention – but their means fundamentally diverged. Canning did not even touch on any of the Duke’s comments or criticisms in his reply.¹²⁷

This dispute over Parliamentary language and tactics foreshadowed the more general deterioration in the relationship between Canning and the Duke, something exacerbated by an increasing frostiness between Wellington and Lord Liverpool. As early as January 1823, Wellington had been complaining to Mrs Arbuthnot about the behaviour of the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister and even talked of resignation over the issue of the Foreign Enlistment Bill.¹²⁸ Despite Canning’s assurances that he wanted to hear Wellington’s opinions – ‘no suggestion of yours can ever be otherwise than most welcome to me’ – his willingness to listen did not automatically translate into actually taking the comments on board.¹²⁹ Mrs Arbuthnot noted in February that Canning had been discussing the subject of ‘peace or war in a very warlike strain & without the least reference to what the Duke had written to him’ and the following month wrote how ‘[t]he Duke seems very much out of sorts with Canning & L[or]d Liverpool for their shuffling conduct in foreign policy’.¹³⁰ This had merely served to ensure that ‘we are now completely shut out from continental politics’.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Memorandum by Wellington to Canning, 10 Feb. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/757/6 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 31-3).

¹²⁷ Canning to Wellington, 11 Feb. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/756/10 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 33-4). Mrs Arbuthnot commented in her journal about these memorandums, noting that the Duke ‘seems never to do any thing without communicating with Mr. Arbuthnot and me’, emphasising both the closeness of the relationship between the three, and the need to take Mrs Arbuthnot into account as a more important political actor in her own right. 12 Feb. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 214.

¹²⁸ 12 Jan. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, pp. 202-3. Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 205.

¹²⁹ Canning to Wellington, 11 Feb. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/756/10 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 33-4).

¹³⁰ 16 Feb. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 215; 22 Mar. 1823, *ibid.*, p. 224.

¹³¹ 16 Mar. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 223.

Wellington's low opinion of Canning and his conduct was apparent in an interesting correspondence with Richard Trench, Earl of Clancarty, the British ambassador to the Netherlands. The Duke had heard reports of the poor relationship between Clancarty and the Dutch King and decided to write to the former on the subject. Wellington believed that he had been encouraged in a confrontational sense by the Foreign Office and drew a comparison between Canning and his predecessor: 'In my opinion our late friend would have warned you of the position in which you stood in relation to the King' but instead '[a]s it is, and as I think perceived in the dispatches which I read yesterday that, instead of being warned, you had been encouraged and indeed fresh matters of irritation had been suggested to you on the question'. Wellington then referred to a previous conversation, presumably on the issue of the succession to Castlereagh, admitting that '[f]rom all this you will see that I think you were right and I was wrong in the last discussion you and I had together in the room in which I am now writing'.¹³²

Clancarty disabused Wellington of the notion that he had been encouraged by the Foreign Office in his behaviour to the King – 'I am not aware that I have even this excuse to plead in mitigation' – but expanded more on their earlier conversation. He remembered it well and everything he believed had been confirmed since.

Had Your Grace been declared the successor of our late friend and the future permanent guide of our foreign relations, your position and influence at Verona would, I am convinced, have been very different from what they were, and measures, which the world will probably have permanently to deplore might, and I think, would have been avoided.

In Clancarty's opinion, '[p]ersonal confidence with the influence it creates in high quarters, can only be attained by long habits of personal communication on similar interests, nor perhaps even then, unless on difficult political measures, and in difficult times, our late friend enjoyed the confidence and influence in all the leading cabinets of Europe.'

After him, there was but one great trump card in our pack, and it ought to have been played: it was not, and the world is capotted [tricked]. Look yourself to the effect of your own influence, or your return through Paris, and from whence alone we have since derived the slight hopes of peace which have been entertained subsequently to the French proposal at Verona.

¹³² Wellington to Clancarty, 11 Mar. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/759/5 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 65-6).

Farewell, this is a melancholy subject.¹³³

This correspondence highlights a few important aspects of the Duke's relationship with Canning. The suspicion of methods and aims was a significant barrier to an effectual partnership of the kind that Wellington had had with Castlereagh but it reflected a deeper divergence between them. For Clancarty and Wellington to complain of Canning's lack of influence and personal intimacy with foreign statesmen was to forget that it had been for Parliamentary reasons, more than any other, that he had been recommended. While the Duke's experience and preferences pointed towards the methods of Castlereagh, the dictates of domestic politics pointed Canning in a different direction. Not that this did anything to temper the Duke's dissatisfaction. Later in the year he would complain to Mrs Arbuthnot that Canning 'knew no more of foreign politics than a child & had neither temper nor address to deal with foreigners' that he had so managed as to be completely in the dark about what was going on'. He told her once more that he 'repented having advised his having the Foreign Seals & said, if it was to come over again, he w[oul]d cut his hand off rather than recommend such a measure'.¹³⁴ Likewise, the realities of the situation did not soothe Canning's other opponents, the King included. He wrote to Wellington that '[m]y feelings are in complete union with your own in this most important and vital question' of Britain's foreign policy. 'My confidence is in you, and you only, and in placing my friendship and affection in you and with you, I feel safe, happy and comfortable'.¹³⁵ These assurances of intimacy would bring with them their own problems and make Wellington's task of opposing Canning actually more difficult, and bring suspicions of intrigue and feelings that Wellington's views would carry 'more weight if they were unencumbered by royal baggage'.¹³⁶

As the divisions within the government and beyond about foreign policy began to fester, events in Spain reached a head with long-expected French intervention

¹³³ Clancarty to Wellington, 18 Mar. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/758/20 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 70-1).

¹³⁴ 26 Sept. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 259.

¹³⁵ George IV to Wellington, 19 Mar. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/758/22 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 71).

¹³⁶ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 210.

coming in early April 1823.¹³⁷ Canning wished to declare British conditional neutrality in advance of this – to depend on Portugal remaining unmolested, no aid by France in regaining Spain’s American colonies and that the French occupation should only be temporary.¹³⁸ Wellington, however, opposed many of Canning’s premises: ‘I have since turned the whole subject over in my mind, and I confess that the result is a conviction that however good the dispatch is, it is better not to launch it’. An official declaration of neutrality would require something solid where the Duke believed flexibility would be preferable. ‘In respect to colonies, in my opinion, our time of proceeding should vary almost in proportion as France should be successful or otherwise, and I can’t see any advantage to be derived in any quarter by publishing beforehand what our line will be’. On the issue of the Family Compact between the two Bourbon monarchies, which was ruled out by the 1814 Anglo-Spanish treaty, Wellington likewise thought that ‘even upon that point it might be inconvenient to pledge ourselves beforehand to any particular line of conduct’. From his military perspective, he told Canning that ‘[i]n respect to French occupation, we may rely on it taking place in some shape or other, if the French should be successful even only in the military operation, and the duration of it must depend on circumstances’.¹³⁹ In the end Canning rejected Wellington’s reservations and the French ignored British statements resulting in a ‘humiliation for British foreign policy’ – an army of occupation remained in France until 1828 despite all of Canning’s opposition and bluster.¹⁴⁰

Wellington’s advice would be rejected again over the question of sending aid to Portugal. Following the French intervention against the constitutional government of Spain, the Portuguese constitutional movement itself collapsed. Palmella, the pro-British minister appealed to Britain for military aid while the military was reorganised.¹⁴¹ There was no doubt in Wellington’s mind of the need to send soldiers to Portugal if possible: ‘[I]f we have the troops, I cannot see how we can refuse them,

¹³⁷ Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, pp. 190-3; Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, pp. 338-43.

¹³⁸ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, pp. 83-6.

¹³⁹ Wellington to Canning, 23 Mar. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/759/13 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 77-8).

¹⁴⁰ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 202.

¹⁴¹ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 203; B. Collins, ‘The Limits of British Power: Intervention in Portugal, 1820-30’, *International History Review*, vol. 35 (2013), pp. 744-65 offers the best examination of British policy towards Portugal in this period, and with a rare focus and analysis of the role of the Duke of Wellington.

allied as we are to the King of Portugal, unless we make up our minds to give up our position in Europe, and to leave France to act the part which has hitherto been ours'.¹⁴² In Liverpool's mind there simply were not the troops to send and to acquire them would involve recourse to Parliament, something he was unwilling to do:

[t]he question is not, however, about sending them, but about raising a force for this purpose. In this case Parliament must be called, nay, I think Parliament must be called even if you send a force which was now in existence upon such a service. I do not allude to the calling of Parliament as any matter of personal inconvenience to ourselves, but before such step was taken, it would be well to consider all the evils which might result from the debates in Parliament upon a subject of this nature being forced upon them.¹⁴³

This was the opposite approach to that which Wellington took, and furthermore, in his opinion based on a false premise, as he 'indignantly remarked' to Mrs Arbuthnot.¹⁴⁴ The Duke wrote back to Canning pointing out two instances since he had been in cabinet where extra troops had been raised without reference to Parliament. Wellington was absolutely stunned that there could be any discussion of not sending aid: 'It will be said that it is an interference, but it is in fact none. The ancient ally of the country, states an undeniable fact, viz. that his mutinous troops have twice overturned the government of the country' and requested British aid to help 'disband his mutinous army and raise another'. The Duke frankly told Canning that 'I confess that it opens a scene of operations for us in our neutral character and affords an opportunity which I am astonished that you don't seize'.¹⁴⁵ Mrs Arbuthnot recorded it in even plainer terms:

I have never seen the Duke so much annoyed about anything in my life; he says this proposition from the King of Portugal w[oul]d be the most excellent opportunity of replacing us in our proper station in Europe, & shewing to the world that our Gov[ernmen]t is not a revolutionary one, which Mr. Canning's conduct ever since he came into office must have made them feel it to be; that the argument in favour of the measure was an unanswerable one; that our oldest & most faithful ally, the King of a country with which we carry on *seven*

¹⁴² Wellington to Canning, 31 July 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/768/25 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 110-2).

¹⁴³ Liverpool to Canning, 1 Aug. 1823, enclosed within Canning to Wellington, 2 Aug. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/769/3 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 112-3).

¹⁴⁴ 4 Aug. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 249.

¹⁴⁵ Wellington to Canning, 3 Aug. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/770/4 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 113-5).

times the trade we do with France, applies to us to assist him in settling the affairs & gov[ernmen]t of his distracted kingdom.¹⁴⁶

Despite this anger and desire for Britain to act Canning was not moved. He merely told Wellington that he and Liverpool were agreed that ‘whatever may be the ultimate decision upon the subject of it, it is impossible to come to that decision satisfactorily without having had a conversation with you upon it’.¹⁴⁷ Or, in the words of Mrs Arbuthnot, ‘Mr. Canning has behaved with his usual shabbiness in the whole business; for, instead of discussing the subject with the Duke himself, he contents himself with sending L[or]d Liverpool’s opinion – what the Duke calls, sets L[or]d L[iverpool] & him together by the ears & stands by himself to see the result’.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Liverpool was decided against intervention, both for Parliamentary reasons and fears of escalation– ignoring the advice of the Duke, in an arena where he was the most qualified person possible, that only 6,000 troops would be needed.¹⁴⁹

Without the troops he wanted, Palmella tried to resort to other expedients to protect Portugal from turmoil. In late 1823 he sought a guarantee from Britain. This was not a measure that met with the approval of Wellington despite his earlier support for the sending of soldiers. He told Beresford that ‘[b]efore we can guarantee anything, we must know what it is. We must be sure that it will stand the test of enquiry and discussion in the most acute assembly of men in the world’. He continued on that ‘I cannot understand the existence of a guarantee of internal government in any country by a foreign power and the existence of independence in such country [...] In short, this internal guarantee is a novelty in politicks, to which I for one can never consent that this country should be a party’. The Duke also pointed out to Beresford the precedent that a British guarantee of Portugal would set. Should they do that then ‘can we object to the guarantee by France, or by any other power, of the internal government of Spain?’¹⁵⁰ Mrs Arbuthnot a few days later explicitly asked the Duke how he squared off the refusal of a guarantee with the desire to send troops. To this he told her that ‘the troops were to be granted for a *specific purpose* (to quell a mutiny of the troops) which he had no objection to, but what is now wanted is a guarantee of the

¹⁴⁶ 4 Aug. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 249.

¹⁴⁷ Canning to Wellington, 4 Aug. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/769/6 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 115).

¹⁴⁸ 4 Aug. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 250.

¹⁴⁹ Collins, ‘The Limits of British Power’, pp. 748-9.

¹⁵⁰ Wellington to Beresford, 3 Nov. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/777/1 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 164-6).

form of gov[ernmen]t that may be established generally, which w[oul]d cause our Parliament to interfere in every act of the Portugueze [sic] Gov[ernmen]t & is a thing he could not sanction'.¹⁵¹ This is an important statement by Wellington. While Canning has been praised for his 'unchangeable principle of non-intervention', the Duke is conspicuously absent from historical debates about this and about the issue of guarantees.¹⁵² This absence has not only helped to cast Wellington as a reactionary where the picture was much more complex, but also to overstate the case of Canning being a trailblazer in his diplomacy. While some of his methods might clash with those of the Duke, his principles in general did not and were shared more widely by the leading figures in the formulation of British foreign policy.

With neither a British army nor a British guarantee in place instability still ruled the day in Portugal. In early 1824 King Joao decided to take the step of summoning the ancient Cortes. His autocratic son Dom Miguel responded by attempting to stage a coup and Wellington once more proposed intervention to secure Portugal. Trying to avoid the question of resorting to Parliament for an increase of the army, it was instead the aim to send the King's Hanoverian soldiers.¹⁵³ While this plan originally appealed to the Foreign Secretary, he pulled back from it when it was used as an example of Britain being 'once more linked up with the European system' as Princess Lieven described to Metternich.¹⁵⁴ He secured that France would not intervene herself and with that prospect removed was happy to then decline British support.¹⁵⁵ Wellington was furious. He believed it ridiculous to tell Portugal that 'We were willing to give troops & assistance when we thought that France w[oul]d if we did not, but now that we find France will not, we will not & you may get thro' your difficulties as you can'. Mrs Arbuthnot had 'never seen the Duke so angry'. To

¹⁵¹ 18 Nov. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, p. 275.

¹⁵² Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 198; C. Howard, *Britain and the Casus Belli 1822-1902: A study of Britain's international position from Canning to Salisbury* (London, 1974), pp. 1-6.

¹⁵³ Wellington to George IV, 1 July 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/797/1 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 281); Wellington to George IV, 2 July 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/797/7 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 281-3); Wellington to Munster, 13 July 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/797/17 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 287-9).

¹⁵⁴ Princess Lieven to Metternich, 4 July 1824, *Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820-1826*, p. 320.

¹⁵⁵ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 215.

Wellington the British were ‘bullied by France & are abandoning our old ally, who is to be left at the mercy of a rebellious soldiery’.¹⁵⁶

The Duke was deeply affected by this incident. To Wellington, Canning’s removal of support for military aid was just another incident in the ‘tricking & shuffling way in which business is now done’ – which was worse than the lack of aid itself. Mrs Arbuthnot recorded:

He says he never knows what ground he stands upon. To use his own expressions, it is cut from under his feet. In Ld Londonderry’s time he knew that every thing was fairly stated, nothing kept back; but now, nothing is told but what cannot be concealed, that papers are sorted even before their faces & some shewn & others kept back.

Wellington thought that Canning’s aim was to end the Continental Alliance and that if he succeeded ‘we shall have war directly’.

It was an alliance contracted solely for the public good, the Powers of Europe engaging to consult each other & make common cause together; it has kept England in a state of profound peace for nine years, & what the Foreign Ministers (Metternich in particular) say is very true. No power gains so much by being at peace as England, & why can’t she continue a course of policy that produces such beneficial results? The Duke says he is sure that in a few months more we shall either have to reconquer Portugal for the King or we shall see it occupied by French troops & be thus driven out of our last hold in Europe.

The Duke took this very personally.

[H]is whole life has been spent in fighting against the Liberals; that all his honours had been gained in fighting for Spain & Portugal; that the Treaties he had made had promised a long & prosperous peace, & now the work of his life is undone from Mr. Canning’s mere *love of undoing*, from his dislike to a settlement not made by himself, & to gratify his own spleen. For *principle* he has none, he has no fixed project, no plan of action, it is a mere vague desire of change.¹⁵⁷

There could be no starker statement of the rift that opened between the two statesmen over the conduct of British foreign policy and it stated clearly how little they agreed on crucial matters of state. The drawn out battle over the independence of Spanish America would be another demonstration of this fact, and one that dominated these years more than any other.

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¹⁵⁶ 16 July 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, pp. 327-8.

¹⁵⁷ 16 July 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, pp. 328.

The issue of the Spanish colonies in the New World was one that had been around since the war. As has been mentioned previously, at Aix-la-Chapelle Wellington had been invited by the Tsar and France to act as a mediator between Spain and her rebellious subjects – an invitation he had declined. It had further been a question that Castlereagh had addressed and it had been he who had accorded the colonies belligerent rights and had sent out consuls to protect British trade. However, it would take on a completely new light under Canning’s leadership at the Foreign Office. Once more, Wellington and the Foreign Secretary would be agreed on the ultimate ends – that at some stage it would be necessary to recognise the independence of Spanish America – but as in so many other questions they differed fundamentally on the means. For the Duke, this had to be driven by a focus on Europe and the Continental implications of policy choices. Canning, on the other hand, placed much more emphasis on the commercial and parliamentary ramifications. As he was wont to do, Wellington rested many of his arguments on a legalistic basis. This kind of outlook on the one hand lent his views greater authority, but, on the other, endowed them with a rigidity that enabled more flexible opponents to outflank him. Ultimately, this was what Canning was able to do over Spanish America, despite some setbacks along the way.

The European focus and the legalistic slant are evident in some of Wellington’s contributions on the question in 1823. In July, at the height of the arguments over intervening in Portugal, the Duke wrote to Canning to emphasise the need to bear in mind the protocols of Aix-la-Chapelle. Wellington told him that ‘[w]e are bound [...] at least to explain ourselves to the signing parties of those protocols upon all our measures respecting the possessions of any other power of Europe’. In the Duke’s mind he was clear that the explanations of British conduct needed to be completely in line with the actual motives behind it. If the latter had shifted, so must the former: ‘if we alter the ground of our proceeding, if the danger of that country falling into the hands of France, or becoming an ally of America, is the motive for the recognition of its government, we ought to explain ourselves to our allies, and ought to draw our instructions in such a manner as to be able to communicate them’. He was clear that

‘our real motive for making the enquiry and for the new measures should be distinctly set forth’.¹⁵⁸

Two months later Wellington returned to the charge on the need to conciliate the continental powers. The ‘Modern Revolutionists’, and the party that supported them, presumably the Whigs, wished to ‘involve this country in all the expences [sic] and consequences of another extended contest’ but the Government should not. He urged that ‘surely we must not get into a war of notes, at least with our neighbours, peace being our object, only because the editors of newspapers and their Jacobin patrons are desirous of enlisting us in the cause of revolution’. Wellington did not believe the rumours of French intervention in America but regardless of that, he argued that, given the principle of opposing foreign involvement already being laid down, it ‘would be far more conciliatory and more effectual for every purpose, excepting to gratify those who wish to push us to a quarrel, to communicate verbally either with Monsieur de Polignac or with the ministers at Paris, and if there be real ground for uneasiness, explain it to them and call for an explanation of this conduct’.¹⁵⁹

Canning took quite a different line, and one that demonstrated the chasm between their attitudes about how foreign policy should be conducted. He replied to the Duke that ‘[t]he alternative, as it appears to me, is between giving fair notice of what we intend, in time to prevent a collision, or waiting till we are called upon to speak out, with all the allies leagued against us’. European diplomacy for the Foreign Secretary was formulated with assumptions of confrontation, of ‘us versus them’, rather than the spirit of cooperation and camaraderie that Wellington was used to and had worked so hard to foster. Canning continued how ‘[i]t may be very fit that the allied sovereigns should govern the old world as they list, but they have no business to expect that they shall be suffered to extend their continental rule to the new’. In his mind, given those thoughts, ‘we shall do well to take the best chance of avoiding collision by speaking plainly to France while she is yet uncommitted’.¹⁶⁰ While the Duke was at one with Canning on the issue of the need to oppose European

¹⁵⁸ Wellington to Canning, 31 July 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/768/24 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 108-10).

¹⁵⁹ Wellington to Canning, 23 Sept. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/772/15 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 134-5).

¹⁶⁰ Canning to Wellington, 24 Sept. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/771/19 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 137-8).

involvement in Spanish America, they differed in the method: the former by quiet, cautious and private means, the latter by a public statement of the British position. Wellington was concerned that the Foreign Secretary's note would mean that Britain 'will be pledged [...] to a course of action of the expediency of which it might be as well that the government should judge at the time'. Thus the Duke's prescription was that it would be 'desirable to avoid any farther irritating correspondence with our neighbours on an event which appears so improbable'.¹⁶¹ Like the general he had been for so long, Wellington did not want to commit himself to defend a position that enemy manoeuvres could make untenable. Canning meanwhile wished to force them to retreat before they ever got close to threatening his position. Canning prevailed in this exchange, with the result being the Polignac Memorandum, but this episode still served as a further incidence that nettled Wellington against the Minister.¹⁶²

After a short while the dispute was renewed. Canning put to Wellington: '[a]re we bound by our neutrality to suffer France to pick up spoils of Spain, after the conclusion of the war? [...] Would you suffer France to acquire Cuba by cession? If not why Canaries, or Ceuta, or Minorca?'¹⁶³ Wellington dismissed these as rumours. For him, 'we should avoid to notice such reports until we shall have some ground to stand upon; such ground must be afforded'.¹⁶⁴ Taking a familiar stance, he told the Foreign Secretary that 'there is neither dignity nor advantage to be derived from angry discussions upon reports of designs which are so vague, as to be entirely unworthy of attention'. The Duke concluded by telling Canning:

In entering upon this question, therefore, I confess I feel very anxious that we should know exactly the ground upon which we stand, and that we should place ourselves in that which we can certainly maintain, that the justice of our case in every part of this transaction should be clearly brought forward, and that

¹⁶¹ Wellington to Canning, 25 Sept. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/772/19 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 138-9). See also Wellington to Liverpool, 17 Oct. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/774/10 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 152-3): 'I [...] anxiously recommend that we should proceed with the utmost moderation and should shew the justice of our cause in every stage of this transaction, if we mean, as we must mean, that the country should not be involved in war'.

¹⁶² Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, pp. 114-21. This incident was the occasion for preferring to 'cut his hand off rather than recommend' Canning for the Foreign Office again which was discussed above. 25 Sept. 1823, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, pp. 258-9.

¹⁶³ Canning to Wellington, 21 Oct. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/773/21 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 154).

¹⁶⁴ In a deleted sentence in the archival version of this letter, Wellington goes further than this: 'It is really necessary that we should have facts which are undoubted before us in taking these subjects into consideration, otherwise we should get into a war of words, of which the result will be to expose us to the suspicion that we are jealous of the French success and regret that we did not interfere ourselves.' Wellington to Canning, 24 Oct. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/774/15.

although our object should be distinctly stated, our tone should be very moderate. We must by all means keep out of this disgraceful contest, or we should not satisfy the King or the publick of this country.¹⁶⁵

A few days later Wellington described the situation with Spain over the independence of her colonies as ‘the worst scrape we have ever been in’, and once again urged Canning that ‘we should proceed in this question with as much moderation as is possible’. He was clear eyed about the question and argued that ‘[t]here cannot be a greater misfortune for this country than to get into a war with a country which in fact it cannot injure. In truth, we cannot injure Spain’ whereas ‘Spain might do us as much injury as all the Powers of Europe leagued against us; and we should soon see the Adventurers and Revolutionists of the whole world in the service of the Rey Neto against us as willingly as they entered the service of the Cortes against France’.¹⁶⁶ Even if that overstated the threat from Spain, Wellington was certainly right in the limited capacity of Britain to exert influence on Spain on this question. With no colonies to seize from her, the traditional British method of pressure was lost and there was no suitable alternative that would not bring on the ire of Europe – something Wellington was ever keen to avoid.

All of these disputes were just a prelude to the main struggle that would take place in 1824 over whether to recognise the independence of the Spanish colonies or not. This would stretch the relationships of the Cabinet to breaking point and bring about underhanded tactics from all side as they attempted to prevail, from the withholding of dispatches and information, to the connivance with foreign powers for the removal of the Foreign Secretary as well as resignation threats all round. The first rift would be over whether to accept an invitation from Spain to a conference about her colonies. As so often with the Duke and Canning, the differences emerged not from the substance of the course that Britain’s policy should take – both were convinced it would be inadvisable to accept – but instead from ‘the whole *tone & temper* of Mr. Canning’s intended note’ as Mrs Arbuthnot put it.¹⁶⁷ The Foreign Secretary was typically blunt in his draft despatch, informing the Spanish that Britain considered the separation of the colonies ‘as practically and irrevocably decided’, as well as that ‘any interference by force or menace on the part of any foreign power in

¹⁶⁵ Wellington to Canning, 24 Oct. 1823, Wellington Mss., WP1/774/15.

¹⁶⁶ Wellington to Canning, 31 Oct. 1823, in *WND*, vol. II, p. 161.

¹⁶⁷ 21 Jan. 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 283.

that contest would constitute a case in which Great Britain must act as her own essential interests might require'.¹⁶⁸ Wellington wished that Canning 'might find in antecedent circumstances and in the nature of the case reasons for declining which will give less offence', in particular the circumstances around the failed discussions of Aix-la-Chapelle. This he argued without ever diverging from the opinion that the Conference was undoubtedly something that Britain should not attend. In his mind, Britain was the only power 'which can have any influence upon this question: that influence may be diminished but cannot be increased by using it in consequence of the decrees of a conference; and I think it very desirable [sic] for the sake of Spain herself that it should not be thrown away'.¹⁶⁹ Wellington was not far removed from Canning's basic premises, and was certainly keen to see a conclusion in the independence question that was in line with British interests but how this was to be achieved was tempered by his continuing concern about Britain's perception on the continent. He was not a one dimensional reactionary, nor an ardent fan of congresses, but instead someone with a developed and honed analysis of the need for Britain to remain close to the continental states and not to offend them and risk the exclusion of Britain on questions where she did not have the influence she did over New World affairs. In contrast, Canning told the Duke '[w]ith respect to the form of the answer that is a secondary consideration'.¹⁷⁰

Wellington's opposition to extending formal recognition to the colonies was based on a different basis – the mode mattered. He told the Foreign Secretary in February how '[t]he existence of these countries, their declarations of independence, their wars are matters of fact which must be acknowledged by everybody'. Following from this '[t]he recognition of the existence, de facto, of these governments, and of their rights of war, the appointment of consuls and the appointment of political agents [...] do not go to the recognition and acknowledgement of the right of these colonies to independence, or to question the title of the King of Spain to their dominion'. Thus for Wellington the measures taken thus far had 'acknowledged and recognised the existence of facts, the truth of which nobody can dispute [...] But none go to the

¹⁶⁸ Canning to Conde de Ofalia, enclosed in Canning to Wellington, 17 Jan. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/782/1 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 188-9).

¹⁶⁹ Wellington to Canning, 19 Jan. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/783/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 189-91).

¹⁷⁰ Canning to Wellington, 22 Jan. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/782/8 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 191-2). See also Wellington to Canning, 23 Jan. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/783/6.

question of right, nor has any power a right to call upon us to pronounce acknowledgement of recognition of such right'.¹⁷¹ Such a technical argument was not one to win votes in the House of Commons – a major consideration in Canning's calculations – but it was an outlook that mattered especially to prevent isolation.

Wellington's preferences in this direction were supported by Metternich. The Austrian Chancellor wrote to the Duke stating that '[l]e gouvernement Britannique semble se vouer à un système d'isolement complet'. Metternich, like the Duke, wanted Britain to be a part of the European system and urged him to do what he could to bring it about:

Ce que je me sens en droit de vous demander, c'est d'user de tous vos moyens d'influence pour donner de la vie à ce qui en manqué, et pour tuer les chances de perdition que je vois augmenter journellement, par suite d'un système (ou si vous le préférez) d'une marche, que je regarde comme jugée par le seul fait, que la raison ne suffit pas pour l'expliquer, et bien moins encore, pour le justifier.¹⁷²

Mrs Arbuthnot described this letter as 'the worst written & the most absurd I really ever read' and records some interesting comments about Metternich from the Duke. Wellington told her that 'Metternich always writes ill & tho[ugh]' he thinks him certainly a sharp, clever man, he considers him greatly over-rated'.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, the Duke did agree with some of Metternich's points, telling Sir Henry Wellesley that '[w]e are certainly not upon the most confidential terms with the allies'. Wellington did not place this solely at the door of Canning, however, despite him believing that Britain was 'radically defective in our diplomattick headquarters here'. The conduct of Metternich and the other continental powers was also to blame: '[T]hey should know that even their best friends think that they treat us very ill, and that they can do nothing with us as long as this continues'.¹⁷⁴ Wellington expanded on this in his reply to the Austrian Chancellor. The first time that the division between Britain and the continent became public was at Troppau thanks to the Circular that had been brought forward

¹⁷¹ Wellington to Canning, 14 Feb. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/786/14 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 211-3). A few months later Wellington would write on the same issue that '[t]he contents of these dispatches become then of infinite importance', once again demonstrating the weight he placed on the modes of business. Wellington to Canning, 28 March 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/789/16 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 240-2).

¹⁷² Metternich to Wellington, 11 Feb. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/784/14 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 207-8).

¹⁷³ 20 Feb. 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 288.

¹⁷⁴ Wellington to Sir Henry Wellesley, 24 Feb. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/786/25 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 221).

‘without the knowledge of our plenipotentiary’. This situation continued at Verona where Wellington had ‘ventured to foretell to Your Highness the consequences to the alliance in general of the state of “isolement” in which I was left’. He continued on that he did not:

pretend that upon either occasion the allies were bound to abandon their object to please the councils of this country; but, I contended then, as I do now, that as it was an object to the allies upon both occasions to carry this government with them, as far as it could go, it would have been wise to conduct these transactions in such manner as that at least it might not be apparent to the world that we were separated from the allies, and that the well-meaning people of this country might not have been accustomed to consider that separation as a benefit instead of an of an evil.

In Wellington’s view it was ‘neither *les choses* themselves nor *les hommes* who have transacted them that have occasioned the mischief, but the mode in which the transactions which have taken place have been carried on’. In this way the Duke extended his criticism of Canning to Austria and the other Allies, highlighting that these were based on a broader conception of how international affairs should be conducted.

Moving onto the matter of the independence of Spanish America, once again Wellington believed that the continental powers had not given necessary consideration to Britain’s position. Britain ‘no doubt possesses [sic] a preponderating influence’ on that matter and a ‘strong interest is likewise felt upon it in the country’ which had ‘their influence in Parliament and even in the cabinet’. The Duke believed that ‘[u]nder these circumstances it would have been desirable [sic] to endeavour to conciliate this government towards the councils of allies, and to take care that there should be nothing either in the proposition itself or in the mode of making it which should insult us or remind us of “isolement”’ – a condition that had not been forthcoming. This was a damning volley by someone that Metternich considered a friend of his system, and who he had called upon to do his utmost to counter Canning. The Duke’s dissatisfaction at the Austrian’s conduct at Verona, which has been explored above, would have a long lasting impact on his personal relationship with Metternich and for Anglo-Austrian relations. Wellington ended his letter with a defence of the British government’s conduct, despite his own criticisms of it: ‘But this I must say, that there is no act of this government, there is scarcely a word in any publick document of which any power can complain’. He continued to urge Metternich, ‘who in many respects

[was] placed in the centre of Europe and at the head of its councils' to do Britain 'justice; and that you will endeavour by your influence and example to prevail upon others to consider our real situation and to conduct themselves towards [Britain] in the manner which is becoming on account of the station we will and the mode in which we have always conducted ourselves, and this for their own sakes as well as for the sake of the world at large'.¹⁷⁵ The Duke returned to this theme in a later letter. He told Metternich how the feelings against cooperation with the continental powers were by no means limited to the usual agitators: 'This sentiment prevails among moderate, well-judging men to as great a degree as among political adventurers and fanatics'. Wellington stressed that '[t]he allies ought to be aware of these facts and ought to shape their measures in such manner as to carry this country with them, which is at least as necessary for their interest and welfare as it is for ours'.¹⁷⁶

While Wellington was critical of the conduct of the continental powers towards Britain, he had not eased up in his disapproval of some of Canning's tactics. This was apparent in the dispute over the publishing of papers, the Polignac Memorandum the most important, in the Commons in March 1824. On this matter Wellington told Lord Liverpool that 'I differ positively with the government on this proceeding' though he was 'not desirous of giving any farther trouble in a subject on which I believe nobody was of the same opinion'. The Duke's outlook on this fundamentally contrasted with the Prime Minister's and the Foreign Secretary's. For Wellington, '[t]he moment the government lay papers before Parliament on any political question, the decision is no longer practically in their hands'. With discussions still on-going, the 'consequence of producing these papers at present is that Parliament must form a judgement upon the whole subject, which must have its influence hereafter whatever form it may assume and however disadvantageous whenever the final decision made'. Furthermore, to release papers to Parliament would have an impact on Europe: 'Foreigners who have witnessed and are aware of the caution and reserve with which we are in the habit of

¹⁷⁵ Wellington to Metternich, 24 Feb. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/786/26 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 221-6).

¹⁷⁶ Wellington to Metternich, 4 May 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/793/5 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 260-1).

communicating papers of this description to Parliament, will see in this act a desire to throw it out of our own hands'.¹⁷⁷

In this matter Wellington rather missed the point of Canning's parliamentary tactics – in part because they were aimed against the Duke. Mrs Arbuthnot recorded how Wellington believed 'the system of publishing papers upon subjects still in a course of negotiation [sic] very bad, & it prevents the Minister being as free & unfettered as he otherwise w[oul]d be'.¹⁷⁸ This was the appeal of the move as 'Canning resorted to his favourite weapon of publicity'.¹⁷⁹ Taking it to the public sphere meant that the Foreign Secretary was setting his policy in stone and removing it as a topic of discussion by his biggest Cabinet critic – Wellington. Liverpool worded it in a more conciliatory manner to the Duke of course:

I sincerely believe that the production of these papers, so far from embarrassing our course in future, will give us a latitude both as to negotiation, if Spain should resist our good offices, and as to the time and circumstances of recognition, of which we should find ourselves wholly deprived by any unwillingness, or even backwardness, to explain our past policy and our present position as to Spain and the American provinces.¹⁸⁰

Nevertheless, there was a crucial divergence between the tactics and outlook of the Duke and his cabinet colleagues. While in 1824 this would be a relatively minor flash point, as the 1820s went on Wellington's position would become increasingly out of touch with the needs of British diplomacy and parliamentary politics – bringing them into conflict rather than using the latter as a prop to the former.

One other area where Wellington differed substantially with Canning was on Ireland, where they took opposing sides on the issue of Catholic Emancipation, and the Duke drew comparison between the question there and that of Spanish America. In this Wellington foreshadowed a criticism that was used against Palmerston in his pomp over the following decades when he was highlighting the case of suppressed minorities and groups while ignoring the irony of the situation in Ireland. For the Duke 'considering what is passing' in that country and 'what all expecting will occur [...] before long, the bad with hope, the good with apprehension and dread' he was clear

¹⁷⁷ Wellington to Liverpool, 5 Mar. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/789/2 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 228-9).

¹⁷⁸ 8 Mar. 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 292.

¹⁷⁹ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 136.

¹⁸⁰ Liverpool to Wellington, n.d. c. 5 Mar. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/787/6 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 242-3).

that ‘we must take care not to give additional examples in these times of the encouragement of insurrection, and we must not be induced by clamour, by self-interested views, by stock-jobbing, or by faction, to give the sanction of our approbation to what are called the governments of these insurgent provinces’ by means of diplomatic recognition. These arguments were tied to the overriding one of the risk of war: ‘The preservation of peace must be our object, and if we must have war we must not be forced into a continental contest single handed with France having all Europe for her well wishers if not for Allies’. Wellington concluded:

Considering what an interest we have in the preservation of peace; the delicacy of our position in Portugal, and the chances, and even probability of a civil war in Ireland; and on the other hand, the interest which all European Powers feel on this question, and with what anxiety even our best friends view our conduct in relation to it; there ought to be a very strong and manifest interest, bordering upon, if not amounting to, an absolute necessity, which should induce us to take any further step.¹⁸¹

In this wish the Duke would be completely out of step with the direction of policy. In July 1824 the cabinet finally agreed to formally move towards recognition in a memorandum to George IV. This divided Spanish America into five parts: Peru, Chili, Mexico, Columbia and Buenos Ayres. In the first four areas the situation was still too fluid or the knowledge of what was happening uncertain. However, in the case of Buenos Ayres ‘there does not appear to be any such circumstances of disqualification’. Their separation from Spain, the absence of conflict, ‘the settled state of the Government’ and ‘the extent of the commerce of Buenos Ayres with this country’ thus ‘satisfied Y[our] M[ajesty]’s servants that they best perform their duty in humbly advising Y[our] M[ajesty] that the time is arrived for taking some decisive step towards the establishment of relations with Buenos Ayres’. Woodbine Parish, the Consul-General there, would therefore be empowered to negotiate a commercial treaty.¹⁸² This measure was not conceded by Wellington without the usual tussle with Liverpool and Canning. The Duke came away very bitter from the experience. Mrs Arbuthnot wrote that he believed that the Prime Minister ‘is opposed to every thing he wishes & is anxious to make a quarrel with him’. Nevertheless, Wellington was willing

¹⁸¹ Wellington to Canning, 12 June 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/795/8 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 277-8).

¹⁸² Cabinet Memorandum, 23 July 1824, in A.G. Stapleton, *George Canning and his Times* (London, 1859), p. 399; Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 144; W. Hinde, *George Canning* (London, 1973), pp. 364-5.

to see the negotiation of a commercial treaty which he believed ‘w[oul]d be *in fact* acknowledging them to be independent, & w[oul]d give no offence to Spain as we have always contended for the right to do whatever was necessary for the protection of our own subjects’.¹⁸³

This agreement quieted matters for most of the remainder of 1824 as more information was gathered and negotiations pursued but at the end of November the fight was renewed. Lord Liverpool and Canning circulated a memorandum that argued ‘[t]he period is now arrived when it appears necessary to review the state of our relations with the provinces of Spanish America, and to consider the language which it may be proper to recommend to the King to hold in his speech to Parliament’. After recounting the circumstances of the rebellions it then proceeded to ask ‘are there any circumstances extrinsic to this internal character which should longer delay the recognition of the independence of such of those states as have established their independence “de facto” and have constituted governments capable of maintaining relations of peace and amity with other powers?’ The memorandum concluded by pointing out the threat from the United States of America. Menacingly, it argued that ‘[s]ooner or later we shall probably have to contend with the combined maritime power of France and of the United States’. But Spanish America offered a balance. ‘The disposition of the new states is at present highly favorable to England. If we take advantage of that disposition we may establish through our influence with them a fair counterpoise to that combined maritime power. Let us not then throw the present golden opportunity away, which once lost may never be recovered’.¹⁸⁴ Given all these points, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were of the opinion that recognition needed to be extended to Mexico and Columbia in addition to Buenos Aires.¹⁸⁵

Wellington disagreed fundamentally with this argument. While he admitted that at some stage it would be necessary to ‘recognize their existence as independent

¹⁸³ 19 July 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 329.

¹⁸⁴ Copy of Memorandum from Canning to Wellington, 30 Nov. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/809/11 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 354-8).

¹⁸⁵ Canning was much more circumspect in his diplomatic correspondence, praising Parish for delaying to conclude the commercial treaty with Buenos Aires as the government there had not been sufficiently united. Canning told him: ‘It is one thing to treat with Governments when actually established and consolidated; it would have been another to do anything which might have been construed into a help towards that establishment and consolidation’. Canning to Woodbine Parish, No. 9, 26 Dec. 1824, FO 118/1 in *Britain and the Independence of Latin America 1812-1830: Select Documents from the Foreign Office Archives*, vol. I, ed. C. K. Webster (London, 1938), p. 120.

states', the Duke was 'convinced that in a view to our own internal situation, to our relations with foreign powers, to our former and to our existing relations with Spain, considering the mode in which the contest with these states has been, and to our honour and good name, the longer the establishment of such relations is delayed the better'. In Wellington's mind there was nothing in the situation in late 1824 that differed enough to make any change to the policy agreed in July to only recognise Buenos Aires by commercial treaty. He urged Lord Liverpool to 'ascertain the real opinions of your colleagues and that of the public' before pledging the government in the King's Speech: 'Excepting one, I believe the former are either disinclined to stir farther in the question, or are indifferent about the matter. All that they wish for is that the peace should be uninterrupted'. He was also sceptical about the public's wish for forward moves to be made in the question. Wellington was very critical of the Government's course on this question. He asked the Prime Minister: 'has it never occurred to you that we lost the best fruits of the late war by our connivance at the private wars of the King's subjects in those countries?' Furthermore, 'the state in which we find ourselves in Europe at present is to be attributed in a great degree to our conduct in this very question?' Wellington was being disingenuous with this line of questioning. While he did believe sincerely that the Government was going too far, he had supported earlier moves towards recognition and was not so blind to the reality of the situation in Spanish America as to believe that what had happened there could have been stopped or reversed. Nevertheless, he did view this matter seriously. He said to Liverpool how he:

came into the government to support yourself and the principles in which you had been acting, and for which we had struggled in the field for such length of time. I should wish to go on as I have done, and nothing makes me so unhappy as to differ in opinion with you. But as you know, I am not inclined to carry these differences farther that is necessary, and I have and shall invariably advise His Majesty to follow the advice of his cabinet.

But I can easily conceive that it must be equally irksome to you to have a colleague whose opinion upon any subject is so decidedly different from yours, and I can only assure you that I am ready whenever you wish it to ask the King's leave to retire from his service.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Wellington to Liverpool, 7 Dec. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/808/5 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 364-6).

Despite this threat of resignation, Liverpool did not back down. He assured Wellington ‘that nothing could give me more sincere pain, privately or publicly, than your separation from any cause from the government’. Nevertheless, he told the Duke that ‘I can most truly say that my opinion has not been hastily formed, and that I conscientiously convinced that if we allow these new states to consolidate their system and their policy with the United States of America, it will, in a very few years, prove fatal to our greatness if not endanger our safety’.¹⁸⁷ Wellington did not follow through with his threat after receiving the letter. Mrs Arbuthnot wrote in her journal that while the Duke thought British policy towards Spanish America had ‘been impolitic in the extreme from the beginning’ and had been ‘doing all we can to raise up powerful rivals [...] Now, however, his anxious desire is that the steps we may be obliged to take sh[oul]d be such as not to embroil us with the European powers, & he thinks the Commercial Treaty proposed the best course that can be adopted’.¹⁸⁸

Nevertheless, the Duke conceded the point and even facilitated the acceptance of the measure by the King.¹⁸⁹ The concession of the extension of negotiations for commercial treaties in December 1824, for all intents and purposes settled the question of Spanish America.¹⁹⁰ Backing down on the matter of recognition was eased by a minor victory for Wellington on the question of the French occupation in Spain, though even this was achieved acrimoniously – Mrs Arbuthnot writing how she had ‘never seen the Duke so much annoyed upon any subject’ (she seemed to have been in a constant state of surprise at Wellington’s anger during these years). Tellingly though, and in a description recognisable to any student of former generals in civilian life, she wrote how ‘tho[ugh] war is his trade, he is always the advocate of peace & says he cannot think without horror of all the miseries of war being inflicted upon

¹⁸⁷ Liverpool to Wellington, 8 Dec. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/807/6 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 366).

¹⁸⁸ 16 Dec. 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 366.

¹⁸⁹ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 219-20. After their meeting the King wrote how he ‘would not be able to manage without the Duke to confide in’. George IV to Wellington, 17 Dec. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/807/16 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 368). See also Wellington to George IV, 18 Dec. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/808/10 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 373-4).

¹⁹⁰ ‘The King readily admits Lord Liverpool’s statement that the recognition at this time of the South American provinces was certainly in opposition to the King’s own judgment; but the King hopes as the step has been taken that it will prove a measure full of the beneficial results which are anticipated, by adding to the prosperity of this country without interfering with the general peace and tranquillity of Europe.’ George IV to Liverpool, 30 Jan. 1825, Wellington Mss., WP1/810/23 (also in *WND*, vol. II, p. 404). See also Wellington to Canning, 19 Mar. 1825, Wellington Mss., WP1/815/14 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 428-9).

Europe again because one man has a bad temper, for there is not a pretence at a national interest in the whole business'.¹⁹¹

The arguments and disputes of these years would leave a bitter mark on all involved. Certainly, the conduct of foreign policy in the cabinet seemed more like that of enemies than colleagues. Despite some setbacks and delays, often the result of Wellington's opposition, Canning emerged the victor in all the important questions – in the process completely changing the style, if not the objectives, of British diplomacy. Its tone, much to the Duke's chagrin, could not have been much more different than that of only a few short years previously. At the same time, Wellington emerged as a keen critic of the Foreign Secretary and the nexus of an internal opposition to him – one that at this stage included the King.

Shortly before joining the cabinet for the first time in 1819, Wellington had been asked by the Tsar to sit in judgement of the question of Spanish America. Then at the height of his European influence, with a friend and ally as Foreign Secretary, the Duke exerted unprecedented sway over the affairs of the continent. By December 1824, having faced defeat at the hands of a new Foreign Secretary, Wellington was in a very different position. His impact on Britain's foreign policy was as great as ever, but it was not in a constructive manner. Instead he opposed, delayed and complained about its conduct. Wed to his own brand of diplomacy, which has been characterised above as pragmatic internationalist legitimism, Wellington proved inflexible to the more parliamentary slant of Canning's foreign policy. These tensions would continue to haunt both during their remaining time in office together. But as the issues of the New World receded, and the Eastern Question instead took over a new prominence, these relationships and the Duke's power in Cabinet would shift and change, eventually embarking both Canning and Wellington on their own courses to Downing Street and the premiership.

¹⁹¹ 10 Dec. 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 365.

Wellington and the Near East I: St. Petersburg to Downing Street, 1826 –1828

The myriad of questions in western and central Europe had been the overriding issues for the Great Powers during the first ten years after Vienna. Wellington's career up to this point had been intimately linked with the development of British diplomacy in these areas. However, over the latter years of the 1820s problems in the Near East would come to dominate the foreign policy of Europe, and the Duke would play a central role in how they developed. Few diplomatic issues of the nineteenth century posed a more dangerous minefield for Britain's government than the Eastern Question at this time. It first erupted in 1821 when the Greeks first rose up in revolt against their Ottoman suzerains and it had been a live issue from then onwards. For conservatives across Europe this raised difficult questions, none more so than in St Petersburg, as the desire to crush revolution in all its forms clashed with religious and cultural sympathy for the Christian subjects against their Turkish overlords. This manifested itself even in Britain. Lord Aberdeen initially contributed to the appeal of fellow classicist Dr John Lemprière for subscriptions to aid the Greek cause. He had to be dissuaded by the Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst, because of the trouble that it might bring for the government, not to mention the atrocities the rebels themselves were committing.¹ At the same time, Russia remained on the verge of war with the Porte, thanks not only to Greece, but also because of simmering resentments and complications following the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest. To cloud matters further, France was making efforts to regain her previous position in the Levant. This chapter will chart Wellington's involvement in the Eastern Question, from his mission to St

¹ M.E. Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen: A political biography* (London, 1983), pp. 199-200.

Petersburg in 1826 through to his appointment as Prime Minister in early 1828 and the concomitant shift of this matter from the private diplomatic sphere to the public political one.

During this period the Eastern Question meant the ramifications of the Greek Revolt and the Russo-Turkish War which eventually emerged from it. The term 'Greek' did not denote a specific territory, but instead Greeks tended to associate themselves primarily with the Orthodox faith, and were found all over the Ottoman Empire, both in Europe and Asia Minor, and played an important role in the functioning of the Empire itself.² Erupting in March 1821, the rebellion actually began in the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, rather than in what would be considered Greece itself, by the crossing of the Pruth by 3,000 men commanded by Alexander Ypsilantis. By the summer, his force had been crushed but once the rebellion began it sparked a further revolt in the Morea peninsula, the modern Peloponnese. Though the Turks reversed some of the rebels' initial successes, this revolt proved much more enduring. The Sultan was unable to crush it, much to the disappointment of those such as Metternich who realised the seeds for future trouble lay in the dissolution of Ottoman rule in Europe. In 1824, the powerful Pasha of Egypt, Mehemet Ali was called in to aid the Sultan and by April 1825 the revolt in Crete had been suppressed and Egyptian forces were landing in the Morea.³

Meanwhile, for a number of years the Powers had attempted to restore peace to no avail. Russia was unique amongst the other Great Powers of Europe as the Tsar had substantial grievances of his own against the Porte, due to disagreements coming out of the Treaty of Bucharest. The Greek Revolt added to these complications. The rapid growth of the port of Odessa as an exporter of agricultural produce from the South of Russia depended largely on Greek merchants as the carriers, something the Porte was eager to end. To counter it, the Sultan exercised his right to seize any goods in ships within the Straits to feed Constantinople, a course which angered all the Powers, not just Russia. The first conference attempted by Tsar Alexander I to reach a concerted policy on Greece proved abortive, and a second, despite lasting more than

² In 1829 Metternich pointed out the inconvenience of the word 'Greek' due to it being used indiscriminately and interchangeably for a territory, a race, a language and a religion: C.W. Crawley, *The Question of Greek Independence: A Study of British Policy in the Near East, 1821-1833* (New York, 1930), footnote, p.62.

³ Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, pp. 285-308.

two meetings this time, also came to nothing as Britain held herself aloof. Britain was far from uninterested in the affairs of the Near East, however, and kept an anxious eye on developments. The death of the Tsar in late 1825 offered the prospect of new arrangements and policies on the question of Greece, a prospect Canning was keen to seize. He dispatched the Duke of Wellington to St Petersburg to reach an accord with the new Tsar Nicholas I, setting in motion a new stage in both European diplomacy and the Duke's career.

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After four years of war, little progress had been made towards a peaceful settlement, and there was concern about the potential repercussions. In November 1825, Wellington informed Mrs Arbuthnot that 'the Foreign Office are rather alarmed at the position of the Russian armies on the frontiers of Turkey, & are rather afraid that the Emperor has warlike views in that quarter & is seriously mediating the project which has so long been assigned to him of conquering Constantinople.' Mrs Arbuthnot went on to record that,

The Duke says the great difficulty in the question is the odious nature of the Turkish Gov[ernmen]t. No power can wish to support them, while certainly they will not accept assistance from any power who will not guarantee their existence, while on the other hand Europe cannot sit quietly by & see the Emperor Alexander make such an immense addition to his power. The Duke advised Mr. Canning to concert all his measures with Austria & France & it was quite necessary we sh[oul]d co-operate with our allies on so important a point.⁴

It was not the threat that Russia provided to India or British imperial possessions that concerned Wellington and the Foreign Office at this stage, but the threat to Europe.

George Canning had no intention of concerting with Austria or France, however. Instead, he had been laying the groundwork for a closer accord with Russia. Alexander had grown frustrated with the policy of cooperation with Austria, which had achieved nothing in the Greek question. Indeed, Metternich, during a trip to Paris, even boasted of his influence over the Tsar and how he used it to prevent Russia from

⁴ 22 Nov. 1825, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, p. 424.

acting against the Ottoman Empire.⁵ This was the final straw for Alexander and marked the end of the Austro-Russian accord that had had such important consequences in Europe over previous years. As Palmer has stated, '[t]he Alliance, if not dead, was certainly buried'.⁶ Countess Dorothea Lieven, who had lost nothing of her political acuity, used the opportunity of her first visit back to Russia in thirteen years to help precipitate a minor diplomatic revolution. Instead of being suspected for her well known relationship with Metternich, she instead denounced Austrian policy to the Tsar. Furthermore, the Countess reassured him that Canning was not a 'Jacobin', despite previously describing him as such herself.⁷

The effect of her meeting was momentous. Alexander had been struck by her statesman-like appreciation of affairs. Meeting Nesselrode shortly after, the Tsar told him of his frustration with the current state of relations with Austria and the other continental powers: 'Compare my conduct to theirs. Everyone has intrigued in Greece. I alone have remained pure'. Impressed by Lieven's representation of Canning and the possibility of cooperation with Britain, Alexander went on to tell his foreign minister: 'If they grasp hands [with us] we are sure of controlling events and of establishing in the East an order of things conformable to the interest of Europe and to the laws of religion and humanity'. Countess Lieven was to be the 'foundation' on which this policy was to be based, and would act as 'a living despatch' for the Tsar.⁸ Given the previous tension between the two powers over Britain's aloof stance over the conferences, Russia could not make the first move. Nevertheless, the Countess was to make it clear to Canning that, should he make an advance, it would not be rebuffed.⁹

Rumours abounded that Alexander planned war against the Ottomans in the spring of 1826, accurately as it turned out. This was an opportunity too good to pass up for Canning to gain a measure of influence over Russia.¹⁰ But, after setting out to

⁵ J. Charmley, *The Princess and the Politicians: Sex, Intrigue and Diplomacy in Regency England* (London, 2005), p. 123; see also 15 March 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, pp. 168-9, for an account of a conversation with Prince Lieven on this incident.

⁶ A. Palmer, *Metternich* (London, 1972), p. 230.

⁷ Charmley, *Princess and the Politicians*, pp. 126-7.

⁸ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, pp. 346-7.

⁹ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, pp. 344-51; Charmley, *Princess and the Politicians*, pp. 121-135.

¹⁰ See, for example, Planta to Wellington, 21 Jan 1826, enclosing a report to George Canning by Francis D'Arcy Bacon on the preparations of the Russian Army for war against the Ottomans. Wellington Mss., WP1/847/8 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 69-71).

join his army, the Tsar died on 1st December 1825, news of which reached London seventeen days later. Some suspected that he had been assassinated, as his father, Paul, had been. Others thought that he was still alive but had been overcome by religious fervour and had gone into a monastery. No matter what the truth of the matter was, the Tsar's death 'echoed through Europe like a thunderclap'.¹¹ In Russia the event was followed by a brief, but bloody, uprising of liberal army officers and a succession struggle. Eventually, Alexander's youngest brother, Nicholas, secured himself on the throne but the 'Decembrist' revolt left a deep impression on the course of his reign.¹²

Much still remained uncertain. Nicholas pledged that he would follow the policy that his brother had been following. Would that mean that the young Tsar would also march into the Ottoman Empire as soon as the weather allowed? With discussions having only just begun over a Russo-British accord over Greece, a pledge of following Alexander still left a great deal uncertain. This was further exacerbated by an indiscretion of the British ambassador to St. Petersburg, Viscount Strangford, that brought forth a stinging rebuke from Canning.¹³ It was in these circumstances that the Duke of Wellington was chosen to attend Alexander's funeral on behalf of the King. In reality his mission was to reach an agreement over Greece. It also had the advantage of removing the Duke from London, and thus securing Canning at least a temporary ascendancy over the cabinet. It was an absence that Wellington's friends lamented. Harriet Arbuthnot wrote in her diary how she could not 'see him set out on such a journey at this bad season without the utmost anxiety & some doubts as to our policy in parting with such a jewel. He is so important at home! [...] [As] the only person that can curb Mr. Canning & Mr. Huskisson in their liberal policy, his loss will be most severely felt.'¹⁴ Even on Greece, Canning was pleased with what the choice of the Duke would mean. Countess Lieven recorded that as the Duke 'would have to make an understanding on the question of Greece, [Canning] would [thus] compromise him and dupe him at the same time – a double pleasure'.¹⁵

¹¹ Countess Lieven, quoted in Charmley, *Princess and the Politicians*, p. 131.

¹² 'When Nicholas had left the Winter Palace on the morning of the revolt, his crown had sat awkwardly and he did not know if he would live to see night fall. He had returned to the Winter Palace an Emperor, the conqueror of a revolution. And this would have far-reaching consequences for his reign.' W.B. Lincoln, *Nicholas I: Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias* (London, 1978), p. 47. See *ibid.*, pp. 17-47 *passim* for an in-depth account of the events of the succession crisis.

¹³ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, pp. 288-93.

¹⁴ 6 Feb. 1826, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 8.

¹⁵ Quoted in Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 352.

As the Duke's instructions were being drawn up prior to his departure, some of the problems that would cause a great deal of difficulty in the future were already apparent. One point on which Wellington and Canning agreed was a dislike of the use of conferences, preferring instead the direct intervention of Britain at the Porte to settle the problem.¹⁶ However, the Duke was aware of the difficulties this mode of proceeding would cause with France and Austria and expected 'great jealousy [...] of our proceedings' from the former. Indeed, he thought that they would 'throw every difficulty in [Canning's] way short of hostilities'.¹⁷ Another issue with which Wellington would have to contend was Russia's separate quarrels with the Porte that threatened war on their own. Arising out of the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest, Russia was unhappy at the non-fulfilment of a number of clauses by the Ottomans, conveniently skirting their own transgressions in not evacuating areas on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. Wellington was nevertheless to deny any right for war between the two entirely: 'The Emperor of Russia must be informed that we don't think he has any just ground of war with the Turks [...] and we must understand from him distinctly that His Imperial Majesty entertains no intention of commencing a war of conquest upon the Turks, in case our efforts to settle the question at Constantinople should fail'. The only ground of war that could be admitted was that of the rumoured plan of Ibrahim, adopted son of Mehemet Ali and commander of the Egyptian troops in Greece, to deport the Greek population to Egypt as slaves and replace them with Egyptians. This cause would 'afford to every Christian power ground for complaint and even for measures to prevent the execution of the designs supposed to be entertained'.¹⁸ The questions of the appropriate role for the other powers in these matters, and that of the separate quarrels of Russia would be pregnant with future problems for the Duke and for British diplomacy.

Despite these potential difficulties, the Duke's instructions were finalised and he set out before dawn on 8th February 1826 on his long journey to St Petersburg.¹⁹

¹⁶ Memorandum, Wellington to Canning, 26 Jan. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/848/14 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 73-5).

¹⁷ Wellington to Canning, 30 Jan. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/848/17 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 76-9).

¹⁸ Memorandum enclosed in Wellington to Canning, 30 Jan. 1826, Wellington Papers, WP1/848/17 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 76-9). See also Bathurst to the Admiralty, 8 Feb. 1826, Wellington Papers, WP1/871/1, which orders the issue of instructions for an ultimatum to be delivered to Ibrahim on the issue.

¹⁹ 10 Feb. 1826, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 10.

With Tsar Nicholas pledging to ‘look to the employment of his own resources’ if his allies do not ‘come effectually to his aid’, Wellington had an important mission before him. Canning instructed him that foremost, ‘our object is, if possible, to prevent Russia from going to war’. It was understandable that a young monarch with 800,000 men at his disposal, with the aftershocks of a mutiny still reverberating, might want to use them outside Russia’s borders. However, ‘every effort must [...] be made to induce the Emperor of Russia to forego, or at least, to suspend an appeal to arms’. Mediation between Russia and the Porte, and the Porte and the Greeks, seemed to the Foreign Secretary the best method of achieving this. Stratford Canning had already been dispatched to Constantinople with instructions on this head, and it was hoped that they would hear of his success soon. If not, a joint mediation of Russia and Britain between the Porte and the Greeks would be proposed. Neither should allow the Russians any right of war against the Ottomans, however. In Canning’s view, there certainly were not sufficient grounds to warrant ‘the commencement of a war, which when once kindled, must, too probably spread throughout Europe’. The fears and legacies of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars were alive and well. The Duke was to dodge the question of renewing the conferences on the Greek question. Canning told him ‘there can perhaps be no more convenient mode of avoiding it than by multiplying the conditions which alone would induce us to attend to it’.

There still remained the prospect of a Russo-Turkish war regardless of the absence of just cause. In this circumstance there had to be either a combination with Austria and France, though both powers were liable to make a deal with Russia about a partition of the spoils leaving Britain alone to defend the Porte, or it would be left to Britain’s ‘single admonition to Russia that we would not see the Turkish power destroyed’. Either way, Canning doubted the possibility of getting the funds from Parliament to support the Ottomans militarily. He drew on the example of the Ochakov Affair:

Is it to be expected that the simple question of balance of power, which was insufficient in the year 1791 to induce the Parliament to check the progress of Russia towards Turkey, before the name of Greece had been heard in recent modern history, would now reconcile Parliament to an active alliance with Turkey, involving in its consequences hostility not only to Russia, but to the Greeks?

Given this, Canning told Wellington that it would be best to ‘take some active measures, which, by restraining the excesses of the existing war between the Ottoman Porte and the Greeks’, might thereby bring about conditions which could change ‘the warlike counsels of the Emperor of Russia’. This referred to the supposed plans of Ibrahim to repopulate Greece. Under these circumstances the Duke should inform Russia of the possibility of British intervention and ‘by that confidence, it is possible that [he] may purchase a suspension, at least, of the warlike designs of the new Emperor against the Porte’ and that intervention ‘may probably save the Porte herself from destruction and Europe from a general war’.²⁰

Under these orders, the Duke made his way to the Russian capital. Stopping at Berlin on the way, Wellington wrote to Bathurst in not very sanguine terms. ‘Excepting in the way of conciliation which is certainly very desirable at the commencement of a new reign, I don’t expect to do much good in my mission’. He believed that once he got into ‘close quarters with the Russian ministers they must see very clearly that I have nearly no means of negotiation in my hands. If they are desirous of peace and of keeping things as they are, my instructions may enable me to get them and keep them in our hands. But if war is on any account desirable to them I don’t think I can prevent it.’ Nevertheless, it was still ‘the most important [question] that we have had under our consideration since the year 1815’. Wellington, like many of his contemporaries, saw the signs of a great conspiracy in the Greek rebellion. It would have happened eventually, but ‘was accelerated by those who occasioned the Neapolitan, and particularly the Piedmontese revolutions’ as well as the ‘Decembrists’ in Russia. Their motivation for speeding up this process was to break the Holy Alliance and bring about war, a war which the Duke had no doubt would turn into a ‘general’ one and which ‘sooner or later we shall be forced to enter as principals, if our essential interests or our honour do not oblige us to commence it’. By comparison, he thought ‘the question of Greek and Turk is trifling’. Indeed, they were acting to potentially set up a rival naval power in the Mediterranean.

Aware of the Parliamentary difficulties of the situation, he conceded to Bathurst that ‘I don’t think our interference to save the Turkish government from the

²⁰ Canning to Wellington, 10 Feb. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/849/7 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 85-93).

hostility of the Emperor of Russia would be tolerated' and nor would the money for even a single campaign be forthcoming, 'even though it was certain that our interference must be successful'. Equally it would be impossible to help the Ottomans against the Greeks and the Duke did not see interference in favour of the latter as an alternative either. With no prospect of victory by one side or the other, the only answer was compromise: 'That to which we must look, then, is an arrangement short of independence'.

Wellington ended this letter with an evaluation of the limits of conference diplomacy, and in doing so demonstrated a considerable degree of convergence with Canning on the matter. The Duke wrote: 'I know nothing for which the Conference is so little calculated as a mediation, whether to prevent war or to make peace'. He had personal experience with this from his time as Commander-in-Chief in France. For Wellington:

The Ministers of the five Powers would go into this Conference, not only not with the same or similar views, but with views quite inconsistent with each other; and the result must be failure. Even if the British government, the only one with any real influence upon any part of the question, could bring the others and the contending parties to a reasonable decision, it would be in the power of any one of the parties to the Conference to defeat the whole arrangement.

Instead of a conference, 'in cases in which we alone possess influence' Britain should not stay aloof and not have other powers 'direct the mode in which that influence shall be exercised; and perhaps after all to have the whole arrangement defeated'. Ever pragmatic, he acknowledged that a conference could gain time, but to participate could endanger Britain's influence with the Greeks and Ottomans, and 'at all events I would not lose the opportunity which the existing circumstances certainly afford of trying seriously what we can do alone to settle this question'.²¹

If Wellington was not too hopeful of ultimate success, some did take heart from his mission. Henry Wellesley reported to his brother that Prince Metternich has such 'confidence in you, that he is quite prepared to enlist himself under your banners, and to leave the interests of Europe in your hands, satisfied that they cannot be placed

²¹ Wellington to Bathurst, Berlin, 17 Feb. 1826, in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 113-6.

in better'.²² Bathurst, like Metternich, trusted in Wellington to do the job, but lamented the limited options available to him. However, Bathurst, also like Metternich, still preferred to proceed in concert with the other European powers. The colonial secretary believed that to mediate the Greek conflict unilaterally would provoke the jealousy of Austria and France who would seek to block Britain at the Porte.²³ It remained to be discovered what reception the offer of British mediation would be met with when Stratford Canning delivered it.

Wellington arrived in the Russian capital on 2nd March 1826, and discussions began later that day that would eventually culminate in the Protocol of St Petersburg, signed on the 4th April.²⁴ Scholarly opinion on the Duke's mission has been mostly critical. Temperley first advanced what has become the stock argument. Wellington 'went off on the false trail', was 'alarmed and bewildered' and was 'induced to sign' the Protocol on Greece.²⁵ For Charmley '[t]he Duke and nuance consorted badly together, and it was Count Lieven who helped to bring matters to what was, from the Russian point of view, a successful conclusion'.²⁶ Cunningham concludes that 'how else does one explain [the Duke's] signature on a document which took up the subject of Greece a mere week after that subject had, according to Wellington, been interred' but that he 'was the dupe of Nesselrode and Count Lieven'.²⁷ This argument has not been challenged thanks in part because of the lack of attention given to this episode by Wellington's biographers. Longford writes of the mission: 'straightforwardness was made to look crude when the Duke had to carry out subtle schemes – a blunt instrument'.²⁸ These opinions have been primarily based on the far from neutral source of Countess Lieven:

²² Henry Wellesley to Wellington, 22 Feb. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/850/13 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, p. 141. Metternich to Wellington, 22 Feb. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/850/12.

²³ Bathurst to Wellington, 2 March 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/851/2 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 142-3).

²⁴ 'Protocol of Conference between the British and Russian Plenipotentiaries, relative to the Mediation of Great Britain between the Ottoman Porte and the Greeks. Signed at St. Petersburg, 23rd March/4th April, 1826' in *Key Treaties for the Great Powers*, pp. 167-9.

²⁵ Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 354.

²⁶ Charmley, *Princess and the Politicians*, p. 134.

²⁷ A. Cunningham, 'The Philhellenes, George Canning, and Greek Independence', in *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters in the Age of Revolution, Collected Essays*, ed. E. Ingram, vol. I (London, 1993), p. 287.

²⁸ Longford, *Wellington: Pillar of State*, p. 126. Neville Thompson devotes no more space or consideration to the mission either: Thompson, *Wellington after Waterloo*, pp. 52-53.

He [Canning] relied on us and the vanity of the Duke of Wellington to get the Greek question pushed on at St Petersburg, but always within prudent limits. My husband, summoned by the Emperor, arrived at St Petersburg a few days after the Duke. By us the question was presented to the Duke in a new light. It was not the revolution that we patronised; we wished to establish in Greece the conservation of order; for it was proved that the Turks were powerless, that we desired a regular state of things, a hierarchical discipline, all of which sounded well in the ears of the Duke of Wellington. He entered full sail into this order of ideas, and on 4th April he signed at St Petersburg with Count de Nesselrode and M. de Lieven the first protocol which prepared for the emancipation of Greece.²⁹

Wellington's mission is certainly not completely free from just censure. He was not the subtlest of diplomats, but then he had not risen to the place he had in European diplomacy on the back of cunning and litheness in negotiating. He was a European figure because of his straightforward and business-like manner in dealing with questions. His status as a person somewhat transcending borders does open him up to a more specific criticism in his conduct at St Petersburg, however. Having been showered with honours from all over Europe, and, indeed, during this trip he had Russian and Prussian regiments conferred on him, he saw it as part of his duty to offer frank advice to anyone who asked it of him.³⁰ As a result Wellington took it upon himself to offer not only detailed comments, but also amendments to the Russian ultimatum destined for the Porte.³¹ Even Lord Bathurst thought this was a questionable action: 'I confess *to you* that I am not quite sure of the prudence of amending the Emperor's Note, for, after all, it is not the measure which you would have advised, even in the amended shape; and, were he to accept your amendments, he will quote you as his authority'. He did, however, admit that Wellington would 'have gained a good deal' if he had stopped the sending of the original draft.³² This episode serves as an example of how the Duke was not always the best *British* representative, and could potentially compromise British foreign policy thanks to his transcending of national roles. A further criticism can be levelled at the Duke's being taken in by the Tsar's professions of a lack of interest in the Greek question, and that his sole interest was in wanting to stand on his own rights against the Porte. More cynicism on the Duke's

²⁹ Quoted in Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 355.

³⁰ Nicholas I to Wellington, 31 March 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/852/18; Frederick William III to Wellington, 18 April 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/854/15.

³¹ Memorandum, Wellington to Nesselrode, 11 March 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/853/7 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 164-6).

³² Bathurst to Wellington, 10 April 1826, in *WND*, vol. III, p. 283.

part here would have certainly been of use, but he did not accept the assertions at face value, with the same told to the French and Austrians.³³

As for the central charge, that Wellington was ‘duped’ into signing the Protocol, allowing himself to go much further than he wished, and securing a Russian victory, there are fewer grounds for criticism. This argument has been able to flourish because scholars have hardly concerned themselves with the Duke’s foreign policy. Although a central figure in all these events, there has been little comment on what his thoughts actually were, and he has often been written off as simply a reactionary. Wellington had made clear to Bathurst when on the road to St Petersburg, he was certainly willing to see changes in Greece: ‘that to which we must look, then, is an arrangement short of independence’. This view is based not only on the military stalemate in the conflict but also on the notion that a truly independent Greece would challenge Britain’s naval situation in the Mediterranean, where ‘we are [...] masters of its navigation’.³⁴ Given his fear of the wider implications of a Russo-Turkish war, which he expected to provoke insurrection in the latter’s European provinces before becoming a general war, he sought to follow his instructions and do his best to prevent that war in the first place, and if that was not possible, to tie Russia’s hands as far as Greece was concerned.³⁵ The Protocol succeeded in doing this. Article III set out that the Protocol would be the basis of any agreement concerning Greece, ‘whether in concert or separately’. With a very real prospect of war, and with no word from Constantinople about the state of the British mediation attempt there, this was a sensible enough addition to secure that any eventual settlement of Greece would be conformable to British interests on the question. Russia could not take the opportunity of war to erect a puppet state under her influence, thus challenging British naval supremacy. It likewise tied Canning’s hands on the question, meaning he could not push further than Greek autonomy on this question, and was pledged to secrecy until Count Lieven’s return to England.³⁶

³³ Wellington to Canning, 5 March 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/853/3 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 148-50).

³⁴ Wellington to Bathurst, Berlin, 17 Feb. 1826, in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 113-6.

³⁵ Wellington to Bathurst, St Petersburg, 7 March 1826, in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 159-60.

³⁶ Stratford Canning was not able to use it in Constantinople until September. Cunningham, ‘The Philhellenes, George Canning, and Greek Independence’, p. 288.

By thus forcing Russia to follow this agreement in case of war, the Protocol went some way to acknowledge officially that Russia had the right to go to war on separate issues. But as Wellington argued to Canning on his return to London:

Our object is to be on friendly terms with the Emperor of Russia, but surely it is inconsistent to have such an object in view, and not to do the Emperor justice where the case is clearly in his favour. The execution of the Treaty of Bucharest, or of any article of that treaty, is quite a distinct question with which the negotiations now pending at Constantinople have nothing to do.³⁷

In an earlier memorandum, the Duke had made clear his thoughts on the matter of Russia's rights in general, and in turn his thoughts on international law and conduct. For him, 'A clear distinction ought to be drawn between rights and pretensions, however well founded the latter may be in consequence of the circumstances which have occurred. Rights are founded upon prescription, the laws of nations, treaties, engagements, etc.; pretensions are created by circumstances.' Russia had certain rights under the Treaty of Bucharest but some of her claims in her ultimatum were mere pretensions, such as the demand for plenipotentiaries to meet on the border: 'The rights of any power may be demanded sine qua non, in a discussion between two powers standing upon a political quality. A pretention, however justifiable, cannot without the semblance at least of an equivalent'.³⁸ For the Duke, rights such as these had to be upheld despite the potential implications for British foreign policy.

Despite the criticisms of Wellington's role in the Protocol, Temperley in particular still proclaimed its importance as a success for Canning's policy. While Wellington was 'cajoled' into signing it, 'without the Protocol it is reasonably certain that Russia would have maintained a hostile attitude' on subjects across Europe and the New World. 'With it Canning was enabled to enjoy a great triumph'.³⁹ Instead of spending 'much time later in trying to explain it away', Wellington was not displeased with the outcome of the negotiation.⁴⁰ What he took objection to was the interpretation Canning put on it, and the latter's moves to bring France into the arrangement without the other Great Powers. Doing so turned it into a tripartite treaty, no longer leaving

³⁷ Wellington to Canning, 30 April 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/855/12 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 310-12).

³⁸ Memorandum by Wellington, n.d., docketed 19 March 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/878/1 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 231-3).

³⁹ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 358.

⁴⁰ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 355.

Britain with the free hand in the eventual case of a Russo-Turkish war that Wellington thought so important.

In part due to pressure from Britain and the other powers, the Sultan abandoned his intransigent line, and agreed to send plenipotentiaries to reach a deal with Russia. The Convention of Akkerman, signed in October 1826, eased the prospect of an immediate war and calmed fears of Russian unilateral action. With the situation in Portugal taking increasing precedence as the year went on, affairs in the Near East took on a less urgent hue. Negotiations continued in the background to invite the other powers to accede to the Protocol. Wellington urged on Canning the importance of maintaining the principle of the Protocol ‘which is not to render Greece an independent state but to reconcile Turks and Greeks permanently by regulating the form and conditions of the dependency of the Greeks upon the Porte’. Should joint mediation fail by Russia and Britain then: ‘the two courts should endeavour to prevail upon the allied courts to give them a more active support even to the length of threatening to withdraw their ambassadors and ministers from the Porte unless the Porte should consent to a reasonable settlement’. Only then the ‘threat of [...] abandonment of the Porte by the powers of Christendom’ should be used to force them into a settlement. Recognising Greek independence in the current state of the conflict ‘would be ridiculous unless we should go to war to protect the independence which we should have [created crossed out] recognized’.⁴¹ However, the powers of Christendom declined to accede. Austria refused to support a precedent of legitimising the division of rebellious subjects from their lawful overlords, and Prussia was unwilling to give her support to it while Austria withheld hers. The only power willing to reach an agreement was France, on the condition that the Protocol would be made into a formal treaty.

Before this could be achieved – if it could have been given reservations in Cabinet, including Wellington’s – Lord Liverpool was taken seriously ill and his fragile Tory government crumbled. George Canning succeeded Liverpool to the premiership, Wellington, Bathurst, Peel and other leading ‘Protestant’ Tories were jettisoned and a number of Whigs joined the government. The result was the most

⁴¹ Wellington to Canning, 12 Nov. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/866/5 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 455-6).

fluid and unstable political combination since the collapse of Pitt's first administration twenty-six years before.⁴² Canning's now undisputed primacy over foreign policy in Cabinet meant that he could conclude the Treaty of London between Britain, France and Russia in July 1827. Its terms were largely the same as the Protocol, but it included the important addition that if either the Porte or the Greeks should refuse an armistice, the three powers should 'exert all the means which circumstances may suggest to their prudence, for the purpose of obtaining the immediate effects of the Armistice', to which end the allied naval fleets would cooperate to blockade supplies, but all 'without, however, taking any part in the hostilities between the Two Contending Parties'.⁴³

The addition of France and the military cooperation between the three allies utterly changed the dynamics of the question in the Near East. In line with all previous statements by the Ottomans, the Sultan rejected an armistice with the Greek rebels, and, inevitably, it proved impossible to impose one while avoiding actual hostilities. The consequence was that the combined Anglo-French-Russian squadrons destroyed the Egyptian and Turkish fleet at the battle of Navarino on the 20th October 1827. Canning did not live to see this event, however, having died in August following a short illness. A number of historians have been critical of Wellington and his government for having 'squandered the position regarding the Greek question left them by Canning in 1827'.⁴⁴ M.S. Anderson criticises them as having pursued 'a policy of drift and temporary abdication of the position in the Near East which Britain had acquired under Canning'.⁴⁵ Temperley said that Wellington's and Aberdeen's policy 'was temporising and feeble', that they 'could not conceive that support of Russia might really be a benefit to Turkey', and that 'the policy of acting with Russia, in order to restrain her from attacking Turkey, was one which none but a great statesman could conceive or execute' with the implication that Canning was a great statesman.⁴⁶ All of these criticisms fail to appreciate that it was not Wellington's

⁴² See Chapter II in *Coalition Government in British Politics: From Glorious Revolution to Cameron-Clegg*, eds., T.G. Otte and J. Black (London, 2011), pp. 55-58.

⁴³ Article II of the Additional Articles of the Treaty of London, *Key Treaties for the Great Powers*, p. 183.

⁴⁴ A. Cunningham, 'Stratford Canning, Mahmud II, and Muhammad Ali' in *Eastern Questions in the Nineteenth Century: Collected Essays*, vol. II, ed. by E. Ingram (London, 1993), p. 28.

⁴⁵ M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (London, 1966), p. 69.

⁴⁶ H. Temperley, *England and the Near East: The Crimea* (London, 1936), pp. 53-54.

government that actually succeeded Canning's. Nor do they account for the extent that Canning's Treaty had already surrendered the initiative and control from Britain by the introduction of France, or that the complex domestic situation acted as a further constraint.

When Canning died, it was not Wellington who was summoned by the King to form an administration, but Frederick Robinson, 1st Viscount Goderich. The former friend and ally of Canning continued his predecessor's coalition but he lacked any of the leadership skills the former had possessed. Immediately, it was plunged into chaos over the appointment of John Charles Herries as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and it never properly stabilised after that. The Battle of Navarino brought the divisions within it into stark view. Mrs Arbuthnot wrote in her diary in early December 1827 that,

when the news of Navarino first came, the Whigs thought it was an immense triumph; L[or]d Goderich did not know what to think. Now, however, they are in the greatest dilemma; they don't know how to back out of it, sometimes meaning to sacrifice Codrington, sometimes willing to go all lengths with Russia. He was positive there must be a break up, and that the Duke would be sent for to form a Gov[ernment].⁴⁷

The situation in Lord Goderich's Cabinet resembled that of the 'seven parties' in Disraeli's administration during the Great Eastern Crisis fifty years later. Views ranged from war at all cost to peace at any price. According to Mrs Arbuthnot's sources: 'the Whigs and Huskisson were disposed to let Russia occupy Moldavia & Wallachia (for which, by the way, they have not the slightest pretence); that Lord Dudley was the same, being governed by the Lievens; but that he & Tierney had divided the Cabinet against them, tho' opposed by Lord Lansdowne.'⁴⁸ Just under two weeks later she noted: 'With regard to politics we have only heard that Lord Goderich, a few days ago, declared he w[oul]d resign if we went on with war, and that Mr. Huskisson declared he w[oul]d resign if we did not (this is known by every gossip in London); Lord Goderich, we are told, as usual gave way, & war we have to have'.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ 2nd Dec 1827, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 150.

⁴⁸ 2 Dec. 1827, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 149.

⁴⁹ 14 Dec. 1827, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 151.

The government's weakness was further complicated by the advantage King George IV took of it. Canning had appointed the Heir Apparent, the Duke of Clarence, Lord High Admiral, without a seat in Cabinet. This contrasted with the customary practice of having a First Lord of the Admiralty with a seat in the Cabinet. Following Navarino, the King and Clarence awarded honours and promotions to the British commander at the battle, Sir Edward Codrington, and his sailors without consulting the Government. The arch-gossip and diarist Charles Greville recorded in December 1827 that 'it has been currently reported that [the Ministers] would willingly have censured Codrington, and have thrown the responsibility of the battle from their own shoulders upon his, if they had dared, but that they were prevented by the precipitate approbation expressed by the King.' He noted that 'these things are greatly exaggerated, but are not without foundation.'⁵⁰

This state of weakness and indecision continued until the government fell in early January 1828, two and a half months after Navarino. No decisive action over the Greek question had been taken, no steps were made to assert British control and events had been allowed to slide further. In November 1827, the Sultan repudiated the Convention of Akkerman, and pledged to use the funds meant to compensate Russia to oppose the allies. The allied ambassadors had to flee Constantinople for Corfu and were forced to use the Dutch minister still in the capital as an intermediary. Temperley and others fail to appreciate the extent to which Britain's ability to influence Russia was limited in those circumstances, even if action had been taken immediately, not to mention overestimating the extent that British power could have a deciding say.⁵¹ Russia had substantial separate grievances with the Porte that she would not allow other states to interfere in, something that often applied to Britain's dealings with Russia over this period.

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Even before the Battle of Navarino, let alone when news of it reached Britain on 11 November, Wellington was looking to distance himself from the Treaty of London.⁵² In reply to a letter from the former Russian foreign minister, leading

⁵⁰ 13 Dec. 1827, C.C.F. Greville, *A Journal of the Reigns of King George IV and King William IV*, ed. H. Reeve, vol. 1, 5th ed. (London, 1875), p. 115.

⁵¹ Temperley, *England and the Near East*, pp. 53-54.

⁵² 12 Nov. 1827, *The Times*, p. 2.

advocate of the Greek cause and the first elected Head of State of Greece, Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, Wellington stressed that while the intervention in the affair of the Protocol took the form of mediation, that of the Treaty rested on war.⁵³ The Duke communicated the contents of both the Count's and his own letter to Bathurst. The latter agreed with the Duke that 'On reading attentively over the protocol I think it quite clear that there is nothing in any of the articles which give it a compulsory character. Whether Mr. Canning has succeeded in his dispatches to give it that appearance is more than I can say, but I am sure the stipulations are free from it' and that he had further 'always consider[e]d the protocol more against Russian aggrandizement than for Turkish dismemberment.'⁵⁴

What is of particular interest is that once news of Navarino had arrived, Wellington treated the matter as one of party politics. The longstanding divergence with Canning on matters of foreign policy was now forced from the realm of the Cabinet to a more public sphere. In his correspondence with Lord Eldon, a fellow former ministerial opponent of Canning, Wellington said 'I quite agree with you respecting this melancholy affair of Navarino. As usual the blame is laid upon us and principally upon me. But I think we are as far from having any concern in this transaction as the moon is from being like a cream cheese!'⁵⁵ Wellington also communicated his correspondence with Kapodistrias to Edward Law, 2nd Baron Ellenborough, who noted: 'The protocol and the treaty seem to have been conceived in a very different spirit and to have been calculated to lead to very different consequences.'⁵⁶ The Duke even went as far as to produce a collection of papers for the defence of the protocol in comparison to Canning's Treaty. Bathurst wrote to him 'I shall be very glad to see the papers which you mention having collected', noting also his misgiving about 'the dispatch about this time last year when Mr. Canning first

⁵³ Wellington to Count Kapodistrias, 12 Oct. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/900/4, (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 136-8).

⁵⁴ Bathurst to Wellington, 27 Oct. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/899/14, (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 140).

⁵⁵ Wellington to Eldon, Copy, 1 Dec. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/904/2 (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 164).

⁵⁶ Ellenborough to Wellington, 3 Dec. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/903/2 (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 165).

attempted to give your protocol a compulsory character. Have you got that among the papers you have collected?’⁵⁷ A few days later, Bathurst wrote again:

I have been waiting with much solicitude for the papers which you were good enough to promise me respecting your protocol, as I find that this protocol of yours is to be the grand point of defence and from the compliance with which the supporters of government speak upon the subject I am afraid that Mr. Canning has in some of his dispatches, not communicated to his colleagues, contriv[e]d to give it an interpretation which it certainly was not intended at the time.⁵⁸

It is quite clear Bathurst appreciated the importance of the matter as one of party, and, in a following letter, he recommended that the former ‘great Greek’, George Hamilton-Gordon, 4th Earl of Aberdeen, should ‘be put in possession of the case, that he may not state his objections stronger than would be consistent with what those with whom I know he is most anxious to act would be able to go.’⁵⁹ Wellington also sent his ‘collection of papers’ to Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville, the former First Lord of the Admiralty from 1812 to 1827, who replied,

If I did not know that the government through their subordinates industriously propagating the notion that their treaty of last July and the battle of Navarin [sic] were the natural results of the course of policy adopted by the late cabinet, and particularly of your negotiation of St. Petersburg, [sic] I could not have believed it possible, after perusing those papers, that any government could have ventured on any proposition so monstrous, or on an assertion so completely at variance with the truth.

He further counselled the Duke that he believed that there was a ‘very general feeling of indisposition towards [Lord Goderich’s Government]’ in Parliament. Melville thought that ‘if that feeling is properly directed and if possible not allowed to fly out in captious opposition and absurd cavilling we shall probably do good to the country, and we shall keep our friends together.’ Crucially though, he thought that ‘if no such system is adopted, I allude again to the House of Commons, we shall do no good and our friends will gradually drop off or will keep aloof.’⁶⁰ The defence of the Duke’s diplomacy in negotiating the initial St. Petersburg Protocol, and the

⁵⁷ Bathurst to Wellington, 19 Dec. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/903/16 (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 169).

⁵⁸ Bathurst to Wellington, 30 Dec. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/903/26 (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 173-4).

⁵⁹ Bathurst to Wellington, 6 Jan. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/913/7 (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 173-4).

⁶⁰ Melville to Wellington, 8 January 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/913/9 (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 183).

corresponding attack on Canning's and his successors' subsequent dealings appears to have been the central plank of the proposed parliamentary tactics for the coming session. Mrs Arbuthnot even noted in late December that Wellington 'says L[or]d Dudley ought to be, & might be, impeached for this Navarino affair'.⁶¹ However, a few short weeks later, Dudley was the Duke of Wellington's own Foreign Secretary following the collapse of Goderich's administration, a circumstance which underlined, once more, the complex domestic political situation at that time.

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With the collapse of Goderich's government, Wellington was called upon to form his own. He set out to reconstruct as close an approximation to the Liverpool Tory coalition as possible but in the end the problems proved insurmountable. Wellington's chief political lieutenant, Robert Peel, insisted on the inclusion of Huskisson and his followers to provide him with speaking talent in the House of Commons.⁶² Lord Bathurst warned that 'though on many accounts Lord Dudley might perhaps be somewhat less disinclined to refuse [office than the Whigs Lord Lansdowne and Lord Carlisle], the offer could compromise you possibly on the Navarino business too much'.⁶³ Even so, Wellington was nevertheless forced to accede to Dudley and the other Canningites retaining their places. To make matters worse, the Duke had fewer of his friends in the Cabinet than he would have liked. With the Canningites occupying some of the most senior positions, and hostile to the inclusion of many Ultras, Wellington was forced to leave out men like Lord Eldon, and John Fane, 10th Earl of Westmoreland. He even had to offer only a non-Cabinet post to his close friend Charles Arbuthnot, husband of Harriet Arbuthnot, an action which almost caused a break between the couple and the Duke.⁶⁴ In these circumstances, Wellington found it difficult to get a firm grasp on the diplomatic situation, and instead was forced to confine himself to preventing what he saw as the full realisation of the Canningite policy – war with the Ottoman Empire.

⁶¹ 28 Dec. 1827, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 156.

⁶² Thompson, *Wellington After Waterloo*, p. 71.

⁶³ Bathurst to Wellington, 10 Jan. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/913/10 (also published in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 185).

⁶⁴ 29 Jan. 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, pp. 159-61.

From the very first Cabinet dinner, held on the day the new Ministers received their seals, the tensions between the various factions, and policies, were obvious. Ellenborough, the new Lord Privy Seal, wrote in his diary of the occasion that ‘the courtesy was that of men who had just fought a duel’. On Huskisson’s opening discussions on the King’s Speech, he noted wryly: ‘I see their object is to procure an approbation of Mr. Canning’s policy’.⁶⁵ However, no caveat on the continuance of this policy had been included in the conditions of Huskisson entering office; these were limited to the financial committee considerations discussed above, and the exclusion of Herries as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Despite that, within weeks of the Government’s formation, there was a significant public debate over continuity with Canning’s policies. In early February 1828, Huskisson gave a speech at Liverpool following his re-election after having been appointed to office. In it Huskisson stated to the electors:

As for myself, I have no desire to retain [office], except inasmuch as I may still be useful to the public, in the promotion of measures which they have stamped with their approbation. I say, then, for the security of these I have a guarantee; that there are to be followed as far as possible, in the manner in which Mr. Canning would have sanctioned and promoted them. (Hear.) I have obtained the best guarantee, I repeat, for these, or I should not appear here as a member of the Government. (Applause.)⁶⁶

The matter of the supposed ‘guarantee’ swiftly became the major talking point. Mrs Arbuthnot recorded in her journal on 15 February that ‘no one has talked for the last week but of Mr. Huskisson’s ridiculous speech at Liverpool and the consequence’.⁶⁷

That consequence was a debate in the House of Lords at the request of Henry George Herbert, 2nd Earl of Carnarvon, on the release of additional papers relating to orders given to Codrington, as well as some further contextual documents. His speech ranged over the principles upon which British foreign policy was conducted, through to the details of the arrangement of the new administration. While noting that ‘the broad principle of non-interference should [...] be the foundation of all treaties between foreign powers’, he argued that it ‘be relaxed, should imperious circumstances demand it.’ For him, ‘the principle of the Holy Alliance had been that of interference; but it

⁶⁵ 22 Jan. 1828, *A Political Diary 1828-1830 by Edward Law, Lord Ellenborough*, ed. Lord Colchester, vol. I (London, 1881), p. 3.

⁶⁶ 7 Feb. 1828, *The Times*, p. 2.

⁶⁷ 15 Feb. 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 161.

had been uniformly exerted, not to put down anarchy, its professed object, but to crush all attempts at establishing free and liberal institutions. Was that a species of interference that ought to be applauded, while an interference with a contrary object was to be Condemned?⁶⁸ Drawing on historical examples, from the reign of Elizabeth I through to the time of Pitt the Younger, he made the case for intervention as a traditional tool in Britain's foreign policy. More especially, though, Carnarvon, justified it in the particular case of Greece with reference to balance of power principles. He contended that

he never would admit that Turkey and Greece formed no part of the balance of Europe. There was a time when they did not. Russia also formed a great and most important part of the balance of Europe. It was a state neighbouring on Turkey, powerful from its extent and position. Now, he would ask whether any one could have looked without anxiety at the state of the Turkish empire—could have seen the distracted condition of that country, and not have felt that the balance of power in the east of Europe was in danger of being broken from hour to hour. Not only had civil war endured for a long period on land, but it had been prosecuted at sea with extraordinary vigour. Could noble lords believe that such a state of things was not calculated to affect the interests of every nation in Europe? Could any one suppose that such a state of things would not give rise to violations of neutrality, and occasion a war, not between one or two powers, but the greater part of Europe?⁶⁹

Interference was then justified as a means of controlling Russian actions. Conversely, if Russian diplomacy was willing to cooperate with Britain, it was incumbent upon the latter to accept it.⁷⁰

Though Carnarvon was not a foreign affairs spokesman of note, his speech nevertheless articulated both the fears of Russia and the government's difficult position in respect to the treaty. Canning's policy and the Treaty of London were meant to control and therefore constrain Russia, thus preventing her unilateral intervention and preserving the balance of power. But the end results were that the treaty had become an instrument for overturning the balance after Navarino. Wellington and the non-Canningites were tied to a treaty that had produced very undesirable results, but that was still a valuable tool for controlling Russia. The Russian ambassador, Prince Lieven, had already informed London that Russia 'claims the right of settling her affairs with Turkey, without intervention of any other Power,

⁶⁸ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 11 Feb 1828, vol. 18, c. 265.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, cc.265-266.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, c. 267.

and attributes it to her own extreme goodness that she has acted with her allies in this case'.⁷¹ In such circumstances, would it be wise to abandon the Treaty of London, without any adequate replacement? Wellington and his Cabinet decided it was not. How to reconcile these contrasting viewpoints was brought up in the House of Lords debate of 11 February 1828.

In referring to the Battle of Navarino in the King's Speech, the Cabinet settled on describing it as follows:

In the course of the measures adopted with a view to carry into effect the object of the Treaty, a collision, wholly unexpected by His Majesty, took place in the Port of Navarin [sic] between the Fleets of the Contracting Powers and that of the Ottoman Porte. Notwithstanding the valour displayed by the Combined Fleet, His Majesty deeply laments that this conflict should have occurred with the Naval Force of an ancient Ally; but he still entertains a confident hope that this untoward event will not be followed by further hostilities, and will not impede that amicable adjustment of the existing differences between the Porte and the Greeks, to which it is so manifestly their common interest to accede.⁷²

To describe it as 'an untoward event' was contentious, even before the speech was delivered. The King preferred to call it 'unlooked for' but was prevailed upon after some small changes to the sentence and the fact that Huskisson and the other members of the previous Government had approved of it. Nevertheless, Peel, now Home Secretary and Leader of the House of Commons, 'thought the word *untoward* would bring us into a scrape'.⁷³

So it did, when Lord Carnarvon commented on it in the debate on 11 February. He argued that it was 'not unnatural that [the British people] should entertain an anxious desire to have the fullest explanation of a case, in which such a strange difference existed between the manner in which it was treated by the government of France, and the dull phraseology, the "untoward" language applied to it by the present administration of this country.'⁷⁴ Although Wellington and his ministers were sceptical of the Treaty and how matters had progressed under the previous two administrations, Carnarvon and others looked to the continuance of the Canningites in office as reassurance of continuity in policy. Lord Dudley, Carnarvon stated, 'had been

⁷¹ 26 Jan. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 10. Lieven had been made a Prince in the honours after Nicholas I's coronation.

⁷² *Hansard*, HL Deb, 29 Jan. 1828, vol. 18, cc. 2-3.

⁷³ 26 Jan. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 9.

⁷⁴ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 11 Feb 1828, vol. 18, c. 267.

lately advanced in a new character, and one in which the country took a deep interest; namely, a guarantee for the fulfilment of the treaty. The noble earl was the residuary devisee of his departed friend's political principles; he had maintained, both at home and abroad, the liberal policy of Mr. Canning'.

The insinuation in the speech was that there had been a compromise of principles on Wellington's part and a guarantee given to the Canningites that the policies of their departed leader would be maintained. Dudley refuted the accusations: 'if, indeed, there was so little honour or confidence amongst [the ministers], that it was necessary to stipulate for each other's principles, they would be, in his opinion, most unfit to act together. No stipulations, therefore, he repeated, had been entered into between them.' Wellington rejected any suggestion that there would be any half-hearted execution of the Treaty of London. On the contrary, it would be carried 'into full and ample execution, according to its spirit, and letter'.

On the question of interference in the affairs of other countries, the Prime Minister dismissed Carnarvon's arguments that such policies were a matter of course:

He did not admit that it was the right of one country to interfere with the internal regulation of another in all cases. No doubt the political position of countries, in some instances, might justify such interference; but such was not the general rule. Non-interference was the rule: interference the exception. That was the only true and safe policy. He did not mean to say that the interference in the present case was not necessary. He himself had been the means of negotiating the act of interference; but that was an exception to the conduct of this country when her interference had been solicited on the occasion of insurrections in other nations.

This is a very revealing statement on his foreign policy views. For Wellington, the proper way to formulate policy was not to base it on abstract ideals or certain liberal political institutions, as Carnarvon had argued. Diplomacy should rather be conducted on a pragmatic, case-by-case basis. As the Government went on, this aspect of Wellington's policy would be increasingly evident, as will be examined in the next chapter. As for sacrificing principles, Wellington questioned whether it was to be believed that he would abandon his principles for 'the corrupt purpose (for such it would be) - of procuring the support and services' of the Canningites. Referencing Huskisson's speech in Liverpool, Wellington affirmed that, '[n]o guarantee was

required, and none was given on my part'.⁷⁵ As has already been noted, Wellington was indeed correct that no guarantee had been given on foreign affairs, but it was far from what Huskisson had said in his speech.

In the opinion of Mrs Arbuthnot, the Duke 'completely gave the lie' to Huskisson in his speech in the House of Lords, but she suspected that the Colonial Minister would 'get out of the scrape by saying that the persons who form the new Gov[ernmen]t area in themselves guarantees that the principles will not be changed.'⁷⁶ Ellenborough in his diary mentions how the Duke had told him how 'for three years he prevented the recognition of the South American States', quite contrary to Huskisson's use of the 'false phrase of Canning's foreign policy and Canning's liberal views as to trade, &c., yet at the same time asserts the Duke of Wellington never thwarted the last or objected to the first'.⁷⁷

Carnarvon's motion, and the surrounding debate about Huskisson and the role of the Canningites in Government demonstrates how far party politics had intruded into the conduct of foreign policy. What Wellington would have regarded as one of the most important matters of state had turned into a matter of both Parliamentary debate and cabinet disagreements. To steer a steady course in such circumstances required tact and personal diplomacy, something for which Wellington was not especially noted. A snap-shot of his personality and inclinations on such matters was recorded by John Wilson Croker shortly after the Duke took office, 'There, Wellington said to him pointing to a pile of green bags and red boxes, 'there is the business of the country, which I have not time to look at – all my time being employed in assuaging what gentlemen call their *feelings*. In short, the folly and unreasonableness of people are inconceivable'.⁷⁸ Even the formation of the new administration and consideration for his new colleagues did not prevent Wellington's continuing efforts to distance himself from the Treaty of London, with correspondence between him and

⁷⁵ Ibid., c. 268-87.

⁷⁶ 115 Feb. 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol II, p. 161.

⁷⁷ 7 Feb. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 20.

⁷⁸ Croker to Lord Hertford, 24 Jan. 1828, *The Correspondence and Diaries of John Wilson Croker*, ed. L.J., Jennings, vol. I (London, 1884), p. 404.

Westmoreland establishing what they had agreed to while members of Liverpool's cabinet.⁷⁹

These were not the actions of someone prepared to back the Treaty completely as the Duke had argued in his reply to Carnarvon. Instead, he had to walk a tightrope of balancing political aspects of policy with what he conceived as Britain's interests. This was a departure from Wellington's previous experiences. Nothing in the Duke's previous diplomatic career had prepared him for the challenges he would now face as politics became front and centre and he could no longer play the quiet, frank and pragmatic role of mediator. Forced to be the face of British foreign policy as Prime Minister, Wellington no longer had an ally like Castlereagh to work with, or an enemy like Canning to blame. His internationalist tendencies would be challenged here, and his brand of legalist pragmatism would prove inflexible in the fluid circumstances of these years. As will be explored next, this complex situation set the stage for the Government's crucial first four months as it tried to grapple with a rapidly changing situation in the Near East, as Russia and the Porte slid towards war. Locked into a policy in which it did not believe, British diplomacy continued to cede the initiative to Russia.

⁷⁹ Westmoreland to Wellington, 29 Jan. 1828, *WND*, vol IV, p. 221; Westmoreland to Wellington, 3 Feb. 1828, *ibid.*, p. 256.

Wellington and the Near East II:

The Great Game or the Old Game? 1828 –1829

As Wellington took office in January 1828, a daunting situation faced him. There were troubled waters both at home and abroad. With the continuation of the Canningites in cabinet on Peel's insistence, there was a discordant element within the government, one which Wellington had been actively preparing to oppose only a few days previously. In the Near East, even darker clouds loomed. The Goderich administration had failed to arrest the drift that had gripped foreign affairs since Canning's death, and to make it worse, had overseen the destruction of the Egypto-Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Navarino. War between Russia and the Porte threatened. The Duke would have to tackle both of these problems. As France was tied to Britain and Russia there were further complications. Despite early hopes that Wellington's ascent to office would herald a peaceful resolution to the crisis, these were quickly dashed with the long-anticipated war breaking out in April. With the mass resignation of the Canningites in May 1828, the Duke gained a more complete control of the cabinet, yet this did little to bring about a more successful resolution to Near Eastern affairs. Britain remained paralysed between the twin problems Russia and France: Britain's two closest allies and two greatest threats. The end result of the Russo-Turkish War was the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople. Expected to bring about the end of the Ottoman Empire as a European power, Wellington and his Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, reacted strongly to its pretensions. While they failed to overturn the settlement, they did succeed in securing minor modifications and, at the very least, the Porte did not collapse. The actions of the Duke's government during this time were an important turning point in the history of British diplomacy as they struggled between two fears, the older one of France, and the ever more pressing one of Russia. In trying domestic

and international circumstances, Wellington never reconciled the two, and the lack of strategic clarity led to an erosion of the British position in the Near East. Though often concerned primarily with keeping France on the same side of questions to restrain her, these years saw the erosion of the primacy of France, and by the end of it, it was Russia that appeared the greatest threat to Britain and to Europe more generally. This chapter will chart the course of this episode, and the difficulties Wellington and his ministers faced in attempting to reach a successful conclusion.

When Wellington took office, he had to deal with a diplomatic situation that was not of his making. As seen in the previous chapter, the Duke had started the process in motion through the negotiation of the St. Petersburg Protocol, which established an Anglo-Russian agreement for dealing with the Greek Revolt by mediation. Yet Canning's Treaty of London between Britain, France and Russia, signed when Wellington was out of government, altered the complexion in the Near East by bringing in France. Despite the Duke's hopes that all the European powers would guarantee the Protocol, it was only France that proved willing. Austria refused to endorse rebellion and Prussia followed her lead.¹ This tripartite arrangement fundamentally weakened Britain's diplomatic position, and reawakened troubling memories as well as releasing new spectres from a diplomatic Pandora's Box.²

It was under thirty years previously that the British had been fighting to expel France from the Eastern Mediterranean at a crucial moment of the late wars. In 1801, with a French army in Egypt, Tsar Paul threatening India and the Second League of Armed Neutrality threatening Britain's naval position, the dangers of Franco-Russian cooperation were clear to Britain's leaders. It is worth noting that Wellington himself was initially intended to command the invasion of Egypt from India that would take place concurrently with the one by Abercrombie, and he proceeded to plan for the job, though various circumstances meant that he did not depart with the army. In the late 1820s, Wellington took on board the lessons of these years, and the ones offered up by the 1807 Treaty of Tilsit that had divided the continent between Russia and France and pledged each to aid the other in their separate disputes with the Ottomans and the British respectively. Though he was not aware of it, there were further echoes of 1807

¹ Schroder, *Transformation of European Politics*, pp. 649-50.

² L. Cowles, 'The Failure to Restrain Russia: Canning, Nesselrode, and the Greek Question, 1825-1827', *International History Review*, vol. 12, No. 4 (1990), pp. 688-720.

when France attempted to redraw the borders of Europe in concert with Russia in the ill-fated Polignac Project of 1829. The Napoleonic Epoch was over, but it still cast long shadows over Europe.

For Wellington, Canning's Treaty of London presented similar threats to the British position. Its implications were more than an abstract and dangerous policy of cooperation in an effort to restrain Russia. After all, that could have been achieved bilaterally with the Protocol. In August 1827, Lord Bathurst wrote to the Duke of the dangers of a separation of the professional heads of the military from the policy makers, when he asked him, 'Do you think for example that any first Lord of the Admiralty having a seat in the cabinet would have consented to a treaty by which we have lost our naval sovereignty in the Mediterranean?'³ The system of ambassadorial conferences established in London, between the British Foreign Secretary and the French and Russian ambassadors, combined with the joint instructions they drew up for the allied naval forces in the Mediterranean, had immensely restricted any freedom of British independent action, either diplomatically or on the spot, and also raised the prospect of being outvoted by France and Russia around the conference table. The concerns Wellington had raised to Bathurst about the potential threat of Greece to Britain's naval supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean had become a reality with the loss of operational independence of British forces with their combination in the joint fleet thanks to the Treaty of London.⁴ With the outbreak of war in the Near East, these factors would have a significant impact on the Duke's freedom of manoeuvre on this difficult question.

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Before examining the policies of Wellington's government further, it is necessary to consider another legacy of Goderich's government, which would act as a major restraint on his policy. Canning and then Goderich had pledged to create a Commons committee to examine the country's financial affairs. The failure of the latter ever to meet Parliament meant that the creation of the committee was still a live question when Wellington set out to form an administration after the final collapse of

³ Bathurst to Wellington, 22 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/895/40 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 104-5).

⁴ See previous chapter; Wellington to Bathurst, Berlin, 17 Feb. 1826, in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 113-6.

the previous government – over the choice of a chairman for the committee.⁵ William Huskisson, Charles Grant and the Lords Melbourne, Dudley and Palmerston, made it a condition of their accession to Wellington's administration that the Committee go ahead, and that the Whig Lord Althorp would sit on it.⁶ Wellington had to accept it, and the Select Committee on Public Income and Expenditure sat during the 1828 session. Its formation was part of the consistent agitation for retrenchment that marked the years following the Napoleonic Wars. Although political reform received a great deal of posthumous attention, for much of the 1820s it was a peripheral issue. Indeed, the Liverpool and Wellington governments were primarily concerned with appeasing calls for financial reform and retrenchment. As Martin Daunton argues, 'at the end of the Napoleonic wars, the scale of the national debt was at the centre of politics.' In consequence, politicians 'had to recreate trust in the tax system, which entailed much more than simply reducing "corruption" and imposing retrenchment. It entailed a long and complex process of reforming administrative and accounting practices, and creating an ethos of "balance" and fairness through political language and culture.'⁷

Indeed, 'from the start Wellington accepted that the political future of the King's government depended on keeping spending down, deflecting radical political change by lowering the revenue demands'.⁸ As soon as the Government was in office, as Lord Ellenborough, at that point Lord Privy Seal, recorded, Robert Peel was arguing for 'the absolute necessity of reducing expenditure, as we have no surplus, and cannot impose taxes'.⁹ With all the conviction of someone who did not have to speak in the House of Commons or defend the Government's expenditure, Ellenborough was adamantly 'against all reduction of troops and seamen till we see daylight in the affairs of Greece. We should reduce what is not essential to national strength'.¹⁰

⁵ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p.298.

⁶ Huskisson to Wellington, 17 Jan. 1828, WP1/913/34, Wellington Mss. (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 199).

⁷ M. Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan: The Politics of Taxation in Britain, 1799-1914* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 58-59. It is worthy of note that the Finance Committee dedicated a great deal of attention in an examination of the Board of Ordnance of which Wellington had been in charge from 1819-1827 and 'possibly to its surprise, found the department to be a model of efficiency', Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 309; 22 March 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 174. See also Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 246-62 for an account of the Duke's time as Master-General.

⁸ A. Lambert, 'Politics, administration and decision-making: Wellington and the navy, 1828-30' in *Wellington Studies IV*, ed. C. M. Woolgar, (Southampton, 2008) p. 194.

⁹ 13 February 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The Committee was an important element in the tensions and difficulties surrounding finance and the conduct of foreign policy. The principles it laid down in 1828 in its reports highlighted the fiscal constraints imposed on the Government. The committee insisted that ‘no Government is justified in taking even the smallest sum of money from the People, unless a case can be clearly established to show that it will be productive of some essential advantage to them, and of one that cannot be obtained by a smaller sacrifice’. It further argued that any surplus should be used to reduce the National Debt. These statements illustrate the political climate in which the government worked as well as their limited freedom to act as they saw fit.¹¹ Sir Frederick Lamb, at this point the British Minister to Portugal, in a letter to the Duke in April 1828, examined the British response to events in Portugal. He emphasised the importance of finance, and the Select Committee, on the country’s foreign policy. For him, the doctrine of non-interference, since its introduction by Castlereagh, ‘has subsequently been slackened or tightened according to the temper and circumstances of the country, and as we are just now under the high pressure of a finance committee it is drawn to the tightest.’ To Lamb’s mind British policy

both abroad and at home, has for years depended upon the struggle we are making to escape from financial embarrassments aggravated, if not brought on, by our return to cash payments upon a mistaken principle. From the consequent vain endeavour to pay what we never owed, has resulted the contradictory attempt to keep up high prices in a currency of augmented value, with all the round of expedients ending and to end in disappointment. Hence, too, has proceeded [sic] the sinking of character which ensues, to nations as well as to individuals, from a state of debt - I will not call it poverty - for it is a state of debt in the midst of wealth proceeding from the balance between our charges and our currency having been forcibly disturbed. It is to these causes that our capacity for action abroad and our constant state of turmoil at home are due.¹²

These sentiments affected the conduct of British policy throughout the course of the Government. In October 1828, Aberdeen told to Stratford Canning that he ‘need not be reminded of the great difficulty from the reduced state of our military establishments during peace of furnishing an adequate contingent of troops’ to be able to intervene in the Morea.¹³ In November 1829, for example, with the possibility of war breaking out again in the East, Aberdeen was writing to Wellington about the

¹¹ Quoted in Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan*, p. 68 & 114.

¹² Sir F. Lamb to Wellington, 16 April 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/928/1, (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 388).

¹³ Aberdeen to Canning, 15 Oct. 1828, copy, No. 31, de Rothesay Mss., Ms 6234, p. 128.

prospect of withdrawing three ships-of-the-line as that would ‘tell very considerably upon the estimates.’¹⁴ Financial considerations thus counselled against any war that could not obviously be said to be necessary and so limited the ability of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to respond as they might have wished.¹⁵ Despite the pre-eminence of British wealth, throughout this period this remained difficult to bring to bear where it mattered. This could be seen following the vote of 80 million francs by the French parliament that left the British government conscious of their own difficulties in comparison, as will be explored below.

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When the government took their places in January 1828, there was an expectation by some that the Duke’s mere presence at the head of the administration would help guide affairs in the Near East to a peaceful conclusion. Harriet Arbuthnot recorded a conversation with the Austrian ambassador, Prince Paul III Anton Esterházy. For him ‘the Duke’s appointment gave the best, perhaps the only, chance of preserving peace in Europe; that our change of gov[ernmen]t w[oul]d give to the Porte the power of saying that, under such new auspices, they w[oul]d be more ready to listen to our councils & advice, and that the negociation might be renewed’.¹⁶ Metternich also expressed a desire that the Duke would be able to take a lead in the question, though of course, doing so with all of his usual flattery: ‘C'est à vous à les lever ou bien à guider notre conscience dans les voies utiles’.¹⁷

Russia, unsurprisingly, was less willing than Austria to see the Duke gain a new influence over the affairs in the Near East, and France seemed willing to back her. In late January, the Russian Ambassador, Prince Lieven, delivered a statement to the Duke that claimed for Russia ‘the right of settling her affairs with Turkey, without intervention of any other Power, and attributes it to her own extreme goodness that she has acted with her allies in this case’.¹⁸ It went on to propose that the Tsar should

¹⁴ Aberdeen to Wellington, 26 Nov 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1058/5, (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 306). As Jupp notes, one of the key features of the government’s economic policy was a preference for cutting military rather than civilian expenditure. Jupp, ‘The Foreign Policy of Wellington’s Government, 1828-30’, p. 162.

¹⁵ Jupp, ‘The Foreign Policy of Wellington’s Government, 1828-30’, pp. 161-2.

¹⁶ 19 Feb. 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 163.

¹⁷ Metternich to Wellington, 10 Feb. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/917/8, (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 259-60).

¹⁸ 26 Jan. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 8.

occupy the Danubian Principalities and that the allied fleets should bombard the Turkish positions in Greece and proceed to blockade the Dardanelles and even advance to Constantinople.¹⁹ A couple of days later, the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Ellenborough, recorded that ‘the French Government recommends to our favourable consideration the proposals made by Russia’.²⁰

The dynamic between the three powers would be crucial over the next two years, as it proved impossible to cut the Gordian knot. This could have been achieved by ending the Treaty of London but to do so would have run incalculable risks. While it would grant Britain a greater degree of diplomatic freedom, as has been seen in the previous chapter, it would have caused severe political problems for the Duke at home given the presence of the Canningites in Cabinet. Furthermore, even if those could be overcome, the financial constrictions on the government made it unlikely that Britain could easily make use of her freedom. Leaving the treaty would also give rise to the possibility that France could unite with Russia, to the complete exclusion of Britain, and a war would be needed to regain any sort of initiative. In these circumstances then, it became necessary to walk a tightrope by opposing Russian advances in the Ottoman Empire while keeping France onside and aligned with British policy.

Added to these difficulties were those of personal relations. The indomitable Princess Lieven had played a significant part in the formulation of Canning’s policy that had been crowned with the close alliance between Russia and Britain. Yet, with Canning dead, and Goderich’s administration an abysmal failure, ‘having so identified herself with Canning, she had no influence with Wellington’ which served to ‘hurt both her self-esteem and her influence’.²¹ As the administration went on, the Princess found herself increasingly in opposition to Wellington. Following the departure of the Canningites, her hostility reached a new height – she ‘had effectively declared war on the victor of Waterloo’, setting the scene for ‘the remarkable spectacle of a Russian ambassadress trying to frustrate the foreign policy of the British government’.²² Throughout the rest of the government, the strained relationship between the Lievens

¹⁹ 31 Jan. 1828, *ibid.*, pp.15-16.

²⁰ 28 Jan. 1828, *ibid.*, p. 12.

²¹ Charmley, *Princess and the Politicians*, p. 160.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 163.

and Wellington and Lord Aberdeen would create a toxic atmosphere that did nothing to help, and a lot to cause, the deteriorating relations between Britain and Russia.²³

When Wellington received a letter in February from the French foreign minister, the Comte de la Ferronnays, that urged on him the dangers of isolated action, the need for strong measures following the Ottoman responses to Navarino and the desirability of cooperating with Russia, the Duke replied in a long and important letter.²⁴ He believed that, given the scale of allied preparations, it was unsurprising that the Porte's reaction was so strong. It was against belief that the allied ambassadors could withdraw from Constantinople after Navarino 'without occasioning some breach on the part of the Porte of those relations of amity which had existed between the three powers and the Porte for some time?' Wellington's overriding concern was to 'leave the Porte in a state of independence, after these transactions shall have been concluded', and instead of expediting a settlement, an occupation of the principalities and a blockade of the Straits would be ineffectual. By even embarking on this course the allies would need to continue and the result would be

neither more nor less than the invasion of the Turkish provinces in Europe by a formidable Russian army, while a fleet from the Mediterranean should force the defences of the Dardanelles and another from the Black Sea those of the Bosphorous, and the two should join under the walls of the Seraglio and with the aid of the army dictate the terms of peace.

To do this would inevitably end in a general war: '[A]ll nations will arm for the purpose of protecting each its own interests in the expected wreck of the Ottoman empire in Europe' and it would be impossible to return those dominions back to the Sultan.²⁵

The logic of Temperley's and Cunningham's idolising of Canning's policy and their criticisms of his successors was that decisive action by the British fleet could have forced the Ottoman Sultan to capitulate to the demands of the allies and thus

²³ 'Although it would be an exaggeration to assume that Anglo-Russian relations revolved around the Lievens, it would not be very much of one', *ibid.*, p. 175. See *ibid.*, pp. 159-192 *passim* for a more in depth examination of Princess Lieven's role.

²⁴ Comte de la Ferronnays to Wellington, 21 Feb. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/918/10 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 270-1).

²⁵ Wellington to Comte de la Ferronnays, 26 Feb. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/920/67 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 274-8. In this Wellington prefigures a long tradition sceptical of reform of the Ottoman. H. Temperley, 'British Policy towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914)', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1933), pp. 156-191.

avoid the start of the Russo-Turkish War.²⁶ This displays a failure to appreciate the restrictions and limitations on the exercise of sea-power. In this respect, Wellington was more keenly aware of those than most nineteenth-century British statesmen.²⁷ To dictate terms under the walls of the Seraglio would, in the first place, require the forcing of the Dardanelles. The events of 1807 showed how difficult this was. Wellington would have been known well that earlier precedent when his close friend, Charles Arbuthnot, had overseen an ultimatum to the Porte that resulted in a British fleet forcing the Straits. Despite the forts being undermanned, and even, in one case, using an artillery piece cast for the 1453 siege of Constantinople, the fleet sustained such heavy damage that they were forced to withdraw from the Sea of Marmora.²⁸ In 1828 the prospect of even achieving this seemed unlikely.²⁹

Instead of any grandiose plans of forcing the Straits and dictating terms, Wellington sought to stick closely to the terms of the Treaty of London to try and bring about a speedy settlement between the Porte and the Greeks. To do this would rely upon a tight blockade to force the withdrawal of Ibrahim Pasha's forces as well as Austria ceasing to aid the Egyptian and Ottomans still in Greece, highlighting the difficulty of drawing closer to the Austrians to help balance France and Russia.³⁰ As ever with the Duke, the legality of proceedings was high in his mind and he was conscious of the need to take a firm line on this point. Wellington believed that Codrington 'had mistaken his instructions':

He says he feels himself "authorized" in "preventing any blockade from being violated by any vessels which shall be established by the Greeks". The laws of nations do not allow us to interfere by force to oblige others to obey them. We

²⁶ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 409; Cunningham, 'Stratford Canning, Mahmud II, and Muhammad Ali', p. 28.

²⁷ B. Collins, 'The Sieges of San Sebastian, 1813, Revisited', unpublished paper at the Wellington Congress 2013.

²⁸ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain 1649-1815* (London, 2004), pp. 550-1. J.H. Rose, 'Sir John Duckworth's Expedition to Constantinople', *Naval Review*, vol. 7 (1920), pp. 485-501.

²⁹ In 1830, Captain Edmund Lyons of the frigate 'Blonde', after having mapped the Straits and the Sea, advised against any attempt to force the Dardanelles after having found adequate defences and 416 heavy guns arranged to fire upon passing ships from every angle: V.J. Puryear, *France and the Levant: From the Bourbon Restoration to the Peace of Kutiah* (California, 1968), p. 98. Lyons would later have a successful naval and diplomatic career, including as Minister to the newly independent Greece and his son Richard, Viscount Lyons, was a leading ambassador of the late 19th century, including notable stints at Constantinople and Paris.

³⁰ Wellington to Dudley, 6 March 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/925/9 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 299-300).

may by influence induce the Austrians not to violate the Greek blockades. But I should think we cannot by force.³¹

This kind of line was not universally supported, even within the cabinet. In a discussion on 9 March 1828, Dudley raised the possibility of allowing the Russians to occupy the Principalities with a small force under the auspices of the Treaty of London, an idea that had the backing of the French. Ellenborough recorded that Wellington objected to this with these objections resting ‘on *principle*’.³² As such, ‘[w]e desired to effect the objects of the treaty in the least dangerous and most direct manner, and to keep *within* the treaty.’ When the discussion moved on to boundaries and indemnities due from Greece, Wellington’s ideas met with opposition and ‘thus the Duke was, for the present, overruled’.³³ It was therefore without the full backing of his cabinet that Wellington had to formulate a response to a fast-moving situation in the Near East.

On 11 March 1828, the Russian declaration of war on the Porte was communicated to the British government. While based primarily on Russian matters such as the Convention of Akkerman and Ottoman interference in the Persian war, it also touched on Greece. This it did in a highhanded way. Should Britain and France not support Russia fully, then the Tsar reserved the right to settle the matter in the way that ‘accords best with his own *interests and convenances*’.³⁴ This startling declaration was to be a consistent bone of contention to which Wellington would refer back repeatedly over the course of the war. With the validity of the Treaty of London now in question, it was France which became the crucial factor in the diplomatic situation. While Polignac agreed with the Duke that he ‘did not apprehend much mischief if France and England would act together’, they did not agree that Russia had given up the treaty by her actions.³⁵ Mrs Arbuthnot captured the Duke’s attitudes towards the question: ‘We must try to get hold of France to induce her to stand by with us & remain neutral. If we can get France to unite cordially & entirely with us, we may yet keep out of the war.’³⁶ Wellington believed the British government should take a stance on

³¹ Wellington to Dudley, 3 March 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/925/2 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 289); Wellington to Dudley, 6 March 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/925/9 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 299-300).

³² 9 March 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 49.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁴ 12 March 1828, *ibid.*, p. 54. Emphasis in original.

³⁵ 12 March 1828, *ibid.*, p. 54.

³⁶ 15 March 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 170.

all the outstanding questions relating to Greece and then ‘endeavour to bring the government of France to concur in our views of these questions’.³⁷ The first priority in the Duke’s mind was to secure France. This would serve not only to prevent Russia from gaining a potentially troublesome partner to overturn the settlement in the Near East but also help to maintain the British naval position in the Mediterranean which would have been severely threatened by the Franco-Russian combination to Britain’s exclusion. The French connection would be the principal relationship for the Duke.

Though Austria and Prussia figured in Wellington’s thinking, their intended role was to back up the Anglo-French line. He was not interested in concerting policy with them – despite Austria’s significant interest in the fate of the Ottoman’s European lands.³⁸ In April, the Duke instructed Dudley that it would be ‘desirable to avoid’ asking Metternich ‘to do more than give his approbation and assistance to what we are doing by way of advice at Constantinople.’ Dudley was to ‘keep clear of anything that should have the appearance of seeking the Austrian mediation or at the present moment in union with Austria for the purpose of attaining our objects’. Wellington was clear on Britain’s priorities: ‘Let us be quite sure of France before we make any approach towards any other power’.³⁹ This emphasis on France is a surprising one, and quite hard to reconcile with the foreign policy options available. Schroeder’s argument that it was because of ‘systemic’ reasons that the Duke was determined to work with France and Russia and avoid Austria has some truth to it. Certainly, the former two powers were more clearly threats to Britain in a way Austria was not, and could never be. Yet, working with Austria did not necessarily mean ‘conforming to its rigid brand of conservatism’ and ‘letting the Greek revolt grind on indefinitely or be snuffed out by the Turks and Egyptians’.⁴⁰ A Russian occupation of the Principalities, control of the mouth of the Danube and invasion of the European Ottoman lands were things that affected Austria more than any other power. In those circumstances, Britain would be able to exercise considerable leverage rather than merely fall in line with

³⁷ Draft memorandum on measures to be discussed resulting from the declaration of war by Russia against Turkey by Wellington, 15 March 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/980/12 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 302-4).

³⁸ Draft memorandum on measures to be discussed resulting from the declaration of war by Russia against Turkey by Wellington, 15 March 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/980/12 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 302-4).

³⁹ Wellington to Dudley, 8 April 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/930/12 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 351-2).

⁴⁰ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, p. 661.

Metternich's wishes. Writing the following year to another diplomat, Lord Cowley, Wellington's brother and the British ambassador in Vienna, admitted he could not 'see any just grounds for the doubts and suspicions which seem to be entertained respecting the conduct of Austria'.⁴¹ To close off all possibilities of this only served to heighten the threat of Russia and France, rather than diminishing them, by narrowing Britain's diplomatic options and freedom of manoeuvre at critical junctures over the course of the following months.⁴²

The Russian declaration of war came at a very inconvenient moment for the Duke. From the start, the government had consisted of relatively uncomfortable bedfellows due to the Canningites' presence, and the issue of a new Corn Law had always been a prominent concern. At the very first cabinet meeting, Huskisson had stressed the need for one and 'was so pledged to the principle of that of last year, that he must resign if it was not preserved' – hardly the best way to inaugurate a new ministry.⁴³ That Bill had failed to pass then owing to the Duke's opposition in the House of Lords thus setting up a difficult and uncomfortable situation for all involved, and one that would dominate many of the cabinets over the administration's first months.⁴⁴ When Dudley received Lieven's declaration in March, it was corn, not war, that was at the forefront of the ministers' minds and on this Wellington found himself isolated and outvoted.⁴⁵ Indeed, Ellenborough even speculated that 'there seemed every prospect of the Government being broken up. The Duke would not yield, though all were against him'.⁴⁶ To further add to his worries, and possibly contributing to his inability to keep control of the cabinet, Wellington was ill for a number of days with a 'bilious attack', thanks to overwork in the opinion of Mrs Arbuthnot.⁴⁷ These were

⁴¹ Cowley to Heytesbury, March 1829, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley, first Lord Cowley*, ed. F.A. Wellesley (London, 1930), p. 169. He went on to say how Austria's 'general policy is the same as that which united the four Governments at the period of Lord Londonderry's death, and it would, perhaps, have been for the advantage of Europe if the other Powers had never abandoned it. Who knows but that sooner or later these four Powers may not be called upon to unite for the purpose of curbing the ambitious projects which there is too much reason to believe are entertained by France.'

⁴² During this time Britain did sign a commercial treaty with Austria continuing the reciprocal trade treaties begun by Canning. Jupp, 'Foreign Policy of Wellington's Government, 1828-30', p. 175, fn. 10.

⁴³ 24 Jan. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 6.

⁴⁴ See Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 308 & 314-6.

⁴⁵ 12 March 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 53.

⁴⁶ 13 March 1828, *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁷ 15 March 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 168.

hardly promising domestic circumstances to construct a coherent and effective foreign policy in a rapidly changing situation in the Near East.

It was not long before there was evidence that the problems of Cabinet and foreign policy had combined to create a difficult and messy situation for British diplomacy. Mrs Arbuthnot recorded in mid-April a conversation between her and Lord Esterházy. The Austrian ambassador told her that the French minister de la Ferronnays had ‘complained that he could not understand the policy of the English Gov[ernmen]t’ and that while one line came from Polignac and the Duke from London, in Paris, Granville, instructed by Dudley and Huskisson ‘represented matters in a totally different light’. For Esterházy, the ‘mischief this state of affairs’ caused was ‘inconceivable’. In his opinion it was ‘of the utmost importance to the peace of Europe that England and France sh[oul]d act together’, as by doing so Russia ‘w[oul]d be in a minority in her interpretation of the Treaty but the reverse w[oul]d be the case if France joined Russia against us’. Russia’s ‘power of doing mischief w[oul]d cease if France made common cause with us as in that case all the other powers w[oul]d remain tranquil’.⁴⁸ The Duke typically did not believe that ‘it w[oul]d be material for that the French knew he was *Minister*, & that his views w[oul]d be adopted by the English Gov[ernmen]t whatever L[or]ds Granville & Dudley might *say* to the contrary’.⁴⁹ This was an underestimation of the political difficulties the Duke faced, especially given the continuing uncertainty over corn and redistribution questions at this time. Indeed, these first months of the government were marked by the continuing battle for control between the Canningite faction and the Duke, and its overspill into diplomacy added to the confusion and uncertainty that prevented a clear line being pressed.

This rift finally reached its climax in May 1828, when Huskisson voted against the government in a division over the disenfranchisement and redistribution of the seats of Penryn and East Retford. Following this, the Colonial Minister sent a letter of resignation to Wellington.⁵⁰ Perhaps meant as a ‘token apology’, it presented the Prime Minister with an easy way out of his cabinet difficulties, and the Duke was quick to embrace it. Huskisson received a curt reply informing him that he had laid the latter’s

⁴⁸ 19 April 1828, *ibid.*, p. 181.

⁴⁹ 21 April 1828, *ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵⁰ Huskisson to Wellington, 2 am, 20 May 1828, *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 449.

message before the King.⁵¹ Despite efforts from the Canningites to explain away the resignation, Wellington knew that any retraction on his part would all but concede control of the government to Huskisson. On the 25 May, the Duke saw the King and made the resignation final.⁵²

In a memorandum on the resignations, the Duke wrote:

Principles have been talked of as if there was any difference of principle in these discussions. There is not the idea of a principle in all these papers. Principles are brought forward solely to aggravate the consequences of these unfortunate difficulties.

We hear a great deal of Whig principles and Tory principles and liberal principles and Mr. Canning's principles, but I confess that I have never seen a definition of any of them and cannot make to myself a clear idea of what any of them mean.⁵³

This was a characteristic of Wellington. Yet it was also one of his weaknesses. Whatever the reality, or non-reality, of principles, the mere idea of them was a crucial part of political life and an essential prerequisite in presenting a unified message and narrative about the conduct of business to Parliament and the wider public. By refusing to develop an idea of his own principles, and instead focusing on some of the narrow realities and legal aspects of questions, Wellington directly contributed to his own political difficulties during the course of his government, and so to the scarcity of historiographical work on his foreign policy by later generations. The further failure to outline clear strategic priorities led to drift in British foreign policy, and the ceding of the initiative to Russia and France.

The resignation of Huskisson signalled the departure of all the Canningites from the government, including the ineffectual Foreign Secretary, Lord Dudley.⁵⁴ Wellington chose Lord Aberdeen, the chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, to replace him. Aberdeen had only limited experience in diplomacy and foreign affairs. As a young man he had served as the British ambassador to Vienna for Lord Castlereagh during the closing stages of the Napoleonic Wars, but he had declined to continue in

⁵¹ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 317; Wellington to Huskisson, 20 May 1828, *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 449.

⁵² Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 318.

⁵³ Draft memorandum on the retirement of Huskisson and Palmerston from Office, Wellington, n.d. but after 25 May 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/980/29 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 451-5).

⁵⁴ Dudley regretted leaving the Foreign Office, having established a good working relationship with the Duke. Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 318.

that post after its conclusion.⁵⁵ Since then he had had very little contact with foreign matters and was more notable as an accomplished classicist than a diplomat. The Lord Privy Seal, Lord Ellenborough, had been eyeing Dudley's job for himself, and on being passed over, was scathing in his diary about Aberdeen, at least until he took over as President of the Board of Control in the autumn. He wrote immediately after the reshuffle that 'I cannot think Aberdeen a fitter man than myself. He has been useless to the Duke in the Cabinet and he failed as Ambassador to Austria. He cannot speak at all'.⁵⁶ Despite Ellenborough's reservations about his suitability, Aberdeen would go on to serve as Wellington's Foreign Secretary and trusted lieutenant for the remainder of his government before later serving as colonial secretary in Peel's first government and then returning to the Foreign Office again in his second. He would eventually become Prime Minister himself in 1852 as leader of the Peelites and would preside over Britain's entry into the Crimean War. His elevation to high office then in May 1828 was an important moment not only in his career but also for British political and diplomatic history.

While Wellington remained the driving force behind the government's foreign policy for the most part - Aberdeen described him as the 'sails and rudder' of the administration - the new Foreign Secretary would still play a very important role in the development of British diplomacy.⁵⁷ The removal of the Canningites enabled the Duke to impress his own foreign policy more clearly on the government, which allowed it to deal with foreign policy matters in relative internal tranquillity. However, their departure produced a new factor on the scene. The appointment of William Vesey-FitzGerald to replace Charles Grant as President of the Board of Trade necessitated a by-election for County Clare. The result of this was Vesey-FitzGerald's defeat and the return of Daniel O'Connell, leader of the Catholic Association. In turn, this sparked off the Catholic Emancipation crisis that would overshadow all other government business over the next year and almost bring down the ministry.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ See Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, pp.105-155. Metternich, Aberdeen's old acquaintance from that time, was pleased to see his appointment as Foreign Secretary. See Cowley to Wellington, 13 June 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/936/27 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 486).

⁵⁶ 28 May 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 127.

⁵⁷ Aberdeen to Wellington, 2 Nov. 1828 in C. R. Middleton, *The Administration of British Foreign Policy 1782-1846* (Durham, 1977), p. 64.

⁵⁸ See Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 322-47 for the most recent overview of Wellington's government and Catholic Emancipation. For an older but more in-depth examination, see G.I.T. Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics: 1820 to 1830* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 109-194.

With this looming crisis at home, and with the continuing worries abroad, Aberdeen did not take office at a fortuitous time. In early May, Bathurst wrote to the Duke pointing out '[w]e have done nothing since the commencement of your government [...] We shall be reproach[ed] with having done nothing, but the conduct of Russia in the first instance and the indecision of France from a disposition to yield to Russia in the second, has not left it in our power to do anything'.⁵⁹ This letter was accompanied by an accomplished memorandum by Lord Aberdeen, which may well have played a role in convincing the Duke to appoint him foreign minister a few weeks later. Aberdeen described in explicit terms the difficulty Britain was placed in by Russia's declaration of war. He questioned whether '[h]aving disapproved of the advance of the Russian armies and deprecated the consequences of that measure' as a measure of the Treaty of London prior to the declaration of war, 'are we quite consistent in giving our support to the same operation when undertaken under circumstances in some respects more alarming?' For him there was a clear question of whether 'our virtual approbation of the hostile invasions by Russia of the northern provinces of the Turkish empire, as evinced by our active co-operation in another quarter, be more justifiable than our acquiescence in the measures formerly proposed by Russia and which for cogent reasons we then declined.' With the problems of the exercise of rights of belligerents and neutrals in the Mediterranean between the various parties, Aberdeen speculated that '[t]his situation, it is presumed, is absolutely new in the history of the world, and the more it is examined the more calculated it appears to lead to complications of the most difficult and embarrassing character'.⁶⁰

By May 1828 it was impossible to escape the difficulties of the situation, however. The complexities of the relations between the parties in the Eastern Mediterranean required swift and decisive action to untangle them. By the time Wellington was in a position domestically to act thus, it was too late. The attachment of the Canningites in government had helped to force his hand, and by the time they resigned it was impossible to backtrack, even if it had been desirable. The campaigning season was almost upon them and the Russian army had been massed for its invasion of the principalities. Yet even in early May, two months after the Russian declaration

⁵⁹ Bathurst to Wellington, 2 May 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/931/3 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 419-22).

⁶⁰ Memorandum by Aberdeen, enclosed within Bathurst to Wellington, 2 May 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/931/3 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 419-22).

had been received, Wellington was still concerning himself with clarifying it and lamented that he had ‘not yet heard any answer to my principles, my facts, or my reasoning, excepting that it is desirable [sic] to renew the conferences’.⁶¹ The lack of clarity would come back to haunt the government in the future but for the time being, British diplomacy in the Near East had assumed an uncomfortable pattern. For most of the next year, Wellington and Aberdeen would do their utmost to keep France onside while also seeking to restrain Russia where possible. Well aware that France backing the Russian war against the Porte would raise the prospect of fundamental changes to the European order, they faced the prospect of playing a high stakes game where the French government held the cards. At the same time, the British cabinet had to attempt to check Russia, and there was a growing awareness, coming especially out of the Board of Control, of the threat that she posed to British interests in India.⁶²

On 15 June 1828, the tripartite London Conference reopened. Instead of solving the question of the Russian status as a belligerent, it glossed over the issue with the legal fiction of Russia being a neutral power in the Mediterranean.⁶³ This arrangement did nothing to clarify matters and would lead to a number of difficult situations over the coming months. Doing this did, however, bind Russia to some degree to her allies and give them some control over her actions in relation to Greece. France was also kept within the treaty framework allowing Britain some possibility of regulating her ambitions in the Mediterranean. However, by simply placing such prominence on the role and importance of France, to the exclusion of trying to bring the other powers, Austria in particular, into the equation, the British government ceded the initiative to Paris. In trying to steer British diplomacy between the twin perils of Russia and France, Wellington restricted his leeway and had to push on even in cases where he would have preferred a different course of action.

This became the case only one month after the resumption of the negotiations in London. While the Battle of Navarino had ended the possibility of a complete

⁶¹ Wellington to Peel, 4 May 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/935/8 (also in *WND*, vol. IV., pp. 425-6).

⁶² Edward Ingram praises Wellington for sharing with his brother, Lord Wellesley, an ‘Anglo-Indian conception of Britain’s vital interests’, Ingram, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia*, p. 48. Nevertheless, India appears relatively infrequently in the Duke’s correspondence during these years.

⁶³ This was based on the apparent precedent of the Baltic Sea during the Seven Years War, Memorandum by Wellington, 21 Jan. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/993/62 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 458-62).

Ottoman victory in the Morea, it nevertheless served as another example of the limitations of naval power as it failed to settle the question on the ground itself. Ibrahim Pasha still remained in Greece with a substantial army and the rebel forces proved unable to evict it by themselves. The stalemate allowed the Tsar scope to declare originally that he would settle the matter in a way that ‘accords best with his own *interests and convenances*’.⁶⁴ There was an urgent need to impose some kind of order on the peninsula and it was France who sought to do this by intervening with troops. In May 1828, the French Chamber authorised a loan of 80,000,000 francs and called up 60,000 men of the 1827 class of soldiers to the alarm of the British government.⁶⁵ Yet despite initial opposition, in July Wellington was forced to back down on the issue. By early July 1828, the Duke’s room to manoeuvre ran out. With the Russian campaign against the Turks in full swing, yet failing to make the expected progress, the risks of a second campaign intensified. This point was being pressed on him by the French government. To delay the settlement of Greece would risk an increase in Russian demands that could undermine the whole Ottoman Empire. Given the lack of military success, if the Greek affair could be settled then the Duke believed there was a chance that it would facilitate peace. But this would be impossible unless Ibrahim was to be removed.⁶⁶ While Wellington had long taken the attitude that the Treaty of London did not permit the use of actual hostilities in its execution, as he admitted, ‘events have, however, materially altered the situation of affairs’. For him in ‘the meantime, important events are occurring in other quarters, and it is necessary that the allies should be prepared for their probable consequences.’ Given this, Wellington was forced to admit the necessity for the British government to consent to the French deployment, adding the caveat:

Trusting to His Most Christian Majesty that this measure will be carried into execution in the true principles of the treaty of the 6th July 1827, that the operations which will be carried on will be limited by the necessity of the case, and that the troops will be withdrawn as soon as Ibrahim Pasha will have evacuated the Morea, whether by sea or land.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ 12 March 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 54.

⁶⁵ Crawley, *The Question of Greek Independence*, p. 107.

⁶⁶ Memorandum by Wellington, 13 July 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/981/3 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 526-7).

⁶⁷ Memorandum by Wellington, 19 July 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/981/7 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 542-4).

Sanctioning the French deployment did achieve one British aim in the short term: making Paris more amenable. The new British ambassador, Lord Stuart de Rothesay, who had replaced Lord Granville after he had resigned with the Canningites, reported to Wellington in late July that ‘[t]he French government are greatly pleased with the answer which has been received from England respecting the expedition to the Morea and appear inclined to follow the same course with ourselves in almost every question of foreign policy’.⁶⁸ This seemed to confirm Wellington’s policy of working to bring France onside.

As it often would throughout the course of his government, this ray of light proved chimerical. Very swiftly complications arose about the French deployment. In August 1828, news reached London that Ibrahim wished to withdraw his army from the Morea despite the orders from Constantinople to the contrary. As Aberdeen noted, ‘should it speedily be effected, it will give a rather a strange character to the French expedition’. The Foreign Secretary drew Wellington’s notice to the fact there was a ‘very great difference between the language employed in the instructions to General Maison and that of Polignac as inserted in the protocol of our conferences’. For Aberdeen, it was ‘another proof how little we can trust to the strict letter of their declarations’.⁶⁹ A few days later, after talking with Polignac, the Foreign Secretary wrote to the Duke ‘[o]n the whole, I can hardly suppose that at the present moment they have the intention of breaking faith with us. But it is impossible to feel any security about the duration of their honesty’: a startling reflection on Britain’s closest ally and the linchpin of her foreign policy.⁷⁰ Wellington remained deeply unhappy at having to concede this to the French:

If our admiral had done his duty (and for not doing it he has been recalled) we might have resisted the velléité of the French to send a military expedition. But situated as affairs were when we consented to send the expedition, we could not have refused without taking upon ourselves the responsibility of the failure to get Ibrahim Pacha out of the Morea. We therefore consented. But it is said we may be deceived. The French government cannot be answerable for their

⁶⁸ De Rothesay to Wellington, 25 July 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/943/11 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 557).

⁶⁹ Aberdeen to Wellington, 15 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/947/29 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 612-13).

⁷⁰ Aberdeen to Wellington, 18 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/948/2 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 630-1).

actions. That may be true. But we have taken every precaution that it is possible to take.⁷¹

He would soon learn that these precautions were not sufficient.

The continuing clashes over the French intentions in Greece would dominate the diplomacy of the summer of 1828. The picture was further clouded by the fate of Greek slaves who had been taken into captivity in Egypt. This was an issue that mattered to the government politically because of its humanitarian aspect.⁷² Wellington wrote to Aberdeen about the case that:

We cannot prevent the return of Ibrahim to Egypt till they are restored, as we shall thereby injure the Morea and defeat our own purpose. We cannot go to war with Mahomed Alli [sic] to force him to restore the slaves. The only resource is then to buy them if we must have them. Have them we must, or we shall have more trouble in Parliament than the slaves are worth, more particularly as the French having at their disposal 80 millions of francs are ready for everything. But I would recommend great caution and circumspection in the whole of this proceeding.⁷³

The situation on the spot did not lend itself to caution. News reached London of a planned deception to achieve the British goals. Codrington, still the British admiral in the Mediterranean, though facing imminent recall, cooperated with the French to settle the matter of the slaves and Ibrahim's army. In the Convention of Alexandria of 9 August 1828, Mehmet Ali was to send out ships containing the slaves to Greece, though ostensibly containing supplies. These would be intercepted by the allied naval forces, the captives removed and Ibrahim's army forced to embark.⁷⁴ Though this would provide a very convenient way around the various difficulties that the slaves and the Egyptian forces posed, Wellington was less than impressed with such subterfuge,

In war it is said that all is fair and it must be admitted that we are not far from a state of war. But I must say that I think we are far enough removed from such

⁷¹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 22 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/24 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 649-50). Wellington also blamed the state of the British army in September as a reason why it was not possible to prevent the French expedition: Wellington to Aberdeen, 2 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/956/6 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 3-4).

⁷² Aberdeen took a more sanguine attitude, having had experience of the Near East, something rare among British politicians and diplomats, and told how '[t]he Condition itself is no doubt horrible, but surely this can be no discovery for the friends or the enemies of Turkey'. Aberdeen to Peel, 29 July 1829, private, Peel Mss., Add. MS 40,312, f. 33.

⁷³ Wellington to Aberdeen, 17 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/1 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 623-5).

⁷⁴ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, pp. 211-2.

a state to avoid everything that savours of war, that is not absolutely necessary to attain the purposes of -the treaty and particularly anything in the shape of a trick.⁷⁵

A few days later, he told the Foreign Secretary that ‘I protest against such tricks. They are unworthy of real officers, even in war, but situated as we are in relation to the Turks it would be shameful’ and on the 27th August, he even suggested that they should remonstrate with the French government concerning it.⁷⁶ Aberdeen, however, took a more pragmatic view that ‘we have done the best thing under the circumstances’ and Codrington carried out the plan on the spot.⁷⁷

With the evacuation of Ibrahim’s army, the question of the purpose of the French army became a pressing matter for Wellington. It was one thing to condone a force to secure the peace in the Morea between two hostile sides, but as Wellington wrote to Aberdeen, ‘It was never intended that the allies should conquer a Greece for the Greeks’.⁷⁸ Wellington desired that French operations should not extend beyond the Isthmus of Corinth but much depended on what the final allocation of borders for Greece would be.⁷⁹ This in turn, relied upon an allied decision. Unfortunately, this was no simple matter to achieve. Not only had the conferences in London been restarted but there was a further conference of the exiled allied ambassadors to Turkey that was sitting in Poros, also discussing the matter of the Greek borders. Unsurprisingly, these two bodies would clash over their competing visions for the future of Greece, something made even more troublesome due to the poor relationship between Lord Aberdeen and the British representative, Sir Stratford Canning.⁸⁰

Additionally, the usually underappreciated factor of realities on the ground continued to have an important effect. Communications with Constantinople were slow and could take weeks. The facts of geography meant that France received information from the Near East before it could reach Britain, news either having to

⁷⁵ Wellington to Aberdeen, 21 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/17 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 646-7).

⁷⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 24 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/33 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 660); Wellington to Aberdeen, 27 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/46 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 673).

⁷⁷ Aberdeen to Wellington, 23 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/948/36 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 657-8).

⁷⁸ Wellington to Aberdeen, 2 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/956/6 (also in *WND*, vol. V., pp. 3-4).

⁷⁹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 4 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/956/17.

⁸⁰ See Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, pp. 205-22, *passim*.

cross the continent by land on poor roads, or by ship around the Iberian Peninsula. When dealing with the matter of the French expedition this was of great importance, as it enabled the French press to report on things before the British government could react and allowed them to put their own spin on events. Wellington had a long-running complaint against the *Journal des Débats*, the organ of Chateaubriand, on this and related heads.⁸¹

An outbreak of plague in the Balkans would also do its bit to delay British communications with the Russian headquarters. With messengers being detained in quarantine for up to forty days on the Austrian borders, it was difficult to know what was happening on the spot.⁸² The new British ambassador to the Tsar, Lord Heytesbury, wrote to Lord Aberdeen from a bivouac *en route* to the Tsar of the ‘many difficulties’ he had experienced, even relating the story of the Prince of Hesse-Homburg ‘who preceded me by a fortnight, [and] was attacked and some of his suite killed tho’ under an escort of 300 men’.⁸³ Heytesbury (à Court as he was, see above), ‘one of the ablest diplomats of his time’, had served in Naples during the revolution of 1820 to the approval of Lord Castlereagh and would play an important role in the trying circumstances of the prevailing war and crisis of the Near East.⁸⁴ The first ambassador to the Tsar since the departure of Lord Strangford in 1826, Heytesbury’s task was made more difficult by the prevailing distrust of Nicholas I and Russian policy generally by Wellington, and the British government more generally.

In their first interview after the ambassador arrived in Odessa, the Tsar asked him ‘[w]hat neighbour could suit me so well as the Turk? What could Russia gain by the destruction of the Ottoman Throne?’ Nicholas proceeded to comment on the difference in attitude towards Russia between Wellington, who ‘has mistaken me’ and the King, ‘who has invariably judged me as I deserved to be judged’.⁸⁵ This despatch would mark the start of a divergence between Heytesbury on the spot and Wellington

⁸¹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 16 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/950/37 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 617-18); Aberdeen to Wellington, 18 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/948/2 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 630-1); Wellington to Aberdeen, 20 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/13 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 639-41); Polignac to Wellington, 26 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/949/12 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 671-2).

⁸² Heytesbury to Aberdeen, Lassy, 25 July 1828, No. 3, TNA, FO 65/173, ff. 111-2.

⁸³ Heytesbury to Aberdeen, 4 Aug. 1828, No. 4, FO 65/173, ff. 113-4.

⁸⁴ M.E. Chamberlain, ‘A’Court, William, first Baron Heytesbury (1779–1860)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009).

⁸⁵ Heytesbury to Aberdeen, 11 Aug. 1828, No. 7, FO 65/173.

and the government in London. Mrs Arbuthnot records how the Duke was ‘most deeply nettled by the Emperor’s remarks upon himself’,⁸⁶ and Aberdeen lamented to Bathurst that he was ‘sorry that [Heytesbury] has been so speedily charmed by the irresistible power of the Emperor’.⁸⁷ Wellington wrote to the ambassador in response how ‘[t]he account of your conversation with the Emperor has been perused with much concern’. He took great exception to the distinction the Tsar had drawn between the British government and the King: ‘In this country we know of no difference between the sovereign and his ministers. Whatever may be the private opinions of the individuals composing His Majesty’s council if they concur in the acts of the government they are responsible for them and those acts must be considered as theirs.’ Despite the assurances of an experienced diplomat of Nicholas’s attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire, the Duke told Heytesbury that ‘great as is the power of the Emperor of Russia he is a man like others, and the usual lot of human nature awaits him, and it is inconsistent with the prudence and foresight by which the actions of those must be governed’.⁸⁸

Deep-rooted distrust of Russia shone through when London looked at the question of Russian reinforcements for the Mediterranean fleet to blockade the Dardanelles. Aberdeen wrote to Wellington that he ‘cannot imagine with what plausibility Lieven will attempt to reconcile us to this proceeding’.⁸⁹ The Prime Minister took a strong attitude towards it in his correspondence with Aberdeen: ‘In my opinion, we cannot consent to the hostile operations of the Russian fleet. I am ready to go to town to attend the conference upon this subject when you please, or rather to consider with you the whole of the Russian and Greek case as at present before us, before we proceed to the conference’.⁹⁰ Yet as ever in the matter of the Near East, France complicated the government’s response. ‘But what will France say?’ was Aberdeen’s query.⁹¹ With continuing wrangling over the issue of the French troops in Greece, Whitehall faced two problems and was left stranded in the middle, unable to

⁸⁶ 10 Sept. 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 208.

⁸⁷ Aberdeen to Bathurst, 10 Sept. 1828, Bathurst Papers, Loan MS 57/18.

⁸⁸ Wellington to Heytesbury, 8 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/957/8 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 31-2).

⁸⁹ Aberdeen to Wellington. 12 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/953/11 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 46).

⁹⁰ Wellington to Aberdeen, 12 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/957/26 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 47).

⁹¹ Aberdeen to Wellington. 12 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/953/11 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 46).

effectively alter the course of either.⁹² Once again, the failure of Wellington to set out clear strategic priorities, and a clear vision of the direction of British foreign policy, had left his administration bogged down in continual disputes with both the French and Russians that weakened their hand overall. The Duke himself put the blame on the Treaty of London and the legacy he had inherited. Mrs Arbuthnot wrote at this time that ‘I think he is very sore about these matters, feeling himself so hampered by the Treaty [...] & disliking the whole proceedings & yet not knowing how to get out of it. It makes him very cross’, and the situation was only exacerbated by the continuing problems in Ireland.⁹³

At times, it appears that an all-pervading sense of negativity took hold over Aberdeen and Wellington, in particular, something perhaps unsurprising given the continuing difficulties and uncertainty of Catholic Emancipation. For the Duke, ‘there never was such a humbug as the Greek affair altogether. However, thank God, it has never cost us a shilling and never shall’.⁹⁴ A few days later he complained to Aberdeen that ‘[i]t is most curious to see the difficulties in which we are brought daily by the bad faith of our allies, and the mischievous disposition, or the stupid blunders, of our servants and officers’.⁹⁵ With the Prime Minister believing that the British ambassador to Russia had ‘misunderstood the government’⁹⁶ and the French general in Greece seemingly acting on his own initiative to push forward into previously uncontested land, against the reassurances of the government in Paris, the situation in the Near East seemed to be one spiralling out of the control of the ministers in London.⁹⁷ This was

⁹² Wellington to Aberdeen, 15 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/958/7 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 57-8); Aberdeen to Wellington, 15 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/953/28 (Also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 59); Aberdeen to Wellington, 22 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/954/18 (Also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 72-3).

⁹³ 9 Oct. 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, pp. 211-2.

⁹⁴ Wellington to Aberdeen, 2 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/968/3 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 199).

⁹⁵ Wellington to Aberdeen, 4 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/968/7 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 209).

⁹⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 28 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/964/23 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 178-9).

⁹⁷ Aberdeen to Wellington, 3 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/965/8 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 206-7). There was also unhappiness at how the Ambassadors, Sir Stratford Canning in particular, in the Mediterranean had conducted themselves and allowed atrocities to happen in Crete: Wellington to Aberdeen, 14 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/981/26 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 331-4).

all despite a feeling that France was ‘more heartily with us at the present moment than they have ever been’.⁹⁸

This negativity was compounded by the difficulties that the continuing Russo-Ottoman War posed. This was very much a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the war prevented Britain and France from making progress in settling Greece. Neither power seemed willing to enter the war on one side or the other, and the Ottomans would ‘have still to incur all the chances of war, and they are right in thinking that they may as well leave the Greek question as all the rest to the result of the same chances’.⁹⁹ On the other hand, Greece and the Treaty of London prevented an opposition to Russia and their potential gains against the Turks in the Near East. This was in many ways a far more important question.¹⁰⁰ Though Aberdeen feared the continuation of the war could ‘scarcely fail to bring on a general war in Europe’, he told Stuart de Rothesay: ‘the truth is, that no Counsel, however judicious, nor any remonstrance however strongly urged, can possess its one weight with either party, until the Greek question shall have been practically settled; and this it is in vain for us to hope to accomplish within any reasonable period, except as the result of an intimate concert between France and England’.¹⁰¹ But, as Aberdeen wrote to Bathurst, ‘[t]he worst of the French is, that tomorrow may find the wind blowing quite the other way’ – not an ideal situation for creating an intimate concert.¹⁰² Even with ‘the breach of engagement on the part of His Imperial Majesty’, the blockade of the Dardanelles, ‘that would have justified His Majesty in taking any steps which the interests and honor of his Crown might require’, the British government instead sought a peaceful

⁹⁸ Aberdeen to Wellington, 13 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/960/15 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 132); Aberdeen to Wellington, 3 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/965/8 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 206-7).

⁹⁹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 31 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/964/37 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 190).

¹⁰⁰ Despite some concern in, what would be termed today, the humanitarian problems of the Greek question, especially in relation to the question of whether to lift the blockade of Crete, public opinion across Europe did not take a great interest in Greece at this time: Aberdeen to Wellington, 15 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/961/2 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 140); Aberdeen to Wellington, 16 Oct. 1828 Wellington Mss., WP1/961/4 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 143).

¹⁰¹ Aberdeen to de Rothesay, 21 Oct. 1828, copy, No. 46, de Rothesay Mss., MS 6234, pp. 140-3.

¹⁰² Aberdeen to Bathurst, 22 Nov. 1828, Bathurst Mss., Loan MS 57/18.

resolution of the issue.¹⁰³ This was not a choice that made everyone happy. Wellington wrote to Aberdeen that

[i]n truth, Metternich is as much at a loss as we are to know what to do. He was very angry with us for not seizing the apparent opportunity afforded by the blockade of the Dardenelles [sic] to declare against Russia, because that would have been a commencement of instance which at all events would have saved the Turks, and could have enabled him to what he calls 'prendre une position', that is to say either to support us or to oppose us, or, what is more probable, do nothing but talk. But as I said before, he no more knows what to do under existing circumstances than we do.

To his mind 'We are bound by the Greek treaty. Upon that the Turks will do nothing till the objects of the treaty will be attained. [...] Greece, once settled, we may consider the question'.¹⁰⁴ Wellington saw clearly that the war posed a threat to British interests, and to Europe:

I confess that I cannot see my way to any negociation [sic] for peace. The thing to be wished for is that France, England, Austria and Prussia should agree to declare to the Emperor of Russia that happen what may they will not consent to any aggrandisement of the Russian empire, nor that the Porte shall be crushed by demands of money on account of the costs of the war.

Nothing else can be of any avail. If this was done manfully the Emperor would soon continue to make peace.¹⁰⁵

This was a pipe dream. Only a month earlier he had written about the impossibility of a Franco-British mediation in the war: 'The Emperor would not consent to it. The offer would produce no good, and would put the Emperor very much out of temper with both powers and render him very unmanageable'. For him, as before, 'the great object to be attained is a perfect understanding with France that the objects of both countries are at this moment the same'. Despite the problems with the French army in the Morea he believed 'that we have neither of us any cause of complaint against the other and that we ought to look steadily at the existing crisis

¹⁰³ Memorandum by Wellington, Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/981/20 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 194-6).

¹⁰⁴ Wellington to Aberdeen, 7 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/968/23 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 224-6).

¹⁰⁵ Wellington to Aberdeen, 5 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/968/12 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 213-4).

with the determination to act together and in concert with any other powers for the purpose of rendering the result as little injurious to the world as possible'.¹⁰⁶

As Wellington's first year in power neared its conclusion, the solidification of the Franco-British alliance remained one of the chief priorities. By late 1828, it was clear that the return of the ambassadors to Constantinople was the only way to achieve any kind of progress on Greece, and possibly also offer a way towards a resolution of the Russo-Turkish war. While it would be impossible for the Russian ambassador to return given the conflict, there were hopes that the return of the British and French representatives could still be achieved. Polignac was worried that this could show a lack of harmony in the alliance but Wellington was more concerned with the practical advantages of the move.¹⁰⁷ Fearing the consequences of the coming year, the Duke wrote to the Foreign Secretary that '[i]t is quite clear to me [...] that the Turkish power in Europe will be annihilated in the next campaign if something cannot be done for their relief'.¹⁰⁸ Aberdeen was more hopeful as reports of the Russian losses sustained during the campaign 'may possibly help to smooth the way for the return of our ambassadors'.¹⁰⁹ Either way, their return was a necessity.

Fortunately, the French government were agreed on this but for them, the need to conciliate Russian opinion was also a crucial matter. Though there were sufficient grounds already existing for the ambassadors of Britain and France to return, there was a need for some new reason from the Porte, 'with the view of having some reason to give the Emperor of Russia for the step we were about to take which made it necessary to precede it by some such transaction'.¹¹⁰ Again, Britain was caught between France and Russia. While the French king was determined to maintain the peace, Polignac reassured Aberdeen that he would not allow 'the indelible disgrace which would be cast upon England and France if, in consequence of delays and diplomatick punctilio, we quietly permitted the sack of Constantinople and the

¹⁰⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 4 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/963/10 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 109-10).

¹⁰⁷ Polignac to Wellington, 2 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/970/8 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 301-3).

¹⁰⁸ Wellington to Aberdeen, 18 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/975/1 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 341).

¹⁰⁹ Aberdeen to Wellington, 6 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/971/2 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 314).

¹¹⁰ Aberdeen to Wellington, 30 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/973/27 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 380-81).

destruction of the Turkish empire'.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, Aberdeen and Wellington remained concerned with French sensitivities towards Russia. Wellington believed that '[w]e must lead the French with a gentle hand as fast as they will march with us'. For him

The truth is that the French have two or three objects in view and they seek to attain each in its turn as it appears to suit the opinion of the salons at Paris. But the uppermost one in the mind of Monsieur de la Ferronays is to keep upon good terms with the Emperor Nicholas and to seek the attainment of other objects only as they will be compatible with this one.¹¹²

This was the heart of the concern for the British government. There was still the lingering fear and concern about French intentions and plans, yet their alliance was the fulcrum of European relations at this time. Wellington believed that '[t]he way for France and us to keep well together which is an object so desirable to both countries is for each to examine well the bearings of every question upon the interests and honour of each before we enter too far with them'.¹¹³ This was all the more important because of the rumours that were circulating during the winter of 1828-29 about the difficulties and strains in the Austro-Russian relationship. Polignac looked upon a war between the two as 'highly probable' thanks largely to the 'imprudence of Metternich' whose 'whole language was hostile to Russia'.¹¹⁴ While the Duke thought that war was unlikely, and told Aberdeen: 'I'll engage for it that the Emperor of Russia is more afraid of us who are as quiet as mice than he is of the Austrians, although the Austrians have more in their power immediately', he nevertheless conceded there was a threat of a more general war.¹¹⁵ 'The danger to be avoided [...]', he suggested, 'is that the Emperor Nicholas, in order to extricate himself from the difficulties into which he has brought himself, may endeavour to excite a general war in Europe'. The Duke was clear that '[n]othing can prevent this misfortune or the overthrow of the Turkish empire which would be followed by a general war excepting the cordial union of

¹¹¹ Aberdeen to Wellington, 30 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/973/27 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 380-81).

¹¹² Wellington to Aberdeen, 31 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/975/40 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 382-3).

¹¹³ Wellington to Aberdeen, 1 Jan. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/993/4 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 408-9).

¹¹⁴ Aberdeen to Wellington, 31 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/973/32 (Also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 384-5).

¹¹⁵ Wellington to Aberdeen, 1 Jan. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/993/4 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 408-9).

France with us in any measures to be adopted’, as well as Britain’s ‘total separation’ from Austria.¹¹⁶

Fortunately, things did not reach this extreme, and the fears of the conflict escalating quickly subsided, but Britain remained caught between France and Russia. The early months of 1829 were comparatively quiet on the international scene. One problem was finally cleared when, after months of discussion, it was at last agreed in March that the French and British ambassadors should return to Constantinople to negotiate with the Turks about Greece on behalf of all the allies.¹¹⁷ This tranquillity was certainly not the case domestically where the battle for Catholic Emancipation was reaching its highest pitch – ‘[n]othing is thought of or talked of but the Catholic question’ recorded Greville in February¹¹⁸ – there were still ongoing concerns that it proved impossible to shake off. The eventual passage of the Catholic Relief Act, which received royal assent in early April 1829, enabled the government to take a step back to assess its diplomatic prospects. Wellington wrote to Aberdeen that:

We must look at our whole position in this Greek affair. The three powers declaring that they look to no objects for themselves and France being in possession of the Morea and Russia being on the high road to efface the name of Turkey from the list of powers of Europe, while we are looking on and holding the candle, come to be matters of serious consideration.¹¹⁹

With the passing of Catholic Emancipation, Peel’s role in the government assumed greater prominence, and from this point, he had greater weight in matters of foreign affairs. He at once grasped the difficulties of the British situation, noting in an important memorandum that ‘our position as a party to the treaty of the 6th July is daily becoming more embarrassing’. He took a very dim view of the conduct of the Russians in the Mediterranean and with Greece: ‘[i]f Russia and England were the sole parties to the treaty I for one would advise immediate dissolution of this treaty and the resumption of amicable diplomatic intercourse with the Porte’. Yet unfortunately this was not so simple:

¹¹⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 3 Jan. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/993/10 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 417).

¹¹⁷ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, p. 215; 28 March 1829, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, pp. 259-60.

¹¹⁸ 11 Feb. 1829, *Greville Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 172.

¹¹⁹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 22 Apr. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1014/24 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 591).

The introduction of France as a party certainly complicates the question, but if we find one of three parties to a treaty making that treaty the instrument of effecting its own objects, indefinitely protracting the fulfilment of the objects of the treaty, perpetuating by the excitement of fresh troubles the necessity, or at least the original cause, of the treaty, no delicacy towards a third power ought to prevent us from acting for ourselves and from refusing to be made the tool of that power which abused the treaty to serve its own objects.

Peel recommended that a plan for effecting the objects of the treaty should be made and that if it was not followed Britain should withdraw. He did note, however, the need to discover what the effect of a withdrawal would be on France, in occupation of the Morea, and consider Britain's situation should France and Russia 'form a new treaty between themselves for the pacification of Greece, pretending to found that treaty on the principle of the treaty of the 6th July, which we had sanctioned by becoming a party to it, but carrying the principle much further and more to their own advantage.'¹²⁰ This was the fear that remained hanging over Britain throughout this time, and the one that most stifled its freedom of manoeuvre.¹²¹

As the spring of 1829 moved into the summer, events reached crisis point. Now under the command of General Hans Karl von Diebitsch, an experienced commander during the Napoleonic Wars who had signed the convention of Tauroggen, rather than the Tsar, the Russian army in the Balkans won a string of successes that rapidly improved her position. By 19th August Adrianople had fallen, leaving Constantinople at the mercy of the Russian forces.¹²² Even before news reached London, Lord Aberdeen predicted that '[a] new epoch is about to arrive when the whole question will assume another character and of course will demand the most serious consideration'.¹²³ While no one had expected the Ottomans to prevail in the campaign, the speed of their collapse came as a surprise. It finally brought about the crisis in

¹²⁰ Memorandum by Peel, 24 Apr. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1012/8 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 598-9). Peel had earlier also taken a dim view of Russia in a letter to Aberdeen: 'in the present position it is very desirable for her to keep England and France hampered by the Greek Treaty, and she will not allow them to escape from it, or even to complete the object of it, until she can make no further use of it, With reference not to Greek, but to Russian Interests, let Russia destroy Turkey, let France & England have their hands tied by the Greek Treaty till she is destroyed, and then Russia will unbind them'. Emphasis Peel's. Peel to Aberdeen, 19-27 Jan. 1829, Aberdeen Mss. Add. MS 43,061, f. 35.

¹²¹ Peel's role in the formation of British foreign policy during this Government receives no attention from his biographers. This is a notable omission. Despite his attention necessarily being focused on Ireland and domestic matters, he was still the most important minister after Wellington himself, and his role was not inconsequential. N. Gash, *Mr. Secretary Peel: The Life of Sir Robert Peel to 1830* (London, 1961); D. Hurd, *Robert Peel: A Biography* (London, 2007).

¹²² Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, p. 70.

¹²³ Aberdeen to Wellington, 24 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1039/29 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 104-5).

British foreign policy that had been brewing over the last eighteen months. Having failed at any point to overcome the difficulties he had inherited in the Treaty of London, Wellington and his government now saw the fruit of their own errors in sticking to France and failing to take any kind of initiative over the summer. The repeated assertions of waiting to see the outcome of the war before Britain would judge its effects left her powerless to react when it appeared likely that even Constantinople could fall into Russian hands.

The impending end of the war and the crisis in British foreign policy excited comment from those outside of the government. Charles Greville commented that '[s]till more extraordinary does it appear that the Duke, from whom vigour and firmness might have been expected, should not have interfered'. For him

That cursed treaty of the 6th of July, and the subsequent battle of Navarino, which were intended to give us a right to arrest the ambition of Russia, have been rendered nugatory by the obstinacy of the Turks on the one hand, and the perpetual changes of Administration here and in France, which have prevented any steady and consistent course of policy from being followed; while the Russians, availing themselves of both these circumstances, have pushed on with singleness of purpose and great vigour of execution. It is quite impossible now to foresee the end of all this, but the elements are abroad of as fine disturbances as the most restless can desire.¹²⁴

Even at this moment of desperation, when Aberdeen was writing to de Rothesay of 'the urgency of the occasion and the magnitude of the crisis', he was still merely seeking the opinion of the French government rather than seeking to impose Britain's own ideas or plans to avoid the potential 'catastrophe [of] the destruction of the Turkish Empire'.¹²⁵

At this point, one surprising figure emerged, steering the government towards a stronger line against Russia: Robert Peel. In a letter to Aberdeen, he warned that '[w]e might be placed in such a situation that Remonstrances not justifiable on mere abstract Policy would become necessary for the maintenance of our honor'. He recommended collecting together the assurances of Russian moderation to base Britain's stance on claims of breaches of faith. For him '[t]he justice of that claim will tell two ways. The stronger the assurances of moderation the more complete may be

¹²⁴ 28 Aug. 1829, *Greville Memoirs*, vol. I, pp. 228-9.

¹²⁵ Aberdeen to de Rothesay, 21 Aug. 1829, copy, No. 50, de Rothesay Mss., MS 6239, pp. 471-8.

our defence for having confided in the earlier stages of the proceeding, but then the more signed will be the breach of faith, and possibly the more insulting to our honour'. He added though 'While I write this, so far from having any warlike spirit, I deprecate with the utmost earnestness the necessity of the particular War of which there is a distance murmuring'. Nothing could be achieved against Russia, apart from 'the vindication of Honour'. Though France would be 'our Natural Ally', 'there seems little prospect that France will be with us' while Austria could not be relied upon. To then take a firm stance against Russia would possibly leave Britain isolated, and Peel ended on a dark note: 'There then is a prospect of War in which we are pretty nearly single handed against Europe, and the "Right of Search" and General Jackson ready to embroil us in two months after its commencement with the United States'.¹²⁶ Though not talked of often, there still remained this consciousness of the threat and opportunism of the USA should Britain get into a war – another brake on an active policy.

One significant problem facing the government in the crafting of a response was the likely target of Russian aggrandisement. After having previously been promised that Russia would not annex any Ottoman territory, it emerged that it would likely take the strategic locations of Anapa and Poti on the northeastern coast of the Black Sea, controlling entry into the Caucasus. Though significant, these points were not of interest to any other European power. Austria was particularly concerned with the Principalities and the Balkans, and France with the Mediterranean, but only Britain was concerned with Asiatic Turkey.¹²⁷ But it was impossible to do anything to save them. As Wellington admitted, they were 'a trifle in comparison with the risk of attending the continuance of the Turkish war':

Anapa and Poti are not sufficiently well known, nor, indeed, are they so important to our interests, as to induce us to incur the risk of involving ourselves and all Europe in war, in order to prevent these places from falling into the hands of the Russians. But the Emperor of Russia ought to be told a little of our mind upon this subject when the Turks shall be out of the scrape.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Peel to Aberdeen, 23 Aug. 1829, private, Peel Mss., Add. MS 40,312, ff. 65-68. Again, an incident unmentioned by Peel's biographers despite its significance.

¹²⁷ As early as July 1828, Heytesbury, on his way to the Russian headquarters at the time, had told Aberdeen that Austria would have no objections to the cession of Anapa: Heytesbury to Aberdeen, 10 July 1828, private and confidential, Aberdeen Mss., Add. MS 43,089, f. 6.

¹²⁸ Wellington to Aberdeen, 29 July 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1036/28 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 57).

Aberdeen was relieved at Wellington's assessment. For him, the towns 'may be important; but we could never be justified in allowing the Turks, if we could help it, to continue the war for these objects. How many people know of the existence of these places? and of those who do, how many know their situation and importance?'¹²⁹ The Duke summarised the situation in August: 'it is quite evident that everything in Greece as well as in Turkey is going on as badly as possible for the interests of this country', thanks to the establishment of Russian influence in Greece and the demands for the two Black Sea ports, 'which is known by all Europe to be injurious to the interests of Great Britain alone'.¹³⁰

By this stage, Wellington and his government had already restricted their own freedom of manoeuvre. An overreliance on France left Britain in a difficult position. Mrs Arbuthnot's belief was that Polignac's ascent to power meant 'we shall therefore have France sincerely in our interest, which is an immense advantage' and that Britain could '[n]ow we shall be able to speak decidedly both to the Russians & Greeks & carry France with us'.¹³¹ This was a view shared by Wellington and Aberdeen, French domestic opinion and even Prince Metternich.¹³² Yet all were mistaken. Instead of leading France, the British government was isolated and liable to be manipulated. Wellington told Aberdeen in August how Polignac 'knows better than others the desire of this country to keep upon good terms with France and the sacrifices that we would make to secure that object. I would make many sacrifices, indeed any sacrifices, excepting our honour'.¹³³ A few days later the Duke complained how '[w]e have made the greatest sacrifices of opinion, principles, and national pride and prejudice to our allies. In return they have not performed their promises [...] We can talk of nothing excepting in the tone and quality of a power that is degraded'.¹³⁴ This was a damning indictment of his own foreign policy to be in that position after over a year and a half

¹²⁹ Aberdeen to Wellington, 30 July 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1034/21 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 64).

¹³⁰ Wellington to Aberdeen, 10 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1042/19 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 76-7). Ellenborough was concerned that the Russians would soon be in a position to attack India thanks to their encroachments, Ellenborough to Wellington, 22 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1039/22 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 100).

¹³¹ 12 Aug. 1829, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 299.

¹³² Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, p. 432.

¹³³ Wellington to Aberdeen, 21 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1042/45 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 98-9).

¹³⁴ Wellington to Aberdeen, 25 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1042/50 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 106-7).

in power. These sacrifices and the reliance on France were even given a ridiculous light thanks to the frequent complaints about her actions, her preference for Russia, and that factions within France were even eager for war with Britain.¹³⁵

The true scale of the folly of close relations with France was not appreciated at the time but has become clear in hindsight. With fears that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was imminent, Prince Polignac sought to lay the ground for an agreement with Russia to partition the remains and redistribute the borders in Europe itself with what has been described as ‘the most pretentious official nineteenth-century French plan for solving the Near Eastern question’, the Polignac Project.¹³⁶ Russia would gain the Principalities and land in Asia, Austria would gain Serbia and Bosnia, Prussia receiving Holland and Saxony, with the latter getting the Prussian Rhineland in compensation, and France would gain the long coveted Southern Netherlands. Britain for her part would get the Dutch colonies, a poor compensation for the loss of the Low Countries as an independent buffer state, as well as Russian expansion in the direction of India.¹³⁷ Although the project never materialised, this episode demonstrates some of the weaknesses of Wellington’s foreign policy in the Near East. Twenty months of efforts at concerting with France had not prevented the latter from reaching out to create the very alliance that was the most feared by Britain.

Despite the problems of which the British government were aware, not to mention those of which they remained ignorant, they still would not seek to broaden their foreign policy by bringing in Austria. In late August the Foreign Secretary recorded that: ‘Esterhazy came to me after he had seen you yesterday and was very inquisitive about our opinions and intentions under the present crisis. He truly said that we might be comparatively at ease, but that it might be a question of life or death to them.’ Despite the importance of the issue, Aberdeen’s reply was, ‘[o]f course I said nothing to him of consequence and rather declined entering upon the subject at

¹³⁵ Aberdeen to de Rothesay, 20 Feb. 1829, copy, No. 16, de Rothesay Mss., MS 6239, pp. 121-6; Wellington to Aberdeen, 21 July 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1035/62 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 33-4); Wellington to Cowley, 10 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1042/17 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 74-6); Wellington to Aberdeen, 18 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1042/34 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 91-3).

¹³⁶ Puryear, *France and the Levant*, p. 76; Sauvigny, *The Bourbon Restoration*, pp. 432-3.

¹³⁷ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, p.658; Puryear, *France and the Levant*, p. 77-8.

present.’¹³⁸ The Duke took the same attitude, adding ‘till we shall know the result of our reference to the French government we must say nothing to them’.¹³⁹ This only had the effect of leaving British foreign policy at the mercy of others. As Aberdeen noted:

It seems to me that we are in a bad way, principally because we are at the mercy of the Emperor. He can insult us if he pleases, and it is for him to judge how far he can venture to do so with impunity. Our position, that is the position of France and England, is more dependant[sic] upon the conduct of the Emperor, because we have in some manner guaranteed his sincerity by accepting his promises, and have thus given all Europe reason to believe they might be satisfied with his assurances.¹⁴⁰

Though Britain was the most dissatisfied with the conduct of Russia, the fact Wellington’s government saw itself in the position as guarantor of her actions demonstrates clearly the extent to which they had failed to extricate themselves from the mess they had inherited and had merely embedded themselves in it more firmly.

Even at this stage, however, Wellington still very firmly blamed the Government’s difficulties on ‘Canning’s management’:

He had set us at variance with every Court in Europe; that he had then made his famous treaty of July 1827, in which he embarked us with Russia in a cause which was opposed to our own interests & admitted France alone into the Treaty, which c[oul]d have no other effect than to give additional influence to Russia; that we had been struggling with this difficulty ever since & he did not see how we were to get out of it.¹⁴¹

While the Treaty of London had undoubtedly left the Duke’s government with a troubled legacy, after this long in office Wellington’s protestations were beginning to have the ring of excuses. If anything, they underscored his own lack of diplomatic ideas and vision.

By early September, rumours were circulating about the fall of Constantinople. ‘A very few days will decide whether the Turkish Empire is to exist or not’, Aberdeen

¹³⁸ Aberdeen to Wellington, 25 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1040/6 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 107-8).

¹³⁹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 26 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1042/55 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 108-9).

¹⁴⁰ Aberdeen to Wellington, 26 Aug. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1040/10 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 111-2).

¹⁴¹ 15 Sept. 1829, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 305.

wrote to Bathurst.¹⁴² Wellington speculated that if it had been captured, it would be the end of all questions of Greece and ‘to the Turkish empire in Europe’. With the fall of the capital, ‘[t]he world must then be reconstructed’ and to do this ‘there is no doubt that the best ground for satisfactory reconstruction would be a cordial co-operation between England and France, that is to say if the French government has a will of its own’. It would then be necessary to ‘reconstruct a Greek empire’ possessing the Straits as well as the mouth of the Danube.¹⁴³ In a rare statement of intent, the British naval presence in the Mediterranean was reinforced.¹⁴⁴

In large part due to the weaknesses in Diebitsch’s own army, with supply lines overstretched and the ranks decimated by disease, Britain’s nightmare never came to pass. Nevertheless, on 14 September 1829, the Russian general signed the Treaty of Adrianople to bring the war to a conclusion.¹⁴⁵ On the whole, it was a moderate peace, demanding only small territorial gains, including Anapa and Poti, as well as imposing an indemnity and reaffirming rights held by Russia in previous treaties. One notable extension of Russian rights was in Article VII which touched on trading rights and the passage of the Straits, but this was by no means a revolutionary innovation. Nevertheless, the treaty still provoked an outraged response in Whitehall. Following the conclusion of the peace, ‘[i]t would be absurd to think of bolstering up the Turkish power in Europe. It is gone in fact and the tranquillity of the world, or, what is the same thing, the confidence of the world in the permanence of tranquillity along with it’, the Duke wrote to Aberdeen.¹⁴⁶

Wellington outlined his views on the Treaty of Adrianople in a long memorandum. For him, the independent existence of the Ottoman Empire was under threat. At the start of the war, ‘His Majesty’s government likewise declared their opinion that the most compleat [sic] success in the justest [sic] cause would not entitle

¹⁴² Aberdeen to Bathurst, 4 Sept. 1829, Bathurst Mss., Loan MS 57/18.

¹⁴³ Wellington to Aberdeen, 11 Sept. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1048/21 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 151-3).

¹⁴⁴ 5 Sept. 1829, *Greville Memoirs*, vol. I, p. 231.

¹⁴⁵ For the text of the Treaty of Adrianople see *Key Treaties for the Great Powers*, pp. 188-203.

¹⁴⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 4 Oct. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1054/7 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 192-3). Wellington’s friend, General Miguel Álava, wrote to him stating his agreement with Talleyrand that the peace was equal to that imposed on Prussia in 1807 which stripped her of half her territory. Álava to Wellington, 10 Oct. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1050/6 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 210-11).

the stronger party to demand from the weaker sacrifices which would affect its political existence' or reduce 'the Ottoman power to a degree of weakness which would deprive it of the character of an independent power'. To this, the Russians had reassured Britain that there was 'no intention exists of demanding indemnities which could affect the political existence of the Ottoman empire, and it was over again declared that the well understood interests of Russia excluded the idea of overthrowing the Turkish empire'. Yet the provisions of the Treaty of Adrianople seemed to go against these assurances. With the Principalities and Serbia both made independent in all but name, Wellington asked '[c]an it be believed that the Sultan can exercise an independent or any controul over the various people submitted to his government after such concessions have been extorted from him?' On Article VII, the Duke thought that no-one would believe 'that the power upon which it is imposed can be considered independent within its own territories'. The occupations of Ottoman territory that the treaty provided for until the Porte had paid off its indemnity also drew the ire of the Prime Minister. Though occupations in the Caucasus were respectable enough, given that they were 'connected with schemes of ambition in Asia which Russia may reasonably entertain', those in Europe were a different matter and instead 'just grounds of suspicion are afforded that the principalities are kept in order to facilitate ulterior views upon the independence of the Porte and the integrity of the Turkish dominions'. For Wellington,

[t]hese views are quite inconsistent with the Emperor's professions and promises and with the security of other powers, most particularly of Austria, to whom the occupation of the principalities [sic] for eleven years after the professions made are not only a serious injury but an insult. This injury and insult are aggravated by the prospect afforded by recent transactions and by this peace, that the Ottoman power must crumble to pieces, and that them, and with Silistria alone, the command of the navigation of the Danube and of the Black Sea.

Surprisingly, the Duke thought that the best course would have been the actual occupation of Constantinople and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In that situation, the 'natural course' would have been a Congress to settle the division of the empire, including the parts Russia had taken for itself. But now 'it is difficult to have such a discussion'. Once again, this was blamed on the stances of other countries: 'If France or Prussia were disposed to take any steps in concert with this country to prevent the evils which must be the consequence of this treaty of peace, they would

before this time have approached us. France will not move with England, and Austria without Prussia, and Prussia will not move without having being certain that the movement will be agreeable to the Emperor of Russia'. In light of all that had happened, Wellington thought that the aim now should be to get an agreement from the Great Powers that if the Ottoman Empire collapsed, 'the dissolution of the dominions hitherto under its government should be concerted and determined upon by the five powers in conference'. This should be combined with a remonstrance to the Tsar, 'strong in facts, yet moderate and respectful in language', yet even this 'should not be produced or ever come to light if we should be able to attain our object, that of obtaining a concert upon the future fate of the Turkish dominions'.¹⁴⁷

This memorandum encompasses many of the flaws of Wellington's foreign policy in the Near East since coming into office. While quick to complain about the situation, especially to place the blame on the difficulties raised by allies, it was short on positive action. The emphasis on the need for concert was very much at odds with the Duke's previous attitudes towards Austria, spurning her advances in preference for a policy tied closely to that of France. Even his close friend Mrs Arbuthnot was critical of Wellington:

It vexes me to death for I am certain, when Parliament meets, the enemies of the Gov[ernmen]t will say that Russia has outwitted us, and it is true. We have got too much into a way of being afraid of a war. We are always tacking to what France or Austria will do, never taking the lead ourselves; and I am persuaded that, if we let the Emperor of Russia know that we w[oul]d resent his occupation of the Turkish territories, he w[oul]d not dare persist. But I am afraid we shan't do it, & we shall be laughed at! I c[oul]d not help writing in this strain to the Duke and I dare say he will be angry.¹⁴⁸

Peel wrote to Aberdeen in a similar vein: 'I think we should do nothing and say nothing to provoke Russia, but in the present position of England with relation to Russia, and the present temper of the English People in regard to Russian Conquests, we should not be too courteous or too confiding'.¹⁴⁹ As has already been noted, the

¹⁴⁷ Wellington to Aberdeen, 10 & 11 Oct. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1054/21 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 211-19).

¹⁴⁸ 15 Oct. 1829, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, p. 310. As Jupp has noted, however, it was very difficult to measure public opinion during this period and as a result 'politicians therefore made up their own minds on what the public really wanted and in Wellington's case he concluded on several occasions that it was averse to foreign entanglements and was dedicated to peace', Jupp, 'The Foreign Policy of Wellington's Government, 1828-30', p. 173.

¹⁴⁹ Peel to Aberdeen, 1 Nov. 1829, Aberdeen Mss., Add. MS, 43,061, f. 54 (original emphasis).

financial contingencies placed on the administration by the Finance Committee of the previous year, and the wider moves in favour of retrenchment in government spending served to place constraints on the ability of Britain to wage war. However, while this was certainly a factor, the timidity of Wellington and the government in facing the problems that confronted them was also crucial. It points to the lack of a clear foreign policy strategy.

The government were certain that a remonstrance was required.¹⁵⁰ This was no simple matter, however. Given the peace had been negotiated on the spot by Diebitsch, it was by no means certain that the terms would not be altered by the Tsar and his government. Heytesbury had already sent word that Nesselrode was ‘so exceedingly annoyed personally’ at the General for including the occupation of the Principalities as it gave openings ‘to those who are always suspicious of an *arrière pensée*’. As a result, the ambassador had ‘very great hopes of seeing that article altogether new modelled in the ratifications’.¹⁵¹ Lord Ellenborough, never trusting entirely in the abilities of Aberdeen as a Foreign Secretary, drafted up a dispatch for Heytesbury to deliver to the Tsar as a remonstrance.¹⁵² But only two days later, Wellington was writing back to him saying that ‘[w]e are in truth without knowledge of what will be the details of the treaty’. All that they knew is ‘that there is peace, but nothing more to a certainty. It is said among other things that the Emperor has ordered his army to cross the Balkan and even the Danube, that he means to remit a great part of the 10 millions of dollars and not to retain in his hands the principalities’. As a result, in the Duke’s mind ‘[i]t may still be necessary to remonstrate but it would be ridiculous to remonstrate till we should know for what’.¹⁵³ Aberdeen reinforced this to Ellenborough: ‘We must really see what it is that we are to remonstrate about. We cannot remonstrate against his victories over the Turks, or the inevitable effect of these victories; although we may take means to protect ourselves, and all Europe, against the consequences’. In the Foreign Secretary’s mind ‘Something, no doubt, must

¹⁵⁰ In early October, Aberdeen wrote to de Rothesay to enquire if France would join Britain in an ‘amicable remonstrance’ to the Tsar – an oxymoron if there ever is one in diplomatic relations. Aberdeen to de Rothesay, 9 Oct. 1829, private, de Rothesay Mss., MS 6239, p. 642.

¹⁵¹ Heytesbury to Wellington, 30 Sept. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1047/10 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 187-8).

¹⁵² Ellenborough to Wellington, 15 Oct. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1051/8 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 227-31).

¹⁵³ Wellington to Ellenborough, 17 Oct. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1054/34 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 235-6).

still be said; but if ever a knowledge of the tenth was necessary before speaking, I think it is now'.¹⁵⁴

Aberdeen was more revealing in a letter to Peel: 'it has been necessary to suspend the remonstrance [...] and its tone must be modified', thanks to word from Heytesbury about the intention to reduce the indemnity and the occupations: 'These were our great causes of remonstrance; The greater part of the remaining evils are not capable of remedy'. But, he told the home secretary, '[s]till, we must I suppose, make some sort of expostulation'.¹⁵⁵

This eventually came in the form of a remonstrance that was sent to Lord Heytesbury at the very end of October, which in turn was not received until late November, well over two months after peace had been concluded. The despatch, which was to be read to Nesselrode and a copy given to him if desired, began by stressing how the treaty had consequences that could 'influence so powerfully the future happiness and tranquillity of all nations' that it was necessary to communicate Britain's sentiments. Though the relative situation of the Porte and Russia at the end of the war could have justified the imposition of 'still harder terms', and while '[i]t may not be easy to accuse of want of generosity, the conqueror who checks the unresisted [sic] progress of success, and who spares the defenceless Capital of his Enemy', the Treaty of Adrianople did not meet the 'expectations held out by preceding declarations and assurances [and] appears vitally to affect the interests, - the strength, - the dignity, - the present safety, - and future independence of the Ottoman Empire'. To challenge in such an explicit way the sincerity of Russia was quite a major step. The despatch even went on to comment how '[t]he independence of a State may be overthrown, and its subjection effectually secured, without the presence of a hostile force, or the permanent occupation of its soil'.¹⁵⁶ These were clearly strong words to be saying to an ally in the moment of their victory, especially when contrasted with the French response 'which had congratulated the Tsar on his moderation and magnanimity'.¹⁵⁷ While Wellington could argue that '[t]he independence [sic] of the Porte is important to all the powers of Christendom', the fact the remonstrance was a lone one was revealing.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Aberdeen to Ellenborough, 21 Oct. 1829, Aberdeen Mss, Add. MS 43,198, f. 19.

¹⁵⁵ Aberdeen to Peel, 24 Oct. 1829, Peel Mss., Add MS 40,312, f. 72.

¹⁵⁶ Aberdeen to Heytesbury, 31 Oct. 1829, No. 22, recd. 22 Nov. 1829, TNA, FO 181/78.

¹⁵⁷ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, p. 221.

¹⁵⁸ Memorandum by Wellington, 4 Nov. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1059/9 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 286).

The dispatch indicated the depth of the problems of Britain's foreign policy in the Near East. A lone remonstrance from Britain, unsupported even by the one ally, France, who she had courted since the beginning of Wellington's administration, served merely to deepen the rift between Britain and the continent. Even the Foreign Secretary was unsure of its ultimate purpose. The remonstrance, he noted, was 'a very delicate matter, and requires much care. If we state our case too strongly, why do we only remonstrate? If too courteously, why are we [deceived?]? We must not Forget that the two specifick objects of the remonstrance, when first proposed, are both already obtained, at least to a certain extent'.¹⁵⁹ Instead of taking a lead, British foreign policy was left to drift until a conclusion came about that the government was convinced left the independence of the Ottoman Empire almost non-existent. This was not all Wellington's doing; the treaty of London had moved Anglo-Russian mediation towards Franco-British-Russian intervention, overturning the balance in the Mediterranean in the process. Domestic difficulties with the retention of the Canningites in Cabinet during the first half of 1828 served to limit the Duke's diplomatic options at the crucial juncture. But since their departure, foreign policy had not received a new focus. By prioritising close relations with France, Wellington had spurned promising possibilities with Austria to avert the problems that the remonstrance complained of. It allowed France the freedom to extort British permission for an expedition for the Morea, it gave her the openings to reach out to Russia, abortively, for a closer alliance, and the following year it would give her the space to make a very worrying intervention in North Africa, as will be explored below.

The Treaty of Adrianople did, however, clear the way for a resolution of the war in Greece. Independence was to all extents settled, and the main question that remained was to settle on a monarch for the fledgling state. Even here was an issue on which Britain failed to take a clear line. While various candidates were suggested, the name of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg was one that was frequently returned to – indeed, he made the Tsar's first list when the suggestion of a hereditary prince came up in December 1828.¹⁶⁰ Leopold had been married to George IV's daughter, Charlotte, was still in receipt of a generous British pension after his wife's death and remained

¹⁵⁹ Aberdeen to Peel, 2 Nov. 1829, Peel Mss., Add. MS 40,312.

¹⁶⁰ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, p. 223.

resident in England at Claremont House.¹⁶¹ Despite this, however, he was not a particularly favoured candidate by the British government. When Laval, in conversation with Aberdeen, ‘tried to describe him as a candidate’, the Foreign Secretary ‘corrected him, and said that since the rejection of Prince Philip of Hesse we had put forward no other candidate than Prince Frederick of Orange’.¹⁶²

Instead of advocating him as a unifying candidate, and one that would be the option most likely to take a pro-British line in Greek affairs, suspicion was directed his way, as was the wont of Wellington’s administration. The Duke thought that ‘as the French do not object to his being the sovereign of Greece, there must be something in the idea that he is [to] connect himself with the House of Orleans’.¹⁶³ Even when it was clear that Russia would be happy to support his candidature, there was only very grudging acknowledgement of Leopold’s advantages by Aberdeen: ‘Perhaps the only method as a middle term will be to agree upon Leopold who nobody likes but to whom no one objects’.¹⁶⁴

One crucial figure did object: George IV. In December 1829, it emerged that he had promised his support for the claim of Charles of Mecklenburg.¹⁶⁵ This was completely separate from the actions of his ministers, and without consultation, and it threatened to bring down the Government. Upon learning of it, Wellington was aware of both the domestic implications of the King acting separately from his ministers, and the diplomatic effects as well. He wrote to Aberdeen stating that ‘[t]he affair upon which this correspondence takes place is not trivial. It is the most important one of the day in foreign affairs, and one in which the honor and interests of this country are materially involved’. The Duke was of the view that ‘[w]e must then accept Prince Charles or we must quarrel with our allies or we must go out. I should prefer the last. But I conceive that we shall not be able to make the world feel the difference between Prince Charles and Prince Leopold, even if we could state it in publick We should be accused then of having resigned in disgust because we could not make Prince Leopold

¹⁶¹ J.L. Polasky, ‘Leopold I (1790–1865)’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011).

¹⁶² Aberdeen to Wellington, 26 Nov. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1058/5 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 305-6).

¹⁶³ Wellington to Aberdeen, 27 Nov. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1059/68 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 307).

¹⁶⁴ Aberdeen to Wellington, 27 Nov. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1058/10 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 308).

¹⁶⁵ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, p. 223.

the sovereign of Greece'. The course which Wellington chose was confrontation with the King: 'Rely upon it that the only safe course for us to take is to strike at once at what is a gross unconstitutional irregularity which may be followed by national inconvenience, injury and dishonour'.¹⁶⁶

This came at an especially inconvenient time as it was increasingly becoming clear that Leopold was the only acceptable candidate and Wellington had set himself to actually removing the obstacles (such as his naturalisation as a British citizen) to his eventual accession. Things were tied up in discussions with the French though – another sign that all of the Duke's good will had yielded scant rewards:

If we had Polignac here as the French ambassador I think that we should get the better of all these difficulties by the adoption of a different form of words in the protocole. [sic] Situated as we are with the King opposed to his ministers and in communication with the opposition of the government on the one hand and the *corps diplomatique* on the other through his brother, the Duke of Cumberland, and this *corps diplomatique* eager to excite an opposition to the government, our position is most difficult and critical. Monsieur de Laval aggravates all these difficulties.¹⁶⁷

Nevertheless, by 8th January 1830, Britain, France and Russia had settled at last on Prince Leopold as their candidate and George IV remained the only problem ahead of them. The King's objection was founded solely on a dislike of Leopold as opposed to any particular desire to use the issue to force the Government out, as had been suspected. Leopold wrote to Wellington that the affair 'might be understood if the [King] founded his opposition upon the impossibility of his giving consent to so unfit an individual, but he lays himself completely open' by an insistence on the ending of his pension.¹⁶⁸ After a series of meetings with Wellington and Aberdeen, the King finally surrendered and gave his consent to the nomination. Even this was grudging though, complaining how he could not 'but deeply regret the selection made by France and Russia of Prince Leopold' and that '[w]ithout entering into a detail of reasoning the King considers Prince Leopold not qualified for this particular station'.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 8 Dec. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1065/18 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 312-4).

¹⁶⁷ Wellington to Aberdeen, 2 Jan. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1090/7 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 370-1).

¹⁶⁸ Leopold to Wellington, 13 Jan. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1085/11 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 407).

¹⁶⁹ George IV to Wellington, 19 Jan. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1086/9 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 426).

Early in February 1830, the three powers congratulated themselves on securing the nomination and thus entering the final straight.¹⁷⁰ This was to prove premature. Leopold now began probing into the situation of Greece and enquiring as to what situation it would be in relation to Britain, France and Russia, to Europe generally, and what his pecuniary situation would be to run the state, especially important, as Leopold wrote to Wellington, because ‘the provisional government has till now only existed by foreign subsidies, which I am told are from hence to cease’.¹⁷¹ This would mark the slow unravelling of the situation, as Leopold imposed conditions on his acceptance. He made clear his desire for ‘a large loan, guaranteed by the Powers; allied troops, at least until a Greek army could be properly organised; the cession of Crete; and a firm indication that the Greeks wanted him as their sovereign’. These terms were all accepted by Wellington. Though Chamberlain expresses surprise that Wellington and Aberdeen agreed to the soldiers, this was completely consistent with his long-term attitudes.¹⁷² The Prime Minister wrote how he ‘never saw any difficulty about the troops if they were not the troops of the three powers only’ and that he was happy to provide the money for Leopold to hire men from another European sovereign.¹⁷³ Given the Duke’s experience of the role of foreign soldiers providing an important state-building role as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Occupation in France and his later advocacy on numerous occasions of British soldiers providing an opportunity to reform the army in Portugal, this was firmly in line with his worldview.

Likewise, his desire to ensure that Greece, and Britain, were not tied to France and Russia in this case, bears a resemblance to his desire to pursue an equitable troop reduction in 1817 to retain the European aspect of the Occupation. By now though, Wellington’s views were tinged with a bitterness absent from his earlier diplomatic positions. He objected to the joint use of troops with France and Russia, and to a joint guarantee of territory as it would be ‘still the triple alliance. We shall still be in the

¹⁷⁰ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, p. 224.

¹⁷¹ Leopold to Wellington, 9 Feb. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1093/25 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 489-91); Wellington to Leopold, 10 Feb. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1098/20 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 492-8).

¹⁷² Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, p. 224.

¹⁷³ Wellington to Aberdeen, 16 Feb. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1098/43 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 516).

hands and at the disposal of our worst enemies in Europe and all our movements under their direction'.¹⁷⁴

Despite Wellington's acceptance of Leopold's conditions, and his overriding desire to be free of his nominal allies, the question of Greece was not resolved. In May 1830, Leopold formally declined the nomination, citing that he had still not received an unequivocal invitation from the Greeks.¹⁷⁵ As far as Wellington was concerned, '[h]is refusal is founded entirely upon reasons *ad captandum*', though he was still of the view that 'this does not signify, our case is excellent'.¹⁷⁶ The search for a monarch would have to begin anew, a task left uncompleted by Wellington thanks to the French and Belgian Revolutions that would blow all other diplomatic business out of the water, and then the fall of his administration in November.

This failure to conclude the Greek affair was symptomatic of the foreign policy of the Duke's Government and capped off a roundly disastrous period on the Eastern Question. Quite simply, Wellington failed to secure his preferences at any point throughout his time in office. Instead, he lumbered from crisis to crisis, blaming anyone other than himself – be it Canning's legacy, the Canningites in Cabinet, Britain's own representatives abroad, the French, the Russians or the Lievens in particular – for the failure to properly outline British priorities and draw up a coherent plan, or even a vague sense, of how to go about achieving them in a realistic manner. Though there were substantial problems facing Wellington's Government, the fault lay solely at the Prime Minister's door for not being able to chart a way around them. Two planks of the Duke's foreign policy outlook seemed to have been abandoned during these years: his pragmatism and his internationalism. It is quite possible that his tendency to micromanage the conduct of the Government meant that never saw the wood from the trees in the Near East. He became too embedded in the questions and was unable to take sensible positions that he would have recommended previously. Certainly, his obsession with sticking close to France meant that he never tried to broaden his base of support by bringing in Austria. That strong internationalist streak that had run through his earlier career seemed to have been lost in this case. The Near

¹⁷⁴ Wellington to Aberdeen, 17 Feb. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1098/45 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 518-19).

¹⁷⁵ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, p. 224.

¹⁷⁶ Wellington to Rosslyn, 24 May 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1117/64 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, p. 61).

East really did mark the arena in which Wellington demonstrated the gulf that had developed between his own conceptions of the conduct and course of foreign policy in Europe, and the direction these forces were actually heading in.

Portugal and Algiers: Wellington and British Foreign Policy, 1826-30

While the Eastern Question increasingly occupied the attention of diplomats in the latter half of the decade, Wellington also faced a number of other important issues. The first of these was the continuing problem of Portugal, where two branches of the ruling Braganza dynasty vied with each other for control following the death of John VI in March 1826. This dispute would concern Wellington in this form for the rest of the decade. It would later change its character after the abdication of Dom Pedro as Emperor of Brazil in 1831 – creating the conditions of the seeming conflict between constitutionalism and absolutism that Palmerston intervened so notably in. Apart from Portugal, 1830 would be an especially difficult year, with many problems for British diplomacy. The first of these was the French intervention in Algeria that would eventually lead to a full-blown occupation – against British wishes. A few months later and the regime of Charles X was overthrown by a revolution in Paris, his African adventure failing to distract his subjects from the internal problems in France. The fall of the Bourbons in another revolution seemed a deeply concerning prospect and one that could easily have resulted in war. Following swiftly after was a rebellion in Brussels that quickly escalated until it was apparent that the southern provinces of the United Netherlands were likely to split off. Having overseen the construction of the Barrier Fortresses in the rebellious areas, Wellington was keenly aware of their strategic importance and the need to reach a satisfactory conclusion to this question.

In all of these matters, the Duke operated with a calm and pragmatic policy. He was not ideological, and certainly not reactionary – as his quick acceptance of the fall of Charles X made clear. Instead, given the conditions in front of him, he set out to solve problems as best he could. In this, he was remarkably successful, especially in contrast with his policy towards Russia and the Near East. In the Belgian Question,

in particular, Wellington laid the ground for Palmerston's own success, though the Duke's contribution has rarely received the credit it deserves.

Portugal 1826-30

Having seemingly overcome the difficulties of the earlier part of the decade, Portugal was once again plunged into crisis following the death of John VI in March 1826. The Crown fell to his son, Dom Pedro, who since 1822 had ruled an independent Brazil. Those earlier problems had demonstrated that it was impossible to rule Portugal from Rio de Janeiro or Brazil from Lisbon any more. As a result, Dom Pedro decided to abdicate in favour of his eight-year-old daughter, naming her Queen Maria II, with his sister, the Infanta Isabella, as her regent. Crucially, he accompanied this move with a constitution that he wrote without consulting anyone in Portugal nor having been officially acclaimed as King of Portugal by the Cortes. Pedro's brother, Dom Miguel, opposed both moves and claimed that Pedro's abdication counted for all of his line and that he was the rightful King in Maria's place. Miguel's supporters began to desert the army and flee to absolutist Spain. Their return later in the year would provide the spark that triggered British intervention.¹

It was clear in London that the complications resulting from the granting of the constitution would have a destabilising effect on the Peninsula. Wellington was deeply concerned about the impact it would have on Spain especially given that whatever they felt towards the constitution would be 'ten times aggravated by the taunts and reviling of the Spaniards and their government, which we know to be uppermost in the heart and mind of every Portuguese'. He believed that an attack on Portugal would be very likely. To prevent this, the Duke suggested to Canning that open discussions and publications of the legislature there should be suspended, as should the freedom of the press for a temporary period. In Wellington's opinion 'by these measures [the Portuguese] deprive their enemies of all cause of establishing in their country a reasonable system of government, and I need not add the advantages, even in Spain, which would be the consequences of the tranquil establishment in Portugal of the government under the charter'. The main reason for suggesting this course, though,

¹ Collins, 'The Limits of British Power', p. 750.

was ‘in order that we avoid being involved in fresh hostilities in Portugal in which we must be principals if they are to be successful, or the misfortune of seeing Portugal in the possession of an enemy, Spain, which must be the consequence of our omitting to interfere’.² Wellington was above all eager to prevent the outbreak of war and in September told Mrs Arbuthnot ‘positively that, if the Cabinet pursued measures with regard to Portugal which he thought likely to bring on war, he w[oul]d quit the Gov[ernmen]t for that he w[oul]d not be implicated in councils he thought so disastrous to the country’.³

As well as urging a conciliatory policy by the Regency in Portugal, the Duke’s policy recommendations included an emphasis on improving the military situation there. Lord Liverpool asked Wellington his thoughts on how capable Portugal was of defending herself as the Prime Minister had ‘adopted the idea that Portugal *single-handed* was, in a *defensive war*, a complete match for Spain *single-handed*’.⁴ This, Wellington replied, was certainly the case, but it was of a ‘Portugal with her army and her other military establishments and resources, such as militia and landwehr or ordenanzas well-organized, compleat, [sic] and well-disciplined and commanded, her fortresses garrisoned and supplied with all requisite for their defence, and the material and other establishments of an army in the field in a fit state for service’. In those circumstances, the Duke believed that Portugal would be ‘more than a match for Spain’, and consequently, that was a position in which he had always laboured to see her placed. Doing so would mean that ‘we might be ourselves in some degree of security that the war would not recommence’. However, in the summer of 1826, Portugal was very clearly not in that well-organised state, and the situation was only likely to get worse rather than better. As a result, Wellington advised the Prime Minister that

[w]hat we must endeavour to do then is to prevail upon Portugal so to shape her course under her new system as not only not to give ground of offence, but that the allies and advisers of Spain, who are still desirous of and have an interest in the continued preservation of the general peace, may be satisfied

² Wellington to Canning, 11 Aug. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/861/9 (also in *WND.*, vol. III, pp. 375-7).

³ 1 Sept. 1826, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 44.

⁴ Liverpool to Wellington, 16 Aug. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/860/15 (also in *WND.*, vol. III, p. 381).

that the most effectual measures have been adopted to prevent the new institutions in Portugal from giving offence or creating mischief in Spain.

This is all that we can do a[t] present, and we must hope that in time Portugal may not be a burthen to us, if she should not become a useful ally.⁵

This concern for the military situation, and his preference to ensure that Portugal should be well defended, both for her own sake and Britain's, led Wellington to be involved in the question of Lord Beresford returning to take charge of the Portuguese army. George Canning left the matter up to the discretion of the Duke and Lord Liverpool.⁶ In the latter's opinion, Beresford's return marked 'the only chance of rendering that army effective, and of checking the insane proceedings of the Spanish government'.⁷ To begin with, Wellington was not of the same view. His initial assessment was that the situation, and the army's regard for Dom Miguel, made it 'far less likely that he[Beresford] will be able to re-establish the discipline and efficiency of the army than it would have been some years ago'. He further doubted of the wisdom of Canning's condition that Beresford should not hold a post in the Portuguese cabinet, something Wellington considered absolutely necessary.⁸

A few days later the Duke wrote to Beresford and expanded on his thinking. He told the Marshal that '[t]he circumstances of the times are altered, your own personal position is not the same that it was, and the army has relations with the Infante Don Miguel which you may find inconvenient in the exercise of your authority'. Yet despite this, Wellington was not completely despondent. Beresford's name and character still carried weight and he 'may be able to restore order, regularity and discipline to this mass of confusion and mutiny'. The Duke added that 'if you should succeed I don't hesitate in saying that you will have rendered to this country and to Europe the greatest service that it is in the power of any man possibly to render at the

⁵ Wellington to Liverpool, 18 Aug. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/861/14 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 381-2).

⁶ Canning to Wellington, 2 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/863/1 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 408-9).

⁷ Liverpool to Wellington, 4 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/863/2 (also in *WND*, vol. III, p. 409).

⁸ Wellington to Liverpool, 6 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss. WP1/864/2 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 410-11). The Duke did add the complaint that he had not seen any of the papers and that 'I know nothing that has passed in Portugal, nor of the state of the relations between Portugal and Spain, excepting what I see in the newspapers'. See also, 19 Oct. 1826, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 51 & Canning to Wellington, 9 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/863/9 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 412-13 for Canning's comments on that matter; Wellington to planta, 9 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/864/6 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 414-5).

present moment'.⁹ Wellington remained clear that Britain's interests were served by a peaceful Iberian Peninsula, and that hinged on the internal state of Portugal.

At this stage, the matter was complicated by Wellington's complaints about Canning's behaviour. Upon reading through the despatches to Portugal and Spain, the Duke realised that Frederick Lamb, then the ambassador to Madrid, had been instructed to withdraw should the Spanish government not ensure the Portuguese deserters gave up their arms. This, Wellington wrote to the Prime Minister, was an act which, 'will be considered as a signal of war throughout Europe and which will infallibly mix this country in this Portuguese dispute unless we should alter our course from the principle on which this step is taken and will, therefore, involve this country in war'. What the Duke found most difficult and offensive, however, was that all these instructions had been issued 'without any one of the ministers being aware of the existence even of discussion'.¹⁰ Liverpool brushed these objections off, pointing out the difficulties of consultation during the Parliamentary recess, and that Canning's actions were taken in concert with Russia and France and had, anyway, been successful.¹¹

Regardless of Canning's conduct, Wellington remained sceptical of British involvement in the Peninsula. He told the Prime Minister to 'rely upon it that we never were in such a scrape in relation to war as we shall be in if we get to war with Spain single handed in alliance with Portugal'. With no glory to be had in the operations that would take place, the country would turn against it and when they had become 'heartily tired of the war, France and the United States will take part in it, and God knows the result'. He ended his letter by imploring Liverpool to '[s]ave us from this disgrace and mischief'.¹² Wellington's analysis of the risks of such a conflict with Spain has clear echoes, and lessons, that reverberate throughout the following years and centuries of the dangers of Great Power military interventions against, theoretically, much weaker states, but without a clear sense of how the conflict is to

⁹ Wellington to Beresford, 9 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/864/4 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 413-4).

¹⁰ Wellington to Liverpool, 11 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/864/9. See also, 19 Oct. 1826, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, pp. 51-2.

¹¹ Liverpool to Wellington, 15 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/863/20 (also in *WND*, vol. III, p. 422). See also Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 379.

¹² Wellington to Liverpool, 12 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/864/11 (also in *WND*, vol. III, p. 419).

be won, or the means to be used to achieve those ends. The Duke repeated his concerns to Canning and added that '[i]t is with this sentiment of what a war with Spain would be, that I have so often urged that we should attend to the military establishments and state of Portugal'.¹³

For Wellington, Lord Beresford would be the means by which this could be accomplished. By 14th October, Wellington had spoken to him and reported to Liverpool that the Marshal would return to Portugal to assess the situation there and accept the position of Commander of the Portuguese army if it should meet his approval.¹⁴ In passing on Beresford's conditions to the Prime Minister, Wellington wrote about the attitudes of foreign powers. Uncharacteristically, he brusquely dismissed them: 'They will, of course, be jealous of the whole arrangement, but as for my part I shall be indifferent in respect to their feelings, if Lord Beresford can only put Portugal in a reasonable state of defence and thus render that country an efficient ally to, instead of being as she is, a burthen upon the country'.¹⁵ This stance reflected his own long service in the country, as well as his analysis of the strategic significance of the Portuguese alliance, not to mention the risks involved in its dissolution.

Nevertheless, on arrival in Lisbon, Beresford was inclined to turn down the offer of the command. He was unhappy at the situation regarding Dom Miguel and the possibility that he could take over the regency the following year. He wrote to the Duke, against the latter's advice to avoid all communication with him and the government in Britain,¹⁶ that

There are several other very weighty reasons for declining to take the command, but the principal is what I have already stated, the instability of the Regent. I can neither feel or give confidence to others and tho[ugh] I know and feel I should get greatly better on with the Infanta Regent than it is probable I could with Dom Miguel, yet I fear that here, until he is sent, it will never be considered as a fixed and stable government. He is held out to them as their

¹³ Wellington to Canning, 13 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/864/12 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 419-21).

¹⁴ Wellington to Liverpool, 14 Oct. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/864/13 (also in *WND*, vol. III, p. 421).

¹⁵ Wellington to Liverpool, 16 Oct. 1826, enclosing memoranda on the terms under which Beresford would return to Portugal, Wellington Mss., WP1/864/17 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 422-6).

¹⁶ Wellington to Canning, 29 Nov. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/866/16 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 469-70).

final regent or sovereign and for the peace of the kingdom the sooner he can be placed in the government the better.¹⁷

A few days later he expanded on this, telling Wellington that the Portuguese army was so ‘totally demoralized’, that the force and coercion needed to restore it to a reasonable state would ‘drive every delinquent into Spain’. Given the unfriendly attitude of that country, and the fact that ‘the Miguelista party are using every effort to debauch what remains of the army would, I am convinced, dissolve the army altogether’.¹⁸ Beresford believed that if he tried and failed, the effect would be more counterproductive to both his position in Portuguese politics and to Britain’s influence than if no attempt had been made at all.¹⁹

The Portuguese difficulties were at this point escalated by the incursion of the Miguelist deserters from over the border, despite the belief that the Spanish king was coming around to disarming them.²⁰ Though Beresford had not yet accepted formal command of the army, the plan that his mere presence would have a pacifying effect had backfired. As Collins has argued, ‘British support, aimed at stimulating reform, had the contrary effect of encouraging political manoeuvring’, thus rendering any response to the incursions ineffective.²¹ Quite what the incursions signified was also an important matter and one that required different responses from the British government. As Beresford put it to Wellington:

Will these troops coming in be considered as an invading army? Wherein if unassisted by Spaniards it becomes a civil war, or one of party against party; and this makes me doubt if we should here interfere, tho[ugh] the allowing these troops to muster, and indeed to give them arms and ammunition and, I understand, guns, is clearly an act of hostility on the part of Spain, as great I think as if their own troops had accompanied them. But that Spain is answerable for, and the question still remains, if whilst the war between the two nations is Portugueze against Portugueze [sic], England will from the above act, if coming from Spain, take part with the defending side?

¹⁷ Beresford to Wellington, 8 Nov. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/865/9 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 446-9).

¹⁸ Beresford to Wellington, 13 Nov. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/865/16 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 457-9).

¹⁹ Beresford to Wellington, 1 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/867/2 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 472-3).

²⁰ Beresford to Wellington, 30 Nov. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/865/28 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 470-2).

²¹ Collins, ‘The Limits of British Power’, p. 752.

This further affected Beresford's attitude towards taking up the command, noting that should Spain 'take a decided part and invade this kingdom, then my position might be very much changed and it might be right I should lend my assistance to check and retard the enemy 'till assistance could come from England'.²² While it appeared that no Spanish troops would actually enter Portugal with the rebels, Beresford wrote to the Duke that he could not 'see what difference that makes as to the conduct of Spain, which appears to have been most treacherous, but I cannot pretend to say how far you in England will consider the entrance into Portugal of the Portuguese troops a cause to induce you to take part against them and their adherents in Portugal, or if you will consider them in Portugal as the two parties fighting for superiority'.²³

For Wellington, the matter was clear cut; Britain had to intervene. Mrs Arbuthnot recorded in her journal how he had received the news from Canning while they dined '*en trio*' together with her husband Charles Arbuthnot. The Duke told them that 'if by the presence of a body of British soldiers the Portuguese [sic] Government are enabled to organize their army & make it efficient, our troops will do good'. This was in line with all his reasoning on the question of Portugal. Britain had to ensure she could stand on her own two feet to be a useful ally, and Wellington approved of any means to achieve that, be it Lord Beresford on his own, or an entire British army. Mrs Arbuthnot drew a comparison with Canning, who she thought 'hopes it will blow up a war'.²⁴ She remarked a few days later that '[a]ll the army are charmed with this appearance of warlike action, & I dare say the whole nation w[oul]d be delighted if we had a war. We certainly are a strange people, & *très insequent* for, notwithstanding all our complaints of our debt & our distresses, we shall send out these troops without the slightest difficulty & every body will be pleased'.²⁵

A force of just under 5,000 men was to be gathered for this purpose, and the Duke threw himself into the planning for it.²⁶ A memorandum of his would form the basis of the eventual instructions for its commander, Sir William Clinton.²⁷ The nature

²² Beresford to Wellington, 1 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/867/2 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 472-3).

²³ Beresford to Wellington, 3 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/867/4 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 474-5).

²⁴ 9 Dec. 1826, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 62.

²⁵ 12 Dec. 1826, *ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁶ Sir Herbert Taylor to Wellington, n.d. Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/867/13 (also in *WND*, vol. III, p. 480).

²⁷ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 242, f.n. 38.

of the intervention and state of the situation on the ground in Portugal necessarily meant that these were quite complex. Given that Spain had ‘connived at the invasion of Portugal’ by the deserters, Wellington believed that ‘if there should be such a body in arms within the country, the British corps is to take the field against it if so required by the Portuguese government and the general officer commanding should deem his force sufficient’. Should forces from Spain have been beaten by the time that the British contingent arrived, however, then ‘it is not intended that our corps should take the field or move from Lisbon with a view to protect any part of the country against invasion, or to put down insurrection in any part of the country which insurrection is not actually supported by a body of troops from Spain’. Wellington realised that determining the nature of the rebels faced was a difficult matter and noted that ‘discretion must [...] be exercised on the spot upon this question which is merely political’ – pointing out the need to decide in advance whether the commander, the British ambassador or Lord Beresford (should he be in command of the Portuguese forces), or all three of them would be making the judgements. The only time that the British force should intervene without prejudice to the involvement of troops from Spain would be in the case of an ‘insurrection in Lisbon itself, which shall endanger the lives or safety of the Princess Regent or any part of the royal family’, in which case Clinton should ‘make every effort by the employment of the force under his command to protect their persons, to provide for their safety and to put down such insurrection’.²⁸ As Muir has argued, ‘[t]he impossibility of identifying the personal history of every Portuguese rebel was self-evident, as was the inevitability that the blame would fall upon Clinton if anything went wrong, but such are the perils of attempting to marry the limited, conditional use of force to an ambiguous foreign policy’.²⁹

The Duke expanded on the aims and intentions of the intervention in a letter to Beresford. Should Clinton ‘consider himself strong enough’, he was to attack the deserters and force them from the country: ‘We cannot blow hot and cold’. Wellington was absolutely clear on it: ‘however strongly we may desire and sincerely intend not to interfere in the internal concerns of Portugal we cannot allow an hostile corps sent

²⁸ Memorandum from Wellington to Bathurst, 10 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/868/3 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 480-2.

²⁹ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 242.

in from Spain to exist in Portugal if we have the means of destroying it or driving it out'. In line with his consistent conciliatory stance on matters of this kind, the Duke told Beresford that when the British contingent was in place that 'the government should grant a general pardon to all concerned in the late events, who should lay down their arms and submit'. He was not surprised that '[w]hen princes commit the follies which those of the House of Braganza have done in the last few years, it is not unlikely that subjects will go wrong, and they may be misled even to the last extremities of rebellion and treason. But some allowances must be made for the circumstances which have occasioned these misfortunes'. Wellington's hope was that 'a general pardon offered at the moment in which the government will be in strength to put down the rebellion will be submitted to and thankfully adopted, that the misfortunes of a civil and possibly a foreign war may be avoided and that the country will be restored to its accustomed tranquillity and happiness'.³⁰ Unfortunately for Portugal, many of these dreams were unrealised.

After being called on by Canning, the Duke spoke in the House of Lords to give his backing to the intervention. In a short contribution the Duke reiterated his moderate line. He told the House that he believed that the 'perfidious acts of aggression on Portugal' should not be laid at the door of the King of Spain, but instead 'attributed to the servants of the Spanish government, than to that government itself. They ought, in his opinion, to be looked upon as the acts of the captains-general of provinces, and even of the ministers of the king of Spain, than as ordered or advised by his Catholic majesty'. At any rate, 'he fully concurred in the measures intended to repress them'. The invasion of the rebel forces in Wellington's mind 'made out a *casus foederis*, and that would afford a sufficient justification of our interference' and he hoped that the exertions of his majesty, aided by those of his most Christian majesty, would have the effect of bringing the king of Spain to that sense of what was due to himself and his own dignity, which would prevent him from allowing any aggression on the territories of his neighbour, and our near ally'.³¹

³⁰ Wellington to Beresford, 13 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/868/8 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 485-7).

³¹ *Hansard*, HL Deb, 12 Dec. 1826, vol. 16, cc. 347-8. Mrs Arbuthnot said, with her usual gushing praise, that Wellington spoke 'I am certain quite well enough to be Prime Minister', 15 Dec. 1826, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 64.

At the same time as Wellington was giving his speech, Canning was speaking in the House of Commons, giving one of the finest orations of his career. He urged the House to ‘fly to the aid of Portugal, by whomsoever attacked, because it is our duty to do so’. Britain went ‘not to rule, not to dictate, not to prescribe constitutions, but to defend and to preserve the independence of an ally. We go to plant the standard of England on the well-known heights of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted, foreign dominion shall not come.’³² According to Temperley, as he ‘uttered these words he looked upwards. A beam of light streamed through the windows and smote on him, and his face seemed as if inspired’.³³ While many were fulsome in their praise and looked on Canning’s intervention in the light that Temperley later would, in practice it was a divisive speech, Greville noted that it was celebrated more by the Opposition benches than the Government ones. Furthermore, his colleagues took exception to Canning stating that “‘*I* called into existence the new world to redress the balance of the old.” The *I* was not relished’.³⁴

Mrs Arbuthnot did not hold back at all in her commentary of the speech:

Mr. Canning made the most abominable speeches that ever were heard, *I think*. He said that he had been reproached for not preventing the French occupation of Spain; he had *done better*. He had rendered it of no importance, he had looked for revenge to Spanish America &, by declaring the independence of her colonies, had left Spain as a millstone round the neck of France & rendered her very different from that Spain on whose dominions the sun never set. He said, too, that if England made war it w[oul]d be a war of opinion & that all the discontented of Europe w[oul]d range themselves under the banner of England, & that it behoved Europe to beware how she forced England to wield this tremendous engine. This a Minister who professes to be anxious for peace & to want the King of France to declare in his speech to the Chambers that he will act in conjunction with us! I think it behoves *England herself* to beware how she enters upon a war upon exactly the same principles as those professed by the French of 1792. They proffered fraternity & alliance to all the discontented of other countries, & dearly have they & all Europe paid for the offer & the acceptance. It behoves her, too, to beware how she upholds a Minister who dares, publicly in his place, to avow such sentiments & to hold out such dark threats to Europe. Mr. Canning was most loudly & vehemently cheered by the Opposition, those on his own side were deadly silent.³⁵

³² *Hansard*, HC Debate, 12 Dec. 1826, vol. 16, cc. 350-69. See also Hinde, *George Canning*, pp. 421-2 &

³³ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 380. Temperley was prone to raise those he admired to the status of ‘heroic statesman’. See Otte, ‘Introduction’, in *An Historian in Peace and War: The Diaries of Harold Temperley*, ed. T.G. Otte (Farnham, 2014), pp. 1-35.

³⁴ 14 Dec. 1826, *Greville Memoirs*, vol. I, p. 70.

³⁵ 15 Dec. 1826, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 64.

This icy reception to what was in theory a Government triumph, and one that Wellington supported, demonstrated the gulf that had developed with the Tory party by this stage. What was a victory for Canning was received as a blow by sections of the Government and its supporters – a situation that foreshadowed the demarche of the following year between the Foreign Secretary and Wellington over the succession to Lord Liverpool. Wellington himself made some muted criticism of the speech in a letter to Bathurst. He told him that ‘I judge from the report of the conversation with Monsieur de Damas that the King of France would not inform the legislative body that he had been acting in concert with His Majesty because we pass in Europe for a Jacobin Club!’ Fortunately, in his mind, ‘as yet we have only boasted that we are such a body. Our acts do not yet prove it’. In a cynical observation in the postscript, Wellington added: ‘I see in the dispatches to Vienna and Paris that we are now explaining away the meaning of our speeches’.³⁶

The British force began embarking for the Portugal on 17th December and was due to arrive by Christmas Eve.³⁷ News of Parliament’s approval of the expedition reached Lisbon on 18th December and the news had an immediate impact. Beresford wrote to Wellington: ‘[b]y this the state of things here becomes entirely changed, tho[ugh] such has not been unexpected’. The arrival of British soldiers would affect Beresford’s own role and ‘places me, independently of former considerations, in a new situation’. He told the Duke that there was no reason to delay now ‘to take a part here, if by this government it should still be desired and that they will accede to such conditions as I have all along thought necessary, and the which I have had no reason to suppose would be denied, in case they may still think my services useful or that they wish them’.³⁸ Despite this, delay was what happened and eleven days later he was still unsure of whether his offer of command would be accepted. He had begun to form doubts about the wisdom of accepting it anyway as ‘if they wanted me for the present crisis, it would in all probability prevent my continuing in command after the bussiness [sic] was concluded, or it would infallibly make me be considered as a party man and deprive me afterwards of that character of impartiality [sic], so necessary to guard to

³⁶ Wellington to Bathurst, 21 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/868/17 (also in *WND*, vol. III, p. 500). Bathurst in turn raised his doubts of what had been said by Canning would be forgotten in Paris. Bathurst to Wellington, 24 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/867/40.

³⁷ Melville to Wellington, 21 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/867/36.

³⁸ Beresford to Wellington, 19 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/867/30 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 498-9).

be useful after such unhappy conflicts as those now passing here'. Furthermore, he was of the opinion that his service might not even be needed, telling the Duke that '[t]he truth is that so soon as the news came here of the decision in England, the moral effect was such to turn the scale most decidedly, and in this town in one hour, everything was changed from the strongest depression and melancholy on one side, to confidence and exultation and the reverse on the other side'.³⁹ Two days later though, and despite the rejection of some of his demands, Beresford wrote to Wellington that he had accepted the temporary command of the Portuguese army. He had 'infinite less authority' than when he had previously been in command, but in a situation where 'disorder and confusion prevails everywhere' he could not leave 'two armies without a general head or point of union' especially when 'my own government feels such interest in seeing a stop put to this state of affairs'.⁴⁰

Wellington was disappointed at the command Beresford had been given. He told Canning that it was 'very different from that which I held during the war, from that which he held himself since the war, and from that which I considered he would have held when I proposed that the British troops should be placed under his command in case there should be any conjoint operation'. Previously, both he and Beresford had been directly under the Portuguese King but the new command was under the Minister at War. The result of that would be that Beresford was not acting under his own discretion but instead 'under the orders of, and responsible to, a revolutionary Minister'. In these circumstances, Wellington believed that '[i]n the way of forming the Portuguese army he will certainly do no good and that, in my opinion, is the main object of Lord Beresford's remaining in Portugal'.⁴¹ It further opened up difficulties about the command of the British troops which were to be placed under him. To Liverpool, the Duke stressed that '[t]here can be no trifling in middle term upon this subject'.⁴² The Prime Minister was of the same view, telling Wellington that 'I have

³⁹ Beresford to Wellington, 30 Dec. 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/867/47 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 507-9).

⁴⁰ Beresford to Wellington 1 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/879/2 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 511-2).

⁴¹ Wellington to Canning, 17 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/881/20 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 546-8). In a letter to Bathurst, the Duke said that Beresford's situation was not 'what it ought to be, and I think it should be altered or we ought not to give him the command of the King's troops in his capacity of Portuguese commander in chief'. Wellington to Bathurst, 18 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/881/22 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 548-9).

⁴² Wellington to Liverpool, 20 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/881/25 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 553-4).

always considered it as necessarily incident to the powers of a commander in chief [...] that whatever his previous general instructions may be, he must have a complete discretion as to the details and to the application of them'. Given that, he believed that if there was 'the least doubt upon this point, there ought to be no delay in setting it right, for everyone must see that it would be nearly as unsafe to trust the command of the British army to Lord Beresford as it would be to trust it to any other Portuguese [sic] officer, if Lord Beresford has not really the efficient command of the Portuguese army'.⁴³

It quickly became clear that Beresford was certainly not in efficient command. News arrived in late January 1827 that he was 'ill with a large party at Lisbon, and to say the truth if he speaks of the Portuguese army openly at Lisbon as he has done in his letters to me, I am not surprised at his being unpopular'. Bathurst reckoned that he would 'be soon deposed'.⁴⁴ The following day, confirmation arrived of that fact: 'the Portuguese government have refused to give the command to Lord Beresford. [...] I confess I am not surprised at their refusals if he has abused their army openly as much as he did to me, more particularly if the army deserve it, as is probably the case'.⁴⁵ Wellington was even more critical:

I think this is to be attributed to himself. He has very foolishly made himself a partizan [sic] in Portuguese politicks, and has pushed his objects with a perseverance and anxiety quite extraordinary in a man of his good sense and talents. Then the moment this country consented to give its aid, Lord Beresford was thrown overboard instead of being strengthened, as he would have been by that measure if his objects had been at all consistent with the views of this country, or with reason.⁴⁶

This marked the defeat of Wellington's hopes of reforming the Portuguese army into an efficient force. He reported to Liverpool that he could not comment on the news, 'as however sensible of the evil consequence which will attend this entire disappointment of our hopes of restoring the Portuguese army to some state of

⁴³ Liverpool to Wellington, 22 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/880/6 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 558-9).

⁴⁴ Bathurst to Wellington, 28 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/880/26 (also in *WND*, vol. III, p. 572).

⁴⁵ Bathurst to Wellington, 29 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/880/27 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 573-4).

⁴⁶ Wellington to Bathurst, 1 Feb. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/884/2 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 579-80).

efficiency, I am not prepared to suggest any remedy'.⁴⁷ As Collins has argued, '[g]iven the centrality of disaffected officers to the revolts of 1820 and given Wellington's experience in India, Wellington naturally focused on the primacy of the army as a governing institution'.⁴⁸ The Duke had relied on Beresford to transform the army into a reliable means of bolstering stability in the country. He was convinced that the army could not be relied on to reform itself, and would remain a tool for political manoeuvring between the factions of Portuguese politics. However, Wellington also believed that Britain could not get entangled further. The Duke might not have had the reputation as an advocate of non-intervention, but he was a pragmatist and consistently worked towards to the same ends as Canning, although with less flair and flamboyant delivery. The Duke wrote to Bathurst voicing his approval that Clinton had refused the command of the Portuguese army after it was offered to him following Beresford stepping down. 'It will not answer for us to become, or appear to be, principals in what is now doing in Portugal'. Though there was the possibility of escalation and eventual war with Spain, in which case 'it may, and probably will, be necessary for us to become, and at all events we shall become, principals, and we must arrange our force, command, operations, etc., accordingly. But we must not do anything to accelerate that misfortune, or to give it the appearance of having occurred [sic]'.⁴⁹

With Beresford's departure from Portugal the question became one of what to do with the British force now there. After some delay in fully deploying it had succeeded with its immediate objects: 'British intervention thus freed loyalist forces to act in the interior and provided a strong shield for the Lisbon region and a deterrent against further Miguelist mobilisation'.⁵⁰ What was its role to be now? It was a difficult question. Liverpool told the Foreign Secretary how 'our policy would be simple and intelligible' if it was limited to just 'the necessity of our continuance till Spain shall have carried into execution her promises'. He continued to Canning:

We went to Portugal not for the purpose of interfering in the internal disputes of parties in that country, not to support liberty on one hand nor despotism on the other, not to maintain the charter (good as it may be), but because we were called upon by Portugal to enable Portugal to resist foreign aggression.

⁴⁷ Wellington to Liverpool, 30 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/881/45 (also in *WND*, vol. III, p. 577).

⁴⁸ Collins, 'The Limits of British Power', p. 753.

⁴⁹ Wellington to Bathurst, 30 Jan. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/881/44 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 575-6).

⁵⁰ Collins, 'The Limits of British Power', p. 756.

Remove then the foreign aggression, give the necessary satisfaction, and ought we not on our own principle to retire?

But I look further and more particularly to what is most for our interest.

If we do not limit our interference to the above objects, shall we not be necessarily, though unintentionally, involved in all the internal struggles which may take place in Portugal during our continuance in it, shall we not become decided partizans [sic] of the charter against those who may wish, as Portuguese, to destroy it, and shall we not be considered as keeping our army in Portugal for the sole purpose of maintaining it?

There was no easy answer to this. Liverpool speculated between a choice of maintaining the force there during a ‘convulsion’ between Miguelists and Constitutionalists and ‘taking some decided part’, or pulling out once ‘satisfied as to the proceedings of Spain, declaring that the Portuguese must be left to themselves’ and no intervention would be allowed. The Prime Minister believed that ‘[i]f you were to canvass the opinion of the country I am satisfied it would be in favor of the latter course’. To withdraw could create difficulties though. ‘The overthrow of the charter and the restoration of absolute power in the hands of Don Miguel might be an eventual consequence’, but despite that, he urged that ‘[w]e must not, however, deceive ourselves. If we remain with our military force in Portugal, we remain there to support, influence and direct their government’.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the British army did remain. In large part, this was due to circumstances in Britain as opposed to those in Portugal. The political manoeuvrings as Wellington and Canning tussled for the Premiership, along with the signature of the Treaty of London and the resulting Battle of Navarino, pushed Portugal down the agenda and the expeditionary force remained in place for the rest of the year.⁵² The next time it would enter Wellington’s purview would be as Prime Minister in 1828. By that time the military deployment had shifted in its nature but at heart it was still one of an unstable ally that was simply too strategically important to abandon to its fate. The dispatch of troops had done nothing to correct the fundamental problems that blighted the country. However, an alternative view is presented in the historiography. Temperley, as usual, was effusive in his praise: ‘The vigour of the action, like the

⁵¹ Liverpool to Canning, 6 Feb. 1827, Wellington Mss., WP1/908/2 (also in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 583-4).

⁵² See Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 279-98 for the best guide to the politics of 1827 and Wellington’s involvement.

vigour of the speech by which he [Canning] justified it, positively electrified Europe. [...] Canning had made himself and England feared, because he directed a public opinion irresistible in England and powerful throughout Europe. It was now seen that he had not hesitated in this case, and would not hesitate again to support words and policies by vigorous and resolute action'.⁵³ Hinde at least acknowledged that things were not quite so clear-cut and that there was an after story following the sending of the army: '[T]he internal stability of the new regime continued to be undermined by military plots, political dissensions between liberals and ultras and the unhelpful behaviour of the House of Braganza'. Hinde also acknowledges that the intervention was not a final act, noting that 'almost literally until the day of his [Canning's] death he was worrying over the potential danger that a disturbed and divided Portugal represented to the country that was bound to defend her against external attack'.⁵⁴ Wellington's task would be to remove the soldiers there and try and establish a stable polity once and for all.

By the time that Wellington entered office as Prime Minister in January 1828, Dom Miguel's position had been transformed. From July 1827, Dom Pedro became willing to appoint Miguel regent, as long as the latter agreed to stick to the charter. In late February 1828 he officially took over as regent, and the situation appeared settled. This would prove an illusion though. Miguel's seeming rehabilitation had led Wellington to order the removal of the British troops but when they began to depart it now seemed that the Regent would quickly act to seize control himself. Indeed, days after the first soldiers had left, Miguel had replaced the commanders of seven of the nine Lisbon garrisons with colonels personally loyal to him.⁵⁵ Ellenborough, the Lord Privy Seal, was not optimistic. He believed that the departure of the British soldiers 'will be the signal for violent reaction. Villa Real has no hopes'.⁵⁶

The question of whether to halt the removal of the British army in light of this became a live matter once again. Sir Frederick Lamb, the new ambassador to Portugal, wrote to the Duke complaining that '[i]f I had any discretionary power this would have been done differently and not a man should have gone from hence' apart from those

⁵³ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 388.

⁵⁴ Hinde, *George Canning*, p. 425.

⁵⁵ Collins, 'The Limits of British Power', p. 757.

⁵⁶ 17 Mar. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 61.

needed for reinforcements elsewhere. He was of this opinion not because the numbers were not sufficient, ‘but that you may feel some awkwardness about encreasing [sic] it again’. If instead of reducing the force, it was augmented, this would serve ‘to put all notion of the possibility of resistance out of the question’. However, if the government were to ‘determine not to interfere, letting the affairs of this country take what course they will and only keeping your force here for a short time to let the present agitation subside and prevent the effects of panic’, Lamb believed that they should not keep an ambassador there as ‘a mere cypher, but that you must recall him directly, making in this way your disapprobation of their course and the principle upon which your troops are still permitted to remain’.⁵⁷

The Cabinet was divided on what course to take. This was due to the difficult and contested legacy of Canning, most obvious over the Eastern Question as examined above, but also evident over Portugal. Ellenborough recorded the split within Cabinet, noting that while to begin with it seemed there was consensus to remove the army, this was shattered by the intervention of Huskisson who ‘endeavoured to persuade us to keep them there. He said we should do so for the protection of the *Constitutionalists to whom we had promised our support*, and for the security of British property. In fact he made an insidious attempt to obtain a continuance of Canning’s policy’. The result was ‘a skirmish’.⁵⁸ Mrs Arbuthnot weighed in as well in her journal: ‘Every part of our foreign politics have certainly been bequeathed by Mr. Canning to his successor in the state of most complete dislocation possible. Portugal is now giving us plenty of trouble. Don Miguel has thrown off the mask at once’. She laid this firmly at the deceased Prime Minister’s door. ‘This comes of Mr. Canning’s interference & forcing a constitution upon Portugal which the people don’t like’.⁵⁹

Huskisson’s line that a withdrawal of troops would be a betrayal of Canning’s principles and past British foreign policy was as inaccurate as the criticisms of Ellenborough and Mrs Arbuthnot.⁶⁰ Despite Canning’s rhetorical flourishes in the House of Commons, the initial intervention was clearly directed at the defence of Portugal from foreign invasion in the form of armed Portuguese deserters crossing the

⁵⁷ 15 Mar. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/922/12 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 309).

⁵⁸ 18 Mar. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 62 (original emphasis).

⁵⁹ 21 Mar. 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, p. 172.

⁶⁰ 18 Mar. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 63.

border from Spain. The conversations at the time between the key ministers, Canning, Wellington and Liverpool, were concerned with ensuring this was not an intervention in favour of constitutionalism and that it should not be treated as such by foreign powers, as has been examined above.

The Duke made this clear in a letter to Lamb. He stressed that '[t]he troops were sent out to protect Portugal against a foreign invasion, and with positive orders not to interfere in the domestick contest going on at the same time'. While it was the case that 'incidentally their pressure has given protection to the constitutional party [there] is no reason why they should be left there. If the constitutional party are the strongest they don't require our protection. If they are not, the other party must have the upper hand and it will not answer for us to involve this country in a contest to maintain the government in the hands of the constitutionalists'. This was a rational, pragmatic attitude that was typical of the Duke. He told Lamb that Britain certainly had 'a right to remonstrate' over Miguel not issuing a promised proclamation. They had even gone 'farther than is consistent with strict rule in desiring that you should remonstrate respecting the formation of his ministry and advise him respecting the pardon of the rebels and the intention of his sister to come to Portugal'. In Wellington's mind '[i]f matters go on quietly, if there should be no act of cruelty or violence, I confess I don't see that we have any right to complain of Don Miguel preferring to employ one party in his service instead of another'. Only if there was 'violence or cruelty' would he consider withdrawing the British ambassador in protest.⁶¹

This was a sound attitude, but it was not one likely to appeal to a public who had grown used to the rhetoric of Canning. Wellington's and Lord Dudley's approach was very much one of soft pressure at this point and avoiding any grandiose gestures. Dudley, 'very civilly', had written a dispatch for Metternich saying that it was 'very desirable that the Emperor should understand that we think his credit, as well as our own, concerned in doing the utmost to hinder Don Miguel from violating his engagements'.⁶² In the Foreign Secretary's mind, it was '[n]ot that the constitution is good for much in itself, but the immediate subversion of it by violence would be an

⁶¹ Wellington to Lamb, 24 Mar. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/925/46 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 321-3).

⁶² Dudley to Wellington, 9 Apr. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/926/22 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 355).

affront to us'.⁶³ Coming from one of the nominal Canningites in Cabinet, it reflected an acknowledgement of the realities of the situation, and the reasons for intervention, though Dudley was always closer to the Duke than his other faction members. Nevertheless, even Huskisson did not speak up for Lamb and his more interventionist line in a Cabinet meeting. Instead, the forts were to be evacuated, and the ships withdrawn.⁶⁴

Lamb did not particularly lament the demise of the constitution – ‘I would not give one straw for it’. However, he had stronger opinions on the need to ensure an amnesty for past behaviour, something that Wellington had suggested many times when dealing with questions such as this. However, the ambassador lamented the lack of British influence: ‘Do not let us deceive ourselves. We do not stand well here, and the reason is plain, we have not gone fairly through with either party. This is the penalty of intermeddling’. This was a criticism that could often be levelled at Wellington’s foreign policy, especially as Prime Minister. In taking a middle line so often, and failing to back this up with a clear ideological appeal, the Duke fell between two stools and his policies failed. While this was most notably the case with Greece and the Russo-Turkish War, it was evident over Portugal as well. Lamb did not lay ‘the end of every symptom of grace or favour between the two courts’ at Wellington’s door, however. He was of the opinion that the Duke ‘had no choice, that you could have taken no other and this I deplore’. This letter was the occasion of Lamb’s criticism of the doctrine of non-interference – ‘which has subsequently been slackened or tightened according to the temper and circumstances of the country’ – and the Finance Committee of the House of Commons which has been explored above.⁶⁵

In reply to this Wellington took the opportunity to expand on his views of interference in the affairs of Portugal:

It is my opinion not only that we have no right to interfere (excepting in the limited manner above stated under the protocoles) but that the less we interfere in the internal affairs of Portugal the better for both parties. We are bound to defend Portugal against a foreign enemy and we have a right to give our advice in respect to the measures of foreign policy and possibly in respect to those

⁶³ Dudley to Wellington, 11 Apr. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/927/1 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 356).

⁶⁴ 13 Apr. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 82.

⁶⁵ Lamb to Wellington, 16 Apr. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/928/1 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 386-8).

measures of internal policy which may in their consequences affect the tranquillity of the country and its political and military strength. The penalty of omitting to follow our advice must be that such omission puts it out of our power to fulfil the obligations of treaties. We have no right, nor, indeed, have we the means of using force, and my opinion is that we ought to confine our exertions strictly to the objects of keeping the country quiet, and in a state to enable us to assist efficaciously in its defence, if we should unfortunately be called upon to defend it.

He continued to argue that '[a]ll the existing mischief has originated in our departure from the strict line above laid down, and the sooner we resume it the better'. Wellington was of the opinion, he told Lamb, that if 'Lord Liverpool's government had treated only with common kindness and attention the two countries which had been saved by us exclusively from the hands of the enemy [Spain and Portugal] they would have now been in a state of prosperity and useful allies to this country'. However, instead, with British support the New World had successfully rebelled against the two Iberian powers and their internal politics consequently thrown into confusion by the revolutions of 1820. As a result, Wellington believed that '[w]e must not aggravate these evils to those countries, to ourselves and to the world by making war upon them, nor must we force little questions (into which we have no right to enter excepting to give amicable advice) into importance, and thus place ourselves under the necessity of adopting an extreme course or of doing nothing after making a noise'. This displayed a certain misremembering of history, and Wellington's role in British policy earlier in the decade. However, his conclusion that 'in the existing situation of the world that breach [with Portugal] is not unattended by advantages' certainly did ring true.⁶⁶

Two factors altered the question of Portugal for the Government. The first was the departure of the Canningites in May 1828. While they had argued for a continuation of the expedition to bolster the constitutionalists while in the Cabinet, the realities of the situation had meant they acquiesced in the eventual withdrawal. Outside of office though, they were free to take a more public line, released from the responsibilities of the course they advocated. However, the assumption of the throne by Miguel in June was more important.⁶⁷ This was not unexpected. As Lamb's accreditation was to Miguel as Regent, were he to crown himself then the British

⁶⁶ Wellington to Lamb, 7 & 11 May 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/935/12 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 427-30).

⁶⁷ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 351.

ambassador should withdraw.⁶⁸ Lamb had not done himself credit regardless though – his ‘position had become one of acute embarrassment’.⁶⁹ At the end of May, he had written to the Duke attacking the Government’s policy and a few days later launched an even more scathing criticism.⁷⁰ He told Wellington:

What I have wanted is a clear and consistent line. Was it to be non-interference? In that case your ambassadors and your naval force were to be taken away as soon as Miguel entered upon a course which you could not support.

The penalty of doing this was that this country should become a dependency of Spain.

That which you throw down you cannot prevent another from picking up.

This, however, was to enter into the balance of interests to be struck at home.

I have been ready to forward your views whatever they might be, but have never been able to make out what they were.

In the ambassador’s mind, British ‘non-interference here has never been other than a deception’. Certainly, Lamb’s actions were of a very involved type; he admitted to the Duke that ‘[a]t this moment, I save the principal opponents of Miguel from his clutches. Can there be a more positive interference?’ For him, it was ridiculous to stick to the line of non-interference once ‘an affair is begun’ – likening it to ‘the conduct of a surgeon who suspends his help when the limb is off, leaving the arteries bleeding’. He told Wellington that his ‘only quarrel with the government is for not having known its own mind and made its non-interference (if non-interference it was to be) a real instead of a mock one’.⁷¹ Given the splits and divisions in the Government, that essentially paralysed decision making for the first five months of its life and have been explored above, it was unsurprising that this was the case, but this was nevertheless a remarkable attack from a British ambassador on the Prime Minister and his policy.

While Lamb was, to a certain degree, right about the unsuitability of half-measures when intervening in the affairs of other states, he did rather miss the point of Wellington’s policies, and of Britain’s situation. As Collins has argued, the Duke

⁶⁸ Wellington to Dudley, 12 May 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/935/18 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 442-3).

⁶⁹ Chamberlain, *Aberdeen*, p. 231.

⁷⁰ Lamb to Wellington, 38 May 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/934/8 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 479).

⁷¹ Lamb to Wellington, 2 June 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/936/5 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 481-3).

‘wanted stability and a conservative constitutional polity, but failed to overcome long-standing internal problems of command and control in the Portuguese army, while the absence of financial leverage over the Portuguese authorities summed up the limits of British power’. Lamb might well want a more determined line, but that was not consistent with the Duke’s long-term aims, nor even Canning’s, rhetoric aside. With ‘middle-class fiscal stinginess and anti-militarism, and [...] politicians’ pessimism about what interventions might achieve’, the ambassador set an unrealistic bar on Britain’s role in Portugal.⁷²

Given that Portugal was in the possession of Miguel, despite Britain’s acknowledgement of Maria and Pedro, Wellington was of the opinion that Lamb should be recalled. In part, this was because he thought ‘one of the defects of Sir F.Lambe’s [sic] dispatches is that there is a total absence of facts and information in any of them’.⁷³ However, this was not the least of the complaints. Ellenborough described how Lamb had ‘written as intemperately as ever’ when Portugal was discussed in Cabinet late in June.⁷⁴ A couple of days later he wrote that ‘[t]he Duke was desirous of recalling Lamb for his offensive letters’, though the majority of the Cabinet were not with him on it. Nevertheless, Wellington ‘was very earnest for Lamb’s recall, and said we should find him quite unbearable, and counteracting us in every way. That no public servant he ever knew had written half so offensively as Lamb, and all others had been severely reprimanded for it’.⁷⁵ Writing to Lord Aberdeen, the new Foreign Secretary, the Duke said that:

It is quite obvious that from the commencement of his embassy Sir Frederick Lamb has taken an erroneous view of the relative situation of this country and Portugal.

We are not the protectors of Portugal. Portugal is not a dependency of this country either de jure, or de facto, or in principle, by any construction of our treaty or in practice.⁷⁶

Wellington and Aberdeen were not known for their cordial relations during this administration with their ambassadors – we have seen their distrust of Heytesbury

⁷² Collins, ‘The Limits of British Power’, p. 761.

⁷³ Wellington Memorandum, 22 & 23 June 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/981/1 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 495-8).

⁷⁴ 21 June 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, p. 150.

⁷⁵ 24 June 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, pp. 152-3.

⁷⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 7 July 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/944/11 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 511).

and Sir Stratford Canning and their strained relationship with Lord Stuart de Rothesay in Paris. Nevertheless, there was little to compare to the gulf that existed in policy aims and analysis of the situation in Portugal between Lamb and the ministers. In the end, this problem was solved by Lamb's resignation and return to Britain.⁷⁷

Dom Miguel's assumption of the throne ended the uncertainty over Portugal. Wellington wrote in a memorandum that the British Government should notify Dom Pedro of 'the absolute hopelessness of the success of any contest in favour of the constitution [...] This is obvious not only from the result of the recent contest, but from all its circumstances'. The Prime Minister was convinced that the 'Emperor Don Pedro must see that a contest on his part, to recover possession of Portugal for himself or his daughter, and to re-establish in that country the constitution, would be hopeless. He has not the means even of conquering the Banda Oriental. How can he find them to reconquer the kingdom of Portugal?' Given that, Wellington's advice was that Pedro 'should come to an arrangement with his brother'. That would 'provide best for his own security and peace, for the peace of Portugal, and for the happiness of the house of Braganza'. This could be achieved by the marriage of Donna Maria to Dom Miguel. Britain would not consider, or allow, 'any farther dismemberment of the Portuguese monarchy' though. The separation of Brazil and Portugal was 'final'.⁷⁸

In a broad form, this memorandum outlined British policy towards Miguel for the rest of Wellington's Government. The withdrawal of the ambassador was further emphasised by the removal of the naval squadron that had been stationed at Lisbon. Wellington told Lord Aberdeen that 'it will not answer to allow His Majesty's subjects to continue to reside in a country in a state of revolution in which they think their residence is not quite safe, and to reckon upon the constant presence of our squadron, not only to give them protection but to carry them off at any moment'. This statement was a far cry from Palmerston's later invocation of 'Pax Romana' – the ships would remain in the Tagus and Douro for five days after the receipt of their orders, and after that, any British subjects remaining would be left to their own devices.⁷⁹ Short of a

⁷⁷ See Chamberlain, *Aberdeen*, pp. 231-3.

⁷⁸ Wellington Memorandum, 19 July 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/981/5 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 544-5).

⁷⁹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 20 July 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/945/9 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 548-9).

direct attack on the sovereignty of Portugal, still a red line for Britain, Wellington would maintain this detached stance as much as he could.⁸⁰

The factions in Portugal were less willing to leave the British government out of the thick of affairs. The Brazilian representatives tried to insist they not only represented Pedro, Emperor of Brazil but also Pedro, King of Portugal though it was 'quite inconsistent with diplomatick rule'.⁸¹ More troubling was the possibility of Pedro's and Maria's supporters using Britain as a staging point for an armed invasion of Portugal or its overseas territories. In August Itabayana, the Brazilian Envoy Extraordinary tried to seek permission to send stores and provisions duty-free on a Brazilian frigate, only for it to be revealed that they included gunpowder and muskets destined for Madeira.⁸² Wellington told Aberdeen that they could only be embarked with assurances that they were not bound for there. Should Britain 'impose this condition, we must state the reason, viz., that till Don Pedro has declared his own intentions, we do not intend to allow his subjects, or the subjects of his daughter, to carry on war from England against Portugal'.⁸³ This would form their consistent line.

It was imperilled though by a new development – the arrival of Portuguese refugees, many of them constitutional soldiers who had fled Miguel's clampdowns, and of German emigrants bound for Brazil, or mercenaries in another term. The British system of allowing any person to seek refuge in Britain for any reason complicated matters. The Government certainly did not want the skeleton of an army to be allowed on their shores. Wellington told Aberdeen that 'we cannot allow foreign troops to remain in England, that all individuals are welcome, but nothing in the shape of troops can remain, and as individuals they must conduct themselves peaceably and obey the laws'. He instructed the Foreign Secretary that the Marquis de Palmella, a leading supporter of Maria and Pedro's representative for her in London, should be informed

⁸⁰ '[W]e do not intend to allow the Portuguese monarchy in Europe to be farther weakened by the seizure of its remaining colonies by the Emperor of Brazil or by their being revolutionized.' Wellington to Aberdeen, 17 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/1 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 623-5).

⁸¹ Wellington Memorandum, 30 June 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/981/2 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 504-5). Wellington to Aberdeen, 8 July 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/944/12 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 511-2).

⁸² Aberdeen to Wellington, 16 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/947/34 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 619-20).

⁸³ Wellington to Aberdeen, 17 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/1 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 623-5).

that ‘we cannot allow His Majesty’s dominions to be made the seat of the cabinet, the government, the arsenal and harbour by which war is to be carried on in the name but without the knowledge or consent of Don Pedro against Portugal’.⁸⁴ How to marry the policy of asylum for individuals when they came as a whole was not an easy one, however, and the matter was sent off to the King’s Advocate.⁸⁵

The situation was not aided by the behaviour of Palmella and Itabayana. Wellington complained at the end of August that ‘[n]o diplomatick agents at this or any other court would venture to conduct themselves as the Portuguese and Brazilian agents conduct themselves towards the government of this country. We shall never be on good terms with them till we shall convince them that they cannot so conduct themselves with impunity, and in saying this I do it of a people with whom I am well acquainted’.⁸⁶ A few days later, Wellington asked Aberdeen to ‘speak very seriously to Monsieur de Itabayana and the Marquis de Palmella respecting their conduct. The King will not allow a foreign minister to give him an assurance that arms are not to be sent to a particular place, and afterwards that they should be sent to that place’.⁸⁷ Despite all of this though, the Prime Minister was unwilling to budge on assisting Maria’s cause. Taking a pragmatic view of the situation, he was of the view that there needed to be a marriage between Maria and Miguel to settle the dispute. That would be the only way to restore peace in Portugal, and finally, end the intriguing on British soil for good.⁸⁸ Like so many of Wellington’s policies, to do this would not necessarily be popular. John Wilson Croker wrote to the Duke urging him that ‘[s]omething should be done to set the press right on the subject of our policy towards Portugal. [...] When the newspapers are allowed to go all the same way and to repeat the same story without contradiction, the best and wisest course of policy cannot fail to be damaged in public opinion’.⁸⁹ Wellington would have done well to heed Croker’s advice as the following

⁸⁴ Wellington to Aberdeen, 23 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/31 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 655-6). See also Wellington to Aberdeen, 24 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/33 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 660) where Strangford is instructed to inform Pedro the same thing.

⁸⁵ Aberdeen to Wellington, 27 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/949/14 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, p. 674).

⁸⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 28 Aug. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/951/53 (also in *WND*, vol. IV, pp. 676-7).

⁸⁷ Wellington to Aberdeen, 5 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/956/20.

⁸⁸ Wellington to Aberdeen, 10 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/957/17 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 37-8).

⁸⁹ J. W. Croker to Wellington, 13 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/953/18 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 53).

year would show when Portugal became an avenue of attack in Parliament with those opposing the administration. Instead, he just criticised the two diplomats for doing it themselves. Ellenborough recorded that Wellington ‘is very angry with Itabayana and Palmella for *newspapering*, as he calls it, and will hold no communication with them except officially’.⁹⁰

Mid-September, a new factor came into play when Donna Maria herself arrived in Britain.⁹¹ Wellington advised George IV that it would ‘be most advisable that Your Majesty’s servants should not encourage the Queen of Portugal to remain in England’ – her arrival added complications to the Government’s position as they were required to receive her with the same ceremony that Miguel had when passing through earlier in the year.⁹² As the Duke said to Aberdeen, ‘[t]he arrival of this young Queen is the work of an intrigue, and is intended to give and will give us a good deal of trouble’. In the Prime Minister’s analysis, ‘the discussion will turn upon the degree of interference on our part in the framing, the bringing to Europe and the establishment in Portugal of the constitution’. The Duke did not rule out that the conflict in Portugal could take on an international aspect, as the Spanish interference in 1826 had, thanks to Miguel making a marriage alliance with Spain or France. Nevertheless, this emphasised the need to remain out of the dispute as much as possible and to stick closely to the principle of non-interference.⁹³ As he wrote a few days later: ‘[i]t will not answer to allow these blackguards to do as they please with us’.⁹⁴

The poor behaviour of the Portuguese was compounded when the Marquis de Barbacena, who had been sent with Maria by Pedro, sought a British naval escort for an expedition to the island of Terceira in the Azores which was for the young Queen.⁹⁵ He wrote to the Duke requesting, in the name of his Queen, that ‘le convoi d’un bâtiment de guerre pour escorter d’Angleterre à une possession qui reste soumise à l’autorité légitime de sa Majesté très-fidèle, une partie des troupes loyales, qui se

⁹⁰ 2 Oct. 1828, *Ellenborough Diary*, vol. I, p. 234 (original emphasis).

⁹¹ Aberdeen to Wellington, 16 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/954/1 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 60).

⁹² Wellington to George IV, 17 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/958/12 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 61).

⁹³ Wellington Memorandum to Aberdeen, 19 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/981/10 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 63-4).

⁹⁴ Wellington to Aberdeen, 23 Sept. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/958/31 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 73-5).

⁹⁵ Chamberlain, *Aberdeen*, p. 233.

trouvent à Plymouth, ce secours ne devant pas débarquer à Terceira dans les cas malheureux où cette isle aurait succombée à l'agression dont elle est menacée'.⁹⁶ For Aberdeen, '[h]is proposal is even beyond most of the specimens of impudence we have had from his countrymen'.⁹⁷ Wellington was rather blunt in his reply to Barbacena. He tersely told him that '[l]es Portugais qui se trouvent en Angleterre s'y trouvent en leur qualité d'individus. Nous ne connaissons pas de troupes portugaises dans ce pays-ci. S'il y en a, il faut qu'elles quittent le pays sans perte de temps'. He additionally repeated how the government could not allow a war to be waged from British soil between the two branches of the House of Braganza.⁹⁸

Wellington took an equally critical line towards Miguel's conduct in Portugal. The Government had received numerous complaints about the treatment of British subjects. Moreover, if the Duke was not prepared to aid Maria's supporters, he was equally determined to hold Miguel to account as well. For the Prime Minister, 'no King of Portugal can justify the conduct of Don Miguel's government or any King of England bear it'. He informed Aberdeen that should the British demands for the release of Britons imprisoned in breach of the treaties between the two countries and compensation for those acts not be met then the Consul General would be instructed to withdraw. Furthermore, the British Government would 'insist upon reparation for these breaches of treaty and injuries' and would be prepared to 'seize the latter for ourselves'.⁹⁹ A few days later Wellington reassured Aberdeen that to '[r]ely upon it that there is no man in England who knows so well as I do how to manage the Portuguese'. He continued with a very revealing statement about his attitude towards foreign policy: 'I don't care a pin about clamours, but I do about realities. We must not allow ourselves to be unjustly treated by any power'.¹⁰⁰ A greater concern for 'clamours' and the presentation of policy might well have served the Duke to achieve his aims. Miguel for his part did as little as possible to accommodate British protests.

⁹⁶ Marquis de Barbacena to Wellington, 15 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/961/3 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 140-1).

⁹⁷ Aberdeen to Wellington, 17 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/961/6 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 144).

⁹⁸ Wellington to Marquis de Barbacena, 18 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/963/51 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 147-8).

⁹⁹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 25 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/964/11 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 171-2).

¹⁰⁰ Wellington to Aberdeen, 29 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/964/26 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 181-3).

These infractions by Miguel's government aside, the biggest thorn in Wellington's side remained the supporters of Maria. At the end of October arms were landed in Terceira, an act which drew the ire of the Duke.¹⁰¹ More concerning was the continuing presence of 4,000 Portuguese soldiers, rather too close to the naval base at Plymouth. They were being paid by the Portuguese and Brazilian representatives in London, and were accompanied by the officers on the spot. Wellington was concerned that they should not 'allow officers and men to remain in the same place, and all events not in such a place as Plymouth where in one night they might do us much mischief' – a moderate way of highlighting what could be a devastating blow to one of Britain's most important naval arsenals. There were 'very few [British] troops there [without] the means of reinforcing them. It is true that these Portuguese have no arms, but with money they can have arms when they please in this country without our being aware of it'.¹⁰² Wellington was understandably keen to see the Portuguese dispersed, a long way from the naval facilities at Plymouth, if possible. There was additionally a legal complication – the law officers having warned Peel of the danger of their sudden departure '*as a military body* on some expedition against some part of Portugal or its dependencies'.¹⁰³ Though they were assured by Barbacena that 'nothing of the kind would take place;- that they might talk about it, but that nothing would be attempted', they were certain that they would hear from Miguel's minister Monsieur d'Assera should anything be attempted.¹⁰⁴

These legal ambiguities mattered to Wellington and his administration. As has been seen concerning the Eastern Question, the Duke was consistently determined to stick closely to the letter of the law and confine his actions strictly to those required by treaties. For him, British negligence in regard to the Portuguese at Plymouth was a matter of grave importance. Indeed, it was more important than the actual dispute between the contending parties. The simultaneous actions of demanding reparations for actions against British subjects by Miguel's Government, and actively opposing and frustrating the attempts of Maria's supporters in Britain, while maintaining a firm legal and treaty position towards both merely ensured that in neither case was

¹⁰¹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 28 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/964/23 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 178).

¹⁰² Wellington to Peel, 29 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/964/27 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 183).

¹⁰³ Peel to Aberdeen, 11 Nov. 1828, Peel Mss., Add. Ms 40,312, f. 39.

¹⁰⁴ Aberdeen to Peel, 11 Nov. 1828, Peel Mss., Add. Ms 40, 312, f. 41.

Wellington advancing a solution in Portugal or cultivating potential allies. Indeed, Britain was creating problems not solving them. As Aberdeen put it: ‘It is a most extraordinary thing that the two powers in the whole world of whom we have most reason to complain for want of common respect are Portugal and Brazil; one of them actually created by us, and the other almost dependant [sic] upon us for existence’.¹⁰⁵ Wellington attributed this to ‘nothing but the system of *laissez aller* which has prevailed in England for the last twenty years and most particularly since the war, upon every subject excepting the encouragement given to insurrection whether at home or abroad’.¹⁰⁶

Wellington’s failure to take a side and his determination to stick to a legal viewpoint did nothing to dampen suspicions of Britain’s involvement amongst the Chancelleries of Europe. Wellington told Aberdeen how he did not ‘wonder that the French government suspect the Portuguese and Brazilian corps diplomatique in London, as I don’t believe that any people ever so conducted themselves, not that we are suspected as the measures which have taken to counteract these gentlemen are not known’. To have followed Croker’s advice to be more active in promoting the Government’s policy rather than just criticising Maria’s supporters’ own efforts would have been a useful prop for British policy. Instead the Duke asked Aberdeen to pass on letters and the substance of a conversation with Barbacena to Polignac ‘and assure him that we stand exactly on the ground in this question which we took when Lord Strangford was sent to [the] Brazils, and that every day’s information tends to prove to us that that is the right ground, and that there is nobody more anxious to avoid being committed in hostilities with Portugal than Don Pedro himself’.¹⁰⁷

After the rejection of Barbacena’s scheme of a naval escort to Terceira, the Portuguese and Brazilian diplomats in London pushed the Government to instead escort them to Brazil as colonists rather than have them broken up and dispersed across the country as Wellington wished.¹⁰⁸ The Duke did not understand the need for a

¹⁰⁵ Aberdeen to Wellington, 29 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/962/6 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 185).

¹⁰⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 30 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/964/34 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 186).

¹⁰⁷ Wellington to Aberdeen, 31 Oct. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/964/37 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 190).

¹⁰⁸ Wellington to Peel, 12 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/968/37 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 242); Wellington to Palmella, 20 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/969/9 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 274-5).

convoy, however, pointing out to Aberdeen that he knew ‘of no war in which the Emperor of Brazil is engaged, although his servants stationed in England are doing everything in their power to excite one’.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, in the end he came around to the idea. The prospect of just getting rid of them completely must have been too appealing a thought, and Wellington told Palmella that

In consequence of your informing me that the Portuguese officers and troops now at Plymouth preferred to quit the country and to proceed to Rio Janeiro, rather than remove from Plymouth to the neighbouring towns and villages, as I had desired in the conversation which I had with you on the 20th instant, and as you have expressed a wish that the government should give these Portuguese a guarantee for their safety from attack on their passage, or send a vessel of war, to convey them, I have to inform you that His Majesty's servants will give orders that a convoy shall be prepared to escort the vessels which will carry these Portuguese troops according to the wish expressed by you.¹¹⁰

Just when Wellington agreed to an escort, however, Palmella began to oppose the prospect. He wrote to the Prime Minister, ‘je crois devoir, Monsieur le Duc, vous prier de ne pas donner suite à l'intention que vous m'annoncez, et qui me paraît dans le cas actuel présenter plus d'inconvénients que d'avantages’. Instead of an escort, Palmella believed that ‘[u]ne simple assurance verbale de la part du gouvernement britannique me semblerait suffisante pour les mettre à l’abri de tout danger dans le cas dont il s’agit’. He told the Duke that ‘j'avoue que plus j'y pense et plus il me semble qu'elle serait interprétée, ou comme un signe de défiance de la part du gouvernement britannique, ou comme une preuve de l'expulsion forcée des Portugais qui avaient cherché un asile dans ce pays’.¹¹¹ Of course, this was in part what the Duke wished to do – to demonstrate that the actions of the Portuguese were not supported by the British Government and to finally be rid of what was a distinctly irritating problem.

Wellington pointed out as much to Palmella, referencing Barbacena’s request for a convoy for an expedition. Given the large number of soldiers assembled at Plymouth, ever increasing as it was, they had to leave or disperse. As it was ‘[t]heir presence at Plymouth can be consider[ed] as [...] one of two grounds only: that these troops, as placed at Plymouth with transports in the harbour, were in a menacing

¹⁰⁹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 4 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/968/7 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 211).

¹¹⁰ Wellington to Palmella, 27 Nov. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/969/33 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 293).

¹¹¹ Palmella to Wellington, 3 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/970/9 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 305-7).

position in relation to Portugal, or the dominions or the colonies of Portugal; or that they were actually intended to attack Portugal or her dominions or colonies from His Majesty's port and arsenal of Plymouth'. Wellington pointed out the discrepancy of the legal position of the soldiers thus gathered, having been assured by Itabayana that they were not in the service of Don Pedro, but instead directed by Palmella himself – 'I am certain that there is no person excepting that individual who can blame His Majesty's government for what has occurred'. He continued with the difference between the offer of a guarantee of safe passage and that of convoy. But there was more than 'a difference of principle' between the two, but also a 'difference in fact':

When the King's servants grant a convoy they have it in their power to prescribe the course and the proceedings of the vessels placed under its charge, and they are responsible for their safety. When they give a guarantee for the safety of vessels navigating the Atlantick whose course and proceedings are ordered by others, the latter may direct those vessels to pursue such course as they please, while His Majesty's servants would be responsible for the consequences not only of those directions but for those of the conduct of the Portuguese government in consequence of the course taken.¹¹²

There was only one course amongst these that Wellington's Government could allow. Indeed, Peel and Aberdeen further ordered the Admiral at Plymouth to prevent the Portuguese 'giving us the slip', by preventing the sailing of the transports.¹¹³

Finding this course of action a dead end, Palmella changed tack. Assuring Aberdeen that 'he honestly indented to send them all to Brazil, when he saw [Wellington]', circumstances on Terceira meant that some of the Portuguese 'were desirous of going' there. 'He added that he did not wish even to send them, or have anything to do with them, but merely to know if these individuals who chose to go upon their own account would be interrupted'. Palmella's professions of innocence ring rather hollow given all the previous actions and duplicity of Maria's supporters within Britain. Aberdeen informed him that Terceira was a place that the British Government was determined 'not to permit to be fed by supplies sent from this country. That individuals, bona fide, might of course go to Terceira, or to any part of Portugal at their pleasure', but soldiers, even disarmed, was a different case. The same

¹¹² Wellington to Palmella, 8 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/974/17 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 315-9).

¹¹³ Aberdeen to Wellington, 10 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/971/14 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 326); Wellington to Palmella, 12 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/974/25 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 326).

would apply to the German mercenaries also gathered at Plymouth. To this, Palmella ‘made some remonstrances, but I told him we should take care to act according to the law of the land, and according to the duties imposed upon us by our neutrality’.¹¹⁴ Wellington was frank when he wrote to Palmella. He was not ‘deceived as to [the expedition’s] real intentions’. He reminded the diplomat that ‘above a month has now elapsed since I desired in the name of His Majesty’s government that the Portuguese officers and troops should be removed from Plymouth, and I again announce to you that His Majesty’s government have taken measures to prevent these troops from proceeding in a hostile character from England to any part of the dominions or colonies of Portugal, which measures they do not intend to advise His Majesty to countermand’.¹¹⁵

In the end, the soldiers did embark to leave, but it was to Terceira. They left Plymouth on 6 January 1829, unarmed, but with weapons dispatched separately. Ten days later they were met off the island by Captain Walpole of H.M.S. *Ranger*, who prevented them disembarking at Porto Praya. This was achieved with the use of force though, and one Portuguese was killed in the gunfire. Consequently, they were forced back into a French port.¹¹⁶

This incident would mark the culmination of the Government’s ineffectual handling of the matter of the Portuguese refugees, proving the lengths that they would go to, to ensure that Britain remained within the letter of the law and her treaties. When an explanation was demanded by Barbacena, Wellington gave him short shrift. In a memorandum, he argued that the Marquis ‘should be informed that His Majesty’s servants deny the right of the Emperor Don Pedro in any capacity [...] to require answers to any questions put to His Majesty’s government respecting the measures which His Majesty’s government have adopted’. According to all the laws and customs of the land, ‘no person whatever, be their rank or dignity what they may, can assume any authority within His Majesty’s dominions, much less carry on war from

¹¹⁴ Aberdeen to Wellington, 18 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/971/43 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 343-4). See also Palmella to Wellington, 20 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/972/8 (also in *WND*, vol. V, 348-9).

¹¹⁵ Wellington to Palmella, 23 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/975/10 (also in *WND*, vol. V, p. 355). Unsurprisingly, this was not the end of the correspondence and Palmella continued to push his case, and Wellington continued to be unrelenting in his analysis. Palmella to Wellington, 28 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/973/7 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 370-5); Wellington to Palmella, 30 Dec. 1828, Wellington Mss., WP1/975/37 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 377-9).

¹¹⁶ Chamberlain, *Aberdeen*, pp.233-4.

His Majesty's ports or arsenals in His Majesty's dominions without His Majesty's consent and against His Majesty's prohibition and His Majesty's government will not allow his undoubted prerogative upon this subject'. Having stated to Palmella previously the grounds for preventing any expeditions, the Duke stressed that the Government 'will follow the same course respecting any other similar expedition from this country' as the one to Terceira. The Duke ended on a threatening note, saying that Barbacena should ensure he stops fermenting civil war in Portugal while in Britain: 'Such interference be it on the part of whom it may is inconsistent with the laws of nations and with the laws of England, a breach of His Majesty's royal prerogative, and in positive disobedience to His Majesty's command repeatedly conveyed to the Marquis de Barbacena, his colleagues and the Marquis de Palmela [sic].'¹¹⁷

The Government would face repeated attacks over this incident in Parliament. Palmerston marked his emergence as a 'thinking politician' and one with a keen eye for foreign affairs, in an attack on Wellington and Aberdeen's Portuguese policy in a speech in June 1829.¹¹⁸ In it he branded Miguel 'this destroyer of constitutional freedom, this breaker of solemn oaths, this faithless usurper, this enslaver of this country, this trampler upon public law, this violator of private rights, this attempter on the life of a helpless and defenceless woman'. But despite that it was believed that 'the Cabinet of England look upon his usurpation with no unfriendly eye'. Wellington's adherence to non-intervention, not to mention his strict interpretation of treaties, had allowed Miguel to prevail.¹¹⁹ He returned to the charge the following year, noting that while in 1826 the freedom of Portugal had seemed to come from Britain, in 1829, the return of a conservative administration in France was believed to be caused by her as well. He asked, '[w]hence has arisen this great and sudden change in public opinion? Why is it, that England, who only three short years ago was hailed as the author of good, should now be branded as the instigator of evil?' The reason was the foreign

¹¹⁷ Wellington Memorandum. 17 Feb. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1000/24 (also in *WND*, vol. V, pp. 505-7). Later in the year Wellington even argued that Palmella should be excepted from any general pardon: 'Surely to stipulate that this individual should be pardoned or to require that he should be pardoned is carrying very far the principle of generosity to personal enemies, considering the manner in which he has conducted himself towards this government and particularly towards me, or is an homage paid to the liberality of the times which is not very necessary. We shall facilitate our measure in Portugal by allowing of exceptions to the general amnesty and I should wish to see the Marquis de Palmella excepted by name.' Wellington to Aberdeen, 26 Nov. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1059/67 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 306-7).

¹¹⁸ Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 136.

¹¹⁹ *Hansard*, HC Debate, 1 June 1829, vol. 21, cc. 1643-70.

policy failures of Wellington's administration that had 'lost our influence in Portugal, and have thrown her into the arms of Spain' and overseen the destruction of 'Constitutional freedom in Portugal'.¹²⁰ This was followed by an attempt to censure the Government in the House of Lords over Terceira a few days later.¹²¹ While these attacks were fended off, the latter being defeated 126-31, they nevertheless marked the ease with which British foreign policy could be attacked in these years. Maria could be painted as the good, liberal candidate that legalism and inaction had seen thrown over by the evil, reactionary Miguel. While bearing little relationship to the actual state of affairs, it was a useful avenue to criticise Wellington's actions, and the painting of him as an abettor of reaction had a lasting impact, weakening him in the public eye when it came to the issue of Reform and in the historiography which has rarely moved beyond the caricature that was painted of him at this time.

After the Terceira incident, the main question left over Portugal was no longer if, but when, to recognise Miguel's government. As Aberdeen put it in July, 'Portugal is satisfied or at least quiet, under Don Miguel, and we cannot therefore look for any alteration from within'.¹²² By September it was becoming clear that other states were already moving towards recognition.¹²³ Given the concurrent crisis over the Treaty of Adrianople, Wellington carried over his criticisms of Russian conduct into the Portuguese question. France had been in discussion with Miguel's agents to recognise his Government in return for the return of confiscated property and a general amnesty. However, Wellington took great exception to this, despite it almost being the same policy as he was recommending. In his opinion, if Miguel 'agrees to an article with any sovereign, I don't care with what sovereign, engaging to restore properties to his subjects to pardon his subjects, or to do any act or to refrain from doing any act in relation to his subject, he is no longer an independent sovereign'. Indeed, the Duke drew the direct comparison, how Miguel would be as much under another's control as 'the Porte is in the hands of Russia respecting Servia [sic], Wallachia and

¹²⁰ *Hansard*, HC Debate, 10 Mar. 1830, vol. 23, c. 102.

¹²¹ *Hansard*, HL Debate 23 Mar, 1830 vol. 23 cc737-80

¹²² Aberdeen to Wellington, 28 July 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1034/8 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 54-5).

¹²³ Aberdeen to Wellington, 9 Sept. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1044/8 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 148-9).

Moldavia'.¹²⁴ This was quite a ridiculous assertion, and more flexibility could have achieved an earlier resolution to recognition in cooperation with other powers.

Instead, Britain pursued a policy of inaction and delay. When word reached Aberdeen that the King of Naples was likely to recognise Don Miguel, the Foreign Secretary urged the Neopolitan envoy to 'write to his court and recommend some delay in this affair', which the diplomat had 'no doubt will be complied with'. The Netherlands as well would follow the example of Britain or France. In Aberdeen's opinion, '[w]e shall preserve our ascendancy in the affair by restraining them in this manner'.¹²⁵

While this ascendancy was of questionable value and utility, the policy of delay was certainly successful, and by the following year a resolution had still not been reached, though it was clearly inevitable now. The Duke was convinced that there was no other option and told Aberdeen about the 'inexpediency of allowing matters to remain as they are and to allow the peace of Europe to be distracted by a few hundred starving Portuguese vagrants'. The peace of Europe was a higher priority than 'constitutional forms'.¹²⁶ Miguel was still delaying on granting an amnesty though, now using the excuse of the impact of the French revolution when he wrote to Wellington in September 1830 to explain his position.¹²⁷ When Aberdeen put forward the prospect of granting recognition in return for an amnesty, the exact policy that France had previously proposed, to Wellington's ire, the Duke was unimpressed.¹²⁸ He told the Foreign Secretary tersely, 'I confess that I have never understood what you meant by your intention to exact the amnesty from Don Miguel. How do you mean to exact it? [...] Do you mean to menace? What will you menace? What menace will you carry into execution?' Written shortly after Huskisson's tragic death, and while Wellington was still in Liverpool, wider circumstances may explain his angry reaction, and one quite unrelated to Aberdeen's proposal. Nevertheless, Wellington did raise

¹²⁴ Wellington to Aberdeen, 14 Sept. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1048/30 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, p. 161).

¹²⁵ Aberdeen to Wellington, 23 Nov. 1829, Wellington Mss., WP1/1057/24 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 302-3).

¹²⁶ Wellington to Aberdeen, 15 Sept. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1143/44 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 265-6).

¹²⁷ Miguel to Wellington, 11 Sept. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1140/24 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 257-8).

¹²⁸ Aberdeen to Wellington, 17 Sept. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1141/19 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 267-8).

some points of more relevance. Tying British recognition to the amnesty would mean that '[t]here is not an individual who will return to Portugal under [it] who will not be under our protection'. The result would be '[i]nstead of one question we shall have twenty every day'.¹²⁹ In his mind, to tie the two together would put the cart before the horse:

A remedy will be applied to the existing evils only by the adoption of a wise system of government, one that will conciliate the affections of all the Portuguese, that will restore the prosperity of the country, insure its internal peace and obtain for it the esteem and respect of all foreign nations. The commencement of such a system must be a general amnesty; till that measure is adopted His Majesty cannot recognize the government of Don Miguel. The honour of the country, the desire to avoid to interfere in the internal concerns of Portugal and the wish to see that country happy and respectable dictate this decision.¹³⁰

It was this course that Wellington advised Miguel to follow in his reply to his letter. He told him that 'Portugal can never be considered in a state of tranquillity or safety as long as such a large proportion of its men of property, talent and activity are ill-treated, greatly dissatisfied and consequently in a state of hostility against the government and its head and daily intentions'. Once they were brought back into the fold then peaceful relations between Britain and Portugal would follow to the mutual interest of both.¹³¹

This was where the state of affairs stood when Wellington's government fell in November. Early on, in 1826, the Duke had identified the need for a stable military situation in the country and set out proposals for how this could be achieved to help ensure there would be no deterioration into civil war. By the time he was Prime Minister though, Portugal had become another annoyance and another diplomatic matter where drift, delay and embarrassment were to become the norm. As with the Eastern Question, Wellington stuck closely to legalistic interpretations. He clung closely to non-interference, arguably taking it far beyond its utility. Like on so many other occasions throughout these years, the Duke's disdain for principles and ideologies meant that there was no effective presentation of the Government's policies

¹²⁹ Wellington to Aberdeen, 19 Sept. 1830, Childwall, Liverpool, Wellington Mss., WP1/1143/50 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 270-1)

¹³⁰ Wellington Memorandum, 21 Sept. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1170/5 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 272-5).

¹³¹ Wellington to Miguel, 28 Sept. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1143/61 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 278-9).

to the public, and they were merely an avenue of attack for her opponents, rather than a shield for her defenders. This meant that when the situation in Portugal was fundamentally altered with Pedro's return to Europe, Palmerston was able to paint it as a struggle of liberalism against reaction to great personal success, but at the cost, minimal to him, of tarring Wellington and Aberdeen as reactionaries in the process. They had failed to move with the times and acknowledge the importance of public opinion and the need to bring it with you, a crucial distinction that Canning had begun to drift towards and Palmerston would take up with full force upon succeeding Aberdeen to the Foreign Office.

French Invasion of Algiers

If ineffectual protest and a deterioration of the British position had marked British diplomacy in the Near East, not to mention Portugal, then the same characteristics would become evident again over the French invasion of Algiers. Nominally a vassal of the Ottoman Sultan, the Bey of Algiers had long overseen piracy of the Barbary corsairs in the Mediterranean alongside the Beys of Tunis and Tripoli. With the largest merchant fleet in the world, Britain was deeply concerned by the piracy that plagued the region. Indeed, she had mounted two punitive expeditions herself against Algiers: the first in 1816 under Lord Exmouth and a second in 1824.¹³² Neither these nor the expeditions attempted by other powers had removed the central problem though – the corsairs would just regroup and strike again from somewhere else.

France had a long list of complaints against the Bey of Algiers that even went beyond the question of piracy: from the issue of payments for 'concessions', trading outposts on the North African coasts, to the legacy of Napoleonic debts and the literal assault of the French consul by the Bey with the handle of his fly-swisher. Though the administrations of Villèle and Martignac contemplated retaliation, circumstances in Spain and Greece meant that French forces were tied up elsewhere. Polignac, however, had different plans, especially as at the same time as he entered office, news had reached Paris that a parley ship had been fired on eighty times while leaving Algiers.

¹³² P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London, 1976), p. 164.

¹³³ However, these merely provided the context and nominal excuse for the French invasion of 1830. As Sauvigny has argued, it was a ‘policy of prestige, looking less to augmenting the material powers of France than to re-enforcing her moral position before Europe and that of the monarchy before the nation’.¹³⁴

The fact that the decision of Polignac to invade was based, in large part, on domestic factors would form an important part of the British Government’s opposition to the move. Initially, it seemed that France would act in conjunction with Mehemet Ali. In late January 1830, the French began to test the water to gauge reactions to it. Wellington pointed out to Laval, the French ambassador to London, that ‘Europe had long suffered the inconvenience, and even indignity, resulting from the conduct of these regencies, rather than the disadvantage of allowing any power to conquer and settle them with a view to its own advantage, or indeed, any change’. However, the prospect of cooperation with the Pasha of Egypt was such that the Duke ‘could not but view this scheme as one tending to establish in the regencies on the coast of Africa a French system of government [sic] instead of a Turkish one’. Furthermore, ‘he was quite convinced that it would be so viewed in this country and by every man of unbiassed [sic] judgement in Europe and this would not be deemed a very desirable [sic] mode of getting rid of piracy’.¹³⁵

Although France backed out of a joint expedition with Mehemet Ali in favour of one composed entirely of its forces, Wellington was once more proved wrong in his assessment of the European reaction. The other major powers were quite content to see France undertake an invasion.¹³⁶ This did not moderate the Duke though. In a letter to Aberdeen, he argued that ‘the Prince de Polignac seems to have made a strange mistake in thinking that we can allow France to seek safety from domestick troubles in foreign conquests, even on the coast of Africa’. He went so far as to state that ‘[n]either Buonaparte, nor the Directory, behaved worse than the French government have in this case’. Continuing the parallel, Wellington pointed out that the ‘French government are quite mistaken in supposing that any of the quarrels between Buonaparte and Europe were to be attributed to their fears of revolutionary principles.

¹³³ Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, p. 435.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

¹³⁵ Wellington Memorandum, 24 Jan. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1091/17 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 437-9.

¹³⁶ Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, p. 436.

They were apprehensive of his conquests and they therefore leagued against him'. In his mind, Polignac had to realise that 'even if we were so disposed this country would not allow us to consent to France making conquests on the coast of Africa'.¹³⁷

Consent is what Britain did. There was much bluster and complaint emanating from Whitehall. Laval complained to Aberdeen of the treatment of his government, saying '[h]e knew they were in a situation to do nothing with impunity which could displease us, but that we might depend upon it they were more afraid of their own people than they were even of us, and that they never dare present themselves to their publick in an unbecoming and unsuitable manner'.¹³⁸ Yet this achieved nothing. Aberdeen's attempts to secure a written promise that the French presence in Algiers would be temporary drew blanks despite early optimism 'it appears likely that we shall receive all the satisfaction we can possibly require upon the subject of the expedition'.¹³⁹ Polignac 'adroitly evaded the question by suggesting that England could be satisfied by the general assurances furnished to all the powers. To give a special assurance to one of the powers would cause the expedition to lose its character of international interest which it was intended to preserve'.¹⁴⁰ This focus on receiving a written promise from France was typical of Wellington's foreign policy during his Government. While it would have been a more concrete statement than just the verbal assurances, it still guaranteed nothing. Despite the scale of the Duke's objections to the expedition, Britain's diplomacy was ineffectual. Never was the red line set out, with the effective menace of the Royal Navy behind it – the one force capable of actually stopping the invasion for certain.

Instead, Wellington was forced to admit that Britain was constrained by the course he had taken. Though Parliament had been assured that France would give the wanted promises, the Duke conceded that 'I don't think that we can go to war because

¹³⁷ Wellington to Aberdeen, 18 April 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1111/33 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 576-7).

¹³⁸ Aberdeen to Wellington, 18 April 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1108/23 (also in *WND*, vol. VI, pp. 579-80).

¹³⁹ Aberdeen to Peel, 14 April 1830, Aberdeen Mss. Add. Ms. 43,061, f. 93.

¹⁴⁰ Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, p. 437. Wellington memorandum for Aberdeen, 7 May 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1117/16 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 20-5).

we have a verbal explanation instead of one in writing'.¹⁴¹ In a memorandum he explained:

The first notion of the cabinet when the demand was made of an official explanation was that if that explanation should not be satisfactory the French expedition should be prevented.

It is quite obvious that that intention cannot be carried into execution. Moreover, this course of proceeding leads to war, not upon the case itself, upon which after all war may not be necessary, but upon matters of communication which, however important they would become as a point of honor if pushed farther, it is desirable [sic] to not bring to that extremity.¹⁴²

Wellington's diplomacy had succeeded neither in getting assurances of the temporary nature of the expedition nor did it stop it taking place at all, despite the strategic implications for British naval power in the Mediterranean. The result of this situation was that France was allowed to dispatch a force of 103 warships, 350 transports, 27,000 sailors and 37,000 soldiers across the Mediterranean to land in North Africa on 14 June. By 5 July 1830, the French flag was flying over Algiers and France would remain in occupation there for a further 132 years.¹⁴³ The other result was that Charles X and the Bourbons definitively lost the sympathy of Wellington. So when revolution swept over France in July 1830, sweeping away with it the world of European diplomacy that Wellington had formed such a large part of over the previous sixteen years, Britain did not exert herself to save it.

Both Portugal and the French expedition marked failures for Wellington's foreign policy. In the former case, Wellington pursued a pragmatic policy but one that was without any appeal to the wider public, leaving his flank open to attack from parliamentary enemies. Thus, instead of celebrating avoiding a costly and long-term entanglement in Portuguese affairs, inaction was the hallmark of the Government's course of action. The Algiers affair was even more damaging for Britain, if not for Wellington's administration. The tight adherence to a legalistic interpretation left Polignac free to issue empty promises only to present Britain with a *fait accompli*. If

¹⁴¹ Wellington to Aberdeen, n.d. May 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1117/17 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 25-6).

¹⁴² Wellington Memorandum, 20 May 1830, Wellington Mss., Wp1/1117/54 (also in *WND*, vol. VII, pp. 54-6).

¹⁴³ Sauvigny, *Bourbon Restoration*, pp. 436-8.

revolution overtook events before the Duke could face Parliament, this would be of little solace for three years of setbacks and disappointments.

Conclusion

Wellington might not have had the impact of Lord Castlereagh or the flair of George Canning when it came to foreign policy. This circumstance does not make him any less important for historians to study. This thesis has broken new ground by establishing Wellington as a central figure in the framing and conduct of British foreign policy from 1814-30. Even when he was not directly responsible for foreign policy, his influence was palpable. Quite simply, Britain's diplomacy over these years cannot be understood without reference to the Duke. From his time in Europe as a statesman of the first rank, through his friendship with Castlereagh and his rivalry with Canning, to his Premiership, Wellington was at the heart of affairs. He influenced the crafting of British foreign policy in a positive manner at times, such as his important part in the second Bourbon restoration, and in a negative one, as when he engaged in a drawn out rearguard action over the independence of Spanish America. His influence was profound.

More than anything, Wellington's attitudes were shaped by his time on the continent between 1814-18. Though he had previously had some experience with diplomacy, in India, Ireland and during the Peninsular War, this tended to be in the context of his military career, and from a relatively junior position. Instead, Wellington's formative diplomatic experiences came in middle age between 1814-18. By the time that the war drew to a close, Wellington had accumulated a great amount of prestige and built up during the final years of the war a close working relationship with the ministers back in London. These factors combined meant that they decided to use the Duke to effect in the diplomatic arena, first as ambassador to Paris, and then as plenipotentiary to the Congress of Vienna.

The year between the conclusion of hostilities in 1814 and Napoleon's escape and Wellington's return to the field in 1815 set the pattern for much of what followed. The Duke established a solid working relationship with Lord Castlereagh. The two shared a common outlook and their experiences together stood them in good stead. As

Charles Webster has argued, out of all of the politicians and envoys in British service, ‘only Wellington, whose services as a diplomatist were invaluable to him, had in any way a policy of his own’.¹ The Duke never sought to impose his own preferences on Castlereagh, or increase his influence at the Foreign Secretary’s expense. As a result, he was a trusted confidant and important sounding board for policies, even before they had reached the Prime Minister’s ear.² This situation would continue once Wellington entered the Cabinet in 1819.³ Only in Castlereagh’s final days, as the toll of high office finally began to have its effect mentally and physically, would their relationship deteriorate from the friendly state it had been in for years.⁴

The strength of their ‘special relationship’ in foreign affairs lay in their shared experiences of personal diplomacy on the Continent together, and this fact would figure as an important part of Wellington’s career. He would always prefer a quieter, more private, method of dealing with diplomatic problems. Never was he inclined to unleash a public broadside on other states in the manner Canning would, and he took great exception to the publication of dispatches.⁵ Foreign policy was not to be conducted in the public arena – that meant inviting misunderstandings and tensions unnecessarily. When there were differences with the Continental powers, as there were bound to be, their visibility should be reduced as much as possible. If this did not happen, as was the case with some of Canning’s policies, and with the conduct of Britain’s allies at the Congresses of Troppau and Verona, Wellington was deeply unimpressed. Speaking of the latter two occasions, Wellington told Metternich how he did not ‘pretend that upon either occasion the allies were bound to abandon their object to please the councils of this country’ but that instead ‘it would have been wise to conduct these transactions in such manner as that at least it might not be apparent to the world that we were separated from the allies’.⁶

¹ *British Diplomacy*, ed. Webster, p. xxxvi.

² For example, over Murat and the Kingdom of Naples; see above p. 21 and Wellington to Castlereagh, Copy, 12 Sept. 1814, Wellington Mss., WP1/428.

³ Castlereagh to Wellington, 6 Feb. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/617/15 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 26-7).

⁴ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, pp. 184-5.

⁵ Wellington to Liverpool, 5 Mar. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/789/2 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 228-9).

⁶ Wellington to Metternich, 24 Feb. 1824, Wellington Mss., WP1/786/26 (also in *WND*, vol. II, pp. 221-6).

Despite his preference for dealing with problems in a personal manner, Wellington was never an advocate of congresses or conferences. On this he shared an equal aversion as Canning, though the Duke has never received the praise that the Foreign Minister has been accorded for his views on this head. When a conference was proposed in 1824 on the matter of the Spanish Colonies in America, Wellington and Canning were as one on the need to reject the invitation. Where they differed was about 'the whole *tone & temper* of Mr. Canning's intended note'.⁷ Likewise, Wellington was a consistent advocate of non-intervention. He might never have put forward his views with the fluency of Castlereagh's State Paper of 5 May 1820 or with the rhetorical flourish of Canning that '[w]e go to plant the standard of England on the well-known heights of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted, foreign dominion shall not come'.⁸ Nevertheless, the Duke put his weight behind both. In the former case, Castlereagh's State Paper was accompanied by a memorandum of Wellington's and in the latter he was giving a speech in the Lords supporting Canning's policy simultaneously with the Foreign Secretary's.⁹ Despite this, however, the Duke always firmly believed in pursuing consensus on important problems. Aware of the suspicion that Britain could be held in on the Continent, he believed in the need to work with European partners, not against them, if British diplomacy was to be at its most effective. This was the course he advocated in 1825 over the tensions in the Near East, to take one example.¹⁰

There is one aspect of Wellington's diplomatic career that arose out of the circumstances of 1814-18 and would have a deep influence on his later conduct: his sense of his own exceptionalism. While he was undoubtedly a major and prestigious figure, his sense of his own importance and ability to direct events could work against him. As Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Occupation, the Duke certainly did have a preeminent position in European diplomacy. But this was fleeting. After his return to Britain he was no longer a European statesman to the same degree. The result was that time and time again, he would find that his own sense of the weight his voice carried would be out of sync with reality. No longer was he '*l'homme nécessaire*', as

⁷ 21 Jan. 1824, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 283.

⁸ Castlereagh's State Paper, 5 May 1820, in *Foundations of British Foreign*, pp. 48-63; Hansard, HC Debate, 12 Dec. 1826, vol. 16, cc. 350-69. See also Hinde, George Canning, pp. 421-2.

⁹ Memorandum on difficulties of military intervention in Spain, Wellington, 16 Apr. 1820, WP1/644/7 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 116-21); *Hansard*, HL Deb, 12 Dec. 1826, vol. 16, cc. 347-8.

¹⁰ 22 Nov. 1825, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. I, p. 424.

Webster described him, as he was while encamped in Cambrai with 150,000 European soldiers under his command.¹¹ Nevertheless, his position was still an exceptional one, even if not to the extent he believed it. He would continue to have the ear of major figures throughout his life and he was never simply a purely British statesman. Wellington, the Prince of Waterloo in the Netherlands, the Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain, Duke of Vitoria in Portugal and Field-Marshal, Marshal-General or Captain-General in the armies of eight different states was not someone to be easily pigeonholed. The debt of gratitude he felt for these honours, and the memories of service under Europe collectively as Commander-in-Chief, left him with some sense of obligation towards other monarchs. Thus, in 1826 when on his mission to St Petersburg, Wellington went beyond what might have been prudent as a British diplomat, but what was in line with the previous frankness, openness, and willingness to offer advice regardless of whether he supported the underlying policy or not.¹² Wellington's willingness to offer advice on the military aspects of intervention in Spain in 1822 has drawn criticism from historians, but as has been seen, was in line with his broader career and outlook.¹³

These connections were, on occasion, turned to account in favour of British policy. This was most clearly the case during Wellington's time in Cabinet alongside Castlereagh. Their shared outlook and understanding of each other's tactics and strengths meant that the Foreign Secretary was willing to draw on the Duke's connections. Wellington could then serve as a back room conduit, one able to push the British position in a frank and private way that would have been inappropriate for formal correspondence. Furthermore, he could act as an additional source of information for the Government, especially on military matters.¹⁴ Wellington then was not a typical diplomat for Britain, and certainly has been open to attack for some of this. But it should always be remembered that, if he was frank with foreign statesmen

¹¹ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p.77-8.

¹² See above p. 152 and Memorandum, Wellington to Nesselrode, 11 March 1826, Wellington Mss., WP1/853/7 (also published in *WND*, vol. III, pp. 164-6). In many ways this also reflected the ambiguities of Wellington's domestic political situation for much of this period.

¹³ See above p. 111-3.

¹⁴ See above p. 77. For an example of Wellington's informal efforts at explaining the British position see Wellington to Pozzo di Borgo, 18 May 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/626/4 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 65-7); for military intelligence see Wellington to Castlereagh, 4 Apr. 1819, enclosing a letter from Metternich to Wellington, 15 Feb. 1819, Wellington Mss., WP1/622/14 (also in *WND*, vol. I, pp. 51-2).

when it would have better to been coy, it was on the very basis of his solid trustworthy nature that Wellington had first achieved his eminent status in Europe. Military prestige was not enough on its own.

Wellington found that himself when he became Prime Minister. There were early hopes that his mere presence would reassure the Ottomans and help avert war, but these would prove unfounded.¹⁵ The same was the case for many of the Duke's own expectations. He proved unable to surmount the difficulties left to him, such as the Finance Committee or Canning's flawed Treaty of London. Overwhelmed by the situation facing him, Wellington almost retreated into bitterness and suspicion, looking for enemies at home and abroad. British ambassadors felt his ire, in the form of Lamb in Portugal and Heytesbury in Russia, and the Lievens falling out with the Duke left a permanent sour note over relations with the Tsar. Long after he should have been able to deal with Canning's legacy, he was still complaining about the former Prime Minister. On top of all of this, the Duke also got into problems of his own making. A strict adherence to France and devotion to a strict legalist outlook left the diplomacy of the British Government rigid and liable to be outmanoeuvred by others. Thus France was able to dispatch troops to the Morea and later to launch her expedition to Algiers, and Portugal would remain a constant thorn in Wellington's side, with the refugees in Plymouth causing them some embarrassment.

By taking a pragmatic line in diplomatic problems and steering a middle course through the troubled waters of the late 1820s, Wellington did himself a disservice. His disdain for principles left his policy unsupported by the ideological props that were becoming increasingly crucial in a dynamic age.¹⁶ The lack of strategic planning on his part undermined the ability of Britain to reach resolutions on the issues confronting them. Thus, when Wellington's Government fell, the two main problems of his tenure, Greece and Portugal, were left unresolved. It would be Palmerston who took the credit on both, much as he would over Belgium, despite Wellington laying the groundwork.

The French Revolution of 1830 was one of the supreme ironies of Wellington's diplomatic career from 1814-30. It marked the end of the European settlement as the Duke knew it. The eruption of ideological fervour in Europe and Britain meant that

¹⁵ See above pp. 173-4 and 19 Feb. 1828, *Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot*, vol. II, p. 163.

¹⁶ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p.365.

Wellington's policy of conducting diplomacy quietly, out of the public eye, was no longer viable. The Great Reform Act would compound this fact, and it would be Lord Palmerston who stepped up to the new challenges and methods needed. Yet, for all of that, Wellington's handling of the French Revolution was potentially his crowning achievement. It marked the one time that he truly took the reins, using his considerable knowledge and skill to steer Britain and Europe out of a very dangerous situation, that could easily have ended in war. No other issue had seen such clearheaded analysis and determination. Within days, Wellington was convinced of the need to acknowledge the overthrow of the Bourbons. Though '[t]here are some bitter pills to swallow', he wrote to Aberdeen, 'the cockade; the apparently verbal, but in fact real and essential alterations of the charter; the act of placing it under the *sauvegarde* of the national guard; the line assumed by Lafayette. However, the best chance of peace is to swallow them all'. He saw clearly, that if Britain did not quarrel with the French then 'they must set these matters to rights or quarrel among themselves or quarrel with us. Any one of these would be better for us and for the world than that we should at this moment quarrel with them'. Having been constrained by treaties, committees, cabinets and allies, the Revolution was finally an issue on which Wellington was free of them. In his mind, there was 'nothing more clear than that what has occurred is at most a case for deliberation'. He also noted with some satisfaction that he believed 'that there is not a power in Europe who will not be relieved from a load of anxiety when it will be known that we have recognized the new government'.¹⁷ On this he was right, and the other powers followed the British lead, though Russia with a lot less willingness and a lot more bluster and military preparation than any other power.¹⁸ One cannot help but wonder how the foreign policy of his Government might have proceeded had Wellington pursued all the problems confronting him with the same vigour and decision.

Ultimately, he did not, and his reputation has suffered as a result. When Wellington died, he was buried as a great military hero and a non-partisan figure. Thus was buried his political role and his diplomatic one. As one of his biographers has argued, to just focus on the military aspect of his career was 'at best a partial view of Wellington's career which seriously distorted the story of his life'. However, while

¹⁷ Wellington to Aberdeen, 12 Aug. 1830, Wellington Mss., WP1/1137/33.

¹⁸ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, p. 670.

Muir has stated that ‘any examination of Wellington’s life shows that his political and military careers were closely intertwined and that one cannot be properly understood without the other’, this does not go far enough.¹⁹ This thesis has re-established Wellington as a major political and diplomatic figure in his own right by giving this part of his career the full attention it deserves. Without an appreciation of the Duke’s deep involvement in Britain’s foreign policy, neither he nor the diplomacy of this period can be understood.

There is far more work still to do both on Wellington and British foreign policy in the early-nineteenth century. While 1830 marked a clear dividing line in his diplomatic career, the Duke continued to have an influence in different forms. His tenure as Foreign Secretary and his role in Peel’s second government need further consideration. His efforts in the latter to increase British defences against France is a notable change from his earlier adherence to France and his quick acceptance of the July Monarchy. As his Parliamentary role took on greater prominence as well, so his speaking on foreign policy there needs to receive more consideration. However, the need for further work is not limited to Wellington. The fact that this is the first work to examine Peel’s involvement in foreign policy before his 1841-6 administration is telling of the scholarly neglect of this area. Lords Aberdeen, Ellenborough and Bathurst are all influential figures who have not had their impact sufficiently studied. All these statesmen were people whose formative political experiences were in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, yet this fact has never received any attention. It is the author’s hope that this will be corrected in future research in the way the lacuna of Wellington’s diplomatic career between 1814-30 has at last been filled.

¹⁹ Muir, *Wellington*, vol. II, p. 573.

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