Disruptions to Diplomacy:
The Eastern Question in the Concert of Europe, 1814-1856



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Short Abstract

This dissertation examines the fragility and eventual collapse of the Concert of Europe through the lens of the Eastern Question—a prolonged diplomatic struggle prompted by the Ottoman Empire's decline. Established by the Congress of Vienna in 1814 under the vision of Castlereagh and Metternich, the European Concert was an orchestrated diplomatic framework aimed at preserving continental peace among the European great powers: Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, and France. Beneath its surface of ostensible cooperation and compromise, the diplomatic system was precarious. As memories of the Napoleonic wars gradually receded, great powers' diverging strategic interests emerged to undermine the diplomatic system.

Focusing on two defining diplomatic crises in the Eastern Question—the Greek War of Independence (1821-30) and the Crimean War (1853-6), this study reveals how five key disruptions eroded the effectiveness of European diplomacy: strategic confusion; transient transactional alliances; susceptibility to public opinion; diluted deterrence; and most decisively, the irreconcilability of expansionist ambitions with peaceful resolutions. While each factor strained European diplomacy, it was ultimately the final disruption—the pursuit of territorial expansionist objectives by militarily capable powers—that destructed diplomatic efforts, as exemplified by Nicholas' Russia during the Crimean War.

Drawing from extensive archival research in Britain, France, Austria, and published Russian and Ottoman sources, this dissertation provides detailed analyses on critical episodes of European diplomacy during the period: Alexander I's restraint in 1821, the 1826 St. Petersburg Protocol, the Holy Places dispute, Prince Menshikov's mission, and the Austro-Russian divergence in 1853. This dissertation contends that whilst European diplomacy was ultimately ill-equipped to restrain Russia's resolute expansionist ambitions, Nicholas' warlike resolutions ought to have been disrupted by the precise factors that imperil diplomacy, as this

thesis identifies—thus preserving cautious optimism for the potency of diplomacy, even in its most fragile state.

Long Abstract

In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, the Vienna Congress of 1814 established the Concert of Europe—a European system of orchestrated diplomatic efforts—to safeguard the continent's painstakingly fought peace and stability. Architected by Castlereagh and supervised by Metternich, the European concert system necessitated compromise from all great powers—Britain, Russia, France, Austria, and Prussia. The unprecedented diplomatic structure saw a triumphant first decade, but it was visibly fraying well before the mid-nineteenth century. Through examining two defining diplomatic crises for the Concert of Europe—the Greek War of Independence (1821-30) and the Crimean War (1853-6)—this dissertation explores how diplomatic mechanisms of the Vienna settlement struggled to manage the Eastern Question, the complex yet persisting diplomatic struggle for Europe arising from the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire. In particular, as memories of the tumultuous Napoleonic period waned and conflicting interests of great powers emerged, the Concert of Europe became increasingly ineffective in tempering great powers' varied ambitions towards the Sultan's crumbling empire.

Between 1814 and 1853, Europe was fraught with widespread socioeconomic challenges from rapid industrial growth and demographic shifts, which fomented public dissent and incited the revolutions of the 1830s and 1840s. Beyond continental instability and political turmoil, this dissertation exposes the weak premise on which the European concert was constructed: the balance of the Concert of Europe was precarious because it relied on a complex web of compromises, rendering the system was vulnerable since its inception. While in 1814, conflicting material and strategic interests of great powers subordinated to the shared ambition of combatting revolutionary upheaval, this balance did not endure. Approaching mid-century,

European diplomacy became increasingly burdened by a multitude of disruptions on which this dissertation centres: 1) strategic confusion of great powers, 2) transient opportunistic alliances, 3) increasing sensitivity to public opinion, 4) the weakening of deterrence power, and ultimately, 5) the fundamental incompatibility between expansionist ambitions and professed commitments to peace. This dissertation argues that while the first four factors significantly undermined diplomatic efforts from 1821 to 1853, it was the final disruption—the irreconcilability of expansionist hubris with peaceful resolutions—that proved fatal for European diplomacy and stability. Exemplified by Russian expansionism during the Crimean War, when a capable power is resolute in pursuing territorial expansion, diplomacy could at best momentarily delay, but not prevent, conflict. In face of such destructive disruptions to diplomacy, even exemplary diplomatic engagement would fail to effectively restrain the expansionist power. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly during the diplomatic preliminaries of the Greek Revolution and the Crimean War, these disruptions repeatedly undermined efforts of European diplomacy, eventually culminating in the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853.

Based on extensive archival research in Britain, France, Austria, and published Russian and Ottoman sources, this dissertation provides a refreshed perspective on the following key episodes in European diplomacy during this period: the 1821 Greek War of Independence, the Anglo-Russian alliance preceding the 1828 Russo-Turkish War; the 1852 Holy Places dispute; the early 1853 Montenegro crisis and Prince Menshikov's mission; Stratford Canning's mission in Constantinople and the Austro-Russian rupture in advance of the Crimean War in 1853.

Chapter 1 contextualises the decline of the Concert of Europe by presenting a socio-economic overview of the European great powers and portraying their diverse strategic priorities. Britain and Russia emerged from the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars as the two

most consequential powers in the continent. Along with other major great powers—France, Austria, and Prussia—the Ottoman Empire attracted varying degrees of interests across Europe: The 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji granted Russia territorial, economic, and religious privileges in the Ottoman Empire; Austria was connected to the Ottoman Empire by the longest frontier of all European countries; British and French interests were primarily driven by the Black Sea's commercial significance, but both remained invested in the Eastern Question with aims of holding the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against Russian dominion in the Near East. Meanwhile, the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 shook the foundations of monarchic legitimacy, shifting conservative powers' behaviour in advance of the mid-century crisis in Crimea. The rise of the press and the invention of the telegraph introduced further volatility, as public opinion began wielding increasing influence over European diplomacy. Britain's industrial expansion bolstered its strategic emphasis on the Mediterranean and Near East, intensifying competition with Russia over access to key trade routes in the Black Sea. Furthermore, the first chapter highlights the educational background of key personalities in this study—Tsar Alexander I, Tsar Nicholas I, Nesselrode, Louis Napoleon, George Canning, Wellington, and Aberdeen, elucidating the role of values and convictions of these individual statesmen in shaping their policymaking.

Chapter 2 details European diplomatic efforts in 1821 upon the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence, one of the earliest diplomatic crises of the Eastern Question that witnessed prominent European involvement. The protracted struggle of the Greeks to overcome Ottoman rule prompted widespread philhellenism in Western European public opinion, dividing the European great powers. Particularly, Russia's Orthodox affinity with the Greeks clashed with her anti-revolutionary commitments, producing strategic confusion that precluded Russian intervention under Tsar Alexander I. This chapter first portrays Baron Stroganoff's abrasive diplomatic mission in Constantinople, then demonstrates how the tsar's

hesitation paralysed Russian diplomatic action, arguing that his ostensible restraint did not originate from deference to ideological principles of the European concert. In this chapter, both Russia's **strategic confusion** and Stroganoff's **dilution of deterrence** power through repeated use of ultimatums, gravely disrupted European diplomacy.

Despite the aversion of a continental conflict in 1821, the Greek struggle persisted throughout the 1820s. At the end of Alexander's reign, the Russian government extended an invitation to George Canning for forming an Anglo-Russian alliance over the Eastern Question. Chapter 3 examines this **transient, transactional alliance** formed under momentarily shared motives: Russia hoped to gain British acquiescence in her actions against the Porte, whilst Britain aimed at checking Russian expansionism and prevented a sole Russian intervention in the Greek Revolution. As this chapter documents, the signing of the 1826 St. Petersburg Protocol and the subsequent Treaty of London were both marred by deep division between Canning and Wellington, as well as mounting British suspicion against Russia, further straining the unlikely rapprochement. This chapter illustrates the fleeting nature of the utilitarian understanding between Britain and Russia, despite the ostensible diplomatic success and cooperation between them during the Battle of Navarino.

Following revolutionary upheaval in the 1830s and 1840s, European governments emerged with reinforced conservative principles and heightened vigilance of public opinion. In France, after two tumultuous decades, Louis Napoleon gained power to establish the short-lived Second Republic, until the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte proclaimed himself as emperor in a coup d'état in 1851. Though frequently condemned for instigating the Crimean War for the Holy Places dispute—a fundamentally immaterial controversy surrounding access to holy sites between the Latin and Orthodox churches in Jerusalem—the Quai d'Orsay, as Chapter 4 presents, adopted a passive and disorganised position during its escalation. Tsar Nicholas I's refusal to recognise Louis Napoleon as 'mon frère' strained Paris' relations with

St. Petersburg, whereas the Ottoman Porte's inconsistency around the two European courts further aggravated the initially trivial debate. Chapter 4 asserts that rather than proactively pursuing a calculated expansionist agenda to provoke a European war, Louis Napoleon succumbed to the pressure of defending national prestige, as he was constrained by the fragility of French domestic politics and his **susceptibility to public opinion**.

At the beginning of 1853, the Holy Places dispute remained unresolved, yet another alarming uprising emerged in Montenegro to disrupt European peace. Following Austria' intervention in Montenegro, the European courts simultaneously faced two crises in the Eastern Question; special diplomatic envoys were thus dispatched to Constantinople in the eye of a diplomatic storm. Under the guise of negotiating for both the Montenegro and Holy Places affair, Russia's Prince Menshikov embarked upon a mission bolstered by Russian military preparedness and designs of a naval alliance with Greece, during which he proposed the formal recognition of a Russian protectorate over the Ottoman Empire's Orthodox subjects. Britain's Colonel Hugh Rose, in intense fear of Menshikov's intentions, summoned the British fleet towards the Dardanelles, entirely unauthorised by London. The Malta fleet's prudence under Admiral Dundas prevented an eruption of hostilities, yet this blunder encouraged France to dispatch the Toulon fleet to demonstrate her position, to little diplomatic effect. Chapter 5 examines the diplomatic deadlock in the Ottoman capital, highlighting **the irreconcilability of expansionist demands with plausible peaceful resolutions**, and argues that Nicholas' Russia sought a *casus belli* through Menshikov's ill-fated mission to legitimise Russian expansionist ambitions. This chapter illustrates how European diplomatic efforts were doomed for failure, as Russia had little sincerity in compromise.

In April 1853, the British Ambassador Stratford Canning arrived in Constantinople, further complicating the diplomatic scene. He clarified the diplomatic impasse by differentiating the Holy Places dispute, which was nebulously discarded by the great powers,

from the more alarming additional Russian demands, which constituted Nicholas' quasi-sovereignty in the Sultan's empire. To the fury of St. Petersburg, Stratford coached the Porte into a partial acceptance of Russian demands while adopting delaying tactics. Prince Menshikov, however, was adamantly opposed to dividing the negotiations and issued an ultimatum for the Porte, threatening a complete rupture of diplomatic relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire with imminent hostilities. The repeated extension of this ultimatum severely **diluted Russia's deterrence power** against the Porte, even emboldening the Ottoman government. Beyond chronicling the diplomatic escalation in Constantinople, Chapter 6 scrutinises London's miscalculation of Russian ambitions, which led to the Aberdeen administration's prolonged denial towards recognising Russian aggression. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon ultimately yielded, browbeaten by internal dissent led by Russell and Palmerston, as well as the anti-Russian British public opinion. This chapter underscores **Britain's strategic confusion** not only through Whitehall's belated recognition of Russian expansionist designs, but also through the admiralty's reluctance in forming an alliance with France—it was rather through Cowley's indiscretion that France invited herself into a joint naval mobilisation, forcing Britain's hands. Meanwhile, alarmed by revolutionary implications of Russian expansion into the Balkans and concerned for her own supremacy in the German Confederation, Austria began distancing herself from Russia, in an act of perceived betrayal against Nicholas, who had assisted Franz Joseph in Hungary in 1849. Despite more deep-seated common interests, the Austro-Russian alliance took a transactional turn, when Nicholas expected a *quid quo pro* with Austrian military support, also emphasising the **fleeting nature of utilitarian alliances**.

This dissertation thus identifies five core disruptions that undermined European diplomacy in the Eastern Question:

1) **Strategic confusion** was exhibited by Russia in 1821 and Britain in both 1826 and 1853, where leaders vacillated between restraint and confrontation. In the case of Alexander I, such confusion was aggravated by conflicting priorities of religious obligations and conservative principles. As for the London cabinet, such strategic incoherence originated from ministerial strife, between George Canning and the Duke of Wellington in the first instance and between Aberdeen and Russell/Palmerston in advance of the Crimean War. The political infighting in Whitehall forged an oscillating British policy that effectively nullified the St. Petersburg Protocol in 1826 and permitted Russian advances towards the Principalities in 1853.
2) **Transient transactional alliances**, exemplified by the strained Anglo-Russian understanding in 1826 and the Austro-Russian alliance that unravelled in 1853—these momentary partnerships were fragile as they materialised for utilitarian motives, ultimately worsening mistrust between European great powers. In the momentary understanding of 1826, Russia outmanoeuvred Britain diplomatically—by obtaining British acquiescence to Russian ambitions vis-à-vis the Porte, Russia leveraged the accord as a bulwark against potential British animosity, foiling London's designs of containing Russian ambitions through the bipartite protocol. Although Nicholas had supported Franz Joseph in suppressing the 1849 Hungarian uprisings, the conservative alliance took a transactional turn when Nicholas expected Austrian military backing for Russian expansionism in 1853. A formidable Russian presence in the Danubian Principalities, however, would trigger revolution, endanger Austria's stability and her ascendancy in the Balkans. Nicholas' quest for an unlikely transaction thus dismantled the former cornerstone of conservative solidarity.

3) **Susceptibility to public opinion** severely constrained diplomatic efforts of Louis Napoleon in his early reign of the Second Empire, as the self-proclaimed emperor pandered to the nationalistic French public opinion, escalating the Holy Places dispute; the Aberdeen administration was initially against naval mobilisation in 1853, but succumbed to the increasingly anti-Russian Fleet Street, whose Russophobia partially stemmed from Liberal loathing of autocracy. Against the Prime Minister and Admiralty's peace-seeking intentions, Britain mobilised her fleet in a posture to appease the hawkish British public opinion.
4) **Dilution of deterrence** resulted from repetitive delays and non-execution of ultimatums, such as Baron Stroganoff in 1821 and Menshikov in 1821, European great powers' deterrence power against the Ottoman Porte was irrevocably undermined. Detecting the insincerity of Russian threats, the Porte was emboldened against future Russian menaces. Such dilution also originated from European great powers' growing reliance on gunboat diplomacy that preceded exhaustive negotiations. Coercive diplomacy against a weaker military opponent could be effective (Austria in Montenegro, 1853), but military mobilisations as a means of deterrence frequently alarmed other European courts more than they pressurised the Porte, as military presence was only be perceived as provocation (British and French naval movements; Russian occupation of the Principalities, 1853).
5) **Irreconcilability of expansionist hubris and peaceful proclamations** was a lethal disruption to European diplomacy, as all pursuits of peaceful avenues would be futile if a capable power, such Nicholas' Russia, possessed resolute expansionist ambitions. Regardless of the tsar's perhaps sincere pacific overtures, his manifest territorial ambitions—as his aims were tantamount to quasi-sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire—could not be accommodated through diplomatic means. Tireless

> diplomatic efforts from Britain and France were fruitless. Once a militarily prepared power became determined on territorial expansion, diplomacy could scarcely escape its demise.

Through these disruptions, the fragile diplomatic system of compromises under the Concert of Europe eventually collapsed at the eruption of the Crimean War. This dissertation demonstrates that all but the last disruption could severely jeopardise diplomacy towards its failure. Once met with resolute territorial objectives from a militarily capable power, however, diplomatic efforts could maximally delay, but not prevent, hostilities. Exemplified through Russia's determination on territorial expansion in 1853, tireless European diplomatic efforts were only futile in achieving peaceful settlements. Whilst diplomatic efforts could not convince a power like Nicholas' Russia to rescind warlike ambitions, they could still have potently undermined the tsar's resolution. The very factors that this dissertation identifies to hinder diplomatic efforts—strategic confusion, transient alliances, public opinion, and deterrence mechanisms—ought to have *disrupted* the tsar's decision-making calculus to stall hostilities. Despite a discouraging outlook, this study maintains cautious optimism for the enduring relevance of diplomacy, even in its most brittle state, fraught with myriad disruptions.

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Introduction: The Concert of Europe, from compromise to collapse

On the evening of 21 January 1853, Tsar Nicholas I invited Sir George Hamilton Seymour, the British ambassador to Russia, to a reception with the imperial family at the grand, neoclassical Mikhailovsky Palace in St. Petersburg. Whilst greeting guests upon entrance for the occasion, the tsar casually remarked to the ambassador, 'nous avons sur les bras un homme malade, gravement malade. Ce serait un grand malheur s'il devait nous échapper avant que les dispositions nécessaires soient prises.'[1] The tsar's unprecedented comment on the Ottoman Empire was unexpected for Seymour, who aptly responded upon brief reflection—'Mais c'est à l'homme généreux et fort de ménager l'homme malade et faible.'[2]

The tsar stared at the British ambassador momentarily, then politely smiled and excused himself, terminating the short exchange. Subsequently feted by historians as the Seymour Conversations, during which the tsar hinted at an Anglo-Russian partition of the imminently disintegrating Ottoman Empire, the informal dialogue was perceived as a fruitless Russian attempt at engaging with Britain over the Eastern Question—the complex yet persisting diplomatic struggle for Europe arising from the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire. Whilst the significance of the Nicholas-Seymour exchange has been largely exaggerated in existing historiography,[3] it epitomised the fractured nature of European diplomacy in the Eastern Question in the first half of the nineteenth century. Such dissonance between the two leading

[1] 'We have on our arms a sick, gravely sick man. It would be a great misfortune if he were to escape us before the necessary arrangements are made.' The National Archives (TNA), FO65/424, No. 13, Seymour to John Russell, secret and confidential, St. Petersburg 11/23 January, 1853, pp.90-97.
[2] 'But it is up to the generous and strong man to look after the sick and weak man.'
[3] Figes, Anderson, Lambert, and Schroeder all dedicated considerable attention to these conversations. M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 121; Andrew Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy Against Russia* (London: Routledge, 2021); Paul Schroeder, *Austria, Great Britain and the Crimean War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972); Orlando Figes, *Crimea : The Last Crusade* (London: Penguin Books, 2011).

powers—Russia and Britain—reverberated across the Concert of Europe, which was established at the 1814 Vienna Congress to safeguard the European status quo from conflict and revolution. Designed by Castlereagh and Metternich, the concert diplomacy system aimed to temper the varied ambitions of European sovereigns by compromise and consultation. Yet by mid-century, exemplified by the Anglo-Russian divergence over the Eastern Question, the concert had been fraying under myriad disruptions to European diplomacy, which had only temporarily deferred to the collective desire for stability in 1814 after the tumultuous Napoleonic wars.

The present study examines two defining crises of the Eastern Question in nineteenth-century European diplomacy: The Greek War of Independence (1821-1830) and the Crimean War (1853-1856). Both episodes elucidate the Concert's eventual subversion by strategic confusion, transient alliances, and expansionist hubris, culminating in the 1853 outbreak of the Crimean War, the sole continental conflict of the century. Drawing from archival sources from Britain, France, and Austria, as well as some published documents from Russia, this dissertation argues that the very compromises upon which the European concert system conditioned gradually surfaced to disrupt diplomacy, ultimately failing to constrain Russian expansionism within the limitations of European diplomatic efforts.

I. Structure overview

European great powers took varying degrees of interest in the Ottoman Empire: The 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji granted Russia territorial, economic, and religious privileges in the Ottoman Empire; Austria was connected to the Ottoman Empire by the longest frontier of all European countries; British and French interests were primarily driven by the Black Sea's commercial significance, but both remained invested in the Eastern Question with aims of holding the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against Russian dominion in the Near East. Chapter

1 contextualises this study by presenting a socio-economic overview of the European great powers and portraying their diverse strategic interests.

The first case study, the Greek War of Independence (1821–1830), marked one of the earliest diplomatic crises of the Eastern Question that witnessed prominent European involvement. The protracted struggle of the Greeks to overcome Ottoman rule prompted widespread philhellenism in Western European public opinion, dividing the European great powers. Particularly, Russia's Orthodox affinity with the Greeks clashed with her anti-revolutionary commitments, producing strategic confusion that precluded Russian intervention under Tsar Alexander I (Chapter 2). A transient Anglo-Russian understanding over the Eastern Question was subsequently achieved between Tsar Nicholas I and George Canning, but the strained alliance was outlived by British mistrust in Russian ambitions in the East (Chapter 3). Although the great powers avoided a pan-European war during the crisis, the Greek struggle only exposed the concert's division when material interests clashed with ideological principles.

After waves of political turmoil in the 1830s and 1840s, European governments emerged with reinforced conservative principles and augmented cognisance of public opinion, until the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853 signified the Concert of Europe's ultimate collapse. The pan-European conflict emerged from a trivial religious dispute over Greek and Latin churches in the Holy Places; Chapter 4 highlights how the self-proclaimed French Emperor escalated this religious controversy to pander to increasingly nationalist French public opinion, after having produced friction over his recognition as 'Napoleon III'. Chapter 5 and 6 demonstrate that despite the strategic indecision of the Aberdeen administration in Britain and Austria's perceived betrayal of Russia, Europe drifted towards the Crimean War due to one ruinous disruption: Russia's resolute expansionist ambition.

II. Literature review

Assessments of the Concert of Europe in existing literature praise the innovative system

for facilitating European diplomacy, but also question its structural limitations, leading to the framework's gradual decline. Focusing on the system's first two decades, Henry Kissinger commends the European concert's sustenance of a stable balance of power by accommodating the diverse interests of great powers.[4] Similarly, Wolf D. Gruner emphasises the ideological flexibility of the Vienna settlement that allowed for necessary compromises at the time of its establishment.[5] Historians C.M. Woodhouse and Charles Webster echoed these optimistic views, focusing on the normative cohesion and defining restraint of the system.[6]

Other scholars are less sanguine about the effectiveness of the European concert. Paul Schroeder challenges the notion that the system thrived on ideological and moral principles; instead, he argues that the unifying force stemmed from a realistic consensus among great powers to avoid unilateral action and prevent any recurrence of revolutionary upheaval, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic warfare.[7] Also emphasising the memory of revolutionary turmoil was Robert Jervis, who attributes the Concert system's decline to the gradual erosion of post-Napoleonic memory: as the acute threat of revolution faded, nationalist sentiments arose in its place. This rendered continued rigour within the concert system particularly challenging: as the framework was, according to Jervis, exceedingly reliant on the founding fathers, the second generation of statesmen and diplomats unshaped by the endeavour of 1814 struggled to comprehend its significance.[8] In a nuanced view, Edward Ingram attributes the instability of the Vienna system to the disconnect between the 'core' and 'periphery' of Europe, with the Concert of Europe, or even more selectively—the Concert great powers apart from Russia and Britain—and Ottoman Empire as part of the periphery. With overlapping expansionist interests

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[4] Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812–1822* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957).
[5] Wolf D. Gruner, 'The Ideological Flexibility of the Vienna Settlement,' *European Review of History* 24, no. 3 (2017): 359–378.
[6] C.M. Woodhouse, *The Greek War of Independence* (London: Hutchinson, 1952); Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, *1815-1822: Britain and the European alliance* (London: G. Bell, 1931).
[7] Paul W. Schroeder, "The 19th-Century International System," *World Politics* 39, no. 1 (1986): 1–26; *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
[8] Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,' *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167–214.

between the two most powerful countries, according to Ingram, the bellicism which core powers exhibited in the frontiers of Europe perpetuated instability back to the heart of Concert.[9] Mark Jarett was more critical; he argues that the Concert of Europe was never designed to be a permanent institution due to its utter lack of any enforcement mechanisms and its failure to account for the rising tide of liberalism, rendering its eventual dissolution.[10]

Underpinned by growing instability in the Ottoman Empire, the Eastern Question posed a profound and enduring challenge to European concert diplomacy since 1814. Charles Webster notes that the potential partition of Ottoman territory posed existential risks to the continent's balance of power. From the outset, however, the Ottoman Empire occupied an ambiguous position within the European system: despite its strategic and commercial importance, it was diplomatically peripheral to Europe and excluded from the concert system. Anderson expanded on Webster's analysis to highlight deficiencies that led to Ottoman deterioration: provincial governance, declining population, trade imbalance, and intellectual stagnation. Compared to a more modernised Europe in the Enlightenment era, the fragmented Ottoman Empire struggled to be incorporated into the existing European balance.[11] Edward Ingram's analysis of the 'core and periphery' of European diplomacy reinforces this point: while the Concert sought to stabilise the European diplomacy within its centre, it brought instability to its frontiers, such as the Eastern Question. Jarett even asserts that the exclusion of the Ottoman Empire was the 1814 settlement's greatest oversight. Therefore, as managing the Eastern Question was strictly outside of the scope of the concert, it was unfair to criticise the system's impotence thereof. Albrecht-Carrie adds that the Ottoman Empire's fragility only deepened the already irreconcilable interests of the European powers, making their unity

[9] Edward Ingram, 'Bellicism as Boomerang: The Eastern Question during the Vienna System', *The transformation of European politics, 1763-1848 : episode or model in modern history?* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 2002): 205-26.
[10] Mark Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 362.
[11] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*.

fundamentally unsustainable.[12]

Dedicated studies of concert diplomacy in the Eastern Question remain relatively scarce. Notable early contributions include J.A.R. Marriott's 1917 publication *The Eastern Question* and that of M.S. Anderson in 1966—both covered a wider timeframe than this dissertation, yet neither was based on archival research. More specialised studies have since emerged to focus on either a single case study or specific powers. For instance, Kissinger, Mazower, Woodhouse, and Dakin centre on the Greek case; Figes, Goldfrank, Baumgart, and Badem on the Crimean War; Schroeder, Bitis, Šedivý, Lambert, and Temperley focus on narrower national perspectives.[13]

Following Kissinger's 1957 publication and political career, the Concert of Europe also became canonised as a paradigmatic case in international relations theory, particularly in American scholarship, where maxims of the European concert became widely studied by policymakers. For instance, IR scholars of the realist school, including Kagan and Rendall, explain the founding principles of the Concert system through the security dilemma—as the costs of war were seen as higher, the values of cooperation increased, safeguarding European peace.[14] Gulick also adopts the balance-of-power theory to contextualise the 1814 settlement.[15] From a more liberalist perspective, Jervis argues that multilateral negotiation facilitated through the Concert system improved the transparency and reliability of diplomatic exchanges.[16] Schroeder also posits the Concert of Europe as an international order, where all

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[12] René Albrecht-Carrie, *A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 128.
[13] Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle for Independence, 1821–1833* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War, 1853-1856* (London: Arnold, 1999); Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Alexander Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question: Army, Government and Society, 1815–1833* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Harold William Vazeille Temperley, *England and the Near East : The Crimea* (London ; Longmans, Green, 1936); David M. Goldfrank, *The Origins of the Crimean War* (London: Longman, 1994).
[14] Korina Kagan, 'The Myth of the European Concert: The Realist-Institutionalist Debate and Great Power Behaviour in the Eastern Question, 1821-41.' *Security studies* 7, no. 2 (1997): 1–57; Matthew Rendall, 'Russia, the Concert of Europe, and the Greek War of Independence,' *Security Studies* 9, no. 4 (2000): 69–90.
[15] Edward Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power* (New York, 1967).
[16] Robert Jervis, 'Security Regimes,' in Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell

powers used moderation to maintain the international system, as Ingram claims that Britain and Russia's respective hegemony stabilised the Concert of Europe.[17]

The historiography of the Greek struggle for independence

The Greek War of Independence marked the first major rupture in the European concert system. J.A.R Marriott first identified the conflict as a turning point in the Eastern Question, introducing the element of nationality—shared race, language, creed, history—into the consideration of concert diplomacy.[18] Less than a decade after the Vienna Congress, the European concert was ill-prepared for such an acute threat to the 1815 status quo to emerge so soon. Apart from fundamentally changing the European perception of the Eastern Question, the Greek struggle exposed Ottoman vulnerability and challenged the 1815 order. Anderson argued that through the 1821 uprising, it became manifest to European powers that the crumbling Ottoman Empire was a source of instability that could jeopardise all of Europe. Ingram presents a similar view: beyond the celebrated aversion of a major power conflict in the Greek struggle, violence was unleashed instead in the peripheries of Europe, with the Ottoman Empire 'paying the price for European stability.'[19] In more recent scholarship, Mark Mazower defines the Greek cause as a watershed moment, as the taboo against intervention was irrevocably broken. European public opinion—particularly in Britain and France, fuelled the rapidly spreading philhellenism.[20] Thus, the Greek Revolution became a moral struggle in which Europe stood firmly on the Greek side; the cause of Greece became the cause of Europe. Ideological considerations aside, Stivachtis highlights the strategic importance of the cause:

University Press, 1983; Robert Jervis, "From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation," *World Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (1985).

[17] Schroeder, 'The 19th-Century International System'; Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?' *American Historical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 2 (1992); Ingram, 'Bellicism as Boomerang'.

[18] J.A.R. Marriott, *The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 147.

[19] Ingram, 'Bellicism as Boomerang', 215-6.

[20] Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).

European powers saw the Greek revolt as the precursor to a Russo-Turkish war, which would inevitably enhance Russian influence in the area. Therefore, the suppression of the Greek uprising and the preservation of the Ottoman Empire became of immediate interest to the adversaries of Russia.[21]

At the core of European diplomacy surrounding the Greek Revolution was Russia, who held strong historical, religious ties to the Greek population. The eventual restraint of Tsar Alexander I from military intervention on behalf of the Greeks was widely examined in existing literature. In his 1973 publication, Douglas Dakin identifies the deciding factors that precluded Russian military intervention despite widespread philhellenism: pressure from Capodistrias, the joint Russian Foreign Minister and advocate for war, and Alexander's insistence upon obtaining allied consent based on the Concert framework.[22] More realistically, Vinogradov attributes Alexander's restraint to Russia's financial difficulties, the unpreparedness of the Russian Army after 1812, and division among the Russian nobility.[23] In 1986, Paul Schroder interpreted Russian non-intervention as a direct outcome of having Alexander I on the throne in 1822, as he was an 'exceptional case'.[24] Matthew Rendall, writing in 2000, finds Alexander's restraint to be not a result of deference to multilateral norms, but of a deeply personal commitment to preserve the European status quo and prevent another European war. Rendall also highlights that Alexander feared alienating other allies more than Ottoman resistance.[25] Russia's ambiguous involvement in the early stages of the Greek uprising added complexity to St Petersburg's position. Alexander Bitis draws attention to Russian complicity in Ypsilantis' revolt, suggesting that the Russian army must have had prior knowledge of its

[21] Konstantinos Stivachtis, 'The Greek War of Independence and the Eastern Question,' *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 23, no. 2 (2021): 171–185.
[22] Dakin, *Greek Struggle*, 93-5.
[23] V. N. Vinogradov, 'George Canning, Russia and the Emancipation of Greece.' *Balkan studies* 22 (1981): 3–33.
[24] Schroeder, 'The 19th-Century International System'.
[25] Rendall, 'Russia and the Concert of Europe', 69–90.

planning.[26] Nonetheless, Alexander's ultimate refusal to endorse Ypsilantis was grounded on a self-imposed sense of moral duty and loyalty to legitimacy, which Dialla links to the humanist principles of the Holy Alliance.[27] The revolutionaries' attempt to influence Russian policy by appealing to Christian solidarity, according to Dialla, highlighted the ideological dimension of the Greek cause.

British neutrality in the Greek uprising revealed Britain's contradictory strategic considerations between material interests, domestic politics, and public opinion. Lord Castlereagh, as Anderson and Dakin both observe, was strictly non-interventional and maintained a policy of aversion to foreign entanglements. Following Castlereagh's suicide, his successor George Canning, rather viewed the Ottoman Empire as the barrier to the advance of Russian power but refrained from openly challenging Russia. In Dakin's view, Canning's staunch policy of British neutrality originated from his suspicion for both Russian ambitions and French opportunism, which engendered resentment from both the Greeks and Ottomans. Economic considerations were also crucial for Britain. In a 1973 article, Glynn Barratt argues that Britain's neutrality was guided by her trade balance calculus: British trade with Russia was far more vital than that with the Ottoman Empire, and imports of raw materials were immeasurably greater. Had war erupted between Britain and Russia during the 1820s, Barratt believed that it would have imposed severe economic hardship on Britain.[28] MacDougall elucidates this Anglo-Russian maritime partnership, which flourished during the era of Peter the Great: Russia was uniquely positioned to supply Britain's 'unquenchable thirst for naval stores', thus securing the strategic necessity for both powers to maintain the commercial alliance.[29] Stivachtis corroborated with this view, underscoring the significance of a Greek loan

[26] Bitis, *Russia and Eastern Question*, 204-8.
[27] Ada Dialla, 'The Congress of Vienna, the Russian Empire, and the Greek Revolution: Rethinking Legitimacy.' *Journal of modern Greek studies* 39, no. 1 (2021): 27–47.
[28] Glynn R. Barratt, 'Notice Sur l'insurrection Des Grecs Contre l'empire Ottoman: A Russian View of the Greek, War of Independence.' *Balkan studies* 14, no. 1 (1973): 47–115.
[29] Philip MacDougall, *The Great Anglo-Russian Naval Alliance of the Eighteenth Century and Beyond* (Rochester,

that only an independent Greek state could repay, aligning with the overwhelmingly pro-Greek public opinion.[30] Mark Mazower's recent publication advances the impact of British public opinion, which was intensified by the death of Lord Byron in Greece. People chose to volunteer for the lustre of heroism, and their ideals of Greece were more based on Greek classics than the revolutionary Greece in its 1821 state. Mazower interprets the pan-continental philhellenic craze as the first modern case of international humanitarian intervention, where widespread sympathy for the Greeks transcended national frontiers.

The European Concert system, according to Schroeder, did very little to safeguard peace during the Greek Revolution.[31] Mark Jarrett attributes the avoidance of war to a combination of continental and national factors: Alexander's solicitude for the alliance framework and the principle of monarchical legitimacy, the diplomatic finesse of Metternich and Castlereagh, continuing fears of a revolutionary conflagration among the great powers, and cabinet changes in France. While Jarrett agrees with Schroeder that the ideological framework from the concert system was not crucial to the maintenance of peace, it was in the strategic interests of Austria and Britain to prevent conflict.[32] More abstractly, Mazower claims that it was the deliberate ambiguity in allied diplomacy during the early phase of the Greek Revolution that helped avert hostilities. In German historiography, the Prussian field marshal Helmuth von Moltke considers the delay of Russo-Ottoman hostilities until 1828 a result of European priority for suppressing revolution, Britain's reluctance, and the dire financial situation of all countries in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars.[33]

Regarding the brief Anglo-Russian alliance around 1826, according to John Clarke, George Canning deemed cordiality to Russia as the best means to mitigate risk, and that the St.

NY: Boydell Press, 2022), 193-4.
[30] Stivachtis, 'The Greek War of Independence', 175-80.
[31] Paul Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy at Its Zenith, 1820-1823* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962).
[32] Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna*.
[33] Helmuth von Moltke, *Der russisch-türkische feldzug in der europäischen Türkei 1828 und 1829 dargestellt im jahre 1845 durch freiherrn von Moltke ...* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1877), 2-5.

Petersburg Protocol was a 'painless' way to contain Russian ambitions. Clarke is critical towards the inconsistencies of British foreign policy between Canning and the Duke of Wellington, commenting that if British influence survived in the East Mediterranean, it did so 'despite government policy'.[34] Smiley, similarly, asserts that out of fear of a continental war from further Russo-Ottoman tensions, London sought to constrain Russia through joining the tsar in his pursuits.[35] Marriott considers the Treaty of London of 1827 as the height of Canning's accomplishments during the Eastern Question; Anderson rejects this view by arguing that the diplomatic victories between 1826 and 1827 were largely illusory. Wellington only conceded to the Anglo-Russian understanding out of fear that Russian aggression against the Ottoman Empire was imminent, and the nebulous treaty only paved the way for the Battle of Navarino later in the same year.

Navarino triggered much debate in the existing historiography on the battle's legality. Woodhouse, echoing Anderson, found the 1827 treaty stipulations of circular logic—the hostilities constituted a hostile naval blockade despite Britain's denial;[36] C.W. Crawley maintains that the insistence on hostilities being 'pacific' allowed the British and Russians to avoid further escalation against the Ottomans. Furthermore, Russia sensed British reluctance in declaring war, thus avoided clarifying the nature of allied military actions.[37] Ingram is more critical of European aggression, claiming that the hostilities at Navarino would undoubtedly be categorised as war in Europe; but in the continent's periphery, it was 'commonplace adjustment'.[38] When hostilities eventually escalated into the 1828 Russo-Turkish War, Bitis deems that it corresponded to Russia's political objective of having a 'weak neighbour' in the

[34] John C. Clarke, *British Diplomacy and Foreign Policy 1782-1865 : The National Interest* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 174.
[35] Will Smiley, 'War without War: The Battle of Navarino, the Ottoman Empire, and the Pacific Blockade', *Journal of the history of International Law* 18 (2016): 42–69.
[36] C.M. Woodhouse, Battle of Navarino 1965 (n. 54), 68.
[37] C. W. Crawley, 'Anglo-Russian Relations 1815-40.' *The Cambridge historical journal* 3, no. 1 (1929): 48.
[38] Ingram, 'Bellicism as Boomerang', 215.

Ottoman Empire. What triggered the outbreak in 1828, according to Moltke, was the European realisation that the Greeks might ultimately prevail in their cause without European support, thus Russia under the new Tsar Nicholas I 'offered a timely hand' to establish her lasting influence and political supremacy in the East. Although the legality of the war was decided in Russia's favour, Moltke highlights the unresolved debate centring on the compatibility of the Kuchuk Kainardji and Bucharest treaties with the principles of international law.[39]

Crimean War historiography

The diplomatic preliminaries of the Crimean War have been a contested subject of enduring interest in historiography. Early scholarship described the war as accidental and fought for nebulous reasons;[40] more recent research demonstrates the underlying forces that preceded the materialisation of hostilities—the only pan-continental European conflict in the nineteenth century originated from a combination of disruptions to diplomacy; modern historiography presents the complex picture comprising imperial ambitions, unpredictable personalities, public opinion, and domestic politics.

A classic view in historiography castigates Louis Napoleon for instigating the Crimean War through his quest for national prestige, a view first presented by A.W. Kinglake barely a decade after the war's end; this was subsequently supported in a more balanced portrayal by Barbara Jelavich, who argued that the French emperor harboured deeper political motives in the Near East, and that Nicholas I only proposed the partition of the Ottoman Empire to pre-empt French ambition.[41] Winfried Baumgart also denounces Louis Napoleon as leaning on a

[39] Moltke, *Der russisch-türkische feldzug*, 6-7.
[40] On the 'uselessness' and unclear causes of the Crimean War, see Marriott, *Eastern Question*; Bernadotte E. Schmitt, 'The Diplomatic Preliminaries of the Crimean War.' *The American historical review* 25, no. 1 (1919): 36–67; Vernon J. Puryear, 'New Light on the Origins of the Crimean War.' *The Journal of modern history* 3, no. 2 (1931): 219–234.
[41] Alexander William Kinglake, *The Invasion of the Crimea : Its Origin and an Account of Its Progress down to the Death of Lord Raglan* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1863).

trivial religious battle, his grounds in which were flimsy, to find fault in Europe.[42] French historiography mildly shifted the blame away from Louis Napoleon, with Bapst highlighting Nicholas' acrimony against the former's coup d'etat that escalated tensions between France and Russia.[43] Although he criticises Louis Napoleon's sensitivity to honour and prestige, Echard contends that French involvement in the Holy Places dispute was an ill-conceived undertaking of the Tuileries court to secure domestic political support, which contained little deeper geopolitical ambition.[44] Karl Marx and Vernon Puryear also mitigate sole criticism for Louis Napoleon, explaining the emperor's hubris through domestic and economic considerations.[45] Temperley's 1936 publication, based on British, Austrian, French, and Dutch archives, argues against attributing the responsibility of the Crimean War to a single individual by underscoring the fragility of the Ottoman Empire.[46] Following Temperley, literature on the war became less fixated upon placing the blame upon personalities.

Tsar Nicholas I's misjudgement of the political reality in Europe is another widely accepted argument for the outbreak of hostilities. Writing from the 1930s, both historians Puryear and Henderson emphasise Nicholas' erroneous interpretation of the Seymour conversations, which was aggravated by the tsar's inadequate understanding of constraints posed by Britain's parliamentary system. Similarly, Andrew Lambert admits that Russia had no intention of dismantling the Ottoman Empire; rather, Nicholas underestimated both the resilience of the Ottoman government and the prompt alignment of Britain and France, as he relied over much on Austria's support.[47] While M.S. Anderson offers a more balanced

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[42] Baumgart, *The Crimean War*.
[43] Edmond Bapst, *Les origines de la Guerre de Crimée : la France et la Russie de 1848 à 1854* (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1912).
[44] William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).
[45] Karl Marx, *The Eastern Question, a Reprint of Letters Written 1853-1856 Dealing with the Events of the Crimean War* (England: S. Sonnenschein & co., 1897); Vernon John Puryear, *England, Russia and the Straits Question, 1844-1856* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931).
[46] Temperley, *England and the Near East*.
[47] Lambert, *The Crimean War.*

portrayal of the diplomatic preliminaries based on published material, his account falls within the line of critique of Nicholas' overestimation of diplomatic avenues. Echoing Puryear and Henderson, Anderson assesses Nicholas' misplaced emphasis on the Seymour conversations and neglect of the rising Russophobia in Britain to be costly oversights. Whilst Menshikov was not directly or solely responsible, his abrasive diplomacy drew Britain and France into the conflict.[48] Ingram advances this view by asserting that Britain was more willing than Russia to tolerate fluctuating levels of disorder in the Ottoman Empire, and Nicholas was mistaken to neglect the British desire to ignore developments to which the tsar wished to respond.[49]

Even historians who hold more sympathetic views of Russia share a consensus on Nicholas' miscalculation. In congruence with the leading view, John Shelton Curtiss—albeit revisionist and insufficiently critical of Russian ambitions—emphasises that Nicholas believed he had Britain's tacit approval to act in the Near East.[50] E.V. Tarle, a Soviet historian whose work is indisputably nationalist, also acknowledges that Nicholas fundamentally misjudged British and French forbearance, although Tarle criticises the maritime powers for exploiting the Holy Places dispute as a pretext for curbing Russian ascendency.[51]

On the other hand, John Clarke, writing towards the end of the Cold War, contends that Nicholas lacked a clear grand strategy; the tsar was merely pragmatic and opportunistic, seizing open opportunities to assert Russian influence.[52] This interpretation was later challenged by Russian scholar Riasanovsky in 2005, who emphasised the Christian and international order that Nicholas was determined to uphold, and that Russia had the most bureaucratised government during the time and experienced the least oscillations in decision making.[53] Such

[48] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*.
[49] Ingram, 'Bellicism as Boomerang', 222.
[50] John Shelton Curtiss, *Russia's Crimean War* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1979), 168.
[51] Evgeniĭ Viktorovich Tarle, *Krymskai͡a voĭna* (Moscow: Izd. AN SSSR, , 1941).
[52] Clarke, *British diplomacy*.
[53] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

analysis of ostensible Russian consistency was critiqued by Alexander Bitis as a product of autocratic governance, which inevitably entailed a lack of deliberation in the St. Petersburg court. Drawing from Russian sources and focusing on military considerations, Bitis criticises Nicholas's propensity to disregard European diplomatic developments of the 1830s and 1840s, as if the 1841 Straits Convention had not already internationalised the Eastern Question. According to Bitis, Nicholas' hubris led to the outbreak of the Crimean War—the Tsar gave the illusion that he lived in Russia's grandiosity from Catherine the Great's age, where Russia was free to set the agenda for schemes again the Porte. Furthermore, Bitis finds Nicholas' conviction that Britain or Austria would support Russia in a war against the Ottoman Empire 'ridiculously anachronistic'. Nicholas never sought war, but simply did not know how to seek a non-belligerent solution.[54]

Another predominant view that elucidates the outbreak of hostilities focuses on the British cabinet, whose indecisive position and susceptibility to public opinion under Lord Aberdeen's unconvincing leadership led to the 'drift' towards war, as Lord Clarendon famously described. Echoing Brian Gooch's 1917 publication, in 1968, John Conacher depicts Lord Aberdeen as a peace-leaning statesman who was incapable of commanding his loose coalition government, which was inclined towards escalation, in alignment with John Russell and Lord Palmerston. Beyond ministerial strife, the Prime Minister was more concerned about becoming 'the laughing-stock of Europe', which underscores the vulnerability of the government to an increasingly assertive public opinion.[55] Clarke is even harsher against the Aberdeen administration, claiming that it was 'the best example of what not to do in an international crisis.'[56] Kingsley Martin, Gerald Clayton, and David Wetzel also share the criticism against

[54] Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question*.
[55] George Peabody Gooch, and John Howard Bertram Masterman. *A Century of British Foreign Policy [2 Essays]* (Westm, 1917); J. B Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855: A Study in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Party Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968).
[56] Clarke, *British Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*, 188.

ineffective British diplomacy and hawkish public opinion, which Anderson coins as 'weakness in Downing Street and emotion in Fleet Street'.[57]

C.W. Crawley leads historians including N.A.M. Rodger and John Daly in emphasising the naval strength of Britain instead. In Crawley's analysis of comparative military capabilities among the great powers, the Royal navy was superior to its Russian counterpart both in fighting efficiency and budget; this comfortable military advantage that Britain enjoyed, according to Crawley, rendered British Russophobia ungrounded.[58] John Daly presents a comparable view, noting Russia's insufficient naval capacity to safeguard trade routes in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. He also draws attention to the Russian fleet's technological backwardness, although Britain remained wary of Russia's accelerating military development, despite her navy's relative weakness.[59] Most recently, N.A.M. Rodger's account of the Royal Navy challenges the assessments of Crawley and Daly—based on the papers of James Graham, the First Naval Lord, Rodger argues that Britain had neither the desire, the means, nor the plan for a major campaign against Russia. The most senior naval lords were consumed in routine administrative affairs in early 1853, creating strategic unclarity; the limited budget that the Admiralty was allowed, Graham dedicated to preparing a new fleet of steam battleships in a potential war against France.[60]

The historiographical debate surrounding Stratford Canning's culpability in the breakdown of diplomatic negotiations remains diverse. British historians Harold Temperley and A.J.P. Taylor contend that London's hesitation was more lethal than Stratford's assertiveness to preserving peace. Steven Richmond advances this view by highlighting the

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[57] Kingsley Martin, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston: A Study of Public Opinion in England before the Crimean War* (London: Allen & Unwin), 1924; Gerald David Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question : Missolonghi to Gallipoli* (London: University of London Press, 1971); David Wetzel, *The Crimean War : A Diplomatic History* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1985).
[58] Crawley, *Anglo-Russian Relations*, 47–73.
[59] John C. K. Daly, *Russian Seapower and the "Eastern Question", 1827-41* (London: Macmillan,1991).
[60] N. A. M, Rodger, *The Price of Victory : A Naval History of Britain, 1815-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2024), 43.

strained relationship and mutual mistrust between Stratford and Aberdeen as more detrimental to diplomatic cohesion. In contrast, scholars such as Lane-Poole and Jonathan Parry underscore Stratford's deep engagement with Ottoman reform initiatives, suggesting his pro-Ottoman tendencies.[61] While Anderson places responsibility on Stratford for encouraging the Porte's intransigence, both Schroeder and Goldfrank vindicate Stratford by asserting that the ambassador did not seek to defeat Menshikov, but rather sought a settlement that would accommodate Russian concerns.[62] In Ingram's generally positive portrayal of the British ambassador, he argues that even though the ambassador believed that stability for Europe presupposed that for the Ottoman Empire, Stratford endeavoured to introduce via reforms a European style army, stronger central government, an effective taxation system, as well as the rule of law in the Sultan's Empire; these attempts at rejuvenation only backfired and caused further instability.[63]

Other historians focused on more specific developments to explain the outbreak of hostilities. Taki presents a nuanced view by highlighting Russia's occupation of the Principalities as the defining factor: the failed coercive bargaining strategy due to Nicholas' unrealistic expectations led to hostilities. Furthermore, Taki draws historical parallels to a similar failed strategy under Alexander I in 1806, arguing that the Ottoman Empire had grown accustomed to temporary territorial losses in Moldavia and Wallachia, thus the Russian occupation only provided the Ottomans with a *casus belli*.[64] Another accepted argument in English historiography was that the war was fought out of concern for the Ottoman Empire's

[61] Steven Richmond, *The Voice of England in the East : Stratford Canning and Diplomacy with the Ottoman Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe : From His Memoirs and Private and Official Papers* (London: Longmans, Green, 1888); Jonathan Philip Parry, *Promised Lands : The British and the Ottoman Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).
[62] Goldfrank, Origins; Paul W. Schroeder, *Austria, Great Britain, and the Crimean War : The Destruction of the European Concert* (Ithaca ; Cornell University Press, 1972).
[63] Ingram, 'Bellicism as Boomerang', 205.
[64] Victor Taki, 'Russian Occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1806–1812.' In *Russia on the Danube* (Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press, 2022): 39-51.

preservation and integrity. Ann Pottinger Saab was the first western revisionist to offer a pro-Ottoman account of the war. Drawing from Ottoman sources, Saab argues that the rapidly failing condition of the Ottoman Empire in the 1850s justified concerns for its sovereignty and survival.[65]

In his meticulously researched account focusing on Austria and the Crimean War, Schroeder assigns particular significance to the Montenegro affair of January 1853, viewing it as a more dangerous trigger than the Holy Places dispute, which has been underestimated by historiography. Although Schroeder's treatment of underlying sources of Austro-Russian friction in the Balkans is disproportionally thin, he argues that this diplomatic episode emboldened Russia, but dismisses the argument that Nicholas deliberately sought war. In his overall balanced account, Schroeder speculates that alternative diplomatic choices—such as appointing a more skilled negotiator than Menshikov, presenting compromise proposals earlier than the end of May, or averting the administrative overhaul in Ottoman leadership—might have prevented war.[66]

Orlando Figes also refrains from specifying a single actor for instigating the war. Although Figes' account provided few fresh insights due to limited original research, his portrayal of events from 1852 to 1853 is cohesive and comprehensive. Under the convenient guise of protecting Christian minorities, according to Figes, all great powers sought to advance their own agendas. For Russia, the weak neighbour policy was flexible enough that it suited the ambitions of the Russian nationalists as well as those who wanted to avoid a European war, but the tsar's greatest error was relying on British support, even though Figes is overly focused on the Seymour conversations to substantiate this point. Furthermore, his portrayal of Louis

[65] Ann Pottinger Saab, *The Origins of the Crimean Alliance* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977).
[66] Schroeder, *Austria and the Crimean War.*

Napoleon's hubris is somewhat exaggerated, and his accusations against French national ambitions in the Holy Places dispute are thinly supported.[67]

Regarding the deterioration of Austro-Russian relations, most historians attribute the rupture to Tsar Nicholas I's excessive confidence on Austrian loyalty—few scrutinised the Austrian perspective. Even Schroeder fails to do so convincingly, as his account limits to Austria's growing ostensible disconcertion with Russia starting from March 1853. Within German historiography, Kurt Borries offers a valuable nuanced perspective by situating the Austro-Russian estrangement within the broader context of Austro-Prussian rivalry in the German Confederation, as well as competing strategic interests in the Balkans that long preceded the diplomatic preliminaries of the Crimean War.[68]

To address the gap in Ottoman historiography, Candan Badem produced a unique publication in 2010 based on Ottoman archival material. Contributing a few key letters from the Ottoman archives from early May 1853, Badem emphasises that the Ottoman government was emboldened by Lord Clarendon's—rather than Stratford's—assurances of British support; simultaneous reports of adverse French and neutral Prussian attitudes towards Russia further encouraged the Porte to reject Russian terms. Ottoman records to a certain extent vindicate Menshikov's culpability for instigating hostilities, as the Russian ambassador, according to Badem, even exhibited last-minute sincerity for peace through personal channels, but the Ottoman resolution towards conflict was unshakeable.[69]

III. Sources and limitations

Due to the Ottoman Empire's peripheral position in 1814, the crises in Greece and the Crimea within the Eastern Question rest on the edges of the Concert of Europe's remit. The great powers

[67] Figes, *Crimea*.
[68] Kurt Borries, *Preussen im Krimkrieg (1853-1856)* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1930).
[69] Badem, *Ottoman Crimean War*, 77-80.

experienced a variety of other disruptions to European stability throughout the first half of the century, including the revolution in Naples of 1820, the Liberal Triennium in Spain, the Liberal Wars in Portugal, revolutions in France and Belgium in 1830, and the First Schleswig-Holstein War. Prioritising the Eastern Question, this thesis excludes the discussion of these crises due to the limited concert intervention therein: these episodes of internal political turmoil did not involve the direct participation of more than one European great power. Therefore, they do not fully represent the complex diplomatic dynamic at play in the European concert system, which centred on safeguarding continental, not national, stability. Within the Eastern Question, the two Egyptian-Ottoman crises between 1831-41 were emblematic of the diplomatic conundrum engendered by the Ottoman Empire's feebleness. In the first Egyptian-Ottoman war of 1831-3, Britain was reticent to interfere due to her prioritisation of the events in Belgium, Netherlands, and in Portugal. Following the second crisis in 1841, the passage of the Straits Convention was a diplomatic victory for London, as the Convention nullified the 1833 Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, which had served as a pretext for Russian dominion in the Straits. The omission of these cases was primarily caused by the constraint of space in the dissertation and logistical difficulties of conducting archival research in Ottoman Turkish, as an adequate examination of the two Mohammed Ali crises would necessitate more substantial understanding of the Ottoman perspective.

Distinct from existing literature on the Concert of Europe, this dissertation does not centre on the Vienna Congress of 1814: despite its symbolic significance, the Vienna Congress, along with its glamour and ideological innovation, did not represent the long-standing challenges that the European concert mechanism persistently faced during the following decades. Therefore, this thesis scrutinises the Concert of Europe in the form of its diplomatic mechanisms, rather than as a normative and ideological framework. Fundamentally, the political principle of the 'balance of power' since the Peace of Utrecht was an inadequate guarantee of European peace due to European great powers' varied interpretation of such a balance and their profound mistrust amongst one another. Such

discourse was primarily rhetorical even in 1814, for instance, both the Austrian King Francis I and Prussian King Frederick William III expressed the desire to uphold a visionary 'juste équilibre de puissances et voulant en mêmes termes de concert avec le Royaume Uni et la Russie', where the emergence of a hegemonic power could be prevented ;[70] by mid-century, however, not only had the definition of this balance shifted, its frequence of use in diplomatic correspondence had also accordingly diminished. By the outbreak of the Crimean War, the European balance of power had already been broken per its 1814 definition, as the concept was solely alluded to in the context of its potential rupture, nearly a euphemism for dreaded Russian ambitions over the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the dispatches between Quai d'Orsay's Lhuys and La Valette, where the two French statesmen feared 'la possibilité de l'équilibre rompue du monde par les actes funestes par la Russie contre la Turquie.'[71]

The research agenda of this study was proposed in late 2021, months before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The war precluded archival research in Russia for the entirety of this dissertation's completion, despite ongoing Russian-language training aimed at facilitating this purpose. To address the crucial gap, this dissertation fully utilised the *Vneshn͡iai͡a politika Rossii* series (which ends in 1833) for the Greek cause, the *Zaionchkovskii* collection for the Crimean War, and published Nesselrode papers for both cases.

Due to the lack of Russian archival material, use of British, French, and Austrian archival sources was maximised. In Britain, the British Library's Western Manuscripts collection is invaluable for insights into the Aberdeen administration; not all materials collected there could be incorporated in this study due to the constraint of space. Similarly, material from the Clarendon Papers was only given limited attention in the final chapters of this dissertation. The National Archives is useful for both the Greek struggle and the Crimean War; The

[70] The National Archives, FO 95/522/3, Treaty Papers from July-December 1814, p120-54.
[71] Quai d'Orsay 166PO/C/228, Drouyn de Lhuys to La Valette, 2 February, 1853, p89.

University of Southampton digitised some correspondence of Wellington, Canning, and Palmerston, but the collection is limited and more useful only for the 1826 period. In France, the main site of the Quai d'Orsay's diplomatic archives at La Courneuve near Paris is immensely challenging to use, due to the relevant documents' exclusive availability in microfilm and outdated microfilm machines. The site in Nantes, surprisingly, holds much more legible (and underexamined) microfilms, constituting the majority of French archival documents used in this study. In Austria, the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv in Vienna offered the most useful insights on the Congress Era, Metternich, and Austro-Russian relations towards 1853. Printed Ottoman archival sources were also cited in this dissertation from Ilicak's 2021 compilation of Ottoman archival records up to 1826, which was pertinent to the first two chapters.[72]

The selection of case studies created a chronological gap in this dissertation: detailed examination of socioeconomic shifts between the 1820s and 1830s, implications of 1848, and other European diplomatic crises during this period—despite their significance, all deferred to diplomatic developments that immediately preceded the Greek War of Independence and the Crimean War. This gap also renders the portrayals of Castlereagh, Wellington, and Metternich relatively limited; the only personalities of continuity throughout the dissertation are Tsar Nicholas I and Karl Nesselrode.

IV. Motivation for research

Inspired by the monograph of Henry Kissinger, this dissertation investigates the decline of the 1814 system through a multitude of disruptions to European diplomacy between the Napoleonic Wars and the Crimean War. The Concert of Europe—constructed upon shared ideological norms and mutual compromises—was initially buttressed by fresh memories of the

[72] H. Şükrü Ilıcak, *'Those Infidel Greeks' : The Greek War of Independence through Ottoman Archival Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

tumultuous Napoleonic period and a collective fear of revolutionary upheaval. As the unifying threat receded, great powers' divergent strategic interests, temporarily masked by diplomatic concessions, began to resurface, eroding the continent's fragile stability towards the concert's collapse.

This dissertation examines the extent to which great powers' clashing materials interests—frequently aggravated by internal political divisions—jeopardised European diplomacy. This study addresses crucial research questions: To what degree did strategic ambiguity undermine diplomatic efforts? Within the framework of the Concert of Europe, did shifting alliances facilitate or debilitate diplomatic efforts? Furthermore, along with the emergence of the press, how did the growing influence of public opinion reshape European diplomacy by mid-century? Ultimately, was the disintegration of the Concert of Europe and the eruption of the Crimean War the result of flawed diplomatic conduct, or was it an inevitable eventuality from expansionist ambitions among the great powers? Through these lenses, this study seeks to contribute a refreshed and comprehensive perspective towards the historiographical debate, supported by extensive archival material drawn from the key European great powers of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 1

Overview of the Great Powers: from the Congress of Vienna to the Crimean War

Between the Congress of Vienna of 1814 and the Crimean War of 1853, significant shifts moulded the dynamics of European diplomacy. From the early stage of the Concert of Europe to the upheavals of the 1848 revolutions, the Congress of Vienna system depended upon compromises from all great powers to safeguard enduring peace in Europe in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. The common fear of another revolutionary force akin to Napoleon united all European powers, but clashing strategic interests and ideological principles would persistently disrupt the diplomatic structure that the victors of 1814 had so painstakingly fought for.

After 1814, Britain and Russia emerged as leading European powers in the continent, with Britain exerting influence in Western Europe and Russia in the East. Historians have argued that the dominance of Britain and Russia made their priorities the deciding factor for European politics: if Britain and Russia were aligned, matters were settled. Tsar Nicholas I certainly also held such conviction on the vitality of an Anglo-Russian alignment. This desired alliance was nonetheless unlikely due to overpowering clashes between British and Russia interests. Apart from irreconcilable differences between British and Russian ambitions towards the Near East, various other hotspots of contention bruised great power relations in the decades after 1814: Anglo-French antagonism over Spain and the Mediterranean, Austro-French contest over Italy, Austro-Prussian rivalry in the German Confederation, and Austro-Russian tensions in the Balkans. Graver challenges to the status quo nonetheless arose from within the borders of these powers themselves. As Paul Schroeder observed, revolutionary ideologies were more disruptive to peace than international struggles. But conservative attempts to combat

these currents were largely ineffective. Notably, a number of crises demanded the attention and intervention of the Congress system, including the Greek War of Independence of 1821. Surges in revolutionary movements thus defined the mediator role of the Concert system, enhancing its prestige as an instrument to shape great powers' courses of action in favour of preserving European stability.[1]

The Concert of Europe entered its most efficient and powerful phase, 'The Congress Era', in the 1820s. Even then, fundamental compromises at the time of the Concert's establishment were exposed to weaken the diplomatic system. At its inception, Castlereagh proposed a system of periodical réunions convening major statesmen and sovereigns, and Metternich fleshed out the vision into its developed form, describing the task as 'un vrai faisceau moral' de ces quelques hommes qui détenaient entre leurs mains la totalité du pouvoir en Europe.' Later referred to as the 'Metternich System', the European Concert reconvened in Troppau in November 1820, where the Holy Alliance powers—including Austria, Russia, and Prussia—proclaimed their adherence to the principle of counter-revolutionary intervention. This principle exposed an early divergence among the great powers and foreshadowed subsequent tensions: while the Holy Alliance powers considered themselves indisputably entitled to intervening in governments overthrown by revolution. France and Britain protested the ensuing infringement on sovereignty.[2] British and French concerns materialised in January 1821 when the Congress of Laibach agreed to abolish the Neapolitan constitution and authorised the Austrian intervention in Sicily in order to quell a liberal uprising and restore the absolutist monarchy. A similar revolt was subdued in Piedmont by Austria in April 1821. Among the attendees from Russia, Austria, Prussia, the Two Sicilies and Sardinia Piedmont, the British and French voiced their firm rejection to the Congress decision.[3]

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[1] Schroeder, 'Metternich's Diplomacy', 1-24.
[2] Constantin de Grunwald, *La vie de Metternich* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1938).
3 Irby C. Nichols, 'The Congress of Verona, 1822: A Reappraisal.' *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1966), 385–99.

The Greek quest for independence and Russo-Ottoman affairs would not be formally discussed within the European concert system until the Congress of Verona in 1822. Eight years after the Vienna Congress, Britain's reluctance to participate in concert diplomacy had become increasingly unproductive. After sternly protesting Austrian armed intervention in 1821, Britain only sent an observer to Troppau and Laibach. Only in June 1822 did Castlereagh reluctantly agree to attend due to parliamentary opposition to the Holy Alliance powers, intending to depart from London on 15 August. What seemed a promising and cooperative turn in British attitude was abruptly jeopardised on 12 August, when Castlereagh unexpectedly committed suicide in his home. The next British Foreign Secretary George Canning appointed Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington and victor at Waterloo, to replace Castlereagh. The British attitude that Wellington expressed, however, remained categorically averse to being involved in the Spanish question. The agenda of the Verona conference was thus confined strictly to Italy, as Austria also opposed to discussing the Spanish revolution, and Russia objected to deliberating on the Eastern Question. Eventually the congress permitted French interference to restore the Spanish crown to King Ferdinand VII. Following the five conferences of the system by 1822, Metternich gained the reputation as 'le mentor de l'Europe'.[4]

The Eastern Question subsequently brought Britain closer to European concert diplomacy vis-à-vis the Ottoman Porte, but it also posed the most dangerous threats to the European peace policed by the Metternich system. In April 1826, the Duke of Wellington signed a protocol in St. Petersburg marking an Anglo-Russo understanding over the creation of a Greek state. In October 1827, joint British, French and Russian fleets destroyed those of the Ottoman and Egyptian forces in the Bay of Navarino. 'Nous ne comprenons rien, ni a ce que les trois cours Russie, Angleterre, et de France ont voulu, ni a ce qu'elles veulent. Le

[4] Grunwald, *Metternich*, 217.

moment actuel présent le spectacle d'un ébranlement universel.'[5] Following the overwhelming victory at the Battle of Navarino, Nicholas I's Russia found herself torn between principles of legitimism and religious protectionism for their Greek coreligionists. Tsar Nicholas eventually decided to declare war on the Ottoman Empire in April 1828. The Treaty of Adrianople shifted Russian focus in the East towards maintaining the weakened Ottoman Empire, whose military strength was further undermined in the conflict with Russia.[6]

I. Economic overview

Political shifts in Europe unfolded against the backdrop of rapid socioeconomic transformations in the early to mid-19th century. With the population expansion in early 1800s, economic growth in Europe was outpaced by the surging population.[7] The economies of most countries only 'took off' when the expansion of new industries became sustained after 1850.[8] The population of Western Europe increased from 133 million in 1820 to 188 million in 1870, with the population of Eastern Europe (including the Russian Empire) expanding from 91 to 131 million during the same period. The share of total European population in the world also increased from approximately 22% in 1820 to 26% by 1870.[9]

Agricultural advancement nonetheless fell behind the rapidity of population growth, until the adoption of new crops and farming techniques marginally improved agricultural productivity to feed the booming population. Economic growth was sustainable only in Britain, Belgium and certain regions of France and Germany; other countries grappled with economic stagnation throughout the period until 1848. Even in Britain, industrial and agricultural

[5] Metternich to Gyorgy Apponyi, 13 November, 1827, in Grunwald, *Metternich*, 226.
[6] Protocol of the 1st Sitting of the Extraordinary Committee, 4 September 1829, in *Vneshni͡aia͡ politika Rossii XIX i nachala XX veka : dokumenty Rossiĭskogo Ministerstva inostrannykh del* (hereafter VPR) (Moskva: Gos. izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1960), Series 2, Volume VIII, 278.
[7] Michael Rapport, *Nineteenth Century Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 80.
[8] Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth : A Non-Communist Manifesto*. 2nd ed., (Cambridge University Press, 1971), 7-8.
[9] OECD Publishing. "Appendix B: World Population, GDP and GDP Per Capita Before 1820." In *The World Economy* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2006), 229-65.

development were unable to adapt to the rising population, leading to problems of overcrowding in cities. In Austria, agricultural productivity only increased by 1% between 1789 to 1841. The potato, previously resented by the Austrians as food for pigs, became gradually accepted due to its use in spirits production. In Russia, serfdom persisted until 1861, which effectively absorbed the growing population; but the peasantry experienced gruesome sufferings, particularly during the famine and cholera epidemic of 1848-9.[10]

II. Revolutions of the 1830s

Between the Greek Revolution and the Crimean War, the upsurge in liberalism was further fuelled by an economic crisis of poor harvests from 1827-1832.

In France, liberal opposition gained traction upon provocative policies pursued by the ultras under the government of Charles X in late 1820s. By 1829, the liberals had dominated the French chamber, thus Prince Jules de Polignac's government became the parliamentary minority. The King Charles X decided to override the disadvantage in parliament for the royalists by dismissing parliament and introducing fresh elections. When two following elections saw even less favourable results for the royalists, Charles X published an emergency creed to dissolve parliament for the third time. This move led to a uncontainable revolt against the regime on 28 July, 1830, where the Parisian crowds stormed the Tuileries. Charles X was forced to abdicate before going on exile in England, leading to the establishment of Louis Phillipe as the king of France. Metternich aimed to preserve conservative order in Europe by sending an assisting Austrian army to crush the July Revolution, yet financial constraints of the Austrian treasury limited his plan. Archduke Charles commented to Metternich that 'ideas could not be conquered by bayonets', yet Metternich still liaised with Nicholas I and Frederick

[10] Rapport, *Nineteenth Century Europe*, 81-3.

III of Prussia in 1833 at Münchengrätz on their mutual commitment to combating revolution in Europe.

In Britain, the political landscape in the early 1830s also shifted in the favour for reform. Conservative influence within the government was weakened after the passage of the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, following which the Whigs came into power in November 1830 in the height of revolutionary events in continental Europe. Parliamentary reform had long dominated the agenda of cabinet discussions by early 1830s, evident from records of Parliamentary Papers. Initially, the Duke of Wellington was firmly against the idea of parliamentary reform, but the conservative party was gradually split among reformists and ultras, as there was growing support to allow for limited change. The flexibility of the Tories party in extending the franchise was mainly due to the possibility of benefiting from the wealth and influence of Britain's emerging middle class. The 1832 Reform Act expanded suffrage to a limited extent for property owners and marked a significant victory for moderate reform.

The revolutions of the 1830s polarised Europe between liberal constitutional states—Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain, and conservative states in Italy, the Hapsburg, Empire, Russia, and most of Germany. While the revolutions of 1830 represented a significant fracture in the conservative order of 1815, as Metternich claimed that the July revolution in Paris 'had destroyed his entire life's work', these attempts fell short of utter revolutionary collapse in Europe.

III. Europe between revolutions

After the turmoil of the 1830 revolutions, Louis Phillipe's July monarchy best epitomised 'bourgeois governance', famously characterised by Karl Marx as a 'joint stock company for the exploitation of French national wealth'. The revolution only saw marginal political gains, as the composition of the Chamber of Deputies remained largely unchanged,

merely replacing Bourbon loyalists with those with closer association to the Napoleonic era. According to Robert Tombs, the only change was that the electorate rose from '90,000 extremely rich elderly men to 170,000 very rich middle-aged men'.[11]

Dissent lingered in French society from the extreme left, Republicans, and Bonapartists, all of whom criticised the cautious foreign policy pursued by Louis Phillippe's government. Protesting groups accused the government of failing to support the Polish revolutionaries in their struggle against Russia in 1831 and called for reassertion of French prestige in Europe in order to rectify the injustices of the 1815 settlement. Despite residual political instability, France in 1830s saw a period of relative peace and sustained economic growth. Louis Phillippe's government aimed to provide stable, parliamentary rule for the economic development of France with significant investments in state schooling, infrastructure projects including the building of railroads, growth in iron and steel engineering, as well as coal mining.

Republican factions, including La Société des droits de l'homme, organised protests and strikes in support of the uprisings in Lyon and Paris in 1834, which served as the backdrop for literary works such as Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. An assassination attempt on Louis Phillipe in September 1835 failed, but the incident led to harsher restrictions on political mobilisation and more stringent regulations on the press. Even though Louis Phillipe still championed liberal principles, guidance from the Republicans and the enforcement of the politically restricting September Laws further intensified division within the French society.[12] Under the leadership of Francois Guizot, the July monarchy continued to oppose efforts at reform, leading to the near exclusion of civil participation in national politics by 1848, when only a meagre 0.1% of the electors were subscribing to newspapers.

As the constitutional countries including France contended with internal dissent from

[11] Robert Tombs, *France 1814-1914* (London 1996), 357.
[12] H.A.C. Collingham & R.S. Alexander, *The July Monarchy, a Political history of France 1830-1848* (London: Longman, 1988), 166-85.

1830s-1840s, absolutist monarchies also grappled with domestic difficulties. Tsar Nicholas I of Russia entrusted N.D. Kiselyov with the task of reforming serfdom in 1836, but serfdom was not entirely abolished until 1861.[13] By the 1850s, it became evidently clear that the obsolete social organisation of Russia was handicapping the country's political and economic growth, that it had cost Russia its significant advantage in iron product at the turn of the century. The Industrial Revolution that entirely transformed the life of Western Europe had barely impacted Russia, with serfdom persistently paralysing Russian development. While Nicholas I's reign saw important developments in Russian political thought, he failed to allow for evolutions along the lines of other European states in legal institutions and social organisation.[14]

Russian dominance in the Levant was consolidated through the Russo-Ottoman Unkiar Skelessi Treaty in July 1833, allowing for privileged Russian access through the Straits. Initially, Nicholas' Russia had intended to monopolise collaboration with the Ottoman Porte, but the 1839 Second Eastern Crisis between the Ottoman Porte and Egypt forced the St Petersburg court to reconsider its position. Fearing the diplomatic alienation of Russia by the other four powers, the Russian Chancellor Karl advocated for collective European action while attempting to distance France from Britain. Brunnow was the selected Russian diplomat sent to negotiate with Lord Palmerston in London. Russia's shift in policy in the Straits was an unexpected yet welcome offer, as Nicholas' government would allow for the Unkiar Skelessi Treaty to be superseded by the Straits Convention of 1841—thereby surrendering Russian privileges, if Britain agreed to guarantee the closure of the Straits by Ottoman Empire to all foreign warships.[15] By 1841, unmitigated tensions between Constantinople and Cairo provided

[13] Olga Crisp, 'The State Peasants under Nicholas I.' *The Slavonic and East European review*, Volume 37, No.89 (1959), 387–412.
[14] David Moon, *Russian Peasants and Tsarist Legislation on the Eve of Reform : Interaction between Peasants and Officialdom, 1825-1855* (Macmillan, 1992), 67.
[15] BOA, HR.SYS 1947/43.

a severe challenge for Palmerston's government, as the Francophile members of his cabinet were ill-disposed to risk Anglo-French relations over affairs of the Levant.[16] When France began military preparations to support Mehmed Ali's Egypt, it was perceived as a pursuit at revision of the 1815 settlements. French involvement stoked Prussian anxiety, who mobilised no fewer than 200,000 men during the crisis. Conversely, the feeble response from Vienna in 1839 undermined Austrian claims for leadership in the German Confederation.[17]

IV. Revolutions of 1848

1848 was incontestably the most fateful year for Europe since the fall of Napoleon, in which a series of destructive revolutions raged through Europe, wrecking widespread economic, social, and political havoc. These uprisings were, as Christopher Clark highlights, not monolithic, but shared themes of demand for greater political participation and social justice. Participants in the 1848 revolutions broadly included liberal-minded intellectuals, urban workers, and nationalists. Hampered by decentralised movements and diverse aims, many of the revolutions failed to achieve their objectives. Historians offer mixed interpretations on the revolutions of 1848, but all acknowledge the nuanced and complex nature of the movements. Jonathan Sperber and George Rude were more optimistic on the legacies of the revolutions, claiming that they had long-lasting consequences from the role of the ordinary people in challenging established authority, to the emergency of modern political ideologies. In addition, even though few of the constitutions introduced in 1848 survived the collapse of the liberal movement, several absolute monarchies retained a certain extent of parliamentary governance. Clark also asserts that even though 1848 failed to introduce immediate, concrete

[16] Charles K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841 : Britain, the Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question* (Bell, 1951), 689.
[17] Rapport, *Nineteenth Century Europe*, 129.

political change, the revolutions served as a catalyst for future movements. On the other hand, Michael Rapport and Peter Jones emphasise the limited impact of the revolutions, as suppression from conservative forces overpowered attempts at democratic reform and social change.

The jolt of 1848 did not shake the entirety of Europe uniformly. Britain and Russia largely escaped the brunt of the revolutions and saw more gradual rises of revolutionary motions. In France, the July Monarchy was overthrown, but the rise of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte ultimately resulted in the strengthening of authoritarian rule with the Second French Empire. Universal male suffrage, however, was re-introduced in France in 1848 and never revoked again. Austria and Prussia experienced more significant repercussions from the revolutions of 1848. Emperor Ferdinand I of Austria was forced to issue the March Constitution, granting the establishment of a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature, and the recognition of civil liberties.[18] This concession failed to quell revolutionary fervour; conservative forces led by Metternich also sought to suppress revolutionary movements to no avail, which led to even further discontent.[19] Eventually, the widespread outbreak of revolutions in Austria forced Ferdinand to abdicate in favour of Franz Joseph I, and Metternich resigned from his position as Chancellor. The downfall of Metternich was a watershed moment in nineteenth century European politics, as it epitomised the eclipse of Metternich's conservative vision by augmenting revolutionary ardour. With Nicholas' military support, the Habsburgs eventually quelled the uprisings in Hungary by 1849, marking the restoration of conservative power.

1848 fundamentally reshaped the manner in which European governments viewed their subjects. An element of fear was inevitably and irrevocably instilled, as vigilance would also

[18] Alan Sked, *Metternich and Austria : An Evaluation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[19] Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire ; a New History (*Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

be practiced. After 1848, governments were forced to acknowledge evolving political ideology and consider the significance of public opinion, which ultimately facilitated greater flexibility and stronger political participation. [20] The 1848 revolutions failed to achieve concrete, enduring political change, but rather provoked the triumphant conservative powers to become more vigilant towards liberal ideologies. Ironically, 1848 also further inflamed sentiments of nationalism across Europe. With the downfall of Metternich, the Concert of Europe system wielded declining influence, as great powers increasingly prioritised national interests over collective concert diplomacy, bruising alliances and thereby destabilising the European balance of power. The fractured and fragile European status quo was thus severely challenged when the seemingly trivial debate of the Holy Places dispute.

V. On the British

In the first half of the nineteenth century, British ascendancy can largely be attributed to dominance in industrial advancements and relative political stability. Political developments in Britain were relatively gradual. Significant shifts include the Reform Act of 1832 and the middle-class campaign to repeal the Corn Laws in 1846, which epitomised the rise of the landing-owning middle class and working classes. With regards to demographic shifts in British society, an extended period of significant population growth under George IV and Victoria led to substantial expansion of the labour force and enhanced technological innovation. Capitalising on her strong navy, Britain explored wider global trade markets both for natural resources and manufactured goods. In addition, this period saw the development of an avant-garde banking system, extensive roads and canal networks. By the 1860s, Britain was producing over half of the world's cotton and metals, which was three times the size of France, Germany, and Belgium's industrial production combined.[21] Britain's rapid industrialisation

[20] Michael Rapport, *1848 - Year of Revolution* (London: Little, Brown, 2008).
[21] Harry Hearder, *Europe in the Nineteenth Century : 1830-1880*. (2nd ed. London: Longman, 1988), 216-227.

coincided with its urbanisation and increasing income inequality, with a decline in agricultural jobs and over three quarters of the population living in towns and cities by the 1851 Great Exhibition.

British strategic interests

Between the 1820s and 1850s, Ottoman ports carried a rapidly increasing traffic between Europe and Asia, particularly India, whose commerce was inextricably linked to access to the Black Sea. As the convenient accessibility of India became a priority under Palmerston, by the 1830s, it was paramount for Britain to find a shorter shipping route to the ports of Calcutta. Alternative routes via Suez or Baghdad and Basra, due to the presence of other European powers, were far less preferable to leaving the Ottoman Empire in charge of the Eastern Mediterranean. British reliance on the Ottoman Empire as a trade partner thus increased during the years between the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the Holy Places dispute in 1852, during which the overall value of British exports more than threefold, the output of iron and steel almost fourfold, and the export of cotton goods increased more than 66 percent. In particular, the Ottoman Empire was one of Britain's major trading partners in the first half of the nineteenth century, explaining its crucial nature to fundamental British interests. Apart from its significance for British access to India, the Black Sea, in the Sultan's territory, also served as the focal point for trade to Egypt and the Danubian Principalities. Fed by major rivers including the Danube and the Dnieper, the Black Sea facilitated the trade of the most fertile parts of Russian and Central Europe, and it was thus known as the Euxine Sea ('the hospitable' in Greek).[22] Regarding the export of grains, Britain and Russia had shared interest for cooperation in the Black Sea: grain from the Crimean region was exported through

[22] David C. Braund, 'Euxine Sea.' *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Classics* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Odessa, which was then purchased and consumed by Britain. Despite a cordial understanding between the tsar and Robert Peel's government established in June 1844 after the former's visit to London—as well as the drafting of the Nesselrode Memorandum—Anglo-Russian relations steadily declined in the early 1850s. Russian advances in the Caucasus towards Persia and Afghanistan stoked Russophobia in British public opinion, although these were matched by British expansion into India. Dominance of the Black Sea would eventually trigger hostilities between the two great powers.

Key personalities in British diplomacy

The elite cadre of British statesmen and diplomats were shaped by a remarkably uniform educational background—the entirety of leading British politicians of the early nineteenth century have studied at either Harrow or Eton for preparatory school and at Cambridge or Oxford for university. In particular, the vast majority of cabinet members studied at either St John's College, Cambridge, or Christ Church, Oxford. Although a great number of leading statesmen were Irish or Scottish peers, they were informed by a highly traditional English educational system that emphasised conformity and rewarded the small, homogenous group of privileged young men to depend upon connections among themselves for forging a successful career.

The mastermind of the Concert of Europe, Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh was one of the few leading statesmen to have received preparatory education outside of England. Having spent his early years in Ireland, Castlereagh was educated at Armagh Academy, followed by St John's College, Cambridge. The British Foreign Secretary during the Napoleonic wars, Castlereagh was well known for his contribution to the Concert of Europe and emphasis on the maintenance of European stability. A main architect behind the post-Napoleonic Quadruple Alliance, the Irish peer was reticent to foreign intervention. He believed

it to be an exceptional right, only applicable in extreme cases when the security of a neighbouring state is concerned, thus directly threatening vital British interests. Overall, he found intervening in foreign nations' affairs to be 'suprêmement dangereux de l'incorporer dans les coutumes diplomatiques courantes ou dans les institutions du droit des gens'.[23]

Another Irish peer that left an impregnable mark on British policy in the same period was Castlereagh's rival George Canning. Castlereagh and Canning had an infamous falling out in 1809, where the two ministers resorted to fighting a duel at Putney Heath—for many years afterwards, both were politically sidelined and precluded from entering prominent positions. Despite his modest background with working class parents in Ireland, George Canning was raised by his wealthy uncle in London and prepped at Eton College before attending Christ Church, Oxford. Both institutions provided Canning not only with a solid intellectual foundation, but more importantly with connections to politicians and members of parliament.[24] Canning was popular, witty, eloquent, and intelligent, but the Duke of Wellington has once accused Canning for being 'one of the idlest of men'.[25]Canning was made Foreign Secretary in 1807 and again in 1822 following the suicide of Castlereagh, before eventually becoming Prime Minister in 1827. Holding opposite political views from his rival, Canning reversed British politics at the expense of the Metternich system, 'à la vieille tradition anglaise et s'opposait à toute intervention dans les affaires intérieures des pays étrangers.'[26]

Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, vehemently opposed George Canning's foreign policy, particularly when George Canning committed Britain to an alliance with Russia in 1826. Also Irish in origins, Wellington was ahead of George Canning at Eton College and subsequently studied at the French Royal Academy of Equitation; the comprehensive education laid the foundation for a decorated military career as well as an embellished one as a statesman

[23] Metternich circulaire 19 Janvier, 1821, quoted in de Grunwald
[24] G. R. Stirling Taylor, *Seven Nineteenth Century Statesmen* (London: J. Cape, 1929).
[25] Wellington to Greville, 10 August 1827, as cited in G.R.S. Taylor, *Seven Statesmen*, 78.
[26] De Grunwald, *Metternich*, 225.

and diplomat. When Wellington became the Prime Minister in 1828, his popularity and prestige had rendered him a unique influence unmatched by others, with a 'near divine' status.[27] Wellington's political attitude was anachronistically royalist and perceived his allegiance to be sworn to the Crown, rather than to Parliament. Wellington in return enjoyed a particular understanding with King George IV, who summoned the duke for private audiences on every occasion of a ministerial crisis. Politically, Wellington was realistic and factual; his dread of war guided his foreign policy. He adhered rigidly to the conservative principle of non-intervention; similar to Metternich, Wellington was also anti-revolutionary, and he persisted in persuading the former in adopting punitive measures against the revolutionaries in Naples. Known for his brutal honesty and straightforward simplicity, Wellington was accused of his aloofness and inflexibility in managing his cabinet.

Among all significant Irish peers on the British diplomatic scene, Lord Palmerston, Henry John Temple, had the longest career spanning 6 decades starting in 1807, including two terms as Prime Minister. Biographer David Brown described Palmerston as 'a raging young Peelite, adolescing Canningite, the juvenile Whig, and attaining-years-of-discretion Coalitionist.' In contrast to his contemporaries, after his time at Harrow School, Palmerston pursued studies at the University of Edinburgh before finishing at St John's College, Cambridge. His Scottish formation under Dugual Stewart and extensive travels to France and Italy exposed Palmerston to ideas of the Enlightenment, which formed the cornerstone of his political career.[28] The elevated social status of his wife Emily Lamb, the sister of Lord Melbourne, further consolidated his political influence and connections.[29] Proponent to an assertive 'gunboat diplomacy', Palmerston was not hesitant to employ military force for maintaining British interests. Influenced by his liberal ideology, Palmerston strongly supported

[27] G.R.S. Taylor, *Seven Statesmen*, 42.
[28] David Brown, *Palmerston : A Biography* (New Haven, Conn. ; Yale University Press, 2010).
[29] Mabell Airlie, Emily Lamb Palmerston, and Frederick James Lamb Melbourne. *Lady Palmerston and Her Times* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922).

national self-determination and sovereignty, including in the Greek War of Independence, where he advocated for British intervention to support the Greek insurgents. For the Crimean War, he also vigorously pushed for war against Russia within the Aberdeen administration.[30]

Palmerston's gunboat diplomacy proved a major challenge for his fellow Cantabrigians from St John's College, particularly Lord Clarendon and Lord Aberdeen—the latter particularly also overlapped with Palmerston at Harrow. George Hamilton-Gordon, Lord Aberdeen, was born in Edinburgh into a wealthy Scottish family before receiving some of the finest, quintessential education in England. Lord Aberdeen served as the Ambassador to Austria during the Napoleonic wars, Foreign Secretary under Wellington from 1828-30, under Robert Peel from 1841-6, and as Prime Minister during the Crimean War. During the second stint of his role as Foreign Secretary, Aberdeen gained the confidence of the young Queen Victoria, whose invariable trust persisted through the early 1850s. Having experienced the loss of his first wife and four children before the age of twenty, Aberdeen was described to be sober, dogged, unpopular, and unfortunate.[31]

Aberdeen's Peelite-Whig coalition government formed in December 1852 was nearly evenly split between Whigs and Peelites, divided by party politics and personal rivalries.[32] The leadership position necessitated an aloofness to party politics which Aberdeen possessed. This also became his foe: his predilection for the middle course prevented constructive decision-making. His sensitivity and trustfulness turned into weakness in time of crisis, apt to avoid conflict rather than asserting his view at the cost of rancour. His biographer Muriel Chamberlain accuses him to be weak in the confrontational atmosphere of foreign policy, as

30 Jasper Ridley, *Lord Palmerston* (Constable, 1970); Richard Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Gladstone vs. Disraeli* (London: Hutchinson, 2006).
31 Lucille Iremonger, *Lord Aberdeen : A Biography of the Fourth Earl of Aberdeen, K.G., K.T., Prime Minister 1852-1855* (Collins, 1978).
32 Whigs included: Landsdowne, John Russell, Granville, Palmerston, Cranworth, Sir Charles Wood, and later Clarendon; Peelites included: Aberdeen, Newcastle, Argyll, Gladstone, Sidney Herbert, and Sir James Graham.

he lacked the authority of Castlereagh and the flair of Disraeli or Palmerston.[33] Kingsley Martin wrote in 1924 that Aberdeen was 'perhaps the most genuinely disinterested Prime Minister England has ever had.'[34] Naturally, the power transition from the hawkish Palmerston and John Russell—two of the most anti-Russian British statesmen—to the mellow Aberdeen and moderate Clarendon was viewed favourably by the Court of St. Petersburg.

In contrast to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, the appointment of Stratford Canning as the British Ambassador to Constantinople, first in 1825 and again in 1853, was not welcomed by the Russian Court. Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, the younger cousin of George Canning, was also educated at the prestigious Eton and King's College, Cambridge; his early and smooth start to a diplomatic career was largely due to his cousin's influence. Despite Stratford's preference for a parliamentary career, George Canning insisted on a path in diplomacy, considering it more stable amid political turbulence—when himself had resigned out of humiliation after the duel with Castlereagh. After years in Switzerland and North America, in 1824, Stratford was promoted to Ambassador Extraordinary in Constantinople and entrusted with the Greek Question—a promising offer as Constantinople emerged as the new focal point of British diplomacy. Stratford served in this position until the Battle of Navarino in 1827, before being recalled to the Ottoman capital in the 1850s amid renewed Eastern tensions. He left such an unfavourable impression for Russia that in 1832, the Russian government took the rare decision to veto his appointment as the British ambassador to the court of St. Petersburg.[35]

His long tenure in Constantinople rendered Stratford pro-Ottoman and anti-Russian, which was welcomed by the French. The French chargé d'affaires Vincent Benedetti observed that was 'il est très imbu de l'idée que la chute de l'Empire ottoman' and held a deep distrust

[33] Muriel Evelyn Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen : A Political Biography* (Longman, 1983).
[34] Martin, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston*, 79-80.
[35] Ibid, 141.

of Russian influence. [36] Benedetti's description of Stratford's immense pride and relentlessness was echoed by Karl Nesselrode, confirming Steven Richard's portrayal of Stratford's forceful style of diplomacy. [37] His inflexibility also stoked the fear of the Ottoman government, who anxiously anticipated Stratford's return to Constantinople in 1853, referring to the British ambassador as 'the Commandant of Constantinople'. [38]

In the French capital, the British Ambassador was much more cordially welcomed. Henry Wellesley, 1st Lord Cowley, was a nephew of the Duke of Wellington and descendant of the Cadogan family. His education was accordingly prestigious—Eton College followed by Brasenose College, Oxford, both of which prepared Cowley for serving as Envoy Extraordinary to the German Confederation then as British Ambassador to France since 1852. His first year in the French capital gained him tremendous popularity and confidence of the French court, insomuch that Princess Lieven wrote to Lord Aberdeen asking the Prime Minister to keep Cowley in office. 'J'espère que Lord Cowley nous reste. II est merveilleusement bien en cour ici. Aime de tous ses collègues, ils ont en lui la plus *grande* confiance et seraient bien fâchés de le perdre.'[39]

British public opinion and the press

In early nineteenth century Britain, the press played a crucial role in shaping political discourse and influencing public opinion. Editorial stances of the leading publications became increasingly influential due to rapidly growing circulation of newspapers in major cities, particularly in London. This growth was not only catalysed by the invention of the telegraph,

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[36] Count Vincent Benedetti, *Essais diplomatiques (nouvelle série) : précédés d'une introduction sur la question d'orient* (Paris: Plon, 1897), 216-217. Translation is my own.
[37] Stratford Canning and Nesselrode's exchanges were documented in The National Archives (TNA), FO65/147, P140.
[38] Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv (HHS), PA 7/46, Klezl to Buol, Constantinople, 31 March, 1853, received in Vienna 13 April, p289-295.
[39] Princess Lieven to Lord Aberdeen, No. 465, 26 December, 1852, in *The Correspondence of Lord Aberdeen and Princess Lieven, 1848–1854* (Camden, 1939), 640.

but also spurred by the abolition of stamp duty in Britain, which rendered newspapers more affordable and widely accessible.

In the 1840s, *The Times* rose to a supreme position in the British Press, with its daily circulation of 10,000 more than doubled of its closest contender. By 1852, its circulation reached 40,000, whereas its rivals all fell shy of 10,000. Lord Clarendon claimed that 'it is a well-known fact that *The Times* forms or guides or reflects—no matter which—the public opinion of England.' Under the editor-in-chief John Thaddeus Delane since 1841, The Times became deeply connected to both the Ministry and the Opposition, as well as informants from France and other European countries. Its influence was far-reaching: for every European court, *The Times* represented the authoritative voice of British public opinion.[40] In Constantinople, the correspondent for the paper was Humphrey Sandwith, who served as a doctor in the British embassy. Through Sandwith, who enjoyed a close connection to Colonel Hugh Rose, *The Times* gained immediate knowledge of diplomatic developments, but likely through the pronounced anti-Russian perspectives of Rose. It is thus difficult to differentiate whether *The Times* reflected or stirred British Russophobia.

Apart from its leading voice, the British press comprised of a great different of other publications—including *The Westminster Review, The Examiner, The Edinburgh Review, The Morning Post, The Daily News, The Morning Herald,* and *The Morning Chronicle*—that collectively sought to challenge the main journal. After persuading leading British statesmen that the Holy Places controversy was of a limited nature between France and Russia, *The Times* swayed to adopt a pro-Austrian and pro-Russian standpoint on the Montenegro affair. *The Daily News* labelled it the 'Brunnow organ', after the Russian ambassador in London; *The Morning Advertiser* went as far as accusing *The Times* of being Russian— 'it is printed in the English language, but that is the only thing English about it. It is, where Russia is concerned,

[40] Martin, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston*, 87-8.

Russian all over.'[41]

There were two major papers in Britain that were in constant communication with members of the Government—*The Times* with Clarendon, and *The Morning Post* with Palmerston. Palmerston's personal ties to *The Morning Post* contributed towards shaping public opinion to suit his view, as Walewski observed that 'en général les articles de ce journal sur la politique étrangère passent pour exprimer la pensée de cet homme d'État.'[42] The publication was cautious at the beginning, but became increasingly supportive of stronger measures against Russia, which happened to align with Palmerston's views. On the other hand, *The Times,* from the outset, had adopted the attitude of Aberdeen and Clarendon. Even Aberdeen admitted that British public opinion had become 'incontestably in favour of Turkey and an active interference', but the Prime Minister declared that his administration would not be swayed by the resounding voice of the public. When the French fleet was dispatched to Malta, Clarendon even wrote a private note to Henry Reeve, journalist at *The Times* reporting on foreign affairs, to instil a sense of calm in public opinion regarding recent developments. 'Do not write anything irritating to France…The tsar deserves trust; Fuad Pacha has already resigned, and Menshikov has so far only raised the question of the Holy Places in Constantinople. It is not at all certain that the French fleet has already sailed…write an article to clarify that the tsar did not intend to offend France on the issue of the Holy Places, or even risk a European war because of it.'[43]

[41] Marx, *The Eastern Question*, 11-2.
[42] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/689, Walewski to Lhuys, p238.
[43] Clarendon to Henry Reeve, 27 March, 1853, see Henry Reeve and John Knox Laughton, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve* (London: Longmans, Green, 1898), 296-298.

VI. On the Russians

The Russian nobility

By the end of the Napoleonic wars, the Russian nobility emerged as business owners, owning the majority of mines, wood factories, papermills, crystal, and glasswork factories.[44] The nobility saw the most dynamic population growth among all social classes in the period, having nearly doubled in size in the first half of the nineteenth century.[45]

For the Alexandrine nobility, status and prestige are directly associated with their proximity to the tsar. Acquaintance with the tsar was only accessible for those already with high rank and within the most elite social circles. John le Donne argues that the Russian ruling elite numbered around merely 15-20 people during the Alexandrine period, and the narrow distribution of power added value to the potential influence the insiders could expect to exert on the tsar.[46] After the Napoleonic Wars, military service became central to social standing, particularly as Alexander emphasised military parades as a showcase of tsarist supremacy and noble subordination.[47]

The dynamic between the tsar and his nobles was delicate and fraught with tension. The increasingly mystical personality of Alexander left the nobility insecure, particularly as the tsar was known to show little affection for the aristocracy. Alexander frequently lamented the shortage of educated and independent-minded noblemen, but these talents avoided significant positions as they were cautious of suspicion from the tsarist regime. This climate of mistrust contributed towards Alexander's ambivalence towards educational reform. Prince Metternich, with whom Alexander shared a friendship, once commented that 'every ruler has considerable

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[44] Janet M Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire 1650-1825* (London: Longman, 1999), 57.
[45] Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), 176-82
46 John P. le Donne, 'The Eighteenth-Century Russian Nobility: Bureaucracy or Ruling Class?' *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, vol. 34, no. 1/2, (1993) : 139–47.
[47] Alexander I: 'The nobility was the loyal and strong buttress of the throne, the mind and soul of the nation, courageous of old, which had shown on precedented zeal through sacrifice, not only of property, but of blood and life itself.'; see Richard S Wortman, *Scenarios of Power, Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy. vol 1: from Peter the Great to the Death of Nicholas I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 228.

difficulty finding sincere and selfless servants, sufficiently independent both in character and position to rise to the role of friend, but for Alexander this was harder than for anyone else.'[48]

Alexander not only avoided the grand houses of the old Russian aristocracy in political appointments and preferred newer nobilities, but he also favoured foreigners, which bred bitterness amongst the Russian aristocracy. The Decembrists' grievances epitomised this sentiment, as they complained that favour with the tsar required foreign birth. One of the leading Russian generals during the Napoleonic War, Alexey Yermolov, was asked by Alexander what he desired as a reward for his service, to which Yermolov quipped, 'Sire, create me German!' Yermolov's humorous comment underlined the privileged position of Germans in the Russian court.[49]

French was the preferred language of the Russian nobility, also a vital badge of refinement and social respectability since the reign of Elizaveta Petrovna, replacing the German from the court of Anna Ivanovna in the 1730s.[50] The prevalence of French was such that some Russian elites had better proficiency in French than in Russian. In the first years of Alexander's reign, the catalogue of the St Petersburg Public library consisted between four to five thousand volumes, where the vast majority were in French and barely more than one hundred volumes in Russian. In 1826, some Decembrist prisoners in the Peter-Paul fortress were unable to provide written answers to their interrogation in Russian, thus dictionaries were acquired for their trials—when transferred to Rochensalm in Finland, Ivan Yakushkin recorded that the penalty of speaking French was withdrawal of rations, whereas in his childhood he would have been sent to bed without supper if he spoke to his sisters in Russian.[51] Ten years later, the Decembrists' continued to communicate in French, especially their leading ideologue, the

[48] Patrick O'Meara, *The Russian Nobility in the Age of Alexander I* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 33.
[49] Liubov Kurtynova-D'Herlugnan, *The Tsar's Abolitionists : The Slave Trade in the Caucasus and Its Suppression* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 92.
[50] Derek Offord, et al. *The French Language in Russia : A Social, Political, Cultural, and Literary History* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018).
[51] Anthony Glenn Cross, *St Petersburg, 1703-1825* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 178.

German educated Pavel Pestel.[52] Nicholas I was also known to have muttered to himself in French, 'voilà un joli commencement de règne' upon learning of the Decembrist revolt on the first day of his rule.[53]

Russian noble children were privately educated—albeit poorly—by French tutors at home, as state education was viewed as socially degrading. [54] As a result, the level of education among Russian government officials was extremely low, prompting Alexander's initial push for educational reforms at the beginning of his reign. A notable Alexandrine educational project was the elite, ultra-exclusive Tsarskoe Selo Lyceum, founded in 1811 to prepare the future generation for high-profile government positions—a near Russian equivalent of Eton College. Pupils lamented the stringent discipline and inadequate tuition, as the curriculum focused on theology and advanced subjects for which students had meagre preparation.[55]

Alexander I and Russia under his reign

The rapid spread of ideas from the French Revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century shaped the upbringing of Tsar Alexander I (r. 1801-25). Catherine the great strongly preferred Alexander to her own son Paul, as she feared the latter's legitimate claim to her throne, deepening tensions within the Romanov family. [56] Alexander was raised under Catherine's influence and tutored by the Swiss republican Frederic-Cesar La Harpe. The future tsar's education drew criticism from the Russian nobility, including Filipp Vigel, who claimed that the continental tendencies in his education engendered a predilection for reform. [57] Prince

[52] Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A parting of ways: government and the educated public in Russia 1801-1855* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 95.
[53] O'Meara, *The Russian nobility,* 47-52.
[54] Ibid, 43.
[55] Korf and Pushkin at Tsarskoe Selo, see Marinus Antony, *Classics in Russia 1700-1855 : Between Two Bronze Horsemen* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).
[56] John T. Alexander, *Catherine the Great : Life and Legend (Oxford:* Oxford University Press, 1989), 234.
[57] O'Meara, *The Russian nobility,* 123.

Adam Czartoryski, Polish aristocrat and Alexander's childhood friend, commented that Alexander 'hated despotism everywhere…he was extremely interested in the French Revolution; that without approving of its terrible mistakes he still wished the Republic success and rejoiced in it.'[58]

Alexander I was celebrated for his charm and enjoyed the praise of his wisdom and integrity overall from leading statesmen of the period. Values of justice, providence, and magnanimity guided the Tsar and forged a strategy of Russian restraint, epitomised by limited Russian support for the Greek cause. A proponent of concert diplomacy, Alexander rejected the Talleyrand model in deference to the Richelieu system, but domestic politics still weighed more heavily on the mind of Alexander compared to foreign affairs. As he wrote in 1824, 'Russia has had enough glory and does not need any more of it. Those who seek more are wrong. But when I think how little has been done inside the state, the thought lies on my heart like a ten-pound weight.' [59]

Aligned with his focus on domestic affairs, in the early years of his reign, Alexander made various attempt at reform. Mikhail Speransky was appointed to propose a constitution including an elected legislature, a State Duma, and a consultative State Council. Court ranks subsequently became purely honorary and a university diploma became a prerequisite for advancement in state service. Major innovations at the Russian education system followed. Five new universities and a number of elite high schools (litsei) were established, including the Tsarskoe Selo.[60]

Nonetheless, Alexander's various attempts at reform were met with fierce opposition in Russia, as they threatened the property rights of the gentry and offended the conservatives.

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[58] A.I.U. Polunov, Thomas C Owen, and L. G Zakharova, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century : Autocracy, Reform, and Social Change, 1814-1914* (Armonk, N.Y. ; M.E. Sharpe, 2005).
[59] S. A. Ėkshtut, *V poiske istoricheskoĭ al'ternativy : Aleksandr I, ego spodvizhniki, dekabristy* (Moskva: Rossiĭa molodai͡a, 1994), 62-3.
[60] Polunov, *Russia in the nineteenth century*, 25.

For instance, Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin was outspoken in his criticism against the Tsar in his 1811 publication *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, reflecting the pressure exerted on Alexander; the Tsar was also forced to banish Speransky in 1812.[61] The invasion of Napoleon, however, marked Alexander's turn towards conservatism—the Tsar became substantially more reactionary after 1815 and gradually lost interest in the idea of reform. The revolutions rampaging through Europe in the 1820s further undermined Alexander's faith in liberal principles. The Holy Alliance between Russia, Austria, and Prussia thus bolstered counter-revolutionary efforts in Spain, Naples, and Piedmont. Domestically, Alexander imposed severe and pervasive political censorship in Russia, even monitoring university lectures. [62] The already extremely low level of literacy was exacerbated to become the worst in Europe, with punitive costs of books and newspapers rendering entrance to civil society even more inaccessible. [63] In order to reinforce control over religion and education, Alexander established the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education. The government backed the Bible Society, which cultivated the expansion of mysticism, which the Tsar increasingly embraced.[64] Heedless to protests from liberalists and Orthodox clergy, Alexander drifted towards enforcing spiritual control and conservatist principles.

Alexander's foreign policy

Alexander provided early support for the Concert of Europe in pursuance to his conservatist principles. At the Congress of Troppau in October 1820, Alexander famously declared—'Le premier coup de canon tiré en Europe contre une révolution, serait le signal de

[61] Nikolaĭ Mikhaĭlovich, Karamzin, and Richard Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia : A Translation and Analysis* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959), 139, 184
[62] Pulunov, *Russia in the nineteenth century* 35.
[63] Rapport, *Nineteenth century Europe*, 66.
[64] Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991, 65-78

la chute de tous les trônes….'[65] Metternich later reminisced Alexander's advocation for intervention in the revolutions in Naples, as Alexander believed in the domino effect of revolutionary movements across Europe. At the outbreak of the Greek Revolution, Alexander responded with caution and mild support for the Ottoman sovereign, in spite of Greek solicitation for support from Prince Ypsilanti. Driven by his strong moral and religious principles, Alexander expressed his discontent towards the uprisings and clarified that no support could be counted on from the Court of St. Petersburg.[66]

Towards the end of his life, however, Alexander's command over his government had waned; the tsar's vision no longer directed Russian political strategy. Prince Metternich lamented the declining clarity in Russian foreign policy and directly questioned Alexander's grip on the Russian court.[67] Even Russian statesmen including Dimitry Tatischeff have admitted the possibility of Tsar Alexander 'being driven into a rupture with the Ottoman Empire against his wishes'.[68]

Count Nesselrode was less firmly anti-revolutionary than Alexander. Born Karl Robert von Nesselrode-Ehreshoven in Lisbon, Portugal into a German-Baltic noble family, Nesselrode received a cosmopolitan education and was deeply influenced by Enlightenment ideals. He entered Alexander's foreign ministry in 1806 at 26 years old, and he would become the main architect of Russian foreign policy for over 40 years, until the end of the Crimean War—the personality who saw the most enduring influence on European diplomacy in this dissertation. Less ideologically rigid than Metternich or Alexander, Nesselrode still supported monarchical legitimacy and the Holy Alliance's role in restraining revolutionary movements. Nonetheless, more strongly guided by Russian interests and stability than ideology or expansionist ambitions, the leading Russian statesman was more pragmatic than conservatist. Despite his

[65] HHS, Russland 55A, Metternich to Lebzeltern, 20 May, 1822.
[66] VPR, Tome VII, p93.
[67] HHS, Russland 55A, Metternich to Lebzeltern, 20 May, 1822.
[68] HHS, Russland 53, 5 April, 1822.

caution over supporting Greece, Nesselrode also understood the inevitably devastating loss the Greeks would face in a doomed contest with the Porte. [69] Sharing Nesselrode's position was Count Ioannis Capodistrias, the joint Foreign Minister of Russia along with Nesselrode from 1816-1822. Born in Corfu, Capodistrias' Greek roots placed him in a personally untenable position due to his support for the Greek War of Independence against the wishes of Alexander I's government. A bitter rival of Metternich's, Capodistrias disapproved of the 'dancing congress' of 1814 in Vienna, as he also criticised the stagnation in ideological progress in Metternich's system.

Nicholas I

After Alexander I's unexpected death in December 1825, his younger brother Nicholas ascended the throne. Born in 1796, Nicholas was much younger than his two older brothers, but received the same attention from their grandmother, Catherine the Great. Catherine oversaw Nicholas' upbringing since birth and attended to her youngest grandson dotingly. Different from Alexander and Grand Duke Constantin, Nicholas did not receive an education programmed by Catherine, as the tsarina died merely five months after his birth. It was thus the militaristic Emperor Paul I and the serious Maria Feodorovna who monitored Nicholas' studies and training. Whilst both his older brothers were tutored by the Swiss Frederic-Cesar de La Harpe, Nicholas had foreign governesses of military backgrounds in his infancy. Nicholas' earliest governors included military men Matvei Ivanovich and Count Lambsdorf, with the latter being a figure representing fear and omnipotence to Nicholas, '[the governors] instilled in us from our earliest childhood, the habit of searching for weaknesses in them in order to turn them to our advantage, fear and effort to escape punishments occupied my mind

[69] VPR, Tome VII, 121.

more than anything else.'[70] Nonetheless, his thorough education had a strong emphasis on politics, which suggests the possibility of intentional preparation for Nicholas' assuming the throne.[71]

Under the guidance of his father Paul I and governors, Nicholas was exposed to the militaristic atmosphere at the Russian court at an early age. During Catherine's reign, Russia witnessed an era of Europeanisation in the arts and philosophy, but the army saw an augmenting Russian spirit at the expense of its previous German influence championed by Peter III.[72] In 1846, the French nobleman Marquis de Custine, a friend of Madame de Stael and Chateaubriand, noted that certain moral values were indoctrinated in Nicholas' early education: a sense of duty to the Emperor, military heroism, and an emphasis on proper, rigid control of emotion from his mother Maria Feodorovna. De Custine argued that Nicholas' education and the temperament of his mother led to Nicholas' coldness and perpetual constraint. In De Custine's portrayal, Nicholas was less charming than Alexander but firmer, and 'desired to be obeyed where others desired to be loved.'[73] Metternich depicted Nicholas as possessing 'l'autorité conquérante, prête a avaler les lambeaux du monde.'[74] Compared to his brother, Nicholas was more belligerent, which provoked the cynicism of the French—'La conservation de son Empire, la gloire de son règne, et le salut du monde' were the only motivations of the Tsar, and that he was also faithful to his noble promises in the footsteps of his grand predecessor, Alexander I.[75] Queen Victoria's description of Nicholas offers a similar, if not more critical view of the tsar's character:

> 'Nicholas I is stern and severe, with fixed principles of duty which nothing on earth will make him change; very clever I do not think him, and his mind is an uncivilised one; his education has been neglected; politics and military concerns are the only things he takes great interest in; the arts and all softer occupations

[70] W. Bruce Lincoln, *Nicholas I, Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias* (London: A. Lane, 1978), 51.
[71] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality,* 24-26.
[72] Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 51
[73] Astolphe Custine, *La Russie En 1839* (Paris : Librairie d'Amyot, 1846), 317-319.
[74] De Grunwald, *Metternich*, 224.
[75] British Library, Add Ms 43080, p123.

> he is insensible to, but he is sincere, I am certain, sincere even in his most despotic acts, from a sense that that is the only way to govern.'[76]

After becoming the tsar, Nicholas held a firm grasp of decision-making over his administration, leaving little room for originality for his subordinates. His directives were expected to be faithfully executed with immediate priority. Nesselrode described Nicholas' governance as uncompromising and authoritarian, and historian Riasanovsky characterised Nesselrode's role to Nicholas as a 'modest tool of the emperor's designs, and an instrument of his political plans', even though Riasanovsky believed that Nesselrode was among the very few that had a restraining impact on Nicholas' decision-making.[77] The low competence of statesmen at the end of his reign could be due to poor educational policies in Russia, but this was exacerbated by Nicholas' limitation on normal governmental functions by institutions such as the state council and senate. Comments from Nicholas included 'I hope they will follow no disadvantage of excessive debate', or even the direct order 'I wish this to be accepted'.[78] Nicholas also detested the technical formalities of governmental organisations, as historians have noted that he referred to legal structures were mere 'abstractions' inferior to Christian conscience and sturdy common sense.[79] Dissatisfied with regular channels of governmental operations, Nicholas relied heavily on ad hoc committees. Riasanovsky noted the 'laborious futility' of Nicholas' abundant committees, as the failure of one typically led to the formation of another. Exceeding the limitations of administrative procedures, Nicholas formed his own Chancellery, which fell under more immediate supervision from the tsar himself. Notwithstanding, Riasanovsky praised Nicholas for his indefatigable nature and relentless diligence, exhibited through his frequently reviewing documents late at night and conducting

[76] Queen Victoria to King Leopold of Belgium, June 1844, quoted in Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 196.
[77] Ibid, 44.
[78] Ibid, 188.
[79] Theodor Schiemann, and Nicholas I, *Geschichte Russlands Unter Kaiser Nikolaus i* (Berl. &c, 1904).

inspection trips throughout his empire.

Nicholas' reign marked a departure from the early liberalism in Alexander's reign, as he deepened the conservative policies representative of the latter half of his predecessor's rule. Political ideology during Nicholas' reign strictly followed the doctrine of official nationality—'orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality', outlined by minister of education Sergei Uvarov in 1833.[80] Of the three key principles in the doctrine, autocracy possessed the most immediate political significance. With the passage of time, legacy officials from Alexander's period with an independent mind all gradually died, further eliminating internal challenges to Nicholas. Benefiting from the doctrine of official nationality, Nicholas became increasingly intolerant of criticism, or mere discussion of his policies; blind obedience epitomised service in his administration, with all legal outlets of constructive criticism eliminated.

Beyond domestic bureaucratic organisations, the Russian army under Nicholas was mired with similar struggles. The Russian army was unmatched in its magnificence of parades or masses of calvary, which facilitated Nicholas' role of 'gendarme de l'Europe'. Nonetheless, Curtiss argued that the Russian calvary and army were both technologically inferior, due to Nicholas' pedantic system that prioritised parades over pragmatic training. Incapacity of leadership, outdatedness of weapons, rampant corruption, ineffective logistics—the plight of the Russian army embodied similar weaknesses of the Russian empire under Nicholas, marked by social and industrial backwardness.[81]

The failed Decembrist insurgency in December 1825 and revolutions in the 1830-1840s all left a profound impact on Nicholas. The Decembrist revolt, particularly, convinced Nicholas that Alexander's control of the empire had been feeble. This led to the creation of Nicholas' personal forces, directly in charge of state security. Constitutional projects in Poland deeply

[80] Rapport, *Nineteenth century Europe*, 73.
[81] Curtiss, *The Russian Army* (1965).

concerned Nicholas, foreshadowing the Russian suppressing of the Polish uprising of 1830-1831 and the end of Polish political freedom.[82] The upheavals of 1848 exacerbated simmering concerns and reinforced Nicholas' resistance to liberal and revolutionary movements.

Despite his hubris and perplexing governance, Nicholas was deeply realistic regarding the Eastern Question. Unlike Alexander I, Nicholas found European declarations in maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire to be near hypocritical; the tsar considered his options regarding waging a war against the Porte solely based on material interests and pragmatic military calculations. Russia's diplomatic preliminaries with the Ottoman Empire extended far beyond Nicholas' reign. The possession of Constantinople had long been a particular ambition of Catherine the Great, tsarina of the Russian Empire from 1762 until 1796, during which the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji was signed in 1774. This treaty granted Russia remarkable religious, commercial, and territorial privileges in the Sultan's empire, particularly the role of protector to Christian Orthodox peoples in the Ottoman Empire and access to various ports in the Black Sea. Throughout the reign of Paul I and Alexander I, the conquest of Constantinople persisted in Russian national ambition, and inevitably imbued the personal aspiration of Nicholas.

On the importance of the Principalities

Russian influence in the Principalities, an autonomous territory officially tributaries of the Ottoman Empire, was persistently met with moderate resistance. The Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia fell under Russian military administration since the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War in 1829, after which Russian presence deeply influenced public administration and the legal framework of the River Danube's lower region. Russian

[82] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I*, 50.

tutelage and Ottoman suzerainty prompted discussions of neutrality and independence of the already autonomous principalities, particularly in the wake of burgeoning ideologies of national identities during the Revolutions of 1848. Moldavia and Wallachia had a population of 4 million, all of whom shared the same language and religion. A deeply religious land, the Principalities' budget for sustaining native and Greek monasteries exceeded 45 million francs. Despite steadily flourishing trade and augmented exports since 1832, the principalities were obligated to pay 35 million francs to the Porte. Barbu Stirbey, the Prince of Wallachia, lamented the financial burden in fulfilling payment to the Ottoman Porte in early 1853. Inhabitants of the two principalities were nonetheless reported to be 'happier' than those of Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transylvania. The unique political landscape of the region contributed towards its delicate status-quo. 'La jalousie de la Russie et de l'Autriche et l'opposition des autres grandes puissances Européennes ont maintenu la quasi-indépendance de la Moldavia et Wallachia.' [83] The greatest obstacle to the principalities' independence originated from the court of St Petersburg, and the public of Wallachia already expected a Russian occupation should diplomatic efforts of the Eastern Question fail.

The Principalities thus depended upon British and French backing for independence from Russian influence, and this was wholeheartedly supported by their westerly neighbour Austria, whose self-interest in supporting the principalities was palpable. To prevent Russian dominance on her eastern borders, Austria even relinquished the condition of placing a Hapsburg archduke as the head of the proposed independent combined state, to the surprise of the French. Logically, Russia would oppose to such an arrangement and nominate a Romanov prince instead, but the Wallachian prince dismissed all hypotheses as futile, because 'ce sont des questions qui ne se décident que par le sabre.' A Russian triumph was almost anticipated

[83] Quai d'Orsay, 47CPC/11, Poujade to Lhuys, confidentielle et réservée, Bucharest, 13 May, 1853, received in Paris on 6 June, p98-108.

by the local public. Nonetheless, whilst preponderant, Russian influence on the region could only be material and logistical, because the people viewed the language, lifestyle, and industry of France more favourably. Ironically, similar to the high society of St. Petersburg, French was the most commonly used language in conversations and business affairs in the Principalities.

VII. On the French

From the Bourbon Restoration to the Second Empire

The Bourbon Restoration of 1814 re-established monarchy in France following the French Revolution. Under the rule of Louis XVIII, the Charter of 1814, instituted a constitutional monarchy that preserved revolutionary liberties while establishing a representative government and granting religious toleration. For fifteen years, the French government operated harmoniously under the Restoration settlement until the July Revolution of 1830. After Charles X succeeded Louis XVIII in 1824, the two following general elections resulted in a rapid growth of liberal majority in parliament, which the King failed to overrule by decree.

The significant rise of the press in France during the time of political turbulence expedited the spread of liberalist ideals. After the stifling years of the Napoleonic wars, growth in French newspapers was impressive: circulation of the top ten most popular Parisian newspapers rose from approximately 50,000 readers in 1824 to 120,000 by 1840.[84] *Le Journal des Débats*, *Le Constitutionnel*, *Globe*, *Courrier Français*, and *Le National* were among numerous publications that promoted liberal campaigns.[85] On 26 July, 1830, the liberal French press united the opposition against the regime under Charles X and the ultra-royalist Prime

[84] William M. Reddy, 'Condottieri of the Pen: Journalists and the Public Sphere in Postrevolutionary France (1815–1850).' *The American Historical Review*, 99, no. 5 (1994): 1546–70.
[85] Pamela Pilbeam, 'The Growth of Liberalism and the Crisis of the Bourbon Restoration, 1827-1830.' *The Historical Journal*, 25, no. 2 (1982): 351–66.

Minister Prince Polignac; with few royal troops readily available, Charles X soon fled to England in exile after three days of conflict. The last of the Bourbons was thus removed with surprising ease. Louis Phillipe, Duc d'Orléans, replaced Charles as Roi Citoyen on 9 August.

The July Monarchy under Louis Phillipe faced an intricate array of political factions: the monarchists, loyalists, and ultras on the right, the Bonapartists, the republicans and socialists on the left. In an attempt to embrace all groups, Louis Phillipe deliberated cultivated a humble, down-to-earth façade by sending his children to state schools and walking on the streets of Paris unattended, dressed as ordinary people. Ironically, despite pursuing le juste milieu (the middle of the road), the Roi Citoyen managed to offend all groups, attested by the six attempts on his life between 1835 and 1846. Notably, the June Rebellion of 1832, workers' uprising in Paris served as the backdrop for Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The eventual fall of the July Monarchy stemmed from forces beyond Louis Phillipe's control. Failed harvests in 1847 exacerbated the already modest economic situation, driving an acute rise in unemployment. The textile industry also shrank due to the growing price of food. The final straw was relatively trivial, with the administration's refusal to grant permission to a political banquet. When riots in Paris erupted in February 1848, unlike Charles X who failed to rally his army, Louis Phillippe never attempted to use military-scale armed action against the people, and the emperor soon abdicated.

Months after the 1848 revolutions, the National Assembly chose Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew to Napoleon I, as the president of the Second Republic. Louis Napoleon would play a significant role in the diplomatic history of Europe in the nineteenth century with his involvement in the Crimean War. He had previously made two laughably futile attempts in 1836 and 1840 to seize power, neither of which lasted for more than a few hours. After escaping from prison in 1846, he was re-elected to the Assembly in 1848, by which point he had gained widespread support across the society. Louis Napoleon owed much of his popularity from the

positive reception of his own published works, including the most widely circulated *Extinction du Paupérisme* in 1844, in which he proposed practical suggestions on a banking system that would enrich the working class, associating Bonpartism with an awareness for social reform, thereby securing his electoral success.[86] For moderates, Napoleon represented a strong government; for the monarchists, he carried a hope for restoration of the monarchy.[87] After being elected as president in 1849, Louis Napoleon was dissatisfied with the 4-year limitation on his tenure, leading to a coup d'état on 1 Dec, 1851, where he arrested eighty leaders of the opposition and donned himself absolute power. Louis Napoleon assumed the title of 'Emperor Napoleon III' in December 1852.[88] The coup sparked a wide range of reactions in Europe—the Holy Alliance powers celebrated a victory of the monarchists, whereas the rest of the continent apprehended French aggression and potential expansion towards Belgium.

During Napoleon III's rule, The Second Empire consistently enjoyed considerable prosperity in the 1850s, approaching the industrial might of Queen Victoria's Britain. Industrial production grew rapidly with railway constructions and a magnificent renovation project of Paris under the direction of Mayor Eugène Haussmann. The French capital was subsequently reshaped into a captivating cultural and artistic centre of Europe, immensely boosting French prestige. During a period of prolonged economic prosperity, the relationship between the regime and the civil society became more stabilised and harmonious compared to in the July Monarchy.

On Louis Napoleon

Louis Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, remains a perplexing figure to his

[86] 'The working class has nothing. It is necessary to give them ownership.' Napoléon III, *Extinction du paupérisme* (Paris : Pagnerre éditeur, 1844).
[87] Rapport, *Nineteenth Century Europe*, 141.
[88] Hearder, *Europe in the nineteenth century*, 200-202.

subjects and historians alike. Born in 1808 to a tumultuous family, Louis Napoleon endured a difficult childhood, surviving exile, penury, and captivity. His uncle Napoleon I wielded a strong influence on his worldview, as he endeavoured to emulate Napoleon's achievements. Louis Napoleon's gain of renown came through his flair with the pen—his writings in exile earned him recognition critical for later political support. [89] In 1832, he published his first pamphlet *Reveries Politiques*, where he declared that republican principles in France could only be safeguarded by a monarchy. In 1834, his publication *Manual of Artillery* added to his acclaim among the French army officers. His 1839 piece *Des idées napoléoniennes* served as another potent propaganda tool, garnering support for Bonapartist governance in the style of Napoleon I's administrative and foreign policies. [90]

His two attempts of coup, however, were farcically disparaging. His 1836 attempt with the 46th infantry regiment and the 1840 plot with the 42nd infantry regiment both failed without any mobilised action, with Napoleon and his supporters having barely left their quarters before being arrested. After the August 1840 failure at Wimereux, Louis Napoleon was sent to life imprisonment at the castle of Ham, but his demeanour at the trial, where he asserted to champion the sovereignty of the masses, gathered further public recognition in his favour.

Louis Napoleon's vision for foreign policy, inspired by his allegiance to Napoleon I, largely resembled the discourse of the political left his time: 'annuler les traites de 1815, fruit de la défaite de Napoléon Ier, des Bonaparte et de la France; procéder à un grand remaniement européen qui défasse les conséquences de Waterloo.' [91] Louis Girard, in his biography of Napoleon, was critical of the emperor's optimism in believing that he could pursue the objectives of the extreme left without resorting to revolutionary means.

Queen Victoria offered a detailed, rather critical portrayal of Louis Napoleon following

[89] Graham Brooks, *Napoleon III* (Duckworth, 1933), 10-12.
[90] Ibid, 31.
[91] Louis Girard, *Napoléon III* (Fayard, 1986), 249.

the French emperor's visit to Buckingham Palace in 1855, in which the Queen described Napoleon III as inferior to his predecessor in knowledge, more Germanic than French, and ill-disposed to having sincere friendships—

> He is evidently possessed of indomitable courage, unflinching firmness of purpose, self-reliance, perseverance, and great secrecy. If we compare him with poor King Louis Philippe, the Emperor (Napoleon) possesses greater judgment and much greater firmness of purpose, but no experience of public affairs, nor mental application… the poor King (Louis Phillippe) was thoroughly French in character, possessing all the liveliness and talkativeness of that people, whereas the Emperor is as unlike a Frenchman as possible, being much more German than French in character…. How could it be expected that the Emperor should have any experience in public affairs, considering that till six years ago he lived as a poor exile, for some years even in prison, and never having taken the slightest part in the public affairs of any country? [92]

As Victoria alluded to, the challenging circumstances in which Louis Napoleon was raised instilled an ambition for glory and prestige within the self-proclaimed Emperor, which would define French foreign policy in the early years of Napoleon III's reign.

French public opinion

As Whitehall could be browbeaten by Fleet Street, the Quai d'Orsay was also not unscathed from the scrutiny of the French press. With the invention and development of the telegraph since 1844, by mid-century, the French press became increasingly involved in political debates, to the extent that newspapers actively intercepted the communication of military intelligence. The relentless curiosity of the French journals made it tremendously difficult for military communication to reliably pass through France without being leaked. The French channel was thus particularly avoided, while French diplomats carried the burden of delivering critical intelligence in private audiences personally. Despite extra precaution, the

[92] D. Forbes Campbell, 'Queen Victoria's Estimate of Napoleon III.' *Notes and Queries*, s6-IX, no. 226, (1884): 334-5,

Quai d'Orsay would find itself on numerous occasions outpaced by French journals in disclosing confidential military plans.

The French press was not monolithic in its view of France's position in the Eastern Question. Except for *Le Moniteur*, which more closely followed the intentions of Louis Napoleon, the remainder of French press adopted varied and frequently conflicting standpoints. For instance, French public opinion was conflicted on the origins and significance of the Holy Places dispute. The French publication *Constitutionnel* portrayed the affair to be primarily concerned with Russian, Austrian, and British interests, omitting French culpability for the dispute's escalation; *Pays* defined it as a question critical to France; *Moniteur* invalidated the existence of a cordial entente between Britain and France and asserted that the Court of St Petersburg must assume a more active role in the deliberations.[93] The overpowering scrutiny and pressurisation from the press thus added to the burden for French diplomats, as they faced the risk of being mercilessly criticised daily; this dynamic would inadvertently force the adoption of a more proactive and involved policy than the Quai d'Orsay would have preferred.

VIII. On the Austrians

In contrast to the rest of continental Europe, the Habsburg Monarchy from 1815 to 1848 saw relative political stagnation with little attempt at reform. Nonetheless, simmering sources of tension continue to threaten the stability of the Austrian Empire. Predominantly, both Ferdinand and Franz Joseph I were confronted with an ethnically diverse empire—Hungarians, Czech, Poles, and Italians—against the backdrop of mounting nationalist sentiments in the continent. The demographic complexity of the Austrian Empire made her view the rise of liberalism with great apprehension. Any attempt at rebellion within the Slavic population or within the territory of Hungary could foment an uncontainable spread of revolutionary

[93] TNA, FO 27/294, extract from *Le Moniteur*, 3 March, 1853, p31.

ideology. To address such concerns, under the reign of Emperor Francis I since 1792, Austria implemented an empowered police force, tightened censorship, and restored the death sentence. The Napoleonic wars only prompted Francis to dial the political landscape in Austria even further backwards, dashing the hopes of any reform.

Upon the foundation of the German Confederation in 1815, which loosely associated 39 German-speaking states, Austria established her prominence therein, securing influence in Central Europe. Simultaneously, with the successful conclusion of the Vienna Congress, Metternich symbolised reactionary conservatism in Europe, where Austrian policies prioritised the safeguarding of monarchical authority through censorship and surveillance. Particularly, Metternich effectively implemented the reactionary Karlsbader Beschlusse within the German Confederation in 1819, introducing a series of repressing regulations against universities and the press. A Central Investigation Commission was also established in Mainz, purposed to impose harsh punishments on forces of opposition. As the president of the Confederation, Austria was adamant to prevent Prussia's ascendancy and resisted all prepositions of unification. Notwithstanding, Metternich's strong protectionist policies aimed at elevating the Habsburg Empire's position in the Confederation backfired. In 1834, Prussia led the creation of the Zollverein, the German Customs Union formed independently to the confederation, from which Austria was excluded. Prince Metternich staunchly opposed Austria joining the union due to her protectionist trade policy, which was at odds with the union's promotion of free trade, as well as incompatible pre-existing trade portfolio and inefficient trade routes. Nonetheless, the Zollverein gradually consolidated Prussia's economic leadership within the German Confederation, to Austria's immense irk and jealousy. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Austrian economy already struggled to compete against flourishing trade networks that the Zollverein member states enjoyed, foreshadowing the rise of Prussia at

the expense of Austria.[94]

Apart from competition within the German Confederation, the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire compelled Austria to become increasingly vigilant of the Balkan region, which she extensively bordered. The preservation of Ottoman sovereignty, albeit weakened, was paramount for Austria in ensuring her Danubian frontier not be plagued by the ferment of nationalist quests for independence in the Balkan region. Strategically, the western coastal region of the Balkans was more appealing to Austria—not only due to its geographic proximity and the strategic access to the Adriatic, but also the remnant influence of the Venetian Republic rendered the coastal region more receptive towards a Western, Christian influence, rather than that of either the Porte or the Eastern Orthodox Russia. For Austria, Ottoman integrity promised prolonged regional stability, but an Ottoman collapse would invite Russian intervention, which could rapidly transform into Russian expansionism towards the Black Sea, threatening proliferation of quests of independence from Slavic countries more sympathetic to Russia. Conflicting material interests in the Balkan regions thus signified the Austro-Russian alliance was not as indestructible as the two courts tended to portray.

In pursuant to her conservatist policies, Austria was reluctant to join in negotiations regarding the Greek affairs, threatening the cordiality between Russia and Austria.[95] In February 1828, Prince Lieven expressed his dissatisfaction on Austrian intentions to the British Foreign secretary Lord Dudley, noting that if Austria and Prussia had wanted to enter 'the good faith of the 6 July alliance', they needed to make this determination known in more precise terms among the three courts.[96] Austrian alienation during the early stages of the Russo-Turkish conflict was because Austria desired 'l'anéantissement de la Grèce', not out of zeal for the legitimacy of the Croissant, but for assuring Austrian monopoly of commerce in the

[94] 'Austria and the Zollverein.' *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 14 (1862): 93.
[95] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623. 25 Jan, 1828, from Prince Jules de Polignac.
[96] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, 1 Feb, 1828. Lord Dudley to Le Comte de la Ferronays.

Adriatic and neighbouring waters.[97]

The Revolutions of 1848 severely destabilised Austria and fundamentally shook her political system, with numerous cities embroiled in protests and demonstrations, demanding significant concessions from the government. In September 1848, the Viennese court committed to crushing the Hungarian revolution by force, declaring war on Hungary in October. It was not until August 1849, with the military support of Tsar Nicholas I, that the rebellion was finally quelled and the rule of the Habsburgs was restored. This left Austria significantly indebted to Russia, adding to the tension and imbalance of the ostensibly intimate alliance.

Prince Klemens von Metternich

Born in 1773 in Coblenz on the Rhine, Klemens von Metternich was neither particularly Austrian nor German in his upbringing. Similar to his Russian contemporaries, Metternich communicated with his mother in French and developed a wealth of knowledge on French literature. His educational background was much more cosmopolitan than European diplomats of his time, as Metternich studied at the Strasbourg University alongside students of Russian, English, and Swiss descent. His earliest exposure to revolutionary actions was a bloodless riot he had witnessed, which he described as a 'drunken mob', more than a decade before Edmund Burke's philosophy left an indelible impression upon Metternich during a visit to London in 1794. Metternich did not settle in Vienna until that year, when he married the daughter of Prince Kaunitz, the minister of Maria Theresa. His marriage into a wealthy and influential family allowed Metternich the possibility to gain visibility and influence in Vienna. Later in 1818, Metternich developed a notorious liaison lasting nearly a decade with Princess Dorothea

[97] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623. 25 Jan, 1828, from Prince Jules de Polignac.

Lieven, wife to the Russian Ambassador to Britain, Prince Christoph von Lieven. Metternich was merely one of many powerful statesmen with whom Princess Lieven had been associated, and this cadre included Alexander I, Castlereagh, Palmerston, Charles Grey, among other influential political figures in Europe. In his twenties, Metternich developed a fear for the prosperous middle class and university professors, yet he dreaded the press more. He also labelled revolutionaries as 'civil servants, literary men, lawyers, and people responsible for public education.'[98]

Metternich's position in Austria grew progressively in the early 1820s, with the Emperor Francis I trusting him 'sans bornes'. In 1821, he became Chancellor of the State, in the capacity of which Metternich forged a close friendship with the emperor, working for hours daily with the latter. Metternich wrote fondly of his close relationship to the emperor:

> Le ciel m'a placé à côté d'un homme qui a été pour ainsi dire créé pour moi. L'empereur François ne dépense pas de vaines paroles. Il sait ce qu'il veut et sa volonté m'impose toujours ce que mon devoir me commande de vouloir. L'Empereur fait toujours ce que je veux, mais je ne veux jamais que ce qu'il doit faire. Si on me comble de bienfaits et à confiance en moi, c'est parce que je suis la route qui m'a tracé. Aurais-je le malheur de m'en éloigner, le prince de Metternich ne resterait pas vingt-quatre heures ministre des Affaires étrangères.[99]

As the key statesman behind the Concert of Europe, Metternich prioritised maintaining the balance of power in Europe, curbing Russian expansionist ambitions in Central Europe and in the Black Sea, while preserving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Metternich was a skilled diplomat—persuasive, charismatic, and detail-oriented. In spite of his talent, Metternich regretted that Austrian affairs became insufficient for him to exercise his capabilities. Starting from 1822, Metternich began to emphasise that the focus of his work was European questions rather than Austrian ones. 'Si j'avais la politique autrichienne à faire, je serais bien coupable de faire celle qui m'occupe du matin au soir. Mais c'est que j'ai beau chercher, je ne la trouve

[98] Hearder, *Europe in the nineteenth century*, 309.
[99] HHS, Russland 55A, 26 Jul, 1820

pas cette politique autrichienne.'[100] Metternich had more reasons for pessimism—even if Austria had been more centrally involved in the affairs of the 1820s, Metternich's diplomatic prowess would still not adequately reverse the waning power of his state.

IX. On the Prussians

Between the Vienna Congress and the Revolutions of 1848, Prussia entered a phase of relative political weakness, only playing a limited role in the Eastern Question. Among the Holy Alliance powers, Prussia's international influence was overshadowed by Metternich's system and the military might of the Russian tsar. Nonetheless, this period saw exemplary Prussian bureaucracy and growing interest in Prussian civil service. In addition, Prussia aspired dominance over the German Confederation, replacing the leadership of Austria. Although both powers were aligned with Russia through the Holy Alliance, the ambition for presiding over the Germanic states provided Prussia with the incentive to alienate Austria economically and diplomatically. This conflict of interest would be accentuated through Prussian leadership in the Zolleverein since 1834, which built a solid foundation for the rise of Prussia in the second half of the century.

Prussian bureaucracy was largely more modernised compared to that of Austria and Russia. Prussia's basic constitution until 1848, the *Allgemeines Landrecht* of 1794, granted civil servants the legal status, rights, and duties separate from those of the aristocratic estates. In the Prussian bureaucracy, nobles and non-noble officials formed their own groups, allowing state service to absorb members of all three of the old estates. In the late 1830s, the distinction between nobles and non-nobles has become less accentuated than that between officials and non-officials.[101]

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[100] HHS, Russland 55A, 19 April 1822, Metternich to Nesselrode.
[101] Hermann Beck, 'The Social Policies of Prussian Officials: The Bureaucracy in a New Light.' *The Journal of Modern History*, 64, no. 2, (1992): 263–98.

The rise of the press also posed a political challenge in Prussia in the first half of the century. Karl August von Hardenburg, Prime Minister of Prussia, deemed that liberal ideologies were charged by journals and gazettes; they must be restricted under a common German law. In 1818, there was a strong demand for reform with over 3,000 signatures from the Rhineland. Later administrative reforms saw German become the common language of the empire. While Prussia initially advocated for the idea of a Parliament, this proposal was rejected following the revolutions in Southern Europe in the 1820s; the empire thus rested on the pillars of 'emperor, army, and church'.[102]

X. On the Ottomans

Throughout the 18th and early 19th century, weakness of the Ottoman Empire can be attributed to a combination of geographical, economic, and demographic factors. The Ottoman Empire was ten times the size of metropolitan France, spread across three continents and numerous islands. Peripheral provinces along the long coastline proved challenging to keep in central control. All aspects of the decentralised empire demanded the Porte's maintenance and governance: the military, the navy, the commissariat, diverse demographics of various levels of imperial allegiance. Ottoman attempts at modernisation of the economy were also haphazard and feeble, with no substantial improvement to governmental revenue or its military strength. Furthermore, the ethnical heterogeneity of the empire continued to plague its internal stability.

The most acute threat to Ottoman stability originated from the emerging power of provincial magnates, known as 'ayans', upon whom the Ottoman government became alarmingly reliant; the Porte thus aimed to dilute their power.[103] When Napoleon's 1812 invasion halted Russia's war with the Ottoman Empire, the Porte established a new defence system independent of the ayans, with the introduction of a provincial army directly reporting

[102] Rapport, *Nineteenth century Europe*, 57, 72.
[103] Davison, Roderic H. *Nineteenth Century Ottoman Diplomacy and Reforms*. Isis Press, 1999, p2.

central imperial authority. The ayans also lost control of tax collection responsibilities during the power reshuffle. The sudden movement to de-ayanise the Ottoman bureaucracy was met with fierce resistance, which prompted a ruinous civil war between the central state of the Porte and the provincial magnates, draining the Porte's military manpower. By the start of the Greek War of Independence, however, the process of de-ayanisation was almost complete, as some Ottoman troops already contained no Anatolian ayan member.[104]

The Porte's project to remove the provincial magnates from power was ill-prepared: by simply replacing the long-standing power structures, the Sultan neglected the necessity to facilitate the transition with appropriate resources and supporting local networks. The abrupt changes were frequently enforced with little practical consideration, nearly causing irrevocable destruction to local networks and infrastructure, to the point that the newly appointed imperial viziers were unable to recruit troops to form an army. With the ayans removed from power, the Porte was compelled to hastily employ mercenaries for the suppression of the Greek uprising, leading to an even more heterogeneous composition of the Ottoman army.

Around this time, all European great powers vied for greater influence in the Ottoman Empire. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic warfare, Russia emerged as the new contester to British dominance in the region. By the 1830s, Russian influence even overshadowed that of Britain, to the alarm of London, who feared the pathway to India compromised by Russian ambitions.[105] Lord Palmerston, then Foreign Secretary, remarked that 'if the Russians tried to make the Afghans Russian, we must take care that they will become British.'[106] The Ottomans were consistently cognisant of foreign intentions on their empire, but always feared the Russians most intensely. The Sultan's extreme anxieties about a Russian invasion directly impacted deployment efforts of Turkish troops. Throughout the Greek revolution, which the

[104] Ilıcak, *Those Infidel Greeks*, 2-4.
[105] Roderic H. Davison, *Nineteenth Century Ottoman Diplomacy and Reforms* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1999), 152.
[106] Palmerston to Lord Clanricarde (British ambassador to Russia, 1838-1840), 26 Oct, 1838, quoted in Webster, *Castlereagh*, 746.

Ottoman Empire considered a Russian-constructed conspiracy, the Ottoman administrators positioned Russia as posing a more concrete enemy than the Greek insurgents, and strived to ensure their preparedness for an eventual war with Russia. Consequentially, a considerable proportion of Ottoman soldiers were prevented from being dispatched to the insurgent provinces in Greece, as they were obligated in maintaining a state of vigilance along the Russian border.[107]

The Greek Revolution highlighted the inefficiencies in the Ottoman military. Following the de-ayanisation process, the military mercenaries from diverse backgrounds hired by the Sultan were even more untamed. A report from the military campaign of 1822 epitomised the alarming incapacity of the grand viziers to manage the army. Sultan Mahmud II remarked a report from Seyyid Ali Pasha, organiser of the military campaign—

> 'A vizier who had served as grand vizier and [is now appointed] commander-in-chief with full discretionary powers and authority is unable to recruit soldiers; and he is not only unable to comprehend the cost of twenty-thousand soldiers receiving forty piasters for a salary and how this amount would be paid, but he also does not know whether there are any viziers in Nafpaktos and Euboea who can manage three to four thousand soldiers. Good God [give me patience]!'[108]

The grand viziers sent to mobilise the mercenaries were typically inexperienced young administrators with no military exposure. Due to their ineptitude, the Porte struggled to coordinate the Albanians and Armenians, whose loyalty to the Ottoman Empire could be barely depended upon.[109] Historian George Finlay argued that the Albanians' complicating factor on the Greek Revolution cannot be omitted, and that the Porte gravely miscalculated by including an ethnic group into a struggle to which they are not entirely objective, rendering the Ottoman state at the mercy of Albanian warlords until at least 1825.[110]

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[107] BOA 575/105, quoted in Ilicak, *Those Infidel Greeks*, 9.
[108] Mahmud II's imperial rescript, 5 January, 1822, BOA/HAT 38516, ibid, 12.
[109] BOA/HAT 31344-B, Ebubekir Sıdkı to the Sublime Porte, 5 August, 1824, ibid.
[110] George Finlay, *A History of Greece, from Its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time, B.C. 146 to A.D. 1864* (LL. D. Clarendon press, 1877), 39.

Since the beginning of the Greek Revolution, protracted instability throughout the Ottoman empire jeopardised commerce. Trade in the Black Sea was so sluggish that major cities struggled to maintain basic rationing due to the stagnant economy. To combat frequent food shortages in Constantinople and soaring inflation between 1821-1826, the Porte debased the currency four times in order to pay the mercenaries. Out of apprehension for domestic uprisings due to the harsh economic conditions, the administration was compelled to purchase corn from Europe for enormous sums to prevent unrest.[111]

From the Ottoman perspective, the Greek insurrection was an inevitable occurrence due to their own decay—a punishment for internal weakness of the Ottoman Empire, rather than a political demonstration of the insurrectionists. The self-sacrificial momentum of the Greek population puzzled the Sultan, leading the Porte to turn towards the traditional Islamic philosophy of Ibn Khaldun in pursuit of religious patriotism. Ibn Khaldun's philosophy outlines a dynastic cycle for the rise and fall of states, which places the Ottomans in the fifth state of 'waste and extravagance', suggesting that the Ottoman Empire's worsening form will lead to the contempt of neighbouring states and the eventual collapse of the empire. Ministers of the Porte thus understood the Greek struggle as a natural outcome as the Ottomans 'got used to repose and ease, fell to embellishment and waste, that enemies felt capable of defeating the Ottomans.'[112]

The Porte thus proposed a social transformation for the Ottoman population, advocating for a more active and militant lifestyle. In a radical series of decrees, the Ottoman population in urban cities were compelled to acquire weapons, with the aim of emulating the martial traditions of their ancestors. The mass arming of the Ottoman population indirectly sanctified unprecedented violence, including indiscriminate violence against religious minorities during

[111] Kitromilides, Paschalis, and Kōnstantinos Tsoukalas, *The Greek Revolution : A Critical Dictionary* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021), 75.
[112] Ibid, 46-58.

the Greek Revolution. For the Ottomans, the state's inability to suppress the uprisings was perceived as an appeal for the population to contribute to the collective violence.[113] In February 1828, the Sultan published a call to arms for all Muslims against Russia, France, and England. After the call to arms, the Porte ordered the immediate departure of all Russian, French, and English residents working in Constantinople 'en peines plus rigoureuses'. The declaration was delivered with bitter acrimony against Russia as the principal enemy. The Porte thus used the discourse of a patriotic war against Russia to further encourage violence and intensify the conflict.[114]

XI. Diplomatic Services in Europe

In the 19th century, diplomatic services and foreign ministries in Europe were transitioning towards greater professionalism compared to the 18th century. Since the establishment of the British Foreign Office in 1782, the British diplomatic service was improved significantly during the office of Lord Palmerston, even though it remained more amateurish than its counterparts in other European countries.[115] While the site of the Foreign Office remained the modest quarters of Downing Street, the department saw a gradual growth in number of staff, reaching 31 staff members by 1832.[116] The office space was described by diplomat Horace Rumbold as outdated, disorganised, and lacking in resources, 'dingy and shabby to a degree, reflecting a picture of disorder, penury and meanness.'[117]

The composition of the British diplomatic staff also evolved. In the 1830s, attaches of embassies and legations were primarily young friends or relatives of ambassadors, frequently

[113] British archival material documents the extent of the violence in 1821 in the Ottoman Empire, 'four waves of collective violence between April and December 1821; by the end of the third wave, out of seventy-six Greek churches and chapels in Istanbul and its environs, one was utterly destroyed and thirteen were plundered' Strangford to Castlereagh, 30 July, 1821, TNA/FO 78/99/36.
[114] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, 11 February, 1828, p234.
[115] Brown, *Palmerston*, 73.
[116] Hearder, *Europe in the nineteenth century*, 157.
[117] Horace Rumbold, *Recollections of a Diplomatist* (Lond., 1902), 56.

unpaid and residing in the household of their patron. George Canning described them as 'young men scattered over Europe, owing no allegiance, and taking diplomacy only as subsidiary to amusement.'[118] The average age of all attachés entering the service from 1812 to 1860 was merely 21 years and 10 months. The vast majority of the attachés, like the younger Stratford Canning, had no intention of continuing service in diplomacy, and resigned after a few years. The Foreign Office was thus put in a passive position of having limited control of its staff, and being unable to dismiss the young attaches whom the office had not been paying. Attempts at modifying the system started with requiring a letter of appointment signed by the Foreign Secretary for all attaches, before an increase in their payment was considered.[119]

The British diplomatic service system remained relatively disorganised despite attempts at modernisation. By 1830s, however, the majority of high-ranking diplomats had risen from within the diplomatic service, with fewer political appointments. The process of admissions, however, remained outdated. Even after the introduction of a qualifying exam by Lord Clarendon in 1856, diplomatic candidates were single-handedly selected by the Foreign Secretary from names submitted by parents who had the personal acquaintance of the Foreign Secretary himself.[120]

In Russia, diplomatic services were organised in a much more archaic system. Graduates from the elite institution entered state service, including the diplomatic services. Compared to other European countries, the organisation of the Russian diplomatic corps remained arbitrary and archaic: all senior posts were appointed directly by imperial decree, while secretaries and attaches were appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Even junior staff members were bound by rigid military discipline. Service in diplomacy was strictly limited to nobles, army officers, and court officials, excluding peasants, merchants, and

[118] Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning,* 265.
[119] S. T. Bindoff, 'The Unreformed Diplomatic Service, 1812–60.' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (1935):143–72.
[120] Hearder, *Europe in the nineteenth century*, 158.

taxpayers.[121]

Around mid-century, the diplomatic service in France was more professional and modern compared to that of Britain and Russia. Firstly, compared to the dimly lit offices on Downing Street, the French seat for its foreign office was much more glamourous. The house of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been located at 37 Quai d'Orsay since 1853, named after an 18th century Provost of the Merchants of Paris. The ornate building is representative of the splendour of decorative arts in the French Second Empire, commissioned by the then Foreign Minister Francois Guizot.[122] Regarding the hierarchical structure within the diplomatic services, France allowed a more universal and inclusive approach. Contrary to arbitrary direct appointments by the foreign minister, entry into the French service was not limited to the aristocracy, but determined via a mandatory entrance exam. The exam required proficiency in German and English; topics included the diplomatic history of Europe from the Congress of Westphalia to the Congress of Vienna. Prior to the French Revolution, professional diplomats in France were high ranking civil servants who owned grand retinues, living extravagant lifestyles in London or Vienna. It was not until the reign of Napoleon I when diplomats started to be recruited from the Council of State advisors. Talleyrand reformed the service, separating domestic and foreign affairs into separate institutions, which strengthened the department with more organisational clarity.

With regards to the diplomatic services in Austria, the system was a moderate combination of the Russian and French systems—entry remained highly exclusive and open to selected aristocratic families and preferred members of the nobility, but a state civil service exam was a mandatory component for appointment. Anton Steindl von Plessenet, Austrian diplomat and first translator at the Constantinople embassy, was an epitome of the Eastern

[121] Hearder, *Europe in the Nineteenth Century,* 159.
[122] Ministère de L'Europe et des affaires étrangères, 'Le Quai d'Orsay—notre histoire', disponible a https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-and-its-network/the-work-of-the-ministry-for-europe-and-foreign-affairs

Question's augmenting importance for the Austrian Empire and her diplomatic services. The Austrian diplomat followed his father's footsteps in receiving an education at the Imperial-Royal Academy for Oriental languages, founded by Maria Theresa in 1754. In the Habsburg monarchy, for the youth outside of hereditary aristocratic families, attending the Oriental Academy provided outstanding upward social mobility, as the completion of an education thereof seamlessly led to a civil-service career as a dragoman, and typically followed by ambassadorial posts.[123]

Diplomatic services in Prussia were the most formally structured system in Europe. Prussian regulations for entering a career in diplomacy were far more rigid than the rest of the continent. The procedure and rules were first drafted as early as in 1827, followed by an amplification by a cabinet order in 1842.

Candidate seeking a career in diplomacy in Prussia had to have completed three years at a university, submit a written application in French, before passing two entrance exams. These entrance exams consisted of topics in history and political science, as well as oral and written examinations in the French language. Even if the candidate was accepted, he would have to serve for a year unpaid, before returning to Berlin for a special examination, in which it is determined whether the young diplomat is suited for missions in the permanent ranks of the service. The most successful candidate would be rewarded with a position as Third Secretary in the service, which is immediately above the rank of attaché.[124]

XII. Conclusion: accumulation of tension in European diplomacy

The 1814 Vienna Congress orchestrated a European status quo that necessitated not

[123] Michaela Wolf, *The Habsburg Monarchy's Many-Languaged Soul: Translating and interpreting, 1848–1918* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), 107.
[124] Hearder, *Europe in the Nineteenth Century*,157-9.

only a shared sincerity for peace in the wake of the Napoleonic warfare, but also collective compromises from all European great powers. These concessions on their respective strategic interests empowered the Concert of Europe system, but also constrained Castlereagh and Metternich's creation to its inherently fragile form. Such a balance of power demanded continuous diplomatic alignment, which waves of revolution and perennial territorial disputes persisted to undermine.

The initial success of the Congress Era masked underlying fractures over principles of intervention, which would eventually fray the diplomatic system. Within the broader framework of the European Concert, the formation of the Holy Alliance—among Russia, Austria, and Prussia—accentuated the ideological chasm between the conservatist powers and the western European powers of Britain and France.

Unprecedented economic and social developments further destabilised the newly established world order. Rapid industrial growth, particularly in Britain, was accompanied by drastic population expansions. This demographic shift shocked existing social structures across Europe, widening wealth disparities and burdening agricultural advancements, which failed to adapt to the surge in urban population. Poor harvests, among other socioeconomic adversities, contributed to the rise of liberalist revolutions in the 1830s and 1840s, severely challenging the status quo and the limits of the Metternich system. Along with the invention of the telegraph, the emergence of the press wielded a growing influence over foreign policy decisions. Following the revolutions of 1848, European governments became increasingly cognisant and sensitive to public opinion, whilst asserting more rigorous conservatist command over their subjects.

In particular, the Eastern Question relating to the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire, highlighted the irreconcilability of European great powers' underlying material interests, among which those of the two strongest powers—Britain and Russia—were most

consequential for the maintenance of European stability. Britain was invested in the integrity of the Ottoman Empire due to commercial necessity for accessing trade routes towards India via the Black Sea. With similarly pragmatic yet more pronouncedly expansionist ambitions towards the Near East, Russia witnessed decades of transformation under the reigns of Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I. Whilst Alexander championed liberalism in the earliest years of his reign, the tsar shifted towards mysticism and conservatism; by the time of Nicholas, the Russian Empire centred around principles of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality.

Compared to Britain and Russia, France and Austria were more vulnerable to revolutionary upheavals in the first half of the nineteenth century. Between the Bourbon Restoration and the rise of the Second Empire, France was marked by recurrent instability, from which Louis Napoleon emerged first as Prince President, then as a self-proclaimed emperor. Apart from economic modernisation and industrial growth, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte also introduced a foreign policy guided by the reassertion of French national prestige. On the other hand, the diverse, multi-ethnic Austrian Empire under the Habsburg Monarchy maintained a rigid political order led by Prince Metternich. Austria sought to preserve her dominance in the German Confederation, but she was deeply concerned with her economic ascendancy and the stability of the Balkan region. Although Prussia's influence over European diplomacy in the Eastern Question was limited, her challenge to Austria's position within both the German Confederation and the Holy Alliance critically shaped a delicate dynamic that Austria struggled to preserve.

Meanwhile, the irrevocable deterioration of the Ottoman Empire, despite decades' endeavour at modernisation through the Tanzimat reforms, whetted European appetite amidst diplomatic crises in the deep-rooted Eastern Question in early nineteenth century Europe.

Chapter 2

European diplomacy during the Greek Revolution

In late March 1821, a storm of uprisings broke out in the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, led by the Greek secret society *Filiki Eteria*, an organisation dedicated to liberating the Greek-speaking Christian population living under the Sultan's rule in the Ottoman Empire since 1453. Their leader Ypsilantis had no more than 4500 men following him in the popular yet poorly organised uprising when he crossed the Pruth River towards the Danubian Principalities on 25 March. A Greek flag was waved in front of lines of armed men, faithfully taking their oaths of allegiance to the cause of forming a Greek nation.[1]

Although the Greek Orthodox Christians were a minority in the Ottoman Empire, they outnumbered the Ottoman Turks in Morea (now the Peloponnese) and enjoyed degrees of autonomy and the freedom to practice their religion. In July 1774, Catherine the Great's Russia and the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardji, which granted Russia the freedom of navigation for her vessels on the Black Sea, as well as the nebulously defined right to protect those who practice the Orthodox faith in the Ottoman Empire.[2] These terms were deeply humiliating for the Ottoman Empire as they were beneficial for the expansion of Russian influence towards the Mediterranean. Since the 1774 treaty, Greek ships began to sail under the Russian flag, which boosted extraordinary growth in Greek sea trade and the development of numerous cities. During the years of the Napoleonic wars, the spread of revolutionary political thought began to impact the deeply radical educated youth of Greece. The impact of revolutionary thought was manifest through rapidly growing membership of

[1] David Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, book (London: Overlook Duckworth, 2011).
[2] 'The Treaty of Kucuk-Kainardji, 21 July 1774', in Matthew Smith Anderson, *The Great Powers and the Near East, 1774-1923*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), 9-14.

secret societies in Greece, who strived for total liberation of the Balkans from Ottoman rule.[3] When Ypsilantis, the leader of *Filiki Eteria*, led his small force consisted of Serbs, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Moldavians, and some 700 Greek students to form the 'Sacred Battalion', they embarked on what would become a nine-year struggle that was anything but a gloriously heroic struggle of liberation. A harsh conflict of attrition, the Greek Revolution was marred by massacres and unspeakable atrocities from both the Greeks and the Ottomans, before the eventual establishment of an independent Greek state in 1830.

Before the uprisings fully spread across the Greek islands by April 1821, all European eyes were already glued to Greece. The Greek Revolution was, compared to other revolutionary movements in the century, uniquely positioned to garner European support. Fundamentally, Europe held deep-rooted prejudices against the Muslim rule of the Ottoman Sultan, which bred hatred against the Porte upon sight of the Greek Christians' suffering. Superficially, the collective European nostalgia for the golden age of Classical Greece was powerful. Europe naturally gravitated towards the Greek cause in veneration of the peninsula's immeasurable cultural significance. The Greek Revolution also ignited widespread attention from the tragedy of Lord Byron, who died in Greece as a volunteer despite having never participated in any military actions for the cause. Philhellenism dominated European public opinion—particularly in Britain, where the force of a journalist's pen could sway diplomatic and political decisions. Within months since the inception of the Greek Revolution, Greece's quest for independence transcended its national frontiers and became a European cause.

The Greek struggle also marks one of the earliest diplomatic crises for the Concert of Europe since its establishment in 1814 at the Congress of Vienna. Historians have labelled the Greek War of Independence, with its brutality and endurance, as the turning point that

[3] Dean J. Kostantaras, "Christian Elites of the Peloponnese and the Ottoman State, 1715–1821." *European history quarterly* 43.4 (2013), 628–56.

fundamentally changed European perception of the Eastern Question. J.A.R. Marriot was among the first to identify the significance of the Greek struggle beyond its national quest for independence, as M.S. Anderson and Albrecht-Carrie both found the struggle representative of the danger of Ottoman weakness, which could severely disrupt European peace and unity. The feeble Ottoman government and their ineffective handling of the Greek insurrection threatened to bring conflict upon Europe, directly challenging the post-Napoleonic status quo established at the Vienna Congress in 1814-5.[4] In Mark Mazower's view, the Greek case thus represented the starting point for sustained European interest and intervention in the region, which persisted beyond the establishment of an independent Greek state.[5]

This chapter examines the complex diplomatic efforts in the initial phase of the Greek War of Independence both in Constantinople and in the European courts between 1821-1822, through archival sources from Britain, Austria, and printed primary sources from the Ottoman archives, and Russia political records.[6] Diplomatic conduct in Constantinople were severely disrupted by logistical challenges, including delays in communication and bureaucratic inefficiencies of the Ottoman Porte. The strong personality of Baron Stroganoff led to a series of confrontational exchanges between the Russian ambassador and the Porte, during which Stroganoff's communication with the Ottoman government was frequently unauthorised by the court of St. Petersburg. The catastrophic diplomatic mission culminated in Stroganoff's premature departure from Constantinople, in an alarming scare for imminent war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Military action, however, did not immediately follow. This chapter argues that the maintenance of European peace in 1821-2 was not an outcome of exemplary diplomatic efforts, but rather it attests to the limited impact of the quality of diplomacy compared to the underlying strategic interests of the great powers involved,

[4] Marriott, *The Eastern Question*; Anderson, *The Eastern Question*; Albrecht-Carrié, *The Concert of Europe*.
[5] Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*.
[6] French archival material from Les Archives Diplomatiques du ministère des affaires étrangères (Quai d'Orsay) will contribute more towards the later stage of the conflict, during the Russo-Turkish War 1828-9.

particularly those of powers who held a decisive voice. Although the failure in diplomatic exchanges can bring two powers to the brink of war, the ultimate decision of whether to engage in armed conflict concerns with considerations of strategic interests that remain unaffected by the quality of diplomatic conduct. For Russia, her national interests were conflicting across the upholding of the European status quo, religious obligations to her Greek co-religionists, and her interests in expanding influence in the Black Sea. Critically, it was in Russia's strategic interests to be aligned with her European allies, thereby allowing British and Austria disinterest in war to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, regardless of Stroganoff's diplomatic blunder in Constantinople.

I. The inception of the Greek Revolution, March-April 1821

Shortly after the Greek Revolution erupted in March 1821, the court in St Petersburg apprehended the broader scope of the rebellion beyond the Greeks' quest for liberation from Ottoman dominion. Out of precaution for the spread of revolutionary sentiments, passport issuing for Greeks to cross the Russian border was suspended, even though Greek motivations remained nebulous to Russian authorities. Despite the uprising's uncertain preliminaries, Tsar Alexander I was by legitimist principles supportive of the Ottoman Empire. The Tsar considered the Sultan to be, not unlike himself, a legitimate sovereign who faced the threat of revolutionary challenges. Alexander thus reassured the Porte of their entitlement to take proper measures to maintain stability in the Principalities.[7]

The Russian foreign minister, Karl Nesselrode, simultaneously received a request for protection from the Phanariot Greek Prince Alexandros Ypsilantis, complicating the picture for Russian diplomacy. Ypsilantis was a prince of the Danubian Principalities and had served in

[7] VPR, Secret correspondence to Count Kotschoubey, No. 21, 15/27 March, 1821, p68.

the Russian cavalry during the Napoleonic Wars. Born in Constantinople, Ypsilantis fled to Russia during the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War in 1805, and subsequently entered the Russian court under the patronage of Maria Feodorvna, the mother of Tsar Alexander I. In 1820, Ypsilantis was elected as the leader of the *Filiki Eteria*, which began organising the Greek Revolution. Nesselrode and Tsar Alexander I thus deliberated to clarify the Russian stance as the Greek plea convoluted Alexander's considerations. The leader of the *Filiki Eteria* addressed the tsar on behalf of the Greek nation which was 'tout apprêtée tout entier a reconquérir son indépendance'. As expressive as Ypsilantis' pledge, Nesselrode gauged that the tsar would strictly adhere to his long-standing maxims: the upholding of legitimate sovereigns and maintenance of the status quo. Nesselrode outlined Alexander's core principles as 'l'improbation générale des tentatives de révolte contre l'autorité légitime'. Persuading the tsar to support the Greeks in an inherently revolutionary cause was implausible. Resolved to observe the precepts of both religion and morality, Alexander wished to see the revolt 'étouffée a son origine'.[8] The foreign minister thus responded to Ypsilantis that the emperor 'ne peut que lui exprimer son plus vif mécontentement, entièrement contraire aux vœux et aux intentions de sa majesté impériale'. Therefore, Ypsilantis should not even depend upon any indication of interest from the part of the court of St. Petersburg. Russia's initial firm disapprobation and near condemnation of the Greek cause was consistent with her policy of denouncing revolutionary activity along with the other Holy Alliance powers.

For Alexander, the diplomatic situation was not quite a quandary, as his position was unflinchingly clear. The perception of Russia as the north light of upholding legitimist, conservatist principles was paramount to Alexander. Under the guise of maintaining European stability, the tsar promptly communicated his denunciation to the Greek insurgents.[9] Ironically,

[8] VPR, Nesselrode to Alexander I, 30 March (18), 1821, p70-1.
[9] Ibid, p71.

the tsar's dismissive response was penned by the other Russian Foreign Minister, the Greek born Ioannis Capodistrias. This was a personally untenable position for Capodistrias, who was naturally sympathetic to the Greek cause due to his origins. In private, Capodistrias wrote to his secretary and close friend Alexandre Sturdza highlighting the 'deplorable events' among the Greek population, referring to the Greeks as men 'qui veut le bien, mais qui ne le veut que par les seuls moyens par lesquels le bien peut se faire'. Against his personal partiality, Capodistrias understood the priorities of his sovereign: the menace of revolutionary movements exploding across Europe would be far more consequential than the fateful quest of the Greek population.[10] His secretary Sturdza nonetheless held a more firmly pro-Greek attitude, eloquently articulating the reasons why the Greek cause could not be confused with other revolutionary movements, including those in France, Italy, and in Spain. The key distinction of the Greek cause was physical danger from the Greek Christians' long-time oppression, the devastation of which approached destruction of their 'life, property, honour, and faith'. Whereas in other instances, revolutionaries stemmed from 'pride and hatred in the name of illusory privileges, stirring up passions against legitimate governments.'[11]

Alexander proceeded to directly instruct Baron Grigory Stroganoff, the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, to convey the tsar's loyal support for the Ottoman Empire, and to convince the Sultan that the tsar would never permit any encouragement of the insurrection. Alexander acknowledged that without deviating from 'des bornes fixées par les traites', his reproach of the Greek cause was unequivocal.[12] Apart from the earlier dispatch for Ypsilantis to declare a definitive Russian refusal for support, Alexander also wrote to the Danubian prince from the Congress of Laibach, regretting the latter's inopportune insurrection against Ottoman authorities, and forbade the prince from returning to Russia again.[13]

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[10] VPR, Capodistrias to Sturdza.
[11] Ibid, p118.
[12] VPR, No. 35 Alexander I to Stroganoff, p93.
[13] The letter from Alexander I dated 25 March was addressed to Stroganoff for passing on to Ypsilantis, who then

The official disavowal from the Russian court was unexpectedly harsh for Ypsilantis—whose military rank was also stripped. He had framed the Hellenic quest for freedom and independence in a manner that resonated with Orthodox solidarity, confidently anticipating ostensible or at least tacit Russian support. Ypsilantis posited that the protection of Orthodox coreligionists and his own ties to the Russian court would trump the tsar's competing considerations—this was, however, a gross miscalculation. In contrast, in addition to firm adherence to conservatist principles, Alexander was also resolved to honour the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest and maintain cordial relations with the Ottoman Porte. The 1812 treaty determined the legal impermissibility of any intervention from Alexander: the treaty postulated Ottoman suzerainty in the Danubian Principalities, which Russia was legally bound to recognise. Nonetheless, the treaty also provided the guise of religious protection as a pretext should the tsar decide to support the Greeks, as the 1812 agreement solidified a Russian protectorate for Orthodox coreligionists in the region. All considered, Ypsilantis' wishes were sensible, but Alexander was far more austere than imagined.

Ypsilantis likely refused to swallow the Russian rejection and deceptively spread the rumour that he had successfully obtained Alexander's blessing for the Greek cause. In spite of the crisp Russian repudiation, Ypsilantis had cited Russian support as the basis to encourage participation in the revolution, plausibly even prior to his official appeal to the Russian court, let alone the receipt of its rejection. By April 1821, the Greek insurgents appeared convinced of Russia's open endorsement or at least tacit tolerance of their cause, even though this had been relentlessly denied by St Petersburg. The perception of Russian support exacerbated the self-sacrificing nature of the hostilities, as the violence gradually escalated towards a macabre bloodbath. The less rigidly anti-revolutionary Nesselrode even remarked that 'the English had

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received it around 15 April. The content of the letter was known to Lord Strangford around 20 April among other dispatches from Laibach, which the British ambassador forwarded to Lord Castlereagh on 21 April, 1821. Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/667/3, 21 April, 1821.

no idea of the excess of tyranny that the Greek nation was overwhelmed with.' The insurrection also became more widespread than what the Russian court had previously supposed, augmenting existing fears of its wider revolutionary repercussions.[14] Nesselrode believed that the Greeks faced an inevitable failure without intelligent leaders and indispensable resources for the war effort—both of which the Greeks in Roumelia and Morea had lacked.[15] The prospects of the Greek cause were thus hopelessly dire in early 1821, as Russia stoically observed its ominous commencement, concealing her conflicting considerations.

II. Challenges to diplomatic efforts and gradual decline of Russo-Turkish relations

Whilst the persisting Greek Revolution began to attract more public attention from continental Europe, the gradually deteriorating diplomatic scene in Constantinople was more alarming for the great powers involved. The focal point of the diplomatic efforts was Constantinople, rather than London, St. Petersburg, Vienna, or Paris. The geographic separation of the governments and their diplomats in action was not unique to the Greek Revolution or events in the Eastern Question, but the distance rendered logistical obstacles and delays in communication more consequential to the outcomes of diplomacy. The inconsistencies in intentions and conduct between diplomats and their governments characterised diplomacy during the first phase of the Greek Revolution as tensions rose between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The direct hostility between the Russian ambassador, Baron Stroganoff, and the Ottoman Porte epitomises the challenges to diplomatic efforts in the Eastern Question—an embodiment of strong personalities, delayed instructions commenting on faits-accomplis, pre-existing prejudice, logistical and bureaucratic ineffectiveness, and the Porte's conviction of imminent Russian aggression.

[14] VPR, Volume III, Tome 4, Antoine Sandrini, Vice consul on island Zante, to Nesselrode, 18 (30) April 1821, p121.
[15] Ibid.

The delay between the dispatchment of a letter and its receipt aggravated the ineffectiveness of Russo-Ottoman communication. The average time lapse for correspondence between St Petersburg and Constantinople ranged from 3 to 5 weeks. This could partially explain the uncooperative reception from the Ottomans to Russian appeals to alleviate tension. For instance, when the Porte read the letters dispatched from St Petersburg in late March only by 20 April, the Sultan was dissatisfied with the 'tone of ménagement' in Russian discourse, and that Russian disavowal of Ypsilantis originated from inconvenience rather than in a decided disapprobation. Furthermore, the Porte found that the Russian government 'admits too unreservedly the right of the Greeks to pretend to an amendment of their political slate and their present proceedings.' Later in the last week of April, a note by the Tulchin-based Lieutenant Colonel P. I. Pestel to the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Army P. D. Kiselev, indicated that the Greek rebellion was already spreading from the principalities to the islands of the Archipelago. The ultimate desire of the Greeks, 'in case of perfect success, was to form a federal republic like the United States of America.' The grounds on which Alexander I and the St. Petersburg court had reproached Ypsilantis were based on events prior to mid-March, when the uprising was still relatively contained. With the advancement and intensification of the Greek insurrection by late April, although Petersburg had not wavered on its position, the Porte naturally found Russian attitude insufficiently sincere.

This distance between Constantinople and European courts compelled diplomats to act autonomously, resulting in frequent discrepancies between their actions and the home governments' intentions. The Russian ambassador in Constantinople, Baron Stroganoff, who exhibited a menacing conduct towards the Porte since May 1821, encapsulated the risk of relying solely on diplomats' discretion. This challenge was also echoed by Lord Strangford, the British Ambassador to Constantinople, who shared with Castlereagh that the geographical distance between him and London had forced the independent judgment and actions of the

ambassador—'it is impossible to conceal from ourselves that the distance at which some of us are placed from our courts, imposes upon us the necessity of either boldly acting upon our own discretion, or of suffering conjunctures and occasions to escape, which cannot be recalled, and which it is our duty promptly to turn to account.'[16] Considering the unreliable and delayed nature of diplomatic correspondence between Europe and Constantinople, the words and actions of a diplomat stationed in the Ottoman Empire could be categorically representative of his home government's policies. But it was naturally more difficult for the Ottoman government to make such bold assumptions.

Atrocities towards the Greek Orthodox Church at the end of April escalated the mounting tensions rapidly. On 22 April, the patriarch of Constantinople Gregory V was seized and executed after leaving church on Easter Sunday. Three other Greek bishops were all executed at the same time, accused of dereliction of their duty to the Porte by failing to control the rebellion. Merely days earlier, on 19 April, the Sultan Mahmud II convened a meeting with all high ranking Ottoman officials regarding the Patriarch, during which the decision to execute the Patriarch was made—primarily motivated by his suspected involvement in the Greek Revolution. [17] The Ottoman chief scribe attempted to portray the executions as an administrative punishment, claiming to the French ambassador that if the executions were religious, 'the Patriarch of Jerusalem would have been the first to be executed.'[18] Anticipating vehement international backlash, the Ottoman Porte had already appointed a new patriarch before the execution, aiming to circumvent Russian pressure, which they rightfully foresaw.[19] British attitude was also inflamed by the executions, as Strangford recommended in late April

[16] University of Southampton Special Collections, The Wellington Papers ('Wellington Papers' hereafter), MS61/WP1/681/3, Strangford to Castlereagh, 10 September 1821.
[17] BOA, HAT 1316/51287, cited in Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak, *Making Sense of an Execution: Patriarch Gregory V between the Sublime Porte and the Patriarchate, (*Cambridge University Press, 2023).
[18] BOA, HAT 1338/52285, 12 June 1821, cited in Karabicak.
[19] Christine May Philliou, *Biography of an Empire : Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution. (*University of California Press, 2011).

that a British warship be stationed in the vicinity of Greece during the summer and autumn, to protect British commerce 'from the depredations of armed Idriote and Ipsariot ships.'[20]

The Ottoman punishment of Greek leadership originated from the adamant Ottoman belief that the Greek insurgency was part of a broader Russian conspiracy, where the Greek clergy and the Fanariots served as agents promoting Russian aims. By the second month of the revolution, the number of executed Greek dignitaries had surpassed one hundred. The relentless punishment served the main purpose of severing perceived connections between the alleged Russian conspiracists and the Greek subjects. Furthermore, the secondary objective of these executions aimed to deprive the Greek insurgents of their existing communal leadership, which would immobilise their actions and render the Greeks unable to organise themselves for sustained coordination against the Porte.[21] During the initial phase of the Greek Revolution, the Sultan struggled to comprehend the emerging nationalist sentiments of the Greek revolutionaries. The Porte thus adopted the teachings of Ibn Khaldun, a fourteen-century Maghrebi scholar, as a framework for navigating the events from the Greek Revolution. Ibn Khaldun's seminal work, *the Muqaddimah*, postulates that states undergo distinct stages comparable to the life cycle of human beings, progressing from birth, growth, maturity, and eventual demise. This ushered in a notable shift in Ottoman political discourse, as Ottoman administrators thus believed that the Greek revolt was due to the sluggishness of the empire, which entered the final stage of the cycle towards decline, exemplified by the pervasive decadence and inefficacy in Ottoman society. A report from the French foreign ministry from June 1822 captured the chaotic state of disorder within the Ottoman army: 'their infantry was useless, their cavalry degenerated, and anarchy reigns among the Turkish troops.'[22]

Provided the existing demographic complexities of the Ottoman Empire and the

[20] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/667/4, Strangford to Castlereagh, 25 April 1821.
[21] Ilıcak, *Those Infidel Greeks,* 7.
[22] Quai d'Orsay, 50MD/19C, Antoine de Jercherbau, chef d'état major général des troupes du cordon janitaire des Pyrénées à Paris, to de la Ferronays, 23 June, 1822, p201.

logistical challenges of military mobilisation, the Porte used violence as a fundamental tool of governance to quell insurgence and instil fear. In an endeavour to combat the waning power of the empire and the revolutionary threat, the Porte mandated compulsory mobilisation efforts. Male Muslim residents of major urban centres were coerced to adopt martial customs by carrying arms and donning military attire in public. Violence was not only sanctified but also actively encouraged by imperial decrees. Consequently, male Muslims across the empire began to procuring horses and launching widespread, unprecedented acts of violence against Greeks and other non-Muslim communities.[23]

As the scale and gravity of Ottoman violence during the Greek insurrection became more widely discerned, Russia adopted a much firmer tone in her diplomatic exchanges with the Ottoman Porte by May 1821. While exchanges between the court of St. Petersburg still allowed for ample room of negotiation and flexibility, Russia reiterated the unwillingness to use force. Russia emphasises her adherence to treaty obligations, but that she was only concerned for the portion of Ottoman subjects over which Russia had a legitimate interest. In a letter from Nesselrode in St Petersburg to Stroganoff in Constantinople on 13 May, 1821, the Russian ambassador was instructed to invite the Porte to consider potential Ottoman actions if they were in the position of Russia, and asserted that 'la révolte n'existe plus du moment où le Prince Ypsilanti se retire', in attempt to persuade the Porte to lessen the violence used against the Greeks. A letter at the beginning of May 1821 marked the initial signs of serious alarm in Russo-Ottoman relations, as Nesselrode ordered Stroganoff not to leave Constantinople unless absolutely necessary, while Russo-Ottoman relations had not yet reached open hostility. For the remainder of that month, relations between the two powers soured as Russian concerns over Ottoman brutality against the Greeks intensified.

Russian instructions from St Petersburg anticipated Ottoman reluctance to various

[23] Ilıcak, *Those Infidel Greek*s, 1-10.

peace proposals. Nesselrode elaborated on the path forward for the Ottoman Porte by explaining 'si la porte rejetait péremptoirement tout moyen semblable de réprimer l'insurrection, si elle ne voulait pas qu'une sommation faite de concert avec la Russie précédât la mise a exécution des mesures coercitives… assurez-vous au moins de prendre toutes les précautions nécessaires pour que la Valachie et la Moldavie ne soient pas dévastées par les troupes ottomanes !' [24] Nonetheless, Nesselrode articulated Russian refusal to share the consequences of an Ottoman recourse to force, and emphasised that all means of assistance for provinces under Russian protection had been exhausted. Nesselrode's restrained, measured diplomatic language stood in stark contrast to the actions and rhetoric of the Russian ambassador, whose emphasis on Ottoman atrocities likely served to obscure the extent to which he had deviated from St. Petersburg's instructions.

III. Stroganoff's diplomatic blunder: early stage of rupture in Russo-Turkish relations, May-June 1821

By May 1821, the open rupture in relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was already manifest to the public. [25] As events in Greece attracted extensive coverage, European public opinion became increasingly entangled in the diplomacy of the Eastern Question. Count Mocenigo, Russian Ambassador in Turin, reported to Nesselrode on 21 June that support in Italy for the Greek cause was vigorous and widespread. According to Mocenigo, formerly opposing political factions in Italy all united to express solidarity with the Greek population. Such zeal for the Greek cause was bolstered by the distinction between the Greek cause and other European revolts—even the staunchest monarchists in Italy believed that 'un peuple opprimé et chrétien méritent d'être jugés sous un point de vue bien diffèrent de celui

[24] VPR, Tome VII, No. 57, Nesselrode to Stroganoff, 1 May, 1821, p149.
[25] VPR, No.66, 5 June, 1821, p176.

sous lequel on a envisagé les troubles dont l'Europe a été dernièrement agitée.' Public opinion in Italy, however, could not reflect the attitudes of other European governments. As *Le Gazetier di Milano* published news regarding the Greek revolution with strong partiality towards the insurgents, the Italian government severely criticised the publication. The Austrian government, similarly, continued to categorise the Greek insurrection as a 'criminal revolt' and monitored its development was vigilance.[26] In Britain, public opinion was so overwhelmingly pro-Greek that any attempt by parliament to defend British neutrality was labelled as 'pro-Turkish'.[27] Historian Mark Mazower emphasised the importance of the public fervour in the Greek Revolution, noting that the craze of philhellenism originated from the lustre of heroism, and the public's perceptions were more based on idealised notions of ancient Greece rather than the reality of revolutionary Greece in 1821. The pressure of public attention surged in Britain following the death of renowned poet Lord Byron—the sacrifice of his life for the Greek cause immortalised him as a hero, and his death invigorated even wider popular support for the Greeks.[28] Ironically, Lord Byron never participated in any fighting, as he died from a fever shortly after arriving in Greece—yet a 3-metre marble statue of Lord Byron still stands today in the centre of Athens, commemorating his heroism in the Greek struggle.

By the third month of the revolution, clear discrepancies had emerged between the actions of the Russian ambassador and official guidance from the court in St. Petersburg. Comparing records from British, Russian, and Ottoman archival material, there were various inconsistencies in Russian communication from May to June 1821 on its policies and actions. Russian archival evidence demonstrates that by late June, Nesselrode still believed Russia's pacific attitude had been communicated to the Porte. To the contrary, Ottoman and British records, including Strangford's various dispatches to Castlereagh, demonstrate that Stroganoff

[26] Ibid, No. 68, 21 June, 1821, p181.
[27] Stivachtis,'International Society', 108–24.
[28] Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*.

had been employing increasingly aggressive and threatening language employed in the preceding months. Curiously, despite full awareness of Stroganoff's confrontational stance, the moderate Castlereagh still held the opinion by mid-June that Tsar Alexander had no intention of using military force.

A pivotal moment in the deterioration of Russo-Ottoman relations occurred in early June 1821, centring on the passage of Russian ships carrying grain across the Black Sea. This was a significant point of contention, as Russia saw rapid economic growth in grain imports from the Black Earth region in South Russia via the port of Odessa prior to 1821. Since the outbreak of the Greek insurrection in Morea, intending to destroy Greek trade, the transit of such vessels was prohibited. Lord Strangford's reports to Castlereagh provided an insightful account of Stroganoff's conduct in Constantinople. As early as 7 May, the British ambassador has highlighted Stroganoff's menacing language and allusions to Russian naval deployment in the Black Sea. While Strangford's pro-Ottoman attitudes and personal animosity against the Russian ambassador must be considered, the Ottoman records and Stroganoff's own accounts largely supported Strangford's narratives.[29] On 25 May, Strangford detailed another key diplomatic exchange in which the Porte addressed the British, Russian, and Austrian envoys regarding preparations for an anticipated famine. Citing previous arrangements made in 1813 with the British embassy, the Porte claimed an ancient right to require all incoming grain ships from the Black Sea to unload at the public granaries, where cargoes would be purchased by the Porte at market price, with an allowance for profit and freight. Strangford reserved the right to oversee these transactions to ensure protection for British merchants.

While the Austrian minister presented a moderate response, the Russian minister, Baron Stroganoff, protested vehemently against the matter, stating that 'if a Russian ship is affected,

[29] Strangford was accused by the Russian government of deliberately jeopardising Stroganoff's diplomatic mission in the Ottoman Empire, shown in Capodistrias' notes in April; The two ministers never shared a cordial relationship. Castlereagh defended the British minister.

it will be considered as the end of all friendly relations between Russian and the Ottoman Empire.'[30] Events escalated further at the end of May, when the Ottoman foreign minister, Reis Effendi, officially rejected Stroganoff's request for an exemption towards Russian vessels. Nonetheless, a Russian packet arrived on 2 June despite the Porte's articulated position. The Ottoman authorities thus ordered the Russian packet to depart within forty-eight hours, threatening forced removal if it did not comply. Unable to prolong the stay of the vessel, Stroganoff already resolved to leave his post with his legation and the families of key Russian officers. To further worsen matters, Stroganoff sent his secretary to inform the Austrian Internuncio, Lützow, that official relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire should be considered suspended.[31]

The Russian account of the events, presented on 9 June in a lengthy letter to Nesselrode, highlighted an important yet under-examined meeting between Stroganoff and the Ottoman Foreign Minister Reis Effendi on 7 May, nearly a month prior to the entry of the Russian packet.[32] In this letter, Stroganoff emphasised the disrespectful and injurious attitude of the Porte's officers towards the ambassador himself, to the extent which Stroganoff considered the prestige of the Imperial Court of Russia impaired. According to Stroganoff's nuanced account, the Ottoman Reis Effendi had informed the Russian ambassador at the protocol conference of 7 May that the Porte was opposed to the entry of the Russian packet, and that Russian vessels would be stopped at the mouth of the Bosphorus. Stroganoff relied on Articles VII and XIV of the Treaty of 1774 to contest this stance.[33] The Ottoman officer then declared that he could not override the Sultan's orders and advised Stroganoff to wait eight days for a revised order. What

[30] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/667/8, Strangford to Castlereagh, 25 May 1821.
[31] The economic consequence of the Porte's policy led to a sharp decline of wheat exports from regions in Southern Russia; In 1824, less than 500 ships left Odessa compared to over 3,000 in 1818 and 1819. See Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 60.
[32] This letter in the VPR is considerably richer in detail than Strangford's second-hand account of the incident towards Castlereagh. VPR, volume 2, Tom 4, p162, letter 63, Stroganoff to Nesselrode, 28 May/9 June, 1821.
[33] Article VII of the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardji establishes that if the Ottoman Empire fails to protect her Christian subjects, Russia would be entitled to practice her rights in protecting them.

immediately followed the discussion, however, was ‘un profonde silence’ that exceeded well beyond the proposed waiting period of eight days. Consequently, Stroganoff deemed that the physical presence of a Russian vessel might compel the Porte to reopen negotiations. ‘Je dus présumer qu’on ne renouerait la discussion qu’à la vue du navire prêt à entrer dans le canal.’ His assumption that direct provocation would reignite diplomatic engagement proved accurate, albeit risking heightened tensions. Circumstances would be irreversible once the abstract threat materialises by form of Russian vessels approaching the Bosphorus. Fully understanding the Porte’s decided rejection of permitting Russian vessels, Stroganoff exploited Reis Effendi’s silence as his justification of testing the limit of Ottoman forbearance.

This episode underscores the deepening dissonance between the discourse of St Petersburg and that of the Russian ambassador, which continued to strain Russo-Ottoman relations with an element of unpredictability. Existing literature has not examined the logistical impossibility for Stroganoff’s actions to have been authorised in early May: judging from the gap between letters from St Petersburg to Constantinople, insufficient time has passed for fresh instructions from Nesselrode to have reached Stroganoff after the executions of the Greek patriarch and prior to the confrontational exchange between Stroganoff and the Ottoman Reis Effendi on 7 May.[34] Therefore, Stroganoff’s arguments menacing Russian presence in the Black Sea could not have been authorised by the Court of St. Petersburg, also provided that Nesselrode’s earlier dispatches remained committed to peaceful negotiations.

By late May, Stroganoff had evidently concluded that open conflict with the Porte was imminent and will plausibly arise from a misunderstanding. A letter sent to Russian consular representatives on 29 May illustrates the mounting tensions. The Russian ambassador urged the Russian ministers in Ottoman port cities to use severe judgment to examine the conduct of

[34] In fact, Nesselrode’s response and first acknowledgement regarding the news of the Greek patriarch executions appeared on 16/28 June, expressing the views of Alexander I to the Russian ambassador; this note arrived far later than the meeting between Stroganoff and the Reis Effendi. VPR, p178, Nesselrode to Stroganoff, 16/28 June, 1821.

Russian ships before taking any action. Considering the conference that Stroganoff held with the Reis Effendi on 7 May and the alleged uneventful eight-day waiting period, this official notice to Russian ministers in the Ottoman Empire likely immediately followed the expiry of the waiting period. Therefore, while the wording in this letter still emphasised the peaceful intentions of the Russian government and upholding diplomatic prudence, Stroganoff had presumably taken offence at Reis Effendi's silence, and adopted an aggressive attitude in anticipating the realistic possibility of open conflict.

> 'S'il arrivait enfin qu'un navire russe vous soit dénoncé comme ayant attaqué des sujets de la Sublime Porte ou leurs propriétés, vous n'oublierez aucun moyen propre à reconnaitre son innocence ou sa culpabilité. En usant de faiblesse ou de négligence à surveiller les individus places sous votre juridiction et en provoquant des plaintes légitimes a votre charge…a la colère de notre auguste souverain qui n'a rien de plus à cœur que le maintien de la paix et d'une intimité parfaite avec ses voisines.'[35]

Tensions between Stroganoff and the Porte reached a point of crisis only four days after Stroganoff's address, when a Russian ocean liner under dragoman (translator) Franchini appeared near the Bosphorus at midday on 2 June, reaching Büyükdere without encountering resistance. From the Ottoman perspective, no concessions had been made on the permissibility of Russian vessels in the Black Sea since 7 May, rendering the ship's appearance an unambiguous provocation. Stroganoff's posture was not the sole factor in this incident—the Ottoman officers, too, exhibited a comparable degree of tactlessness. Although the Russian vessel originally carried a Russian flag upon arrival, Reis Effendi refused to acknowledge it as a state ship, as he persisted in only considering Franchini's vessel as a merchant's ship and thus subject to Ottoman inspection, which only state vessels were exempted from. The Reis Effendi accused Stroganoff, perhaps not unjustifiably, of 'acting as his own chief', and demanded the

[35] Ibid, p158, letter 61. 'If it finally happens that a Russian ship is denounced to you as having attacked subjects of the Sublime Porte or their properties, you will not forget any means to recognise its innocence or its culpability. By using weakness or negligence to monitor individuals placed under your jurisdiction and by provoking legitimate complaints against you... to the anger of our august sovereign who has nothing more at heart than the maintenance of peace and perfect privacy with its neighbours.'

immediate withdrawal of both the ocean liner and a brick boat anchored at Büyükdere, to the north of Constantinople, which carried a merchant boat banner. The Ottoman minister's tone was unequivocal, threatening the use of military force should the two unauthorised Russian vessels not depart at once. When Stroganoff requested a 24-hour period to prepare an official written response, this appeal was also firmly rejected.[36]

As the crisis unfolded, Stroganoff continued to frame the ensuing events as personal affronts to his status. While departing for Büyükdere, Stroganoff was denied from embarking, on grounds that he had not yet responded to the vessel removal order. Furthermore, all transportation for the Russian ministers and their families was delayed, as 'toute la ville pour témoin et me prouva que j'aurais pu être arrêté aussi de la même manière, si mon dessein eut été de me transporter a bord de nos bâtiments (russes)'—implying that had he attempted to board a Russian ship, he might have been forcibly detained. Stroganoff blamed the new insult on a trivial logistical glitch—his most recent travel documents were at Pera, where the Russian Embassy hotel was located, but the embargo has not yet been lifted, thus he only had his papers in fragments and had to 'échapper a l'attention des préposés turcs.' Stroganoff only briefly mentioned the incident of the travel document, but his account of the disconcerting episode was corroborated by Strangford's account, which noted that Stroganoff had neglected to account for the administrative delays typical of Ottoman state functions during Ramadan.

> 'The Porte does not permit any kind of property to be removed from Constantinople without permission from the competent department. This permission is not easy to obtain and applications for it must be made at a number of public offices. These difficulties are greatly increased during Ramadan. Stroganoff did not apply immediately for the permit and the delay in granting it led to vehement language from the Russian. Stroganoff ordered his dragoman not to call for the document at the Porte and not to appear there any more. This state of affairs has continued since 7 [June] despite the request of the Reis

[36] Strangford's account on 12 June also shed light on the sequence of events that took place in early June 1821. Stroganov insisted that the packet, as a public vessel, should be exempted from this visit; but Reis Effendi could see no reason why the Russian vessel should be treated any differently from the ships of other nations, only merchant vessels being mentioned in the treaties between the Porte and foreign powers.' Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/667/13, Strangford to Castlereagh, 12 June 1821.

Effendi that the dragoman should renew his official contacts.'[37]

Great alarm, unease, and apprehension regarding the inevitability of war with Russia dominated over Ottoman population in the wake of Stroganoff's actions. As Strangford observed, 'a Russian war is universally apprehended… one of the parties may not yet have sufficient moderation and good sense to give up to the other. But it unfortunately happens that the question has now become one of dignity and I very much fear that neither the Sultan's government nor M. de Stroganoff will be inclined to yield on a point where that feeling is concerned.'[38]

As evident from the early June incident, Stroganoff's conduct was not the only source of rising tension. The imprudence of Reis Effendi and persistent Ottoman bureaucratic inefficiencies also contributed to the escalation. Strangford reinforced this view, arguing that the chaos in Ottoman bureaucracy produced the contentious exchange between Stroganoff and the Porte; it was not the outcome of deliberate Ottoman government policy, but rather an inevitable result of the complete disorder in Constantinople.[39] A letter from Sultan Mahmud II in the Ottoman State Archives further underscores this point, where the Sultan attributed the mishandling of the Russian vessel incident not to Stroganoff's aggression, but to the mismanagement of his own officers. Dated 4 June, 1821, the Sultan wrote to the Grand Admiral Abdullah Hamdullah Pasha to express deep dissatisfaction with his ministers' incapability to execute imperial orders—

> 'Can you ever imagine that the infidel, enemy of our religion, would ever say 'I shall dispatch warships to lay siege on you?' They would, of course, send the ships one by one, under the guise of merchant vessels. I have told you to send orders to the officials in charge of the Bosphorus to deny the access; have you sent them? If you did, then why did they let that vessel in? All our endeavours are in vain. I cannot even make myself understood to the ministers; imagine the troubles we suffer to communicate our orders to the provinces. Of course the ambassador should send them back. For God's sake, be reasonable. Is it the ambassador or our officers to be blamed? This has now turned into a

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] MS61/WP1/678/10, Strangford to Castlereagh, 16 August, 1821

game. Yet, I shall not always remain tolerant.'[40]

The Sultan's exasperation foreshadowed increased vigilance in Ottoman inspections at the Bosphorus, which exacerbated the existing paranoia of Ottoman fears that Russia had supported the Greek insurrection from the outset. A few days later, another dispatch from the Porte to his own ministers confirms this point—'This present time is not like any other: it is not the time for negligence and laziness. Are we going to commission another vessel for the Bosphorus? They conceal the figureheads of the ships coming from the Black Sea by covering them with mats and sailcloth. Why is that so? The grand admiral should find out why.' [41]

After the rapid deterioration in Russo-Turkish relations following this episode of early June 1821, Stroganoff had noted 'le triste état des relations entre les deux empires'. Confronted with his impaired credibility and limited impact over the Porte, Stroganoff found himself in an impasse in late May as he awaited instructions from St. Petersburg. If Strangford and the Ottoman archives accurately reflect the progression of events, Stroganoff chose to adopt his own initiative to address the Porte in a level of austerity unmatched by his government's measured discourse, as he also disregarded the logistical challenges of Ottoman bureaucracy. Stroganoff's impatience, sensitivity to criticism, and unauthorised declaration of a diplomatic rupture between the two powers further jeopardised any remaining prospect for peace. With little left for him in Constantinople, Stroganoff ultimately presented Nesselrode with a sequence of *faits-accomplis* and signalled his readiness to depart for Odessa.[42]

[40] Ilicak, BOA 573/19, regarding Russian vessels in the Bosphorus, to his Excellency the Grand Admiral, 4 June, 1821.
[41] Ibid, BOA 573/30, regarding inspections of vessels in the Bosphorus, to the Grand Admiral [Abdullah Hamdullah Pasha], 6 June, 1821.
[42] Ibid, 63 Letter, 28 May, 1821, p162.

IV. The July ultimatum: controversy of the eight-day limit

Stroganoff's turbulent diplomatic mission in Constantinople approached its denouement in late June 1821, when a decisive shift occurred in Russian policy towards the Ottoman Empire. At this critical juncture, Tsar Alexander I arrived at the conclusion that 'the Porte was ignoring his admonitions'. Most importantly, Alexander realised that his previous restraint from interference was built upon a false premise—rather than from indifference, the previous lack of Russian action originated from the tsar's unwillingness to aid revolutionaries. Nonetheless, it became indisputably clear to Alexander following the execution of the Patriarch of Constantinople and other Orthodox clergy, that instead of fighting against revolutionaries, the Porte was seeking to exterminate the Greek people and their faith. Therefore, the Petersburg cabinet communicated to Stroganoff on 28 June that Russia considered it necessary to provide the Porte with a final warning, cautioning it against further provocations.

Nesselrode's dispatch enclosed a draft of the Russian ultimatum, with the following guidelines—'[Baron Stroganoff] may soften the tone of the note if he considers it useful and justified. If the Turkish government accepts the terms set out in the note, Stroganoff is authorised to resume the interrupted negotiations and must seek security guarantees for the Greek civilian population. If the Porte persists in its 'destructive' policy, Stroganoff and members of the Russian mission must leave Constantinople.'

Crucially, while Nesselrode's instructions did not specify a rigid deadline for an Ottoman response, even allowing for flexibility at Stroganoff's discretion to further soften the tone of the note, the final version of the ultimatum presented to the Porte imposed a firm eight-day limit:

> '[L'empereur] a été enjoint au soussigné de laisser à la Sublime Porte un délai de huit jours pour répondre à la présente communication. Au cas que le gouvernement turc exauce tous les vœux et réalisé toutes les espérances de s.m.i., en adhérant à ses propositions, le soussigné est autorisé à convenir avec la Sublime Porte d'un nouveau délai qui lui garantira la faculté de démontrer à

l'Europe… qu'elle accepte les conditions et qu'elle s'empresse de les remplir.'[43]

It is plausible that the eight-day deadline was an arbitrary addition by Stroganoff himself. Nowhere in Nesselrode's instructions was a definitive timeframe mentioned, nor did any subsequent dispatch—either confidential or ostensible—ever refer to a set deadline. Considering the significance of a specific timeline, Nesselrode would have reasonably emphasised this detail, but the eight-day limit was also omitted in communications to Russian ministers in London and Vienna. In addition, the long delay in correspondence of up to five weeks between Petersburg and Constantinople renders an eight-day window operationally trivial, as the Russian cabinet would not be notified of the outcome of the Porte's consideration until nearly one month later, long after the ultimatum expired.

Stroganoff's previous conduct in Constantinople, representative of his personalities, further suggests the likelihood that the ambassador independently imposed the deadline for the ultimatum. Stroganoff was highly attentive to his prestige and reputation and proved sensitive to offence, particularly towards remarks originating from the Ottoman Vice Admiral and Reis Effendi. He had invariably exhibited impatience and condescendence in his interactions with the Ottomans, which was documented not only by British and Ottoman records, but even in Stroganoff's own accounts. During the early June grain vessel incident, particularly following the episode where his insufficient documentation prevented him from travelling, Stroganoff recorded sentiments of being akin to an object of public ridicule for the population of Constantinople. Provided with his strong overall discontent in Constantinople, Stroganoff had been repeatedly expressing his desire to leave the Ottoman capital, even months before the escalation of tension, and he renewed this request immediately following the catastrophic diplomatic blunder.

Another revealing detail concerns the symbolic choice of eight days. The number of

[43] VPR, letter 78, Stroganoff official note to the Ottoman Porte, 6 (18) July, 1821, p203-7.

days stipulated in the ultimatum could precisely match the interval which Reis Effendi had originally asked Stroganoff to wait for on 7 May—the meeting which existing scholarship has scarcely documented, as Reis Effendi sought the Porte's reconsideration on whether Russian vessels could be permitted on the Black Sea. The Reis Effendi never responded to Stroganoff, leading to the latter's rage which resulted in the escalation of events in the first weeks of June. Presenting the Porte with eight days to respond to an ultimatum could be seen as deliberate retaliatory gesture, as an assertion of the Russian ambassador's personal pride.

Moreover, logistical challenges and Ottoman inefficiencies further shortened the eight-day period, leaving the Ottoman Porte with little time to respond to the ultimatum. Stroganoff received the instructions from Nesselrode on 15 July, which pressed for an Ottoman response by 23 July. The presentation of the note to the Porte, however, was not until 18 July. Lord Strangford noted that the length of Stroganoff's ultimatum and difficulties in translation prevented the note from being delivered to the Sultan before 21 July, with only two days to consider a response. Reis Effendi expressed both embarrassment and offence at the note's severity and the brevity of the response period.[44] Strangford remarked that it would be difficult to satisfactorily provide an answer to the Russian ambassador even without logistical challenges, which further adds suspicion to the sincerity of the eight-day deadline. This lends credence to the possibility that Stroganoff sought an expedited termination of his diplomatic mission, thus the official rupture in Russo-Ottoman relations was a welcome and necessary outcome.[45]

Existing literature has underestimated the extent to which Stroganoff actively provoked animosity towards the end of his mission in Constantinople. While his inflexibility upon the expiration of the eight-day period has been portrayed, the Russian ambassador acted in the

[44] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/674/12, Strangford to Castlereagh, 23 July 1821.
[45] 'I do not see how the cumbersome machinery of this government can be so quickened into activity as to produce in such a limited space anything likely to satisfy his expectations.' Ibid.

most provocative manner as if intentionally ensuring the breakdown of negotiations. When the dragomen for Stroganoff demanded a final response from the Porte, the Reis-Effendi explained that the Ottoman government had had insufficient time due to the necessary delay for translation. Instead, Reis-Effendi provided an interim statement providing the eventual answer to be presented, offering conciliatory acceptance towards the Russian terms; the dragomen thus departed to report to Stroganoff on the Ottoman response. Such explanation, however, was received by Stroganoff as 'a chicanery' and that the Russian ambassador resolved to persist in 'une insistance trop inflexible à exiger une réponse par écrit à l'expiration des huit jours.'[46] Merely three hours later, the final Ottoman response was completed, but Reis-Effendi's summons for the dragomen were unanswered. The following day, on 27 July, the dragomen reappeared with a request from Stroganoff for his passports, as the Russian ambassador intended to depart immediately. Reis-Effendi argued that the response had been completed in time, but the dragomen insisted that the day when the first notice was delivered should have been counted as one of the eight days. The Reis-Effendi responded with indignation at the Russian choice to refuse his note 'on such a paltry cavil', and 'let the consequence be what it might', alarming the British Ambassador Strangford.[47] Another letter from Strangford alluded to the possibility that Stroganoff was then shrouded in grave danger as the Porte contemplated extreme measures of punishment towards the Russian ambassador, 'a barbarous practice which has always disgraced this government in the case of a foreign minister attempting to quit Constantinople on unfriendly terms with the Porte.'[48] Fearing violence for Stroganoff, Strangford and the Austrian Internuncio Lützow lobbied the Porte in granting Stroganoff's passports, to which eventually the Porte conceded that the Russian ambassador would be allowed to depart without hindrance.[49] While Charles Webster applauded Strangford for

[46] VPR, letter 83, Stroganoff to Nesselrode, 15 (27) July, 1821, p224-225.
[47] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/675/2, Strangford to Castlereagh, 30 July 1821.
[48] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/675/1, Strangford to Castlereagh, 26 July, 1821.
[49] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/675/2, Strangford to Castlereagh, 30 July 1821.

preventing a diplomatic calamity and preserving peace in Constantinople, his account overlooked the disapproval of Castlereagh on Strangford's actions.[50] The British foreign secretary voiced his reserve on Strangford's 'consulting and cooperating' with the other ambassadors to bring the Porte to sound and temperate views of policy, as Castlereagh believed that questions of national interest between Ottoman and European governments should 'in future be moderated, and at present, kept out of sight.'[51]

It is likely that Stroganoff was never aware of the danger he had tempted with his provocative actions when he left Constantinople, pushing Russia and the Ottoman Empire towards the brink of conflict. His departure also shifted the focal point of diplomatic efforts from the turmoil of Constantinople to the glamour of European courts.

V. The European diplomatic scene after Stroganoff's departure, late 1821-22

While Constantinople—mobilised, militant, yet disordered—was a crucial stage for diplomacy during the Greek War of Independence, it was not the most consequential one. Parallel negotiations unfolded in the grand palaces of Tsarskoye Selo, refined salons of the Hofburg, or sophisticated drawing rooms in St James, where interactions between Britain, Russia, and Austria contextualised the unravelling crisis in Constantinople.

Stroganoff's abrasive diplomatic conduct in Constantinople and his subsequent departure brought Russia and the Ottoman Empire to the brink of war by July 1821. The dramatic diplomatic efforts in Constantinople, however, did not directly determine whether the European great powers would engage in armed conflict. The unsuccessful diplomatic negotiations mired by bureaucratic dysfunction and logistical delays eventually stopped short of triggering hostilities. Ultimately, these mismanaged diplomatic exchanges brought the two

[50] Webster, *Castlereagh*..
[51] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/6781/1, Castlereagh to Strangford, 5 August 1821.

powers to the brink where the possibility of war was considered, but the final decision of whether to go to war lay in the strategic calculus of the power with the decisive force—Russia. Therefore, the preservation of European peace rested squarely in the hands of the of Alexander I.

Among all the great powers, Russia was the only one with tangible grievances against the Porte with profound religious ties to the Greek Christians and an adequately powerful military to threaten the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Russia's clashing strategic interests, however, did not overwhelmingly guide the tsar towards either war or peace. His desire for maintaining the status quo meant supporting the Porte; his Christian principles pointed towards supporting the Greeks through military intervention; Russia's commercial and territorial interests also required unobstructed access through the Dardanelles for her merchant ships. While it was clear that the anti-revolutionary Alexander would not wage war against the Porte simply to support the Greek revolutionaries, evidenced by the tsar's denunciation of Ypsilantis, whether Russia would use military intervention to put pressure on the Porte partially depended on if the European allies would endorse such a militant course. In the months following July 1821, diplomacy across Europe entered a period of intense volatility, until the threat of war gradually subsided in 1822.

Since the beginning of the Greek Revolution, the court of St Petersburg maintained regular communication with the other European governments. In early 1821, Nesselrode communicated regularly with Prince Lieven in London, seeking to understand how the Court of St James perceived the Greek uprising and its potential to damage the Sultan's empire from within.[52] The Russian foreign minister also kept frequent contact with Metternich, reassuring the Austrian court of the Tsar's pacific intentions, and that Alexander would not utilise his

[52] VPR, letter 56, Nesselrode to Prince Lieven, 30 April/12 May, 1821, p148; also in VPR, Antoine Sandrini to Nesselrode, 18/30 April, 1821, letter 45, p121.

religious protection rights for Christian subjects in the Principalities defined by the 1774 treaty. In Russo-Austrian communication, Nesselrode highlighted that since the Congress of Laibach, despite all alarming reports from Constantinople detailing massacres and excessive violence, Russia continued to pursue all hypothetical pathways towards maintaining peace in the East. Thea two courts also boosted their 'indestructible' alliance, as Nesselrode was highly confident in Russo-Austrian relations throughout the first half of 1821.[53]

For Alexander I in July 1821, the most important consideration was acting in accordance with treaty stipulations set out in the Vienna Congress. The tsar not only sought to upholding the Concert system, but Alexander was likely the sole sovereign who believed in the binding power of concert treaty obligations, as an achievement painstakingly fought for following the Napoleonic warfare. As the tumultuous years fighting against Napoleon reshaped Alexander's personality, the tsar had become more exceedingly fearful of revolutionary movements by the time of the Greek Revolution. Alexander had frequently acknowledged the difficult position he faced, where his fulfilment of religious obligations could make him the culprit in disrupting European peace, threatening a legitimate sovereign, and destructing the European concert diplomacy system. This conundrum was aptly observed by other European diplomats. Ludwig von Lebzeltern, the Austrian ambassador to Russia, observed that the tsar's partiality towards conserving European peace could not change the troubled nature of the pacification, as the project in addressing the 'deplorable catastrophe' would necessarily become a favour for the revolutionaries, which Alexander could not support.[54]

As soon as the court of St Petersburg issued the ultimatum in July, Alexander communicated his intentions via a confidential dispatch to the Russian ambassadors in London, Berlin, and Paris, in the expectation that the Ottoman government would obstruct a peaceful

[53] Ibid, Frederic de Gentz to Nesselrode, 23 July, 1821, p119.
[54] HHS, Russland 53, Baron de Lebzeltern to Metternich, 22 September 1821, p125.

settlement. The tsar also directly invited the other European powers to contribute their plans and how they envisaged the political settlement of Greece. This confidential dispatch on 29 July differentiated from other diplomatic exchanges from his court with its distinctly forthright language in addressing European—primarily Austrian—fears of Russian expansionism. 'Certainly, it would not be Austria that Russia should invite to guarantee her views, if she entertained projects of aggrandisement and conquest. It suffices to take a glance at the map to be convinced of this, and as Austria borders both the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, she would be the first to be exposed to a real danger.' [55]

Explicit acknowledgement of other European countries' fear of Russian aggression and expansionist ambitions is rare in the discourse of the Petersburg court, where the diplomatic communications were typically couched in superfluous diplomatic formalities and hollow declarations of friendship. While other powers might have believed in the tsar's sincerity, the unpredictability of his temperament led many European leaders to consider his intentions with caution. In Alexander's ambivalence, he expressed his bona fide wishes of cooperating with other European courts in a collective action. Beyond communications from the tsar himself, Nesselrode used more direct language to appeal for joint efforts in 'defending the Orthodox religion and the Greek nation under Russo-Turkish treaty obligations', charging Y.A. Golovkin, the Russian ambassador in Vienna, to lobby the Austrian and other European courts. Russia was confident in receiving immediate Austrian support by September, as Nesselrode congratulated himself on the productive union of the great powers in the seven preceding years, and expected that Austria would 'easily and promptly' agree to the terms in the Russian instructions.[56]

Such sanguine expectations soon proved misplaced. The other European courts firmly

[55] VPR, Letter 84, Nesselrode to D.M. Alopeaus (Russian Ambassador in Prussia), chargé d'affaires in London P.A. Nicolai, and ambassador in Paris, Pozzi di Borgo, 17 (29) July 1821, p227. My translation.
[56] TNA, FO 92/46, Nesselrode to Lützow, 16 September, 1821, p73.

resisted the idea of any military action, and their reluctance weighed heavily on Alexander's deliberations. As Mark Jarrett and Paul Schroeder have both observed, it was clearly within the strategic interests of Austria and Britain to prevent conflict.[57] Earlier in June, Castlereagh had already informed the British ambassador in Vienna that London welcomed Vienna's precaution and abstention from interference. 'Severe response of the Turkish government is a source of regret but this cannot justify an armed intervention in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire—to admit such a principle would be to open Turkey to perpetual invasions.'[58]

In July, the British government sent an official response to the tsar's invitation, including polite acknowledgement of Russian intentions and a brief mention of Britain's own concerns: commerce in the Black Sea. The British court apprehended the vulnerability of her marine merchant ships in the Black Sea and warned the devastation of maritime commerce if the conflict persisted. The British court also observed that if all trade through the Black Sea was 'annihilated', it would reverse half a century of economic development.[59] By the early 1820s, British foreign policy was anchored in non-intervention, as observed by historian Brison Gooch. Imperial affairs only occupied a subordinate position in British foreign policy, with the notable exception of the Eastern Question, which was considered as a pertinent concern as it not only involved the pathway to India, but was also the only obstruction to Russian expansion in the East. At the Congress of Vienna in 1814, Britain's limited territorial ambition enabled Castlereagh to moderate influence over the other powers.[60] Yet by late 1821, the Cabinet's indecision and lack of a coherent Eastern policy hindered Britain's capacity to shape diplomatic responses to the Eastern question.

The laissez-faire nature of British attitude added to the tsar's hesitation towards military

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[57] Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy*; Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna*.
[58] Wellington Papers, WP1/667/10, Castlereagh to Baron Stewart, 12 June, 1821.
[59] VPR, letter 91, Capodistrias' presentation of British official declaration to Alexander I, dated 16 July 1821, presented to the tsar on 29 July/10 August, 1821, p244.
[60] G. P. Gooch, and J. H. B. Masterman. *A Century of British Foreign Policy* (London: Council for the Study of International Relations, 1917).

action, halting the immediate alarm for war. As Capodistrias summarised, the British only wished to play the role of a mediator between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, rather than a committed ally to Russia in her aims. The official dispatch from London on 16 July clearly stated the British neutrality on the matter, which was one that decisively rejected collaboration with Russia while acknowledging Russia's rights to act independently in her Eastern policy. 'Il n'appartient qu'à s.m.i. de poser des bornes a sa patience et a son inaction.'[61] Britain's ambivalence was partially due to her commercial interests: Britain did not simply wish for a depression in Russian prosperity; Turkish restraints upon Russian productions would ultimately compromise the profitability for Britain from her trade with Russia. Castlereagh challenged the supposed British attitude on the matter and claimed that Britain did not seek exclusive commercial advantages in the Black Sea.[62] Glynn Barrett supports this view—although British trade with the Ottoman Empire was increasing rapidly throughout the Greek revolt, British imports of raw materials were immeasurably greater from Russia than with the Porte's empire. Castlereagh's claim underlines the delicate economic situation discussed by Barrett that defined British policy towards the Greek rising as one of strict neutrality.[63]

The self-contradictory nature of the British attitude was presented with its inconclusive sentiment to the Russian cabinet, as if waiting for Russia to help articulate the British position: Britain had long opposed the intervention of European powers in other states' interior affairs, only to suggest that Russia alone might exercise her right to intervene and uphold the established order.[64] Even the second clause of British intentions was self-contradictory: Russia would not be able to both intervene against the Ottoman Empire *and* fight to preserve the established order. Nonetheless, the ambivalent British position significantly constrained the

[61] VPR, letter 91, 'It is only up to His Imperial Majesty to set the boundaries of his patience and his inaction.'
[62] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/684/8, Castlereagh to Sir Charles Bagot, British ambassador to St Petersburg, 28 Oct, 1821.
[63] Barratt, 'Notice Sur l'insurrection Des Grecs', 47–115.
[64] VPR, letter 91, British official declaration to Alexander I, 29 July/10 August, 1821, p245.

tsar's actions.

Amidst his contradictory objectives and the nebulous nature of allied courts' attitudes, the tsar proposed a European conference in Hanover in October 1821, where George IV, Castlereagh, and Metternich were all in attendance. Castlereagh did not originally support the idea of the meeting, as he thought the matter of restoring relations between Russia and the Porte too delicate a subject for a European concert deliberation.[65] Nonetheless, in Hanover, Castlereagh and Metternich were able to hold 'more unreserved communication' on the state of affairs between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and the British King also extended his stay in order to meet with the Austrian minister. Castlereagh reported to then Home Secretary Lord Sidmouth that the views of Metternich on various matters generally coincided with those of the British government, and that there was 'most entire conformity' between British and Austrian views on the Eastern Question.[66]

The Hanover meeting, however, failed to clarify the diplomatic uncertainties and forge a unified European action as the tsar had intended. The organisation of the meeting itself sowed discord: the selection of Hanover as a venue also engendered minor disagreement between the Russian and Austrian courts. The Vienna court was dissatisfied that their original proposal for a meeting at Schloss Johannisberg was refused and replaced by the 'surrogat' Russian plan that was mere 'repetition' of the Austrian suggestion. The Russian diplomat also admitted that the meeting would yield little substance, except for 'determiner les positions' and 'de préciser le langage'. Golovkin was pessimistic of the Hanover meeting's effectiveness due to the inflexibility of British policy, where all ministers 'can never be accused of being light and versatile. Everything is calculated in this country because everything is responsible. Prince Metternich, as talented as he is, could he reverse an entire system founded on national rather

[65] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/684/8, Castlereagh to Sir Charles Bagot, British ambassador to St Petersburg, 28 Oct, 1821.
[66] TNA, FO 92/46, Castlereagh to Lord Sidmouth, Hanover, 9 October, 1821, p69.

than ministerial interests? Could he accomplish this salutary feat in a few days?'[67]

Around October 1821, initial signs of miscommunication between the courts of St Petersburg and Vienna appeared; Russo-Austrian relations never remained as reliably intimate as their dispatches continued to portray. Russia's confidence on her close alliance with Austria and the latter's automatic support would prove to be misplaced, more decisively during the Crimean War in 1853. Metternich's grievances against the Russian court in late 1821 not only stemmed from delays in Russian communication, but also from its growing divergence from the political reality in the Eastern Question. Metternich observed that the Austrian dispatch of 24 August to Russia was received in St Petersburg on 5 September, while the response received in Vienna on 1 October was dated 10 September. Beyond the typical 3-week delay for each dispatch, even more troubling was the silence Count Golovkin since June, for which Golovkin cited a lack of time, to the frustration of Metternich. In reality, as correspondence between Golovkin and Nesselrode confirmed, the delay in communication was deliberate. St Petersburg had intentionally chosen not to respond to prompt reaction, as Golovkin particularly believed in the 'sagacity and utility in this silence, as it had the advantage of making other people speak as much out of fear as much out of impatience.'[68] Furthermore, Metternich also believed that the contradictions in Russian communication were caused by Capodistrias, whom the Austrian minister described as 'easily mistaken in his calculations, for the very reason that he confuses his ideas and hopes with the reality of positions.'[69] By January 1822, Russo-Austrian relations had been visibly eroded. Nesselrode even directly instructed the ambassador in Vienna that the Austrian court must not intermediate between the communication between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and that if the Porte was to reject Russia's terms of negotiation, such wishes must be communicated directly to Russia and not via Vienna.[70]

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[67] VPR, Letter 115, Y.A. Golovkin to Capodistrias, 2 (14) October, 1821, p311.
[68] VPR, letter 148, Golovkin to Nesselrode, 20 Jan (1 February), 1822, p412.
[69] TNA, FO 92/46, Metternich to Baron von Vincent, 1 Oct, 1821, p95.
[70] HHS, Russland 55, Nesselrode to Golovkin, 22 Jan, 1822, p73.

The staunchly anti-revolutionary Metternich was so intensely concerned that Capodistrias would persuade the tsar into war, that the Austrian minister took the extraordinary step of writing directly to Alexander with evidence that Capodistrias had participated in Greek secret societies, in an attempt to remove Capodistrias from the Russian cabinet. Capodistrias, however, was cognisant of Metternich's designs and promptly informed the tsar. To Metternich's disappointment, Alexander questioned the validity of the evidence provided and dismissed the accusation, citing it being inadequate to constitute irrefutable proof against Capodistrias. Furthermore, the tsar pointed out that it was possible that those who had wished to divide the Austrian and Russian courts could have fabricated the materials in order to fume mistrust between the two courts.[71] Even though Alexander did not dismiss Capodistrias on the grounds of Metternich's accusations, Capodistrias became more acutely aware of his marginalised position in the Russian cabinet. Within the same week, Nesselrode reported that Capodistrias had withdrawn from talks of the Eastern question in mid-January 1822. Capodistrias protested that it was Nesselrode and the tsar who had deliberately excluded him from these discussions, and that he was undeserving of such distrust. Alexander denied these claims and refused Capodistrias' resignation, which cited conflicting views with Nesselrode. The tsar in response asserted that he preferred having contrasting options, which would allow him to feel more in command of his foreign policy.[72] These records from the Austrian state archives challenge Douglas Dakin's view that Capodistrias was a menace towards a pacific policy from Russia, and that the other courts were certain of Alexander's restraint if they do not offer support—to the contrary, Capodistrias' influence struck a balance which the tsar intentionally sought, and it was Metternich who feared Capodistrias as a threat to peace more intensely than others, presumably arising from their personal hostilities.[73]

[71] HHS, Russland 55A, Alexander I to Metternich, 29 December 1821/10 January 1822.
[72] VPR, letter 144, between Nesselrode, Capodistrias, and Alexander I, 29 Dec 1821/10 Jan, 1822, p407-8.
[73] Dakin, *The Greek Struggle*.

The following month saw temporary relief in Russo-Turkish tensions in spite of the divergence within the Russian cabinet and imperfect communication between Russia and Austria. On 18 February, 1822, Alexander issued a memorandum for Russian ministers in European courts—Golovkin in Vienna, Alopeaus in Berlin, Lieven in London, and Pozzo di Borgo in Paris, presenting a new diplomatic mission in which Russia intended to re-establish her relations with the Ottoman Empire upon the latter's acceptance of a modified ultimatum. The Porte had already accepted the full conditions from the original July ultimatum, but Russia added additional stipulations on the complete evacuation of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as sending Russian plenipotentiaries back to the Ottoman Empire. The wording in the fourth article of the verbal note, however, leaves ample room for interpretation—this could be the intention of Russia to permit herself with the maximum flexibility in negotiating against the Porte. 'La Porte est au regret de devoir se borner…a munir les plénipotentiaires turc des pouvoirs nécessaires pour régler avec les plénipotentiaires russes non seulement tout ce qui concerne l'exécution pour concerter avec eux les mesures auxquelles la Porte associerait la Russie dans la vue d'assurer une existence heureuse et paisible aux provinces chrétiennes de l'Empire Ottoman…'[74] The notion of 'necessary means' indicates the possibility of military action, while 'a happy and peaceful existence' render the standards of intervention arbitrary and at the discretion of the Russian plenipotentiaries, which would eventually prolong Russo-Ottoman disputes throughout the first half of the century.

The Russian choice of presenting various modified versions of the ultimatum caused negotiations with the Porte to remain in stalemate since the departure of Stroganoff in July. Shortly before the tsar's memorandum was announced, Nesselrode wrote to Count Golovkin regarding his views on the sterile diplomatic talks, blaming the Russian government for having made multiple concessions to the Porte yet continued to hold unrealistic expectations for the

[74] VPR, Memorandum to Golovkin, Alopeaus, Lieven and Pozzo di Borgo, 6/18 February, 1822, p436.

Porte to accept terms beyond their power and willingness. 'It has been nine months since severing ties of friendship with the Porte, and this state of warfare between the Musulmans and the Greek Christian continues. We had asked the Turks their intention and ability to respect the existing treaties, as we must have considered it impossible for the Turkish government to change its system. The Russian proposal was rejected in April, in June, and in September—how are we entitled to have a different judgment today?'[75] Nesselrode also strongly criticised the tsar's choice of using an ultimatum, where he had the options of using the limitations of the Ottoman Empire and curbing the Sultan's influence. Instead of securing a durable arrangement, Nesselrode lamented that Alexander had chosen a third ultimatum, which 'guaranteed the absolute impossibility of a pacific reconciliation with the Turks.' Nesselrode's critique on the choice of multiple ultimatums was confirmed by the Ottomans—in early November 1821, the Porte expressed their disappointment and alarm in the Russian communications and additional ultimatums. The Ottoman government became convinced that making concessions to Russia would encourage the latter to demand further claims; therefore, the content of Russian notes was not seriously considered, as the Porte thought them as mere preludes to new demands.[76] More significantly, Ottoman distrust of Russian sincerity would lead to a vicious cycle of diplomatic talks. Particularly on the critical point of a complete evacuation of the principalities—By early 1822, the Sultan wrote to the Commander of the Vanguard Troops in Moldavia, that 'even though the Russians have kept quiet so far, it is not yet clear how they will react to the official answer delivered by the Sublime Porte. It is even possible that they may declare war. Therefore, it is not wise to leave Moldavia without troops.'[77]

Nesselrode's criticism on the choice of ultimatums also highlights the disorganisation of foreign policy in Alexander's cabinet. Capodistrias, the joint foreign minister, considered

[75] HHS, Russland 55, Nesselrode to Golovkin, 22 Jan, 1822, p64-73
[76] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/687/2, Strangford to Castlereagh, 10 November 1821.
[77] BOA 574/321, the Porte to the Commander of the Vanguard Troops in Moldavia, 10 Jan, 1822.

himself neglected in the Eastern Question by Nesselrode, while Nesselrode himself identified the discrepancies between his vision and Alexander's wishes. Effectively, the tsar was the de facto foreign minister, exercising far more direct control of Russian foreign policy than other statesmen had perceived. For instance, Metternich had repeatedly commented that Alexander's influence vis-à-vis his ministers had waned since the Congress of Troppau and Laibach, that Russian diplomats and the cabinet were no longer truly representative of Alexander's thoughts.[78] Rather than Alexander's waning influence, Metternich's observations could reflect the increasing difficulty for the Russian ministers to gauge the tsar's wishes.

Along with the temporary ease in tension between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, Russia sent new diplomats for special diplomatic missions to the London and Vienna courts following the February memorandum. In Britain, Prince Lieven had already been based in London prior to this mission, whose wife Princess Dorothea Lieven was a notable socialite that enjoyed epistolary correspondence with most notable statesmen in Europe and a well-known affair with Metternich.[79] For the Austrian mission, Tatischeff had previously served as an envoy in Naples and Spain, and his rise in status was by virtue of his aunt Princess Dashkova, the confidante of Catherine the Great. Tatischeff's diplomatic mission in Vienna to engage the Austrian government to support Russia was not particularly smooth: Metternich's conversations with Tatischeff were frequently confrontational yet unsubstantial in content, and full of Metternich's suggestions to the Russian cabinet. For instance, Metternich remarked that Alexander was not honouring the grand alliance by not informing his allies of the Russian government's determination. Acknowledging that the tsar's wishes may have already been well

[78] HHS, Russland 53, Metternich to Tatischeff, 19 April, 1822, p832; HHS, Russland 55, Metternich to Lebzeltern, 20 May, 1822. Metternich and Tatischeff held months of relatively repetitive conversations with little substantial updates on either part, see dispatches from Tatischeff to Metternich between March-May1822.

[79] Metternich and Princess Lieven first met at the Congress of Vienna in 1814, and their liaison began in 1818 at the Congress of Aix-la-Chappelle. Their high-profile affair lasted until 1826. Princess Lieven had close friendships with Tsar Alexander I, Castlereagh, Lord Palmerston, Duke of Wellington, Charles Grey, and Lord Aberdeen. See Clemens von Metternich, Wenzel Lothar, and Jean Hanoteau. *Lettres du prince de Metternich à la comtesse de Lieven,* 1818-1819. 2e ed. (Paris, 1909).

known across the European capitals, Metternich insisted that the allies should still be given an opportunity to contribute; Metternich ventured as far as having prepared a circular for Tatischeff to directly forward to other Russian ambassadors across Europe.[80] Metternich also meticulously pressed for modification in the wording of Russia's notes regarding the Porte's suzerainty in Morea.[81] More directly, Metternich lectured Tatischeff on statecraft—'il faut séparer les vœux des droits, puis vous pouvez préciser vos vœux, afin que nous puissions les apprécier, les juger, et les admettre.' Overwhelmed by Metternich's overflowing recommendations, Tatischeff had to ask the Austrian minister to record all his advice in a written document.[82] Some of Metternich's proposals suggest that he may have deliberately prolonged diplomatic talks with Tatischeff with vague assurances, in order to stall any rapid Russian move towards war. In early April 1822, Metternich cautiously conceded to consider recalling the Austrian representative from Constantinople and suspending diplomatic relations with the Porte, but only if this action is also pursued by other great powers. It was evidently clear to Metternich that Britain would never consent to removing her diplomatic mission from the Ottoman Empire, which rendered this promise by Metternich effectively empty.[83] Frustrated with Tatistcheff's ineffectiveness, Metternich bypassed the Russian envoy and wrote directly to Nesselrode, requesting a private audience in lieu of communicating via writing—but only under the condition *sine qua non* that 'nous parlons honnêtement et clairement sur ce dont nous voulons et les bornes de facilité.'[84]

Metternich's ambitions and eagerness could not be diminished by the unenthusiastic attitudes of the other powers—he proposed another meeting in Vienna between Russia, Britain, and Austria, prior to the powers had agreed to meet in Verona later in the summer of 1822.

[80] HHS, Russland 55A, Metternich's response to Tatischeff's communication on 2 April, 1822, p768.
[81] HHS, Russland 55, Metternich to Tatischeff, 18 March, 1822.
[82] HHS, Russland 55A, Metternich to Tatistcheff, 19 April, 1822.
[83] Ibid, 2 April.
[84] HHS, Russland 55A, Metternich to Nesselrode, 19 April, 1822, p894.

Castlereagh, Tatischeff, Capodistrias, and Nesselrode were all among those invited.[85] Metternich exclaimed that he devoted himself to European, rather than Austrian, questions, which he considered to be questions of 'life and death'. The Austrian chancellor admitted that his fervour on European politics was due to the lack of pressing affairs in Austrian politics, that his eagerness to 'faire le bien' could only find its platform by concerting the European great powers.[86] Similarly, Paul Schroeder observes that the Greek cause was of no inherent value to Austria, but Metternich was determined to avert war. Schroeder argues that Austria's position alone could not steer Russia away from waging war, but it was rather the divided policy within Russia that achieved this outcome.[87] The strict neutrality from Britain wielded an arguably stronger influence on the tsar, and Alexander had a more proactive attitude of avoiding conflict than Austria suspected.

Alexander continued to be actively involved in the development of negotiations even as all powers gradually shifted away from the immediate threat of war—contrary to Anderson's view that the tsar did so for the Greeks, Alexander had little interest in fighting a war with the Porte.[88] Actions of Alexander and the Russian cabinet at the end of May 1822 demonstrated cooperation between Russia, Britain, and Austria with closeness unmatched by other moments during the Greek Revolution, which also challenges the leading narrative in existing literature, such as the views of Bitis, or more recently from Dialla, that it was Alexander's fidelity to the ideological framework of the concert system that compelled the tsar to restrain from war.[89] Other historians, including Vinogradov and Penn, emphasised the Christian element of Alexander's restraint—nonetheless, Alexander's correspondence and actions did not

[85] Dakin, *The Greek Struggle*, 146.
[86] HHS, Russland 55A, Metternich to Nesselrode, 19 April, 1822, p894.
[87] Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy at its zenith*, 175-8.
[88] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 58-66.
[89] Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question*; Dialla, 'The Congress of Vienna', 27–47.

particularly accentuate the religious element in his considerations.[90]

Despite the difficulties in diplomatic efforts in Vienna, the tsar's plan of conditionally restoring diplomatic relations with the Porte was gradually coming to fruition by May 1822, along with the news of Lord Strangford returning to Constantinople and the Porte showing first indications of accepting the final Russian ultimatum. The final version of the ultimatum remained deliberately ambiguous in the tsar's entitlements as a religious protector, which Mazower claimed that such vagueness was intentional and eventually contributed towards the aversion of war in 1822.[91] Immediately upon learning of Strangford's upcoming opportunity to convince the Porte, Alexander made an extraordinary decision to skip lines of communication and directly reached the British ambassador, requesting him to emphasise the Russian terms of a complete evacuation in the Principalities and the sending of an Ottoman plenipotentiary. The tsar justified his action in noting that the moment was decisive, and 'any delay would have been detrimental.'[92] Furthermore, the tsar also commanded Tatischeff that 'you will ask in my name that Austria take the most prompt and effective measure to support the steps of Lord Strangford.' Another detail also disputes the argument that Alexander restrained Russian military actions due the limiting power of the Concert of Europe—Nesselrode sent Tatischeff a confidential note two days after the tsar's letter with the following instructions: if necessary for ensuring the success of negotiations, the tsar was willing to concede on the nomination of hospodars from the boyars of Wallachia and Moldavia. The foreign minister reminded Tatischeff to keep the additional concession strictly confidential to any other party. If Russia was more concerned with the ideological considerations of the European concert, she would have communicated her final concession to the European allies

[90] Virginia Penn. 'Philhellenism in Europe, 1821-1828.' *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 16, (1937), 638; V. N. Vinogradov, 'George Canning, Russia and the Emancipation of Greece.' *Balkan Studies*, vol. 22, (1981): 3–33.
[91] Mazower, The Greek Revolution.
[92] VPR, letter 175, Alexander I to Tatischeff, 14/26 May, 1822, p507-508.

to demonstrate her sincerity. Conversely, the discreet approach Russia adopted provides evidence for a genuine desire for peace, little influenced by the perceptions of Britain and Austria.

The tsar's proactive communication with the other powers in orchestrating a collective action against the Porte in late May 1822 extended beyond military cooperation, whereas existing literature has focused on a passive position that the tsar assumed when a joint military action had been cautiously refused by the allies. The tsar did not refrain from using military action out of fear for adversarial actions from Britain or Austria, refuting the argument by Randall.[93] To the contrary, in spite of his peaceful policy, Alexander seemed disposed to remind the allies of Russia's military might and the facility with which he could wage war, as the tsar travelled to review the guards' corps quartered near Vilna at this time. Alexander's self-contradictory actions of reiterating his peaceful intentions whilst reviewing his troops prove the tsar's decision-making process was not driven by a meticulous consideration of British and Austrian sentiments. Nesselrode was worried that this visit would confirm the allies' fear of Russian intentions, which could explain the widely held view that Britain and Austrian remained sceptical of Russian intentions.[94]

VI. The aversion of conflict despite diplomatic disorder

In the early months following the outbreak of the Greek Revolution, European diplomatic efforts were severely disturbed by the delays in communication and the geographical distance between Constantinople and the European courts. Baron Stroganoff's diplomatic mission, marked by his frequent actions independent of the Russian court's instructions, was epitomised by the confrontational Russian grain vessel incident in June and

[93] Rendall, 'Russia, the Concert of Europe', 52–90.
[94] VPR, Nesselrode to all European consulars, 16/28 May, 1822.

the eight-day ultimatum controversy in July. Russo-Ottoman diplomacy during this time not only failed to alleviate rising tensions between the Russian government and the Ottoman Porte, but provoked the two powers to the verge of military conflict in July 1821. When Stroganoff's turbulent tenure in Constantinople terminated with the Russian ambassador's controversial departure, war between Russia and the Ottoman Porte appeared inevitable.

Nonetheless, the catastrophic diplomatic conduct in Constantinople did not culminate in armed conflict, even though it brought war into the consideration of tsar Alexander I. The tsar, however, faced clashing national interests of Russia: her religious responsibility for the Greeks Christians, her obligations to uphold European peace, and a disorganised cabinet with conflicting views between two foreign ministers—the myriad considerations halted rash decisions and confined Alexander to nonaction. Critically, the tsar's decision-making process was further complicated by the European allies' indifference in joining Russia on military action, although the tsar himself remained personally invested in ensuring peace with the Porte after the threat of immediate armed action had abated, demonstrating a genuine disinterest in war that was not particularly prompted by any external factor. Alexander was neither strictly bound by a rigid adherence to the concert system, nor was he particularly deferential to Britain and Austria's perceptions. Fundamentally, even though Baron Stroganoff has put his country in grave risk of war, Alexander's proactive, erratic, and incohesive decision-making process that lacked overarching principles managed to prevent Russia from fighting the Ottoman Empire in 1821-22. By May 1822, the court of St Petersburg congratulated itself on the reconciliation and 'longanimité' with the Porte.[95] This temporary aversion of war, however, was not a total lasting victory. Metternich correctly predicted that Russian ambition and Ottoman weakness would ensure continued mistrust and perpetual hostility. [96]

[95] HHS, Russland 55, Lebzeltern to Metternich, 17 May, 1822. Longanimity.
[96] HHS, Russland 55, Metternich to son Auguste Imperial Monseigneur le Prince Imperial, March 1822.

Only a few months later, as European statesmen and diplomats convened in Verona, news reached the conference of Lord Castlereagh's tragic suicide. The death of the British statesman would irrevocably shift British foreign policy and usher in a new era in the Concert of Europe's diplomacy in the Eastern Question.

Chapter 3

The strained Anglo-Russo alliance:

European diplomacy before the Russo-Turkish War 1828

In late 1824, nearly three years after the outbreak of the Greek Revolution, the war for Greek independence against the Ottoman Empire continued to rage with no forthcoming arrangement for pacification. Tsar Alexander I had been deliberating over an intervention on behalf of the Greek cause to terminate persisting hostilities, but the tsar who refrained from declaring war against the Ottoman Porte in 1821 seemed no more enthusiastic on committing the Russian army three years later. The enduring conflict had caused severe losses to Russian trade due to restrictions in the Black Sea, particularly for produce from Russia's southern provinces. It was thus in Alexander's sincere interest to enforce a prompt and complete cessation of fighting between the Greeks and the Ottoman Empire. Diplomatic efforts had reached an impasse: despite Russia's insistent effort at negotiating with the Porte, no satisfactory agreement had been reached after years of fruitless deliberation. Among the Concert of Europe great powers, Britain proclaimed strict neutrality but was vigilantly alert of Russian expansionism in the Levant; Austria never deviated from her pro-Ottoman stance, distancing her position from that of Russia's; France navigated the nebulous alliances between allies with opportunism and flexibility, to the extent it benefited her national prestige; Prussia remained insignificant and adhered to the views of Austria. With their foreign policies shrouded in mutual mistrust, Russia and Britain decided to reach a separate agreement to prevent a direct clash over the Greek question as the two greatest powers in Europe. From forging their unlikely alliance in April 1826 with the St Petersburg Protocol, to signing a reinforced tripartite treaty with France at the Treaty of London in July 1827, Anglo-Russo diplomatic efforts were marked by burgeoning Russian ambitions and augmenting British

apprehension, further clouded by the internal divide of the British cabinet and years of futility in the concert alliance. This chapter argues that although Britain and Russia developed an unparalleled level of ostensible coordination from the final year of Alexander's reign until the Russo-Turkish War in 1828, increasingly discernible Russian ambitions, continuous British ministerial strife, and relative weakness of other European powers all accentuated existing Anglo-Russo discord and determined the ephemerality of the utilitarian diplomatic alliance.

I. Formation of the Anglo-Russo alliance

In 1824, Alexander I's court continued to refine final demands to the Porte since issuing the ultimatum in July 1821, and another detailed rendition of Russian requirements was presented to the Sultan in early 1824. The Russian demands communicated via Lord Strangford, the British ambassador to Constantinople, included the following terms: pacification of Greece and the direct announcement of the retreat of Ottoman armies to Russia; abrogation of restrictions placed on Russian commerce and transit through the Bosphorus; free navigation of the Black Sea; and the removal of half the Ottoman troops stationed in the Wallachian and Moldavian principalities and to restore the ante bellum status quo thereof.[1] The Ottoman Porte had consented to the proposed terms, and a termination of hostilities in Greece finally seemed promising after three years of futile diplomacy. Nonetheless, the Russian Foreign Minister who would dominate Russian foreign policy for four decades since 1816, Karl von Nesselrode, rejected the demands mediated by the British ambassador over the final condition. Prince Lieven, the Russian ambassador in London, communicated the Russian disapproval to George Canning, the British Foreign Minister, on the basis that a complete evacuation of the principalities was non-negotiable for Russia, where the Porte meeting the

[1] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/843/3, Lord Strangford to George Canning, 3 September, 1825.

final demand would be inadequate.[2]

Russia considered no alternative but persisting to press the Porte for a complete satisfaction of her demands, yet the continuous quest thereof had not been fruitful by late 1824. Around the same time, both Britain and Austria posited their courts further from an allied intervention in the pacification of Greece, effectively signalling their wishes to quit from European diplomatic efforts in the Greek affairs. Britain was adamant in her strict neutrality in the Eastern Question, which she viewed as 'une question hérissée de difficultés dont elle ne s'était mêlé qu'avec une extrême répugnance'.[3] Simultaneously, the court of Vienna adopted a 'vague and cold' tone, and conveyed Austria's wish of distancing herself from potential Russian actions vis-à-vis the Ottoman Porte. The Austrian alienation was unsurprising given the Austrian Chancellor Prince Metternich's strong anti-revolutionary principles, but Alexander viewed the Austrian withdrawal as a defection from Russia's 'most intimate ally' that was plotted by the British cabinet of St James. Consequentially, Nesselrode instructed Prince Lieven to cut off communication with the British government regarding the Eastern Question and to decline responding to any of George Canning's approaches on the subject.[4] By the end of 1824, the fissure between Russia, Britain, and Austria seemed difficult to overcome, primarily because Britain steered clear of the European alliance's directionless diplomatic efforts on the Greek question.

In 1825, the Court of St James revived an attempt at engaging the Court of St Petersburg in collaborating on the Greek question. Stratford Canning, George Canning's younger cousin, was sent to Russia as the British ambassador in summer 1825. Britain was testing the possibility of reaching a separate agreement with Russia outside of the alliance, but Nesselrode insisted upon firm silence against all British attempts.[5] In spite of failed efforts in forging an agreement,

[2] VPR, II, 5, Prince Lieven to Nesselrode, 2/14 January, 1824, p291.
[3] VPR, II, 5, Nesselrode to Tatischeff, 14/26 December, 1824, p652.
[4] VPR, II, 5, Nesselrode to Prince Lieven, 18/30 December, 1824, p656.
[5] VPR, II, 6, Nesselrode to European ambassadors, 27 January/8 February, 1825, p35.

Britain and Russia were aligned by their shared animosity against the Austrian Chancellor and proponent of the Concert of Europe, Prince Metternich. George Canning's strong disdain for Metternich was manifest when describing him in a letter to Viscount Granville, 'Metternich is the greatest rogue and liar on the continent, perhaps in the civilised world', as Canning suspected that Metternich had been organising an intrigue with Princess Lieven, the Almack's socialite and wife of the Russian ambassador, in agitating British politics and influencing Canning's own decision-making. 'If this intrigue carried on, I would be forced to resign and be driven out of office by the Holy Alliance and further in that system which I found established of personal communications between the sovereign and foreign ministers was one under which no English minister could do his duty.'[6] Meanwhile, Alexander I remained bitterly offended by Metternich's isolation, so the possibility of Britain and Russia acting in alignment against Austrian wishes emerged. A Greek request for British protection also shifted the mindset of London, convincing George Canning that Britain held the diplomatic upper hand over Russia with a direct plea from Theodoros Kolokotonis, Greek general and leader of the Greek struggle for independence.[7] The Greek representatives also asked for British recommendations on a potential candidate for a supreme leader for Greece, insinuating their desire for a connection with the British Royal family via either Prince Leopold or the Duke of Sussex; both suggestions were gently denied by George Canning.[8] Whilst Britain respected the position of the Greeks as belligerent, this act was tactical to protect British commerce in the region against the threat of Greek piracy; British neutrality under Canning was unflinching.[9] Such neutrality faced augmenting challenges in England, as popular opinion swung heavily in favour of the Greeks

[6] George Canning to Lord Granville, 11 March, 1825, cited in George Canning and Edward John Stapleton, *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1887), 257.
[7] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/835/4/3, Theodore Kolokotrones to George Canning, 30 June, 1825.
[8] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/838/2, meeting between George Canning, Greek deputies Orlando, Spaniolacki, and Luriottis, 29 September, 1825.
[9] Alexis Heraclides and Ada Dialla, 'intervention in the Greek War of Independence, 1821-32,' in *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015): 112.

and Lord Cochrane—the latter joined the Greek Revolutionary navy as a former member of Parliament. Canning lamented his inability to command public opinion and expressed concerns for the perceived intactness of British neutrality.[10]

The true intention of the courts of Britain, France, Austria, and Prussia were centred on limiting Russian expansion in influence and territory, thus the European courts would predictably refuse all proposals that could bring about any substantial diplomatic progress.[11] By mid-1825, Matvey Minciaky, the Russian ambassador to Constantinople, accurately observed that negotiations with the Porte were fruitless, because the European allies had no intention or sincerity to act on the Greek question. The Porte in the meantime has become familiar with the diplomatic conduct of the European allies: the Sultan was acutely aware of the isolationist policy of Britain, the strong pro-Ottoman affinity of Austria, and the inability of Russia to carry out her numerous threatening and coercive measures. Lieven even judged that British relations with the Porte was intimate for commercial reasons. Furthermore, the symbolic rupture of diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and European courts carried little weight for the Porte, thus the Sultan could not be effectively menaced by further European menace.[12]

The depopulation plan and shift in British neutrality

The turning point of the diplomatic impasse occurred on 24 October, 1825, when the alleged depopulation plan of Ibrahim Pasha became the foundation of the Anglo-Russo attempt at rapprochement. In a private meeting without official instructions from the court of St Petersburg, Prince Lieven brought to Canning's attention a rumoured plan of the Porte and

[10] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/838/1, George Canning to Sir Henry Wellesley, British ambassador to Austria and younger brother of the Duke of Wellington, 27 September, 1825.
[11] VPR, Miniacky to Nesselrode, 8 June, 1825, p190.
[12] Ibid, p193.

Ibrahim Pacha to 'remove the whole Greek population carrying them into slavery in Egypt or elsewhere, and to re-people the country with Egyptians and others of the Mahommedan religion.'[13] By this time, Britain was warming up to the idea of communicating with Russia, as Canning was delighted at what he perceived as Russian trust and confidence in the British government, exhibiting sincerity unmatched by any other European court. Such confidential news, albeit appalling, offered George Canning a legitimate excuse to forge a closer connection to St Petersburg. The idea of including Metternich and Austria in the conversation was unconceivable—Lieven described of Russian 'wrath' against Metternich and Canning asserted that 'there is no honesty in Metternich, and that we cannot enter into joint counsel with him without the certainty of being betrayed.'[14] The very validity of the depopulation plan was subsequently repetitively questioned by statesmen from all powers. Nesselrode admitted to Lieven on 29 Sep, 1826 that 'perhaps it would be impossible to ever acquire irrefutable proof of the existence of such an intention'.[15] Even two years later, Capodistrias also expressed to Admiral Codrington his doubts on the original depopulation plan—'S'il [Abrahim Pasha] avait l'inclination d'évacuer le Pelopousses si la Porte était dispose à accueillir les conseils des puissances allies de pacifier la Grèce—permettrait elle a Abrahim Pasha de détruire a grands frais les propriétés? La même traite lui réserve la chance d'une indemnité.'[16] Therefore, the unverified, one-sided account from Lieven of Ibrahim's depopulation plan, compounded with Britain and Russia's mutual hatred for Metternich, pushed the two most powerful European courts towards each other in late 1825.

November 1825 was an eventful month in the evolution of Anglo-Russo relations. In the weeks following his meeting with Prince Lieven, George Canning immediately considered

[13] Memorandum of George Canning, 25 October, 1825, as cited in Stapleton, *Some Official Correspondence ,* 313; the depopulation plan was also described in Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/838/4.
[14] George Canning to Lord Liverpool, 25 October, 1825, Stapleton, *Some Official Correspondence,* 317.
[15] VPR, Nesselrode to Lieven, 17 September (29), 1826, p605.
[16] TNA, FO 352/21B/7, Capodistrias to Codrington, 24 July, 1828, p22.

the military feasibility of an Anglo-Russo cooperation against the Ottoman Empire. The British Foreign Minister wrote to Sir Cockburn, First Naval Lord of the Admiralty, and to the Duke of Wellington, to respectively inquire after the military preparedness of the British navy and the strength and position of the Russian army positioned close to the Russian border with the Danubian principalities.[17] Based on a military analysis of the Russian army, the Duke of Wellington advised that a Russian occupation of the principalities would necessitate maritime operations, which the naval power of Britain could prevent its execution. A meticulous suggestion of liaising with France and Austria instead of Russia was thus proposed.[18] Even though Canning was wary of Russian military capabilities, Lord Strangford, the British ambassador to St Petersburg, reported that the disposition of the Russian government inclined greatly towards Britain. The willingness to cooperate was reciprocated, but the Court of St James patiently waited for Russia to make the first significant move. In mid-November, Nesselrode finally extended the highly-anticipated gesture, by claiming that 'the work of restoring peace in the Levant depended on the establishment of a perfect understanding between Russia and England.'[19] When all developments were perfectly positioned to facilitate an Anglo-Russo rapprochement, Lord Strangford inexplicably deviated from the instructions from London, by proposing to Nesselrode a joint allied intervention in Constantinople including Austria and France, even citing Strangford's coordination with Comte de la Ferronays.[20] This entirely unauthorised move angered the British cabinet, and the Foreign Office immediately disavowed Strangford and banned the ambassador from further participation in Greek affairs. George Canning found Strangford's conduct incomprehensible after the diplomat's long career, where the lack of experience was not an applicable excuse. Strangford offered a weak defence of his blunder only after the death of George Canning, where

[17] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/843/14, George Canning to Duke of Wellington, 17 November, 1825.
[18] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/832/18, Duke of Wellington to George Canning, 22 November, 1825.
[19] Stapleton, *Some Official Correspondence*, 348.
[20] VPR, Nesselrode to Alexander I, 15/27 November, 1825.

the former ambassador criticised the scarcity and irregularity of Canning's instructions on the Greek question.[21] Another plausible explanation is Strangford's jealousy of the simultaneous appointment of Stratford Canning to Constantinople; Strangford could be attempting to jeopardise Stratford's diplomatic mission, in order to ensure not being overshadowed by George Canning's younger cousin.

Albeit bewildered at the inconstancy of British attitude, Nesselrode passed on the five-court allied proposal by Strangford for the tsar's consideration, but Alexander was then absent from St Petersburg on a trip to the south. His mental and physical state having already been deteriorating for some time, the tsar caught typhus on the voyage and died unexpectedly on 1 December, 1825. The death of the tsar at the critical moment of Anglo-Russo negotiations halted all progress and shattered hopes of immediately securing the alliance; it also left Britain and the other European allies in utter uncertainty over the course of action of the new tsar. Much confusion surrounded the dispute of who would succeed Alexander—due to the Grand Duke of Constantin's unyielding refusal to become tsar, his younger brother Nicholas ascended upon the throne in December.

Finalised alliance under Nicholas I

Due to the delay of communication, when Prince Lieven visited George Canning on 1 December, the news of Alexander's death had not yet reached either Petersburg or London. Canning was residing in Seaford for recuperation, thus the Russian ambassador who called upon the Foreign Minister at the far less ostensible location in the South of England compared to London on 23 November. In this initial meeting, Canning maintained restraint and did not entirely agree to collaboration with Russia. Canning's hesitation solely originated from the

[21] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/903/4, Strangford to the Duke of Wellington, 6 December, 1827.

opposite view held by the Duke of Wellington, who protested staunchly against forging an alliance with Russia based on military intelligence. Intent to overcome the internal barrier, Canning travelled back up to London shortly to meet with the duke on 3 December, after which Wellington was reluctantly persuaded. Wellington was seemingly troubled by having relented to a Russian alliance, as he afterwards wrote to Canning to warn of Lieven's unreliability and urged Canning to steer British policy as clear from Russia as possible. The rift between Canning and Wellington was aggravated by Lieven, who even discouraged Canning from entrusting King George IV and Wellington from the confidential alliance, given their strong pro-Austrian sentiments. Ultimately, on 15 December, Canning pretended to have business in Brighton for a pretext in meeting with Lieven, where the Anglo-Russo friendship was sealed.[22]

The Anglo-Russo relationship remained so strictly confidential that even the high-ranking diplomats of the two countries were not entrusted with the full extent of information. On the British side, only the King, George Canning, Lord Granville, and the Duke of Wellington were aware of the secret negotiations. The discreetness was effective, that the secret correspondence and preliminary communication between the courts of London and St Petersburg were not discovered by Vienna until nearly three years later. In February 1828, Metternich intercepted a dispatch in December 1825 from George Canning to Lord Strangford, then British ambassador to St Petersburg. The discovery was simultaneously enlightening and infuriating for Metternich: it was valuable for understanding the dynamics between Britain and Russia, and the mission of Alexander and Nicholas; nevertheless, the letter amounted to a betrayal by Russia from Metternich's perspective. The Austrian Chancellor was distressed to find evidence of a covert Anglo-Russo rapport that had escaped his notice and lamented the energy wasted in maintaining Austria's friendship with Russia. 'One day it may be useful to reveal that we have not ignored anything of this rapport or changes in attitude adopted towards

[22] VPR, Prince Lieven to Nesselrode, 4/16 December, 1825, 'secret', p301.

us by the cabinet with whom we have cultivated the closest intimacy for many years.'[23] France, through account of Damas, also had no knowledge on the Anglo-Russo negotiations and predicted that a separate British appeal to the Porte would be insufficient to prevent an open conflict between Russian and the Ottoman Empire.[24] Even the Russian ambassador to France, Pozzo di Borgo, had not the faintest idea of a covert alliance between his government and the British cabinet by late February 1826. He still described to Nesselrode of Canning's proclaimed hatred of Russia and the increasing correspondence between London and Vienna; the ambassador proceeded to suggest a Franco-Russian alliance, alienating Canning and Metternich. Nesselrode understood that the British incentives in forging an alliance with Russia was driven by her own commercial interests, but did not react to Pozzo's proposals.[25] It was only around the end of March that Nesselrode finally warned the Russian ambassadors in Berlin and Paris about the secret negotiations between Russia and Britain, but continued to stress for confidentiality.

After Nicholas ascended the throne, Canning reiterated British willingness to cooperate with Russia. The Duke of Wellington was appointed on a special mission by the King to congratulate Nicholas I upon his ascension. Given Wellington's prestigious rank, Nesselrode had discerned before the arrival of Wellington that his mission was beyond simply congratulating Nicholas but gauging the policies of the new court. Nicholas' priority at the time was upholding social order within Russia, having quelled the Decembrist uprising on the first day of his rule. Regarding the Ottoman Empire, Nicholas continued to hope that Russia and Britain could find an agreement regardless of whether the Porte accepts or rejects Russian demands. Nicholas' first proposal was a limited military intervention to put pressure on the

[23] HHS, Russland 84, Metternich to Tatischeff, 19 February, 1828, delivered 5 April, 1828, p15.
[24] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/846/1, Lord Granville to George Canning, recounting an interview with Baron de Damas, 2 January, 1826.
[25] VPR, Pozzo di Borgo to Nesselrode, 16/28 February, 1826, p354; on the same day, Nesselrode to Nicholas I, p394.

Porte, by occupying the Principalities until the Porte agreed to Russian demands, yet disavowing any aggrandization of territory. The eventual ultimatum, finally sent on 5 April contained the following demands: the return of the Danubian Principalities to the pre-1821 status quo; the release of the Serbian deputies who had travelled to Constantinople to negotiate executing the Treaty of Bucharest; the dispatch of plenipotentiaries to the Russian frontier to negotiate the reestablishment of peaceful, friendly relations between Russia and the Porte. Should these demands not be met within six weeks, Minciacky was to withdraw from Constantinople, with the Porte left to deal with the consequences which would follow.[26] Wellington attempted to soften the tone of the ultimatum but offered British assistance in reconciling Russia with the Porte, even though the duke was alarmed by the high likelihood of war.

On 4 April, 1826, the official terms of a joint Anglo-Russo mediation in the Greek War of Independence were finalised in the St Petersburg Protocol, by Prince Lieven, Nesselrode, and Wellington. The protocol stipulated the liberation of Greece under the suzerainty of the Porte, reserved the right for Russia and Britain in adopting 'necessary measures' to determine details of the question, and disavowed territorial augmentation for both powers.[27] If Britain secured any victories at all in the St Petersburg Protocol, they were twofold: firstly, Britain tied Russia into seeking a peaceful solution for the Greek Crisis even if Russia and the Ottoman Empire were to be at war; secondly, that the fifth clause saw Russia disclaim territorial aggrandisement. Notwithstanding, what the tsar promised seemed alarmingly pointing towards an indefinite occupation of the principalities that could lead to territorial aggrandisement, which Nicholas had so vehemently denied. Nesselrode found that only an alliance with Britain can guarantee boosting Russian power, that British interests appeared not to drive Britain

[26] VPR, Miniacky to the Ottoman Porte, 24 March/5 April, 1826, p451-3.
[27] VPR, the Russian-British protocol on Greek affairs, St Petersburg, 23 March/4 April, 1826, p449.

towards a rupture with Russia regardless of the Porte's decision.

Ironically, the hypothetical Russian intervention by March 1826 contained little consideration for the Greeks. The Duke of Wellington thus realised the fundamental difference between Alexander and Nicholas, as the former tsar had based negotiations on mediating the war between the Turks and the Greeks, but his successor rather focused on existing grievances between the Porte and Russia. This differentiation was stressed by Wellington to Stratford Canning, asking the ambassador to emphasise the nuance to the Porte in order to enhance the chance of acceptance. Nesselrode's additional confidential communication with Miniacky also demonstrated genuine Russian desire for the Porte to accept the demands, as even secretly permitted accepting a partial satisfaction excluding the third condition. 'In the utmost final extremity, if the Porte have met with the first two conditions but struggle with the material impossibility to satisfy the third, you don't have to consider it as a condition *sine qua non*.'[28]

Russia justified her alliance with England instead of the European concert for two reasons: firstly, the alliance was a specific and possibly fleeting one, due to its strictly utilitarian nature regarding the Eastern Question. In Nesselrode's view, alliances were invariably formed for specific affairs, citing the examples of Naples with the concert of the Holy Alliance countries; the French and Russia cooperation in the last expedition of Spain; the recognition of the King of Brazil united Austria and England. If Russia did not align with Britain, common interests in pacifying the Eastern Question could immediately turn into rival interests, which would endanger general peace. Secondly, Nesselrode argued that the constitutive acts of the European concert were entirely independent of the Eastern Question, which had technically never fallen into the domain of the alliance; nor had any great power ever imposed upon Russia the obligation to concert with the alliance on the Eastern Question. The defiant Court of St

[28] VPR, Nesselrode to Miniacky, 5/17 March, 1826, très réservé, p416. This was the additional note to the ostensible dispatch on the same date, p411.

Petersburg essentially considered negotiations with the Porte a 'purely Russian affair'.[29] Nesselrode cited the difference between Alexander and Nicholas to defend Russian policy—if Alexander had signalled interest in engaging European powers to terminate the troubles of the Eastern Question, it was a spontaneous act of the late emperor, rather than a fulfilment of obligation. For Nicholas, the years of futile diplomatic efforts had formed a 'cercle vicieux' from which the tsar was desperate to exit. Far from weakening or departing from the alliance, Nesselrode insisted that Russia was aiding the Concert system through a rapprochement with Britain that would guarantee peace.

British public opinion was oscillating upon initial reception of the St Petersburg Protocol. The first public exposure of the protocol in *The Times* was highly critical of British diplomacy, citing that 'England strenuously concurs with Russia' and that Wellington's failure rendered hostilities between St Petersburg and the Porte inevitable.[30] Wellington was infuriated; he accused that either cabinet ministers had 'conveyed this nonsense' with the intention of impugning Wellington's reputation for office, or the intelligence had originated from foreign manipulation of British public opinion.[31] On 18 May, bearing the brunt of Wellington's rage, *The Times* modified its tone by publishing another article, praising that 'regarding Greece, the Duke succeeded in a manner the most absolute and complete.' Nonetheless, *The Times* held the opinion that Wellington had failed in mediating between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, because 'the mind of Nicholas, of the Russian people, and of the Turks, were all too ripe for an appeal to force to be checked by the interference of diplomacy.'[32]

[29] VPR, Nesselrode to Pozzo di Borgo, 9/21 May, 1826, p491.
[30] *The Times*, 8 May, 1826, p.2 col d, Times Digital Archive.
[31] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/855/19, Wellington to George Canning, 8 May, 1826; A second letter on the same day was a follow-up note on the same subject, MS61/WP1/855/20, Wellington to Canning, 8 May, 1826.
[32] *The Times*, 18 May, 1826, p.2 col c, Times Digital Archive.

II. From St Petersburg Protocol to Treaty of London

Nicholas' reluctance to wage war on behalf of Greece mitigated the perceived Russian threat in Constantinople. The temporary alleviation of tension in the early months of 1826, however, simultaneously diminished the diplomatic leverage that Stratford Canning possessed in Constantinople, as the British ambassador had enjoyed distinctive prestige and esteem upon his arrival in the Ottoman Empire.[33] Stratford's mission soon witnessed the Auspicious Incident, the massacre of janissaries who had failed to rebel against Sultan Mahmud II in June 1826. The onslaught did not entirely surprise Stratford Canning, who had witnessed the aftermath of the 1807-8 Janissary revolt in Constantinople and had always acknowledged the formidable power of the janissaries across the Empire.

Less than a week after the revolt on 16 June, 1826, over 8000 people had been executed and 18,500 banished from the capital.[34] The reign of terror in the Ottoman capital continued throughout the month of August, where the state of violence was prolonged indefinitely. General fear and discontent placed the Sultan's Empire in dire short-term consequences: the complete destruction of the janissary corps, destabilisation of the army, and slow rollout of military reform all significantly weakened the Ottoman position in the aftermath of the massacre of the Janissaries.[35] Events in June 1826 halted Russian and British discussion with the Porte on the pacification of Greece, as the turmoil between the Sultan and his janissaries had rendered all other discussions regarding the authority of the Ottoman government or the personal safety of the sovereign impossible.

Interpretations in existing historiography, such as those of Webster and Crawley, have characterised Austrian and Russian views as aligned in opposition to that of Britain and France

[33] TNA, FO 78/141, p60.
[34] This was recorded in Stratford Canning's daily reports to the Foreign Office in FO352/13B, including 13B/6B starting from 19 June, 1826.
[35] TNA, FO78/144, p74-75.

regarding the division of the Ottoman Empire.[36] To the contrary, Austro-Russian relations rested upon brittle grounds. By mid-1827, Austria had become a clear impediment to the wishes of Russia, to the severe reprimands of Nesselrode and Nicholas. Such friction also counters Šedivý's view that the close communication between Nicholas I and Metternich alienated Austria from the rest of the European alliance.[37] Not only did Austria reject the conversion of the St Petersburg protocol into a treaty, she began to challenge the fundamental basis of Russian negotiations with Britain. '[L'Autriche] ne se contentait pas de combattre le principe pose dans le préambule, mail altérait les bases même de notre convention avec le duc de Wellington. Les restrictions qu'elle a ajoutées peuvent seulement faire des compromis qui ne pourraient être approuvées par Sa Majesté impériale et ne lui laisseraient que de vifs regrets.'[38] Russian discontent against Austria was so strong that by May 1827, Nicholas felt the necessity to directly engage with the courts of Tuileries and St James to adhere to the negotiation of a treaty and circumvent Austrian obstruction.

The major disparity between Austria and Russia originated from their interpretation of the proposed treaty based on the St Petersburg Protocol. For Russia, this was a diplomatic concession intended to placate other allies, thus she aimed for no substantive change in policy. Nesselrode astutely observed that changing the protocol into a treaty served more a purpose of pride than a matter of formality, intended 'pour mieux satisfaire tous les amour propres en replaçant toutes les puissances signataires sur la même ligne.' In essence, Russia had no intentions of altering any stipulations of the protocol. Austria, however, interpreted the treaty process as an invitation to renegotiate substantive changes to the protocol's terms and 'à entamer à Londres une négociation sans terme, et le premier effet serai à rendre non avenus

[36] C. W. Crawley, *The Question of Greek Independence : A Study of British Policy in the Near East, 1821-1833* (Cambridge: University Press, 1930); Charles K. Webster, *Palmerston, Metternich and the European System, 1830-1841* (1934).
[37] Miroslav Šedivý, *Crisis among the Great Powers : The Concert of Europe and the Eastern Question* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).
[38] VPR, Nesselrode to Tatischeff, 21 April (3 May), 1827, reserve, p73.

nos engagements avec le duc de Wellington et que nous subordonnerions entièrement nos résolutions définitives aux résultats des délibérations nouvelles dont Londres deviendrait le centre.' Evidently, fury against Austria was compounded by the parallel growing mistrust of Britain, as fears emerged that Britain would replace Russia as the major beneficiary in the pacification of Greece. Therefore, given Russia's formal alliance with Britain, it was more feasible to divest her anger towards Austria and the rigid stance of Metternich. Nesselrode also insinuated augmenting communication between London and Vienna, by sarcastically expressing to Austria that 'if Lieven's language is in accord with that of George Canning, then that means our propositions are agreed to by the cabinet of London.'[39] In France, despise for Prince Metternich dominated public opinion. The Austrian ambassador in Paris, Monsieur Anton von Apponyi, despite being regarded as one of the finest Austrian diplomats, was detested as a 'mere echo of Metternich', rendering his influence in the French capital negligible.[40]

While the attitudes of Prussia carried the least weight in Russian and British considerations, Prussia shared Austria's concerns for an Anglo-Russo alliance. Berlin had originally been described by St Petersburg as the court that most completely supported Russian views, but the protocol between Britain and Russia raised considerable alarm in Berlin, where it was feared that the agreement 'was only the first step towards even more vigorous measures to pacify the East by hook or by crook.'[41] The more assertive Russia's stance became, the more hesitant Berlin appeared. Prussian apprehension of Russian gains in the Levant stemmed from fears of a broader conflict, which would be financially insupportable and politically untenable for Prussia. In case of a wider war, the Berlin court would struggle to overcome financial difficulties and surpass debts accumulated during the previous reign. Count Christian Gunther

[39] Ibid.
[40] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/932/2, Marquis of Londonderry to Duke of Wellington, 10 May, 1828.
[41] VPR, Alopeus to Nesselrode, 12/24 May, 1827, p112.

von Bernstorff, the anti-revolutionary Prussian foreign minister and close ally of Metternich, was utterly opposed to the prospects of such turmoil, by training or association. He supported the reactionary Carlsbad Decrees within the German Confederation and been a henchman to Metternich at the Congresses of Laibach, Troppau, and Verona. Bernstorff considered the situation in the East hanging by a thread: he was convinced that the Porte could not possibly accept proposed allied mediations without pronouncing its own imminent doom, any concession from the Porte would thus engender bloody revolutions within the Ottoman Empire, severely threatening the tranquillity of Europe. Negotiations in London regarding the Eastern Question hence presented a fateful juncture for the Concert of Europe: if a formal treaty involving all great powers fail to materialise, the dissidence among their views would become more pronounced than ever before, rendering the alliance functionally dissolved.

On 6 July, 1827, The Treaty of London was signed by representatives of Russia, Great Britain, and France—respectively by Prince Lieven, Lord Dudley, and Prince de Polignac. One of the immediate concerns that arose following the conclusion of the treaty was the potential appointment of Capodistrias as the president of Greece. Since retiring as the co-Foreign Minister of Russia under Alexander I, Capodistrias had been residing in Geneva. Constrained by British public opinion, George Canning found it impossible to endorse this appointment, out of fear that Capodistrias' selection would produce too Russian an influence upon Greece. Prince Lieven noted that it was unclear whether the British Prime Minister was acting against Capodistrias personally or symbolically against the Russian court, but it was imperative to search for an expedient candidate that would 'faire taire les alarmes du ministre et l'amour propre de l'Anglais.'[42]

The Treaty of London was controversial and received with difficulty in Britain. Wellington was criticised for his indecision, but also for having signed the treaty without

[42] VPR, Lieven to Nesselrode, 1/13 June,1827, p150.

foreseeing the full scope of its diplomatic consequences. The failure of embroiling Britain in the Treaty dictated the evasive nature of British policy following 1827, where Wellington resorted to delaying tactics between the July treaty and the Russian declaration of war. While there was some criticism against interfering in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, more uneasiness among the British society originated from British collaboration with Russia, as the latter concern was described as having behaved 'treacherously' towards the Ottoman Porte. By forging an alliance with Russia, criticism emphasised that Britain had abandoned her own interests, and that provisions of the treaty should not have been made public before its ratification.[43] These criticisms did not even condemn the inherently self-conflicting nature of the treaty stipulations—on the one hand, the treaty was intended to enforce the St Petersburg Protocol and terminate the hostilities between the Greeks and the Ottoman Empire; on the other hand, the great powers must exert to prevent the outbreak of conflict whilst enforcing their lofty aims. Expressions defining the purposes of the Greek cause were also paradoxical, including dichotomous terms of 'loin de porter atteinte a l'intégrité de l'empire', and 'conserver la Grèce a Constantinople'. Later in October 1827, when the allied naval commanders at the Bay of Navarino found themselves on the brink of a battle that eventually annihilated the Ottoman fleet, they remained puzzled at the permissibility and authorisation of the use of force from the 6 July treaty. The confusion surrounding the interpretation of the treaty amounted to 'un vague extreme' that paralysed actions of the allied commanders. The Duke of Wellington himself was forced to acknowledge the universal dismay at the ambiguity of the treaty, 'all parties had complained of the 'vague extrême' of the treaty, and none more vehemently than those who had taken most pains to carry it into execution, and had manifested the utmost zeal and ability to the cause.'[44] Lord Aberdeen, the British Foreign Secretary from June 1828, also

[43] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/893/18, Lord Clancarty to Wellington, 24 July, 1827.
[44] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/980/25, memorandum by the Duke of Wellington, on the French reply to proposed explanations of articles of the treaty of London, 3 May, 1828

commented that the Treaty of London left the future of Greece undetermined.[45]

Effectively, the Treaty of London necessitated a naval blockade, but the commanders deemed this militarily infeasible without a wider outbreak of armed conflict. In the event of the Porte not consenting to an armistice, the squadrons were demanded to be united 'a l'effet d'empêcher tout secours turc ou égyptien, en hommes, armes, vaisseaux et munitions de guerre, d'arriver en Grèce ou dans les îles de l'archipel'. The Greeks were to be treated as 'friends' but no part was to be taken in the hostilities between Greeks and Turks. 'Vous sentez que vous devez apporter un soin extrême à ce que les mesures que vous prendrez envers la marine ottomane ne dégénèrent pas en hostilités.' [46] These additional instructions sent to the commanders intended to elucidate the vagueness of the treaty articles, but achieved little in such effect, as Codrington interpreted the overall message to be using force if necessary upon the Ottomans as to impose the settlement. The fact that the ultimate decision of war and peace in Europe laid upon the military commanders in Navarino infuriated Prince Metternich, who wrote with indignation at the lack of allied organisation –'l'interprétation de cet acte, le sort des nations, leurs rapports de paix ou de guerre ont donc été soumis au gré de simples chefs d'escadre!' [47] Historians, including Clayton, also echoed Metternich's criticism of British policy, which was principally left to the discretion of Admiral Codrington in excess of instructions from his home government.[48]

III. The divided cabinet and strained alliance

Canning's reluctance towards concert action epitomised the internal divide within the British government, particularly the conflicting views of the Duke of Wellington and George

[45] British Library (BL), Add Ms 43082, Aberdeen to Lord Stuart, No.54, 18 November, 1828.
[46] Various records of the Treaty of London can be found across the VPR, British National Archives, and Wellington Papers.
[47] HHS, Russland 84, Metternich to Tatischeff, 29 February, 1828, p8.
[48] Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question,* 244.

Canning. This rivalry was on full display by September 1826, where the duke voiced numerous doubts about Canning's capabilities as Foreign Secretary in a letter to Lord Bathurst. The strong personalities of the two leading British statesmen in 1826 partially contributed to their antagonism. Canning's fierce character was well-known: the French ambassador to London described Canning as typically exerting 'grande force contre les adversaires par l'habitude, harcelait jadis de ses sarcasms.'[49] The social composition of the British Cabinet further set Canning apart. Most of Lord Goderich's administration studied at Cambridge, Lord Liverpool's at Oxford; nearly all trained at either Eton or Harrow. Despite a comparable education endorsed by his uncle, George Canning's pedigree was not one of established wealth or elevated social status. The Duke of Wellington, also Irish, was similar in his independent ascent to power and prestige, but the hero of Waterloo had already begun to face a decline in his popularity, despite his enduring esteem. When the two leading statesmen were compelled to cooperate, their invariably clashing beliefs and personal discord aggravated the existing uncertainty and oscillation of British foreign policy. Describing negotiations with the Ottoman Porte on the Eastern Question, Wellington claimed that he had 'never in my life known anything half so confused as Mr. Canning's ideas, but that is his affair and not mine.'[50] Wellington criticised that British foreign policy had become fickle and overly cautious under Canning. It was only after the death of George Canning did Lord Strangford write to Wellington, explaining that he had never received adequate instructions on the Greek affairs. According to Strangford, since George Canning took office as the Foreign Secretary following the suicide of Castlereagh in August 1822, no formal instructions related to Greece had been issued until 25 April, 1823. Consequentially, Strangford had to rely on his correspondence with Wellington for instructions.[51] Similarly, later in July 1827, during the height of tensions

[49] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Polignac to Comte de la Ferronays, early February 1828, p122-123.
[50] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/861/30, Duke of Wellington to Lord Bathurst, 7 September, 1826
[51] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/903/4, Strangford to Wellington, 6 Dec, 1827

between the Ottoman Porte and the allies, Stratford Canning complained that he had not received any decisive instructions from the British government, and that he was 'of the opinion that two and perhaps even three weeks may elapse before I receive them.' Even though this was only shortly before George Canning's death in early August, the phenomenon of neglect from London appeared to have commenced much earlier in Stratford's post.[52] The chaotic and divisive nature of the British government was criticised also by the French, as Polignac wrote that European mediation in the Greek question had been severely delayed by the 'indecision of the British Cabinet.

By October 1826, it became apparent that whilst still formally allied, Russia and Britain were increasingly at odds over the Greek question. Nicholas cared very little about the Greek affairs; six months following the arrival of Prince Lieven in St. Petersburg, discussions on the case had not moved at all. Britain was already attempting to break away from the St Petersburg Protocol by September, as Lord Bathurst emphasised the hope that as long as the Duke of Wellington could 'keep the Foreign Office to the protocol we shall be safe, but there will be a constant attempt to slip from it.' [53] Both Britain and Russia were lukewarm about the Greek cause: Britain intended to limit Russian gains vis-à-vis the Porte and reduce her own reliance on working with Russia, while Russia aimed to advance as far as possible in the Treaty of Akkerman without alarming Britain. Around this time, Russia was becoming more pessimistic towards prospects of negotiating with the Porte, already hinting at more forcible measures in coercing the Porte's acceptance of the Protocol.

By the end of 1826, internal divisions within the British government remained the principal obstacle to Anglo-Russo negotiations. The duke, who had always been doubtful of cooperating with Russia, claimed that Russia was attempting to redefine the goals of the

[52] TNA, FO/352/17B, Stratford Canning to Lord Codrington, 27 July, 1827, p102.
[53] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Polignac to de la Ferronays, 8 January, 1828.

protocol to suit her own interest—specifically, to promote Greek independence, rather than reconciling the Ottomans and the Greeks. Russian frustration intensified in December 1826, when Nicholas first openly criticised Britain's disengaged conduct. The Russian tsar's concerns were well-founded: Canning had indeed been deviating from the sworn alliance with the court of St Petersburg, fearing accusations of his subservience to Russia. In the autumn of 1826, George Canning spent six weeks in Paris to persuade the Bourbon Tuileries court to participate in the Anglo-Russo agreement, producing the first draft of a tripartite agreement that would include France. Canning had convinced the French government and the Prime Minister Villèle that Nicholas was prepared to employ extreme measures to force the Porte in accepting the Protocol, and that Britain sought to re-introduce the discussion to the European alliance, in order to dilute Russian influence—in stark contrast to the signed protocol that outlined British and Russian participation on equal terms.

British reluctance to cooperate with Russia unless guaranteed the cooperation of other allies angered Nesselrode, who emphasised that Britain was obligated by the protocol to work with Russia, and signing the document constituted a formal committed that could not simply be disavowed. George Canning's instructions to Stratford were also highly contradictory—the only threat made by Protocol was the withdrawal of ambassadors from Constantinople—Canning effectively requested that Stratford wait further iterative directives from London and delay any action until the intentions of all other courts had been fully ascertained. Nesselrode did not refrain from harshly criticising the British government, that 'moins d'incertitudes et moins de complications auraient suffi pour créer de grands embarras.' In Nesselrode's hypothesis, if Britain chose to align with France, then there will be no need to change the protocol's content; if following Austria, then Britain would have to withdraw from the alignment with Russia, which would mark a great failure for Anglo-Russo diplomacy. 'Plus on examine la politique du gouvernement anglais dans les affaires grecques depuis un an, plus on

y découvre des contradictions', underscoring the inconsistency of British policy.[54] Britain further exasperated St Peterburg with Canning's speech in Parliament in mid-January 1827, from which Nicholas interpreted that 'revolutionaries of all countries seeking to overthrow existing regimes are natural allies and assistants of England', and asked Lieven to communicate to Canning that such doctrines could not strengthen mutual trust between Russia and Britain.[55]

By early 1827, Russia had grown increasingly pessimistic of the Anglo-Russian alliance's utility. Russia came to believe that British engagement—particularly the closure of the Black Sea to the expeditions of Egypt—was merely a manoeuvre used to temporarily associate with the court of St Petersburg, when a rupture between Russia and the Porte appeared imminent. Once the prospect of Russian military action diminished, however, Britain's appetite for executing the St Petersburg Protocol seemed to wane. In contrast, for Russia, material and commercial interests in the Black Sea bolstered her determination in acquiring more influence over the Porte. In a confidential dispatch on 21 January to Lieven, Nesselrode disclosed the true intentions of Russia after signing the St Petersburg Protocol—to reduce the Greek negotiations to weak demarches that would not bring about any substantive outcome, and to allow Russia to regain her ancient ascendancy in Constantinople.' Nesselrode astutely identified other cabinets' fear of seeing the pacification of Greece accompanied by the lone ascension of Russia. Strategic interests clearly outweighed religious and moral considerations, as dispatches compelling the Porte to comply with Russian demands were articulate in terms regarding a full execution of the Akkerman Convention, but adopted a more nebulous description for the Russian wish 'to see a happy, calm existence of Greece.'[56] By the end of January 1827, having dismissed Austrian wishes that peace in the Levant ought to be the consequence of an 'independent decision of the Porte', Nicholas no longer deemed it possible

[54] VPR, Nesselrode to Lieven, reserve, 9/21 January, 1827, p15.
[55] VPR, third dispatch from Nesselrode to Lieven on 9/21 January, 1827, p14.
[56] VPR, reserved dispatch from Nesselrode to Lieven on 9/21 January, 1827, p17.

for the Porte to reach a peaceful resolution without Russian intervention.[57]

In London, the chaos of British domestic politics revolving around the rivalry between the Duke of Wellington and George Canning further clouded the unstable Anglo-Russo alliance. In January 1827, the Foreign Secretary George Canning had fallen gravely ill and was forced to entirely suspend discussions on the Greek question. It was not until later in 1827 when Canning was appointed Prime Minister by George IV that the negotiations resumed. The neglect of Greece was not solely due to Canning's illness. The issues that dominated parliamentary debates between January and March 1827 were confined to the corn laws, Catholic question, and the affairs in Spain and Portugal; very little mention of Greece was made. The Duke of Wellington, however, found little to agree with in Canning's foreign policy. Notably, the Duke was dissatisfied at the partial recognition of independence that the Greeks obtained, which was incomparably less than that claimed in Spanish America. The intensely critical attitude that Wellington adopted towards Canning forced the prudent duke into silence on the matter, as he refrained from directly criticising the Foreign Secretary in his correspondence, apart from occasional bitter remarks—the little utterance that Wellington did allow himself on foreign affairs was severe. Wellington also censured the work of Stratford Canning in Constantinople for being futile, having stalemated discussions for six months. Wellington was thus in strong dissatisfaction against the cabinet, and he blamed the British government for the unfavourable terms of the protocol and the incapacity to execute them. 'All the powers agree in the principle of the protocol but none, not even the signing parties, in the mode of carrying that instrument into execution. There is a great deal of useful truth in the dispatch from Count Nesselrode to Prince Lieven. But this country is very far yet from what is therein proposed.'[58] It is striking that by March 1827, only shortly before the St Petersburg

[57] VPR, Nesselrode to Tatischeff, 10/22 January, p21.
[58] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/886/3, Wellington to Joseph Planta, 7 March 1827

Protocol was turned into a treaty, Wellington still vehemently debated with Canning on the fundamental nature of the course of action to be pursued.

The Duke of Wellington played a delicate role in British foreign policy broadly, as he held no official appointment but enjoyed the confidence of the monarch, George IV. When the Prime Minister Lord Liverpool became permanently incapable for office by 19 March, 1827, the King requested a private audience with Wellington in Windsor. For the remainder of the duke's life, he was summoned to meet the monarch on the verge of every ministerial crisis by George IV and his successors. The only priority of the Duke of Wellington centred on foreign policy, on which lay the main divergence between the duke and Canning. While Wellington had warned against collaboration with Russia since the first instance, he was even more resolutely against turning the St Petersburg Protocol into a treaty, which would give Russia and France an undesirable amount of influence within Greece. Wellington alternatively suggested incorporating both the Ottoman Empire and Greece into the treaty, leaving the positions of France and Russia intact, but ensure Greece's inevitable maritime developments take place under limited external influence.[59] Nonetheless, George IV was more pleased with George Canning's foreign policy, to which he credited the rise in British position in Europe, and the king believed the maintenance of such unprecedented British prestige relied upon the continuation of power of Canning in office. Acknowledging that he was facing an uphill battle, the Duke of Wellington was compelled to swallow his grievances against Canning's foreign policy and the Anglo-Russo alliance; he rather focused on the intrinsically trivial Catholic question to attack Canning.

Robert Peel, who emerged as an ally to Wellington, nominated the Duke of Wellington to become Prime Minister on 9 April of 1827. The proposal, however, was met with fully anticipated rejection from Canning, who was himself appointed as Prime Minister the

[59] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/886/13, Wellington to George Canning, 26 March, 1827.

following day after receiving royal commands to prepare 'for the reconstruction of the administration'. Upon the resignation of Wellington and other Tories, Canning formed a coalition ministry with Whig ministers in April 1827.

IV. From Treaty of London to Navarino

Immediately after the signing of the Treaty of London, diplomatic exchanges between the Great Powers adopted a much more militant tone, which attested to the little sincerity from the Great Powers in securing peace with the Ottoman Empire. The 6 July treaty was in its essence an agreement designed to produce a *casus belli*. Whilst originally the Ottoman Porte were granted a month for consenting to all allied demands, this time limitation was shortly after reduced to only 15 days. The delay in correspondence between Constantinople, St Petersburg, and London effectively rendered the shortening of time limit for the Porte by two weeks arbitrary and materially inconsequential. Such added pressure for the Porte can thus only have been symbolic—the allies were eager to receive a response; rather, they were impatient to ensure the rejection of the Ottoman Empire, otherwise the entire alliance established by the 6 July treaty would be futile. After five years of inaction, Russia finally escalated her threat towards the Porte to the immediate entry of Russian troops in Ottoman territory.' Nesselrode's instructions to Ribeaupierre also suggested the low likelihood in which the Russian court considered that the Porte could accept allied demands. In his letter on 21 August, Nesselrode wrote that 'as soon as your excellency acquire the positive certitude on the malicious determinations of the Porte, you are authorised to coordinate with Admiral Greigh to ensure a ship is always ready to offer you assured refuge.'[60]

The news of George Canning's death on 8 August only reached Russia later in the

[60] VPR, Nesselrode to Ribeaupierre, 9/21 August, 1827, p196.

month. Both British and Russian resolve in continuing to pursue the alliance appeared unshaken. The treaty was thus ratified on 15 August in London, merely one week after the death of the former Prime Minister. In September 1827, Nesselrode's priority was to dispel the doubts of the Austrian court that Canning's death would add delays and difficulties to the execution of the treaty. 'Russia had known for a long time that Austria was trying to convince others that the treaty will not be concluded and that Russia would not ratify it. Through Monsieur de Caraman, Austria must be trying again after the death of George Canning to spread the same erroneous assertions.' Russia worried about French susceptibility to Austrian rumours, so Tatischeff was ordered to reassure the Tuileries that the death of George Canning would not at all affect 'la consummation de l'œuvre de paix'.[61] The French was less sceptical of British policy, as Prince Polignac wrote to Comte de la Ferronays, as Britain understood the necessity to uphold 'les choses dans le même état de l'idée de Tories' out of her dignity and responsibility.[62]

In September 1827, when all military preparations for a blockade of the Bosphorus and ground occupation of the Principalities were set in place, instead of the immediate entry of troops into the Ottoman Empire as previously threatened, Russia chose to extend the naval blockade by a month. While this was explained under the guise of peaceful intentions, Russian hesitation indicated deeper significance. Fundamentally, the extended timeline signified incomplete Russian military preparations and the difficulty in coordinating the navies of Britain, Russia, and France into one central command. Citing the susceptibility of her navy, the French government refused to accept the central command of British Admiral Edward Codrington, who was the highest ranked naval officer among the allies. Nicholas thus instructed Pozzo di Borgo to press the French government to order French naval commanders

[61] VPR, Nesselrode to Tatischeff, 23 August/6 September, 1827.
[62] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Londres, 25 January, 1828, Prince Polignac to Comte de la Ferronays.

to strictly conform with the Third Article of the Treaty of London, in which the three-court united fleet was prescribed.[63] Systematically, Russia had also underestimated the Ottoman determination and willingness to fight a war. The calculation that a joint military action between three allied courts would sufficiently intimidate the Porte, thereby discouraging a general conflict, was miscalculated. The Ottoman Empire had long been resolved to fight with Russia, regardless of treaty stipulations or diplomatic concessions. Mass conscription in the Ottoman Empire and formidable armaments against the Morea all proved that the belligerent resolution of the Porte had already been irrevocably formed. The situation was accordingly tense in Constantinople, as Stratford Canning had been writing to Lord Codrington as early as 1 September to seek the earliest opportunity of securing a spare frigate for conveying the ambassador's family from the Dardanelles to Corfu.[64]

In the second week of September 1827, the Ottoman fleet that had left Constantinople reached the bay of Navarino and combined with the forces of Ibrahim. Around the same time, the British and French squadrons combined with the Russian fleet, which was last to arrive in Navarino.[65] 26 September, 1827 marked a turning point after which Russia became irrevocably determined to engage in military conflict. On this day, Nesselrode sent three different dispatches to Prince Lieven: an ostensible note that was accessible for other foreign diplomats, a reserved note with different instructions than those in the first, and an additional secret reserved note with instructions on using the second note. The ostensible note outlined a one-month naval blockade of the Bosphorus with the anticipation of positive changes from the Porte. The second dispatch, however, detailed a final mediation for the Porte, where the allies provided only 15 days for the accordance of an armistice between the Ottomans and the Greeks, or the three courts' diplomatic representatives would quit Constantinople. Not only was the

[63] VPR, Nesselrode to Pozzo di Borgo, 6/18 August, 1827, p193.
[64] TNA, FO352/17B, Stratford Canning to Lord Codrington, 1 September, 1827, p161.
[65] TNA, FO 352/19C, Codrington to Stratford Canning, 8 Sep and 16 Sep, 1827, p59-61.

time limit truncated in half, critically, the Russian cabinet also added that 'the Russian troops will pass the Pruth River and occupy the Principalities.'[66]

A lone Russian advancement across the Pruth River or unilateral occupation of the Principalities had not been previously outlined in official correspondence, nor were such terms likely to be accepted by the British and French courts. While such menace would be convincing in coercing the Porte, the provocative nature of these proposed measures would present unprecedented difficulties among the allies. The court of St Petersburg fully anticipated resistance and suspicion from London and Paris. Nesselrode also recognised that empty Russian assurances might fall short of assuaging the anxieties from the court of St James. To compensate for what appeared to be an alarmingly expansionist Russian course of action, Nesselrode instructed Lieven to employ all means at his disposal to ease British apprehensions. Notably, Nesselrode insinuated that the Duke of Wellington would be among other ministers who provide 'malicious interpretations to our good will', and warned Lieven that he would face 'an infinitely difficult and delicate task'.[67]

On 23 September, the official rejection from the Porte reached the allied cabinets. Nesselrode reported to tsar Nicholas that the joint demarche from Britain, Russia, and France failed to produce the desired effect, as the Porte had rejected the allies' offer of mediation in the Greek affairs on the basis of the Treaty of London. In response, Nesselrode prioritised logistical support for both the Greeks and the Principalities. Firstly, an order was sent to Heyden for securing ammunition and food supplies for the Archipelago. Following the renewed momentum of the Greek cause, ministers in Prussia and Switzerland were authorised to facilitate Capodistrias' voluntary involvement in supporting the Greek cause. The former Russian foreign minister was allocated 1 million rubles to fund Greek subsidies and the

[66] VPR, Nesselrode to Lieven, 14/26 September (16), 1827, (ostensible dispatch), p228-230.
[67] Ibid, p233-5.

redemption of enslaved citizens. Additional instructions were also detailed for Minciaky to arrange for subsistence for the Danubian Principalities. All other measures in Nesselrode's lengthy memorandum in the wake of the Porte's rejection to mediation, however, were strictly military in nature. The most important immediate action was the proposed blockade of Constantinople, which had yet to be approved by the allied courts for its coercive nature. As a matter of top priority, Russia urged ministers of France and England to endorse the plan swiftly. Vice Admiral Greigh was commanded to hold a ready position to enact a naval blockade of the Bosphorus. Aside from arrangements for joint naval operations, the Russian Second Army was also ordered to finalise its preparation ahead of an imminent advance across the Ottoman border.

Russia's narrative on her course of action on the brink of war with the Ottoman Empire accentuated the key difference between Tsar Alexander I and Nicholas I. Alexander observed a strict adherence to treaty obligations, whereas his younger brother courageously differentiated between 'the spirit of the treaty' from its actual stipulations and chose to be bound only by the former. Even though the Treaty of London was principally constructed by the court of St Petersburg, Nicholas exhibited flexibility unmatched by Alexander through interpreting the treaty terms at his subjective liberty. These predilections of the Russian tsar, all of which could be viewed as dangerous and testament to Russian expansionist ambitions by Britain, were well-represented in the most confidential and final dispatch of 26 September, which sought to justify amplified Russian measures. In his third letter to Lieven, Nesselrode claimed that additional ulterior measures were proposed due to the reluctance of France and Britain in adopting existing measures and the fruitlessness of all proposed terms in saving Greece. Existing measures were of an 'insuffisance évidente, surtout si aucun secours indirect, aucun subside ne viennent sauver la Grèce ; néanmoins, l'Angleterre et la France se refusaient à l'adoption de ces mesures—ces mesures existants du traite mis en un péril manifeste.'

Nesselrode proceeded to articulate more alarming terms for the British government, claiming that if the British agreed to joining Russian military action, all possible consequences must be fully examined, including the scenario of the fall of the Ottoman Empire. A realistic consideration of the fall of the Ottoman Empire had not been discussed previously by the Russian government, which had rarely questioned the resiliency of the Ottoman Porte. It is incredulous how Nesselrode and Nicholas contemplated that Lieven could quell British fears by emphasising that the only method to avoid a general war was 'the spirit of the acts of 6 July, not the acts themselves… no [Russian] conquest, nor exclusive influence.'[68]

Russian gradually exhibited stronger interests in the occupation of the Principalities, congruent with historians' views that Russian only sought material benefits from trade in the Black Sea instead of the utter destruction of the Ottoman Empire.[69] By 12 October, Nesselrode wrote that it was out of unprecedented necessity that Wallachia and Moldavia were better administered, 'parce que leur bonne administration peut nous devenir infiniment utile a nous-même, si nos différends avec la Porte touchant à la pacification de la Grèce prenaient un caractère plus grave.'[70] The only plausible Russian excuse in maintaining her ties with Britain despite unmistakeably aggressive proposals, was an assessment of the Greek army on 28 September, which produced disappointing results. The state of exhaustion and disorganisation of the Greek military determined that the Greeks would be unlikely to resist further military advancements, such as a ground invasion, from the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Nesselrode stressed the urgency in rescuing the Greeks in a letter to Count Admiral Heyden, where Heyden was instructed to plan for a naval station in front of Alexandria, which would prevent Ibrahim Pacha from sending subsidiaries into Morea and from embarking on expeditions in the Archipelagos.

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[68] Ibid, second and third dispatches from Nesselrode to Lieven, 14/26 September, 1827, p228-235.
[69] Daly, *Russian Seapower.*
[70] VPR, Nesselrode to Ribeaupierre, 30 Sep/12 Oct, 1827, p258.

Another important development that the St Petersburg court quietly nurtured also indicated deepening Russian interests in the long-term administration of the Principalities, through the highly confidential relationship with Count Capodistrias. Although Capodistrias had withdrawn into reluctant retirement following his service for Alexander I, he continued to follow developments in Greece in his private capacity. Capodistrias' undeniable Russian links and Greek roots made his position as president for Greece unacceptable for Britain, as Greece would inevitably be heavily influenced by Russian interests. To quell British doubts, Nesselrode carefully instructed Count Heyden to monitor Capodistrias in his spending of a million Rubles of subsidies for the Greeks, while ensuring the Heyden's public rapports with Capodistrias as the President of Greece 'not excite foreign jealousy, which could be infinitely harmful [nuisible].'[71] Out of meticulous consideration for perceived British views, much of Nesselrode's efforts centred around suppressing British apprehension, even instructing Heyden to avoid the regular links of courier and entrust a young Lieutenant Wimmer to personally direct the count admiral's letters back to St Petersburg via Italy. This route was chosen to safeguard the evidence of Russia's continuing 'intime' relationship with Capodistrias, which Nesselrode urged to be kept as 'un secret impenetrable'.[72]

Contrary to existing views that the Duke of Wellington embraced the Treaty of London more enthusiastically than George Canning, the hero of Waterloo received the treaty with marked displeasure and concern over the conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.[73] According to Wellington, the 1826 Protocol was fundamentally transactional and opportunistic—the cooperation stipulated in the Protocol was temporary and loosely bound by circumstantial interests. Wellington had an audience with Capodistrias at the Duke's country home at Stratfield Saye house, Hampshire at the end of September, merely a few weeks before

[71] VPR, Nesselrode to Heyden, 5 Oct (17), 1827, p263.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, *1763-1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 640, 656.

Nesselrode's instructions of having Heyden scrupulously monitor Capodistrias' actions for Nicholas. This conversation remained largely focused on the difference between the St Petersburg Protocol and the Treaty of London, yet the new head of state of Greece and the British Army Commander-in-Chief held strikingly different views on the comparison. Both the duke and the Count expressed varied degrees of reservation on cooperation with Russia, regarding the stipulations of the Protocol and the Treaty. Wellington spoke openly and critically about both agreements, and actions of the duke did not indicate that he had suspected any existing connection between Capodistrias and the Russian court. In Wellington's analysis, the St Petersburg Protocol of April 1826 failed to achieve its alleged aim of advancing Greek interests, but rather prevented Greece from disturbing Europe. Wellington claimed that the Treaty of London relied on war as a necessary means; Capodistrias, however, persisted in believing that the treaty was loyally based on the protocol and still aimed to preserve peace. The only fact upon which Wellington and Capodistrias appeared to have concurred, was the disadvantageous position in which Greece had been placed following the Treaty of London. The only military support offered to Greece was maritime, which Wellington deemed that Greece did not need. 'It was inevitable that the Greeks would play a secondary role, becoming dependent on one or the other of the powers.'[74] Curiously, even though Wellington was pessimistic about the durability of Anglo-Russian cooperation outlined in the protocol and treaty, Lord Ellenborough applauded Wellington for his ability to make Russia pledge to the settlement 'not only pro hac vice, but at all times and under all circumstances'.[75]

The British government unsurprisingly rejected the more coercive measures proposed by the Russian cabinet against the Porte on 15 October, citing that Britain rejected escalation until the results of existing measures by the allies were clarified.[76] While this was sufficient to

[74] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/900/4, Wellington to Capodistrias, 12 October, 1827.
[75] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/903/2, Lord Ellenborough to Duke of Wellington, 3 Dec, 1827.
[76] VPR, minutes from the conference of representatives of Russia, Britain, and France, London 3/15 October, 1827, p261.

prevent discord between Britain and Russia, the British premise of examining existing measures was unrealistic and improbable to achieve without a substantial delay, depriving Russia of opportune timing for her military advance. Therefore, it was clear that the British had no intention of consenting to the steadily augmenting display of Russian ambitions, as London had never wholeheartedly committed to either the Protocol or the Treaty, even before the death of George Canning.

At the London conference, the representatives of the three allied powers finalised a draft of joint instructions to their naval commanders in the Mediterranean. Dated 15 Oct, the communication addressed to Ibrahim Pasha was jointly delivered by Vice admiral Codrington, Count Heyden, and Count Admiral Rigny. Given the brevity of time elapsed between the conference and the dispatch, it was unlikely that the most recent sentiments concluded at the London conference, including British rejection of fresh Russian proposals, could have been adequately reflected in the menacing letter for the Ottomans. Whilst the letter fell short of a formal declaration of war, the unequivocal announcement of the European allies' military presence achieved the effect of an ultimatum. A close examination of this provocative communication, delivered aboard HMS Asia near Navarino, reveals the unconvincing grounds of the European commanders—'nombreux détachements de votre armée parcourent dans différents sens la partie occidentale de la Moree, qu'il dévastent, détruisent, brulent, arrachent les arbres, les vignes, toutes les productions végétales, qu'ils se hâtent enfin de faire cette cornée un véritable désert.'[77] Citing the devastation for trees and agricultural production, allied commanders argued that the acts of extreme violence from the Pasha were in breach of the Armistice of 26 September, 1826, which had allowed the Egyptian fleet's entry into the Bay of Navarino.

The adoption of a 'final threat' long been a recurring tool in European great powers'

[77] VPR, Codrington, Heyden and Rigny to Ibrahim Pasha from ship Asia in Navarino, 5/17 Oct, 1827, p262.

diplomatic arsenal whilst managing the Eastern Question, and this tactic re-emerged with urgency at Navarino in October 1827. The frequent use of ultimatums had already been criticised by the Russian Foreign minister Nesselrode as early as in 1822, where the combination of the Porte's inflexibility and the Great Powers persistence failed to produce a pacific solution to the Greek struggle. Despite providing various 'final threats' to the Porte, the great powers had yet to execute the coercive nature of these ultimatums until October 1827. Without the ultimate threats ever materialising, the deterrence power of European ultimatums had been irrevocably diluted after five years of negotiations.

Three months after the signing of the Treaty of London, however, the intimidation of a similarly articulated ultimatum was more compelling to the Porte, as the allied fleets were already in close proximity to the Egyptian fleets of Ibrahim Pasha in Navarino. The allied commanders sternly warned against the immediate consequences of 'any other violation from the part of Ottoman army outside of the laws of nations and the existing treaties', and that the continued violence of Ibrahim Pasha could also jeopardise the Sultan and his advantages from the Treaty of London. The commanders further demanded a categorical and prompt response to the notification, warning that either a refusal or any procrastination could incur upon immediate consequences, the gravity of which was deliberately left ambiguous for the Pasha's own interpretation.

V. From the Battle of Navarino to the Russo-Turkish War

20 October, 1827, saw one of the most 'terribles et des plus acharnés' combats between the fleets of Ibrahim Pasha and the European allies in the Bay of Navarino, eventually shattering the increasingly fragile peace between the allies and the Porte. The British, French, Russian, and Ottoman accounts of the battle varied slightly in their descriptions of events that

precipitated hostilities. The Russian narrative referred to the battle as an 'incident',[78] blamed Ibrahim Pasha for his relentless violence and devastation of the Morea, while also emphasising Lord Codrington's cannon fired in the Port of Navarino for triggering actions from the Ottomans. The French account was likely more sympathetic to the Ottomans as it sole based on a conversation with Ibrahim Pacha, deviating from other powers' discourses. The letter from Captain Pujol, was commanding the French schooner La Fleche in Navarino, explained in detail the interactions between Ibrahim Pasha and the European commanders, portraying British aggression unfavourably. Ibrahim reprimanded the allied admirals for attacking the unprepared Ottoman fleet and that the first shot had been fired by a British frigate which impeded Ottoman fireships. According to Ibrahim Pasha, it was the allied fleet, rather than Ottoman action, that escalated tensions and rendered the pacification of the Levant futile.[79] Although the Ottoman fleet under the leadership of Ibrahim resisted fiercely, their endeavour was powerless vis-à-vis the allied fleet. As Pujol observed, 'Les turcs ont soutenu l'action avec vigueur et opiniâtreté, mais leur audace finit à la fin par la destruction entière de leur flotte combinée, sans la perte d'aucun vaisseau du cote côté des allies.'[80][81]

Navarino marked a significant turning point in the military calculus of the Eastern Question. Within a single battle, the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet was annihilated at Navarino, with nearly all of its eight-two ships destroyed; the Ottoman Navy virtually lost the entirety of its capacity and manpower. Thus, the weakened Sultan not only became more defenceless against European great powers, but Constantinople also developed a deepening near crippling reliance on Mohammed Ali's Egypt, giving rise to instability in the 1830s-40s. The Ottoman armed forces, however, were still reeling from the Auspicious Incident in June 1826, where the Janissary Corp, the long-standing backbone of the Ottoman Army, was forcibly abolished by

[78] VPR, Heyden to Nesselrode, 13/25 October, 1827, p273.
[79] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/899/16, Captain Pujol letter.
[80] VPR, Antoine Sandrini to Nesselrode, 12/24 October, 1827, p271.
[81] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Polignac to de la Ferronays, 29 Jan, 1828.

Sultan Mahmud II. Following the destruction of the Janissaries, the newly established yet inexperienced infantry corps failed to fill the vacuum in Ottoman defence; the Ottoman Empire thus saw both its land force and naval force demolished between 1826-7, enticing Russian appetite for the decades to follow yet with no capabilities of mounting any effective resistance.

In the immediate aftermath of the battle where the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet was annihilated on 20 October, 1827, the allies still firmly maintained that they were not at war with the Ottoman Empire, and that the naval blockade was merely a 'pacific' gesture. The wake of the battle was nonetheless a diplomatic catastrophe, but it was particularly perilous for Stratford Canning in Constantinople. When the news of the conflict reached Constantinople three weeks later, Stratford and ambassadors of other courts had no instructions to admit a state of war or for immediate departure. Even though the ambassador had previously acquired the frigate Rifleman from Codrington, he had happened to order for the frigate to be returned from the Dardanelles back to Codrington at Smyrna on 16 October, only four days before the battle took place.[82] There was also the concern that the Ottoman government might cut off all communications of the British embassy.[83] Judging by dispatches from Constantinople for London on 11 November, the Porte had been refusing passports for cruisers and vessels since 7 November, citing that the battle of Navarino had terminated treaty obligations upon which the granting of passports laid its foundation.[84] Eventually, Stratford Canning, the French ambassador Guilleminot, the Russian ambassador Ribeaupierre managed to depart from Constantinople in early December 1827. The diplomatic corps of Constantinople would only return in June 1829 with representatives from Britain, France, Austria, and Prussia, as the ambassadors liaised to prevent an unexpected collapse of the Ottoman Empire amidst its

[82] TNA, FO 352/17B, Stratford Canning to Codrington, 16 October, 1827, p199.
[83] TNA, FO 78/157, Stratford Canning to Lord Dudley, 6 November, 1827, p169-71.
[84] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/913/37, Baron Ellenborough to Duke of Wellington, 18 January, 1828.

ongoing hostilities with Russia.[85]

Even though the Battle of Navarino saw the joint operation of Britain, France, and Russia, the conclusion of allied armed actions further provoked Britain's mistrust of the alliance and her growing desire to gain unique advantages independent of Russia. The Battle of Navarino was vehemently denounced by the Duke of Wellington, who referred to the incident as 'a melancholy affair' and 'an untoward event', emphasising that the Russian Emperor would never receive support in the pacification of Greeks by form of armed assistance from the British government.[86] Prince Metternich similarly referred to the battle as the 'funeste évènement du Navarin';[87] King George IV also found the conflict at Navarino to be 'wholly unexpected'; the King subsequently ordered a copy of the St Petersburg Protocol and the Treaty of London to be present before the members of parliament on their meeting of 29 January. 1828, suggesting the British government's general lack of preparedness in managing the development. As wariness and suspicion for French and Russian ambitions heightened, the duke highlighted the priorities of the British government in the immediate aftermath of the battle: a severe enquiry upon the conduct of Admiral Codrington; negotiations with Russia to clarify mutual responsibilities under the Protocol; halting further hostilities with the Ottoman government and precluding the occupation of the principalities. Wellington had already called for the reinforcement of British her maritime presence in the Archipelago 'enfin d'y conserver la prépondérance de l'Angleterre d'y rester maîtres de cette affaire, et d'empêcher une occupation même temporaire soit des Russes soit des Français d'un port quelconque de la Moree ou de l'Archipel.'[88] Curiously, the British communication was intercepted by the Austria, and Prince Metternich sharply rebuked Wellington's presumption that Britain had ever

[85] C.W. Crawley, 'The Greek question: the battle of Navarino and the Russo-Turkish War 1827-9' in *The New Cambridge Modern History, Volume IX: War and Peace in an age of Upheaval, 1793-1830*, 688.
[86] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/904/2, Wellington to John Scott, first Earl of Eldon, 1 December, 1827.
[87] HHS 84 Russland, Metternich to Tatischeff, 29 February, 1828, p8.
[88] HHS 84 Russland, Duke of Wellington to Lord Howard de Walden, 26 November, 1827.

been the 'master' of the Eastern affairs— 'pour rester maître d'une chose, il faut d'abord l'être; or l'Angleterre peut-elle se regarder comment étant place dans cette situation?' [89] The British public criticised the battle, citing that it was futile and unjustifiable to fight the Ottoman Empire, who had been an enemy of Russia.[90] The court of St James, unsurprisingly, remained divided at the end of January.[91] Wellington ultimately assumed responsibility for Navarino amidst debates of the legality of the allied attack.[92]

After Navarino, the discourse of Nicholas darkened. 'Si hier encore je me suis à ma véritable satisfaction vu place en face d'une chance réelle de contribuer par de loyaux conseils à l'aplanissement d'une complication politique pleine d'embarras et de dangers, je ne nourrir plus aujourd'hui le même espoir.'[93] With Nicholas exhibiting increasingly assertive intentions towards the Porte, British reservation was well-founded: not only because Britain just realised the extent of Russian menace, but also that the British army itself was involved in the annihilation of Ottoman forces that could have been used to defend against a potential Russian attack. Therefore, even though the British fleet was largely condemned as the main instigator of hostilities, partially because Lord Codrington was the commander-in-chief, the Battle of Navarino only exacerbated British fears of Russian intentions. In Metternich's analysis, even though Nicholas lamented the inevitability of war with the Porte, the Russian cabinet had reason to rejoice over Navarino, as it had drawn the allies advance too deeply into the crisis to retreat unscathed— 'il ne leur était plus faisable de reculer devant le traité et ses conséquences!'[94]

Political shifts in Britain between the years of 1827-8 only added to her diplomatic

[89] HHS 84 Russland, Metternich to Tatischeff, written 29 February, 1828, sent on 5 April, 1828
[90] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/903/9, letter from Lieutenant General Sir James Willoughby Gordon, Quartermaster General at the Horse Guards, to Wellington, enclosing a letter from one of the largest traders with Russia in England, 10 Dec, 1827.
[91] The division of British attitudes was observed by Metternich to Tatischeff, in HHS, 84 Russland, 29 February, 1828, p9.
[92] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/904/2, Wellington to Earl of Eldon, 1 Dec, 1827.
[93] HHS, Russland 84, p9-10.
[94] Ibid.

confusion. Following the death of George Canning, who only served 119 days as Prime Minister, Lord Goderich succeeded him for a mere 144 days in the position before his own resignation. After a turbulent period with two of the shortest premierships in British history, on 22 January, 1828, the Duke of Wellington was eventually invited by George IV to form a government. It was then widely rumoured that Lord Strangford would be sent to Constantinople as the British Ambassador following Stratford Canning. The potential appointment of Strangford first alarmed the French government, as Prince Polignac regarded the assignment of Strangford represented 'le renversement total du système adopté jusqu'à ce jour envers la Turquie' from the British government.[95] Lord Strangford contributed towards further doubts of his reliability with a controversial speech in the House of Lords on 28 January, 1828. Strangford's strong pro-Ottoman sentiments were manifest, as the former ambassador referred to the Ottoman Empire as 'an ancient ally', which was immediately challenged by Lord Holland. Strangford also cited the negative impact on British trade in the Levant as the primary reason for seeking a speedy termination in the Greek struggle. Strangford proceeded to describe the Porte as having 'honest, downright, undeviating fidelity in maintaining all engagements' with Britain, and that the hostilities at Navarino were 'unauthorised and anomalous, carried out by the romance and cupidity of individual adventurers, which would bring discredit on national faith and embarrass the proceedings of the wisest government.'[96]

Strangford's contradictory discourse to the perceived attitude of the British government caused great alarm among both French and Russian ambassadors in London. Amidst the uncertainty of the European alliance after Navarino, the French tentatively gauged the attitudes of the British and the Russian in London. On the evening of Strangford's speech in Parliament, the French ambassador Prince Polignac dined with his Russian counterpart, Prince Lieven.

[95] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Polignac to Ferronays, 25 January, 1828.
[96] UK Parliamentary Papers, House of Lords, 29 January, 1828, 18 Volume, Address on the King's Speech. 9 Columns-11.

Polignac was initially surprised by Lieven's calm demeanour, as the latter seemed to have only possessed imperfect knowledge of Strangford's discourse. Subsequently, however, Lieven revealed that he had demanded that Lord Dudley produce a prompt manifestation on the true intentions of the British court, 'pour l'assurance propre à dissiper les inquiétudes que ferait naitre une impression aussi peu satisfaisante.' Lieven admitted that his request caught the British Foreign Secretary underprepared, so the Russian ambassador did not insist upon a 'categorical and immediate' written response. Prince Polignac also consented that the British Cabinet was markedly dissatisfied at Lord Strangford.[97] Polignac and Lieven enjoyed a close personal relationship, as they saw each other again merely a few days later, where the Russian ambassador confessed that he had been waiting for Lord Dudley in vain for the entire morning, and that he began losing patience in the British Foreign Secretary. Polignac speculated that Dudley's difficulty was due to the public opinion in England on the subject of the Eastern Question, which was 'not very satisfying'.[98] The challenge aligns with David Brown's description on the role of public opinion in shaping British foreign policy in the nineteenth century—where although its role remained elusive, it was no longer negligible in the minds of diplomats.[99]

On 11 February, the Sultan published a public call to arms to all Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire against Russia, England, and France. Despite earlier assurances from the Porte in protecting foreign nationals following the departure of their ambassadors, this promise was soon broken, as the Ottoman Porte issued a simultaneous order for the immediate departure of the three powers' nationals living in Constantinople.[100] The declaration of hostilities from the Porte posed a significant test for the 6 July treaty alliance. The French and the British

[97] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, 1 February, 1828, Prince Polignac to Comte de la Ferronays.
[98] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Prince Polignac to Le Comte de la Ferronays, 5 Feb, 1828.
[99] David Brown, 'Diplomacy and the Fourth Estate: The Role of the Press in British Foreign Policy in the Age of Palmerston.' *On the Fringes of Diplomacy*. 1st ed. (Routledge, 2011): 36.
[100] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Polignac to de la Ferronays, 11 February, 1828, p234.

governments interpreted their treaty obligations in decidedly opposing ways—Britain was predictably unwilling to be further engaged, whereas France believed that the Treaty of London necessitated an allied joint declaration of war, and that any Russian military actions would consistent with the treaty. The British reluctance opposes Alexander Bitis' view that Russian's position towards war was unquestioned and successful without foreign intervention.[101] The French position, which was emphatically stressed to the Duke of Wellington, saw the rise of 'une opinion forte en faveur de l'emploi de moyens coercitifs'. The French ambassador appealed to the underlying British apprehension of Russian aggrandisement, warning that failing to adopt coercive measures would not hinder the outbreak of hostilities, but rather lead to a war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia alone, but this outcome 'nous enlèverait les moyens d'influer efficacement sur son issue.'[102] The Duke of Wellington was displeased at the pro-war sentiments of France and her adamant adherence to the treaty stipulations. Part of his displeasure originated from the Prime Minister's original disapproval of the Treaty itself, which he regarded as already an infraction upon 'le Droit des Gens', and he would resolve to avoid further escalation, such as a Russian entry into the Principalities, unless in the utmost extremity. It is notable that the internal misalignment among the British ministers did not the escape the notice of the Quai d'Orsay—when the Duke of Wellington resisted French proposals in early February, the French ambassador immediately sought the endorsement of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Dudley, to sway the British position closer to that of the French. Dudley seemed receptive to the French proposal, as he instructed Granville to assure the French that Britain was committed to collaborating with France on the Greek issue.[103] Such schemes were crushed when the Russian ambassador Prince Lieven informed Prince Polignac that the British government would be 'satisfied to be able to rid of the treaty, and that perhaps the British

[101] Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question*, 496.
[102] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Polignac to de la Ferronays, 15 March, 1828, p241.
[103] TNA, FO 146/98 Dudley to Granville, 25 March, 1828; TNA FO 146/99 Dudley to Granville, 1 April, 1828; as well as the French record in Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/623, Dudley to Granville, 8 April, 1828.

thought the strong attitude of their government alone could overcome all difficulties of the moment.'[104] This provoked shared frustration of Russia and France over British unwillingness to proceed in a joint allied intervention.

Diplomatic exchanges around February 1828 centred around two distinct themes: one of 'droit', and the other of 'faits'. Did the great powers seek the de facto liberation of Greece that the great powers fought for, or was it merely a de jure guarantee of Greek privileges? From Wellington's anti-war perspective, the cause for the pacification of Greece was confounded with the Treaty of London, and that signatories of the treaty were taking advantage of the Greek cause to advance their own interests, thereby also violating the treaty they composed. Congruent to the views of historians St Claire and Bartlett, France aimed to gain relative advantage to the other powers and a re-assertion of French national prestige, even at the expense of the dissolution of the Treaty of London—hence her quest for 'un rôle à jouer dans ces circonstances qui convient à la fois ses intérêts et sa dignité.'[105] The national interests of France were little concerned by either the pacification of Greece or the termination of hostilities, uniquely placing her in a position of flexibility and opportunism.

As a mere observer to the hostilities and ensuing diplomatic developments, Metternich criticised all three allied courts for seeking ulterior motives for remaining in the precarious treaty alliance. Overall, Metternich reprimanded the state of 'ivresse d'exultation' present across Europe over the perceived victory at Navarino, without realising that the great powers had plunged themselves into an irrevocably compromised situation. The Battle of Navarino allowed a glimpse into France's national interests and priorities—according to Metternich, the French government, inspired by 'vanités nationales', exploited the naval battle as a means to appease French liberalists, but also to 'impose glory upon the country without exerting any

[104] Ibid, 8CP/623, Polignac to de la Ferronays, 15 March, 1828.
[105] William St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free : The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 298; Christopher Bartlett, 'Britain and the European Balance of power, 1815-48', in Alan Sked, *Europe's Balance of Power, 1815-1848* (London: Macmillan, 1979): 156.

valour'. Indeed, the ultra-royalist French Prime Minister, Joseph Villèle commented that the French nation, still imbued with revolutionary principles, would have strongly accused the government for nonaction. [106] The chaotic political landscape in France was equally underlined by the Charles Vane, Marquis of Londonderry and son of Castlereagh, in April 1828. In a letter to Wellington, the Lieutenant General wrote from Paris about the divided nature of the constitutional French government and the King's court.

> 'Foreign politics in France—the Bourbons have mainly regulated it. As it is, the King [Charles X] himself is decidedly a Turk and lamented the battle of Navarino, but it occurred at the period of the elections, and Villèle tried to turn the harvest to the best account… more especially as it is universally popular throughout the nation. The country is wholly absorbed in its interior political and personal struggles; the King is too much frightened at the idea of revolution to be firm in any purpose. If France was ever to agree to anything in foreign affairs, it would be to conceal a real 'nullity' in their external politique.'[107]

Meanwhile, ongoing Russian military aggrandisement aroused Austrian suspicion and concern. Nicholas allegedly recruited 20-25 thousand men in Poland for strengthening the Russian army; Metternich accused Russian military recruitment of being disproportionate to the country's needs and finances. [108] Recognising that the maintenance of peace was increasingly unlikely, by mid-February 1828, Metternich adjusted his aim to a more pragmatic one: preventing Russia from entering a war with the Ottoman Empire by herself. In Metternich's calculus, this could be achieved if Russia could be convinced to initiate hostilities by sea, thereby creating a natural pathway for French involvement, preserving a certain extent of an allied action. Metternich saw Britain as the most injured party in the vicious, paralysing situation after Navarino—'this is how the British ministry, on this occasion, showed all its weakness—an attentive nation, without insight, pronounced its incapacity.'[109] By June 1828, Britain's position vis-à-vis Russian remained reactive, as instructions from London to

[106] HHS, Russland 84, Metternich to Tatischeff, 29 Feb, 1828, delivered on 5 April, p18.
[107] Wellington Papers, MS61/WP1/927/2, Sir Charles William Vane, Third Marquis of Londonderry, to the Duke of Wellington, 11 April, 1828.
[108] HHS, Russland 84, Metternich to Tatischeff, 29 February, 1828, p16.
[109] HHS, Russland 84, Metternich to Tatischeff, 29 February, 1828, p20-21.

diplomats in Petersburg still indicated this hesitation—'it is impossible to prescribe the timing and content in the change of attitude of Russia, but if she demonstrates any indication of maintaining possession of fortresses on the Bosphorus, you must write immediately to your government without delay for further instructions.'[110] Such meticulous guidance for British diplomats could have been inspired by Lord Strangford's drastic deviation form instructions at the end of 1825, which had nearly jeopardised the Anglo-Russo understanding and the St Petersburg Protocol.

The two European great powers that declined the Treaty of London—Austria and Prussia—were strongly desirous of peace, but they lacked the competence to meaningfully constrain Russia. In early June 1828, Lord Aberdeen, who had previously served as ambassador to Austria, succeeded Lord Dudley as Foreign Secretary. Baron Heytesbury was appointed as the new British ambassador to Russia. In Aberdeen's analysis, Austria was sincerely invested in peace due to potential dangers to her territorial integrity. The deficient state of Austria's military preparation also left her with little choice but to support a peaceful solution. Nonetheless, Aberdeen sarcastically remarked that 'the timid and calculative policy of the court of Vienna makes it doubtful what means it may take that are thought justifiable for so great a goal as to restore the general tranquillity.'[111] Similarly, for Prussia, whilst Britain had no reason to doubt the former's desire for peace to be of equal measure, foreign relations of Prussia had left her weak and subordinate to the pretensions of Russia, 'however unreasonable and exaggerated.'[112]

On 26 April, 1828, Nicholas I officially declared war on the Ottoman Porte, citing Ottoman mass mobilisation against Russia and ensuing violation of the convention of Akkerman. The deterioration of Russo-Turkish relations has had significant impact on Russia:

[110] BL, Add Ms 43114, Aberdeen to Heytesbury, 13 June, 1828, p6.
[111] BL, Add MS 43114, Aberdeen Papers, Aberdeen to Heytesbury, 13 June, 1828, p4.
[112] Ibid.

repeated evacuations of its subjects from Ottoman territory after Navarino, the closure of the Bosphorus to Russian shipping, and the threat of catastrophic losses in the trade of southern provinces, which heavily relied on Black Sea outlets. [113] Thus formally commenced the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-9. The first few months of fighting was not as effortless as Nicholas might have hoped—by July, it appeared the termination of hostilities was far from probable, necessitating a militarily and financially draining second campaign. Nicholas was already reportedly 'tired of the war' and intended to halt as soon as Russian troops could reach the Balkans.[114] To exacerbate matters for Nicholas, public opinion in Russia had begun to shift against the tsar's favour—Prince Metternich claimed that everyone in St Petersburg who had previously vehemently supported the war 'now pretend to have always been against it'.[115] The second half of 1828 was no more successful for Nicholas on the battlefield, but his intentions to continue the conquest remained undaunted.[116] It was evidently clear by September 1828 that Russia would proceed alone in the execution of the Treaty of London, moulding the tripartite agreement 'selon ses intérêts et ses convenances', to the unenthusiastic acquiescence from other courts. The allies, however, were not convinced by any of Nicholas' overtures, even uncertain whether the tsar would refrain after the temporary occupation of the Principalities, suspecting a naval blockade or further penetration towards Constantinople. [117] Britain particularly feared that Nicholas 'might have the designs to carry on the war to the utmost extremity…and although attributing all its calamities to the obstinacy of his opponents, he does not conceal from himself that it may possibly terminate in the total destruction of the Ottoman Empire.'[118]

In March 1829, the Austrian court successfully persuaded the Ottoman Porte to enter

[113] HHS, Russland 84, manifesto of Nicholas I, 12/26 February, 1828, p31.
[114] TNA, FO 352/21B/7, memorandum of the Duke of Wellington, 13 July, 1828, p89.
[115] BL, Add Ms 43056, Lord Aberdeen to the Duke of Wellington, 23 August, 1828, p173.
[116] Dakin, *The Greek Struggle*, 263.
[117] BL, Add Ms 43114, Aberdeen to Heytesbury, 20 September, 1828, p23; Crawley, 'The Greek question', 689.
[118] BL, Add Ms 43114, p23.

in diplomatic negotiations with Russia to terminate the second campaign. Nonetheless, Constantinople was resolved 'to dispute every inch of ground with Russia', as peace negotiations were considered as degrading due to the internal turmoil of the Ottoman Empire.[119] Ultimately, the second campaign of the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-9 saw a decisive yet costly victory for Russia, as she compelled the Sultan to sign the Treaty of Adrianople on 14 September, 1829. While the disastrous defeat of the Ottoman Porte was alarming for the European great powers as a harbinger for Russian ascendancy, the conclusion of the 1829 treaty did not introduce any further Russian aggrandisement immediately. Russia's unexpected military difficulty revealed her need for Austria's support—the Russian army was exhausted and incapable of seizing Constantinople, thereby postponing Russian aggression towards the Straits while maintaining diplomatic pressure on the Porte; ironically, compelled by military and operational necessity, a diplomatic rapprochement between St. Petersburg and Vienna was facilitated.[120]

From the final year of Alexander I to the Russo-Turkish War, European diplomacy had long deviated from prioritising the Greek cause for independence, as the Concert of Europe great powers once so dutifully did in 1821 amidst the surge of European Philhellenism. By 1827, on the brink of Russo-Ottoman hostilities, the unifying objective of pacification for Greece retreated to the background of diplomatic negotiations, merely serving as a guise for the pursuit of varied ulterior motives among the European powers. For Britain, containing Russian ambitions became her paramount objective. France, ever opportunistic, was more focused on augmenting her own relative strength, while Austria remained suspicious of all other powers apart from Prussia. Although the interests of the great powers were misaligned, the temporary utilitarian alliance—the fleeting Anglo-Russo understanding under George

[119] BL, Add Ms 43080, Lord Cowley to Lord Aberdeen, 1 April, 1829, p155.
[120] Sked, *Europe's Balance of Power*.

Canning—fittingly suited the strategic aims of Russia, Britain, and France. Such a transient alliances was loosely bound by momentarily shared interests, but it allowed European great powers to steer clear of waging war amongst themselves in the late 1820s. Even recognising its fleeting nature, the Anglo-Russian alliance was particularly strained due to the interminable strife between Canning and Wellington. The St James court was defined by its indecision and incessant apprehension: it was concerned about Russian aggrandisement and the public perception of British neutrality, in equal measure. The bruised Anglo-Russian understanding—and European peace at large—would be further compounded by imminent revolutionary turmoil in France, to which the last Bourbon King, Charles X, would eventually succumb in July 1830.

Russia's enduring ambitions in the Levant and her growing appetite for access to the Black Sea would, two decades later, once again imperil European peace during the Crimean War of 1853.

Chapter 4

Origins of the Crimean War: Louis Napoleon's France

Public opinion, Quai d'Orsay's prudence and Tuileries' pride

Since the moment of Greek Independence, Europe became embroiled in revolutionary shockwaves. Throughout the 1830s, the July Revolution in France, Liberal Triennium in Spain, the Portuguese Civil War, and the Belgian revolt against the Netherlands all threatened to disrupt European peace. The Ottoman Empire also saw a decade of struggle against the ambitious Mohammed Ali over two crises, resulting in the Egyptian-Ottoman Wars from 1831-3 and 1839-41. The ineptitude of the Ottoman army, the Auspicious Incident, and the unforeseen massacre at the Battle of Navarino forced the Sultan Mahmud II to request Russian support to defend his empire against Egyptian advances. After Russian troops helped secure Constantinople, the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi was signed in 1833, reaffirming the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople and consolidating Russian dominance in the Levant through a defensive alliance with the Porte. Notably, the Porte consented to the closure of the Dardanelles to all non-Russian foreign warships, securing an invaluable diplomatic victory for St. Petersburg, to the alarm of London and Paris. Tensions reignited in the Near East in 1839 when the Ottoman Empire sought to reclaim Syria, which had been lost to Egypt in 1833. Following the defection of the Ottoman fleet, joint British and Austrian intervention succeeded in terminating the conflict with an Egyptian submission to the Sultan. The London Straits Convention was subsequently concluded in 1841, which guaranteed equal passage through the Turkish Straits to all European powers, as the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus would be closed to all foreign warships during peacetime. This was favourable for Palmerston, as Russia's threateningly privileged position vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire since 1833 was reversed. Towards the end of the decade, the

Revolutions of 1848 erupted across continental Europe, resulting in widespread political upheaval. Among the Concert of Europe great powers, France and Austria were most directly impacted: in France, the French Second Republic was established; whereas in Austria, Franz Joseph relied on Nicholas I's military support to suppress the 1849 Hungarian Revolution, leading to the tsar's expectation for receiving Austrian backing in the Crimean War.

In the aftermath of 1848, the French quest for national prestige posed a predicament for the nearly dismantled Concert of Europe. Restoration and preservation of the status quo was paramount for the European great powers, not least for France, whose government under Louis Philippe was overthrown in February 1848 by an uncontainable revolution. Louis Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, returned to France after a 33-year exile in Switzerland, Bavaria, Italy, and England; he was subsequently elected president of the Second Republic in December 1848. His appointment to office, however, did not represent an immediate transition of power. The newly elected president who had farcically failed in two previous coup-d'etats attempts was devoid of his own political party and faced opposition from the Left and Right, including the legacy of the July Monarchy that condescendingly, if not contemptuously advised, rather than served him. In December 1851, the then Prince-President had a successful coup d'état from which the National Assembly was dissolved, and universal suffrage was re-established. Further consolidating his rule in 1852, the Second French Empire was formally re-established on 2 December, 1852, following which the Prince-President proclaimed himself as the Emperor of the French. After a tumultuous youth in exile since the Battle of Waterloo, Louis Napoleon adopted a distinct sensitivity towards all matters relating to French honour. The years of exile also forged his identity—his 1839 publication *Des idées napoléoniens* signified his full embrace of Napoleon I's legacy, from the basis of which he would attract favourable sentiments in France throughout his reign. During the first years of his rule as sovereign, however, two apparently trivial disputes epitomised the unforeseen yet catastrophic

potential of matters of form to escalate into war. Respectively, the two debacles that would push France, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire dangerously close to the brink of war were the Holy Places dispute regarding Latin and Greek privileges in the Holy Land of Jerusalem, and the European recognition of Louis Napoleon himself as Napoleon III, the Emperor of France. The Holy Places dispute was more ceremonial than religious in nature; it triggered a confrontation between France and Russia, respectively championing the Catholic and Orthodox churches in Jerusalem, in the territory of the Ottoman Sultan's Empire. The re-establishment of the French Empire was equally controversial among other European courts. Particularly, the Russian Tsar Nicholas I rejected addressing Louis Napoleon with the customary title of 'mon frère', leading to plummeting Franco-Russo relations in 1853, insomuch that military considerations initially appeared in the diplomatic exchanges of all great powers involved.

France has been criticised in existing scholarship for having provoked the Crimean War out of her staunch pursuit for national prestige. Historians including A.W. Kinglake believed that Louis Napoleon was the main conspirator for the Crimean War, while Puryear considered that the French emperor faced the ultimate decision between conflict abroad or revolution at home, where he selected the former.[1] In French language historiography, Thouvenel and Bapst both presented detailed documentation of the event with mild criticism of French diplomatic conduct, from La Valette's ambivalence to Louis Napoleon's adamancy; Jomini's account centred on preserving integrity of the Ottoman Empire.[2] Paul Schroeder held a more balanced view on Louis Napoleon's role: the emperor never wanted to provoke a war in the East, but he challenged Russia for domestic considerations and personal prestige.[3] Goldfrank deemed that

[1] Kinglake, *Origins of the Crimean War*; Puryear, 'New Light', 219–34.
[2] Louis Thouvenel, *Nicholas Ier et Napoléon III*, Paris, 1891, p. 96; Bapst, *Les origines de la guerre de Crimée*,; Alexandre Jomini, *Etude diplomatique sur la guerre de Crimée* (1852 à 1856) (2 vols.,St. Petersburg, 1878), I, 4-5.
[3] Schroeder, *Transformation.*

the re-establishment of the French Empire under Napoleon III was particularly problematic due to Nicholas' ill-considered stubbornness that alienated Austria, Prussia, and Britain—the last being unwilling to perpetuate Louis Napoleon's international insecurity, despite deep reluctance towards recognising him. Anderson, on the other hand, only offered a light treatment to the recognition of Louis Napoleon, but condemned the Ottoman Porte's weakness to have aggravated the pretensions of both Russian and France during the Holy Places dispute. Figes was most critical against Louis Napoleon, arguing that he exploited both episodes to contrive for hostilities—irrespective of whom France would fight, as she merely desired an assertion of her national honour.[4] Comprehensively viewing archival documents from all the great powers, however, French diplomatic efforts appear far less intentional and far more reactive than depicted in existing historiography. Guided by the unpredictability of the Ottoman Porte and dictated by French public opinion, Louis Napoleon's France was ill-disposed towards provoking Russia. Through examining French, Austrian, and British archival material and published Russian sources, this chapter investigates the role of Louis Napoleon's France in escalating tensions among European great powers in the leadup to the Crimean War in 1853. While Louis Napoleon did not intentionally seek conflict with Russia or the Ottoman Empire over ceremonial formalities, this chapter argues that the French emperor's extreme susceptibility to public opinion was a debilitating weakness for European peace. Compounded with the inherently intricate nature of the Holy Places dispute, the inconsistent communication of the Porte, and France's overestimation of her influence in Russian decision-making, neither the Holy Places dispute nor the recognition of Napoleon was definitively resolved by the Quai d'Orsay. Even though French diplomatic conduct was predominantly conciliatory towards Russia, France's fateful combination of public opinion, prudence from the Quai d'Orsay, and pride from the Tuileries proved inadequate in either compelling the Porte or reassuring Russia.

[4] Figes, *Crimea* ; Goldfrank, *The Origins*; Anderson, *The Eastern Question*.

I. The Holy Places dispute : obscure origins

The issue of religion had long persisted as a source of tension between the Orthodox and Catholics in the territory of the Ottoman Empire, but it did not become an acute source of dispute until the mid-nineteenth century. Towards the end of 1847, the occurrence of a seemingly frivolous event became the unlikely catalyst towards gradual escalation of tension between France and Russia: a silver star with Latin inscriptions disappeared from the grotto beneath the Greek-owned Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem.[5] The Latins were entitled to an adjoining sanctuary, but they no longer possessed a set of keys to the main gates of the church, which forced them to use a side entrance. The logistical change was deemed injurious to Latin privileges, and the disappearance of the star was also labelled as a 'theft'. The French foreign ministry immediately declared the situation unsupportable and degrading, as the status of France as the religious protector of Catholicism in Jerusalem as established by the 1740 capitulations had already been severely compromised. France thus escalated the trivial dispute over the Holy Places, demanding that all Catholic possessions in 1740 be restored, among which was included the right to repair the cupola of the Holy Sepulchre, which the Greeks also contested. Further demands entailed entitlement to the great entrance to the Bethlehem Church of Nativity, and reparations for the tomb of the Virgin outside Jerusalem. To demonstrate French disapproval, the French Foreign Minister Drouyn de Lhuys instructed General Jacques Aupick, French minister in Constantinople, to vigorously condemn the theft of the star.[6] Whilst the incident had taken place in 1847 under the reign of Louis Philippe, the revolutions of 1848 reinforced France's motivation to continue her deliberations.

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[5] *Mémoire sur la question des lieux saints*, Fuad Pasha, in I. de. Testa, *Recueil des traités de la Porte ottomane avec les puissances étrangères depuis le premier traité conclu, en 1536, entre Suléyman Iet François I jusqu'à nos jours: Par le Baron I. de Testa* (Paris: Amyot, 1864), 296-8.

[6] Quai d'Orsay, 50MD/98 and CP Turquie 300/263, Drouyn de Lhuys to General Jacques Aupick, 27 January, 1849.

French actions on the Holy Places affair were initially sporadic after Louis Napoleon took office, attesting to the relative low priority the religious controversy held for the government. Drouyn de Lhuys first assigned General Aupick, the French *ministre plenipotentiare* in Constantinople, to pressure the Ottoman Porte in early 1849 on the basis of the 1841 Treaty, in protest at Russia's unilateral occupation of the Danubian Principalities. One year later, the French switched the foundation of their grievance to the ancient treaty stipulations of 1740 between the Ottoman Empire and France, in which France was guaranteed the right to religious protection for the Catholics in the Holy Land. Despite the French attempt to garner support from other Catholic countries, Austria maintained a distant stance due to her alliance with Russia. Even though the resilience of the Russo-Austrian alliance would be severely challenged in the diplomatic preliminaries of the Crimean War, Austria never supported the French case against the Ottoman Empire.[7]

The dispute had been trivial in essence, as only a small population living in Jerusalem were affected by the specific points at issue. There were around 2000 Greeks and 900 Catholics living in Jerusalem, yet both groups were 'natives' who spoke 'nothing but Arabic'; there were around 12,000 pilgrims visiting Jerusalem annually, yet only 80 of them were Catholic.[8] Upon a decision to share joint control over the holy sites between the Catholic and Orthodox churches in Palestine, the Porte delivered keys to the French for the Church of the Nativity, yet assuring the Orthodox church that these keys would not be functional, to the outrage of the French. The French government was nonetheless satisfied with limiting the nature of the dispute to the interpretation of treaty stipulations, rather than elevating its political significance. Since the initial instructions of La Hitte, who served as Foreign Minister from November 1849 to January 1851, official French discourse sought to dilute the French and political colours of the

[7] This is best evidenced through the Frankreich 41 and 43 documents at the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv (HHS) in Vienna, Austria.
[8] TNA, FO65/424, Seymour to Lord Malmesbury, 1 January,1853, p19.

dispute. Instead, all diplomatic exchanges conducted through General Aupick centred on the Catholic faith; Aupick even consulted the diplomatic corps in Constantinople to assure that he was acting in the 'common interest of Catholicism'.[9] Aupick was warmly received in Constantinople, particularly by the British ambassador Stratford Canning, who described the French General as 'thoroughly honest, and much quieter and more unpretending than the generality of his countrymen.' When it was rumoured that Aupick was to be summoned back to France, Stratford Canning asked if Palmerston could use his power to keep Aupick in his post.[10]

The French position was torn, inevitably conditioning its prudence: the pursuit of French national prestige was a high priority, but to manifest such ambitions through the Holy Places dispute was more vehemently supported by a clerical coterie in Paris, who wielded a considerable amount of power in Louis Napoleon's government. It was primarily Edouard Drouyn de Lhuys, the main architect of French conduct during the affair from 1849, who provided instructions for French ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire, including Marquis Charles de La Valette, a leading member of the clericalists. Drouyn de Lhuys was an experienced diplomat who had already served as Minister of Foreign Affairs prior to La Hitte, as well as French Ambassador to Britain from 1849-51; he was also the product of a quintessentially elite French education, having studied at Lycée Louis le Grand and La Faculté de droit de Paris (contemporarily Sorbonne Law), both among the finest institutions in the country. La Valette, on the other hand, had only served as a minister in the Chamber of Deputies. An ancestral member of his family, Jean Parisot de Valette, had also been Grand Master of the Catholic Order of Malta. Louis Napoleon's foreign ministry thus harboured strong supporters of a more aggressive Catholic policy in the East, the French ambassador to

[9] Quai d'Orsay, 50MD/98, p25, La Hitte to Aupick, 28 May, 1850; Aupick to La Hitte, 3 June, 1850, p31-37.
[10] Broadland Archives, Palmerston Papers, MS62/PP/GC/CA/192, Stratford Canning to Palmerston, 24 November, 1849.

Constantinople included. These statesmen and diplomats accurately assessed that Nicholas's Russia would inevitably respond to any French attempt in reasserting her influence in the Holy Land, which would help the clericalists, as religious matters scarcely received focused attention under Louis Napoleon.[11] Nonetheless, the historical origins of the dispute and the organisation structure of Louis Napoleon's government undermine the view of Kinglake and Figes that the French emperor intentionally spurred conflict in Europe with deliberate machinations by raising the Holy Places discussion.[12]

Similar to the view of historian William Echard that France emphasised the importance of the European concert, Louis Napoleon's France valued collective European concert action and treaty obligations, congruent with the Prince President's discourse since early 1852.[13] For instance, in January 1852, then prince-president Louis Napoleon wrote to Nicholas, whom he addressed as 'très cher grand ami', to reassure the tsar of social order and stability in France.[14] In this short letter penned in Vienna, Louis Napoleon described the relations between France and Russia to be 'les plus intimes' and he hoped that 'toutes les puissances pénétrées du devoir de maintenir les traits auxquels l'Europe doit les bienfaits de la paix…qu'elle est conforme aux premiers besoins de notre époque.' On the other hand, France was also cognisant of the transactionalism with which Russia viewed European peace. Nearly one year later, in a letter from General Castelbajac to Drouyn de Lhuys on 5 January, 1853, the French ambassador in St Petersburg reported that the Russians viewed peace as an idea which was 'inséparable des transactions sur lesquelles elle se fonde'. While praising the harmonious relations between the two great powers until the end of 1852, Castelbajac expressed that the French government remained committed to European collective actions and was ready to respect 'les grands actes

[11] Memoire by Fuad Effendi, in Testa, *Recueil des traites*, 288-9; Kisseleff to Nesselrode, 16/28 April, 1852, as cited in Goldfrank, *Origins*, 77.
[12] Kinglake, *Origins of the Crimean War*; Figes*, Crimea.*
[13] Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe*.
[14] *Zaionchkovskii*, Louis Napoleon to Nicholas, 31 January, 1852, no.39, p207.

européens'.[15]

Deliberations on the Holy Places dispute involved the French, Russians, and the Ottomans. The negotiation process was thus lagging and frequently delayed, based on the long timespan between 1847 and 1851 during which little material progress had been accomplished. The inefficient deliberations might have been tactically prolonged by the Ottomans, to whom ambiguity was beneficial towards gaining concessions from both the Tuileries and Petersburg. In early 1851, Nesselrode explained to the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, Titov, that the Holy Sepulchre was significant to Tsar Nicholas I:

> The day that the emperor sees the cult or the Church persecuted or humiliated, be it in the Holy City or elsewhere, as the result of the suggestions with political aims in mind that we care not to fathom, His Majesty will not recoil before any consideration or any sacrifice to take up with pride the defence of his co-religionists, and among which control over the Holy Sepulchre and precedence in the celebration of offices may not be assaulted without a dreadful injustice.[16]

The Russian attitude from Chancellor Karl Nesselrode was as antagonistic as France had expected, as Russia declared that she found any concessions or changes to the status quo inadmissible. Such uncompromising views were summarised in a public memorandum at the end of 1851, penned by Monsieur Constantin Mikhailovich Basili, a Russian diplomat and writer of Greek Albanian origins, who had lived extensively in the Ottoman Empire. This long memorandum contextualised Nesselrode's explanation and highlighted the historical nature of the status quo perceived by Russia, tracing the origins of the Holy Places dispute to 614CE. According to Basili, it was in the seventeenth century that the Orthodox position became 'insoutenable' in the Holy Land, 'à cause des prétentions de l'Occident. La protection dont jouissaient les Francs à Constantinople engendra pour le Saints Lieux cette lutte interminable qui dure jusqu'à présent.' The debate of 'droit' in the Holy Places dispute was dissected into

[15] Quai d'Orsay, 112CP208, Castelbajac to Drouyn de Lhuys, 3 January, 1853.
[16] Nesselrode to Titov, confidential, 9/21 January, 1851, cited in David Goldfrank, 'The Holy Sepulcher and the Origin of the Crimean War', *The Military and Society in Russia, 1450-1917* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 496.

three distinct categories : 'les droits historiques, les droits fondes sur la jurisprudence ottomane, et les droits de la possession de fait'. Among the three categories, Basili emphasised the difficulty of the third, which most resembled customary law—rights deriving from existing practices and not stipulated by written documents yet consisted of a multitude of details, where 'là, chacun est maître de son action.' The loosely regulated and nebulous nature of the legal debate in the Holy Places question further obscured the dispute, leading to Russian pessimism towards its reconciliation: 'nous devons poser pour principe—il ne s'agit point, en l'état actuel des choses, d'établir la paix et la bonne harmonie entre les religieux des différents rites; ce serait tenter l'impossible; il ne s'agit pas non plus de satisfaire à des vœux irréconciliables ou chimériques ; il s'agit plutôt de supprimer un scandale, de mettre un terme aux empiètements réciproques.'[17]

Rooted in contradictory principles to those held by the French, by 1851, Russia had already adopted a stance that firmly rejected any active inquiry into the actual state of possession in the Holy Land. Nesselrode explicitly expressed such wishes in December 1851, claiming that 'la Russie ne peut et ne doit pas toujours scarifier ses intérêts matériels a la politique générale.'[18] The French position thus also became comparably explicit and unequivocal: France declared that she refused to accept any *firman*s prior and subsequent to 1740, and granted the stipulations of the 1740 treaty absolute precedence over any other agreements, even though the latter might have not contravened French privileges as prescribed in 1740. Not fully understanding the inflexibility in Russia's stance, General Aupick repeatedly demanded the Ottoman Empire if the Porte still considered itself bound by the capitulations of 1740.[19] The depth to which France and Russia became embroiled in the dispute has been a source of incredulity to historians, as Schroeder commented—'why would France and Russia

[17] Constantin Mikailovich Basili, *Notice sur la Question des Saints Lieux*, Beyrouth, 27 November/5 December, 1851, Nesselrode Papers, Tom X, 93-118.
[18] Nesselrode Papers, Nesselrode to Meyensdorff, 21 December, 1851/ 2 January, 1852, p72.
[19] Clarendon Papers, I, General Aupick to Aali, 23 & 25 January, 1851, p14-5.

challenge each other over such a petty issue?'[20]

On 2 December, 1851, Louis Napoleon, the elected Prince President of the Second Republic, announced the dissolution of the National Assembly and ordered troops to occupy the parliamentary chamber. After arresting leaders of the main political parties, Louis Napoleon placed himself in the sole position of power. His coup d'état brought to an end the short-lived republican regime in France after 1848, a victory for conservatism yet a demoralising defeat for the momentum of economic and social reform.

The coup of Louis Napoleon was bitterly castigated by Russia. French historian Bapst even argues that instead of the Holy Places dispute, it was the animosity accrued between Paris and St. Petersburg over Louis Napoleon's coup that led to the eventual Crimean War in 1853.[21] Criticising the unnecessary violence in the coup, Nesselrode instructed Meyendorff to demand the Austrian court to not rush to the recognition of Louis Napoleon, and referred to this eventuality as 'un fait aussi grave'.[22] Viktor Balabin, junior secretary at the Russian embassy in Paris, analysed the circumstances which facilitated Louis Napoleon's unlikely feat: the new Constitution in France failed to fundamentally reshape French society, as all classes received it with varying degrees of indifference: the lower classes understood that constitutions only served to exploit them; the upper classes fathomed that the new constitution would not change the fait accompli of absolute power enjoyed by Louis Napoleon.[23] Nesselrode was more sceptical in the capabilities of Louis Napoleon to rule as a sovereign—'Je ne vois pas pourquoi Henri V, ou un prince de sa maison, ne gouvernerait pas la France avec les institutions du Napoléon aussi bien que le Président actuel. Je ne sais si nous vivrons assez longtemps pour voir ce dénouement, que je considérerai seul comme la fin des révolutions qui depuis soixante

[20] Schroeder, *Austria and the Crimean War,* 23.
[21] Bapst, *Les Origines*.
[22] Nesselrode Papers, X, Nesselrode to Baron Meyendorff, 21 December, 1851, p74-5.
[23] Nesselrode Papers, X, Balabin au comte Dmitri de Nesselrode (son of Karl Nesserlode and served in the State Duma), Paris, 20 January, 1852, p145-6.

ans désolent cette malheureuse France et agitent l'Europe.'[24]

Nesselrode expatiated on the relative military strength of Russia at the end of 1851: in the view of the St Petersburg court, the British armed forces were superior, and Russia would be compelled to pay the price for a conflict. On the other hand, according to a report conducted by the French National Assembly on the state of the French Navy, France had been steadily augmenting her maritime power, to the extent that the French Navy would have a considerable advantage over England in case of war. The French based their efforts on struggles of the French navy under the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI, aiming to completely revolutionise maritime warfare, for which they were prepared to undertake extensive works to achieve greater efficiency and material strength of the fleet.[25] The production of the comprehensive investigation by the Parliamentary Commission in France, which commenced in 1849, was then severely disrupted by Louis Napoleon's coup d'état on 2 December, 1851, following which the legislative system in France was utterly overhauled. The project continued only when the new Minister of Marine under Louis Napoleon requested the examination on the French naval force be completed after a hiatus in early 1852. Therefore, it is implausible that the Russian government would be cognisant of the ascendancy of French naval force at the beginning of Louis Napoleon's reign, and it is therefore possible that Russian decision making was less scrupulous towards France due to delayed military intelligence.

In early 1852, the nature of the Holy Places dispute watered down to a granular debate on the status quo in Bethlehem and Jerusalem between the French-backed Catholics and the Russian-supported Greek Orthodox. The Porte began drafting new agreements to satisfy both sides with comparably boosted privileges: new privileges to the Catholics included the restoration of the keys to the Church of Bethlehem (which they were pledged not to use) and

[24] Nesselrode Papers, Tome X, Nesselrode au Baron de Meyendorff, 21 January, 1852, p147.
[25] 'Enquête Parlementaire sur la Situation et l'Organisation des Services de la Marine Militaire ordonnée par la Loi du 31 Octobre, 1849, Paris : Imprimerie National. Two volumes, 1852,' *The Edinburgh Review*, 98, no. 199 (1853): 240-72.

the right to use the Tomb of the Virgin for religious ceremonies; an equivalent concession and consolidation of Orthodox rights over other sanctuaries were later granted to the Greek Patriarch. On 8 February, 1852, the Porte issued four official documents that would direct the Quai d'Orsay's discourse for the following year: a new firman stipulating an updated settlement for the Holy Places, an official note for La Valette, a communication to Titov, and a letter in response from the Sultan to the letters from Nicholas I in September 1851.[26]

The French were not entirely convinced by the terms in the 8 February *firman*, which Goldfrank described as an 'evasive masterpiece'.[27] Louis Felix Etienne (Marquis de Turgot), the new French foreign minister, deliberated over the implications of the agreement in a lengthy dispatch to Marquis La Valette, on 8 March, 1852. France viewed the 8 February *firman* as a partial success that deserved 'to be shared and celebrated with Rome', but this could not compensate for the incomplete nature of French accomplishments. The French assessed the difficulty of the negotiations realistically, if not pessimistically—the French interpretation of the Holy Places dispute was the Porte's return to usurpations 'qui avaient le bénéfice d'une longue possession et l'appui d'une influence étrangère.' Precisely a month after its communication, Turgot recognised the official nature of the Sultan's 8 February letter, a close reading of which demanded French vigilance in monitoring nascent obstacles that Turgot was convinced would arise. Reasons behind French scepticism on the terms of the *firman* were manifold: various terms in the agreement lacked a desirable degree of clarity and sharpness, which would provoke restrictive, unfavourable interpretations of Latin concessions to which the document had initially devoted. Furthermore, the French minister deemed the section on Article 33 of the 1740 capitulations concerning Latin complaints inadequately addressed, so La Valette was instructed to press the Porte for a more explicit declaration of concessions. In

[26] See documents from Quai d'Orsay 50MD/98.
[27] Goldfrank, *Origins*, 86.

full anticipation of future controversies, the French foreign ministry understood the necessity of having a written precedent from the Porte 'dont l'autorité ne saurait être méconnue et que nous aurons à invoquer a l'avenir.'[28]

Notably, Turgot dedicated considerable length of his dispatch to La Valette on the values of the Congress of Vienna system. In his letter, Marquis Turgot wrote to La Valette:

> D'après interprétation consacre par l'usage général, du règlement arrête au Congrès de Vienne, la préséance entre les consuls doit se régler uniquement par le grade et l'ancienneté de la résidence. Nous devons tenir le règlement de Vienne autant que possible, au lieu de revendiquer les privilèges de préséance qui nous étaient anciennement attribues par les dispositions expresses de nos capitulations.[29]

Mentions of the Concert of Europe system from 1814 had already become infrequent following the Russo-Turkish War of 1828 and became scarce particularly following the downfall of Prince Metternich, in the wake of the 1848 revolutions. Turgot's letter to La Valette in early March 1852 was internal, which excludes possible motivation for the French minister to unnecessarily invoke diplomatic boilerplate. The binding power of the Concert of Europe was so weak by mid-century that it was no longer characteristic of European diplomatic exchanges to mention the system that had once dominated diplomatic discourse. Even though the concept of the Congress of Vienna was evoked to maximise French privileges in negotiations against the Porte, Turgot's emphasis to La Valette for citing the Vienna Congress demonstrated that there remained at least some degree of influence among the Ottoman Empire and European great powers for the treaty stipulations of 1815.

II. Ottoman disorganisation and inconsistency in communication

The Ottoman Empire deliberately separated communication with France and Russia that the two great powers believed in different versions of the final Holy Places settlement in

[28] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Marquis Turgot to Marquis de La Valette, 8 Mars, 1852, p24.
[29] Ibid, 29.

February 1852. While the French were cautiously optimistic about the 8 February *firman*, the Russian ambassador to St Petersburg, Vladimir Titov, found concessions for France gravely injurious for Russian privileges. Titov immediately escalated his accusations against the Porte, who refused to alter concessions for the Latins, that the *firman* would be viewed as a direct offence against Tsar Nicholas I himself. The Porte was internally conflicting on how to respond to the indignant Russian ambassador. Ali Pasha first attempted to explain that the Russians had a weaker claim than the French due to the former's lack of a legal agreement to the equivalence of the 1740 capitulations for France. Foreseeing how such a response would further infuriate the Russians, Reshid Pasha resorted to suggesting the restoration of the grand cupola as an additional concession for the Orthodox, in exchange for the Latin privileges gained in the Tomb of the Virgin and the Chapel. Fascinatingly, judging from the French foreign office records in mid-March 1852, the additional concessions for Russia made by Reshid Pasha were initially kept confidential and remained unknown to Paris. Whilst the supplementary rights to Russia were granted in mid-February, merely one week after the Ottoman communications on the 8th of the same month, Turgot did not comment on the impassioned protests of Titov until 18 March and made no complaints of further Ottoman concessions to Russia. The French foreign minister wrote to La Valette that he was not surprised by the discontent manifested by Titov but subtly criticised the Russian ambassador for engaging in his personal actions and discretion too early in the affair. Because of the Russian ambassador's outspoken nature, the French ministry was dubious to the official attitude of the court of St Petersburg, and how much of Titov's aggression was endorsed by the tsar and Nesselrode. Even though Turgot appeared oblivious to the new concessions made by Reshid Pasha, the letter contains an approving confirmation of the actions of Ali Pasha, which 'had nothing obscure and was as exact and loyal to the engagements of the Porte towards us.' Therefore, the Porte selectively shared information on the Holy Place settlement with the two great powers involved to appease both

sides. The intentionality of the two-sided scheme was further evidenced by Turgot's instructions for General Castelbajac, the French ambassador in St Petersburg—Turgot expressed curiosity at not having heard of any agitation in Petersburg upon the Russians' learning of the Porte's concessions for France; Castelbajac was thus advised to avoid 'unnecessarily approaching this delicate topic' during his audiences with Nesselrode.[30] It can thus be deducted that Ottoman communications to Russia were also incomplete in disclosing full concessions previously promised to France, hence the silence in St Petersburg. The Porte's curation of diplomatic exchanges effectively, albeit deceitfully, camouflaged the unresolved nature of the dispute until at least the end of April, when communication with *chargé d'affaires* Monsieur Sabatier brought the discovery of a letter from the Sultan to Russia, which Paris noticed for the first time with immense interest. It was thus only around 28 April when the equal exchange of concessions was brought to the attention of the Quai d'Orsay.

A diplomatic impasse was then inevitable in May 1852—all three players were locked in a convoluted web of fundamentally trivial promises, with national prestige of each power adding to the gravity of the dispute. The Porte's doctoring of communications thus made various promises self-contradictory, revealing their scheme to have nearly constituted fraud. For instance, the Latins' rights to practice in the Bethlehem church of Nativity were shrouded in uncertainty, although the French believed they had just been promised a pair of keys to its entrance. The French had already considered the dispute indefinitely closed by April; to reopen the subject was an eventuality they dreaded yet nonetheless fully anticipated. The French attitude was surprisingly conciliatory—it appeared as if the French foreign ministry suddenly realised the significance of the debate and was alarmed by the possibility of antagonising Russia. With newfound trust in Sabatier who discovered the dispatches manifesting the Porte's betrayal, Turgot wrote to the consul with a remarkable sense of reserve and caution: Turgot

[30] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Constantinople, 18 March, 1852, Turgot to Marquis de La Valette, p34.

reiterated that whilst evaluating French privileges against existing that of Britain and Russia in the city, Sabatier must avoid citing French rights and privileges or threatening to exercise them, as it would become 'un abus ou un embarras'.[31]

Meanwhile, internal ministerial strife and corruption were also plaguing the Ottoman Empire, further convoluting the Holy Places dispute. Both Britain and France relied on cooperation with the Grand Vizier, Reshid Pasha, although he was not consistently trusted by the Sultan as a result of political intrigues within the Porte. With Reshid, both British and French diplomats found themselves communicating freely. Stratford Canning's private message to Palmerston proved the British statesmen's partiality for working with Reshid Pasha—'I wish to put you on your guard against the danger of communicating too freely with the Sultan's ambassador in London. He does not sympathise entirely with Reshid, and he sometimes reports your observations in a manner and spirit more calculated to do harm than good.'[32] The Sultan's two brother in laws were reported to be 'deeply corrupt' that even the Sultan was fearful of their influence in the army and artillery. Because of their intrigues and the Sultan's timidity and vacillation, Reshid's position was frequently shaken. The French ministry also indicated a preference of Reshid Pasha as their point of contact within the Ottoman government. On 11 February, 1852, shortly after the communication of the new firman of 8 February (although most likely before its receipt), French Foreign Minister Marquis Turgot wrote to La Valette that 'j'ai appris avec beaucoup de satisfaction que le Sultan avait fait rentrer Reshid Pasha dans son conseil.'[33]

It was through the British diplomats' direct communication with Reshid Pasha that the extent of Ottoman financial struggles became clearer: Stratford Canning reported the alarming fragility of Ottoman finances, which were 'in a bad plight' in June 1851, to the extent that even

[31] Ibid, 57.
[32] Palmerston Papers, MS62/PP/GC/CA/208, Stratford Canning to Palmerston, 5 April, 1850.
[33] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/228, Constantinople, Marquis Turgot to Monsieur Marquis de La Valette, 11 Février, 1852, p18.

Ottoman ministers pessimistically predicted that 'there would be infallibly a severe and dangerous crisis within six months.'[34] Britain also became heavily involved in the early phases of planning and construction for the prospective Egyptian railway, despite the lack of British financial contribution thereto. Reshid Pasha appeared cooperative and susceptible to British recommendations on the railway; however, Kostaki Musurus, the Ottoman ambassador to Britain since 1850, believed that such British involvement compromised the dignity of the Sultan. It was suggested by Stratford that the Sultan believed in Musurus' concerns, which inevitably hindered British designs over the Ottoman railway project.[35]

The internal strife and instability within the Porte could explain the shifting alliances in Ottoman diplomacy, supporting Anderson's view that the weakness of the Ottoman Empire and the frequent duplicity of its ministers contributed to growing friction with European powers.[36] The Ottoman Empire had habitually and skilfully balanced between two great powers as it did during the early stage of the Holy Places dispute, oscillating between Britain, France, and Russia. Efforts to undermine existing alliances of the Ottoman Empire in favour of one with Russia were pursued by political rivals to Reshid Pasha within the Porte. Compounded with the relative meekness of the then French ambassador Francois-Adolphe de Bourqueney, the predecessor to La Valette, and unsurprising delays of instructions from London, Stratford Canning complained of the challenges in maintaining the Porte's interest in cooperating with Britain.[37] Stratford Canning wrote of the Porte's reaction to the differences between Drouyn de Lhuys and Palmerston in June 1850. The British ambassador to Constantinople accentuated the Porte's alarm at the mere prospect of a diplomatic rupture between Britain and France, 'to whose union she looks for support, and whose misunderstandings could not ripen into a quarrel

[34] Palmerston Papers, MS62/PP/GC/CA/239, Stratford Canning to Palmerston, 'private', 5 June, 1851.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Anderson, *The Eastern Question.*
[37] Palmerston Papers, MS62/PP/GC/CA/183, Stratford Canning to Palmerston, 5 April, 1849, also available in TNA, FO352/32, Stratford Canning Papers.

without exposing the peace of every country in Europe into immediate danger.'[38] Towards the end of 1852, internal turmoil in the Ottoman Empire continued to threaten further instability, to the concern of Austria and Russia. Political intrigues and violent rivalries within the Porte were epitomised by the financial sector in Pera, which contributed to the tumult towards the end of October 1852. Count von Buol-Schauenstein, the Austrian foreign minister, feared that agitation in the Ottoman Empire was only a prelude that would not end in a victory for the old Turkish party, which signalled 'une réaction sanglante dans le système de gouvernement intérieur de l'empire turc'.[39]

III. Prudence of the Quai d'Orsay in continued diplomatic impasse

In May 1852, existing tensions surrounding the Holy Places dispute escalated and shifted the great powers' attention towards the Mediterranean. On 18 May, the French foreign minister communicated to Sabatier the official French attitude on the 'étrange changement' in the conduct of the Porte, based on the Ottoman *firman* of the previous day to the Greek community. The Ottoman Empire invoked the 1841 London Straits Convention, in which the 'ancient rule' of the Ottoman Empire was re-established, and all warships were barred from entering the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Indignant at the sudden change, the French deployed the newly commissioned ninety-gun screw propellor warship *Charlemagne* to Constantinople, ostensibly to bring the new ambassador, the Marquis La Valette, but also to intimidate the Sultan.[40]

Historians such as Goldfrank have interpreted the escalation from France to be a manifestation of Louis Napoleon's personal *amour propre*, but documents from French

[38] Palmerston Papers, MS62/PP/GC/CA/215A, Stratford Canning to Palmerston, 5 June, 1850, 'private'.
[39] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, letter from Édouard de Lacour to Lhuys, Vienne 28 Octobre, 1852, p205.
[40] Quai d'Orsay, 50 MD/98, Correspondence between Ozeroff, Sabatier, and La Valette in and TNA, PRO/FO/78, Echard, 27-28.

sources suggest that French assertiveness was a mere demonstration of the government's anger and frustration against a perceived Ottoman betrayal.[41] Similar to the view of Echard, this period of French foreign policy was marked by moderation and sense of European concert.[42] It was possible that the Quai d'Orsay was exasperated at itself for having placed trust in the Porte and considered the Holy Places dispute terminated by April. From the dispatch on 18 May from Turgot to Sabatier, the foreign minister insinuated at Paris' knowledge of British and Russian designs, yet blamed the Porte for yielding to other foreign attempts at gaining influence in the Mediterranean at the expense of France. Even though France was fully cognisant and wary of Russian involvement, she underestimated the extent to which Tsar Nicholas was personally invested in the Holy Places affair. On the receiving end of instructions in Constantinople, the French chargé d'affaires Sabatier wrote on 3 June, 1852 to Edouard Thouvenel, previously chargé d'affaires in Greece and head of political affairs at Quai d'Orsay. In this letter, Sabatier highlighted the profoundly personal nature with which Nicholas had been evaluating the Holy Places dispute. 'Nicholas faisait de la question des Lieux Saints une affaire personnelle, dans laquelle il agissait seul, sans même y mêler le chancelier de Nesselrode.' The lack of communication between Nicholas and Nesselrode was not solely the responsibility of the tsar. Thouvenel deemed that the Nesselrode was 'too Lutheran, too German, and not Orthodox enough to understand the thoughts of Nicholas in this regard'- even though the Russian Chancellor was in fact born in Lisbon and baptised in the Church of England.[43] Nesselrode was not the only one excluded from the deliberations—Castelbajac, the French ambassador in St Petersburg, recorded that Nicholas had never directly communicated to him about the Holy Places affair either.[44] Rather than interpreting Nicholas' reticence as disinterest,

[41] David M. Goldfrank, *The Origins of the Crimean War*. London: Longman, 1994
[42] Echard, *Napoleon III*, p29.
[43] Castelbajac to Thouvenel, 2 July, 1852, p55-56 in Thovuenel, *Nicolas Ier et Napoléon III*. On Nesselrode's upbringing and religion, see Ivan Gavrilovich Golovin, *The Nations of Russia and Turkey and Their Destiny* (London, 1854), 149.
[44] Sabatier to Thouvenel, 3 June, 1852, referenced in Thouvenel, *Nicolas Ier et Napoléon III,* 48-9.

the French government interpreted the tsar's silence as a dangerous menace, which could have restrained French actions. What the French cabinet had not been aware of, was that Nicholas' silence was not uniquely targeted towards Castelbajac or France. Based on British records, Count Alexander von Mensdorff, the Austrian ambassador in Petersburg, also failed in engaging Nicholas in conversation regarding the Holy Places affair. Even Mensdorff's attempts in inducing Chancellor Nesselrode to comment on the Eastern Question were consistently fruitless.[45]

The Russian cabinet adopted the opposite approach to the French in managing the Holy Places dispute: while in Paris the Quai d'Orsay principally oversaw French policy vis-à-vis the Ottoman Porte, with limited input from the Tuileries, the Russian tsar more directly commanded the Russian course of action. Figes supports this view, highlighting that Nicholas immediately resorted to threatening violence against the Porte and spearheaded negotiations with London, with very little mention of Nesselrode or other ministers.[46] On the other hand, there was insufficient indication that the French attitude of 'profondément blessé' by the invocation of the 1841 convention was strictly the personal attitude of Louis Napoleon. French discourse invariably focused on the admission of the *Charlemagne*, thus aggravated menaces made by Sabatier were intended solely for the purpose of naval passage. Allegations that Louis Napoleon's pride led to French escalation are further undermined by remarks from Seniavine, who was one of the most highly ranked fonctionnaires of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Seniavine observed to Castelbajac that Russia had understood that France had 'inadvertantly made the affair one of her national prestige.'[47] Furthermore, even Nesselrode deemed that Louis Napoleon did not envisage the 'velléités belliqueuses' of France in the Holy Places dispute, but he nonetheless refused to resist their development.[48] While Paris found the

[45] TNA, FO65/424, Seymour to Malmesbury, 1 Jan, 1853, p7.
[46] Figes, *Crimea*, 104-5.
[47] Castelbajac to Thouvenel, 2 July, 1852, in Thouvenel, 55-6.
[48] Nesselrode Papers, Nesselrode to Chreotowitch, 27 March/ 8 April, 1852, p184.

Ottoman discourse unacceptable, Turgot instructed Sabatier to inform the Porte that the weakness of the Ottoman Empire was not only injurious for France, but even more deplorable for the dignity and independence of the Sultan's empire. Instead of comprehending the 'bizarre position', France believed that she must continue to escalate her demand to the Porte for the admission of the *Charlemagne* in the Dardanelles. Alternatively, the Quai d'Orsay threatened to recall the French ambassador from Constantinople.[49]

Even though Louis Napoleon's government could have unintentionally intensified the Holy Places dispute to the vexation of Russia, the Russian government's animosity against the French emperor, which had originated even before Napoleon's coup in December 1851, persisted in aggravating diplomatic endeavours with France. The Russian chancellor Nesselrode considered in April 1852 that it was Europe's misfortune that continental peace depended upon a single individual who had just been placed as the head of a 'légère et remuante' country. While acknowledging the qualities of the new French constitution, Nesselrode lamented the vagueness in the diplomatic conduct of Louis Napoleon's government, which failed to inspire confidence and assurance of security from the other great powers.[50] Russian mistrust of Louis Napoleon stemmed partially from the recent historical memory of the Napoleonic warfare, as Nesselrode thought that 'une forte impulsion lui venait de l'armée qui a toujours Waterloo sur le Cœur et voudrait en tirer vengeance.'[51] Nicholas's distaste for Louis Napoleon as a jumped-up *parvenu* was also palpable. Compounded by the contentious passage of *Charlemagne* in the Straits—also distinctively unrelated to the debate in Jerusalem—these sentiments critically jeopardised Franco-Russo relations in the early stage of the Holy Places dispute.

In July 1852, following months of mounting tensions between France and the Ottoman

[49] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Turgot to Sabatier, 18 May, 1852, p77, also Thouvenel to Castelbajac, 13 June, 1852, cited in Thouvenel, 50.
[50] Nesselrode Papers, Nesselrode to Comte Michel Chreotowitch, St Petersbourg, 27 March/8 April, 1852, p183.
[51] Ibid, 184.

Empire, Drouyn de Lhuys replaced marquis Turgot as the head of the French foreign ministry, ushering in a new phase of meticulous, conciliatory French conduct. As an experienced diplomat who had previously served as French ambassador to Britain, De Lhuys detected the hidden yet dangerous gravity in the Holy Places affair in summer 1852. La Valette, the French ambassador to Constantinople, however, was too optimistic and complacent with the diplomatic victories that France had gained by September.[52] From the perspective of La Valette, negotiations with the Porte were conducted with remarkable secrecy and rapidity, even worthy of France congratulating herself. 'Nous sommes en règle pour le présent et surtout pour l'avenir et je suis sincère en disant que loin de regretter le firman donne aux Grecs, nous avons tout lieu de nous féliciter.' The French ambassador was too clairvoyant to be concerned about the delayed execution of 8 February *firman*, only reporting to Thouvenel on 25 September about the lack of recent news on the Holy Places affair in Constantinople, without apprehension for effectiveness of French diplomatic efforts. Without a clear understanding of Russia's perception, De Lhuys subsequently wrote to reassure St Petersburg via General Castelbajac on the pacific intentions of France—'c'est bien de bonne foi que nous vous le disons: nous n'avons pas l'idée d'une lutte. Si nous n'étions pas engagés, nous ne commencerions pas l'affaire. Au point que la France était parvenue, il nous faut une retraite honorable, et ce que nous demandons est bien innocents.' The new head of Quai d'Orsay also emphasised to the ambassador that it was only the Russian government who could 'terminer cette tempête factice, ou la rendre plus sérieuse, parce que nous ne pouvons pas reculer avantage.'[53]

La Valette's diplomatic fruitlessness to a certain extent forged the reactive, conciliatory nature of French diplomatic agenda in the second half of 1852. His undiscerning optimism rendered it impossible for France to adopt an aggressive tone through his communication

[52] The first pages of Quai d'Orsay 53MD/2116 provide an immensely useful high-level summary of the French account of the Holy Places dispute in 1852.
[53] La Valette to Thouvenel, 13 September, 1852, in Thouvenel, p76.

channels—even the notes of escalation from May were communicated via Sabatier rather than the ambassador himself. Plausibly related to disheartening diplomatic deadlock, it was around this time that La Valette had asked to be on leave from his position as ambassador in Constantinople, which caused great irritation for the diplomatic scene in the Ottoman capital. At the end of September, in spite of slow progress in negotiations with the Porte, De Lhuys maintained an optimistic outlook for French relations with the Ottoman Empire and that existing difficulties will be resolved after receiving formal assurances from the Porte's ministers. 'Nos rapports avec la Turquie sont enfin rétablis sur un pied normal, et nous nous en félicitons dans son intérêt tout autant que dans la nôtre.'[54]

France's lack of understanding of Russian priorities beyond the Holy Places and La Valette's disposition rendered the conduct of the Quai d'Orsay tentative, prudent, and nearly self-important insomuch it accentuated an unnecessary sense of alarm. On 28 September, De Lhuys highlighted to La Valette that despite ostensible stability, the use of military force was within the range of deliberations vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. The new French Foreign Minister considered the firman as an incident that was 'entre nos mains', and that there existed a deployable army that 'nous pourrions user efficacement si la mission d'Afif Bey a Jerusalem n'avait pas tous les effets que nous sommes en droit d'en attendre.'[55] Therefore, the outcome of Afif Bey's mission to the Holy Places was paramount for French decision making. If Afif Bey was to achieve a lacklustre result, France was already contemplating the use of military force. On 18 October, Afif Bey finally arrived in Jerusalem in what became a preposterous attempt to resolve outstanding disputes between the Latins and Greeks. To the utmost dismay of all parties involved, none of the questions in Afif's agenda were satisfactorily addressed: the Latin star for Bethlehem remained missing; previously terminated debates on access to the

[54] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Lhuys to La Valette, 28 September, 1852, p173.
[55] Quai d'Orsay 166PO/C/228, Constantinople, 28 Sep,1852, Drouyn de Lhuys to La Valette, p173.

church of Nativity and the Tomb of the Virgin were reopened; the Ottoman engineer failed to repair the cupola; Afif confessed that he had no official knowledge of the *firman* and could not authorise its execution.[56]

While meticulous in avoiding confrontation with Russia, France adopted a much more assertive posture vis-à-vis the Porte. The utter non-execution of the firman further prolonged the diplomatic stalemate that by late October 1852, the French attitude towards negotiating with the Porte became exceedingly pessimistic. Even La Valette admitted his frustration at the Ottoman failure to deliver promises previously made by Aali Pasha, acknowledging that the cordiality between Louis Napoleon's France and the Porte was imperilled.[57] Due to an accident in the service steamboats, delayed communications permitted only one exchange in instructions between Paris and Constantinople from 28 September to 28 October, even though little has transpired during the diplomatic impasse with the Porte within the month. De Lhuys finally conceded France's diplomatic failure with the Porte's non-cooperation. Paris found the deplorable outcome of diplomacy to be regrettable for two reasons: firstly, French interests would be inevitably impaired from the Porte's unwillingness to compromise; secondly, the financial fragility of the Ottoman Empire also rendered confrontation with France nearly ludicrous in Paris' view.[58]

At the same time, public opinion in Vienna adopted the rumour that Austria had concerted with Russia to jeopardise French diplomatic negotiations with the Porte, which was not wholly supported in Vienna. In addition to discernible differences between the two cabinets on the then evolving Montenegro question,[59] the Austrian cabinet was unconvinced about potential gains from concerting with Russia, insomuch that the French Foreign Ministry was in the knowledge of Vienna's growing disquietude towards Russian ambitions. Detecting early

[56] Goldfrank, *Origins*, 98.
[57] Quai d'Orsay 300cp/310. La Valette to Lhuys, 14 November, 1852.
[58] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, 28 Oct,1852, Lhuys to La Valette, p187.
[59] The Montenegro question will be elaborated on in 6 Chapter.

signs of fatigue and strain in the relationship between Russia and Austria, rather than considering approaching the Austrian cabinet, the French attitude remained highly critical and sceptical towards Vienna. From the French perspective, 'prudente lenteur et l'espirit de temporisation' characterised the Hofburg's habitual conduct, yet the French criticised the opportunist conduct of Austria, as her government precipitated an inevitable conflict from which would have the strongest interest in delaying, yet she sought to deliberate her timing until the situation became profitable for Austrian interests.[60] Echoing French caution towards Vienna, the British Envoy extraordinary George Hamiliton Seymour also commented on the delicate nature of Russo-Austrian relations as a result of the personal connection between Nicholas and Franz Joseph: Following the death of the Duke of Wellington in September 1852, the next person likely to assume a leading position in the military affairs of the continent was the Emperor of Austria. Franz Joseph's limited military reputation rendered him ill-equipped to command the same level of confidence to the late duke—to whom Seymour considered Metternich, Schwarzenberg, and Bernstorff were all inferior. Although Nicholas' apparent partiality towards the young Austrian emperor was diplomatically significant, it could not compensate for Franz Joseph's youth and inexperience.[61]

In an attempt to steer clear of provoking Russia, France continued to emphasise the fundamentally religious nature of the Holy Places dispute, seeking to separate her actions from their political entanglements. By December 1852, even though the Holy Places dispute remained materially unresolved, France found the impasse more favourable to her interests relative to those of Russia. France saw the Ottoman effort as a 'redressement partiel mais positif', yet she remained tentative in considering the reclamations successful. Although De Lhuys claimed that the ancient grievances of France were uniquely religious, the French

[60] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, De Lacour to Lhuys, 31 October, 1852, p205.
[61] TNA, FO65/424, 1 January, 1853, George Hamilton Seymour to Lord Malmesbury, p1.

foreign minister considered the state of the Holy Places affair a political victory at the expense of Russia, which was a failure that St Petersburg would not be insensible to. The French tone was hardly congratulatory—on the contrary, the prospects of St Petersburg viewing the Holy Places dispute as a political defeat inspired apprehension, if not alarm, in France. French intelligence reported meetings 'assez serieux' between Baron de Brunnow, the Russian ambassador to London, and Lord John Russell, the British Prime Minister, that Lord Cowley was ordered to report to Lhuys the British cabinet's concern of an imminent rupture between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Curiously, according to the British ambassador to Paris, by the end of 1852, the fissure feared by Britain and France was limited to that between Russia; little apprehension had been expressed for a continental conflict in which the two western powers would be at direct conflict with Russia. On the contrary, in December 1852, France was far more vigilant than Britain as to the gravity of the Holy Places dispute by explicitly classifying the discussion of one about peace between Russia and France. Paris found it imperative to reassure both London and St Petersburg of the wholly religious nature of her involvement in the Holy Places dispute. Through Walewski, France communicated to Russell's government of French 'moderation and reserve' that excluded the potential accusation against France for not taking into consideration 'du temps écoulé et des circonstances nouvelles en orient depuis l'époque des capitulations.' Compared to communications with London, French discourse towards St Petersburg placed more emphasis on the religious nature of French obligations—as Lhuys was sanguine that the St Petersburg cabinet could appreciate the duties of France as a Catholic power, which granted her both the incontestable right to protection and a religious sincerity that Nicholas could comprehend.[62]

After more than a year of continuous diplomatic exchanges on the subject, the significance of the debate was first elevated from a religious discussion between the Greeks

[62] TNA, FO65/424, Lhuys to La Valette, 19 December, 1852, p288.

and the Latins to a political struggle between France and Russia. Alarmed and fearful of a prolonged misunderstanding with Nicholas' government, in late December 1852, the French foreign ministry proposed for the first time that the Tuileries and Petersburg cabinets 's'aboucher directement de débattre leurs prétentions et de les concilier autant que possible avec les exigences de la politique.'[63] Lhuys seemed unconvinced that the Russian cabinet would accept that France harboured no desire for conflict; in addition to dispatching Castelbajac to pacify St Petersburg, the French foreign minister also instructed La Valette in Constantinople to declare to Ozeroff the French intention to avoid confrontation with his government. There was a discernible sense of weakness and conciliation in French diplomatic language towards Russia, which highlighted the discrepancy in the great powers' interpretation of the affair: France struggled to believe that Russia viewed French gains in the Holy Places dispute with hostility, particularly given France's emphasis on the absolute nature of her stipulated treaty entitlements, which provided her with rights that were 'assuredly far less advantageous than the terms that link the Porte with Russia.' French sincerity was palpable, but her defence was inaptly worded—the direct comparison between French and Russian gains vis-à-vis the Porte might have been unintentionally vexatious for St Petersburg. The language used by Lhuys was provocative—the wording of the dispatch, however, suggested that such a connotation was not intended to irk Nicholas. It is thus plausible that the French diplomatic instructions blundered in emphatically underlining French sacrifices and the minimal and inadequate nature of concessions for Latins, also highlight the French moderation that the St Petersburg cabinet 'would not imitate', all of which would further infuriate the Russians who had already been frustrated with Louis Napoleon. Despite Lhuys' request to communicate directly with Count Nesselrode, repetitive reassurance of peaceful intentions and sincerity from France could have further angered Russia. Additionally, Lhuys alluded to a further challenge

[63] Ibid, 290.

that thwarted communications between Paris and Petersburg—the French foreign minister accused the Russian *chargé d'affaires* and other 'agents secondaires' of compromising crucial diplomatic negotiations and being more answerable to 'passions locales' rather than their own government.[64]

In her meticulous diplomatic conduct, possibly to compensate for the want of recognition of the Prince President, what France had completely discounted was the possibility that the Russian perspective towards the Holy Places affair had limited consideration for French sensibilities. For Nicholas, the priority was the negotiations between Russia and the Porte, rather than with Paris. Based on accounts of the Austrian diplomat Mensdorff, at the end of 1852, the cabinet surrounding Nicholas occupied themselves contemplating the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the immediate seizure of the Danubian Principalities, with little mention of France. The debate for Nicholas had little concern for French conduct: the tsar was perfectly aware of the dangers of an already overgrown empire, and the creation of a southern Russia was too attractive and too powerful to not injure St Petersburg and the Russia of the North.[65] As Russian designs led the alarmed Austrian cabinet to believe that the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire was already imminent by January 1853, whereas London believed in more vitality from the sultan's empire. The only aspect in which France was involved in Russian deliberations over the Eastern Question, was the high likelihood of a closer British alliance to France in protest of Russian designs.[66] British documents demonstrated a slightly contrasting view based on a conversation between Nesselrode and Seymour in January 1853. The Russian chancellor, in an exceedingly rare occurrence, commented on the Holy Places Affair to the British Ambassador. Consistent to the Austrian perspective, Russia focused on considerations regarding the Ottoman Empire in the dispute, rather than the pretensions of France. Instead of

[64] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Lhuys to La Valette, 19 December, 1852, p288
[65] TNA, FO65/424, Seymour to Malmesbury, 1 January, 1853, p7-12.
[66] Ibid.

mentioning Russian privileges, Nesselrode emphasised that the concessions demanded by France in the religious dispute to be injurious to the authority of the Porte, which had already been held in 'the slightest estimation' by the Greeks.[67]

The contested Ottoman *firman* was eventually executed in Jerusalem on 29 November, followed by Ottoman Council meetings in early December that granted France the right to a key for the Great Entrance. Based on his optimistic interpretation of developments in the Holy Places dispute, until early January 1853, the French ambassador La Valette was still in denial of growing tensions between France and Russia; he proceeded to congratulate Ozeroff for being promoted to premier dragoman of the Russian legation, and considered France and Russia on the most amicable terms.[68] According to La Valette, he had secured a diplomatic victory and induced the Porte to favour French claims over the status quo desired by the Russians. Historians including David Wetzel supported La Valette's viewpoint, that the Ottoman government had agreed to the entirety of French demands.[69] Even before the finalisation of the firman's reading, Ozeroff's report of the possible granting of the keys at the end of November still raised alarm in the St Petersburg cabinet, following which Nesselrode described the development as 'the new cloud that began to grow in the Orient.'[70] Goldfrank attributed the escalation from St Petersburg to the provocative language employed by Ozeroff, who did not report the limited nature of French victory yet deemed a 'heroic remedy' necessary to insert Russian influence in Constantinople. Ozeroff was also criticised to have forged or exaggerated an allegedly secret promise from Reshid Pasha regarding Russian privileges in the Holy Places, 'to renovate and complete the clause of the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardji to the protection and the immunities that the Orthodox cult and its clergy must enjoy in the Ottoman Empire',

[67] FO65/424, p19.
[68] Thouvenel, p73.
[69] Wetzel, *The Crimean War,* 43.
[70] Ozeroff to Nesselrode, 27/15 November, 1852, as cited in Goldfrank, *Origins*, 105.

upon which Nesselrode proceeded to base Russian policy throughout 1853.[71]

IV. Public opinion and pride of the Tuileries in recognition of Napoleon III

Earlier in October 1852, Louis Napoleon had articulated his vision for the reestablishment of a dynastic empire in France in a speech in Bordeaux on the 9th of the month—which manifested the irreconcilable differences between Nicholas's Russia and the governmental transformation in France. The then Prince President defiantly addressed doubts in public opinion about his agenda: 'il est néanmoins une crainte a laquelle je dois répondre. Par esprit de défiance, certaines personnes se dissent; 'L'Empire, c'est la guerre.' Mois je dis: l'empire, c'est la paix. C'est la paix parce que la France la désire, et lorsque la France est satisfaite, le monde est tranquille. La gloire se lègue bien à titre d'héritage, mais non la guerre…La guerre ne se fait pas par plaisir: elle se fait par nécessité… Malheur à celui qui le premier donnerait en Europe d'une collision dont les conséquences seraient incalculables.'[72]

On 4 November, the declaration of the prince president was read in front of the senate, in which Louis Napoleon articulated the significance of the restoration of the French Empire. On 7 November, by a national referendum with only one vote shy of a unanimous agreement, the senate voted to approve the imperial restoration; another plebiscite sanctioned the proposal on 21 November with nearly 8 million positive votes and only 250,000 against—the French Second Republic became the Second Empire; Louis Napoleon declared himself as Emperor of the French, Napoleon III.[73]

While Louis Napoleon might have secured favourable views in French public opinion with his patriotic speech, this pursuit of domestic popularity was exchanged at the expense of

[71] Goldfrank, *Origins*, 106-9.
[72] Bapst, *Les origines*, 280-1.
[73] Roger Price, Mark Cowling, and James Martin. 'Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte: "Hero" or "Grotesque Mediocrity"?' *Marx's 'Eighteenth Brumaire'* (Pluto Press, 2015): 151; Figes, *Crimea*, 100.

pacific attitudes from the Russian tsar. Predictably, Nicholas was infuriated not only by the language of Louis Napoleon, finding that the French prince viewed France as the axis of the world, but also the high-profile and public nature of his announcement. The Bordeaux prefect Baron Haussmann had already warned Drouyn de Lhuys against the potential consequences for communicating Louis Napoleon's provocative speech to foreign representatives verbatim. To exacerbate matters, French public opinion embraced Napoleon' s discourse in Bordeaux and welcomed the title of 'Napoleon III'. With an unequivocal announcement of the senatus-consulte, the reestablishment of the hereditary empire was officialised under the reign of Napoleon III.[74] Rather than Louis Napoleon's Bordeaux speech, what Nicholas found unacceptable was—beyond his disdain and intolerance for Napoleon's newfound parity with him as a sovereign—the reestablishment of a dynastic empire in France, which included even the descendants of Jerome, the former king of Westphalia and the last brother of Napoleon I. Both the British and Russian cabinets initially deemed it 'absurd' to accept the title 'Napoleon III', when neither court had officially recognised Napoleon II. It was not until the intervention of Queen Victoria in November 1852 that the British government changed course to recognising Napoleon III, as Victoria considered it a matter of 'importance capitale' for Britain to avoid giving France any pretext for claiming herself offended.[75] Nonetheless, Nicholas remained warm towards the French ambassador Castelbajac, who had just returned to St Petersburg; the tsar immediately invited the French general to the Winter Palace for an audience on 14 November, merely shortly after the latter's return. Nicholas cited that in honour of his brother Alexander I's memory, it was untenable for him to recognise the French prince as Napoleon III. Following his private audience with Nicholas, Castelbajac called upon the

[74] Bapst, *Les origines,* 277.
[75] Victoria to Malmesbury, 8 November, 1852. 'objectionable as this appellation no doubt is, it may hardly be worth offending France and her ruler by refusing to recognise it, when it is of such importance to prevent them considering themselves the aggrieved party', in Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria. Volume 2, 1844-1853*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Russian Chancellor for clarification. Supporting the tsar's view, Nesselrode guaranteed the absence of public protest in Russia on the issue—Russian refusal to adopt 'Napoleon III' merely entailed not printing 'A Sa Majesté l'empereur Napoléon III' on envelopes or at the bottom of official letters. The Russian chancellor further referred to the historical precedence of cordial diplomatic ties between Russia and France despite discordance over the recognition of sovereigns, including a notable thirty-year period without France recognising Peter the Great as emperor of all Russia.[76]

Louis Napoleon's fear of French public opinion was the excuse used by diplomats of the Quai d'Orsay in defence of the emperor's provocative discourse. Lhuys cited the influence of public opinion on shaping Louis Napoleon's actions; General Castelbajac also alluded to the necessity for the emperor to 'calmer les craintes et les susceptibilités nationales', that Nicholas ought not to place much importance in the superficial meaning of the Bordeaux speech. What the French diplomats had neglected, however, was that the public delivery of Louis Napoleon's messages was far more irksome for Russia than the already vexing discourse itself. Beyond the title of Napoleon III, what the St Petersburg court considered of graver consequence for Franco-Russo relations was the lack of direct communication from Louis Napoleon to Nicholas in preparing the tsar for the former's declarations. In a dispatch to all French diplomatic corps on 1 December, Louis Napoleon asserted that if he had hoped to restore hereditary rule for the Bonapartes, he would have proclaimed himself as Napoleon V rather than Napoleon III, as his uncle Joseph and his father Joseph were successively the head of the Bonaparte family following the death of the Duke of Reichstadt.[77] Furthermore, Louis Napoleon argued that he would not have derived his sovereignty from a popular election. Additionally, he would have retroactively declared the start of his reign for the day of his father's death instead of during

[76] *Zaionchkovskii*, Copy of a confidential dispatch to Kisseleff, 1 December, 1852/19 November, 1851, No. 67, p262-5.
[77] Quai d'Orsay, 47CPC/3, French consul in Riga to Lhuys, 22 December, 1852, p182.

the reestablishment of the empire. Even though Louis Napoleon was willing to directly reassure the great powers of his lack of dynastic designs, Nicholas was infuriated that he had to learn of such intentions through public journals.

The gap in communication between Paris and Petersburg in early December likely caused irrevocable damage to Franco-Russo relations in early December 1852, which had been confused as a defiant silence from the French emperor in existing historiography. Historian Edmond Bapst largely attributed the deterioration of relations between France and Russia to the non-response from Louis Napoleon to a confidential letter from Nicholas in late November,[78] but this argument is undermined by *Zaionchkovskii*, which documented a meeting between Louis Napoleon and Kisseleff on 29 November at Saint Cloud castle, at 12:30pm, which was reported back to St Petersburg by the Russian special envoi. During this meeting, Louis Napoleon and Kisseleff had a long, and what the latter thought to be also frank and sincere, exchange. Shortly after greeting the Russian envoi, Louis Napoleon confessed his difficulty—he was torn between maintaining harmonious relations with his own people and with Russia. In his report for the tsar, Kisseleff duly suggested that Russia seek a solution that would allow for Louis Napoleon's debacle—'Sa Majesté sait apprécier les services que vous avez rendus aux principes de l'ordre et de l'autorité. Son intention est de vivre non seulement en paix avec la France, mais d'entretenir les meilleures relations avec vous. Pour cela il faut que Vous lui donniez les moyens de ne pas dépasser les limites du possible en ce qui concerne le respect de soi-même et la dignité de son pays.'[79] Therefore, Louis Napoleon was aware of the influence that French public opinion wielded upon his foreign policy and how it had confined options of diplomacy with Russia.

The frank exchange between Louis Napoleon and Kisselef potently challenges Figes'

[78] According to Bapst, Lhuys prevented the emperor from responding to Nicholas' letter, as it was addressed to the 'President of the Republic', rather than to the 'Emperor of France', see Bapst, *Les origines*, 278.
[79] *Zaionchkovskii,* Kisseleff to Nicholas I, 9 December/27 November, 1852, No.68, p266.

narrative on the French emperor's pursuit of a Bonapartist tradition, his intended alliance with Britain, and that 'Russia was the one country the French could fight to restore their national pride', where the British historian cites Bapst and A.J.P. Taylor, somewhat unconvincingly. Instead, Louis Napoleon was apprehensive of St. Petersburg's animosity, even confessing his susceptibility to French public opinion to the Russia court, aiming to avert misunderstandings. Furthermore, although the legacy of Napoleon I was evident in other avenues of Louis Napoleon's career, the self-proclaimed emperor did not specifically appeal to the Bonpartist tradition during events of 1852-3. Additionally, Figes' argument for a 'Catholic crusade against the Orthodox heresy' is unsupported, as no records from the Quai d'Orsay during the period mentions any well-established religious agenda—Paris rather stumbled into the dispute and allowed it to escalate.[80]

Had the Russian court learned of the 29 November meeting between Louis Napoleon and Kisselef more promptly, it would have plausibly adopted a more conciliatory approach towards France. Kisseleff's report of this meeting was, however, not dated until 6 December, which would not have reached St Petersburg until mid-December. Even though the audience between the French emperor and the Russian envoy took place before the end of November, logistical difficulties prevented Louis Napoleon's attitudes from reaching Nicholas and Nesselrode before Russian resolutions on the recognition of Napoleon III became officialised in a confidential dispatch from to Kisseleff dated on 1 December (19 November), which was harshly worded towards the French government:

> 'Nous reconnaissons encore hautement la grande part qu'a prise le Prince Louis-Napoléon à la restauration générale de l'ordre. Mais cette loyale et franche appréciation, il ne faudrait pas que le Gouvernement français en poussât trop loin la portée, et qu'il voulût trop exiger pour prix du service qu'il a rendu à la cause des autres Etats en servant sa propre cause. Quelque grande que soit l'influence exercée par la France sur ses voisins pour le mal comme pour le bien, il ne nous est point prouvé que si l'anarchie à laquelle a mis fin le 2 décembre y eût triomphé en 1852, l'Europe entière eût été irrévocablement condamnée à

[80] Figes, *Crimea*, 103-5.

> s'engloutir avec sa civilisation dans le même abîme. Qu'on veuille bien ne pas oublier qu'à la suite des bouleversements engendrés partout en 1848…'[81]

The significance of this letter is twofold: Nesselrode and the Russian cabinet accused Louis-Napoleon's actions as being restrained by public opinion, to which the French emperor had in fact already admitted to Kisseleff prior to the writing of Nesselrode's instructions. More importantly, this communication most likely followed Kisseleff's receipt of the official French plebiscite that consecrated modifications to the French constitution and the recognition of Louis Napoleon as emperor, which was also dated on 1 December.[82] The court of St Petersburg was thus much behind Kisseleff in its access to information, as the latter not only had met with the French emperor in Paris but also received the official plebiscite from Quai d'Orsay two days after, both of which the Russian diplomat only reported back on 9 December. Therefore, Nesselrode's instruction which contained the firm, uncompromising Russian attitude on the recognition of Louis Napoleon was effectively a response to very little information from Paris apart from what Nicholas could learn about from public journals, where it had appeared that appeasing French public opinion was paramount for Louis Napoleon.

Merely a few weeks later, January 1853 saw the great powers embroil in another diplomatic storm with France at its centre, led by the controversial discussion on addressing Louis Napoleon upon his recent self-declaration as Emperor of France. Following the initial debate on using 'Napoleon III' and its dynastical implications, the legitimacy of Louis Napoleon's rule was challenged anew by the disgruntled tsar Nicholas. The Russian ruler had already demonstrated his reluctance in recognising Louis Napoleon, which led to his using 'mon ami' instead of the customary title of 'mon frère' for exchanges between hereditary sovereigns, which was presented in a letter of creance by the Russian special envoy to Paris, Nikolai Kisseleff. When Louis Napoleon had been Prince-President, him and Nicholas

[81] *Zaionchkovskii,* Nesselrode to Kisseleff (confidential), 1 December (19 November), 1852, No.67, p264.
[82] *Zaionchkovskii*, Drouyn de Lhuys to Kisseleff, 'About the restoration of the Empire and the need to change credentials', 1 December, 1852, No.69, p272.

exchanged correspondence addressing each other as 'mon grand et bon ami' in early 1852.[83] After the re-establishment of the French Empire, Nicholas' continuation of the appellation instantly constituted a fresh offence. On the morning of 5 January, Drouyn de Lhuys promptly summoned Kisseleff for a meeting at Quai d'Orsay. Interestingly, the following day, the French minister arranged for separate audiences with the Austrian ambassador, Hübner, at noon, and with the Prussian Ambassador at 1pm.[84] Lhuys asked Kisseleff to clarify the intentions of Nicholas I in refusing to address the French Emperor with the customary title, to which Kisseleff responded that he was uncertain about the tsar's intentions, but he thought that 'what is judged to be acceptable would be accepted.' Lhuys' attitude was unequivocal: The French foreign minister considered the address of Louis Napoleon as a matter of International Law; if France accepted 'Sire et bon ami', it would be cowardice for France.[85] Compared to records from the Austrian archives, the French account of this meeting between Kisseleff and Lhuys recorded uncharacteristic acrimony from Lhuys, who expressed his dissatisfaction at Kisseleff citing Russia's 'scrupulous fidelity to ancient traditions' in justifying Nicholas' refusal to adopt 'mon frère'. Subtly referring to Nicholas's previous audience with General Castelbajac on 14 November when the tsar had asserted 'nous sommes les anciens, et à ce titre seul on nous doit quelques égards', the French foreign minister retorted with 'quels sont les interprètes naturels des traditions? Ce sont les plus anciennes cours de l'Europe. Or, permettez-moi de vous le dire, celle de Saint-Pétersbourg est bien jeune encore pour aspirer à être, en cette matière, une autorité prépondérante.'[86] In a rare deviation from the prudence in his diplomatic dispatches, Drouyn de Lhuys forcibly dismissed the explanation of the Russian court with a potent attack that could not have helped mitigate mounting tensions. Furthermore, within the same audience,

[83] For an example of the exchange between Louis Napoleon and Nicholas in early 1852, see *Zaionchkovskii* No. 31 and No.32, 12 January and 3 February/22 January, 1852, p190-2.
[84] Records from *Zaionchkovskii*'s history showed that the meetings between Lhuys with respectively Hübner and Max von Hatsfeldt were in fact instructed by Kisseleff but proposed by the ambassadors themselves.
[85] HHS, PA IX Frankreich 41, Hübner to Buol-Schauenstein, 11 Jan, 1853, p16.
[86] Quai d'Orsay, 598PO/A/63, Drouyn de Lhuys to Castelbajac, 12 January, 1853, p29-30.

the French minister also posed the question to the Russian envoi—if Alexander I called Napoleon I 'frère', why was Nicholas I unable to address Napoleon III in a similar fashion?[87]

Similar to the title of 'Napoleon III', 'mon frère' was another appellation with which Louis Napoleon associated recognition and favourable public opinion. The French foreign ministry asserted that the firm rejection of 'bon ami' was not a matter of humiliation or national prestige, but rather prevention for plausible turmoil that could easily be aroused in France by the fervour of public opinion. In the opinion of Lhuys, even Louis Philippe, who maintained dignity even upon his fall from power, could not resist the pressure of public opinion. In the newly re-established empire, a trivial matter of addressing the emperor could immensely complicate the domestic politics of France. Nonetheless, the Russian diplomat was pessimistic on a change from the tsar, which the former considered 'possible mais peu probable.'[88] While reporting to Buol, Count Alexander von Hübner, the Austrian ambassador to France, added his suspicion towards Lhuys' claim. The Austrian ambassador to Paris found the French premise of 'reciprocity' to be unsound, as Louis Philippe had never properly addressed Nicholas, and Louis Napoleon 'was already better treated than the others.' On the other hand, even though the Russian attitude wasn't known to Kisseleff, Nicholas shared his views with the British Ambassador to St Petersburg, that he thought the title 'mon frère' could only be used for a sovereign whose authority was 'received from Heaven; if for a French man, it would only be Henri V.' Kisseleff advanced the tsar's reasoning, claiming that the Russian constitution prevented the recognition of souverains who obtained their rights from the will of the nation, as brothers.[89] Additionally, Nicholas thought it was a misfortune that Queen Victoria was ill-advised to adopt such address for Louis Napoleon.[90]

Relations between France and Russia rapidly deteriorated, and both Louis Napoleon

[87] This letter was also available in Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, p7-15.
[88] HHS, PA IX Frankreich 41, Hübner to Buol, 11 January, 1853, p15.
[89] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Lhuys to Castelbajac, 12 January, 1853, p8.
[90] TNA, FO65/424, mid 18 January53, p137.

and Nicholas were infuriated: the former by the reluctance of the Russian court to recognise and fully respect his legitimate rule, and the latter by the triviality of the 'mon frère' dispute and the turmoil it had instigated. Nesselrode had already predicted that the debate of etiquette could lead to the rupture of relations between France and Russia.[91] Notwithstanding, the attitudes of Austria and Prussia more effectively constrained the course of action of France—warned of the political consequences of the debate, Louis Napoleon was forced to choose a measured response in order to avoid clashing with Russia over his title. The prudence of the French government did not originate solely from avoiding a conflict with Russia; more importantly, Louis Napoleon was unwilling to alienate both Austria and Prussia over the same matter, as the two long-standing allies of Russia had articulated to the French government their inclination to side with Russia should a Europe rupture be unavoidable. During a meeting on 7 January, Hübner urged the French foreign minister to accept his letter of credence from the Austrian court, and claimed to be speaking as a detached third party with no direct interest in the affair. After the French foreign ministry had resolved to reject the Russian ambassador's letter, Hübner warned Lhuys that he was 'turning a very insignificant matter of etiquette into a question of politics, which you intend to let this issue acquire graver complications with your refusal.'[92] According to the analysis of the Austrian ambassador, France faced two possible courses of action: the first option was to entirely 'rompre avec la Russie'; the other was to respond to Nicholas with the following comparison of Louis Napoleon to Napoleon I: 'vous vous parlez à chaque instant de feu l'Empereur Alexandre—vous vous citez ce qu'il a fait quand vous croyez pouvoir profiter de cet appel à sa mémoire; permettez-nous de vous rappeler, que l'Empereur Alexandre a donné le 'Monsieur Mon Frère' à l'Empereur Napoléon (Bonaparte), qui avait certes moins de titres à la reconnaissance des souverains que n'a acquis l'Empereur

[91] *Zaionchkovskii*, Nesselrode to Nicholas I, 19/2 December, 1852. No.78, p285.
[92] HHS, PA IX Frankreich 41, Hübner to Buol, 11 January, 1853, p19.

actuel des Français.'[93] The Austrian ambassador's words left an indelible impression upon the French foreign minister. Lhuys subsequently conceded that France and Russia were geographically far apart, thus a temporary cooling in Franco-Russo relations would not immediately compromise world peace. Nonetheless, if Vienna and Berlin were to follow the Russian course of action, any revocation of diplomats would signify a 'rupture morale' with a grave complication in Europe. Hübner's warning of Austria and Prussia aligning with Russia was a credible one, as the three powers had signed an agreement in May 1852, stipulating that the three courts pursue uniform action over the recognition of Louis Napoleon. In the protocol signed by Nesselrode, Buol, and Manteuffel, it was stipulated that the potential recognition of Louis Napoleon strictly excluded the dynasty of Napoleon Bonaparte as the sovereign of France, and that the recognition for the imperial title of Louis Napoleon would not apply for the designated successor for the throne.[94] While the hypothetical rupture with Russia, Austria, and Prussia alarmed the French foreign ministry, Lhuys had originally questioned the validity of the tripartite protocol between the former Holy Alliance powers. Consequently, in an act that exhibited Russian dominance in the alliance, Kisseleff demanded that Hübner and Hatzfeldt request for private audiences with Lhuys, during which eventually Hübner proved convincing.[95]

Hübner's case to dissuade France from escalation proved compelling: targeting the 'amour propre' of Louis Napoleon and his constant comparison of himself to other French emperors, Hübner provided an explanation that the French emperor did not consider overly demeaning. During his second audience with Drouyn de Lhuys regarding the crisis of the letter of creance, Hübner reassured the French minister that 'la Russie a fait plus et les cours de Vienne et de Berlin n'ont pas fait moins pour l'Empereur des français que pour le Rois Louis

[93] Ibid, Hübner to Buol, 11 Jan, 1853, p20.
[94] *Zaionchkovskii*, Protocol between Russia, Austria, and Prussia, No.46, signed between 13 May to 22 May, 1852 by the respective powers, p217-8.
[95] *Zaionchkovskii*, Kisseleff to Nesselrode, 10 January, 1853, No.86, p298-9.

Philippe.' By emphasising that the reception of Louis Napoleon was already superior to that of Louis Philippe, Hübner reported to Buol that his rhetoric used a loophole in Louis Napoleon's logic to successfully prevent embarrassment for the French emperor.[96] At the end of January 1853, Hübner discussed the political eventualities for Louis Napoleon's France. According to Hübner, the other European great powers had exaggerated the susceptibility of Louis Napoleon, indicating that the self-esteem of the French emperor was not as fragile as it had appeared, thus Louis Napoleon was simply waiting for a favourable moment to 'jeter le masque'. The other possibility, which would present a considerable danger, was that Louis Napoleon habitually relied on improvised resolutions; he thus perceived the allies' rejection of his simple expectation of courtoisie as an act of personal offence, which 'already pushed two fingers at war'.[97]

As the recognition of Napoleon reached a stalemate,[98] diplomats and statesmen of the major powers dedicated more attention to monitoring one another's military preparations. Historians including Temperley and A.J.P Taylor have interpreted French naval strength and gunboat diplomacy to be the focal point of Russian calculations, yet the vigour of the French navy was only recorded in the British diplomatic correspondence via Colonel Rose; even the dispatches between Seymour and John Russell predominantly focused on Russian military preparedness instead. The first mention of Russian military mobilisation appeared in French records in early January 1853, but French intelligence remained less detailed and accurate compared to British records. On 8 January, Castelbajac reported to Lhuys that the 3rd Russian corps of 45,000 troops and 5th corps led by General Affemberg were both ready for war, but it was rumoured among the army that the mobilisation was intended for a war with the Ottoman

[96] HHS, PA IX Frankreich 41, Hübner to Buol, 11 January, 1853, p24-25.
[97] Ibid, Hübner to Buol, 26 January, 1853, received 3 February, No.13, p73.
[98] Nicholas claimed that his position was 'inebranlable' (unshakable) in his resolution even though the situation was 'pitoyable' on 5 January, 1853. See *Zaionchkovskii*, Buol to Mensdorff, No. 81, p288.

Empire, rather than with France.[99] Less than one week later, Castelbajac corrected the information: instead of the 3rd corps, it was the 4th corps that had been mobilised after the 5th.[100] In early February, the French learned that the Russian troops were primarily operating in Bessarabia and in the Dodone region, proving the French suspicion that Russia had sought to intimidate the Porte.[101] Reports that John Russell received in London came from Seymour, who directly inquired after the mobilisation of the 5th corps to Nesselrode, and found military intelligence for the south of Russia to be well-circulated yet incongruent—the Russian Chancellor and Seymour's other sources of intelligence were at odds over the level of preparedness for the 4th and 5th corps, yet Seymour concluded that any minor advancement of either the 4th or 5th corps would bring the Russian forces within the Moldavian border, to the immense alarm of London. On the night of 18 January, Nicholas departed from St Petersburg with orders for the assemblage of a Russian force to proceed to the Adriatic coast and form a squadron of observation. Seymour disputed the information, as he believed that 'the only naval force disposable for such an objective would be one which would have to pass the Dardanelles.' Hastily reaching Nesselrode, Seymour was only met with the Russian Chancellor's concise response that 'our Black Sea fleets have no right to cross the Dardanelles; that of the Baltic Sea fleet is taken by ice until the month of May…the noise reported to you is unfounded.'[102] As the British government became increasingly vigilant of Russian naval presence near the principalities, Seymour even suggested as early as in January 1853 that Britain should showcase 'an equal force under the colours of England' off the Adriatic coast, signalling imminent escalation in the Eastern Question with further involvement from Britain later in 1853.[103]

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[99] Quai d'Orsay, Nantes, 598PO/A/63, Castelbajac to Lhuys, 8 January, 1853, p25.
[100] Quai d'Orsay, Paris, 112CP/208, Castelbajac to Lhuys, 13 January, 1853, p16.
[101] Quai d'Orsay Nantes, 166PO/C/228, Castelbajac to Lhuys, 2 February, 1853, p89.
[102] TNA, FO65/424 letters from Seymour to John Russell, from 13 January, 1853, p110, 113, 121; Nesselrode to Seymour, 19 January, 1853, p123.
[103] Ibid, Seymour to Russell, 25 January, 1853, p166.

V. Conclusion: towards escalation

For Nesselrode and other officials in Nicholas' Winter Palace in early 1853, the Holy Places dispute and the recognition of Louis Napoleon were two comparably exasperating yet entirely distinct affairs. France, however, did not appreciate this nuance—the general language in French discourse surrounding the two affairs suggested that she had allowed sentiments of national prestige, historical glory, and entitlement to cloud her assessment of both events, nearly combining the two incidents as an extended quest for re-established French eminence vis-à-vis the Ottoman Porte and the Russian cabinet. For Russia, the recognition of Louis Napoleon was ceremonial yet inextricably linked to her recent historical memory before the establishment of the Vienna Congress—a matter of unwavering principle and Russian patriotism that even Nesselrode could defend. The Holy Places dispute, while ostensibly religious and even more trivial, was profoundly associated with Russian ascendency in the Black Sea, which would become increasingly acute with the continuous decline of the Ottoman Empire. The Holy Places dispute thus represented for Russia a matter of future gains, a long-standing matter between the Porte and Petersburg, only frustratingly complicated by French involvement. It was therefore evident from the private correspondence of Nesselrode and official Russian dispatches that in both diplomatic challenges, St Petersburg paid less attention to France than Paris might have believed. Even for the recognition of Louis Napoleon where the French Empire was impeccably the centre of discussion, what primarily concerned Petersburg was a plausible Austrian betrayal and French and British naval movement.

Whilst both the Holy Places dispute and the recognition of Louis Napoleon stopped short of bringing France and Russia to war, neither issue was fundamentally resolved. Instead, both highlighted irreconcilable differences between the two great powers, particularly the duel between Nicholas and Louis Napoleon. In an attempt at reconciliation, the French emperor

later accepted the Russian ambassador's letters of creance and wrote directly to Nicholas at the end of January. Both sovereigns were shaped by the tumultuous revolutions of 1848, and Louis Napoleon vowed to 'undeviatingly' pursue the conduct of Nicholas, who had displayed unremitting endeavours to preserve order in Europe during times of turmoil; Louis Napoleon also wrote of the intimate friendship between Queen Hortense, his mother, and Alexander I. In principle, however, the Romanov family considered the restoration of imperial rule in France an ill-advised measure. In the view of Nicholas, the only political system which would have any durability in France would be a republic headed by an elected sovereign from the House of Bourbon, to which the French population was known to be profoundly attached, even though Nicholas was unconvinced of the legitimacy of their power over the French nation.[104] Nonetheless, Louis Napoleon directly addressed allegations of him acting upon his 'amour propre', yet further highlighted his susceptibility and pride— 'Ne croyez pas Sire que mon amour propre ait été blesse par la lettre que votre majesté m'a adressée—Non, Sire, ce n'est point mon amour propre, c'est mon cœur qui en souffrait.'[105]

Based on the Holy Places dispute and his recognition as emperor, Louis Napoleon could not be condemned as the sole culprit for instigating conflict with Russia. His defining flaw was his susceptibility to public opinion—the emperor's popularity in France dictated French foreign policy, thereby compromising Franco-Russian relations. A multitude of other factors outside of Louis Napoleon's personal responsibility also contributed to the deterioration of European stability in the early 1850s. Fundamentally, the Holy Places dispute was exceedingly complex yet trivial with little urgency, which had become a chronic diplomatic challenge with the Porte that France had been revisiting at her own sporadic pace. French failure at resolving the dispute diplomatically was largely caused by the disorganised nature of the Ottoman

[104] TNA, FO65/424, Seymour to Russell, containing letter from Louis Napoleon to Nicholas I, 31 January, 1853, p193-194.
[105] Ibid, p194.

government, or rather its erratic and inconsistent communication with Paris and St Petersburg. What did not ameliorate the situation, was the inflated self-importance exhibited by the French foreign ministry under both Turgot and Lhuys, in that it had overestimated the weight of French actions in Russian considerations for the Holy Places dispute. This misjudgement necessitated the utmost caution and prudence from French diplomats out of fear of provoking Russia, but it also led to unnecessary scrutiny and prolonged contention over the minute dispute. In the wake of Louis Napoleon's rise to power, France found the nebulous landscape of European diplomacy full of uncertainty and unlikely allies. Additionally, the recognition of Louis Napoleon introduced a significant shift in the power dynamics between the former Holy Alliance countries: Russia, Austria, and Prussia. As indisputably shown from diplomatic proceedings of early 1853, Austria strived to act independently from Russia as an intermediary in the Eastern Question, straining Austro-Russian relations. The discord between Vienna and Petersburg over the recognition of the French emperor signified the unravelling of a once intimate alliance, which would significantly shape the course of European diplomacy when the entangled Eastern Question verged upon conflict in the Crimean Peninsula towards the end of 1853.

Chapter 5

Dual disputes and Menshikov's ill-fated mission

I. New diplomatic missions in dual disputes

As the year 1853 commenced, dynamics between European great powers were shrouded in a nebulous flux by the aggravating Eastern Question—the unending challenge to the European order surrounding the declining Ottoman Empire. Although ruled by a legitimate monarch, the Sultan's Porte had been decaying from impotency. The Holy Places dispute, which prompted a crisis in European diplomacy in 1852, was among the most contentious affairs of the Sultan's Empire that necessitated European mediation. The religious dispute on Greek and Latin ecclesiastical privileges in Jerusalem in itself had historically been considered as trivial, thus it only sporadically surfaced in European discussions without any realistic perceived threat to the status quo. Nonetheless, the year 1852 witnessed acute tensions surrounding the dispute, complicated by the recognition of Louis Napoleon as the French emperor. Following more than one year of futile deliberation, another ostensibly insignificant dispute surfaced to once again threaten European peace—the Montenegro question. The Ottoman Porte had long held contested sovereignty over Montenegro; it advanced militarily once again in December 1852 to subdue the region. Strategic interests in the Balkans immediately incited the participation of Austria to resolve the crisis diplomatically, which led to a sequence of diplomatic missions from Russia, Britain, and France, all aimed at peacefully settling both diplomatic crises with the sultan's government. The mission of the Russian special envoy, Prince Alexander Menshikov, however, entailed wider Russian designs: through the pretext of the dual disputes in the Eastern Question, Menshikov was sent to Constantinople to

demand greater Russian influence in the Ottoman Empire in form of a general Russian protectorate over the Sultan's Orthodox subjects. Within the first month of Menshikov's mission in the Ottoman capital, underlying Russian ambitions and intentions gradually elucidated. Other European great powers thus became increasingly alarmed, resulting in an escalatory naval incident that brought all powers to the brink of hostilities by March 1853.

Whilst Tsar Nicholas I did not wish to dismember the Ottoman Empire to its immediate collapse, the level of Russian influence that Nicholas desired could not be sensibly achieved through peaceful means, nor could they be countenanced by other European great powers. Notwithstanding, these other powers were ill-positioned to counter Russia diplomatically. Austria had the most delicate position among all powers involved. Nicholas might have believed in the resilience of Austro-Russian rapports, particularly after his support for Franz Joseph in 1849—but he underestimated Austria's alarm over their clashing interests in the Balkans and her fear of the spread of revolutionary sentiments. France was most directly involved in the Holy Places dispute and concerned with her entitlements thereof, but she was ill-disposed towards escalating against Russia and somewhat reliant on London's attitude; her use of military deterrence rather served as demonstration of national pride rather than any concrete strategic considerations. Nicholas had outmanoeuvred Britain by proposing an unlikely bilateral understanding with her on the Eastern Question, gaining Russia a momentary yet crucial respite from British suspicion. The British press demanded a strong position against Russia, but the Aberdeen government persevered in believing in the peaceful overtures of the tsar, resulting in prolonged British neutrality, even as mounting tensions foreshadowed imminent hostilities.

The diplomatic debacle that culminated in the Crimean War was already materialising in the early months of 1853; existing historiography is rife with indictments of responsibility for its escalation. M.S. Anderson, Orlando Figes, and John S. Curtiss criticised Tsar Nicholas

I for misjudging the political and diplomatic reality in Europe, overly trusting towards both Britain and Austria and negligent of the increasingly anti-Russian public opinion in Britain.[1] In French historiography, de Grunwald found the outbreak of hostilities an extension of deep-seated irreconcilability of Russian designs and European interests.[2] Similarly, Harold Temperley and John Grainger focused on the underlying strategic interests of Britain and Russia, particularly through an imperialistic perspective.[3] More recent works, including Figes and Goldfrank, linked the aggressive nature of Prince Menshikov's mission to the escalation of tensions. These accounts, however, fell short of condemning Nicholas in purposefully seeking a war, rather his demands simply could not be met through peaceful means. Paul Schroeder's invaluable analysis on Austria's impasse provided rare insight to the significance of the Montenegro affair, as Andrew Lambert offered a fresh, admiralty-focused military perspective on the British calculus during the naval scare in March 1853.[4]

This chapter examines the significance of the Montenegro crisis in exacerbating tensions within the Eastern Question, focusing on the diplomatic mission of Prince Menshikov to Constantinople. In the aftermath of Count Leiningen's swift, successful negotiations, was Menshikov's mission genuinely purposed to secure Russian demands from the Porte, or was it merely a pretext for advancing deeper Russian objectives? This question necessitates an assessment of the Court of St. Petersburg's intentions, on whether the mission was deliberately orchestrated by Tsar Nicholas I to provoke a *casus belli* that would legitimise a Russian conflict with the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the naval incident in Malta in March, which nearly forced Britain into an unwanted conflict, raises doubt on British motivations—was Britain's

[1] Anderson, *The Eastern Question*; Curtiss, *Russia's Crimean War*; Figes, *Crimea*.
[2] Constantin de Grunwald, *Tsar Nicholas I.* London: D. Saunders, 1954;
[3] Temperley, *England and the Near East* ; John D. Grainger, *The British Navy in the Baltic* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014).
[4] Goldfrank, *Origins*; Lambert, *The Crimean War* ; Schroeder, *Austria and the Crimean War* .

non-action a manifestation of her restraint and realism, or was it an epitome of the cabinet's confusion and indecision? This chapter contends that Prince Menshikov's mission was largely doomed to failure from the outset, as Nicholas would not tolerate any possible concessions in diplomatic negotiations with the Porte. While Menshikov lacked diplomatic finesse and tact, he was not the sole culprit of instigating conflict. Rather, his mission was largely a camouflage for Russian expansionist designs aimed at achieving Ottoman subordination. Limited by their respective divergent interests, other European great powers were rendered powerless in countering the gradually materialising Russian aggrandisement designs and the ultimate eventuality of the Crimean War.

The Montenegro crisis

In January 1853, a military expedition led by Omer Pasha of the Ottoman Empire aimed to subdue Montenegro, a small mountainous region in the Balkans whose long and tumultuous history witnessed extended periods of foreign influence and repeated failed attempts at independence. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, Montenegro's Adriatic coastal region of Boka Kotorska was governed by its powerful patron, the Venetian Republic, until the latter's collapse in 1797 in the Napoleonic wars. During the four centuries of Venetian influence, the Ottoman Empire and the Venetians fought periodically over ascendancy in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Montenegrins successfully resisted the Ottomans until 1695. In the eighteenth century, Ottoman influence in Montenegro was still limited and symbolic: the continental part at the foot of the Dinaric Alps remained free of Ottoman power, whereas in other regions of Montenegro, occasional tax payments constituted the only vestige of the Porte's power. In resistance to the Sultan's dominion, Montenegro established diplomatic relations with both Russia and Austria in early eighteenth century. The Habsburgs occupied Montenegro following the fall of Venice, but this rule of was short-lived—upon Austria's

defeat at Austerlitz, she was forced to cede former Venetian possessions to France. Nonetheless, in 1814, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, the coastal regions of Montenegro, including the Boka Kotorska, had been promised again to Austria. In the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic warfare, Alexander I's Russia advised Montenegro to resist against Austrian rule. [5]

Modernisation efforts in early nineteenth century Montenegro highlight rivalrous Austrian and Russian interests thereof. Due to the region's lack of infrastructure and poverty, famine and inaccessibility of the Adriatic were persisting problems that plagued the Montenegrin leaders. Since the 1830s, during the rule of Petar II, Prince-Bishop of Montenegro, the government was able to create state offices with Russian subsidies. When administrative reforms to the court were introduced in 1831, these subsidies even surpassed the volume of the government's collectable tax revenue. Nonetheless, Russian patronage did not consistently benefit the true interests of Montenegro. Although Petar II actively sought an outlet to the Adriatic, the Habsburg monarchy of Austria firmly opposed this development. Montenegro's Russian ties made other European great powers approximate a Montenegrin seaport to the acquisition of a Russian base on the Adriatic, which was far more consequential. Despite this hindrance, the connection between Montenegro and Russia deepened, culminating in Petar II's visit to St Petersburg in 1837, from which he returned with more generous subsidies and Russian advisors. After Petar's death in 1851, his nephew Danilo took over the leadership role. With the approval of both Austria and Russia, Danilo secularised his government and proclaimed himself as prince in 1852. In August of the same year, Danilo committed Montenegro towards supporting anti-Ottoman uprisings in the neighbouring Herzegovina; his motion deeply angered the Ottoman Porte. Omer Pacha thus advanced into

[5] Boka Kotorska, the Bay of Kotor in Southwestern Montenegro, close to the Adriatic coast to its west. Živko Andrijašević and Šerbo Rastoder, *The History of Montenegro : From Ancient Times to 2003*. Podgorica, 2006, p59-83.

Montenegrin territory in early 1853, forcing Danilo to seek the military assistance of Austria and Russia.[6]

Despite Russia's long-standing financial assistance to Montenegro, the latter's independence from the Ottoman Empire was a much more delicate matter for the Court of St Petersburg. Austrian records suggest that in September 1852, the Russian government had stated that due to the lack of tributary payment requirements, the Porte had never exercised any real sovereignty over Montenegro. The Russian Chancellor, Karl Nesselrode, then expressed the wish that the Austrian court would second Russia in not recognising the Sultan's sovereignty over the region, which Vienna gently rejected. Citing local Montenegrin records, Austria substantiated the *de jure* Ottoman sovereignty despite its non-existent *de facto* enforcement.[7] Furthermore, Buol considered it difficult to declare the independence of Montenegro simply on the sole evidence that the Porte had not exercised its suzerainty in multiple years. In January 1853, upon Omer Pacha's advancement, Russia was reticent to intervene on behalf of Montenegro due to tsar Nicholas I's adherence to legitimist principles. Austria, on the other hand, had more compelling reasons to responding favourably to Danilo. Rather than contesting with Russia on the basis of the Porte's legitimacy, Austria decided to proactively shield herself from ramifications of a likely Ottoman occupation of Montenegro.[8] Austria, unlike Russia, immediately bordered the region, thus she sought to prevent trade disruptions and a potential asylum crisis on the Austrian Montenegrin border, as well as the spread of Ottoman influence towards Serbia and Bosnia. Vienna was also more disposed towards Prince Danilo than to the Ottoman ministers. Most critically, the Ottoman conquest could reach towns such as Klek, north of Dubrovnik, and Sutorina, near the Boka Kotorska—if turned into military bases, Ottoman presence thereof would be strengthened at the expense

[6] Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), I, 247-52.
[7] HHS, PA XII 48, Buol to Klezl, Vienna, 10 January, 1853, p1-3.
[8] HHS, PA X/37, Buol to Mensdorff, Vienna 21 January, 1853, p2-7.

of Austrian control of the Adriatic coast, along the southern frontiers of Austria.

Consequently, Vienna's aims at re-establishing an Austrian protectorate in Montenegro prompted the Hofburg's diplomatic interference in the early 1853 crisis. Unbeknown to Russia, Austria's clandestine efforts included sending 10,000 gulden in various instalments of gold, while also reallocating Austrian ammunition in Dalmatia towards Montenegro under the pretext of reinforcing the Royal garrison troops. Ostensibly, Austria also backed Montenegro with a formidable military demonstration. Mobilising her troops in Dalmatia, Croatia, and Bosnia, Austria was determined to dispel the Porte from Klek and Sutorina, but she also promised hospitality to Montenegrin refugees who fled under Ottoman invasion. The extremely difficult terrain in Montenegro, however, rendered it difficult for the Austrian army to prevail upon a larger Ottoman force in the Boka Kotorska. In addition to a rapid concentration of troops in Croatia to pressure the Turkish flank and rear, by mid-January, Governor-General Baron Mamula, the commander of the Austrian forces, recommended to Buol that a distinguished and capable diplomat must be sent to Constantinople to pressurise the Ottoman Porte.[9] One week later, on 21 January, Count Leiningen was appointed on a special mission to the Ottoman capital to resolve the Montenegro crisis.[10] Unwilling to accede to lone Austrian management of the affair, tsar Nicholas I assured the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I that in case of an Austro-Ottoman war over Montenegro, 'nous prendrions fait et cause pour elle'; in February, Russia promptly sent Prince Menshikov as a special envoy to Constantinople after the departure of Count Leiningen, setting the stage for a diplomatic showdown in the Ottoman capital.[11]

[9] Kriegsarchiv (Vienna), MKSM 1853/ad 222, General Mamula to Grünne, 14 January, 1853, p6-7.
[10] Count Leiningen, Christian Franz Seraphin Vincenz von Leiningen-Westerburg. HHS, PA X/37, Buol to Mensdorff, 21 January, 1853, p2-7.
[11] *Zaionchkovskii*, p369 ; Nesselrode Papers, X, M. Balabin au comte Dmitri de Nesselrode, 11 February, 1853, p213.

Dual disputes and diplomatic missions

With the Montenegro crisis and the ongoing Holy Places dispute involving France and Russia, European great powers thus simultaneously faced two disputes vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of 1853. Britain, consistent with her previous policy, held a more distant position and was not directly involved in either. Predictably, she favoured compromise, as she desired that France and Russia could balance each other in the Holy Places dispute, while Austria helped orchestrate an equilibrium in both affairs. Louis Napoleon's France might have been genuinely seeking peace, as the emperor bitterly accepted a concession on his recognised credentials and seemed amenable to a conciliatory stance in the obscure religious dispute. For France, to enhance the still fluid Anglo-French relations was a priority, even at the cost of continuing the perennially unresolved debate. Austria was in a delicate situation: she certainly wished to assert her interests in the Montenegro affair, but signs of strain were noticeable in both the Austro-Russian alliance and Anglo-Austrian rapports; the death of Prince Schwarzenburg in April 1852 added more uncertainty into her position vis-à-vis France and Russia—which led to the reasonable Austrian concern for being isolated by a coalition of the other great powers. As for Russia, Nicholas I's was encouraged by the absence of British support for France in the Holy Places dispute; the tsar thus considered himself as possessing an advantageous moral high ground in the Eastern Question. Regarding Russia's long-standing ally Austria, Nicholas neglected the multi-faceted considerations that the young Franz Joseph was compelled to face and considered the alliance between the two courts robust and unassailable.

In February 1853, tensions rapidly mounted in Constantinople. The first European diplomat to arrive was naturally Austria's Count Leiningen. After being sent to the Ottoman capital at the end of January, Leiningen demanded that the Porte suspend and evacuate Montenegro, repay Austrian merchants for their losses, and forbid Hungarian refugees from

serving in the army of Omar Pasha. Furthermore, Austria warned against Ottoman advances towards waterways surrounding Klek and Sutorina, particularly prohibiting the annexation of these towns for Ottoman naval purposes. Leiningen's threats were powerfully supported by the Austrian show of force alongside the Ottoman border. With further menace of a joint Austro-Russian armed intervention should the Porte reject Austrian terms, a peace treaty was quickly concluded within three weeks.[12] To the dismay of St Petersburg, Leiningen's rapid diplomatic victory prevented the Russian envoy from claims of its fruition. Prince Menshikov was sent from Russia in early February; he first embarked at Odessa on 16 February, 1853, spent over a week in inspection of the fleet in Sevastopol, before reaching Constantinople at the end of February.[13] Other diplomats also gradually reached the Ottoman capital after the termination of Leiningen's mission. In February 1853, the French Foreign Ministry replaced its ambassador, Marquis de La Valette, with Edmond de Lacour, who had previously served as the French ambassador in Vienna from 1848-53. For the French Emperor Louis Napoleon, the Eastern Question had become too grave for French representation at the Porte to hold inadequate authority.[14] Stratford Canning, the younger cousin of George Canning and British Ambassador in Constantinople during the Greek War of Independence, received orders from the then Foreign Minister John Russell to return to his post in Constantinople on 11 February, 1853, following a parliamentary alert that Britain had been left unrepresented in the eye of an imminent storm.[15] At the heart of the Eastern Question, the diplomatic scene was thus revived in Constantinople in February 1853.

[12] Schroeder, *Austria and the Crimean War*, 24-5.
[13] Quai d'Orsay, 47CPC/3, French Consul (Count Gilbert de Vilius) in Odessa to Drouyn de Lhuys, 18 February, 1853, p186. The French Consul initially noted that Mentchikoff had arrived in Odessa 'the day before yesterday'—16 February; the British sources only dated the prince's second arrival in Odessa for 26 February, see TNA, FO65/424, Seymour to Lord Clarendon, 9 March, 1853, p48.
[14] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Drouyn de Lhuys to La Valette, 23 February, 1853, p126.
[15] UK Parliament, Hansard, Commons Chamber, Volume 124, debate on 11 February, 1853.

Appointment of Menshikov and instructions for the special envoy

Nesselrode proposed the idea of dispatching a special diplomatic envoy under the inspiration of Count Leiningen's swift success. But the selection of Prince Menshikov as the special Russian envoy to Constantinople had not been straightforward—the prince had been neither the first nor second choice for the tsar and Nesselrode. Nicholas preferred Pavel Kiseleff, who then was serving as the First Minister of Russian Empire State Property and had previously commanded Russian troops in the Russo-Turkish War 1828-9, subsequently serving as Plenipotentiary in Wallachia and Moldavia in 1830s. To Nicholas's dismay, the highly experienced diplomat in negotiating with the Ottoman Porte refused the proffered post. Immediately, Nesselrode began organising alternative arrangements. Along with the assistance of Baron Meyendorff, the Russian ambassador in Vienna, Nesselrode prepared the diplomatic mission for Count Alexey Orloff, who had served as the Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1829-30 and helped construct the Peace of Adrianople, which concluded the Russo-Turkish War. Count Orloff had also served as the commander-in-chief of Nicholas' Black Sea fleet, in addition to being the head of the Third Section secret police for over a decade. By 1 February, it appeared that the appointment of Orloff was nearly certain, and Nesselrode asked Meyendorff to temporarily receive dispatches and instructions on behalf of Orloff, before the latter's special envoy appointment was confirmed. The 73-year-old Chancellor had been in poor health and was for the second time confined in bed for eight days.[16] Presumably, it was around early February during Nesselrode's indisposition that the plan for appointing Orloff fizzled, plausibly with Orloff's refusal due to the perceived unattainability of the mission.

Within the same week, the news of Menshikov's appointment was officialised. Prince Alexander Sergeyevich Menshikov had served under Tsar Alexander I, the late brother of

[16] Nesselrode Papers, Tome X, Nesselrode to Meyendorff, 1 February/20 January, 1853, p211.

Nicholas I, and had fought extensively in the Napoleonic wars. After retiring from army service in the 1820s, Menshikov turned his attention to naval matters, serving as Nicholas' head of Naval Headquarters as well as the Governor-General of Finland. Although experienced in military and naval affairs, Menshikov had little exposure to diplomatic negotiations; he was described as a rigid, uncompromising, and deeply Orthodox professional soldier. On 5 February, Baron Eduard de Lebzeltern-Collebach, the Austrian legation's First Secretary and chargé d'affaires in St Petersburg since 1844, wrote to the Austrian Foreign Minister to share rumours of the news. On 7 February, Lebzeltern confirmed details of the appointment directly disclosed by Nesselrode himself, whom Lebzeltern had run into in St Petersburg on the previous evening. It had been decided that Count Dmitri Nesselrode, the son of the chancellor, would accompany the prince to the Ottoman capital. This dispatch, however, was not received by the Hofburg until 18 February.[17] Around the same time, the French foreign minister Drouyn de Lhuys was among the first senior European statesmen to speculate on the nature of the mission, 'Prince de Menshikov est chargé de faire dans ce bal de nouvelles et énergiques démarches auprès de la Porte.'[18] By the end of February, in his private correspondence with his daughter, Nesselrode confirmed again that his son Dmitri would join the mission, which Nesselrode considered to be a short one that 'ne se prolongera guère au-delà de deux mois.'[19] The expectation for the mission to be rapid was widely shared. Dmitri Nesselrode would also learn from his private correspondence that by the end of March, St Petersburg wished to see 'l'arrangement terminé avant l'arrivée des ambassadeurs', particularly that of Stratford Canning.[20] According to Lebzeltern, it was widely known that Menshikov had been in poor health and 'suffering' for some time, but the 66-year old admiral general was compelled to

[17] HHS, Russland 36, Lebzeltern to Buol, St Petersburg, 7 February/25 January, 1853, p17.
[18] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Lhuys to La Valette, 18 February, 1853.
[19] Nesselrode Papers, Nesselrode to Countess Helene Chreptowitch (his daughter), 27/15 February, 1853, p214.
[20] Nesselrode Papers, Dmitri Longuinof to Count Dmitri de Nesselrode, 31/19 March, 1853, p216.

depart for his post within one week of his official appointment.[21]

Nicholas' instructions for Menshikov's mission were not only firm and peremptory, but the text was also presented in a stylistically distinct format for diplomatic exchanges in early nineteenth century: a numbered bullet point list with minimum elaboration and articulated in strikingly uncomplicated language:

Quel doit être notre but ?
- *1. Réparation.*
- *2. Garanties pour le futur. Quelles peuvent-elles être.*
- *3. Conservation de l'état passé. Est-ce probable ?*

Quels sont les moyens d'atteindre notre but ?
- *1. Négociations :*
  - *a) par lettre ;*
  - *b) par l'envoi d'une ambassade. Avantages et inconvénients.*
- *2. Intimidation par rappel de notre mission. Inconvénients.*
- *3. Par la force :*
  - *a) déclaration de guerre. Inconvénients ;*
  - *b) surprise par occupation des principautés. Inconvénients ;*
  - *c) surprise sur Constantinople. Avantages, inconvénients ; chances de succès*

Résultats probables :
- *1. La Turquie cédera.*
- *2. Elle ne cédera pas ; destruction de Constantinople.*
- *3. L'armée turque battue se retire vers Gallipoli ou Enos.*
- *4. Occupation des Dardanelles.*
- *5. Les Français envoient une flotte et un corps de débarquement. Conflits avec eux.*

Chances de succès ; possibilité de revers :
- *6. Nous avons le dessus, Constantinople et les Dardanelles sont entre nos mains, l'armée Turque est en déroute.*
- *7. Chute de l'Empire Ottoman.*
- *8. Devons-nous le rétablir et à quelles conditions ?*
- *9. Pouvons-nous le rétablir avec chances de succès ?*[22]

My translation:

What should be our goal?
- *1. Reparation.*
- *2. Guarantees for the future. What might they be?*
- *3. Preservation of the previous state. Is this likely?*

What are the means of achieving our goal?
- *1. Negotiations:*
  - *a) by letter;*

[21] HHS, Russland 36, Lebzeltern to Buol, St Petersburg, 7 February/25 January, 1853, p17-8.
[22] *Zaionchkovskii*, Emperor Nicholas I's personal note on the Eastern Question before Menshikov's mission, No. 98, undated, p357-8.

b) by sending an embassy. Advantages and disadvantages.
2. Intimidation by recalling our mission. Disadvantages.
3. By force:
a) declaration of war. Disadvantages;
b) surprise by occupation of the principalities. Disadvantages;
c) surprise at Constantinople. Advantages, disadvantages; chances of success.

Probable results:
1. Turkey will yield.
2. She will not yield; destruction of Constantinople.
3. The defeated Turkish army withdraws towards Gallipoli or Enos.
4. Occupation of the Dardanelles.
5. The French send a fleet and a landing force. Conflicts with them.
Chances of success; possibility of setbacks:
6. We have the upper hand, Constantinople and the Dardanelles are in our hands, the Turkish army is routed.
7. Fall of the Ottoman Empire.
8. Should we reestablish it, and under what conditions?
9. Can we reestablish it with a chance of success?

The significance of Nicholas' note here in February 1853 for Menshikov is manifold: Most significantly, Nicholas had little patience for diplomacy. In the tsar's view, diplomacy likely entailed dispatching a representative to read off from a list of Russian demands until they were accepted, or rather, capitulated to. Alternatively, the diplomat must be recalled, signalling the rupture of diplomatic relations and the outbreak of war. According to this criterion, Menshikov need not possess diplomatic adroitness. Admittedly, the tsar harboured expansionist visions, but they were rooted in realistic restraints. Nicholas did not truly desire the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire but rather its subordination to Russian demands. The restoration of the empire following its complete dissolution was too cumbersome for Nicholas; if inevitable, it remained a distant possibility and would only be assumed as a burden. The tsar's notation of 'inconvénients' after options of intimidating the Porte, declaration of war, occupation of the Principalities, and a surprise siege of Constantinople—all suggested that albeit likely, bellicose measures were not necessarily Nicholas's preference. Furthermore, Nicholas' simplistic, succinct note struck a stark contrast to the myriad voluminous materials previously prepared by Nesselrode for Count Orloff, suggesting the tsar's confidence and

nearly bull-headed complacency.[23] Anderson deemed Menshikov's mission 'a striking assertion of Russian power'; David Goldfrank also found the prince's instructions of circular logic and 'divorced from political reality', which Orlando Figes in parallel assessed that the Russian instructions 'stood little chance of being met'.[24]

Fundamentally, the Russian diplomatic mission sought to nullify all negotiation in 1852 between France, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire surrounding the Holy Places dispute. Convoluted grievances from France and Russia stemmed from discrepancies on two specific religious privileges in Jerusalem: bestowal of the keys of the Bethlehem Church and participation in the repair of the grand cupola. The French believed that these privileges had been stipulated in the existing *hatti scheriff* (signed edict by the sultan) and demanded their execution.[25] The Russians demanded more, even extending beyond the extent of French claims in 1852—the expulsion of the French and British championed diplomat, Fuad Effendi; the immediate repair of the Bethlehem church without any participation from the Catholics; the publication of an additional, elucidatory firman, a *sened*, as a new formal treaty to confirm Russian rights; the non-publication and confidentiality of all future agreements between the Porte and the Court of St Petersburg. Afif Bey's mission in Jerusalem November 1852 was also dismissed as neither a definitive conclusion to the Holy Places dispute, nor a durably satisfactory arrangement.[26] Even though instructions drafted by Nesselrode asserted that Russia did not seek any new religious concessions, these demands for the Porte were far beyond what the Sultan could feasibly promise and what the French could honourably concede.

Consistent to its behaviour in 1852, the Ottoman Porte exacerbated the existing dispute

[23] These instructions are presented in *Zaionchkovskii*, No, 104-111, p369-86.
[24] Historians who evaluated Nicholas and Menshikov's mission include Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, p120-1; Figes, *Crimea*, p107-8, Schroeder, p28-9; Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition,* 141-2; Marriott, *The Eastern Question,* 242; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery,* p49-50—largely unsubstantiated. Based on Menshikov's diary in the Russian TsGAVMF (Central State Archive of the Navy), Goldfrank considered the possibility that Menshikov's selection was due to Nicholas' partiality for war, p116-7.
[25] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Drouyn de Lhuys to Marquis de La Valette, 26 February, 1853. This had been dispatched before Menshikov's arrival in Constantinople.
[26] *Zaionchkovskii,* No.104-11, p371-86.

through its duplicity in clandestine underhand negotiations, culminating in contradictory decisions promised to France and Russia. The trivial details of this debate nonetheless warrant a brief description: due to French coercion, the initial February 1852 firman favoured the Latins by granting them the possession of the key to the great door of the Bethlehem Church. Confusingly, Hafiz Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Jerusalem, later promised the Russian delegation that he would endeavour to avoid honouring the treaty. In the spring of 1852, Vladimir Titoff, the Russian envoy since 1843, obtained the Porte's permission to modify details of the firman as he deemed suitable for Russian interests. Out of reverence towards an official legal document, the Russian envoy refrained from altering the existing stipulations, but rather resorted to inserting a contradictory article that guaranteed the maintenance of the status quo, denying additional privileges for the French granted in the firman. Considering this insertion was insufficient to rescind French privileges, Titoff proceeded to urge Afif Bey, the Porte's Commissioner, to nullify all concessions to the French and silence those cognisant of Titoff's illegitimate manoeuvres. In a near farcical sequence of events, in early March 1853, Ozeroff cited the illicit letter that Afif Bey was coerced to produce and condemned the Porte for its non-execution. The Porte's weakness engendered its chicanery, as a clumsy attempt to placate French grievance and Russian intimidation resulted in graver offences towards both courts, leading to La Valette and Menshikov's accusations that the Porte had told numerous 'mensonges'.[27]

While historians have depicted claims in the Holy Places dispute as immaterial and circular in logic, the military component of Menshikov's diplomatic mission has been oversimplified, largely failing to account for a nuanced timeline of Menshikov's initial arrival that had significant implications for the prince's mentality. The broader context of Menshikov's highly anticipated mission was months of rumours on Russian military preparations along the

[27] TNA, FO78/930, Rose to Russell, Constantinople, 6 March, 1853, received in London on 19 March, p13-24.

Ottoman borders. As early as the first week of January, both British and French governments became increasingly vigilant of the rumoured Russian mobilisation of its 3rd, 4th, and 5th corps in Bessarabia (mostly in Wallachia) and in the Dodona region (in Northwestern Greece).[28] George Hamilton Seymour, the British Envoy Extraordinary to St Petersburg, confirmed the alarming news to John Russell in a confidential dispatch on 19 January from the Russian capital. According to Seymour, with a 24,000 strong reinforcement due, the whole Russian force mobilised would amount to 144,000 men. A mobilisation of such scale was peculiar, considering the finances of Russia, which Seymour had noted to be 'far from flourishing and encumbered with the coming expense of the railroad between St Petersburg and Warsaw, are so little in a state to encourage unnecessary expenditure.'[29]

By February, the extent of Russian military designs remained obscure to European courts. Within a secret memorandum for Menshikov, Nesselrode acknowledged that rumours must have spread in Constantinople about existing Russian preparations, but Menshikov needed not deny them. Conversely, Menshikov was encouraged to confirm these rumours and explain that they were precautionary measures necessitated by the Porte's concentrated armies and ammunition in Rumelia. As an experienced military man since the campaigns of Alexander I and head of the Naval Headquarters under Nicholas I, Menshikov naturally would already have a curiosity over the exact state of Russian military preparations—particularly the naval base at Sevastopol, despite that the Russian Black Sea fleet and the Russian navy generally had fallen behind the development of its British and French counterparts.[30] For Menshikov, understanding the actual state of the Russian base would provide crucial reassurance for his negotiations with the Porte. Arrangements were thus made for an extended, 10-day long naval

[28] Quai d'Orsay, 598/PO/A/63, Castelbajac to Lhuys, 8 January, 1853, p25; Quai d'Orsay 112CP/208, Castelbajac to Lhuys, 13 January, 1853, p16; Quai d'Orsay 166PO/C/228, La Valette to Lhuys, 2 February, 1853, p89; TNA, FO65/424, Seymour to Clarendon, 9 March, 1853, p47.
[29] TNA, FO 65/424/, Seymour to Russell, 19 January (7), 1853, p59-60.
[30] Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, p62.

inspection in Sevastopol prior to the Constantinople mission.

A peculiar fleet inspection in Sebastopol

While the conventional depiction of Menshikov's arrival in Constantinople at the end of February 1853 was grandiose and presumptuous, few historians have documented the fleet inspection at Sevastopol prior to his arrival. Even those who did account for the prince's short sojourn *en route* to Constantinople, including Figes, failed to note the peculiar logistical details of this brief excursion. Regional French archival records suggest that Menshikov had initially aimed to keep his visit to the Russian fleet outside public scrutiny, but the military inspection itself seemingly transformed his position to one of ostentation and grandiosity towards the end of his voyage. Based on a letter from the French regional consul in Odessa of Southern Russia for the Quai d'Orsay, now held in Nantes, Consul Count Gilbert de Vilius recorded Menshikov's initial arrival to Odessa as 16 February, nearly two weeks prior to his supposed arrival in Constantinople. Strikingly, the consul described Menshikov's activities in Odessa as exceptionally quiet, as the prince immediately embarked on the steamboat *la Bessarabia* to depart for Sevastopol, where he would indeed reconnoitre the Russian fleet. Rather than pomp and circumstance, the situation in Sevastopol was a rather chaotic congregation with soldiers and officers, but the atmosphere was not triumphant: an air of paranoia surrounded the naval base—'le plus profonde mystère cours toujours les projets de la Russie: on craint de parler; les journal qui se publie ici n'a pas annoncé l'arrivée du Prince Menshikov ni son départ pour Sébastopol. Il y a dans les esprits une grande inquiétude : une panique s'est emparée du commerce… dans l'incertitude de l'avenir, craignant de se livrer à de grandes opérations.'[31] In this initial dispatch, the French consul was even unaware of which officers were included in

[31] Quai d'Orsay, 47CPC/3, Consul Count Gilbert de Vilius to Drouyn de Lhuys, Odessa, 18 February, 1853, p186.

Menshikov's entourage due to the secretive nature of his proceedings. Adding to the mystery was the fact that the local journals appeared intentionally hushed and requested to not report Menshikov's initial arrival in Odessa, nor his subsequent inspection in Sevastopol. The deliberate quiet, however, is illogical, given Nesselrode's instructions explicitly stated to Menshikov that he was authorised to boast about Russian military preparedness. One more factor suggests that Menshikov was intent on keeping his reconnoitring of the fleet outside public knowledge: If one looks at the map of the Black Sea, it is clear that Sebastopol, located between Odessa and Constantinople, would be a sensible stopping point without much extra distance; it is thus plausible for Menshikov to stop via the Russian naval base before disembarking at the Ottoman capital. The prince, however, returned north to Odessa eight days later, on 24 February, before heading south again for Constantinople on 26 February. The whole entourage was thus able to arrive in the Ottoman Empire aboard the original vessel, *Vladimir*.[32] Furthermore, immediately following Menshikov's second arrival in Odessa, the French consul reported that the details of the Russian crew were revealed. Menshikov was accompanied by a few of the most senior military officers in the whole Russian Empire, and the facility of their leaving their ranks of command suggest the confident preparedness and lack of urgency for the Russian military. Joining the prince included not only the Chancellor's son Count Dmitri Nesselrode, but also the Commander in Chief for the Black Sea fleet Admiral Vladimir Kornilov, Chiefs of Staff of the 4th and 5th corps, respectively General Nipokoichinski and General Kwitzenski, as well as Nicholas' aide-de-camp Prince Galitzine. The curious silence was lifted, and Menshikov's mission became the most debated topic in Odessa.[33]

Menshikov likely sought a quiet start to his mission for a variety of reasons. Firstly, he

[32] HHS, PA XII/46, 3 March, 1853, Ed Klezl to Buol, p182-185. Goldfrank and Figes have both erroneously named Menshikov's steam frigate as *Thunderer*.
[33] Quai d'Orsay, 47CPC/3, Consul Count Gilbert de Vilius to Drouyn de Lhuys, Odessa, 25 February, 1853, p187. The British sources only dated the prince's (second) arrival in Odessa for 26 February and was unaware of the initial arrival one week earlier, see The National Archives, FO65/424, Seymour to Lord Clarendon, 9 March, 1853, p48.

had been in poor health, and this was widely known among the diplomatic corps in St Petersburg. The urgency of the mission in Constantinople forced him to leave Russia on short notice, which further confirms that the additional round trip between Odessa and Sevastopol rather than departing from Sevastopol for Constantinople—a considerably inefficient detour—must have been pre-meditated. With insufficient diplomatic experience, Menshikov perhaps also needed to familiarise himself with the Montenegro crisis, the Holy Places dispute, and with Nesselrode's myriad dispatches. Coincidentally, Nesselrode's illness in early February has also confined the chancellor to resting in bed for multiple stints. It was thus unlikely that the two ailing aged statesmen were able to have thorough discussions on the mission before Menshikov's departure, if any discussion at all. Here the influence of his entourage, which was presumably appointed by Nicholas himself, was paramount. Not fully recovered in health and underinformed on a momentous mission, Menshikov sensibly favoured prudence whilst obtaining more information on relative Russian strength. His militant approach for the diplomatic mission may have been gradually augmented through proximity with the military commanders onboard and only heightened through what was an encouraging review of the fleet. The Russian fleet was reported to be 'armée en guerre et prête à mettre à la voile au premier signal.'[34] Upon confirming that the Ottoman army had little prospect of rivalling the Russian fleet, the prince arrived in the Ottoman capital on the morning of 28 February with the 'flamboyance' that historians have accused him of. It is worth noting that the military review in Sevastopol itself wasn't flamboyant—it was in fact almost secretive—but from 24 February onwards, emboldened by Russian naval superiority, Menshikov commenced his diplomatic mission gloriously.

[34] Quai d'Orsay, 47CPC/3, Consul Count Gilbert de Vilius to Drouyn de Lhuys, Odessa, 18 February, 1853, p186.

II. The mission of Menshikov in Constantinople

Menshikov exhibited no discernible endeavour at courtesy from the first moment of his arrival, but accusations of his impertinence may have been overstated. Following his disembarkation on Monday afternoon 28 February in Constantinople, Menshikov stayed in the Russian Embassy Hotel at Pera before notifying the Porte of his arrival on 1 March. The following day, the Russian envoy presented himself to the Ottoman Porte in civilian dress, where he only visited the Grand Vizier Mehmed Ali Pasha. Goldfrank and Figes exaggerated this offence by labelling it as 'unprecedented' and 'breaking with all diplomatic traditions'—such a view was inadequately substantiated by Figes and only based on the reports of Vincent Benedetti, the French chargé d'affaires, for Goldfrank. The French reports on Menshikov's proceedings were distinctively more derogatory, thus they must be considered alongside the Austrian record. Even though Austria and Russia had traditionally been allies, reports prepared for Count Buol consistently maintained a considerable level of vigilance, barely short of mistrust, against Russia; such suspicion particularly held regarding the disputes at issue in Menshikov's mission, where Austrian interests were practically at odds with those of Russia. Count Karl Ferdinand von Buol-Schauenstein, the Austrian Foreign Minister since 1852, was an experienced diplomat who had served in various posts across the German Confederation and even in Russia. He had always maintained suspicion towards Russian expansionism in the Near East and remained vigilant of Prussian aspirations in Germany. Despite his unpopularity in Vienna—primarily due to a lack of military authority—Buol enjoyed the confidence of Franz Joseph.[35] All considered, it would be uncharacteristic for Austrian reports for Buol's review to unreasonably favour Menshikov's actions. According to Baron Eduard von Klezl, the Austrian legation Secretary in Constantinople since 1850, Menshikov's civilian attire had been

[35] Schroeder, p20; Kempen von Fichtenstamm and Johann Franz, *Das Tagebuch Des Polizeiministers Kempen von 1848 Bis 1859* (Österreichischer bundesverlag für unterricht, wissenschaft und kunst, 1931).

previously arranged, 'as it was customary for ambassadors to pay their visits to the Porte Ministers in this manner.' The Foreign Minster Fuad Effendi, however, had indeed been disrespectfully slighted. Fuad had fully prepared his large reception room for the Russian prince, only to learn the disappointing news that the latter had immediately departed from the Seraglio, the Porte Palace after paying a visit to the Grand Vizier, Mehmed Ali Pacha.[36]

Menshikov's mission continued with astounding directness, unequivocally demanding Russian privileges specified in Nesselrode's instructions. The prince categorically refused to negotiate with Fuad Effendi due to both the latter's involvement in the 1852 firman favouring Latin privileges and explicit instructions to remove Fuad from the Porte. Publicly humiliated, the Ottoman Foreign Minister was forced to resign on 6 March, within the first week of the mission. This was a significant loss for Britain and France, who had long nurtured a understanding and cooperative relationship with Fuad Effendi. Rifaat Pacha immediately replaced him and was ready to meet with Menshikov the following week, when the latter was invited to present his letters of credentials to the Sultan. Even with Fuad replaced, the Russian ambassador still demanded a private audience excluding the newly appointed Ottoman Foreign Minister from all discussion. During the first meeting, Menshikov presented a letter signed by tsar Nicholas on 5 February to the Sultan Abdulmecid I[37] where the tsar clarified the conundrum that the two empires had been faced with: the Holy Places dispute was largely blamed on the inexperience and ill intent of ministers, but the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardji still existed between the two powers. Nicholas effectively reminded the Sultan of Russia's entitlements and privileges, and warned him against being misled by other powers into a position antagonistic to that of Russia.

Menshikov requested another private audience with the Sultan on 13 March, reiterating

[36] HHS, PA XII/46, Ed Klezl to Buol, 3 March, 1853, received 15 March, 1853, p182-5.
[37] *Zaionchkovskii*, No.112, Letter from Emperor Nicholas dated 24 January, 1853 to the Sultan, presented by Prince Menshikov at a private audience in presence of Reis Efendi and Dragoman, 5 February/24 January, 1853, p386-7.

the necessity to exclude Rifaat from being present, which incited the suspicion of Benedetti. Rather than requesting an audience, the Russian ambassador subsequently informed the Foreign Minister that he would call upon him on 16 March. During this time, the Grand Vizir Mehmed Ali Pacha maintained extraordinarily close communication with the French embassy, indicating the Ottoman predilection towards concerting with France. The Grand Vizir revealed that Menshikov would likely press the Porte in contracting comparable engagements as stipulated in the 1833 Unkiar Skelessi Treaty. The Grand Vizir was determined not to accede to any proposition that would grant Russia more advantages than the other great powers in Constantinople, subsequently expressing his hope for receiving 'the firmest support' from the British and French governments.[38] The British and French embassies were nonetheless sparsely represented in the first two weeks of Menshikov's mission, as neither Ambassador de Lacour nor Stratford Canning had reached Constantinople yet.

Although his advances on the Porte appeared imposing, Menshikov expressed a reflected interpretation of his own mission that obscured the intention of the Russian court, whilst also challenging the existing depiction of his character: according to the prince, his mission prioritised the Montenegro affair as he confessed his unfamiliarity with the Holy Places dispute. Menshikov was presumably truthful to some degree about his inadequate understanding of the trivial religious debate, but a proclaimed priority given to the Montenegro affair could have also served as an advantageous camouflage for Russian designs. When Count Lebzeltern first learned of the prince's appointment in St Petersburg in early February, Nesselrode had ascertained that the main motives of the mission were the two outstanding affairs of Montenegro and the Holy Places dispute.[39] Menshikov's instructions were, contrarily, unambiguously only focused on the latter. One month later, the French chargé

[38] Quai d'Orsay, 47CP/312, Benedetti to Lhuys, Pera, 14 March, 1853, received in Paris, 31 March, p67-74.
[39] HHS, Russland 36, Lebzeltern to Buol, St Petersburg, 7 February/25 January, 1853, received in Vienna on 18 February, p17.

d'affaires Vincent Benedetti wrote from Constantinople to Lhuys to report a curious conversation with Menshikov that has not been considered in existing historiography. The conversation took place around the weekend of 12 March, during which Benedetti reviewed the Holy Places dispute for the Russian envoy. The French diplomat was surprised that Menshikov did not contest any of the Quai d'Orsay's assertions. 'Il a prétendu qu'il n'était pas en mesure de le faire ; qu'il a été, avant tout, amené à Constantinople par l'affaire du Monténégro pour laquelle son gouvernement n'aurait pu admettre aucun tempérament.' Menshikov explained the grave eventualities of the Montenegro affair, and that Russian military preparations served no other cause than for possible measures that would 'ne laisser aucun doute sur les intentions de son gouvernement.'[40] Furthermore, Menshikov admitted to his being inadequately informed the Holy Places dispute—

> 'J'aurai, sans nul doute, à m'occuper de la question des Lieux Saints… J'arrive, toutefois, sans avoir de notions exactes sur la légitimité des réclamations qui nous ont été adressées. Je suis occupé, en ce moment même, à les examiner et je suppose qu'il me sera permis avant peu de me former, sur cette affaire, une opinion fondée et réfléchie. Je reconnais déjà la question est ardue, mais il me semble toutefois qu'il est des précautions que nous avons le plus grand intérêt à prendre sans retard.'[41]

This discourse suggested a more moderate nature to Menshikov's character than is generally believed, but it also enlightened the Russian discourse that the Holy Places dispute was inherently of secondary importance. Benedetti understandably suspected Menshikov's duplicity, based on the former's conviction of Russian antagonism towards France in the dispute. Notwithstanding, it is worth considering the possibility of Menshikov not being entirely dishonest—perhaps he did consider the Montenegro affair to be more significant. At

[40] Quai d'Orsay, 598PO/A/63, extrait of dispatch from Benedetti to Lhuys, Pera, 14 March, 1853, p142-3; full dispatch available from the same letter in 47CP/312 of the same date, received 31 March in Paris.
[41] Ibid, p143-4. 'I will, without a doubt, have to deal with the question of the Holy Places... I arrive, however, without having any exact notions on the legitimacy of the claims that have been addressed to us. I am busy, at this very moment, examining them and I suppose that I will soon be able to form, on this matter, a well-founded and considered opinion. I already recognize that the question is difficult, but it seems to me nevertheless that there are precautions that we have the greatest interest in taking without delay.'

least for some time, Nesselrode also vocally shared this view, supporting Schroeder's belief that in early January, the conflict between Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire appeared far more dangerous.[42] According to Nesselrode, the pressure on the Eastern Question should ease, because unlike the Montenegro question where 'the extermination of the Christian population' was concerned, there was no immediate hurry in the Eastern Question.[43] With regards to the Holy Places dispute, Menshikov's reticence in providing his judgment on the matter exhibited a prudence and caution typically not associated with the prince in existing literature. Menshikov appeared polite, courteous, and earnest in his exchanges based on the accounts of junior French and Austrian diplomats. Even Hugh Rose, the staunchly anti-Russian British chargé d'affaires, commented that Menshikov's language about the Holy Places had been 'much more satisfactory and moderate than that of Monsieur de Ozeroff; he says that it is a question for monks more than statesmen, that it should have been from the first instance treated as a matter of secondary importance.'[44] Granted, the Russian admiral had never been accused of being calculating or deceitful; on the contrary, he was undeniably more straightforward vis-à-vis the Porte and rarely equivocated before declaring his intentions. He did not conceal his disdain for the Ottoman Porte, describing it as 'un ministère sans consistance' where ministers were preoccupied with their own positions and harboured malicious intentions; the sovereign was in a more debauched state, 'adonné à la boisson, qui règne sans gouverner et qui, par boutades, gouverne sans régner.'[45] It is possible that the forceful inflexibility of his character was only provoked in front of the Ottoman Turks, which was not a desirable quality for a diplomat negotiating on the brink of war.

Aside from championing a more reflective and prudent side of his personality, why would Menshikov want the French to believe that he privileged the Montenegro question? In

[42] Schroeder, *Austria and the Crimean War*, p24
[43] TNA, FO65/424, p48.
[44] TNA, FO78/930, Rose to Clarendon, Constantinople, 19 March, 1853, received 15 April in London, p244-50.
[45] Nesselrode Papers, Tome X, Menshikov to Nesselrode, Pera, 6 May, 1853, p220-1.

mid-March, there was little remaining for Menshikov in the affair, as an armistice had been settled in mid-February, with the news from Salonika reaching Constantinople in early March. Menshikov was even too late to meet Count Leiningen, as the Austrian diplomat had already departed for Boka Kotorska.[46] Given the delicate Austro-Russian dynamic over Montenegro, the Russian Ambassador was understandably much annoyed at Leiningen's early departure, which prevented him from contributing towards or claiming the successful conclusion of the Montenegro affair.[47] Two logical explanations remain for Menshikov's Montenegro emphasis, both alarmingly illuminating for Russian expansionist goals—firstly, the view in St Petersburg limited the Holy Places to merely 'une place infime', but the real purpose of Menshikov's mission was a grander and more abstract vision—beyond an absolute protectorate, territorial concessions, and pecuniary indemnities, Russia aspired at 'une idée, une fiction, une ombre ou une vapeur que personne ne comprend et ne peut revêtir d'une forme quelconque'[48]—a general yet overpowering control of the Near East, beyond the limits of specific rights and privileges. More realistically, stating that Russia prioritised the Montenegro affair provided a logistically reasonable explanation for her extensive military mobilisation since January, which could also ease other great powers' alarm over wider Russian designs and induce the plausible wishful thinking that such mobilisation would be withdrawn momentarily. There was reason to be alarmed, as naval intelligence from the Adriatic Sea soon proved.

Opportunism has mostly been cited to condemn Louis Napoleon for instigating conflict in Europe; a similar logic also fittingly applied to Russian motivations, except that Russia's designs were grander than those of the French emperor's, and her pretexts flimsier. The Russian

[46] HHS, PA XII/46, Ed Klezl to Buol, 3 March, 1853, received 15 March, 1853, p182-5.
[47] TNA, FO78/930, Rose to Clarendon, Constantinople, 24 March, 1853, received in London 11 April, 1853, p357-63.
[48] Nesselrode Papers, Tome X, Dmitri Longuinof to Count Dmitri de Nesselrode, Moscow, 22/10 May, 1853, p222-3.

government's understanding of Holy Places dispute was disproportionately vague compared to the vigour with which Menshikov pursued his mission, signifying the opportunistic nature of Russian diplomacy. From suggesting the invalidation of the 1740 French capitulations to her professed emphasis on Montenegro, Russia's peculiar discourse was disconnected from its assertive diplomatic conduct solely targeting the Holy Places dispute. Rather than a reflection of inadequate preparation, this demonstrated the deliberate nature in which Russia participated in the discussions: her deeper intentions were not limited to a victory in the Holy Places dispute. It was evident to all great powers that the dispute was trivial and immaterial, yet all lamented others for allowing the disagreement to widen and deepen. What Russia desired was extending her privileges in the Ottoman Empire, and the Holy Places dispute was a tangentially relevant yet sufficiently controversial debate that allowed for convenient Russian pressurisation on the Porte. The religious specifics at issue, from this objective, would naturally be insubstantial. In a fashion similar to the Greek War of Independence where European Philhellenism supported Greece out of nostalgia for classical Greek culture, St Petersburg's support for Greek Christians was least motivated by possession of keys to the great entrance of the Bethlehem church. In essence, the Greek rayahs[49] abhorred any conflict on account of the Holy Places and even conceded that the Latins had treaty entitlements to exclusive rights of repairing the Cupola. If European intervention could be precluded, the Ottoman Greeks were likely to reach a settlement with the Porte and Latin Patriarch, or more plausibly—the issue would be habitually dismissed into negligence. Even the Greek Orthodox subjects of the Porte, whom Russia sought to protect, discerned that the religious matter had been exploited by Russia to perpetrate her political agenda. [50]

[49] Non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire.
[50] TNA, FO78/930, Rose to Russell, Constantinople, 6 March, 1853, received in London 19 March, p13-24.

Grander Russian designs- taunt of Greco-Russian alliance

Menshikov continued his mission through launching two energetic rounds of demands. On 16 March, during the scheduled appointment with the new Foreign Minister Rifaat, Menshikov presented the first Verbal Note, which exclusively referred to the Holy Places. The verbal note accused the Porte of unilaterally colluding with the French Embassy for a more favourable firman, demanded authorisation for the Greek Orthodox in repairing the St Sepulchre church and cupola, and requested the new firman would neither be read nor recorded.[51] This meeting already left a profound impression on Rifaat, who Menshikov described to have been most affected by the proposal of a formal convention, rather than the material content of its agreement.[52] Five days later, the prince escalated such already categorical demands by insisting upon a new *sened* (convention) which would secure an effective protectorate over the Greek clergy in the Ottoman Empire in a definitive, indisputable, and obligatory act.[53] The second verbal note was extraordinarily untoward for the Ottoman Empire, as it would grant Russia comparable privileges to those which she already enjoyed in the Danubian Principalities.

Simultaneously, Austrian records suggest that Menshikov's curious military retinue may have had further obligations on the agenda than simply accompanying the prince to Constantinople, including conceivably forging an alliance with Greece. Figes erroneously claimed that Vice Admiral Kornilov was sent on a mission to spy on defences in Constantinople in preparation for a lightning attack, but the Austrian chargé d'affaires Count Lebzeltern's report contradicted this view—Austrian archival records suggest that the military mobilisation under Kornilov was more directly linked with the affairs of Montenegro, as the Vice admiral's mission ultimately privileged developments in the Adriatic Sea rather than the Black Sea—

[51] *Zaionchkovskii*, Note verbale remise à Rifaat-Pacha le 4/16 Mars 1853, No.113, p387-91.
[52] *Zaionchkovskii*, Note from Menshikov on first meeting with Rifaat-Pacha, Pera, 24 March (12), 1853, No.115, p392-3.
[53] *Zaionchkovskii*, Note verbale remise à Rifaat-Pacha le 10/22 Mars 1853, No.114, p391-2.

'Vize-Admirals Korniloff…nach dem adriatischen Meere, wo er mit einigen kleineren Fahrzeugen, die sich gewöhnlich in Athen, Smyrna und Constantinopel befinden, den Gang der Ereignisse an der Küste von Albanien zu beobachten hätte.'[54] Lebzeltern's report was further substantiated by an additional report from Athens one month later. Carl Freiherr von Eder, the Legation Secretary at the Austrian Embassy in Athens, reported Admiral Kornilov's arrival on board *Bessarabia*—the same vessel that transported Menshikov's entourage for the military inspection in Sevastopol—to Piraeus on 15 March. The Russian Admiral had already engaged in prolonged conversations with Andreas Metaxas, Greek Ambassador to Constantinople and former Prime Minister of Greece, whilst Kornilov stayed in the Ottoman Capital in the first two weeks of March. It was widely believed in Athens that Kornilov had been assigned a political mission, as the Admiral had reached the Greek capital first and subsequently summoned Metaxas from Constantinople for further negotiations. On 17 March, Kornilov also had a 'solemn' formal meeting with the Bavarian born Greek King Otto I[55] and returned to Constantinople on 18 March.[56]

Russian engagement with Greece was also noticed by the French chargé d'affaires in Athens, Baron Forth-Rouen, who had been stationed in Greece since 1839. After activities in Piraeus, Kornilov arrived in Athens in the early days of April, where the admiral provided assurances to the Greek population respecting 'the ample protection Russia would give her coreligionists'. It was also reported that Kornilov also induced the Greek government to send armed banditti from Greece into the neighbouring Ottoman provinces for the purpose of inciting revolt amongst the Ottoman Greek inhabitants.[57] Kornilov was also of Greek origin; it

[54] HHS, PA X/38, Lebzeltern to Buol, St Petersburg, 5 February/24 January, 1853, received in Vienna 17 February, 1853, p19-20. 'Vice-Admiral Korniloff…to the Adriatic Sea, where he would have to observe the course of events on the coast of Albania with some smaller vessels, usually located in Athens, Smyrna and Constantinople.'
[55] Otto of Greece, son of Ludwig I from the Wittelsbach family in Bavaria, brother of the King of Bavaria Maximilian II.
[56] HHS, PA XVI/19, Carl Freiherr von Eder, Legation Secretary at the Austrian Embassy to Greece, to Buol, Athens, 18 March, 1853, received in Vienna 28 March, 1853, p102-3.
[57] TNA, FO 78/931, Rose to Clarendon, HMS Fury, 11 April, 1853, received in London 28 April, p108-13.

was natural that the tsar would appoint him on the endeavour to engage with Greece. Considered alongside the vast naval and military resources available to Menshikov and Kornilov, in addition to an enormous sum of service money—allegedly a total of £300,000 at Menshikov's disposal—the fear of escalated Russian demands involving the participation of Greece was conceivable.

Attempts at a Greco-Russian alliance signify the military nature of Nicholas's considerations even though Menshikov's mission had only commenced. This effort could not be camouflaged as supporting the Montenegro affair, which had already concluded with the victory of Leiningen's gunboat diplomacy. Although Greece was utterly inconsequential compared to the maritime powers of Britain and France, Russia's appeal to Otto indicates that Nicholas had anticipated a contest against British and French fleets as early as March 1853, particularly since Russian forces were confidently superior to the Ottoman navy. More importantly, this move planted the seeds for subsequent Austrian suspicion of Russian designs. Under Austria's broader ambitions in the East, she considered territories west of Salonika as closer to her sphere of influence rather than to Russia's; the crucial position of the Salonika port also rendered it unsupportable for Austria to allow Greece to entirely fall under Russian influence. Around March, however, Austria was still cautiously sanguine about the nature of Menshikov's mission, so Kornilov's engagements with Greece did not create much agitation for Vienna.

III. France, the aggrieved Quai d'Orsay

The French reaction to Menshikov's mission comprised indignation and confusion in equal measure. The Russian mission had been announced by Nesselrode through Count Nikolai

Kiseleff on 17 February, which caused a 'pénible impression' for Lhuys.[58] From the Quai d'Orsay's perspective, France had been amicable and frank to the Court of St Petersburg during the Holy Places dispute in 1852, only to meet Russian recriminations. Disappointed with the complete invalidation of an entire year's diplomatic endeavour, the French foreign minister condemned the futile actions of General Castelbajac, the French Ambassador to Russia since 1849, despite understanding that it was Nicholas' court who had nullified his efforts. The French bitterness was comprehensible—in Paris' view, they had already made considerable concessions to both the Porte and Russia; Lhuys further revealed that Louis Napoleon had recently made the determination to pursue an even more conciliatory course of action, where France could be content with 'une restitution partielle'. Lhuys regretted that France had 'sincerely hoped to put an end to the situation, which would now be reborn and aggravated.'[59] According to Count Alphonse de Rayneval, French Ambassador to the Holy See, the Vatican was disposed to support the French cause in the dispute. Further, Count Rayneval reported that Count Nesselrode had disclosed he 'ne connaissait que d'une façon très imparfaite les details de la mission d'Afif Bey a Jerusalem', leading to Lhuys' accusation that the Petersburg cabinet had exaggerated their grievances against France based on admittedly imperfect knowledge of the debate.[60]

Existing scholarship has rarely alluded to the accuracy with which the Quai d'Orsay had forecasted Russian gestures vis-à-vis the Ottoman Porte, which could explain the more apprehensive attitude from Paris. Louis Napoleon's foreign ministry had held sensible conjectures on what Nesselrode thought would be the most classified, ultimate proposition that Menshikov was authorised to negotiate, thus the French perception of Russian proceedings following the arrival of Menshikov must have accounted for the worst-case scenario, escalating

[58] Count Nikolai Kiseleff, Russian envoy in Paris 1851-1854.
[59] Ibid, p102.
[60] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Lhuys to Marquis La Valette, 26 February, 1853, No.11, p131.

the existing dispute towards much graver considerations. [61] The French had anticipated the defensive alliance between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, which was well-documented yet highly confidential in Menshikov's instructions. Whilst not a blank cheque for the Porte, the proposed alliance would eventually lead to a more general Russian protectorate over the Porte's Christian subjects.[62] On 17 February, while writing to General Castelbajac, Drouyn de Lhuys not only deplored the Russian non-cooperation in negotiations on the Holy Places dispute, more significantly, the French foreign minister denied the possibility of accepting any close rapports between the Porte and the court of St Petersburg. 'Le document qu'on nous oppose, au contraire, de l'aveu même du Ministre des Affaires Etrangères du Sultan, n'en qu'un acte d'administration intérieure, révocable par la seule volonté qui l'a créé, et auquel il nous est impossible de reconnaitre le caractère d'un engagement près vis-à-vis de la Russie et concert avec elle.'[63] According to Lhuys, if an intimate alliance between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was forged, both France and Fuad Effendi considered Russian involvement in Ottoman affairs to be no different than an 'interior administrative' act, indicating the facility with which the tsar could intervene at will in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire. The hypothetical alliance would be akin to a complete Russian patronage of the Porte's empire, precipitating its imminent collapse. Assuredly, such a prospect was beyond alarming and inadmissible for France, thus most likely aggravating her suspicion of Menshikov's mission even ahead of its commencement.

The French government thus approached the London cabinet to forge an alliance, but this was not met with a categorical response; Britain's non-cooperation attested more towards her own indecisiveness in the Eastern Question rather than an unwillingness to concert with

[61] Until mid-March, Lhuys still claimed that 'nous connaissons ni la nature, ni l'étendue de toutes les demandes que cet ambassadeur doit présenter à la Porte', in a letter to Benedetti, 19 March, 1853, in Quai d'Orsay 166PO/C/228, p148-9.
[62] *Zaionchkovskii*, No.111, Projet d'un acte sépare et secret, p385-386.
[63] Quai d'Orsay, 598PO/A/63, Drouyn de Lhuys to Marquis General Castelbajac, 17 February, 1853, p101.

France. On 7 March, Lord Cowley emphasised to Clarendon the necessity for Her Majesty's government to determine 'how much it was willing to sacrifice' for a settlement in the East.[64] Superficially, there was no sense of urgency in the St James Court's consideration, as the British government perceived no sign of an impending dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.[65] A few days later, Stratford Canning, who was en route to Constantinople by way of France and Austria, dined with Louis Napoleon whilst in Paris. Stratford recorded that Louis Napoleon was confident that the two governments of London and Paris would act together to uphold the Ottoman Empire. The French Emperor advocated for a stronger British stance, citing British aims on the Turkish railway for communication purposes with India,[66] while emphasising that it was Britain, rather than France, who possessed extensive territories in the East. Louis Napoleon outlined French ambitions vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire: he had no wish to 'make the Mediterranean a French lake', but that he should like to 'see it made a European one'. The French Emperor did not offer a detailed explanation for his claim, but Stratford Canning conjectured that he had meant the inclusion of all shores of the Mediterranean exclusively in the land of Christendom, and the ambassador judged the dream to be 'rather colossal'.[67]

While historian Orlando Figes cited this memorandum by Stratford describing Louis Napoleon's hubris as evidence for French sincerity in establishing an Anglo-French alliance and restoring French naval power, this discounted a budding voice among French aristocracy in early March 1853 that favoured a Franco-Russian alliance. In a letter from Thouvenel to Castelbajac on 1 March, the former French Foreign Minister wrote of the significance of Franco-Russian diplomacy and the heightened likelihood of forging an alliance, given Louis

[64] TNA, FO27/964, Lord Cowley to Lord Clarendon, 7 March, 1853, p41.
[65] Ibid, same to same, 13 March, 1853, p201.
[66] During the mid-nineteenth century, Britain helped build the first railways in the Ottoman Empire, which would enable shorter transportation routes to India, her biggest colony at the time. For instance, the Iskenderiye-Kahire Railroad, for which construction lasted from 1851-6, served this purpose by connecting the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, which was seen as a superior alternative to opening a canal.
[67] TNA, FO352/36/9, Stratford Canning Papers, Memorandum from Paris, 11 March, 1853, p12.

Napoleon's conciliatory attitude towards the Holy Places dispute. Thouvenel recalled a meeting with Louis Napoleon on 26 February, where the French Emperor disclosed his inadequate understanding of the Holy Places dispute— 'Je ne connais pas les détails de l'affaire des Lieux Saints, je regrette le bruit qu'on en a fait, et plus encore, l'importance exagéré qu'elle a prise, mais nous ne pouvons rien rendre du peu que nous avons obtenus.' Facilitated by the Emperor's discourse, the French aristocratic circles began discussing the advantages of an alliance with Russia. According to Thouvenel, the salon of Princess Dorothea Lieven—the widow of the former Russian Ambassador to the Court of St James, Prince Christoph von Lieven—became once again frequented by statesmen and politicians in Paris.[68] Princess Lieven's salon in London enjoyed unmatched popularity in the early phase of the Concert of Europe, particularly whilst Prince Metternich remained in power, for its role of facilitating unofficial diplomatic discussions. The immense charisma of Princess Lieven, her extensive epistolary network, and her reinvigorated salon in early 1853 must have boosted the consideration for a peaceful outlook with Russia in France.

Although the possibility of a Franco-Russian alliance might have been entertained, the circles represented by Princess Lieven's salons could not encompass the entirety of French public opinion. Some statesmen viewed Prince Menshikov's mission in a highly alarming light. For instance, Edouard Thouvenel, Lhuys' predecessor as the French Foreign Minister, described the beginning of Menshikov's mission to be 'si bruyamment commencé et si pompeusement conduit à la surface, ne constitua qu'un grave échec pour la diplomatie russe.' According to the acrimonious critic of Russian policy in the Eastern Question, the role of the St Petersburg government in the East was simpler than generally believed— 'il consiste à être toujours le plus grand ami ou le plus grand ennemi de la Turquie.'[69] The majority of French

[68] Thouvenel, *Nicholas I*, 85-7.
[69] Thouvenel, *Nicholas I*, 90.

public opinion, albeit less austere, remained sceptical of Russian ambitions towards the Ottoman Empire. One of the most authoritative voices in the French press, *Le Journal des Débats,* wrote of the inevitable conflict between Russian and the Ottoman Empire. 'Si l'on veut détruire la prépondérance de la Russie en Constantinople, ce n'est pas l'empire ottoman qu'il faut essayer de restaurer, c'est l'empire russe qu'il faut affaiblir.' [70] As long as Russia maintained a powerful naval presence that extended from the Azov Sea, the Black Sea, and to the Baltic Sea, reinforced by her fleet at Sevastopol, the fragility of Constantinople was deemed inevitable under the looming menace of St Petersburg.

Aligned with *Le Journal des Débats*, the Quai d'Orsay was deeply alarmed by Russian military mobilisation and speculation on Menshikov's mission in the early months of 1853. On 6 March, in the first week of Menshikov's mission, Castelbajac wrote an urgent, confidential letter to Nesselrode with the intention of influencing the Chancellor to modify new instructions for Constantinople due to be sent out the following day. In this dispatch, Castelbajac eloquently cited fundamental values that would have appealed to Alexander I far more profoundly than to Nesselrode: Christian, European, and anti-revolutionary. The French marquis further urged the Russian court to accept sacrifices that were 'secondary' given the instability in Europe, highlighted the Russian mobilisation of the 4th and 5th corps and naval preparations, and criticised the St Petersburg court for rendering the Holy Places dispute a *casus belli*. Castelbajac also acutely underscored that the Russian resolution was extreme and could severely compromise the European status quo, which contravened the conciliatory assurances only recently guaranteed by tsar Nicholas. [71] The discourse of Castelbajac was bold, attesting to the ambassador's exasperation towards Menshikov's mission, but it was likely of a personal

[70] Saint-Marc Girardin, *Le Journal des Débats*, ibid, 96. See also Mihaïl D. Sturdza, 'Bibliographie d'un réquisitoire: La Russie vue la presse parisienne Juillet 1848-juillet 1859', *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, 1968, p386–436.

[71] Quai d'Orsay, PA Castelbajac/2, No. 25, particuliere et confidentielle, Castelbajac to Nesselrode, St Petersburg, 18 March (6), 1853, in Bearbeitet von Windried Baumgart, *Franzosische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkriegs*, Series IV, I, p142-145.

nature and unauthorised by Lhuys—10 days later, in Lhuys' response back to Castelbajac, the foreign minister thanked the ambassador for enclosing recent dispatches, yet with the notable omission of the confidential letter to Nesselrode.[72] France continued to struggle in engaging with Russia in parallel to Menshikov's mission. Apart from Benedetti's failed efforts in meaningfully engaging with Menshikov, Paris also proposed a bilateral conversation between France and Russia on the Holy Places to no avail. Merely one month into Menshikov's mission, the French Foreign ministry felt isolated in a debate in which they had always considered pivotal to their position.

IV. False alarm of British naval deployment

As Menshikov's mission in Constantinople continued with escalated tensions, an incident on the Mediterranean Sea almost drastically escalated British involvement in the dispute. In mid-March 1853, the British chargé d'affaires in Constantinople, Colonel Hugh Rose, ordered the British fleet stationed in Malta to move towards the Dardanelles, entirely unauthorised by London. Hugh Rose was then merely a recently promoted British colonel;[73] he considered that the matters in the East had 'taken so serious a turn' that he directly commanded Vice Admiral Sir James Dundas, Third Naval Lord in the Aberdeen ministry stationed in Malta. The steamer *Wasp* bearing Rose's dispatch, in which Rose warned of a Russian *coup de main*, arrived in Malta on 14 March.[74] Without orders from the Admiralty, Dundas refused to move his fleet and unflinchingly stayed in Malta. Yet for over a week, none of the European courts could confirm whether Dundas had obeyed this order from a much more

[72] Quai d'Orsay, 112CP/208, Lhuys to Castelbajac, p251-5.
[73] Colonel Hugh Rose had previously served as an advisor to the Ottoman Army during the Egyptian-Ottoman War of 1839-1841.
[74] TNA, ADM 50/252, Dundas journal, 14 March, 1853; ADM I/5617, Dundas to Admiralty, 14 March, 1853; Dundas Papers, Rose to Dundas, DND 9/ 22-3, 8 March, 1853, as cited in Lambert, p50; Karl Marx provided the only account that correctly recorded the name of the steamer *Wasp* which carried Rose's dispatch to Malta, see Karl Marx et al, *The Russian Menace to Europe : A Collection of Articles, Speeches, Letters, and News Dispatches* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953), 121; Lambert had erroneously named it *Fury.*

junior officer, which stirred much speculation across the European capitals.

Colonel Rose's actions were ill-advised in the view of the British Cabinet, but the chargé d'affaires had not intended to infuriate his government. On the one hand, he was unaware of the gravity of his action. Rose was oblivious towards the fact that mobilising Dundas' fleet towards the Dardanelles was unnegotiable and a privilege that even Stratford Canning, the more senior rank diplomat, had been denied. In an otherwise ambiguously worded dispatch, Clarendon explicitly stated to Stratford that in the case of imminent danger, the ambassador would be authorised to request Dundas' fleet in Malta 'to hold in readiness, but you will not direct him to approach the Dardanelles without positive instructions from Her Majesty's Government.'[75] Presenting his government with a defiant *fait accompli*, Rose's defence appeared to contain some logic: Dundas had already originally scheduled to leave Malta the following week on a cruise to Corfu, Athens, and Smyrna; Rose merely asked Dundas to leave ahead of schedule and to Urla instead of Corfu.[76]

Between 17 March and 19, diplomats and statesmen in Europe appeared befuddled at the actual state of Admiral Dundas's fleet with no definitive insight. Nebulous British, French, Russian, and Austrian communications diverged on the details of British naval activity and pondered at the extent to which the London Cabinet was involved. Orlando Figes argues that Louis Napoleon's France sought aggressive naval movement out of French interests in the Mediterranean and the wish to establish an alliance with Britain; Louis Napoleon deemed that the dispatch of the French fleet would appeal to British Russophobia and force Britain to join France.[77] This view, however, was contradicted by French archival material from the Quai d'Orsay, which suggested that ostensible French aggressiveness only originated from Paris'

[75] TNA, FO78/924, Clarendon to Stratford, Foreign Office, 25 February, 1853, in Winfried Baumgart, *Englische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkriegs* (AGKK), (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1980), 115.
[76] TNA, FO78/930, Colonel Rose to John Russell, Constantinople, 7 March, 1853, received 19 March in London, p38-46.
[77] Figes, *Crimea,* p112.

impression that the British fleet had already been dispatched from Malta. The Quai d'Orsay disregarded the distinction between London and Colonel Rose; irrelevant of the order and propriety of command, the critical fact for France was that British naval movement had already occurred, which Paris considered to be only productive of positive effects in the East. French intentions also exhibited a desire to be relevant rather than dominant — 'Cette mesure n'a pas d'autre objet pour le moment que de rapprocher nos forces navales du théâtre des évènements.'[78]

It was not only Dundas' prudence and discretion that made him refuse Rose's orders and keep the fleet in Malta; an evaluation of relative British naval strength also held Dundas back. Granted, Vice Admiral Sir James Dundas had always been described as a cautious and reliable man. At 67 years old, his experience enabled Dundas to understand the supremacy of strategic national interests over naval strategy, and this vital quality exhibited itself in the critical moment when Dundas faced the summons of Colonel Rose.[79] His long career in the navy would also render him deeply hierarchical in decision-making; Colonel Rose was simply too junior for an admiral at the rank of Dundas to consider these unauthorised commands. More importantly, the British Mediterranean fleet, while the premier seagoing command in the Royal Navy, was slightly outnumbered by the nearby French fleet. Whilst the French fleet had seven vessels, Dundas only had six.[80] Sir James Graham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had planned on reinforcing Dundas' fleet in the spring of 1853, but the British fleet remained weaker in numbers of ships of the line throughout the whole year. Therefore, military hierarchy and naval strength also weighed heavily in Dundas' decision to keep his fleet in Malta.

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[78] TNA, FO78/930, p149.

[79] Captain Baillie Hamilton, permanent Secretary of the Admiralty, to James Graham, 18 June, 1854, Graham Papers, B/120, as cited in Lambert, *The Crimean War,* 52. Dundas joined the Royal Navy at age 14, participated in the Napoleonic Wars, served as a Naval Lord on the Whig Boards of 1841, 1846-52, and as Senior Naval Lord from 1847 before taking up the position as commander-in-chief for the Mediterranean fleet; he would later lead all naval operations in Black Sea commanding the Baltic Fleet.

[80] TNA, PRO 30/22/10H, Graham to Russell, 15 February, 1853, p81-2; Clarendon Papers, Graham to Clarendon, 19 March, 1853, C4/ 150.

After nearly two weeks of suspense, in the late hours in the evening of 19 March, Admiral Dundas' report stating that his fleet had remained anchored in Malta finally reached London. Here the British government was outpaced by St Petersburg unknowingly: while Clarendon only received confirmation from Dundas late on 19 March, Nesselrode had learned of this on 17 March already. Writing to his son, Nesselrode commented that 'nous ne comprenions donc rien a cette folie britannique', as he was also in disbelief that by 17 March, the diplomatic corps in Constantinople remained in ignorance of such intelligence.[81]

'Folie britannique' was not an unfair description of the British cabinet's reaction, which epitomised the pitfall of the divided Aberdeen administration. Upon receipt of Dundas' report, Clarendon and Sir Graham convened a meeting for the following afternoon of 20 March. Russell, Aberdeen, and Palmerston, who was made Home Secretary after a falling out with the Crown, were all in attendance. The British cabinet debated whether to dispatch the British fleet towards Urla near Izmir, as Colonel Rose had suggested. Russell and Palmerston were convinced of Russian ambitions to dismantle the Ottoman Empire, thus they proposed allowing the Russians to advance into the Bosphorus to enable a justified invocation of the 1841 Straits Convention, before sending a joint Anglo-French fleet into both the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. Clarendon, Aberdeen, and Graham were more reticent to pursuing such a trenchant policy. More pacific in nature, the other three ministers distrusted French military aims—partially informed by Lord Cowley's previous report that the French government 'always demands much more than was offered, but one cannot doubt that they will be satisfied with less than they ask.'[82] Lord Clarendon and like-minded ministers also considered that Russia was entitled to more concessions in the Holy Places dispute, and believed in the assurances of peaceful Russian intentions from both Russian Ambassador Count Phillip von Brunnow and Nesselrode.

[81] Nesselrode Papers, Tome X, Karl Nesselrode to his son Dmitri Nesselrode, 13/1 April, 1853, p219-20.
[82] TNA, FO 27/964, Cowley to Clarendon, 7 March, 1853, p41.

[83] Three votes for British non-action thus triumphed in cabinet.

Russia was cognisant of the voice of disquietude in Whitehall, even though it was soon clarified that Rose had acted without London's authorisation. To placate foreseeable resistance from the British government, St Petersburg considered instructing Brunnow to inform the London cabinet on Russian proposals for a new *sened* with the Porte.[84] Russia not only professed her sincerity in upholding the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, she also make unlikely assertions that Russia and France remained in accord. Nesselrode expressed in early March that Nicholas had been satisfied with the conciliatory note from France and was 'in great joy' to act in concert with France to prevent a dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, which 'was the last thing' that Nicholas desired. The Chancellor also explained that the movement of the 4th and 5th corps towards the Ottoman border also served to prevent the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.[85]

The support, or non-hostility, of Britain was paramount for St Petersburg. Considering the secret conversations between Nicholas and Seymour in January, Russia sought an Anglo-Russian alliance—not too dissimilar to its fleeting form constructed in 1827 in the Treat of London under George Canning—as a bulwark against being alienated by a concert of European powers for her ambitions vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. The tsar had reason to believe in some level of British acquiescence over Russian designs in the East, particularly following Nicholas' visit to London in June 1844, which he considered a diplomatic triumph that resulted in the highly confidential Nesselrode Memorandum. Lord Aberdeen, then Foreign Secretary under Robert Peel, held a series of informal conversations with Nicholas regarding the Eastern Question during the tsar's visit. From Nicholas' perspective, Russia had secured British support in what he considered a likely eventuality of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Contrarily,

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[83] Clarendon Papers, c4/150, Graham to Clarendon, 19 March, 1853; C4/278, Russell to Clarendon, 20 March, 1853; The British Library, Add MS 43188, Clarendon to Aberdeen, 20 March, 1853, p38.
[84] Nesselrode Papers, Tome X, Dmitri Longuinof au Dmitri Nesselrode, St Petersbourg, 31/19 March, 1853, p216.
[85] TNA, FO 27/964, Cowley to Clarendon, 10 March. 1853, p106.

neither Aberdeen nor Peel suspected any gravity attached to the memorandum drafted by Nesselrode, as they believed London had officially secured Russia's adherence to the maintenance of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. Varied interpretations of this informal 'gentlemen's understanding' led to wider divergence between two courts' understanding of the Eastern Question in early 1853, when the tsar made a series of overtures to Seymour regarding the imminent collapse of the Ottoman Empire, expecting British support. Whilst British backing appeared intuitive to Nicholas given the memorandum from 1844, the tsar underestimated the divergence between London and Petersburg's interpretations of the document, as he also overestimated the command over British policy that Aberdeen and other British statesmen enjoyed in the parliamentary system. Ultimately, the tsar grossly misjudged British forbearance pertaining to Russian designs in the Eastern Question. Additionally, a decade later in 1853, Nesselrode's position on the Eastern Question was also delicate. It was obvious to Castelbajac that the Russian chancellor lacked total command of the issue— 'je l'ai bien fait sentir a Monsieur de Nesselrode n'a pas eu entière direction de l'affaire d'Orient, un peu confus, et n'a pas toujours être maitre de diriger, a son gré, toute cette affaire.' [86] Castelbajac shared an anecdote with Thouvenel that further highlighted Nesselrode's awkward position. The irreverent Menshikov allegedly joked with the maid of honour of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna,[87] Countess Baranoff, that the son of General Alexandre Chernyshev[88] was offered to marry the daughter of the sultan, which was why Dmitri Nesselrode was added to join Menshikov's mission in Constantinople.

[86] Castelbajac to Thouvenel, Private correspondence, 1 April, 1853, in Thouvenel, p115-6.
[87] Born Princess Charlotte of Prussia, the wife of Nicholas I.
[88] Prince Alexander Tchernychev, Russian general who had fought in the Napoleonic wars alongside Alexander I, later served as Russian Minister of War 1827-52, Chairman of the State Council and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers from 1848-56.

Dispatch of French Toulon fleet

France was determined to prevent a plausible Russian aggression even at the price of acting alone. Simultaneously, without seeking confirmation on whether Dundas had left Malta, Paris ordered a French fleet from Toulon to Salamis, by the coast of Greece, 'not with any hostile intention, but to be prepared for any eventuality'.[89] Later Clarendon lamented French impatience—indeed, if Paris waited for even one more day, the news of Dundas' position would have reached Paris, dispelling the necessity for French mobilisation. Concerningly, the confidential French military motion was shared publicly in *Le Moniteur* on 20 March, even ahead of its confirmation in official ostensible dispatches. In its haste, *Le Moniteur*'s report was inaccurate and dangerously disruptive, as Lord Cowley and Clarendon both believed in the French naval deployment had already occurred on the 20th. In reality, as confirmed by Drouyn de Lhuys' dispatch to General Castelbajac, the French fleet at Toulon had not left until 22 March—writing on the 21st with news of the three Russian corps in the southern regions and naval preparations in Sevastopol, the Quai d'Orsay believed that the Petersburg cabinet had decided on war with the Ottoman Porte. 'C'est dans ce but que notre escadre d'évolutions quitte *demain* Toulon pour se rendre dans les mers de Grèce' to be at the disposition of Monsieur de Lacour, who would leave Paris on the same evening.[90]

The lone naval movement of France caused tremendous anxiety for the British government. Although France was acting pre-emptively to prevent a possible Russian attack on the Ottoman Empire, it would constitute a violation of the Straits Convention of 1841. In Paris, upon reading *Le Moniteur* on the morning of 20 March, Cowley frantically sought an audience with Louis Napoleon. After the news had been published, Cowley even feared that further discussion with the Quai d'Orsay would only be futile, since 'the French are irritated

[89] TNA, FO27/964, Cowley to Clarendon, 19 March, 1853, p279; Clarendon Papers, C4/150.
[90] Quai d'Orsay, 112CP/208, Lhuys to Castelbajac, 21 March, 1853, p273-4.

this moment against us because they do not know how to conceal their mortification, or where to look for support, and they are disappointed at not finding us going headlong with them into every rash act which they may think it wise to commit.'[91] If France was to accept Russian demands as a concession, further military action would be avoidable. Nonetheless, prudence was not the selected course of action by Paris. 'It is the French who are always acting in the spur of the moment, which will lead them to repent in the sequel of events.'[92] Regardless of the hastiness of French orders, the naval deployment could not have been impactful. If the Russian mission was not hostile or dangerous, a demonstration on the part of France or Britain would be futile (Clarendon—'or worse, ridiculous');[93] if Menshikov's mission was hostile and the independence of the Ottoman Empire was truly menaced, then the fleet would be 'moutarde après diner', but the affair would then be 'too grave, too European to be dealt with by fleets sent with instructions respecting events not foreseen—the demonstration must be premature, unnecessary, and therefore ill advised.'[94]

The French government subsequently exerted more pressure on Aberdeen's cabinet to dispatch the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet from Malta towards the Black Sea. Notwithstanding, Walewski's efforts were fruitless; by Monday 21 March, the British government still firmly stood by inaction. Nesselrode mocked French efforts in a letter to Menshikov, 'la France a remué ciel et terre pour entraîner l'Angleterre. Cette fois-ci cela n'a pas réussi.'[95] Colleredo also reported that 'le comte de Walewski déploya une grande activité pendant ces trois jours, eut de longs entretiens avec Lord Clarendon, et expédia deux courriers à Paris.' Austria was relieved at the British decision, applauding British reserve for maintaining tranquillity in the East. If Britain allowed herself to be persuaded by France, whose strategy

[91] Clarendon Papers, 5/148-52, Cowley to Clarendon, Paris, 20 March, 1853.
[92] TNA, FO27/964, Cowley to Clarendon, 19 March, 1853, p279; Clarendon Papers, C4/150.
[93] TNA, FO519/169, Clarendon to Cowley, London, 21 March, 1853, p83-99.
[94] Ibid.
[95] *Zaionchkovskii,* Nesselrode to Menshikov, 1 April/20 March, 1853, No.117, p395.

seemed inextricably bound by British intentions, Anglo-French fleets would simultaneously appear in the waters of the Levant, severely escalating tensions in the East. When Britain was not even committed to such an involved role in the dispute. In his audience with Colleredo, Clarendon commended Admiral Dundas' prudence and congratulated himself on the 'calm and cold blood' that the British government had exhibited.[96] Beyond British prudence, there was still lingering mistrust against France 40 years after the Napoleonic Wars. Memories of a warlike France and her expansionism in Europe were not too remote to serve as reminders of caution, particularly when the emperor was a nephew of the Napoleon I who fully championed Bonaparte's legacy. Altogether, Britain's inertia and inherent unwillingness to sincerely cooperate with France prevented this decisive moment in March 1853 from becoming a fatal one.

Misalignment between Britain and France over the Toulon fleet was not a risk that Louis Napoleon was willing to take. Upon the first opportunity, the emperor approached Lord Cowley at a *Corps Legislatif* ball in Paris on 28 March to explain his motives behind the French naval activity. Emphasising his wish to act generally in concert with Britain, Napoleon noted the nuance in British and French interests—beyond the two courts' shared interest in maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, the emperor highlighted that the Holy Places concerned France more particularly, which she must demonstrate that she was not indifferent to developments in Constantinople. Louis Napoleon shared a bitter remark regarding the St Petersburg court— 'the Russian government had never given me the same pacific assurances which they had given to Her Majesty's government. Had they done so, the French fleet would have never left Toulon.'[97] The French emperor's explanation invalidates Figes' argument that the Toulon fleet was dispatched due to Napoleon's ardent wish to force an alliance between

[96] TNA, FO27/964, Cowley to Clarendon, 19 March, 1853, p279; Clarendon Papers, C4/150; ADM 2/1697/33, Admiralty to Dundas.
[97] TNA, PRO 27/965, confidential, Cowley to Clarendon, Paris, No. 190, 30 March, 1853, received in London 1 April, in Baumgart, *Englische AGKK*, p167-8.

Britain and France, and the French naval activity specifically targeted British Russophobia. It was rather the contrary, where the nuanced material interests between the courts of London and Paris rendered the latter more impatient; the French decision was far less meticulously calculated. It was miscalculated demonstration without sincere commitment, but unintentionally alienated London and shocked Nicholas.

V. Escalation in Constantinople and prolonged British denial

In Constantinople, Prince Menshikov continued to adopt an aggressive approach to diplomatic negotiations that precluded any deliberation or concessions. On 31 March, shortly before the arrival of Stratford in the Ottoman capital, a long conference of five hours took place between Rifaat Pacha and Prince Menshikov. Menshikov then presented the final confidential clause of a secret defensive alliance with the Porte, aimed at obtaining overpowering Russian privileges in the Ottoman Empire. The Russian envoy had not closely obeyed his orders—Nesselrode's instructions clearly stated that such a measure would only be proposed in the utmost secrecy with the Sultan, should all previous Russian demands be met satisfactorily and promptly. Ottoman reception of Menshikov's two verbal notes, however, had not been as appeasing as the final confidential clause necessitated. Based on Menshikov's own report, Rifaat Pacha had been visibly affected by the terms as he was deeply troubled by the intensity and implications of Russian demands. Menshikov did not justify his negotiating tactics—which entailed very little negotiating or any mention of compromise. In the prince's own account, Menshikov had on multiple occasions declared Russian demands authoritatively, and upon observing the severe impact it immediately had on the Ottoman ministers, abruptly left the meeting without an opportunity for the Porte to bargain and soften the incomprehensibly onerous demands. Menshikov's vision of diplomacy comprised of little conversation—it was rather solitary and pained meditations on the part of the Porte that, according to the prince,

would produce desirable results of these critical diplomatic negotiations.[98]

Rifaat consented to the suggestion that three Plenipotentiaries should be named on the part of the Ottoman Government for the purpose of negotiating with the Russian ambassador. In its angst, the Porte had been treacherously disclosing confidential information from meetings with Menshikov to the junior diplomatic corps of Britain and France in Constantinople, who became increasingly alarmed. Benedetti feared that Menshikov aimed at a secret treaty; Colonel Rose was originally sceptical and thought the Porte would never consent to any alliance with Russia but changed his mind when recalling details of Russian bribery vis-à-vis the Porte in the past month. Rose had learned from Rifaat's ministry that the ottoman minister had been in extended conferences with the first Russian dragoman and agents for three days prior to his Russian-backed appointment as Foreign Minister on 3 March, and Rifaat's son had also paid two long visits to the Russian embassy. Additionally, Rose reported that Menshikov had already spent over £48,000 in a few weeks, partially in bribes, plausibly aiming to secure confidential treaties with both the Foreign Minister as well as the Ottoman Minister of Commerce, Ahmed Fethi Pacha.[99] Considering these circumstances, Rose thought a secret alliance between Russia and the Ottoman Empire inevitable and imminent. It could be inferred from Rose's extraordinary knowledge of Menshikov's briberies that Rose himself also had unusual ties to the Porte. This was immediately detected by Clarendon, who correctly surmised that it was the Grand Vizier, Mehmet Ali Pacha, who had reached an underhanded agreement with Colonel Rose. The Grand Vizier reportedly said, 'so long as I remain in power, no treaty injurious to the Ottoman Empire shall be accepted'; Clarendon interpreted this statement as the Grand Vizier saying 'keep me in office, and I will defeat Russia for you.'[100] The Porte was not monolithic—its internal politics were immensely divisive, but it was collectively corrupt and

[98] *Zaionchkovskii*, Prince Menshikov consular memorandum, Pera, No.115, 24/12 March, 1853, p392-4.
[99] TNA, FO78/931, Rose to Clarendon, Constantinople, 1 April, 1853, received in London on 15 April, p1-7.
[100] Palmerston Papers, GL/CL/504, Clarendon to Palmerston, 11 April, 1853.

duplicitous. Through allowing British and Russian interference in its ministerial politics, the Ottoman government was effectively shielded from the brunt of Menshikov's demands.

In parallel to Menshikov's menacing attitude, Russia's military capabilities consistently set the undertone of her diplomacy. In the spring of 1853, she could be veering dangerously towards becoming over-confident. In the first week of April, Seymour reported on heightened vigilance among the Russian army as diplomatic proceedings in Constantinople exhibited signs of evolving into open hostility. The validity of Russian military reports in St Petersburg must be considered with the context that all military officers desperately sought the approval of the tsar. The fear of incurring an 'imperial frown' could have led to boasting of Russian capabilities, and the rare permission for a general to express any opinion which would not be reliably and entirely conformable to those of Nicholas. The tsar had given orders to prohibit any discussion on a potential war the Ottoman Empire, but among the cadets, it remained a topic of engrossing interest. Gradually, these rumours evolved into open discussions on the readiness of the Russian army to conquer the Ottoman Empire—it was rumoured in St Petersburg and acknowledged by the cautious Marshal Ivan Paskevitch[101] that 'no serious obstacles existed on the part of the Turkish Army, and that as for England and France if one Power sent 10,000 men and the other 40,000 men to the assistance of the Sultan, it was the utmost that could be expected. Whereas for Russia, she might pour in 100,000 men or 200,000, or as many more as might be required.'[102] Such observations exposed the weakness Russian military planning, which glaringly underestimated the significance of sea power, resulting in Russian hubris.

Updated intelligence from Seymour and Rose in the second week of April, respectively reporting Russian military preparedness and Menshikov's demands, forced London to

[101] Victor in the 1828-1829 Russo Turkish War.
[102] TNA, FO65/426, Seymour to Clarendon, 6 April, 1853, p32-6.

reconsider whether Russia could be trusted any longer. Upon receipt of intelligence from Sir Adolphus Slade and Dundas on Russian military preparations,[103] Clarendon questioned if the Cabinet had been mistaken in trusting the integrity of Nicholas I. Rather than writing to the Prime Minister, Clarendon chose to write from his home in Belgravia to Lord Palmerston, who was officially the Home Secretary and no longer close to foreign affairs.

> 'If Russia were now insisting upon such a treaty as that of Unkiar Skelessi which would place Turkey in a state of practical vassalage towards her, it would be the greatest fraud and insult towards us and France that one power ever attempted towards one another. No *casus belli* in modern times would be more complete. I cannot therefore believe it, which you will perhaps think rather green on my part, but still, unless we have positive proof, I doubt the Emperor's proclaiming himself a liar in the face of Europe…We may of course be deceived, but under all the circumstances I have stated, do you think we have been justified in trusting to Russia? Pray let me have one line from you upon this point.'[104]

Clarendon's late suspicion of Russia only in April proved that part of the Cabinet—at least both the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary—trusted in the good faith of Nicholas and the absence of expansionist Russian designs. Clarendon also did not consult John Russell—Russell was more hawkish towards Russia, but he served as Foreign Secretary for too short a period to leave an imprint on British policy in early 1853. During the meeting on 20 March where the ministers discussed whether to dispatch Dundas's fleet, Russell did not refrain from his characteristic advocacy for a hard-line policy against Russia to curb her expansionist designs. Nonetheless, due to Russell's consistently bellicose policy against Russia, his warning of war might have been dismissed as Russell's habitual discourse, failing to alarm the cabinet.

Escalation in the Eastern Question in the early months of 1853 originated from the fundamentally controversial nature of Menshikov's diplomatic mission, which permitted little space for Russian concessions. The ambitions that Nicholas harboured in the Ottoman Empire's subordination, albeit not dissolution, were still far from being supportable by other European

[103] Sir Adolphus Slade, British Admiral who had served in the Ottoman Navy since 1849 commanding the Ottoman fleet.
[104] Palmerston Papers, GC/CL/504, Clarendon to Palmerston, 11 April, 1853.

great powers. Regrettably, by April 1853, as the only power that could realistically rival Russia, Britain had fallen extraordinarily behind other courts in her diplomatic engagement in the Eastern Question. The Aberdeen administration initially insisted on an isolationist policy, preferring to remain distant from the Holy Places dispute. It was not until the Montenegro crisis and Russia's revival of the religious debate that Stratford Canning was sent on a diplomatic mission for British representation. When the British charge Hugh Rose blundered to dispatch Admiral Dundas' Malta fleet, London denied further naval movement and rejected an alliance with France. For a shockingly longer period, Whitehall remained obstinately trusting of St. Petersburg and did not fear of Russian expansionist designs. Meanwhile, since February, Austria had successfully suppressed the Montenegro crisis for her interests in the Balkans, and since vigilantly monitored Menshikov's mission in Constantinople. France arrived at the most accurate understanding of Russia's deeper intentions, even though Louis Napoleon's took a superfluous and miscalculated step by dispatching the fleet of Toulon, risking alienating Britain. Russia had masterfully camouflaged her wider military designs in Menshikov's mission under the pretexts of dual disputes in Montenegro and the Holy Places, engaged in negotiations at a naval alliance with Greece, and incredulously kept the St James Court in trusting non-hostility.

When Stratford Canning arrived in Constantinople on 5 April, 1853, the British ambassador faced an unresolved and intensifying diplomatic turmoil resulting from Menshikov's military-backed mission with impossibly lofty aims, as well as his own government's delayed realisation of such Russian expansionist ambitions. In the following months in advance of the Crimean War, the resilience of existing alliances in Europe would be severely challenged: after all, Austro-Russian rapports were merely loosely bound by gratitude and conservatism, while an Anglo-French alliance remained nebulous and hypothetical. One would be optimistic to hope that Stratford's belated arrival on the diplomatic scene in

Constantinople would not amount to too little, too late.

Chapter 6

The Russian quest for a *casus belli*

April-July 1853

I. Escalation in Constantinople

On 5 April, 1853, the British Ambassador Stratford Canning finally arrived in Constantinople after a leisurely voyage through France and Austria. He reached the Ottoman capital in a moment of heightened agitation and apprehension from both the diplomatic corps in Constantinople and the statesmen in European capitals. Since the debut of Russian envoy Prince Menshikov at the Ottoman Porte, a few dire eventualities appeared increasingly probable: Ottoman rejection of Russian demands followed by the rupture of Russian-Ottoman relations; Russian military actions towards the Danubian Principalities; the imminent collapse of the Ottoman Empire followed by general tumult in Europe. Amidst such uncertainty, the much-anticipated arrival of Stratford produced a reinforced British presence that the Ottoman Porte and France earnestly welcomed, but Russia was naturally wary of the ambassador's potential hindrance to Menshikov's smoothly progressing mission.

Although Stratford only arrived in Constantinople a month after Prince Menshikov, the British ambassador was pivotal in shaping the diplomatic deliberations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Existing historiography varies on the extent to which Stratford Canning had actively persuaded the Porte to reject Russian demands, directly resulting in the failure of diplomatic efforts. British historians Harold Temperley and A.J.P. Taylor argued that London's hesitation rather than Stratford's assertiveness prevented a successful diplomatic mission. Steven Richmond furthered this view by highlighting the animosity and mistrust between Aberdeen and the ambassador, whereas Lane-Poole and Jonathan Parry emphasised Stratford's

extensive involvement in the Ottoman reforms, producing a pro-Ottoman tendency. While Anderson found Stratford responsible for the Porte's uncooperative attitude, Schroeder and Goldfrank highlighted that Stratford had initially strived to see Russian demands satisfied. While most historians attributed the gradual decline of Austro-Russian relations to Nicholas' negligence and over-confidence, Kurt Borries in German historiography provided the critical nuance on Austro-Prussian competition within the German Confederation in addition to clashing Austro-Russian interests in the Balkans.[1]

This chapter examines the effectiveness of Menshikov's mission after the arrival of Stratford Canning and the extent to which the Russian envoy was thwarted by the British ambassador. Scrutinising the separation of the Holy Places dispute from wider Russian demands, why were these additional terms ultimately unsupportable for the Ottoman Porte, provoking the *casus belli* that Russia desired? Beyond Stratford's alarm, how did the British cabinet drift towards participation in the escalated conflict? Additionally, how did the Vienna court decide to distance Russia, in an unexpected act of betrayal perceived by Nicholas? Through extensive British, French, Austria, and published Russian records, this chapter argues that the unsupervised Stratford Canning critically jeopardised diplomacy in Constantinople by differentiating between the Holy Places dispute and Russian demands for a general protectorate, while advising the Porte to deliberately omit the latter. Even though his delaying tactics were effective, the separation of two debates crucially undermined the prospects for a peaceful solution in the Eastern Question, as Prince Menshikov adopted a non-conciliatory approach that demanded a complete Ottoman capitulation to all terms. Fundamentally, this exposed the impossibility of Russian demands being met, regardless of the diplomatic flair of

[1] Jonathan Philip Parry, *Promised Lands : The British and the Ottoman Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022); Anderson (1966); Taylor (1954); Temperley (1936); Steven Richmond, *The Voice of England in the East : Stratford Canning and Diplomacy with the Ottoman Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe (*London: Longmans, Green, 1888); Goldfrank (1995); Schroeder (1972); Kurt Borries, *Preussen im Krimkrieg (1853-1856)* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1930).

either Stratford or Menshikov. Meanwhile, the London cabinet adopted a passive stance throughout 1853; Britain's position was so incessantly debated yet poorly defined, that she was forced into the Anglo-French naval alliance through Lord Cowley's indiscreet disclosure of British military plans. Tsar Nicholas I's Russia had always been prepared for war, as Nesselrode's bellicose instructions and Russian military mobilisation both preceded escalations in the Ottoman capital. In a significant blow to Nicholas, Franz Joseph's Austria distanced herself from St Petersburg at the risk of Nicholas' fury—this rupture was not only due to fraying Austro-Russian relations since 1853, but also long-standing friction in the Balkans, Austria's economic isolation in the German Confederation, and her deep-seated fear of ensuing revolutionary flames that would threaten the survival of the Austrian Empire.

Stratford de Redcliffe's mission

The British government's instructions for Stratford highlight the overall distant and neutral British stance—Clarendon accentuated the unique advantage that Britain possessed, which was her lack of special interest in the alarming contingencies, and of being viewed by the Porte with less mistrust due to her removal from the disputes. Compared to the Montenegro crisis, Britain considered the Holy Places dispute to be more fatally detrimental for the Ottoman Empire. The instructions for Stratford clearly stated the official discourse of Her Majesty's government on the affairs of Montenegro, which recommended the earliest possibility withdrawal of the Sultan's troops without disputing the authority of the Porte. Although these guidelines were pertinent around the time of their drafting, they were rendered superfluous by Stratford's delayed journey—the Montenegro affair had already been concluded by Count Leiningen from Austria more than a month earlier than Stratford's arrival. With regards to the Holy Places dispute, however, Clarendon's instructions were even more fantastically futile: 'as regards the Holy Places, Her Majesty's Government are unwilling to give you any special

instructions, and prefer to leave Your Excellency unfettered in the exercise of your judgement and discretion, as much may depend on your communications with M. Drouyn de Lhuys, and upon the state in which you find the negotiation between Russia and the Porte on your arrival in Constantinople.'[2]

The absence of concrete instructions for Stratford's mission would have been logical if the British government had placed the utmost trust in his diplomatic flair. Such confidence and full authorisation had previously been provided for the Duke of Wellington in 1825, who travelled to St. Petersburg to congratulate the newly crowned Tsar Nicholas I. The case for Stratford was the contrary, as the Aberdeen administration never depended upon the ambassador's prowess. The Foreign Secretary had never held Stratford's aptitude in high esteem, as Clarendon wrote— 'he has never entered sincerely into the views of the Government, and has been making political capital for himself. However, there he is and we must make the best of him'![3] Provided that the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were not fully convinced of the ambassador's capabilities nor reliability, particularly with his previous failures in Constantinople in 1827 with manifest diplomatic imprudence, such an unrestrained blank cheque for Stratford in 1853 nearly comprised a dereliction of governmental duty. Indeterminate sentiments and obscure discourse from Whitehall would dangerously subject Britain's position to Stratford's discretion, as they also confined London to incessant, passive waiting for correspondence from Constantinople for the months to follow.

The British minister, however, wielded little power over the unfolding of Menshikov's deliberations with the Porte. Stratford received a warm welcome from the Porte despite unflattering remarks from ministers who remembered him from 1828, as the British envoy

[2] The National Archives (TNA), FO78/924, Clarendon to Stratford Canning, 25 February, 1853, in Winfried Baumgart, *Englische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkriegs* (Englische AGKK*),* III, I (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1980), 113-115.
[3] Charles Greville and Henry Reeve, *The Greville Memoirs : A Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria, from 1852 to 1860*, London: Longmans, Green, 1887, Volume VII, p8-91.

could still be counted on to defend the Porte against Menshikov's relentless demands. Merely two days after his arrival, Stratford had his first audience with the Sultan on the morning of the 7th. The extended meeting was cordial, as Rifaat Pacha was also present, along with Count Alexander Pisani,[4] the private secretary for the British ambassador since 1821, who acted as an interpreter. Count Leiningen's mission was briefly discussed, where Stratford passed on the friendly sentiments of the Court in Vienna, and the Sultan assented that despite his legitimate authority in Montenegro, his policy of resorting to arms had been unsound. Regarding the Holy Places dispute, Stratford commenced the discussion gently by stating Britain's lack of interest in the affair, but he only urged the Porte to be wary of 'innovations dangerous to his independence' and to implement an early adoption of comprehensive improvements in the administration of the Porte and the management of the Empire's vast resources.[5]

Two weeks after his arrival, Stratford began presuming a more definitive role in mediating the Holy Places dispute. The debate had already become tedious and exasperating for all, which Stratford observed that the material differences between Menshikov and the French Ambassador De Lacour's standpoints were minimal. From this perspective, Stratford advised Rifaat Pacha to separate the Holy Places question from other additional Russian demands to facilitate a prompt conclusion of the former. But the additional Russian demands were the true bottleneck due to their concerning nature: Russia demanded contractually guaranteed privileges for the Greek Orthodox Christians through an augmentation of the articles of the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji, which entailed expanded Russian influence over 10 million of the Sultan's subjects. Beyond such diplomatic browbeating that threatened encroachment upon Ottoman sovereignty, the militant state of both Russia and France further concerned Stratford. He thus attempted to persuade Menshikov to reduce the Russian military

[4] Pisani was also the head of the diplomatic chancellery of the British Embassy in Constantinople since 1844.
[5] TNA, FO78/931, Stratford to Clarendon, Constantinople, 7 April, 1853, received in London on 26 April, p72-79.

buildup in Bessarabia and convince De Lacour to withdraw the French fleet previously at Toulon from Salamis. Both attempts were futile, as they clearly exceeded the scope of the Holy Places dispute, but targeted wider designs of Russian expansionism.[6] Seeing the ineffectiveness of individual conversations, on 22 April, Stratford arranged a meeting with both De Lacour and Menshikov in attendance. Both ambassadors exhibited surprisingly amicable sentiments and agreed upon settling the remaining differences in the Holy Places dispute that were only material in form, but negligible in substance. De Lacour admitted that the conclusion of the dispute not only concerned the justice of the case, but also the honour of his government. Notwithstanding, no progress had been made regarding inhibiting the additional Russian demands.[7]

Temperley argued that Stratford was startled by Menshikov's restraint on 23 April; this was accurate if only considering the Holy Places dispute and excluding the more general protectorate that Russia was seeking.[8] In Stratford's consideration, the Holy Places and additional Russian ambitions were already distinctly classified as two entirely separate debates. On the religious dispute itself, both Menshikov and De Lacour concurred to the feasibility and immediacy of finding a solution—for which Stratford must have indeed anticipated stronger resistance. What Temperley had discounted was the strong dissidence that still existed between Russia, the Porte, and Britain regarding the additional, sovereignty-encroaching Russian demands. They were impossible for the Porte to satisfy due to the wider repercussions they would inflict upon the Ottoman Empire beyond the very concessions to Russia. Should the Porte accede to Menshikov's terms, Rifaat Pacha apprehended that after sharing sovereignty

[6] Stratford Canning to Clarendon, Constantinople, 20 April, 1853, in 'Correspondence Respecting the Rights and Privileges of the Latin and Greek Churches in Turkey. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty', *The Edinburgh Review* 100.203 (1854): 1, 155-156.
[7] TNA, FO78/931, Stratford to Clarendon, Constantinople 22 April, 1853, received in London on 9 May, p193-195.
[8] Harold William Vazeille Temperley, *England and the Near East: The Crimea* (England: Longmans, Green, 1936), 318.

with Russia over the Greek Orthodox minority, the Porte would be incapable of rejecting similar demands to other powers for privileges regarding Catholics and Protestants. For the Porte, placating Menshikov would be tantamount to ceding the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire altogether in an inescapable collapse.[9]

As the Holy Places dispute gradually faded out of the centre of diplomatic negotiations in Constantinople, it only became apparent then that Menshikov only truly valued the acceptance of additional Russian demands. In contrast to Stratford Canning, Menshikov refused to consider the Holy Places dispute and the extension of Russian influence as two distinct discussions, contributing to the insolvability of the protracted debate. 'Ja es scheint sogar, daβ man den Punkt wegen des geistlichen Protektorates mit der Frage der heiligen Orte in innigen Zusammenhang bringen, und die eine Frage nicht ohne die andere erledigt wissen will.' [10] Menshikov had already insinuated to the Porte that he would depart upon an unfavourable response and terminate his mission. Simultaneously, the military nature of Russian designs appeared progressively realistic. Border disputes between Greece and the Ottoman Empire erupted around the same time, and the swiftness with which the Greek government dispatched troops to the Greco-Ottoman border deeply alerted the Austrian government. Russia's wider designs to pressurise the Porte militarily along with the assistance of Greece thus appeared inevitable. Any attitude short of unconditional compliance to Menshikov's demands from the Porte could prelude war and upheaval in Europe. By late April, the failure of Menshikov's mission and the rupture between the Porte and Russia seemed imminent.

Meanwhile, the Austrian diplomat Steindl had been undermining Stratford Canning in front of the Ottoman Foreign Minister Rifaat Pacha, warning that Britain might have ulterior

[9] HHS, 7PA/46, Ed Klezl to Buol, Constantinople, 18 April, 1853, received in Vienna, 2 May, p407-11.
[10] HHS, 7PA/46, Ed Klezl to Buol, 18 April, 1853.

motives for mediating on behalf of the Porte. The Porte indeed instantaneously halted its proceedings in concluding the Holy Places dispute. On 25 April, Stratford had already written to Clarendon to report that the debate had been settled after two revised *firman*s approved by Stratford, Rifaat, Mehmed Ali, Menshikov, and De Lacour. Merely a week later, Stratford notified the Foreign Office that, to his dismay, a formal and definitive conclusion of the question still could not be reported due to newfound hesitation and opposition from the Porte. Aside from Steindl's warning, there were two other crucial factors that hampered the Porte's processing of the revised *firman*s: Orthodox Easter was particularly late in 1853 and not until 1 May, which could have delayed administrative affairs in the Ottoman capital. Additionally, the Sultan Abdulmecid's mother and the wife of Mahmud II, Bezmialem, passed away on 2 May after a prolonged period of grave illness. Stratford, however, did not appreciate the personal difficulties of the Sultan, but rather complained that these were 'furnished excuses for hesitation and delay' and persisted in demonstrating a 'strong remonstrance' against the Porte.[11]

On 5 May, Menshikov submitted his final draft of a firman under the ceremonial pretext of settling the Holy Places dispute, but both him and the Porte recognised that the remaining friction in Constantinople solely arose from the outstanding Russian demand for a general protectorate. In the crucial period during which Menshikov waited for the Ottoman Empire's official response, the Russian ambassador only aggravated existing friction in the negotiations. On the evening of 9 May, Menshikov set out for Büyükdere unannounced on the steamer *Foudroyant*, which stirred much speculation in Constantinople surrounding the Russian prince's intention to depart from his post and leave for Odessa. Büyükdere is a strategically significant location on the European coast of the Bosphorus, within sight of the entrance to the Black Sea. Menshikov's movement only exacerbated existing suspicions on Russian naval activities and designs in the Black Sea. The remainder of the Russian diplomatic corps,

[11] TNA, FO78/932, Stratford to Clarendon, 3 May, 1853, received on 19 May, p6-8.

however, demonstrated no suggestion of any imminent departure, to the relief of the Porte.[12]

Fundamentally, the *sened* of a general Russian protectorate stood little chance of being acceded to by the Porte. Even though the demand seemed ostensibly religious, a careful perusal of the Russian documents would elucidate the deeply political nature of the proposed protectorate. The unique governance of the Ottoman Empire conditioned the profound yet inevitable repercussions of these demands: in the East, ecclesiastical and civil authority were intimately interwoven, that Russian entitlements for religious interference would equate authorisation for intervention in matters of civil administration. From the Ottoman perspective, Menshikov's demands were effectively a direct request to share sovereignty over the Orthodox population in the Sultan's empire, in which it constituted the largest minority group. Even though the 1774 treaty provisions of Kuchuk Kainardji stipulated Russian privileges over the Greek church, these entitlements were more general and vaguer, particularly less specific than the demands by Menshikov in spring 1853. Considering the characteristic loosely bound nature of the heterogenous elements in the Ottoman Empire, to categorically define and expand Russia's privileges by granting her an official protectorate over the Greek clergy would be an immeasurable blow to Ottoman sovereignty. The Greeks Orthodox were particularly governed through their ecclesiastical authorities—if the Porte acceded to the proposed *sened* with Russia, the preeminent figure of authority would be Nicholas rather than the Sultan. Furthermore, although the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire embodied a strong influence exerted by the Greek population, it greatly benefited from the existing municipal and Ottoman civil administration system. When Lord Cowley eventually learned of the gravity of additional Russian requests from Lhuys in late May, the British Ambassador in Paris described their significance vividly to Clarendon— 'I should look very much upon the pretentions of Russia in Turkey, as I should if some Catholic power insisted on a convention with us for the protection

[12] HHS, PA XII/46, Klezl to Buol, Constantinople, 12 May, 1853, received in Vienna on 24 May, p91-93.

of the Roman Catholic religion in Ireland.'[13]

Within the same week of Menshikov's final firman, Stratford Canning actively lobbied the Porte ministers. The British Ambassador spent the evening of 8 May at the waterfront palace of the Grand Vizier, where he persuaded a group of ministers to accept the Russian demands, before having a private audience with the Sultan on 9 May.[14] The French Foreign Minister, De Lacour, also visited both the Grand Vizier and Rifaat Pacha on 8 May. De Lacour claimed that even though he could not detach French interests from the Russian impositions on the Ottoman Empire, but Stratford Canning had influenced him to leave the St Petersburg court with 'full liberty of action'. Therefore, De Lacour recommended that the Porte not categorically reject Russian terms but rather express the willingness to reconcile existing misunderstandings and the sincerity towards protecting the Greek Orthodox subjects, whilst citing principles of international law.[15] The timing of Stratford and De Lacour's conversations with the Porte was critical: the following day, 10 May , marked the deadline that Menshikov had set for a response to the 19 April verbal note, to which the British Ambassador already referred to as the 'Russian Ultimatum'.[16]

Overwhelmed with an influx of advice and demands, the Ottoman Porte was occupied in taking cognisance of the Russian note before arriving at a final decision; the Ottoman Council of Ministers have already convened for meetings on 7 and 8 May, reportedly also preparing for a final session on 10 May at the country home of Grand Vizier Mehmed Ali Pacha, to which Menshikov had been cordially invited. Nonetheless, either due to Menshikov's brief sojourn in Büyükdere or his disinterest in further negotiation with the Porte, the prince declined the Grand Vizier's invitation. Instead, the ambassador instructed Nikolaus Aristarchi,

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[13] Clarendon Papers/ 5, Cowley to Clarendon, Paris, 20 May, 1853, p425-430
[14] HHS, PA12/46, Klezl to Buol, Constantinople, 12 May, 1853, received on 24 May in Vienna, p91-93, 98-102.
[15] Quai d'Orsay, 47CP/312, De Lacour to Drouyn de Lhuys, Pera, 9 May, 1853, received in Paris on 23 May, p338-345.
[16] TNA, FO78/932, Stratford to Clarendon, 'most confidential', 6 May, 1853, received on 18 May, p81-83. *Zaionchkovskii,* Note verbale du 7/19 avril 1853, No. 123, p402-403.

a financial administrator of the Greek Patriarch in Constantinople, to express to the Porte his willingness to await the Ottoman response until Friday the 13th. This conciliatory gesture did not sufficiently compensate for a perceived offence by the Porte. The Sultan unhesitatingly refused the extension due to both Menshikov's absence at the Council meeting and the prince's insincere communication through a messenger. Writing to Menshikov, Rifaat Pacha was uncharacteristically vocal in expressing his anger against the Russian ambassador's refusal. 'J'avais invité Son Altesse le Prince à une entrevue pour aujourd'hui dans la maison de campagne de Son Altesse le grand visir avant le jour fixé pour le terme, afin de faire quelques communications et d'en entendre et afin de consolider la sincérité et les égards. Je suis fâché que Son Altesse le Prince se soit refusé à cette entrevue amicale.' On 10 May, the Porte similarly communicated its final response via a messenger to the Russian Embassy Hotel; Menshikov described the tone of this response to be 'sèche' and likely penned by Rifaat but later modified by Mehmed Ali.[17]

On 10 May, after meticulous deliberation, the Porte submitted what they considered to be a sufficiently conciliatory response to Menshikov, but it failed to prevent subsequent events from escalating rapidly. This response was largely congruent to Russian demands, likely following the suggestions of Stratford and De Lacour. The Porte stated that it had always intended to maintain the religious privileges of the Greeks, as well as those of the other Christian denominations in its states; it was also willing and ready to comply with 'all reasonable requests of the Russian Imperial Court that do not infringe on the sovereign rights of the Sultan.'[18] The point regarding the conclusion of an official sened was, however, entirely omitted, as though an invitation for the Russian government to reemphasis the necessity of a convention, but Rifaat Pacha insinuated to Klezl that the Porte 'would not be absolutely averse

[17] *Zaionchkovskii,* Billet de Rifaat-Pacha au Prince Menchikov, No. 133, p416.
[18] HHS, PA12/46, Klezl to Buol, 12 May, 1853, received 24 May, p91-3.

to entering a convention with Russia with certain restrictions.'[19] Upon receipt of the Porte's response late in the evening on 10 May, Menshikov summoned Ozeroff to Büyükdere for consultation, before sending the latter back on board the *Bessarabia* to Tophane on the same evening, whereas the prince himself remained in Büyükdere. Tophane is to the south of Büyükdere and closer to Constantinople; Ozeroff's movement did not attract much attention among the diplomatic corps in Constantinople, who were far more concerned with Menshikov's reception of the Porte's response. The Porte's unwillingness to enter into a formal convention with Russia indeed provoked dissatisfaction from Russia along with a menacing ultimatum, as Menshikov condemned the Porte's systematic mistrust and reluctance in cooperating with Russia. 'Si par une opposition systématique la Sublime Porte persiste à lui fermer jusqu'aux voies d'une entente intime et directe comme elle doit l'être dans un différend à régler entre deux puissances amies, le soussigné le déclare avec peine : il devra considérer sa mission comme terminée, interrompre ses relations avec le cabinet de Sa Majesté le Sultan et rejeter sur la responsabilité de ses ministres toutes les conséquences qui pourraient en résulter.' Menshikov granted the Porte three more days, until 14 May, to reconsider their response; if the final decision was unsatisfactory, Menshikov declared that Russo-Ottoman relations would rupture, and his diplomatic mission would be terminated.[20] What was abnormal during Menshikov's issuing of the ultimatum was his independence in the decision-making process before employing such a threatening measure. General Kornilov, Prince Galitzine, Dmitri Nesselrode, and other officers who had accompanied Menshikov were all still in Constantinople, so the ambassador single-handedly employed an ultimatum against the Porte without even convening an internal meeting within the Russian Embassy.

The curious promptness with which Menshikov drafted a Russian ultimatum suggests

[19] Ibid, p98-102.
[20] *Zaionchkovskii,* Menshikov to Rifaat Pacha, 29 April / 11 May, 1853, No. 136, p418-419

that the Russian court had long precipitated an ultimatum against the Porte well ahead of escalation of tensions in the East. The universally detrimental lag in correspondence was most consequential for the St. Petersburg court, whose instructions for Menshikov placed the most emphasis on a sense of urgency under a tight timeline.[21] Menshikov's haste was nonetheless unusual—the prince barely had more than a few hours to consider the Porte's assertions, yet he responded promptly with the gravest language his embassy had ever employed against the Ottoman government, threatening to terminate the diplomatic mission and leave Constantinople. There was little attempt at writing to St Petersburg, but this was understandable due to the typical three-week delay in correspondence. To compensate for miscommunication and disconnect from delayed instructions, rather than passively waiting for updates from the East—which the Court of St. James did in London—Nesselrode began dispatching information to Menshikov without having received the ambassador's latest reports. For instance, in late April, Menshikov's report that the Holy Places question had been settled with De Lacour only reached St. Petersburg on 8 May, by which point the additional Russian demand of forging a *sened* remained the only outstanding impediment in all negotiations. Without instantaneous intelligence on the situation in Constantinople, Nesselrode reassured Nicholas that the hindrance from the Porte on 'guarantees for the future…cannot fail to be smoothed out as soon as Prince Menshikov receives the latest dispatches from Petersburg.' To the contrary, Nicholas was not as optimistic about such a smooth resolution, commenting on Stratford's obstruction in a handwritten annotation—'let's hope, but let's not be too prompt in believing in a success—with this Redcliffe, everything is to worry about.'[22] The instructions that Nesselrode referred to contained orders of imposing a three-day ultimatum on the Porte regarding the convention for a general Russian protectorate, which had been dispatched from St. Petersburg on 12 April,

[21] Letters usually took around 16 days to be delivered between London and Constantinople, around 12 for Vienna and 14 for Paris. It was less predictable between Petersburg and the Ottoman capital, with some letters taking longer than 3 weeks.
[22] *Zaionchkovskii*, Nesselrode to Nicholas, No. 130, 26 April / 8 May, 1853, p413.

nearly a month before the point of escalation which warranted an ultimatum. Menshikov would not receive these instructions containing a specified timeline for an ultimatum until 10 May, the day of Rifaat Pacha's response to Russian demands. It is probable that Menshikov hastily added in the three-day deadline on 11 May immediately upon receiving Nesselrode's instructions and the Ottoman response, which also explains the swiftness with which the ambassador responded to the Porte's quasi-conciliatory note with yet graver menaces. More importantly, this substantiates that Menshikov's employment of an ultimatum was not only compliant with his government's instructions, but also the termination of diplomatic relations with the Porte was considered nearly an inevitable outcome even in the early days of Menshikov's mission. In essence, peace was not an eventuality that St Petersburg had prepared for, and Menshikov's quest for a *casus belli* would only terminate upon the Porte's refusal to the *sened*.

After Menshikov's three-day ultimatum was announced, the Austrian interpreter von Steindl and the Greek Patriarch financial administrator Nikolaus Aristarchi both visited the Porte. Surprisingly, Rifaat Pacha did not appear frightened by Menshikov's menaced escalation, but believed that further clarification with the prince was necessary. The Ottoman Foreign Minister had not had the opportunity to meet with Menshikov since the delivery of the verbal note, despite the former's constant attempt at arranging for a conference with the Russian ambassador. Recognising Menshikov's aversion, on 12 May, Rifaat Pacha decided to send his son, Reuf Bey, in lieu of himself to visit Menshikov in Büyükdere. The younger Ottoman diplomat was received with courtesy by Menshikov, and the Russian prince also consented to attending a meeting with the Grand Vizier at his country home in Kuruçeşme,[23] on 13 May. Naturally, the Porte swung closer to Britain than to Austria during the moment of crisis. The Porte did not fully trust the Austrian first interpreter—when asked if Menshikov

[23] Ottoman municipality on the European coast of the Bosphorus, between Constantinople and Büyükdere.

provided a specific date for his departure or any concrete threats, Rifaat Pacha responded negatively, feigning composure whilst asserting that Menshikov's threats were only general in nature. On the other hand, confident in the sincerity of British mediation than that from Austria, Rifaat fully disclosed the details of Menshikov's ultimatum to Stratford Canning.[24]

Upon learning of Menshikov's ultimatum on 11 May, Stratford ensured that while he might not be the most effective diplomat in Constantinople, he was the busiest, through engaging both Russia and the Porte. The British ambassador remained in close contact with both De Lacour and the Austrian chargé d'affaires Count Lebzeltern; he also established a nearly constant channel of communication with Rifaat Pacha, to whom he 'put in possession of whatever struck as calculated to smooth down the existing obstacles without a surrender to the main point at issue.' Attempts were also made to placate the Russians, but this had to be done through clandestine channels, as Menshikov had 'closed every avenue at negotiation but that which required a ticket of surrender at the entrance.'[25] According to Stratford, Menshikov also had a full agenda between 11 and 14 May. Despite having closed off all communication with the diplomatic corps at the Ottoman capital, Menshikov busied himself by 'knocking on every door where the slightest chance existed in gaining a voice in favour of his views.' The Russian ambassador also paid a second visit to the 84-year-old former Grand Vizier, Husrev Pacha, who was antagonistic towards Stratford. Additionally, Menshikov wrote to Reshid Pacha, Mehmed Ali Pacha, and proposed a private meeting with the Sultan either on the 13th or the morning of the 14th.[26]

On the day before Menshikov's proffered deadline of 14 May, during the height of diplomatic negotiations in Constantinople, a complete administrative overhaul took place in the Porte, directly affecting the most senior statesmen in the Sultan's Empire. The former Chief

[24] TNA, FO78/932, Stratford to Clarendon, Constantinople, 14 May, 1853, received in London on 3 June, p125-8.
[25] Ibid.
[26] *Zaionchkovskii*, Communication faite à Férid-Effendi le 30 avril, pour être exposée au Sultan, p420.

of the Supreme Imperial Council, Mustafa Naili Pacha,[27] replaced Mehmed Ali Pacha as Grand Vizier; while the latter was appointed the Minister of War. Rifaat Pacha, the incumbent Foreign Minister, was replaced by Reshid Pacha. The former Minister of War, Mehmed Rüşti Pacha, was moved into Mustafa Naili Pacha's previous post as President of the Imperial Council.[28] The new Ottoman Foreign Minister Reshid Pacha, like Nesselrode and Aberdeen, was an experienced statesman who had worked in the Porte's London and Paris embassies since the period of the Greek War of Independence, as he spoke French proficiently. Attesting to the inconstant nature of Ottoman internal politics, Reshid Pacha would serve in the position of Grand Vizier for a total of six times between 1845-57 in addition to various stints as Foreign Minister since 1837.[29] Reshid was considered as one of the forerunners of the Tanzimat reforms under Sultan Mahmud II; there Reshid had been responsible for the Gülhane Edict of 1839, an Ottoman legislation that protected individual liberties and equality before the law on the basis of religion, which was favourable to the Christian Ottomans' privileges. Reshid's historical affinity for Christian Orthodox subjects in the Ottoman Empire may have prompted Prince Menshikov to advocate for his appointment in the foreign ministry, under the impression that the ottoman minister would persuade the Sultan to an eventual concession.

Menshikov had indeed masterminded the administrative overhaul in the Porte on 13 May to suit Russian interests in negotiations vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. Before Menshikov's private audience with the Sultan, the Grand Vizier's credibility and popularity within the Porte was already rapidly declining due to the impasse with Russia. The Russian ambassador seized the opportunity to warn the Sultan of dangerous designs from his ministers that would culminate in destructive consequences for the Ottoman Empire. Although

[27] Mustafa Naili Pacha was born in Egypt in 1798 and previously served as the governor of Crete. He was considered progressive, pro-British, and familiar with the Christian minorities. See Ann Pottinger Saab, *The Origins of the Crimean Alliance*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977, p42-3.
[28] See both TNA FO78/932 Stratford to Clarendon, No.45 and No. 46, 14 May, 1853, p141-55, and HHS, PA12/48, Buol to Klezl, 23 May, 1853, p157-9.

Menshikov claimed to be surprised at Mehmed Ali's dismissal, the Sultan forced the Grand Vizier to resign within the same day after meeting with Menshikov. Reshid Pacha, who was effectively in retirement and had merely a peripheral role in the Porte cabinet, seconded Menshikov's accusations to his own benefit; he would subsequently be appointed in the position of foreign minister. Mehmet's replacement, Mustafa Naili Pacha, was viewed by both the Porte and Menshikov as a suitable candidate welcome by all parties. 'Les musulmans le considèrent comme un homme énergique et fidèle aux principes du Coran, ce qui lui donne de nombreux adhérents parmi le clergé Turc. II s'est acquis en même temps une réputation de tolérance envers les chrétiens lors de son administration en Crète où les mœurs locales présentent cette singularité que les alliances entre les musulmans et les femmes chrétiennes y sont tolérées.' Mustafa's son, Veli-pacha, was also serving as the Ottoman Ambassador in Paris, also promised improved communication with the Tuileries court.[30]

Despite the administrative overhaul, Stratford's efforts in the second week of May proved successful. Through his coaching of the Porte, the British ambassador advised Reshid Pacha to revise the terms of the Russian memorandum but also a few more days of extension in answering the Russian ultimatum. On the morning of 15 May, Menshikov acceded to Reshid's formal request of a short delay. Menshikov reported that the former Grand Vizier Mehmed Ali Pacha had appealed to Stratford and De Lacour, unauthorised, for the support of British and French fleets. This demand was refused by the British and French ambassadors, whom Menshikov described as using 'un langage identique'. Menshikov was habitually derogatory towards Stratford, but it is noteworthy that Menshikov perceived with conviction that Stratford had already understood Russian occupation of the Principalities to be an inevitable and immediate eventuality following a Russo-Ottoman rupture.[31]

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[30] *Zaionchkovskii*, Menshikov to Nesselrode, No.138, 4/16 May, 1853, p420-422.
[31] *Zaionchkovskii*, Menshikov to Reshid Pacha, No.140, 3/15 May, 1853, p426; Ibid, Menshikov to Nesselrode, No, 141, 4/16 May, 1853, p426-427.

All proceedings appeared promising for Stratford, who tirelessly lobbied senior politicians of the Porte on 16 May and on the morning of 17 May. Later during the day of the 17th, the Sultan summoned a Grand Council meeting of 48 attendants to determine the final Ottoman response towards Menshikov's ultimatum. All Ottoman dignitaries and senior statesmen were present, including the dismissed Fuad Effendi and the retired Husrev Pacha. The Porte decidedly overwhelmingly in the favour of Stratford Canning for rejecting the Russian ultimatum and adopting a modified firman supervised and edited by the British ambassador. Ottoman ministers who advocated for a moderate approach and not provoking Russia were accused of 'Moscovitisme'. On the morning of 18 May, Reshid faced the ill-fated task of communicating the Ottoman rejection to Menshikov; the Council had voted overwhelmingly in favour of this rejection, 42-3 votes, insomuch as Reshid confessed that the decision was beyond his personal control. The Ottoman Council was officially still in session, so the Ottoman Foreign Minister only presented the undelivered yet finalised Ottoman sentiments, which demonstrated an overall readiness towards conceding to all Russian demands, except for the *sened*, which was only proposed for the locality of Jerusalem, short of what Menshikov had demanded. Menshikov needed no further explanation in what he described as a 'dry, choppy, and not very verbose' meeting—he had little patience for seeing the final documents from the Porte, even at the possibility of last-minute Ottoman flexibility. Therefore, on the morning of 18 May, Menshikov declared that diplomatic relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire were broken and that he would shortly quit Constantinople.[32]

The following days saw a frenzy of mobilisation including all diplomatic corps in Constantinople: from the Ottoman side, Reshid and Aristarchi; from the maritime powers, Stratford and De Lacour; from the German powers, Klezl and General Wildenbruch, the

[32] *Zaionchkovskii,* Menshikov consular notice, 9/21 May, 1853, 428-429; TNA, FO78/932, Stratford to Clarendon, Constantinople, 19 May, 1853, p209-215, received in London on 1 June.

Prussian ambassador in Constantinople. Without exception, all searched for means of further negotiation with Menshikov, who had already prepared for his boat and was evacuating the entire Russian embassy building. On 20 May, the son of Reshid Pacha visited Menshikov to deliver a marginally modified note on behalf of his father. This was an irrelevant move, as the Porte's Council had already ratified Reshid's verbally delivered note of 18 May, which Menshikov had crisply rejected. Finally, the Russian prince presented his own draft for an acceptable Ottoman note and officially communicated it to the Ottoman Porte.[33] Stratford orchestrated a final appeal to Menshikov in a Four-Power joint agreement with the expectation that Menshikov would at least relent to some calm consideration of the Porte's intended note through a private channel, appointing Klezl to deliver this proposal as the Austrian diplomat paid a final visit to bid farewell to Menshikov.[34] Nesselrode later severely criticised Klezl for being manipulated by Stratford and considered the Four-Power proposal an 'inconceivable blunder' that the British ambassador had employed to prove that he was not alone to prevent Reshid from signing the ultimatum.[35] Stratford may have genuinely believed that a joint communication through an unofficial channel would suffice in persuading the Russian ambassador to soften his tone, but this would be a misjudgement of Menshikov's intention. Stratford was unaware that there was a noticeable tone of relief when Menshikov announced 'je rompais finalement les relations diplomatiques' to Reshid; to even receive proposals of backhanded negotiations beyond the expiration of his ultimatum had already stretched Russian forbearance.

Time was nonetheless running out for Stratford's hopes, as by sunset of 20 May in Constantinople, there was no updated intelligence from Menshikov. On his last day in Constantinople, Menshikov had met with Reshid for a final time, but the Russian ambassador

[33] *Zaionchkovskii,* p433-43.
[34] TNA, FO78/932, Stratford to Clarendon, 19 May, 1853, p209-15.
[35] Nesselrode Papers, Nesselrode to Meyendorff, St. Petersburg, 10/23 June, 1853, p230-1.

was infuriated to witness the degree of influence that Stratford wielded over the Ottoman Foreign Minister. Thus, Menshikov effectively placed all blame of the Russo-Turkish diplomatic failure entirely on the British ambassador, who 'brought Russia to the edge of war'.[36] Alone in his peaceful meditations around sunset on 20 May, Stratford was mistaken in remaining at ease with no concern for imminent hostilities. Granted, out of prudence, he had already confirmed with Admiral Dundas that the British fleet was ready in Malta.[37] Even though the Quai d'Orsay had yet to receive this alarming dispatch, the Russian 5th corps was readily positioned to enter the Principalities by 13 May. The French Consul in Bucharest, Eugene Poujade, reported to Lhuys that in Leova, Bessarabia, one expected that the 5th Russian army corps 'allait d'un jour à l'autre recevoir l'ordre de passer le Pruth.'[38] Substantiated rumours of Russian military mobilisation suggested that Menshikov was merely seeking a *casus belli* in the Ottoman rejection to legitimise a subsequent Russian occupation.

On 21 May, Menshikov lifted anchor and sailed away on the steamer *Gromonosetz* from Constantinople for Odessa. The Russian diplomatic mission had officially failed with Russo-Turkish relations shattered. War was imminent—as soon as Menshikov reached Odessa on 23 May, he had a conference with General Alexander von Lüders, the Commander of the 5th corps, the Acting Governor-General Pavel Fedorov, and the Odessa Governor Dmitri Aldestisev. All the Russian troops were reporting to camp on 27 May, and the 4th army corps had been put into motion on 6 May for concentration on the Dniester with further reserves to arrive.[39]

When Menshikov's reports eventually reached St. Petersburg in June, Nesselrode expressed his discontent with the diplomatic outcome, referring to Menshikov's mission as 'ce triste sujet' whilst writing privately to his son. The Chancellor disagreed with his son Dmitri,

[36] Clarendon Papers/ 10, Stratford to Clarendon, 20 May, 1853, p106-109.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Quai d'Orsay, 47CPC/11, Poujade to Lhuys, confidentielle et réservée, Bucharest, 13 May, 1853, received in Paris on 6 June, p98-108.
[39] TNA, FO 78/932, Stratford to Clarendon, 30 May, 1853, reporting a letter from British Consul in Odessa, James Yeames, from 24 May, p448-52.

who defended Menshikov's mission—as Nesselrode Junior himself had accompanied the prince to Constantinople—claiming that Russia became better positioned diplomatically than if Stratford Canning had simply allowed Reshid to sign Menshikov's ultimatum. Nesselrode argued that proposing the final version of an Ottoman note drafted by Menshikov on 20 May was the best diplomatic manoeuvre from the ambassador throughout his entire mission, but the chancellor regretted that it had not been proposed it one week earlier when Reshid had just been appointed—so that Stratford Canning would not have had ample time to influence the new Ottoman Foreign Minister.[40] Nesselrode was distraught not only because of the diplomatic tumult and mounting pressure facing the St Petersburg court, but the Chancellor was also a 73-year-old man whose health demanded a moment of repose. The Chancellor was disappointed to cancel his excursion to Saratov, a port city on the Volga in Southwestern Russia, as Menshikov's failure left Nesselrode with 'encore bien du fil à retordre'.

The immediate aftermath of Menshikov's departure

Whitehall under Lord Aberdeen remained in a collective denial of Russian ambition until at least the end of May. Britain ought to have been the great power who could play a significant role in inhibiting Russian advances towards the Ottoman Empire. The British government was, however, astonishingly delayed in recognising the gravity of Russian menaces, rendering Petersburg's demands effectively unopposed. Even after Stratford Canning explicitly expressed his apprehension towards the indefensible Russian demands and Menshikov's threat of departing from Constantinople, the ambassador's warning of an 'imminent outbreak of hostilities' was met with less solemn consideration in London than the severity of his wording had warranted. Back in the end of March, Nesselrode had reassured

[40] Nesselrode Papers, 1/13 June, 1853, Nesselrode to his son Dmitri, p225-6.

Seymour that upon the settlement of the Holy Places dispute, there would be no further agenda to discuss in Menshikov's mission beyond 'affaires ordinaires de chancellerie'; the British government only realised that these promises were deceptive on 17 May, when Clarendon finally comprehended the hidden gravity thereof. The British government had truly miscalculated in trusting Russia but still refused to denounce her for the betrayal, seeking in denial to hear further reassurance — 'our confidence has been unlimited and not a doubt has crossed our minds as to that confidence being fully justified but it is with no little anxiety that we look for the opinion of the Russian Government upon this late act of Prince Menshikov's.' Clarendon recognised the inevitable backlash he would face for his negligence and deception by Russia. 'I should stand particularly ill with the public, after the opinions and the confidence that I so unhesitatingly expressed in the House of Lords.' [41] One of these parliamentary sessions took place on 25 April, where Clarendon claimed that Her Majesty's Government had the same confidence as Clanricarde[42] in the honour and integrity of the Emperor of Russia. 'When that Emperor gives his word, Her Majesty's Government would always place reliance upon it.'[43]

The denouement of the Holy Places dispute was as obscure as its inception. As British alarm for Russian intentions and Menshikov's mission heightened, French pretensions abated. Under the persuasion of Lord Cowley, the Quai d'Orsay gradually softened her demands against the Porte and ultimately relinquished the protracted debate. After over three years of fruitless diplomatic negotiation and escalated tensions, very little material progress had been made on the issue, reflecting upon the inherently trivial nature of the dispute. In the face of more destabilising threats for the Porte's integrity, the pretext for all diplomatic missions was anticlimactically dropped even by France, the great power who had contributed significantly to the aggravation of the affair since 1850. Ironically, the French government found nothing to

[41] Clarendon Papers/ 125, Clarendon to Seymour, 17 May, 1853, p449-457.
[42] Ulick de Burgh, 1st Marquis of Clanricarde, Irish peer educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, who had previously served as British Ambassador to Russia in 1838-1840.
[43] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 126 [1853] col. 378-379.

object to among Menshikov's final firmans in early May, citing that 'there is nothing in those firmans at variance with the concessions made to the Latins in the note addressed by the Porte to Monsieur de Lavalette on the 8 February, 1852, and France is consequently perfectly satisfied.'[44] Only after three years of futility did the Quai d'Orsay admit that 'we have no wish or intention to insist on a more literal fulfilment of the rights conferred on France by the Capitulations of 1740', as long as no new arrangement between Russian and the Porte supersede the historical treaties between Paris and Constantinople. The facility with which great powers countenanced an unassuming ending to the debate reflected that it was out of ulterior motives that they had encouraged the dispute in the first place.

As soon as all courts from Constantinople to Petersburg considered the Holy Places dispute definitively resolved around mid-May, the Quai d'Orsay promptly re-engaged with Britain. France was evaluating her undetermined position and relied on that of Britain's for guidance, but the latter was no more resolute either. Without the Holy Places dispute, France no longer had any particular stake in the existing negotiations, thus she was eager to investigate the positions of other great courts. In London, the French Ambassador Walewski spoke to Clarendon multiple times to probe the British course of action in the eventuality of a Russo-Ottoman rupture. The British Foreign Minister, however, refused to provide a categorical answer, aggravating the French ambassador's frustration. Clarendon's indecision was consistent to his disposition, but Lord Aberdeen was even more averse towards seeing any danger from Menshikov's ultimatum. Even on 19 May, Aberdeen told Clarendon that he did not find that Russia's project, 'to have all the gravity that one seemed to have attributed to it.'[45] In a separate meeting with Colloredo, Aberdeen echoed Clarendon in stating that Her Majesty's government was inadequately informed on the affairs in the East, but the Prime Minister

[44] TNA, FO27/968, Cowley to Clarendon, Paris, 17 May, 1853, in *Correspondence Respecting the Rights and Privileges of the Latin and Greek Churches in Turkey*, Vol.7 (London, 1854), 163-4.
[45] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/689, Walewski to Lhuys, p235.

believed that terms in Menshikov's ultimatum were 'not exorbitant in substance; they do not seem to go much beyond what is stipulated in Article XVII of the Treaty of Kainardji.'[46]

Apart from her own irresolution, Britain was unconvinced of forging an alliance with France. It appeared that Baron Brunnow, the Russian envoy to London, typically enjoyed more honest conversations with Clarendon than Walewski did. Such British nonchalance for concerting with France delighted Austria—who feared her own diplomatic isolation—finding it 'a powerful guarantee of the maintenance of peace in the East, which had been dangerously compromised by the success of French projects.'[47] Even by the end of May, when escalations in Constantinople stoked naval activities, James Graham, the head of the Admiralty, still vocalised his disdain for France and unlikely preference for cooperating with Russia. Writing to Palmerston, Graham cited the autocratic tendencies and unreliability of Louis Napoleon for his reluctance to concert with France. 'I can place no confidence in our French Ally. We may be driven by the force of circumstances to act with him; but unhappily at this moment France is one man, and that man is treacherous. Nicholas may be suspected, but Napoleon is known to set at naught all moral obligations, when we are once deeply committed against Russia, Napoleon will not be indisposed to treat separately… we must look to the policy of nations, not to the character of their rulers, at this moment this axiom hardly applies to Russia and to France; they are both in the absolute Dominion of Autocrats. I place little confidence in princes, but I am disposed to place more reliance on the honour of Nicholas than on the broken faith of Napoleon, until I have distinct evidence, that the tsar has behaved treacherously.'[48]

Despite Clarendon and Aberdeen's near naïveté in still trusting the peaceful intentions of Russia, they eventually bowed to the pressures of public opinion. As tensions between Russia and the Ottoman Empire escalated, and Walewski deemed it improbable that Aberdeen

[46] HHS, Großbritannien 37, Colloredo to Buol, 10 June, 1853, p75. Translation is my own.
[47] HHS, England 37, 10 March, 1853, p42.
[48] Palmerston Papers, GC/GR/77, Graham to Palmerston, Admiralty, 30 May, 1853.

would persist against the British press, which favoured action against Russia, and 'faire prévaloir une politique si contraire au mouvement de l'opinion publique contre lequel aucun ministre ne saurait lutter impunément dans ce pays.' The predominant voice in British public opinion then could be exemplified by an article in the *Morning Post* on 19 May, which pushed for a 'strong and proper resistance to oppose the attempted encroachment of Russia on Turkish independence.' The article presented the diplomatic milieu to be beneficial for Britain with assured French support and possible backing from Austria, as the latter was 'far from anxious in lending herself to an increase in influence and dominating position of her great rival in the East.'[49] Informed by representations in *The Morning Post* and *The Times,* the British public were convinced of Nicholas' plans for the immediate and total destruction of the Ottoman Empire.[50] The Aberdeen administration's position of nonaction thus became increasingly difficult to maintain, as the strong anti-Russian sentiments in Britain were palpable to all European courts, pressuring the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to bow on a matter of foreign policy to Palmerston and Russell, the Home Secretary and Leader of the House of Commons. Eventually, Clarendon acknowledged that it was becoming challenging for Her Majesty's Government to maintain distance and circumspection, despite Clarendon's personal predilection for reserve. British public opinion, which 'se prononcer dans un sens contraire à la Russie', forced the hands of Clarendon and Aberdeen through incessant interpellations and demands for explanations from members of the public.[51]

II. Belated British awakening and French self-invitation

At the end of May, the position of the British government ultimately shifted. The ministers were compelled to relinquish their denial of Russian aggression and authorise

[49] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/689, extract from *The Morning Post* on 19 May, 1853, p 239.
[50] British Library, Add MS 43055, Aberdeen to Princess Lieven, 23 May, 1853, p307.
[51] HHS, Großbritannien 37, Colloredo to Buol, 20 June, 1853, p102.

mobilisation of the fleet in case of a Russian attack. On 27 May, Stratford reported the war preparations in Constantinople in an alarming light, as the Ottoman ministers were more frightened by a Russian *coup de main* rather than general hostilities. Particularly, the war efforts would take a toll on harvests in the empire, and the danger of insurrection among the Greek inhabitants along the Black Sea in Bulgaria was also feared. This letter, however, cannot be used to explain the rapidity with which the Aberdeen administration consented to dispatching the British fleet towards the Dardanelles, as Stratford's report was not received until 12 June. On 28 May, without having received Stratford's dispatch, Lord Clarendon wrote to Queen Victoria to request 'unconditional authority to send for the fleet' for Stratford. John Russell encouraged Clarendon to pursue a closer joint action with France, as he claimed that the fleet's movement could be limited in nature if it only approaches rather than enter the Dardanelles.[52] James Graham, the First Naval Lord of the Admiralty, had been corresponding frequently with Palmerston on plausible naval solutions to prevent a Russian attack on Constantinople. Graham's analysis could have well confirmed the British decision— 'if the French and English fleets be not anchored off the Seraglio Point, Russia can seize Constantinople in sixty hours from the first movement of her forces now in readiness in Sevastopol.'[53] On 31 May, the Cabinet met to approve authorisation for Stratford in summoning the fleet; Lansdowne, Russell, Palmerston, and even Clarendon, Newcastle, and Argyll had all fallen into its approval. Palmerston particularly observed that Clarendon adopted a notably stronger stance against Russia on the 31st compared to on Saturday the 28th.[54]

The Prime Minister was nearly isolated in his disapproval of authorising Stratford to summon the fleet. Lord Aberdeen denounced the proposal to be ineffectual both militarily and diplomatically, but he conceded that pursuing this course of action could be perceived as 'a

[52] Clarendon Papers/ 3, Russell to Clarendon, 29 May, 1853, p306-7.
[53] Palmerston Papers, GC/GR/76, Graham to Palmerston, Admiralty, 29 May, 1853.
[54] Palmerston Papers, GC/GR/93, Palmerston to Graham, Carlton Gardens, 31 May, 1853.

vigorous and decisive step' by the public. Effectively, even though doing so would breach the 1841 Straits Convention and provide a much-desired *casus belli* for Russia, this measure provided no additional military protection for the Ottoman Empire. According to Sir Baldwin Walker, Surveyor of the Navy,[55] Russian forces could land at the Bay of Killia and proceed without difficulty regardless of the presence of a British fleet in the Dardanelles. One of the primary objectives of such a Russian landing would be to cut the water supply into Constantinople from the nearby Great Reservoir.[56] Meticulous calculations of precise timing of the Russians' arrival from the Bay of Burgas would thus be immaterial, as an anticipated *coup de main* could not be prevented at the Dardanelles due to the entirely northerly winds at the Dardanelles during summer months. Aberdeen insisted that if Britain was to take a step at all, it needed to be effective, rather than aimlessly provocative for the tsar. The only plausibly effective strategy would be for Anglo-Franco squadrons to take command of the Black Sea, but in the Admiralty's analysis, this would necessitate yet another squadron to safeguard the Baltic Sea and ensure friendly support from Denmark and Sweden. Aberdeen was unconvinced of the extent to which Britain was willing to sacrifice 'on behalf of such a state as Turkey', echoing his previously expressed prejudice against the Sultan's empire.[57] Diplomatically, this act would immediately deprive Britain of her current moral higher ground against Russia. A united presence of both fleets in Ottoman waters, even outside the Dardanelles, 'would be regarded by the tsar as a hostile demonstration, releasing him from every honourable engagement to keep the peace and to respect the integrity of Turkey.'[58]

Strikingly, even when the British fleet was authorised to be mobilised, the Prime Minister remained convinced of Nicholas' peaceful overtures. This was likely because the

[55] Sir Baldwin Wake Walker, 1st Baronet, was the Surveyor of the Navy since 1848 and responsible for the Royal Navy's warship construction. Walker was given permission from the Admiralty to accept a command in the Turkish Navy from 1838-1845. He was subsequently created a Baronet in 1856 and promoted to Admiral in 1870.
[56] Palmerston Papers, GC/GR/77, Graham to Palmerston, Admiralty, 30 May, 1853.
[57] Clarendon Papers/ 4, Aberdeen to Clarendon, Downing Street, 1 June, 1853
[58] Palmerston Papers, GC/GR/76, Graham to Palmerston, Admiralty, 29 May, 1853.

British Cabinet had been in a perpetual state of passive anticipation for post from Constantinople, in contrast to Nesselrode's pre-emptive dispatches ahead of Menshikov's responses. By 1 June, Whitehall still had not received Stratford's dispatches on 20 May explaining the final rupture and Menshikov's departure. A week earlier, the government's uninvolved role was vividly depicted in Aberdeen's letter to Princess Lieven in Paris— 'With any post from Constantinople was the fear that it could give us the decisive blow'.[59] Historian J.B. Conacher argued that Aberdeen gave in to the pressure of the Cabinet upon receiving reports from Stratford on 1 June. Even though the assessment that Aberdeen was incapable of commanding the situation was accurate, he was never successfully persuaded, as the cabinet had already decided on 31 May to grant Stratford with full command of the fleet in addition to the dispatch of Dundas' Malta fleet to the Dardanelles.[60] Based on records of the Clarendon Papers, Stratford's dispatch would also only reach London on 3 June; on 1 June, Aberdeen still claimed that 'we do not know the manner in which the diplomatic rupture had taken place.' Even compared to Graham, who rejected the proposal as a likely *casus belli*, Aberdeen maintained an astonishing sense of trust in Nicholas and deemed it 'unwise to give up the moral guarantee we now possess of the conduct of the Emperor towards us.'[61]Moreover, after the authorisation for Stratford had been confirmed by Queen Victoria, Aberdeen still expressed that he should have wished, 'before moving our fleet, to know the circumstances under which Menshikov left Constantinople, of which at present we are not perfectly informed. If friendly interference be still possible, we may perhaps sacrifice our chance of using it with effect, after having adopted a step so hostile to Russia.'[62]

[59] BL, Add MS 43055, Aberdeen to Princess Lieven, 23 May, 1853, p307.
[60] Other courts also suffered from a comparable delay; for instance, the Quai d'Orsay did not receive De Lacour's report on Menshikov's departure until 8 June in Paris. St Petersburg received this news much earlier, on 16/28 May.
[61] *Selections from the Correspondence of the Earl of Aberdeen*, Volume X, p125-126, cited in Englische AGKK, III, Volume 1, p242-3.
[62] Clarendon Papers / 4, Aberdeen to Clarendon, Downing Street, 1 June, 1853, p127-8.

In stark contrast to Aberdeen's conviction, Nicholas was already resolved to advance Russian troops towards the Principalities regardless of British attitudes, but he was willing to countenance a superficial concession by extending the ultimatum deadline, fully knowing that the Porte would not simply yield with additional time. On 29 May, the tsar disclosed his military plans to the Prince of Warsaw, Ivan Paskevitch, whom the tsar had been addressing as 'Father Commander' since the Russo-Persian War of 1826. Upon the failure of Menshikov's mission, which was entirely attributed to the 'intrigues of Stratford Canning', Nicholas decided to 'demonstrate his desire for peace' by extending the ultimatum for the Porte by another 8 days. A Russian courier would be sent on 31 May to Constantinople for the Porte's reconsideration; if still unsatisfactory, Russian troops would then advance towards the Principalities. Furthermore, Russia would propose to Austria to occupy Herzegovina and Serbia; should this suggestion be met with resistance, Nicholas would also consider declaring the independence of the Principalities and crossing the Danube upon the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.[63] Even though Paskevitch was much more cautious than the tsar and strived to warn Nicholas of the danger of a pan-European conflict, the tsar was immovable. The following day, Nicholas held a long conversation with Seymour at the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoye Selo, where the tsar also revealed this plan to the British ambassador. After laboriously disputing the basis for a Russian *sened* and confronting Nicholas' for his reference to the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji, Seymour endeavoured to buy more time for Britain by delaying Russian movement: the ambassador pledged that the tsar waited for an official response from the London Cabinet on his declaration. If Nicholas had consented to this, the return of correspondence would postpone Russian advancement by at least two weeks. The tsar had certainly considered the timeframe and curtly refused. Addressing Seymour in the third person, Nicholas retorted— 'Sir Hamilton Seymour has had several conversations with the emperor, who spoke to him with a

[63] *Zaionchkovskii*, Nicholas to Prince Ivan Paskevitch, Tsarskoye Selo, 17/29 May, 1853, p437-8.

total absence of reserve. Sir Seymour must have written a report of these conversations. I have nothing to add to the information of which the English Government is in possession.'[64] Extension of the ultimatum and determination to act without British acknowledgement may seem paradoxical, but the juxtaposition demonstrates that a firm British rejection would still wield an impact on Nicholas, yet he did not want any obstruction in occupying the Principalities, hence a *fait accompli* would be more conducive. As for the eight-day extension, Clarendon later interpreted it as Nicholas' attempt at seeking a justification for the Russian occupation and more extensive military activities—once presented with a new rejection, Russia could be more liberated in her military advancements.[65]

Britain's decision to move her fleet immediately yet haphazardly precipitated a joint Anglo-French action, even without any formal consultation between the two courts. Although the naval alliance appeared logical and had been anticipated in Cabinet discussions, it was not the outcome of any meticulous deliberation, as the Admiralty remained indisposed towards cooperating with France. Even St Petersburg was surprised, and assuredly infuriated, at the Anglo-French alliance, as Brunnow had reported that the old antipathies between Britain and France were 'incapable of being removed or materially diminished'.[66] The newfound joint action was rather imposed upon Britain due to Cowley's indiscreet disclosure of British military plans on 4 June, whilst meeting with Louis Napoleon and Lhuys in Paris. As soon as confirming that orders had been sent to mobilise Dundas' fleet, the French emperor ordered the *Chaptal* in Marseilles to prepare for movement. Complete authorisation was also granted to De Lacour in commanding the French fleet, who would urge the Porte to consider British and French fleets as a collective entity with shared plans of action. Louis Napoleon's orders were concerning if considered with Stratford's instructions—Clarendon had stated that Stratford 'will not think it

[64] TNA, FO 65/427, Seymour to Clarendon, No. 263, Secret and Confidential, 19/31 May, 1853, received in London on 7 June.
[65] HHS, Großbritannien 37, Colloredo to Buol, 20 June, 1853, p98.
[66] TNA, FO519/169, Clarendon to Cowley, 30 June, 1853, p495-503.

right [to send for the fleet] unless Monsieur de Lacour who has the same power exercises it also'. Therefore, Stratford was bound to De Lacour—thus if any action in support of Turkey was considered, it would automatically take an escalated form of joint Anglo-French presence in the Dardanelles, which would signify much graver and aggressive implications. Apart from Louis Napoleon's hastiness in forging the Anglo-French alliance, Cowley also indiscreetly disclosed classified British military plans that enabled France's self-invitation. Lhuys inquired after '*probable* locations that the English fleet would go', to which Cowley unhesitatingly replied, 'in summer, Besika Bay, which is at the mouth of the Dardanelles, would very likely be the rendezvous.' Having obtained the prized information, the French Foreign Minister immediately ordered for Admiral de la Susse to advance towards Besika Bay to join the British fleet there. Thus Cowley realised his grave blunder— 'Lhuys took what I mentioned as a probability for a certainty and gave orders in consequence. I have called his attention to the error which he has made, but as it is more than probable that a part if not the whole of the British Fleet will make for that anchorage, I trust that the error will be of no material consequence.'[67] British hands were thus forced with France's advancement that preceded any movement from the Royal fleet. The scenario was nearly identical to the Mediterranean naval scare in March, where France dispatched her fleet from Toulon towards Salamis without ascertaining whether Admiral Dundas had departed from Malta. By mid-June, the military situation in Europe had dangerously escalated: from reserved nonaction in Britain to her reluctant dispatch of the fleet, leading up to the enthusiastic self-invitation of the French that forced upon British hands. Europe indeed stumbled into readiness for war on behalf of the Sultan, but it could not have done so in a more disorganised or unconvincing manner.

[67] TNA, FO27/969, Cowley to Clarendon, Paris, 5 June, 1853, No.397.

III. The Unravelling of the Austro-Russian alliance

As Britain and France moved towards antagonistic positions against Russia, Austria was also subtly shifting her position as she awakened to Russian expansionist ambitions. By mid-1853, the Eastern Question was threatening to dismantle the emblematic Holy Alliance, an alignment with Russia that Austria and Prussia had long enjoyed. In particular, during the revolutions of 1848, the young Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph was indebted to the unwavering support of Nicholas for supressing the uprisings in Hungary. Joint Austro-Russian forces defeated the Hungarian revolutionaries in 1849, restoring Habsburg power. This led the tsar to naturally expect the utmost loyal adherence from Austria to the Petersburg court. But that once intimate shared understanding was fraying in early 1853.

Various factors induced the denouement of the once intimate alliance—Austria and Russia were fundamentally far from united in purpose. The two great powers prioritised conflicting long-standing strategic interests, including those in the Balkans and Austria's own position in the German Confederation; their divergence was exacerbated through accumulated tension in developments in early 1853, including discord over Louis Napoleon's recognition, Petersburg's evasiveness to Vienna's communications, and Austria's deep fear of stoking revolutionary sentiments in the empire. Strikingly, Nicholas was cognisant of little of these clashing Austrian considerations, resulting in what Paul Schroeder summarised to be a Russian attitude of naïve arrogance towards Austria,[68] with Nicholas unconcernedly presuming that he was entitled to Austrian support following his assistance in 1849.

Austria had more reason to fear war than other European great powers due to her extended borders with Russia in the north. On the east, the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were bulwarks before the Russian border. The Russian threat to occupy the Principalities could instantaneously expose Austria further on her eastern borders. Furthermore,

[68] Schroeder, *Austria and Crimean War*, 42-3.

the Hungarian revolt exposed Austrian military inferiority to the Russian army, which added to the dangerously vulnerable position for Vienna, who was already concerningly indebted to Russia. According to Seymour's reports in Petersburg, Russian officers who had participated in the Hungarian campaign returned with 'a great contempt for those from Austria'. The Austrian foreign ministry could face the brunt of her own conservative principles emulated by Russia. The privileges that Austria possessed over Sardinia, Sardinia possessed over Parma, and Parma over the Republic of San Marino, 'may some day be invoked by Russia over Austria herself.' [69] The King of the Two Sicilies provided an astute analysis of Austria's conundrum. Referring to Russia as 'maîtresse des Provinces Danubiennes', Ferdinand I believed that Russia would not delay in exercising on both the Greeks and the Slavs in Austria a formidable influence. 'C'est l'Autriche qui est destinée, quand l'Empire Ottoman aura cessé d'exister, à subir les premières attaques de la Russie, et, si elle aide cette puissance à renverser la barrière qui la sépare encore du Colosse, elle aura follement compromis son avenir, elle se sera désarmée.' Apart from the potential border threat from Russia, the Austrian Empire herself was already severely divided; to engage herself in a struggle against any foreign powers would be destructive and a guaranteed precursor to general chaos or even dissolution in Franz Joseph's empire.[70]

Conflicting long-standing interests

The Balkans & Principalities

Franz Joseph had feared that Nicholas's Eastern policy could not allow Austria to escape from revolutionary sentiments unscathed, and this was paramount for the Austrian

[69] TNA, FO65/426, No.163, confidential, Seymour to Clarendon, St Petersburg, 25 March/ 6 April, 1853, received in London 16 April, p32-36.
[70] Quai d'Orsay, Naples 86 CP/184, Barrot to Lhuys, Naples, 17 June, 1853, p188-195. Adolphe Barrot was the French ambassador to Naples since 1851 and he later served as the ambassador in Belgium.

Emperor. St. Petersburg's inflammatory appeals to the Balkan Christians would not only subvert the Sultan's Ottoman subjects, but also those of Austria. Vienna attempted to warn Petersburg that inspired by a Russian occupation of the Danubian Principalities, independent states would follow suit to breed revolution in Krakow or in Switzerland; these appeals were, however, unheeded by Nicholas. Buol had already alerted the St Petersburg court to the revolutionary impact of Russian expansionist ambitions at the onset of Leiningen's mission in Montenegro—but such sentiments were also largely dismissed by Russia, under the assumption that Buol could not fully represent Austrian's Eastern policy. Nesselrode esteemed Buol more than Nicholas did, but the Russian heedlessness towards Buol's warnings of revolution was somewhat grounded. Count Anto Prokesch-Osten, for instance, had proposed in February 1853 an underhand agreement with Russia to divide the Balkans into two spheres of interest based on commercial and strategic considerations favourable to Austria. This idea resonated with Franz Joseph and was seriously considered until July, but Austria then refrained from discussing it with Russia after the latter's occupation of the Danubian Principalities. Franz Joseph subsequently wrote to the Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, to seek Prussian backing in cautioning Nicholas on the revolutionary dangers of escalating the Eastern Question. 'Aber vergessen wir auch nicht, daß die heutige christliche Welt einen schlimmeren Erbfeind hat als die Türken. Dieser Feind aller göttlichen und menschlichen Ordnung ist die Revolution. So lange sie nicht gründlich besiegt ist, würde nicht die Zersplitterung der Kräfte der Continental-staaten für die Neugestaltung des Orients abermalige Zuckungen des Geistes der Zerstörung im Abendlande hervorrufen?'[71]

The Austrian position on the Danubian Principalities, in contrast to that on the Balkans,

[71] HHS, Kabinettsarchive, Geheimakten (secret files)/ Preußen/ 7, Franz Joseph to Freidrich Wilhelm IV, Vienna, 15 July, 1853, p100-101. Translation: 'But let us also not forget that the Christian world today has a worse hereditary enemy than the Turks. This enemy of all divine and human order is the revolution. As long as it is not thoroughly defeated, would not the fragmentation of the Continental states' forces for the reorganisation of the Orient provoke renewed twitches of the spirit of destruction in the Occident?'

was not frontally colliding against Russian ambitions, as the region was not inherently appealing to Austria. In a memorandum presented to Franz Joseph on 22 January and subsequently published in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* on 2 February, Prokesch-Osten, the former Austrian ambassador to Prussia, called for a demarcation line from Vidin to Salonika in dividing Russian and Austrian influence. According to Prokesch-Osten's partition proposal, all the valleys leading to the Black Sea should belong to the Russian sphere, with those leading to the Aegean belonging to Austria. Certainly, as the Prussian newspaper *Kreuzzeitung* observed, Prokesch-Osten's Eastern policy was not wholly compatible with the views of the Emperor, as the close subordinate to Metternich considered that 'Konstantinopel könnte nicht in besseren Händen als russischen'! Austrian interests in the Danubian Principalities were denied because they would prove financially inefficient for Austria to maintain. Additionally, according to Prokesch-Osten, Austrian exports to the Black Sea area were also insensible, because Russian grain was much cheaper than Hungarian grain; the distance to Western markets from Salonika was also much shorter than from Odessa.[72]

In the Balkans, however, Austrian and Russian interests were sharply at odds. Prokesch-Osten was opposed to the independence of small Balkan states, as the European part of the Ottoman Empire had been significantly weakened by the Tanzimat reforms and approaching the brink of disintegration. 'Serbien und Bulgarien halten nur mehr an einem Faden, Bosnien und Albanien sind fast ganz zum Abfall reif und Montenegro versucht ein kern zu werden für den slawisch-orthodoxen Völkerstamm.' [73] But Austria desired the dominance of her influence to the west of the Vidin-Salonika line, including Bosnia, Albania, Serbia, and Macedonia. Prokesch-Osten's hubris was unrealistic for two reasons. Firstly, as Metternich had declared, Austria was a saturated state; conquests and assimilation of new territories were infeasible due

[72] HHS, SB Nl Braun 1, Nachlass Adolf Braun: Korrespondenz/7/3, Memorandum from Anton Graf Prokesch von Osten to Franz Joseph I, 22 January, 1853, p.62. 'Constantinople could not be in better hands than Russians'.'
[73] Ibid, 'Serbia and Bulgaria are only holding on by a thread; Bosnia and Albania are almost ripe for apostasy and Montenegro is trying to become a nucleus for the Slavic Orthodox tribe.'

to the strict centralisation and military administration in the Schwarzenberg system. The other point centres on the Balkan preference for Russian tutelage. If Austria could hypothetically guarantee unhindered development for the Balkan states, she would certainly be favoured vis-à-vis the Ottoman Porte in being a Christian Protectorate. Nonetheless, even though the Adriatic coastal region previously under Venetian and Habsburg rule would accept an Austrian Protectorate, the continental part of the Balkans would invariably prefer a Russian protectorate due their shared Orthodox confession.[74] The Prussian Wochenblatt party detected this nuance with great delight; as they aimed to drive a wedge between Russia and Austria for dual benefits: to isolate Russia and deprive the Konservative party of their secret Russian support, and to isolate Austria for achieving Prussia ascendancy within the Germanic Confederation.

The German Confederation

Not only were Austro-Russian relations on the brink of rupture by mid-1853 following Nicholas' occupation of the Principalities, contrasting interests between Austria and Prussia were also accentuated, distracting the Vienna court. Austria was in a disadvantageous position—her exclusion from the *Zollverein* and diplomatic isolation were capitalised by Prussia, who aimed at undermining Austrian dominance over the German Confederation, thereby also widening the gap between Vienna and St Petersburg.

The Austro-Prussian rivalry was a major challenge that plagued Austria apart from ructions in her relations with Russia. Since 1834 the establishment of the *Zollverein*, the German customs union from which Austria was excluded, Prussia had become the authoritative figure among German states for economic affairs. Prince Schwarzenberg had fruitlessly attempted to revamp the *Zollverein*, but this failed due to the lack of a practical and cohesive Austrian alternative to the somewhat ineffectual union. When Buol became foreign minister,

[74] Borries, *Preussen im Krimkrieg,* 33-4.

he viewed Austria's exclusion from the *Zollverein* as a political matter, which promptly led to the early 1853 Trade and Customs Treaty to which Pfordten referred. Nonetheless, Austria still failed at being immediately included into the economic union that has proved beneficial for the majority of German states. This subtle rivalry competed for the attention of the Hofburg, as Vienna was highly attentive towards maintaining dominance over the German Confederation. Around June 1853, Buol expressed Austrian willingness to participate in a four-court understanding to uphold the 1841 Straits Convention, as proposed by the Quai d'Orsay. As the second strongest Germanic power aspiring for dominance, Prussia was much more limited in her influence over the arrangement. The Prussian view was generally one of adherence, and she was nearly impatient to see leading British and French actions in order to align herself through the 1841 Convention. Fundamentally, Prussia was less directly involved in the Eastern Question than Austria. [75] This liberated Prussia towards focusing on ascendency within the German Confederation; Berlin was thus motivated to isolate Austria diplomatically after Prussia's begrudging submission to Austrian political leadership since Punctation of Olmütz of 1850. Prussian politicians have highlighted the divergence in Austrian and Russian interests in the Balkans to sever Austro-Russian ties; as the Prussian president Otto Theodor von Manteuffel also capitalised on British prejudice against Austria, through his correspondence with the German-born Prince Albert, to weaken the already delicate diplomatic position of Austria between Russia and the West. Historian Paul Schroeder harshly described Austria's predicament, claiming that Britain could be partners with any other superpower but Austria, because 'no Whig could see any sound basis for partnership with Austria—Catholic, reactionary, oppressive, and decadent.'[76]

The protection of Austrian commerce outside of the German *Zollverein* also contributed

[75] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/670, Lhuys to Walewski, 27 May, 1853, p276.
[76] Schroeder, *Austria and Crimean War*, 40.

to Austria's considerations for distancing herself from Russia. The Minister-President of Bavaria, Karl Ludwig von der Pfordten, highlighted that prioritisation of Austrian material interests forced Vienna to reduce her foreign dependence: the hard-fought Prussian-Austrian Trade and Customs Treaty signed on 19 February, 1853 for the duration of twelve years, was an exceptional commercial agreement that proved the general rule of Austrian exclusion from the *Zollverein*. The Bavarian president believed that the commercial treaty would bear fruit on the lower banks of the Danube, which would soon sway the ambivalent Austrian court towards recognising the necessity to maintain her own political and commercial independence.[77] Due to commercial considerations, further extension of Russian influence in the Balkans and entrenchment on the lower Danube were wholly insupportable for the Vienna court.

Short-term accumulation of Austro-Russian tensions in 1853

With friction in underlying strategic interests simmering, diplomatic proceedings in 1853 also construed the Austro-Russian rupture. As early as February 1853, French diplomatic exchanges already recorded a 'discernible trace of rivalry' between Russia and Austria over the affairs of Montenegro.[78] The Court of Vienna demonstrated its wish to act proactively in the affair to prevent an intervention from Russia—'c'est même à premier vue un germe de dissidence entre elle et l'Empereur Nicholas qui n'a pas échappé à notre attention.'[79] According Baron Meyendorff, the Russian Ambassador to Austria, the superficial alignment between Petersburg and Vienna had a simple explanation—the congruity between the two countries was an outcome of the dispute over Louis Napoleon's recognition and style of address. Tsar Nicholas I was reportedly deeply wounded at the conduct of his Austrian counterpart, Franz Joseph, who did not follow Nicholas in adopting 'mon ami' instead of 'mon frère' towards the

[77] Quai d'Orsay, Bavière, 16CP/231, Segur to Lhuys, 13 June, 1853, p104-5.
[78] Quai d'Orsay, 166PO/C/228, Drouyn de Lhuys to La Valette, 10 February, 1853, p122.
[79] Quai d'Orsay, 112CP/208, Lhuys to Castelbajac, 15 March, 1853, p251-5.

French emperor. Thus the young Austrian Emperor quickly resolved to place himself in line with Russian directions with regards to the Eastern Question, to 'dispel the unpleasant feelings' of the tsar.[80]

Based on traces of discernible disagreements between the two courts, Drouyn de Lhuys repetitively emphasised to Count Walewski to ascertain whether there was still a perfect accord between Vienna and Petersburg and to investigate the definitive points of discord thereof.[81] Lhuys could not have been satisfied with his pursuit, because Austrian diplomats so firmly upheld the appearance of an unassailable alliance between Vienna and Petersburg. Around early March, after having ardently pushed for an alliance with Britain, France launched a wave of approaches to Hübner, the Austrian ambassador in Paris; there Lhuys attempted to test the robustness of Austro-Russian rapports. On 28 February, Lhuys received Hübner and 'se borna d'abord à m'exprimer l'espoir que nous ne serions pas trop durs avec les pauvres Turcs…mon interlocuteur en convint assez franchement, s'efforça à me suggérer que la France n'aimerait pas mieux que d'avoir là-bas un allie très fort, que je pouvais compter sur sa discrétion.' Hübner courteously smiled without directly responding. He impassionedly remarked that Lhuys' discourse betrayed 'the price which the Quai d'Orsay was willing to pay in order to detach Austria from her intimate alliance with Russia.'[82]

Nicholas' erratic summons of military exercises also elicited much alarm for Austria. It was habitual for Nicholas to conduct last-minute inspections of remote parts of his empire unannounced, but these spontaneous inspection trips—in which Nicholas industriously persisted throughout his reign—had debatable efficacy. Dissatisfied with spontaneously arranging for his personal travels, Nicholas was also disposed to summon a regiment gratuitously, occasionally in the dead of the night, and would be much displeased to witness

[80] TNA, FO65/424, Seymour to Lord Clarendon, 9 March, 1853, p45.
[81] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/689, Lhuys to Walewski, 17 March, 1853, p10-15.
[82] HHS, 9PA/42, Hübner to Buol, 2 March, 1853, Paris, received 10 March, 1853, p46-52.

any delay in the execution of his orders. Leading up to April 1853, Nicholas has demonstrated the tendency to exercise his command on much larger scale—for instance, he has hurried three large armies to the Ottoman frontier yet secretly and silently dismissed them to their usual quarters, to the tremendous vexation of foreign statesmen and Chancellor Nesselrode alike. These military exercises were dangerous experiments for not only the country directly menaced, but also others who bordered Russia, including Austria. Whilst Nicholas may well have considered testing the immediacy of his command and the agility of the Russian army a strictly domestic affair, Austria had indeed perceived the weight of tangible Russian military deterrence.

Comparable to how Clarendon never suspected the peaceful intentions of Nicholas, the Russian tsar never doubted the allegiance of Franz Joseph. Nicholas wrote with effusive earnestness to the Austrian emperor about his truthful intentions in the east, admitting the practical advantages of maintaining the Ottoman Empire for 'as long as she could last'. 'Je ne compte pas, cher bon ami, de faire plus dans l'affaire d'Orient, que ce que mon simple devoir me commande. Je n'ai jamais songé à porter coup à l'Empire Ottoman, dont je crois la conservation bien plus utile, tant qu'elle peut durer, pour nos deux Empires, que tout ce qui pourrait le remplacer après sa chute. J'ai toujours pensé ainsi, il faut seulement que l'on me laisse la possibilité de continuer à agir dans ce sens, sans compromettre et les intérêts de la Russie.'[83] What Nicholas proceeded to share was of a much more revealing nature and clearly alarmed Franz Joseph, as the Austrian Emperor visibly highlighted this section of Nicholas' letter but did not leave any annotations elsewhere. Nicholas wrote that if the Ottomans obstinately disregard their errors and refuse to correct them by making guarantees for the future, 'je devrais recouvrir aux armes. Je le ferai alors malgré l'opposition ou les obstacles que l'on voudrait me susciter – car ce sera mon devoir.' Nicholas proceeded to promise to Franz

[83] HHS Russland PA X/38, Nicholas to Franz Joseph, 8/20, April 1853, p203.

Joseph that he would keep the Austrian emperor apprised of his courses of action, before reemphasising the intimacy of Austro-Russian union and the identity of the two courts' views and signing the letter as 'your loyal, devoted brother, friend, and ally, Nicholas.'[84]

Nicholas's letter left an impregnable impression on Franz Joseph and the Austrian court. Consequently, Buol's foreign ministry began warming up towards the Quai d'Orsay's proposals for a four-court European joint action in safeguarding the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. By the end of May, Lhuys surmised that Austria's continued ambivalence already constituted sufficient proof for her distrust against Russia. Baron Francois de Bourqueney, the French Ambassador in Austria, was charged by Buol to orchestrate such an Austrian rapprochement towards the West.[85] Bourqueney's efforts bore fruit in the Hofburg; on 24 May, Buol first hinted at the possibility of concerting with other European powers by virtue of the 13 July, 1841 Straits Convention. Should Menshikov's mission entirely fail and fatal complications threaten, 'alors certes serait venu le moment d'invoquer le principe pose par le traité du 1841, et la France nous trouverait prêts à seconder ses efforts tendant à ramener entre les cinq Puissances cette union et cet accord.'[86] Buol still wished to avoid directly provoking Russia, thus he added a weak line stating that the Porte must be exaggerating Russian threats and all precaution must still be avoidable. Austria's alienation from Russia was subtly taking shape in late May, unnoticed by St Petersburg.

Buol already initiated cooperation with France before his sovereign responded to the tsar's alarming letter, suggesting that Franz Joseph had meticulously considered his position before writing to Nicholas. The 22-year-old emperor did not directly address the tsar's professed resolve to using military means; instead, he hinted that he trusted the tsar to reconcile Russian treaty entitlements with the conservation of the Ottoman Empire and European peace.

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[84] Ibid, p204-5.
[85] Quai d'Orsay, 8CP/689, Lhuys to Walewski, Paris, 27 May, 1853, p276.
[86] HHS, Russland PA IX/44, Buol to Hübner, Vienna 24 May, 1853, p54-5.

The rest of Franz Joseph's response was superfluous with discussion of less critical affairs, as if avoidant of inadvertently exposing his alarm towards Nicholas' war plans. Franz Joseph urged for the Russian Ambassador Baron Meyendorff's early return to Vienna and confirmed his complete confidence in the tsar's messenger. The visits of the King of Belgium and the King of Prussia in May to the Hofburg were also discussed, in addition to Leopold II's engagement to the Austrian Archduchess Marie-Henriette. [87] The hollow nature of his response reveal that doubt against Russia had already taken root in the mind of the young Austrian Emperor.

Towards the end of May, as Austria cautioned against the danger of Russian designs, Petersburg continued to confide in Vienna without reserve—although Nicholas likely preferred the pre-1848 predecessors of Buol. The tsar summoned Prince Metternich, who had fallen out of power after the revolutions, for an audience in Warsaw in the third week of May. The imminently commencing Hungarian diet could not permit the former Chancellor's absence from Budapest, thus Metternich sent Count Karl Ficquelmont, who briefly served as Foreign Minister in 1848, to meet with Nicholas instead. It occurred to Ficquelmont that whilst Austrian propositions to Russia were 'si explicites, si larges', Nicholas' responses were vague, only insisting that 'il ne voulait rien au-delà du Danube'. Ficquelmont found Nicholas' overtures somewhat believable, as he deemed advances towards Georgia—including Imereti and Mingrelia—as the logical next steps for Russian expansion in the East. For Austrian interests, this was not wholly detrimental, as 'quand elle (la Russie) avance en Asie, elle s'occupera moins de peser sur l'Europe.'[88] In receipt of Ficquelmont's report in Vienna, Buol was far less sanguine. The Warsaw meeting between his predecessor and the tsar only confirmed that Nicholas was bent on territorial expansion, and he would insist upon religious protection for

[87] HHS Russland PA X/38, Franz Joseph I to Nicholas I, Vienna 26 May, 1853, p207-8.
[88] HHS. Russland PA X/38, Ficquelmont to Buol. Vienna 24 May, 1853, p399-402.

his coreligionists even at the cost of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

After the open rupture between Russia and the Porte, Austria was exasperated and stunned, but she still, at least ostensibly, sought to ameliorate her relationship with Russia. Buol sent a firmly worded dispatch to Lebzeltern on 2 June, enumerating all discrepancies between Russian promises and actions since the beginning of Menshikov's mission and demanding a frank communication with Russia. 'Si la franchise doit toujours présider aux relations entre deux cours aussi intimement liées que celles de Vienne et de St. Pétersbourg, cette franchise devient un devoir dans des circonstances critiques. Tel est le cas aujourd'hui.'[89] From her perspective, Austria did relentlessly attempt to salvage the relationship, with Buol repetitively pressing the St Petersburg court to deny claims that Russia had demanded a general protectorate over the Ottoman Empire. Buol had reason to be irked, as Nesselrode had disregarded his dispatch pressing for peaceful Russian reassurances at the end of May, whilst sending a 'nearly mocking note where the chancellor spoke of Eastern Question as one of the domestic affairs where the situation depended upon Russia's convenience, without being able to affect other cabinets', leaving Austria in a state of 'vifs regrets'.[90] Simultaneously, the Russian court duly expressed her discontent at Austria. Lebzeltern reported that Nesselrode had accused Ed Klezl, the Austrian delegation secretary in Constantinople, of being insufficiently enthusiastic in prevailing upon the Porte to accept Menshikov's ultimatum for a *sened* and for being influenced by Stratford Canning.[91]

The evolution of Klezl's attitude towards Russia aptly reflected his court's slow drift away from Russia over a prolonged period of accumulated tension, rather than a sudden split. Austria first subtly indicated her reluctance to offer support to Russia on 9 June, in a letter from Buol to Lebzeltern. From the outset, Austria continued to perform her traditional role of a

[89] HHS, PA X/37, Buol to Lebzeltern, Vienna, 2 June, 1853, p87-93.
[90] Quai d'Orsay, 7CP/689, Lhuys to Walewski, 27 May, 1853, p276.
[91] HHS, PA Russland X/36, Lebzeltern to Buol, St Petersburg, 13/25 June, received in Vienna on 2 July, 1853, p138.

mediator in such a diplomatic crisis, fusing Menshikov's ultimatum with Reshid Pacha's final notes, whilst dissuading Russia from occupying the Principalities. Austria advised the Porte to accept Russian terms without modifications— 'sans variants', per Russian demands—as that provided the Porte the best opportunity to terminate the protracted and deeply menacing diplomatic crisis. Buol was also emphatic about warning Austrian diplomats to abstain from any expression of distrust against Russia, as to not further exacerbate the dynamics between Austria and Russia. A noteworthy section was added towards the end of the dispatch where Austria argued that Russia hardly needed Austrian support for a convincing victory against the Porte. 'The best guarantee for Russia of her success in a struggle against Turkey is the vast resources of this Empire, her geographic position, and the valour of her troops. This guarantee has never needed and hardly needs to be supported by a material demonstration.'[92]

Meanwhile, on 24 June, when word reached the Russian capital for the Porte's formal rejection to the Russian ultimatum, Lebzeltern struggled to locate Count Nesselrode in St. Petersburg. The Austrian chargé d'affaires thus spent most of the 25th in the city centre and in the countryside in a vain quest for an audience with the Chancellor. It was not until the evening, at the church where the Württemberg chargé d'affaires held his wedding celebration, that Lebzeltern finally detected the senior Russian statesman. Nesselrode only spoke briefly to the Austrian chargé, unequivocally addressing Lebzeltern's inquiry on the news. 'Nous avons reçus la nouvelle de refus de la part de la Porte et nous entrerons.'[93] This and letter dated 27 June only reached Vienna on 7 July; on the pages of the dispatch, Buol visibly annotated and converted all Old Style dates to the New Style, which indicates his scrutiny of the timeline of Russian movement towards the Danubian Principalities. Buol also underlined only one word, *entrerons*, suggesting the grave impact the unhesitating Russian attitude to advance must have

[92] HHS, PA Russland X/37, Buol to Lebzeltern, 9 June, 1853, p111-112. Translation is my own.
[93] HHS, PA Russland X/36, Lebzeltern to Buol, St Petersburg, 15/27 June, received in Vienna on 7 July, 1853, p140-143.

inflicted upon the Austrian foreign minister.

Russia's official declaration for occupying the Danubian Principalities on 28 June forced the Austrian court to escalate its language. Buol reiterated Austria's dual ostensible foreign policy priorities—maintenance of the Ottoman Empire and concert with Russia. Under these principles, the Foreign Minister insisted that Austria had advised the Porte to accept the Russian ultimatum, albeit without the vigour desired by St Petersburg; she pacified the courts of Britain and France and convinced them to not consider a Russian occupation of the Principalities as a *casus belli*; she had loyally stayed in the line of reservation and conciliation because the Court of Petersburg had assured Vienna of none other than its pacific designs.[94] By end of the June, the court of Vienna thought it had exhausted all means possible of preventing a Russo-Ottoman rupture but saw no concession from Russia. Buol plainly expressed Austrian frustration to Lebzeltern—'Que reste-t-il à désirer à la Russie ?' A Russian occupation of the Principalities would be unfavourable for Russia in various regards: European public opinion would be disapproving, and Russia would forcibly antagonise the maritime powers of Britain and France. Compelled to appease their press, the courts of London and Vienna would demand precise commitments from Russia on her purpose, duration, and limits of the occupation by Russian troops. Buol believed that any explanation from Russia in the 'grave complication' would be futile in vindicating her actions.[95] Buol saw these disastrous yet inescapable eventualities, but the Russian court appeared insensitive to the painful considerations that Austria deliberated, which could explain the widening chasm between Petersburg and Vienna, as well as the former's oblivion towards its formation.

The major remaining question was Austria's debt towards Nicholas for his support in the 1849 Hungarian crisis, which fomented the Austrian fear of being seen as ungrateful by the

[94] HHS, Russland PA X/38, Buol to Gyulai, Vienna 30 June, 1853, p179-86.
[95] HHS, PA Russland X/37, Buol to Lebzeltern, 30 June, 1853, p148-50.

tsar. But as the Sicilian King asserted, Austria was 'sans doute, pas dispose à scarifier son existence à venir sur l'actuel de la reconnaissance, et à se faire l'instrument d'une politique qu'elle aura nécessairement plus tard à combattre.'[96] To combat accusations of ingratitude and lethargy, Vienna potently expressed its position by highlighting the disparity between 1849 and 1853. Fundamentally, Buol considered the Russian occupation entirely unjustified and prone to incite revolutionary upheavals. In 1849, Russia and Austria were united in a conservative cause; Nicholas' assistance then should not obligate Austria in aiding Russia in an incontestably revolutionary pursuit, which Austria considered and entirely Russian cause. A firm rebuttal to possible claims of Austria ingratitude was articulated in Buol's instructions for Count Franz Gyulai, who was sent to St Petersburg at the end of June to signal Austria's distanced position.[97]

> 'Nous pourrions valoir la même objection, si la Russie se croyait en droit de s'attendre de notre part a une coopération active et armée dans ses démêles avec la Porte, en retour des services qu'elle nous a rendus en nous aidant à comprimer l'insurrection hongroise. Nous ne méconnaitrons jamais ses services, et sommes prêts à les payer de réciprocité, mais à condition de l'égalité des circonstances. En 1849 nous combattions la révolution, et, concédé même que la Russie n'était pas aussi directement intéressée que nous au succès de la lutte, elle ne refusera pas de reconnaitre qu'il y allait aussi de sa propre sureté. Si nous nous engagions dans une guerre avec la Turquie, ce serait, comme nous l'avons déjà remarqué, encourager le parti révolutionnaire à éclater, et notre armée serait détournée de la haute vocation que les troupes russes ont si vaillamment suivie en combattant la révolution a cote des nôtres.'[98]

Austria finally drew the line with Russia: Austria would adopt a non-hostile lukewarmness with a categorical refusal to join Russia militarily. In the incisively-worded dispatch, Buol lamented Russian avarice in demanding a general Russian Protectorate, condemned the occupation of Wallachia and Moldavia, and rejected the proposition for a simultaneous Austrian occupation of Serbia and Herzegovina.[99] Austria rejected the military

[96] Quai d'Orsay, 86Naples CP/184, Barrot to Lhuys, Naples, 17 June, 1853, p188-95.
[97] Count Franz Gyulai von Maros-Nemeth und Nadaska, was an Austrian General and aide-de-camp to Emperor Franz Joseph, who served as Minister of War in 1849.
[98] HHS, Russland PA X/38, Buol to Gyulai, Vienna 30 June, 1853, p186.
[99] *Zaionchkovskii*, Nicholas to Paskevitch, 17/29 May, 1853, p437-438.

proposal on account of two factors: firstly, guaranteed Anglo-French hostility towards Austria; secondly, Austria's own internal and external instability could not support a foreign conquest. Buol also criticised Russia's comparison between Nicholas' offer to support Austria during the Montenegro crisis to the military backing that the tsar now demanded from Franz Joseph four months later. In the Austrian view, her intervention in Montenegro was driven by protecting the interests of Christian coreligionists, to which Nicholas also attached deep sentiments of support. The occupation of the Principalities, by contrast, 'on demande notre coopération pour une cause purement russe'!

The fear of rekindling revolutionary flames in her own territory was the main rationale behind Austria's alienation from Russia. Sarcastically, Nicholas had foreseen 'Christian revolts everywhere' only in the case of an Austrian refusal to occupy Herzegovina and Serbia, which would then lead to Nicholas's declaring the independence of the Principalities. A Russian crossing of the Danube was also deliberated once the Ottoman Empire collapsed.[100] Even though these military details were only shared between Nicholas, Paskevitch, and General Gorchakov, Austria must have considered the likelihood of Russian entanglement past the Danube, stoking a general war in which Austria could not possibly support Nicholas at the expense of the survival and stability of her own empire.

IV. Russian gunboat diplomacy and keenness for war

In the tsar's concept of gunboat diplomacy, pre-emptive military movement and occupation of territories were peaceful gestures, or permissible means of deterrence—as long as he promised to halt his advances once desired terms of negotiation have been accepted. This approach provided no room for discussion for the Ottoman Empire, who faced the options of

[100] *Zaionchkovskii*, Nicholas to Paskevitch, 29 May, 1853, p438.

either complete capitulation to Nicholas' terms, or a full-blown Russian invasion. Perhaps the tsar was speaking his mind when he insisted that the occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia was simply a 'moyen de négociation', because he believed gunboat diplomacy could strengthen his bargaining power.[101] Nicholas reiterated that he did not seek territorial aggrandisement—because 'Russia does not need it; we just search for the satisfaction of our rights which are so evidently violated.'[102]

Through a surprisingly forthright conversation with Castelbajac, the tsar revealed his own assessment of Russian military plans: the tsar could not be deterred by a joint Anglo-French movement, which contradicts existing views form historians that an Anglo-French alliance was deeply dreaded by the tsar.[103] The tsar was aware his Black Sea Fleet would 'soon be destroyed' were it to come into collision with those of England and France; for that reason, 'I shall keep them out of your reach should war break out; even so it is possible that my ships might be destroyed in the Harbour of Sevastopol, although, supposing them to be so, their loss would have little effect upon the operations in Turkey.' Castelbajac analysed that due to logistical difficulties of the Commissariat, there was little likelihood for a successful Russian crossing of the Balkans and marching upon Constantinople, and not more than one of the Baltic Fleet could be adequately manned. France was, however, incapable of independently opposing any serious Russian attacks on the Ottoman Empire. Militarily, a joint Anglo-French movement was necessitated to guarantee the defence of Constantinople. Notwithstanding, such an action would not only provoke a general war in Europe, but also ignite all revolutionary spirits in the continent.[104]

Another deeply distressing development within the Russian military contributed to Tsar Nicholas's growing impatience for war—the uncontainable spread of cholera among the troops;

[101] TNA, FO65/427, Seymour to Clarendon, 25 May/ 6 June, 1853, p100-5.
[102] Quai d'Orsay, 47CPC/3, Nicholas' memorandum, 14/26 June, 1853, p196.
[103] Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition,* 152.
[104] TNA, FO65/427, Seymour to Clarendon, secret and confidential, 25 May/ 6 June, 1853, p100-5.

prolonged stationing only risked exacerbating its transmission and aggravating ensuing discord. Despite the medical crisis, Russian forces were otherwise well-prepared for mobilisation. By 20 June, the Russia fleet was prepared with its 13th and 14th divisions assembled in Sevastopol and Odessa,[105] while four ships were already deployed to the mouth of the Bosphorus to monitor Ottoman naval movements. Command of the 4th and 5th corps was transferred to Prince Gorchakov, who was immediately summoned to St. Petersburg to discuss war plans with the tsar. On 18 June, Generals Alexander von Lüders and Nipocoitchiski, along with Ozeroff, departed from Odessa to Kishinev, Moldavia, where they would join Gorchakov to coordinate command of the army. On the same day, the cavalry stationed in Odessa, which had not received orders previously, were commanded to head towards Leova on the Pruth River. Concurrently, the 3rd army corps left Moscow en route towards the Russian-Ottoman border.[106] By the third week of June, the Moscow-based corps was readily formed with between 160,000 to 180,000 thousand troops, with the forces expected to double before the end of August. Notwithstanding, one critical concern overshadowed these promising preparations. Although Nicholas expressed satisfaction after inspecting six battalions of the 2nd corps, the tsar lamented, 'it is a pity that they also have cholera.'[107] As also observed by the French Consul in Moscow, the cholera epidemic had begun to wreak havoc among Russian troops.[108] The outbreak followed years of widespread devastation in Russia due to various cholera epidemics, which first emerged along the Caspian Sea coast in 1846, subsequently reaching the Caucasus and the Black Sea region of Ekaterinoslav by mid-July 1847. Between 1847-51, there were 1 million deaths from cholera in Russia, with 100,083 deaths recorded in 1853 alone.[109] Harsh

[105] *Zaionchkovskii*, Nicholas to Paskevitch, 29 May, 1853, p438.
[106] Quai d'Orsay, 47 CPC/3, French Consul in Odessa, Gilbert de Vilius to Lhuys, Odessa, 20 June, 1853, p194-195.
[107] *Zaionchkovskii*, Nicholas to the Prince of Warsaw, 29 May, 1853, p437.
[108] Quai d'Orsay, 47 CPC/3, French Consul in Moscow to Lhuys, 20 June, 1853, p198.
[109] Charlotte E. Henze, *Disease, Health Care and Government in Late Imperial Russia : Life and Death on the Volga, 1823-1914* (Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge, 2011), 5, 19-20; John P. Davis, *Russia in the Time of Cholera : Disease under Romanovs and Soviets* (London ; I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018).

fumigation regulations implemented by Nicholas in military stations—frequently deemed draconian—damaged military morale, provoked dissent and open rebellions among the soldiers, already burdened by the military's harsh, rigid conditions.[110] Rather than breeding rancour among the troops, a speedy mobilisation could be an expedient measure to boost morale. However, Russian wartime medicine in mid-nineteenth century remained rudimentary and largely ineffective in combatting infectious diseases such as cholera.[111] All considered, Nicholas remained unwavering in his commitment to military mobilisation at the earliest opportunity.

Nicholas' firmness to a certain extent embodied an element of 'amour propre' and national honour, as historian M.S. Anderson suggested that Russia, Britain, and France have all taken positions involving national prestige from which it was impossibly difficult to retreat. Russian public opinion confirmed this assessment, as it was speculated in Moscow that Nicholas was entirely independent in his decision-making, relying on few ministers but only upon 'un mouvement spontané', imbuing a sense of national honour.[112]Nicholas and other European statesmen at the time, however, did not view the situation quite as delicately as Anderson accounted for. For Nicholas, Russian national prestige was primarily associated with the struggle between Russia and the Ottoman Empire rather than vis-à-vis London or Paris; Britain and France were great powers whose 'difficult attitudes' complicated Russian designs. This is most robustly evidenced by Nicholas' assertion to Castelbajac that even if Russian fleets were destroyed by a joint Anglo-French fleet, it would not significantly impact the overall Russian effort against the Ottoman Empire. Although Nicholas erroneously underestimated the crucial importance of naval warfare and overestimated the fortitude of his troops, the tsar did

[110] Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia and the Russians : A History* (Cambridge, Mass. ; Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 268.
[111] Yulia Naumova, "Russian Medical Service During the Crimean War: New Perspectives." *19: interdisciplinary studies in the long nineteenth century* 2015.20 (2015), 3.
[112] Quai d'Orsay, 47 CPC/3, French Consul in Moscow, N. Funlange-Bolz to Lhuys, Moscow, 8 July, 1853, received in Paris on 30 July, p202-203. M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question,* p125.

not consider Russian honour at stake due to British and French involvement, as the main contest was not against these two powers for Nicholas. Furthermore, Nicholas did leave a nominal exit for himself through the 26 June memorandum, citing that he will evacuate the Principalities should the Ottoman Porte concede to the final Russian terms, albeit it a hypothetical and unlikely possibility. France was distinctively proactive—she immediately supplied the Ottoman Empire with between 40,000-60,000 troops in the first week of July. The Quai d'Orsay shrewdly followed Nicholas' discourse that occupying the Principalities was a peaceful measure, thus France was fully justified in providing arms for the Porte.[113] For Britain, to the contrary, it was rather her want of attention towards national prestige that compromised her position: should Clarendon and Aberdeen have prioritised Britain's national image, her foreign policy would have been more steadfast and that of Russia more restrained. Still in a near farcical denial in July, the London Cabinet chose to interpret Nicholas' declaration for temporarily occupying the Principalities *quantum valeat*, which rendered it an inadequate *casus belli* and insufficient justification for summoning the British fleet, prolonging Whitehall's deliberations.[114] After painstaking diplomatic efforts in 1853, Britain considered that it would be 'so bald and small' a 'mauvaise plaisanterie' to simply offer Russia what she was entitled to claim under existing treaties; but to offer her anything beyond Kuchuk Kainardji would be injurious to the Porte; it would also be difficult to obtain the concurrence of France to any 'acte explicatif' that would also satisfy Russia.[115] If only Britain had elucidated her own national interests ahead of that of other powers, Nicholas' expansionist visions would have been far more effectively constrained.

[113] *Le Constitutionnel*, 1 July, 1853, and *Le Moniteur*, 3 July, cited in TNA, FO27/971, Cowley to Clarendon, Paris, 4 July, 1853, No. 505, confidential.
[114] Aberdeen to Palmerston, 4 July, 1853, in *Selections from the Correspondence from the Earl of Aberdeen,* Volume X, p158-160.
[115] TNA, FO519/169, Clarendon to Cowley, 30 June, 1853, p495-503.

V. Conclusion

'There is no doubt that the Ottoman Empire is in great peril. It is so weak, so disorganised, and at the same time so tempting a prize to ambition that each of the Great Powers entertains no unnatural fear that its conquest may be accomplished to the aggrandisement of the other. Thus, each power is induced to action, not from its own ambition, but from suspicion of the ambition of another great and formidable Empire.'[116] John Russell aptly described European diplomacy surrounding the Eastern Question before the onset of diplomatic missions surrounding the Holy Places and Montenegro crises. If Russell had remained in power as the British Foreign Secretary, his suspicion, hawkishness, and penchant to action would have moulded Britain's eastern policy. Under Lord Aberdeen, the divided British government saw prolonged inertia and obstinate denial preclude any effective deterrence against Russia. Even confronted with Nicholas' formidable ambitions for quasi-sovereignty by form of a general protectorate in the Ottoman Empire, Britain timidly faltered over the legal basis for intervention, out of fear that if she intervened, her pre-emptive military presence would gift Russia a most desired *casus belli*, despite purely defensive British intentions. Stratford Canning so assiduously and vigorously lobbied all parties in Constantinople to foil the Russian proposal, that he was inevitably uncoordinated with and unsupported by his government's indecisiveness. Ultimately, Britain's confusion exceeded her feebleness—as she did reluctantly authorise mobilisation of the Malta fleet in a joint naval alliance with France. Britain was even passively forced into this escalatory step, as in both March and June of 1853, Louis Napoleon's opportunism resulted in premature French naval activities that derailed diplomatic efforts, thereby forcing British collaboration.

At the very core of the diplomatic preliminaries of the Crimean War lies Russia's undeniably manifest desire for expansionism. Prince Menshikov's intransigence was less

[116] TNA, FO27/955, Russell to Cowley, 29 January, 1853, in Englische AGKK III, I, p92.

responsible than his imperial instructions in rendering his diplomatic mission impossible. St. Petersburg had only been preparing for the eventuality of war since the early weeks of April, even before the verbal notes had been communicated to the Ottoman Porte. Close monitoring of Russian military preparedness dictated Menshikov's mission—the army was convened, and the Black Sea fleet was ready. The rapidly spreading cholera fomented more agitation, prompting the military into prompt mobilisation, bolstered by Nicholas' hubris. All that was missing was a sound *casus belli*, thus the quest for failure in Menshikov's mission served to produce it.

Nicholas nonetheless desired an expansion of Russian influence over the Ottoman Empire in an implausibly unsophisticated manner—he was sincere in his disavowal of seeking the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire or generating a general European War. The tsar viewed his extensive pressure on the Porte in a parochial light, failing to foresee that the wider ramifications of his intentions would necessitate violence, and a hypothetical conflict between the maritime powers and Russia would be more consequential to Russian national prestige than the lone contest against the Sultan, in which Nicholas was guaranteed to prevail.

What Nicholas had also overlooked was the fragility of the Austro-Russian alliance and the irreconcilable fractures in the once intimate rapports. Even though Austria did not directly compete over the Danubian Principalities, she could not concede Russian influence in the Balkan region, to which the Austrian Empire was territorially and commercially exposed. With pressures from Prussia over ascendency in the German Confederation, protecting Austrian material interests trumped fostering the alliance with St Petersburg. More critically, conservatism brought Austria and Russia together, most recently in 1849, and it was also over conservative principles that the two countries would sever ties. The Russian attack upon the legitimate sovereign of the Ottoman Empire would assuredly engender an uncontainable spread of revolutionary sentiments from which Austria could not escape unscathed. Franz Joseph's

Austria therefore chose survival and stability over loyalty and gratitude.

Betrayed by staunch Austrian neutrality, Nicholas' Russian troops crossed the Pruth River on 3 July, 1853, unsupported by any allied forces, marking the beginning of hostilities between Russia and the Ottoman Empire at the onset of the Crimean War. Epitomising remarkable British confusion during months of diplomatic frustration, Cowley still asked the Foreign Minister Lord Clarendon, 'Do you think of protesting if the Russians cross the Pruth?'[117]

[117] Clarendon Papers/6, Cowley to Clarendon, Paris, 29 June, 1853, p172.

Conclusion: Disruptions to Diplomacy in a Fractured Europe

In the immediate wake of the Napoleonic wars, the Congress of Vienna of 1814 sought to safeguard European peace through a system of orchestrated diplomatic efforts—the Concert of Europe, which institutionalised the vision of Castlereagh and flourished under the supervision of Metternich. This unprecedent diplomatic structure saw a triumphant first decade, but it was visibly fraying well before the mid-nineteenth century. Unprecedented economic growth and industrial advances introduced rapid demographic shifts and widening wealth disparities, fomenting widespread public dissent. Grappling with complex socioeconomic challenges, Europe emerged from the revolutions of the 1830s and 1840s only with more conservative regimes now cognisant and vigilant of public opinion.

Beyond these external disruptions, this thesis exposed the weak premise on which European diplomacy was constructed: the Concert of Europe was conditioned on a complex web of compromises among all great powers, rendering the diplomatic system inherently fragile. In 1814, irreconcilability of material interests only temporarily deferred to the common task of combating revolution. European diplomacy was also increasingly mired in a multitude of other disruptions: 1) strategic confusion, 2) transient transactional alliances, 3) susceptibility to public opinion, 4) dilution of deterrence, and ultimately, 5) the incompatibility of expansionist hubris and peaceful proclamations.

The disruptions to diplomacy identified in this thesis were frequently interrelated, as exemplified through the complex diplomatic preliminaries of the Greek War of Independence, the Russo-Turkish War, and the Crimean War. For instance, strategic confusion within Britain led to her brief, fractured alliance with Russia in 1826; British and French navy deployment, as pressurised by mounting Russophobia in domestic public opinion, also failed to preclude

Russian advances towards the Principalities in 1853. Fundamentally, among great powers who witnessed the rise of the printed press, statesmen's susceptibility to public opinion frequently clouded strategic considerations in foreign policy. The sway of public sentiments habitually caused disunity among the leading statesmen, thereby diminishing the possibility and undermining the durability of great power alliances, particularly those forged over momentary agreements rather than deep-seated shared values. Whilst the presence of the first three disruptions, individual or combined, may not immediately lead to the outbreak of hostilities, they could severely hinder diplomatic efforts and push great powers closer to the edge of war.

The dilution of deterrence and resolute expansionist ambitions, as this thesis demonstrated, were far more lethal to the safeguarding of peace through diplomatic efforts. Once the Ottoman Porte grew accustomed to repeated Russian ultimatums and various stints of Russian occupation of the Danubian Principalities, Nicholas' coercive act of military advancement proved ineffective in producing a peaceful resolution in the Eastern Question. Naval deployments from Britain and France, in a similar fashion, only escalated tensions irrevocably. More detrimentally, in face of resolute territorial objectives, diplomatic efforts could maximally provide a momentary redress. Once a capable great power is resolute in territorial expansion, tireless diplomatic efforts can only be futile in achieving peaceful settlements. In the first half of the nineteenth century, these varied disruptions considerably thwarted efforts at European diplomacy, eventually culminating in the Crimean War of 1853.

I. Disruptions to diplomacy, 1814-1856

Strategic confusion

Strategic confusion was a debilitating disruption to diplomacy among great powers,

particularly those who faced overwhelmingly clashing priorities and principles. This was best exhibited through Tsar Alexander I's handling of the Greek War of Independence, explored in Chapter 2, in which he eventually refrained from Russian military intervention. The anti-revolutionary non-interventionist principle that Alexander honoured faced a frontal collision with Russia's religious obligation to protect her Greek Orthodox co-religionists under Ottoman rule. Torn by desires to defend the Greeks and the commitment to uphold the European status quo, the tsar's indecision precluded Russian action. Although this was feted as a victory for European diplomacy—as Russia did not declare war against the Ottoman Empire in 1821, it reflected the absence of a clear Russian eastern policy, rather than the triumph of ideological constraints established under the Concert of Europe.

More detrimental strategic disarray—distinctively marked by internal ministerial strife—jeopardised British diplomatic efforts in two notable episodes. During the formulation of the St. Petersburg Protocol of 1826 (Chapter 3), George Canning extended a welcoming gesture to Russian overtures of an Anglo-Russian understanding over the Eastern Question. This arrangement, however, was vehemently opposed by Wellington, who mistrusted Russian pretensions. Their political infighting thus forged an oscillating British policy that effectively nullified both the Protocol and the Treaty of London, to the frustration of St. Petersburg.

By 1853, Britain's strategic indecision became fateful for diplomatic efforts preceding the Crimean War (Chapters 5 & 6), where the British cabinet once again vacillated between appeasement and confrontation against Russia. Similar to 1827, the Aberdeen administration was ruinously mired by ministerial strife between pro-peace (Aberdeen & Clarendon) and war-seeking ministers (Russell & Palmerston), delaying decisive British action and compromising the ambassador in Constantinople, Stratford Canning. Apart from an isolationist desire to steer clear of the Holy Places dispute, British Russophobia collided with the Prime Minister's faith

in Tsar Nicholas' peaceful declarations, resulting in a gross British miscalculation that permitted Russian hostilities towards the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Porte also exhibited such strategic confusion: feeble Ottoman governance and administrative chaos virtually invalidated all European efforts at diplomacy in the first half of the century. Particularly, the Porte's handling of the Holy Places dispute (Chapters 4 & 5) saw contradictory Ottoman concessions to France and Russia, deepening the crisis by emboldening all parties' belligerence. In contrast to Britain and Russia, Ottoman strategic confusion was partially deliberate, as the Porte placated all great powers to capitalise on conflicting European interests, thereby shielding itself from solely facing the brunt of Russian aggression.

Transient transactional alliances

As the acute threat of Napoleon faded from immediate memory, alliances between great powers under the Concert of Europe framework became increasingly transactional and transient, reflecting the system's fundamental fragility. The Anglo-Russian alliance in 1826 epitomised such a fleeting arrangement loosely bound by utilitarian motives (Chapter 3). In this momentary understanding, Russia outmanoeuvred Britain diplomatically—by obtaining British acquiescence to Russian ambitions vis-à-vis the Porte, Russia not only fortified her position in the East, but she also leveraged the accord as a bulwark against potential British animosity, foiling London's designs of containing Russian ambitions through the bipartite protocol. Burdened by contradictory motives, the strained alliance soon collapsed, aggravating British mistrust of Russia.

Although the Austro-Russian alliance once honoured more deep-seated conservatist

principles, it took a transactional turn after Nicholas' militarily supported Austria in suppressing the 1849 Hungarian uprisings: the Tsar expected a *quid pro quo* through Austrian backing for Russian expansions towards the East (Chapter 6). Austria was not ungrateful, but a formidable Russian presence in the Danubian Principalities would threaten Austrian ascendancy in the Balkans, also inciting revolutionary sentiments that would immediately endanger the survival and stability of the ethnically heterogenous Austrian Empire. Nicholas' quest for an unlikely transaction thus dismantled the former cornerstone of conservative solidarity.

Susceptibility to Public Opinion

With the rise of the printed press, public opinion also rattled nineteenth century European diplomacy. In 1852, Louis Napoleon, the self-proclaimed French emperor, adopted an assertive posture in the Holy Places dispute to pander to increasingly nationalist French public opinion and bolster his domestic popularity (Chapter 4). At the risk of irking Russia, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte appealed to the French public with his inflammatory discourse on the restoration of French prestige, escalating tensions with Constantinople and frustrating the Quai d'Orsay.

The following year, the British government was more severely constrained by growing anti-Russian public opinion at the outset of the Crimean War, which stemmed in part from Liberal loathing of autocracy. As Russophobia surged in the press, the pacific Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary succumbed to the hawks of Fleet Street—who demanded war against Russia—as they reluctantly authorised the mobilisation of the British fleet towards the Black Sea, signalling the commencement of hostilities and the rupture of diplomacy (Chapter 6).

The dilution of deterrence

European diplomacy following the Congress Era was far from exemplary—it demonstrated a narrow range of mechanisms, frequently resorting to threatening aggression against the Ottoman Porte, which significantly diluted the deterrence power that European courts wielded. In 1821, the Russian ambassador Baron Stroganoff's abuse of ultimatums in Constantinople—through their repetitive use and non-execution—gravely discredited Russia and crippled her diplomatic efforts (Chapter 2). Detecting the insincerity of Russian threats, the Porte was emboldened against future Russian menaces. Thirty years later, the Russian envoy Prince Menshikov reprised this blunder by repeatedly extending the deadline of his 'final ultimatum', which threatened a Russian occupation of the Danubian Principalities (Chapter 6). Even after a crisp rejection from the Ottoman government, which effectively exceeded Russian forbearance, Nicholas further extended the ultimatum by two weeks, to little diplomatic effect.

This disruptive force originated from European great powers' growing reliance on gunboat diplomacy that preceded exhaustive negotiations. The premature deployment of the French Toulon fleet in March 1853, the pre-emptive mobilisation of the Royal Fleet in Malta, and the unflinching Russian advance towards the Principalities—alarmingly, were all perceived as means of diplomacy by European sovereigns and statesmen, intended to coerce the Ottoman Porte into compliance. Admittedly, gunboat diplomacy prevailed in early 1853 for Austria during Count Leiningen's mission in the Montenegro affair, but a similar strategy led to catastrophic eventualities in the later months of 1853 (Chapters 5 & 6). Essentially, gunboat diplomacy can be plausibly effective when used against a considerably weaker opponent, such as Austrian menaces towards the Sultan. By mid-1853, however, such ostensible military demonstrations only served to provoke adversarial powers and incite hostilities, as the Russian 3rd and 5th corps alarmed Whitehall and the Tuileries far deeply than

it pressurised the Porte. When confronted with comparable military fortitude, ill-advised gunboat diplomacy shattered hopes of maintaining peace in advance of the Crimean War.

Irreconcilability of expansionist hubris and peaceful proclamations

Finally, whilst other factors helped to derail Congress diplomacy, the ultimate disruption which led to its utter destruction was the irreconcilability of territorial expansionist ambitions and peaceful proclamations. In 1853, European great powers bitterly lamented that, regardless of Tsar Nicholas I's perhaps sincere pacific overtures, his manifest territorial ambitions could not be accommodated through diplomatic means. St. Petersburg's hubris aimed at securing a general Russian protectorate over the Ottoman Empire under the guise of safeguarding Orthodox co-religionists, but it was effectively tantamount to possessing quasi-sovereignty over the Sultan's subjects (Chapters 5 & 6). Tireless British and French diplomatic efforts at the Ottoman capital were futile; even Austria's perceived betrayal could not forestall the advance of Nicholas's fully mobilised army corps and Black Sea fleet. Once a militarily capable power—such as Russia—becomes determined on territorial expansion, diplomacy can scarcely escape its demise.

II. Contribution: on the decline of the Concert of Europe

A primary contribution of this dissertation is its perspective on the Concert of Europe as a procedure of diplomatic mechanisms, in lieu of an ideological balance of power framework. The limited constraining power that the European concert did wield was gradually waning in the first half of the nineteenth century, until eventually eclipsed by prioritised considerations of transactional alliances, public opinion, and strategic hubris. Henry Kissinger,

whose monograph on the Concert of Europe inspired this dissertation, was far too sanguine about the normative power of the concert system in accommodating for great powers' divergent strategic interests. The limited scope of Kissinger's 1957 seminal publication structurally omitted the decline of the congress system as memories of the Napoleonic Wars gradually receded, with great powers' conflicting interests replacing the ideological cohesion that 1814 witnessed. This thesis demonstrates the disruptive force of the Eastern Question, which exposed the temporarily concealed yet fundamental compromises great powers made in the Vienna settlement.

As portrayed throughout this dissertation, parsimonious IR theories on the Concert of Europe neglect the intentions of statesmen of the nineteenth century—a great number of whom were irrational and inconsistent. The major pitfall of the security dilemma theory, as proposed by Kagan and Rendall, is its stark oversimplification of nuanced conflicts. As shown in Chapters 3, 5, and 6, multiple instances of hostilities—the 1828 Russo-Turkish War, the Austrian intervention in Montenegro, and the Crimean War—drastically varied in their implications for European stability; statesmen thus rarely considered shifts in the European status quo in generalisable notions. This study also disputes Jervis' explanation of improved transparency through the Concert system, by evidencing that major European powers' transactional alliances were driven by mistrust rather than confidence. In contrast to Schroeder's theory, this thesis underscores that great powers rarely considered the maintenance of an international order with sincerity, despite frequently citing this motivation in diplomatic correspondence. In addition, Austria's mounting suspicion of Russia and Britain's isolationist predilection undermine Ingram's description of hegemonic power.

Building upon existing historiography on the Greek struggle for independence, this dissertation largely confirms Dakin's review on Alexander's restraint due to the Russian division among two foreign ministers, yet it mildly challenges Dakin and Jarrett's emphasis on

Alexander's respect for concert norms. Instead, the nonaction from Britain and Austria created Alexander's hesitation, affirming Mazower's standpoint that the deliberate ambiguity and flexibility in European diplomacy helped prevent conflict in 1821. Whilst Marriott praises the Anglo-Russo understanding in 1826 as George Canning's greatest diplomatic accomplishment for unmatched cooperation between the two great powers, this dissertation agrees with Anderson that such diplomatic victories were not only transient but illusory, as the strained, short-lived partnership only aggravated relations between London and St. Petersburg. To the historiography of the Greek case, this dissertation contributes a nuanced and renewed view of Russia's diplomatic blunder with Baron Stroganoff in 1821, where St. Petersburg's attitude on Greece was nearly forced by Stroganoff's unauthorised escalations against the Porte. Furthermore, this study challenges ideological explanations of Alexander's restraint, as the tsar's actions were shown to be unpredictable and driven by inertia, rather than deliberate non-action. Additionally, this dissertation highlights the under-examined yet ruinous strife between George Canning and Wellington during the formation of the St. Petersburg Protocol, where British policy was far from cohesive.

Among the historiography of the Crimean War, Anderson and Goldfrank offer the most balanced and comprehensive accounts attributing blame to all powers involved, with which this dissertation broadly agrees. Figes castigates Louis Napoleon for escalating the Holy Places dispute under a Bonapartist tradition to find fault in Europe, claiming that the religious controversy offered a convenient pretext for the French emperor to fight against Russia; through extensive French and Austrian records, this dissertation challenges Figes' accusations against French aggression by demonstrating La Valette's inconstancy, the Quai'Orsay's timidity, and the Tuileries' sway, with the last only answerable to French public opinion. While Anderson, Figes, Lambert, and Ingram all criticise Nicholas' misjudgement of British support, this thesis resonates with Bitis' emphasis on Nicholas' hubris, as well as Schroeder and

Goldfrank's focus on the irreconcilability of Nicholas's expansionist ambitions with peaceful resolutions. Regarding the British Cabinet, leading historians' sharp criticism of the Aberdeen administration are well-founded, but this study further elucidates London's disconnect from Stratford Canning, the passive nature of British intelligence, and British resistance towards forging an alliance with France. Additionally, through underexamined French and Austrian records, this thesis accentuates the militant nature of Menshikov's diplomatic mission, including Russian designs for forging a naval alliance with Greece in early 1853, both attesting to Russia's resolution towards seeking a casus belli based on her military preparedness.

A fundamental contribution of this dissertation is its analysis on the Austro-Russian rupture in advance of the Crimean War, on which existing scholarship is unconvincing. Through detailed Austrian archival material, this study clarifies that Vienna's decision to distance St. Petersburg originated far beyond 1853 and the recognition of Louis Napoleon—despite Nicholas' military support in suppressing the Hungarian uprising in 1849, Austria and Russia held deep-seated conflicting interests in the Balkans. Through examining Austria's competition with Prussia in the German Confederation and Vienna's intense fear of revolutionary repercussions of supporting Russia, this thesis illuminates both the long-standing and short terms causes of the Austro-Russian split.

III. Final discussion: cautious optimism for the vitality of diplomacy

Despite a discouraging outlook, diplomatic efforts could still have potently undermined Russian resolution in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the face of resolute Russian expansionist ambitions, ordinary tools of diplomacy may have been rendered powerless, but this meant it was necessary to reverse the traditional diplomatic approach. Instead of aimlessly

persuading a power such as Nicholas' Russia to rescind warlike ambitions, diplomatic efforts ought to have *disrupted* the tsar's decision-making calculus, utilising precisely the factors that jeopardise diplomacy as this thesis observed: strategic confusion, transient alliances, public opinion, and deterrence mechanisms. Through highlighting a power's conflicting strategic principles and engineering internal political division, strategic confusion can be generated to cloud the sovereign's strategic prioritisation. Forging a momentary, utilitarian alliance can also stall immediate hostilities. More feasibly, the manipulation of public opinion—although only applicable to more liberal-minded powers—can also sway existing predilection for war. Measured utilisation of a single ultimatum along with its faithful execution may also be effective.

This thesis concludes with cautious optimism for the vitality of diplomacy, as it promises hopes for peace, even in its most brittle and fragile state, fraught with myriad disruptions.

Epilogue

Nearly two hundred years later, ports on the Black Sea—still controlled by the Turkish navy—remain vulnerable to Russian menace. Reminiscing on its imperial Ottoman glory, Turkey boosts its position as 'a country condemned to strategic significance', seeking to leverage its military weight as a worthy partner to Europe, as the latter desperately needs a well-armed ally to protect the continent's southeastern flank from Russian revanchism.

The pre-2022 status quo, apart from fruitless quests for EU accession, had been largely favourable for Turkey. Upon the declaration of a plausibly imminent ceasefire in Ukraine, Russia could revert to fortifying its presence in Crimea, projecting military dominance over the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean. A stronger Russia in the Black Sea would subsequently jeopardise both Europe and Turkey, but the continent has exhibited more appetite to engage closely with Ankara for its military support in repelling Russia. As the *Financial Times* fittingly asserts, 'Unsteady NATO alliance makes Turkey vital once again for European security.'

If 1853 was farcical, then the tragedy of 2025 is far more chilling. As Mark Twain once noted, history doesn't repeat itself, but it sometimes rhymes.

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