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**‘A Great and Sudden Change’:
Lord Castlereagh, Economic Reform, and the
Transformation of Post-Napoleonic Politics,
1815-1822**

*Trinity College Dublin
School of Histories and Humanities
Department of History*

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

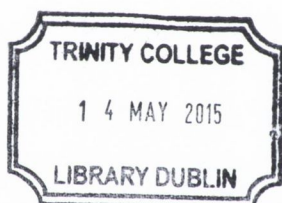
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2014

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Abstract

Utilizing a political history approach, this thesis presents an account of two distinct, but interrelated narratives of change. Firstly, it presents Castlereagh's political thought as a process, and seeks to present Castlereagh's policies as uniquely flexible due to his ends driven political tendencies. The evidence of Castlereagh's development, on a broad swathe of prominent legislative and ideological debates is then analyzed within the larger context of the second 'great and sudden change' brought about by the impact of economic reforms, both supported and opposed by the Liverpool government, in the years that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars. These economic reforms helped to intensify a climate of violent political dissent and to bring about a reorientation of cabinet hierarchy. The cabinet's reorientation is presented as a Canningite 'coup' that took place in two stages, with William Huskisson superseding Nicholas Vansittart in the midst of the Corn Bill debates and Canning increasingly overruling Castlereagh following the government's income tax defeat. The persistent economic challenges of the immediate postwar era, when combined with the Liverpool administration's draconian efforts at putting down popular protest, shifted radical emphases to domestic matters and incentivized political moderation. This approach highlights previously unrecognized links between the austerity measures that occurred after the repeal of the income tax and Castlereagh's embrace of non-intervention and reinterprets Castlereagh's post Aix-la-Chappelle foreign policy as dominated by Canning's influence.

Summary

This study traces the development of Castlereagh's foreign and domestic policies within the context of the rapid economic, social, and political changes that followed the Napoleonic Wars. Rather than treating the British government's foreign and domestic policies as existing in distinct political spheres, this thesis examines underlying trends that shaped both. In particular, this thesis highlights the impact of economic reform upon the nature and scope of the British government. The thesis is divided into three sections. The first deals primarily with three legislative processes.

Chapter 1 contextualizes Castlereagh's career by examining his historical legacy and the political trends that shaped his era. With the expansion of the fiscal military state, the scope and scale of the government's responsibilities grew exponentially. Castlereagh's reluctance to delegate tasks, in spite of this expanded workload, had significant effects on the postwar development of the government.

Chapter 2 looks at Castlereagh's involvement in the passage of the Corn Laws of 1815. In particular it highlights his support for the suppression of protests outside parliament. The government's decision to pursue the legislation, likely in hopes of securing support for a continuance of the income tax, brought an end to wartime unity. By demonstrating its class prejudices, the Corn Laws spread support for radicalism into a larger swathe of the middle classes. The rising tide of middle class dissent, created a schism within radicalism that would eventually shift the movement away from violence and towards the more gradualist reforms brought about in the 1820s and early 1830s.

Chapter 3 depicts the events surrounding the abolition of the income tax in 1816. At the conclusion of the war both the Whig and radical parties found themselves disorganized and ineffective. While radical protests grew more violent, within parliament, Henry Brougham attempted to utilize growing anti-tax sentiment to push himself into the opposition's leadership. Castlereagh's condemnation of the public's impatience with the tax's continuance helped to seal the income tax's fate. Worried that the government might fall, in the aftermath of the abolition of the income tax, Lord Liverpool invited Canning to rejoin the cabinet and instituted a policy of austerity and retrenchment that would reshape the nature of the British government.

Chapter 4 examines Castlereagh's interactions with British monetary policy. Castlereagh's mentor, William Pitt instituted the suspension of cash payments in 1797 to sustain Britain's burgeoning

wartime budget. In the aftermath of the war, Castlereagh floated a new and unusual definition of money that sought to ensure Britain's continued ability to project force. Eventually, as the ministry embraced bullionism, Castlereagh gradually accepted the new monetary orthodoxy.

Chapter 5 surveys changes in Castlereagh's policies towards the Americas, North Africa, and Anglo-Dutch relations in Asia. In the wake of the War of 1812, British economic interests propelled a rapid normalization of Anglo-American relations. Castlereagh's cooperation with Adams and Rush helped establish a firm relationship, as both countries embraced the renewal of commercial ties. Castlereagh's relationship with South America, similarly pivoted as Castlereagh abandoned his earlier policies of military action and political intervention. Eventually Castlereagh also elected to drop his policy of establishing monarchies in South America. As part of his buffer state system Castlereagh sought to strengthen Dutch colonial holdings in Asia, a policy that he would abandon later in the face of opposition from the British commercial interest. Castlereagh's efforts at creating the Kingdom of Sardinia as a buffer between France and the Italian states drew Britain into conflict with their former allies the Barbary States.

Chapter 6 analyzes the decline of the Congress System, by highlighting the persistent effects of Lord Liverpool's disagreement with Castlereagh during the Congress of Vienna. With the addition of Canning to the cabinet in 1816, Castlereagh's role in setting the government's foreign policy was diminished. The growth of cabinet oversight during the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle was a turning point in Britain's relationship to the Congress System. While Castlereagh worked to create a more efficient Foreign Office the cabinet's reorientation led to a shift away from his policy goals. Although Castlereagh attempted to reestablish his connections with Metternich after Canning's resignation, Castlereagh's death prevented Britain from returning to full participation in the Congress System.

Chapter 7 examines the domestic impact of economic reform, in particular looking into the declining power of the monarch and the changing face of dissent. The persistent economic challenges of the immediate postwar era, when combined with the Liverpool administration's draconian efforts at putting down popular protest, shifted radical emphases to domestic matters and incentivized political moderation.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to acknowledge the enormous assistance of my parents Henry and Cheryl Parker, whose moral, intellectual, spiritual, and financial support made this thesis possible. Their love of history and travel shaped my childhood fascination with the past, even when their appetite for restored villages proved deeper than my own. In particular I would like to thank my father for the many hours he spent explaining historical events. His storytelling abilities granted me an understanding of the importance of narrative in the presentation of the past. My mother, who taught me from the ages of six to eighteen, instilled not only the importance of hard work, but a love for reading and a sense that the past can remain alive. Her advice and assistance with this thesis have been priceless.

My sister Gisela likewise deserves much thanks for her kindness and sympathy during the writing of this thesis, and for sharing my sense of humor.

I would also like to thank Thomas Kay, whose brilliantly discursive lectures during my undergraduate years helped me decide to pursue further historical studies. My Uncle Daniel Hoisington and William Heyck, my advisor at Northwestern, both deserve much thanks for their inspiration and willingness to introduce me to the craft of the historian.

The research at the core of this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of the staffs of the National Archives at Kew, the Durham University Archives, the British Library, and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

Much thanks as well to the faculty of Trinity College, in particular my advisor Patrick Geoghegan, as well as Martine Cuypers for their willingness to read drafts of this thesis, and for their extremely helpful notes. Robert Armstrong stands out as one of the most thoughtful and kind academics I have worked with, his encouragement and assistance were invaluable during the long process of completing this Ph.D.

I would like to especially thank John Bew for his willingness to serve as my external examiner. A scholar that I have long admired, his advice proved tremendously useful in the process of revising this thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank my grandparents, for their love and support throughout my childhood and beyond. My grandfather Raymond Hoisington's help with homework and delicious buckwheat pancakes demonstrated the joy of learning to me at a young age. My grandmother, Roberta Hoisington, consistently reminded me of the importance of family and of finishing tasks, including this one. This thesis is dedicated, with much love and thanks, to them.

Introduction

‘[Peace] was a *great and sudden change*, and such a change, however desirable, however necessary, however beneficial at last, could not occur without much immediate inconvenience.’

-*The Quarterly Review*¹

‘Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a *great and sudden change*. The sun might shine or the clouds might lower, but nothing could appear to me as it had done the day before.’

-Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*²

Throughout history societies have faced the perennial problem of warfare. At the core of this issue are the particularly complex social, political, and economic challenges posed by the expenses of warfighting. In the aftermath of the strategic innovations of the Napoleonic Wars, the logistics of fielding massed armies elevated this difficulty by vastly increasing the cost of warfare, as well as the tertiary social impacts of the fiscal military state’s society-wide mobilization.³ The sudden reduction in the size of the postwar British state, and the extensive social and political aftershocks that they produced have much in common with the impact of the world-wide austerity measures that resulted from the 2008 recession. Just as rioting broke out in response to efforts at reducing the scope of the European welfare state, post-Napoleonic Britain experienced a period of violent dissent that fundamentally reshaped its political system. The persistent challenge brought about by austerity measures thus remains a problem, worthy of continued scholarly attention. More specifically the question of how austerity, dissent, and political reform interact remains current and pressing. This thesis thus presents a new approach to understanding the complex interaction of these factors which emerged in Britain in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars.

This thesis presents the argument that the year between the onset of the Hundred Days campaign and the 1816 repeal of the income tax should be understood as a dramatic and fundamental break in the history of the British political system. In contrast to gradualist

¹ *The Quarterly Review*, July 1816, p. 566.

² Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (Boston, 1869), p. 156.

³ Geoffrey Parker has argued that, in the Napoleonic Wars, ‘the concentration of such large armies and fleets strained to the limit the expanded economic, political and technological resources which had permitted their creation’ but at the same time, ‘managed to create the first global hegemony in history.’ Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1990* (Oxford, 1992), p. 154.

interpretations of postwar transformation, rooted in midcentury economic history, this thesis presents the case that Britain's political system exhibited a relatively stable form during both the military-fiscal years of the wartime government and the second half of the Liverpool government.⁴ In between those two distinct systems, there occurred a series of events powerful enough to break the inherent inertia of a well-established constitutional form and replace it with something distinct. This disruptive change was actuated by the explosion of spending at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, which left the country with long-term fiscal liabilities.⁵ Castlereagh's spending on subsidies during the Hundred Days relied, in part, upon the payment of French war indemnities, which were set at £700 million, and a continuation of wartime parliamentary unity, payments that could have ensured the maintenance of necessary war taxes.⁶ Both economically damaging and ineffective, the blatantly self-serving nature of the 1815 Corn bill led to an eruption of popular dissent, the expression of which reinvigorated both postwar radicalism and parliamentary opposition.⁷ When combined with the perceived failure of the Corn Laws, the opposition coalesced

⁴ Clapham can be seen as the originator of this gradualist tendency in his criticisms of the term, 'industrial revolution.' Arguing instead, that, 'neither in London nor anywhere else had there been a revolution... only a slow development.' J. H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain, 1820-1850* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 71; Berg and Hudson have convincingly argued that the 'radical change' of this period, 'was obvious to contemporaries, but it has been obscured in recent historiography.' Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution', *The Economic History Review*, 45/1 (1992), p. 26. While the gradualist interpretation of industrialization has largely held, more recent scholarly work has sought to emphasize the *experience* of change, or as Maxine Berg puts it, 'the shocks of a rapid process' rather than the actual rate of industrial change. Maxine Berg, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy, 1815-1848* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 15; Berg and Hudson have argued that the gradualist narratives of economic history have impacted other branches of study, as 'social history' has taken, 'a strong lead from the gradualism of economic history interpretations.' Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution', p. 25.

⁴ Oliver MacDonagh has cautioned against the tendency to select pet inputs, such as 'economical reform' or 'utilitarianism' as the cause of the 'revolution in government.' As such, any claims of causation must be presented with the proviso that the contributing factors to change in government are necessarily highly dispersed, and irreducibly complex. Oliver MacDonagh, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal', *The Historical Journal*, 1/1 (1958), p. 53.

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⁶ For a detailed examination of British wartime subsidies, see John Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder: British Foreign Aid in the War with France, 1793-1815* (London, 1969); While the First Treaty of Paris had imposed no indemnities, after the expenditures of the Hundred Days, the changing economic situation in Britain, and the increased parliamentary hostility towards the Bourbons, this policy was ostensibly altered in the Second Treaty. Niall Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild* (New York, 1998), p. 113.

⁷ Another, less well understood component of the popular perception of this legislation, and the economic legislation which followed it, is the manner in which it awakened a 'new awareness of economic and social change' as the government's role in seeking to 'fix' the economy were 'unprecedented' and rooted in 'the long term problem of

around efforts to repeal the income tax.⁸ This effort, aided by a wide variety of motivating factors impoverished the government, and led to an enormous increase in debt. This combination of debt and the decline in government resources, in turn, led to the emergence of austerity as a central issue in the business of parliament, as the scope and scale of the government was ruthlessly reduced within a few years' time, often under duress.⁹ Austerity thus can be seen as the motivating factor behind many of the reforms which weakened the status of the monarchy and the customs of 'Old Corruption'.

At the center of this argument is Lord Castlereagh, whose role as Leader of the House of Commons has attracted relatively little examination. While some historians interpret Castlereagh as a leader committed to the 'fixed principles' of high Toryism this thesis argues that Castlereagh's political tendencies experienced a transformation from 1815 to 1822 as he slowly, but steadily, responded to the changing post-war political climate.¹⁰ During this period Castlereagh converted or at least pivoted on a number of policies, including austerity, bullionism, and intervention. While Castlereagh did not always fully embrace changes in ministerial policy, he tended to endorse cabinet consensus, even when those policies violated his own principles.¹¹ As Canning's private secretary Augustus Stapleton wrote, 'the fault indeed in Lord Londonderry's policy was not in the tone of the official documents which he put forth to the world or the speeches which he delivered in Parliament, but in his not taking care to make his measures accord with his principles.'¹²

Rather than being presented as a dominant actor who forced through dramatic shifts in British foreign and domestic policy, Castlereagh is understood as a traditionally-minded,

adjusting to an industrializing economy.' Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class, the Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 233.

⁸ Brougham, in a letter to Creevey set out the general outlines of what would become the opposition's strategy in the following years. 'As to home politics, here we should make our main stand; and the ground is clearly retrenchment, in all ways, with ramifications into the Royal Family, property tax, jobs of all sort, distresses of the landed interest, etc.' (Brougham to Creevey, 14 January 1816, *Creevey Papers*, i, p. 248.)

⁹ It is clear that the government's austerity measures were not generally, as J. E. Cookson asserted, on behalf of 'respectable opinion' which encouraged 'its steady pursuit of economical reform.' Instead the government should be seen as having acted out of a deep concern that rebellion, or at very least a new government, might result from a failure to act quickly. J.E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool's Administration*, p. 395.

¹⁰ Adolphus Ward and George Gooch, *The Cambridge history of British foreign policy, 1783-1919*, i, (New York, 1922), p. 464.

¹¹ Adams noted this tendency, arguing that Castlereagh's support for Catholic emancipation was weaker than is commonly argued. Describing a speech given by Castlereagh, as spoken 'like a man pleading for his own consistency rather than for his cause.' Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 523.

¹² Augustus Stapleton, *Life of Canning* (London, 1831), p. 140.

ideologically-flexible moderate whose policies were largely shaped by the legislative process and the intellectual consensuses that emerged from the aristocratic milieu of the Pitt and Liverpool administrations.¹³ By examining Castlereagh's distinctive role as the spokesman of the Liverpool administration during a series of three divisive legislative debates this thesis seeks to offer insights into the interaction between Castlereagh's persona and the public expression of dissent. As an avid promoter of the Congress System and the Six Acts, Castlereagh functioned as the public face of the suppression of radicalism. Additionally, Castlereagh both helped to define the government's economic policies and to argue for their implementation in Parliament. Thus Castlereagh's tripartite role in foreign affairs, economic policy, and domestic security can be seen as highly significant, in that, as this thesis will argue, crosspollination between these policy emphases had long-lasting impacts on the changing nature of government during this period.

Before examining Castlereagh's role in the transformation of Britain's political system, it is important to have a sense of the course of his life and career. Born on 18 June 1769, Castlereagh grew up in a wealthy Irish Presbyterian family. His father, a prominent landowner and Whig, pushed Castlereagh into a political career in the independent Irish parliament. With the assistance of family connections, Castlereagh was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland by his uncle, John Pratt, the Marquess of Camden. As Chief Secretary, Castlereagh helped to suppress the 1798 Rebellion and later became instrumental in securing the Acts of Union, which went into effect in 1801.

In the aftermath of Union, Castlereagh began a second career in British politics, serving in both the Addington and Pitt ministries, first as President of the Board of Control (1802-1806) and later as the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1805-1806, 1807-1809). In 1809, Castlereagh was forced to resign his position, after having shot George Canning in the thigh during a duel.¹⁴ The duel, which had resulted from Canning's ill-conceived efforts at taking over Castlereagh's position, left both Castlereagh and Canning outside of the cabinet.¹⁵ Castlereagh was eventually offered a position as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in March 1812 in the final

¹³ The patterns of intermarriage within the elite, and the 'family attachments' which formed from them, 'helped to dissolve greedy English parochialism as nothing else.' In so doing these alliances helped to sustain a distinct, highly networked 'national' elite, in the face of diverse localized social and economic pressures. See, Linda Colley, *Britons*, p. 160.

¹⁴ For a full discussion of the duel between Castlereagh and Canning see, Giles Hunt, *The Duel* (London, 2008), pp. 135-137.

¹⁵ Henry Bathurst, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst* (London, 1923), p. 97.

months of Spencer Perceval's ministry, a position which he retained in the newly formed Liverpool government after Perceval's assassination.

With Lord Liverpool's ascension to the premiership, Castlereagh was appointed Leader of the House of Commons where he represented the voice of the government. As Foreign Secretary, Castlereagh played a vital role during the final years of the Napoleonic Wars by distributing subsidies to sustain the war efforts of the anti-Napoleon coalition. In the aftermath of the conflict, Castlereagh drew on his predecessors' plans to craft a mutual defense pact amongst the great powers, in his creation of the Congress System. In the final years of his life, Castlereagh's role in the government's passage of repressive legislation and his connection to the suppression of radicalism on the continent left him highly unpopular amongst many Britons, both radical and moderate.

Castlereagh's dark legacy, both in Britain and Ireland, was permanently sealed on 12 August 1822, when he committed suicide at his home at Cray Farm during a fit of insanity.¹⁶ In the period immediately following his death, friends and colleagues expressed sadness over his suicide and the events which led up to it.¹⁷ Meanwhile, opponents, still in shock at his sudden death expressed mixed emotions, as Creevey wrote in the days following the suicide.

Death settles a fellow's reputation in no time, and now Castlereagh is dead, I defy any human being to discover a single feature of his character that can stand a single moment's criticism. By experience, good manners and great courage, he managed a corrupt House of Commons pretty well, with some address. This was the whole of his intellectual merit. He had a limited understanding and no knowledge, and his whole life was spent in an avowed, cold-blooded contempt of every honest public principle.¹⁸

As a highly public symbol of the Liverpool administration, and more particularly of everything most inflammatory to radical prejudices, the manner of Castlereagh's death quickly became

¹⁶ In the final months of his life Castlereagh, who had long suffered from ill-health, possibly brought on by neurosyphilis, repeatedly expressed 'his anxiety to quit office and politics and Parliament' and shortly before his death he repeated this desire, while at Almack's. Creevey to Miss Ord, 14 August 1822 (*Creevey Papers*, ii, p. 42).

¹⁷ In a letter to George IV's private secretary Benjamin Bloomfield, Croker related the first complete description of the events surrounding Castlereagh's death, and vividly describes the 'horror and surprise' surrounding the events. See John Wilson Croker, *The Croker Papers*, i, (London, 1885), pp. 224-225. Castlereagh's longtime opponent, Henry Brougham, wrote that he couldn't 'help feeling a little for him, after being pitted against him for several years pretty regularly. It is like losing a connection suddenly. Also, he was a *gentleman*, and the only one amongst them.' Henry Brougham to Mr. Creevey, 19 August, (*Creevey Papers*, ii, p.44).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 43-44.

politicized, with protesters briefly disrupting his funeral procession, and Lord Byron contributing a satirical epitaph.¹⁹

In the decades that followed, accounts of Castlereagh's career were largely written from the perspective of former colleagues and enemies, predominantly in texts whose emphasis was elsewhere.²⁰ These amateur histories, published in the mid-nineteenth century did little to shape Castlereagh's legacy beyond the manner in which it had been left in the aftermath of his suicide. In 1848, towards the end of his life, Castlereagh's younger brother and successor, Charles Vane, began the publication of an extensive, if somewhat bowdlerized, compilation of Castlereagh's correspondence.²¹ The year following the publication of the first volumes of Castlereagh's correspondence saw a counter-volley in Martineau's *History of the Thirty Year's Peace* which set out to counteract Charles Vane's efforts by ferociously attacking Castlereagh's legacy. Over the following years, until Vane's death in 1853, several further volumes of Castlereagh's correspondence were published, and seemingly achieving Vane's objective, inspired the first wave of serious Castlereagh scholarship, with the publication of the first volume of Archibald Alison's three volume, *Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart*.²² Alison's biography delved deeply into the personal papers of his subjects in his efforts to restore Castlereagh's legacy and set the tone for Castlereagh apologetics for many years. In the following decades, scholarship remained sporadic, with the publication of several texts largely sympathetic, in

¹⁹ Harriet Martineau, writing in 1849, justified the heckling, arguing that 'There was abundant reason for the rejoicing which spread through the world on the death of Lord Londonderry, and the shout which rang through the Abbey when his coffin was taken from the hearse was natural enough, though neither decent nor humane.' Harriet Martineau, *A History of the Thirty Year's Peace, 1816-1846* (London, 1858), p. 141. In addition to the specifically politically motivated heckling at Castlereagh's funeral, celebration of his death appears to have been rooted in genuine, spontaneous relief, for instance in a letter written on 24 August, Creevey wrote that, '[John Spencer, Viscount] Althorpe was here yesterday, and told me there had certainly been rejoicings in the neighboring market towns upon Castlereagh's death.' 'Creevey to Miss Ord, 24 August 1822', (*Creevey Papers*, 2, pp. 46-47); In addition to his well-known epitaph: 'Posterity will ne'er survey, A nobler grave than this: Here lie the bones of Castlereagh: Stop traveler...' Byron also published a series of epigrams which played an important role in shaping Castlereagh's legacy: 'Oh, Castlereagh thou art a patriot now: Cato died for his country so didst thou: He perish'd rather than see Rome enslaved: Thou cutt'st thy throat that Britain may be saved.' 'So Castlereagh has cut his throat! The worst Of this is, that his own was not the first.' 'So He has cut his throat at last, He! Who? The man who cut his country's long ago.' George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Works of Lord Byron* (Leipzig, 1842), iv, p. 11.

²⁰ For example, the noted dandy Rees Howell Gronow in his *Reminiscences* discusses several meetings with Castlereagh, including unsurprisingly a detailed account of his clothing (p. 221). See R. H. Gronow, *Reminiscences of Captain Gronow, formerly of the Grenadier Guards and M.P. for Stafford, being Anecdotes of the Camp, the Court, and the Clubs, at the close of the last War with France, related by himself* (London, 1862).

²¹ Charles Vane, Third Marquess of Londonderry, (ed.), *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry, Edited by his brother* (London, 1848-53).

²² Archibald Alison, *Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart, the Second and Third Marquesses of Londonderry*, 3 vols. (London, 1861).

keeping with Alison's work.²³ In the aftermath of the First World War and the Irish War of Independence, attention again turned to Castlereagh with the publication of the first volume of Charles Webster's *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh* in 1931.²⁴ Webster's second volume was published in 1934, and helped to establish the importance of Castlereagh's foreign policy, exposing Castlereagh's work to a generation of political scientists and diplomatic professionals.²⁵ Webster also wrote several other books on topics closely related to the career of Castlereagh, further contributing to his preeminent role in Castlereagh studies throughout much of the twentieth century.²⁶ During the same period, two other volumes were published on Castlereagh: Hyde's *The Rise of Lord Castlereagh*, which would go on to have a significant impact on the literature, and Marriott's *Castlereagh*, which did not.²⁷ Hyde followed up his earlier monograph with a less scholarly study of the events surrounding Castlereagh's death in his, *The Strange Death of Lord Castlereagh* published in 1959.²⁸ For much of the mid-twentieth century, Castlereagh scholarship relied upon the extensive archival work accomplished by Alison, Webster, and Hyde. These biographies expanded upon the work of previous scholars, while increasingly seeking to moderate the unfortunate tendency towards encomium found in those earlier works. Additionally, C. J. Bartlett's efforts at unifying scholarly understandings of the interaction between Castlereagh's foreign and domestic policy proved highly useful and influential on the approach taken in this thesis.²⁹

In more recent years, scholarly attention has again turned to Castlereagh, with Patrick Geoghegan's, *Lord Castlereagh*, published in 2002, rectifying a long-standing absence of modern scholarship on Castlereagh's Irish career.³⁰ John Bew continued this renewed emphasis on a return to the archival materials, with the 2011 publication of his *Castlereagh: A Life*, which

²³ Arthur Hassall, *Viscount Castlereagh* (London, 1908).

²⁴ Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Lord Castlereagh, 1812-1815: Britain and the Reconstruction of Europe* (London, 1931).

²⁵ Perhaps most famously in Henry Kissinger's 1954 dissertation: *Peace, Legitimacy, and the Equilibrium: A Study of the Statesmanship of Castlereagh and Metternich* which was later expanded and published in 1957 under the title, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812-1822* (New York, 1954).

²⁶ These include: *British Diplomacy, 1813-1815* (London, 1921); Charles Webster *The Foreign Policy of Lord Castlereagh, 1815-1822: Britain and the European Alliance* (London: G. Bell, 1934); *The Congress of Vienna* (London, 1934); and *Britain and the Independence of Latin America* (Oxford, 1938).

²⁷ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Rise of Lord Castlereagh* (London, 1933), J.A.K. Marriott, *Castlereagh: The Political Life of Robert, Second Marquess of Londonderry* (London, 1936).

²⁸ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Strange Death of Lord Castlereagh* (London, 1959).

²⁹ Ione Leigh, *Castlereagh* (London, 1951), C.J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh* (London, 1966); John W. Derry, *Castlereagh* (London, 1976); Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh* (London, 1981).

³⁰ Patrick Geoghegan, *Lord Castlereagh* (Dundalk, 2002).

builds on earlier efforts at restoring Castlereagh's reputation by developing a far more nuanced depiction of Castlereagh's thought than that achieved by the scholars of the mid-century.³¹

This thesis seeks to build on the work of these scholars, by exploring the post-Napoleonic period via an interlinking set of approaches. It utilizes a blending of political history approaches with fiscal and monetary history by examining the fundamental economic inputs that shaped decision-making, the mechanisms of parliament's legislative responses, and the role of activists who promoted and organized popular dissent.³² The union of these approaches are then used to make assessments of the practice and theory of Castlereagh's foreign policy and its relationship to the emergence of the late Liverpool-era political order.

At its core, this thesis's approach is rooted in early and mid-twentieth century efforts at correlating economic instability and political dissent.³³ By exploring the interconnectivity between the economic challenges of the immediate postwar period and their sources in both a complex set of external inputs and parliament's legislative initiatives, this thesis seeks to reassess and expand upon W.W. Rostow's admittedly flawed, but insightful, depiction of the tight connection between those cycles and the expression of dissent in Britain. Simultaneously, by emphasizing the role of Castlereagh, and the ideas that shaped his perspectives, this thesis seeks to counteract the tendency amongst historians, who have tended to minimize the role of elites and, more particularly individuals within the elite, in shaping the cultural and constitutional trends of the early nineteenth century.³⁴

³¹ John Bew, *Castlereagh: A Life* (Oxford, 2012).

³² By utilizing a mixed approach, this thesis seeks to counter, both the tendencies towards determinism found in older economic histories of the era, as well as the inverse tendency to misread or downplay the role of economic factors in shaping, not only policy, but also the theory and discourse on economic issues in the early nineteenth century. See Gareth Stedman-Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History*. (Cambridge, 1983).

³³ W. W. Rostow, 'Business Cycles, Harvests, and Politics: 1790-1850,' *The Journal of Economic History*, 1/2 (1941), p. 206; Eric Hobsbawm, 'Economic Fluctuations and Some Social Movements', *Labouring Men*, (London, 1964).

³⁴ Linda Colley has similarly argued that, in the face of domestic political challenges, the elite's embrace of change helped to shape the nature and process of reform. According to her, the 'landed establishment's willingness and ability to change at this has been too much neglected or denied recently.' Linda Colley, *Britons*, p. 193; Colley, however, has also argued that examinations of class should not exclude the importance of national identity and that the 'atomization which characterized so much Namierite political history', has come to characterize much of the recent analysis of identity among the 'extra-parliamentary classes' has been detrimental. Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750-1830', *Past & Present*, 113 (1986), pp. 97-117; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 147-193.

Castlereagh's tendency to absorb political opinions from his peers, especially his political 'conversion' from Whig to Pittite, has been widely noted by scholars.³⁵ This lack of dogmatism however, was not limited to his early days in politics but remained a distinct aspect of Castlereagh's personality throughout his career, a fact that remains largely absent from the scholarly discussion of his life.³⁶ During Castlereagh's time in government the role of the individual remained surprisingly intact, and thus the impact of Castlereagh's personality can be found in government policies, both foreign and domestic.³⁷ The record of these traces has been unusually well-preserved by the size and depth of the paper trail generated by both the government and the opposition. While clearly much has been lost, purposefully or otherwise, in the extensive records from this era we have a window into the creation process of proposals and counterproposals fossilized in the form of draft memorandums, letters, and journal entries. This vast expanse of intra-office ephemera provides evidence of an important, and often overlooked component of politics: shifts in opinion. In the modern political age a changed mind is often seen as symbolic of weakness or lack of resolve, British politics in the age of Liverpool, however, without the constraints of strict party discipline, did not.

Although Castlereagh has been generally understood as a flexible pragmatist, some historians have, unintentionally, made the error of overemphasizing particular aspects of Castlereagh's thought, examining the statesman devoid of his changing context. Thus we have Castlereagh depicted statically as either a repressive eighteenth-century authoritarian or the enlightened prophet of inter-European cooperation.³⁸ Such dramatically different perspectives are each flawed, in that they fail to take into account both the degree to which Castlereagh's context affected his personal beliefs and affiliations. This is not to say that Castlereagh's 'core beliefs' did not retain some rigidity, however, his divided identity offers insight into the manner in which his personality tended towards flexibility. Baptized a Presbyterian, Castlereagh converted to

³⁵ Montgomery Hyde, *The Rise of Castlereagh* (London, 1933) p. 41; Patrick Geoghegan, *Lord Castlereagh* (Dundalk, 2002), pp.8-11; John Bew, *Castlereagh: A Life* (Oxford, 2012), pp.42-61; Castlereagh's 'conversion' apparently resulted, in part, from the instructions of his Uncle, rather than in a purely personal change of heart. 'Camden to Stewart, 23 January 1791', from H. Montgomery Hyde *The Rise of Lord Castlereagh*, (London, 1933), p. 77; The widespread tendency to place Castlereagh's conversion during his travels in France is rooted in a chronological error. For example, John Derry *Castlereagh* (London, 1976), p. 39.

³⁶ For example, Castlereagh embraced mutually exclusive positions on Britain's policy towards renegade South American colonies, free trade, monetary policy, and the Congress System over the course of his career.

³⁷ Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812-1815* (London, 1931), pp. 44-52.

³⁸ Harriet Martineau, *A History of the Thirty Years' Peace, 1816-1846*; Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*.

Anglicanism; born into a Whig family and elected as a Whig, he became one of the most prominent Tories of his day; a youthful supporter of America, he later helped to prosecute an unnecessary war against it; and perhaps most importantly, his divided nationality; as Elizabeth Bowen famously put it, the Anglo-Irish were, 'Irish in England, and English in Ireland.'³⁹ J. C. Beckett characterizes the Anglo-Irish identity as tending towards, 'a kind of ambivalence, or ambiguity of outlook, arising from the need to be at once Irish and English, and leading sometimes to detachment, sometimes to a fierce aggressiveness that may, on occasion, mark an underlying sense of insecurity.'⁴⁰ This lack of stability in Castlereagh's identity seems to have removed some of the typical foundations of fundamental beliefs and left him far more prone to adopting the attitudes and opinions of his milieu than was typical for his colleagues. By understanding the interaction of Castlereagh's personality with the sudden economic and political shock of the end of the war we can gain essential insights into the nature of Castlereagh's political perspectives.

In reassessing Castlereagh's personality, and its role in forming his political identity, this thesis also seeks to modify how his interactions with the Congress System are perceived. The historiography of the Congress System leaves a massive record of two centuries in which scholars have struggled via a wide variety of methods to determine the meaning and significance of the system. Amongst contemporary historians, there is a widely divergent hermeneutic. These interpretative theories vary from those such as Philip Bobbitt who see the system as a sort of proto-NATO, and as a result have worked to discover evidence of its antecedent role in the emergence of international law.⁴¹ Such approaches tend to force historical events into a pre-arranged framework, and in doing so fall prey to the same difficulties faced in Marxian historiography. On the other end of the spectrum, Paul Schroeder's work argues that the Congress System simply masked an underlying Anglo-Russian struggle for hegemony from their protected bases on Europe's geographic periphery.⁴² Schroeder's analysis of Britain's role in the Congress System, while insightful, is handicapped by what Jack Levy has accurately described as, Schroeder's

³⁹ Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh, 2003), p. 10.

⁴⁰ J.C. Beckett, *The Anglo-Irish Tradition*, (London, 2009), p. 144; Castlereagh's tendency, as well, towards associational self-definition, seems a persistent aspect of his identity, and may have indicated a 'weaker' self-identification due to the collectivist tendencies of the Anglo-Irish elite. William Robinson, *Social Groups and Identities*, (Oxford, 1996), pp 145-160.

⁴¹ Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, p. 161.

⁴² Paul W. Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?' *The American Historical Review*, 97/3 (1992), pp. 683-706.

rejection, ‘both of the assumption that foreign policy always reflects deeper forces within a country and the implication that diplomatic history should be subsumed within a larger conception of socio-economic, political, or intellectual history.’⁴³ By seeing foreign policy as being constructed in a conceptual vacuum, Schroeder misses the underlying narrative that unites Castlereagh’s diplomatic and domestic political careers. Thus, this thesis seeks to counteract this tendency by fully contextualizing Castlereagh’s foreign policy thought in Britain’s domestic political situation.

By understanding Castlereagh’s policies as contributing to and emerging from the contentious political debates of the day we can better understand those aspects of his thought and practice which have been misread previously, for instance, Castlereagh’s complex relationship with the Great Powers of continental Europe, and especially their efforts at suppressing revolutionary movements and dissent in Southern Europe in the early 1820s. Castlereagh’s embarrassment at these efforts at reifying the abstract principles, inherited from Grenville and Mulgrave, which Castlereagh himself had promulgated in the Quadruple Alliance treaty, were thus certainly genuine, but rooted in Liverpool’s loss of faith in Castlereagh’s foreign policy, as Canning was reemerging as a powerful figure in the Cabinet. When Castlereagh’s pivot to non-interventionism is understood in conjunction with the strained debate within the Cabinet over governmental austerity a different picture than the one typically presented by either Bobbitt or Schroeder emerges. Instead of an innovative international law theorist, we have a Foreign Secretary given to adopting the policies of others, harried by a Cabinet that tended to undercut his decisions, and an old political opponent increasingly willing to push his own agenda.⁴⁴ This pattern of confused, imitative, *ad hoc* policy-making, provides a useful window into the disorderly processes by which the Liverpool Cabinet managed the governance of Britain.⁴⁵

This thesis utilizes a wide set of data drawn from a varied mix of sources. Primary amongst these are data acquired from the personal papers and correspondence of the central figures involved

⁴³ Jack S. Levy, ‘The Theoretical Foundations of Paul W. Schroeder’s International System’ *The International History Review*, 16/4 (1994), p. 716.

⁴⁴ Castlereagh’s efforts at preventing Aix-la-Chapelle from being labeled a Congress, speaks to the political divisions within the cabinet itself, over Castlereagh’s foreign policy. See Castlereagh to Cathcart, Foreign Office, 27 March 1818, (*Supplementary Despatches and Memoranda*, i, 575).

⁴⁵ While Boyd Hilton has argued that the Liverpool administration was, ‘the first to strive for a coherent theory of economic policy’ the archival records, speak less to coherence than to frantic extemporizing in the face of both strident parliamentary opposition and the possibility of a Jacobin-style revolution. Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments, 1815–1830* (Oxford, 1977).

in the policies discussed in this thesis. The most important of these sources were Castlereagh's papers at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland.⁴⁶ The Canning, Huskisson, and Liverpool papers held at the British Library allowed for a greater sense of cabinet debate and helped to contextualize Castlereagh's policies within a larger conversation within the government.⁴⁷ Additionally, the Grey and Ponsonby papers, held at the Durham University Library, provided an indispensable window into the state of the opposition, as well as economic data gleaned from Lord Grey's audit requests.⁴⁸ In addition to the collections named thus far, published papers such as the Croker, Creevey, and Castlereagh correspondences also proved helpful.⁴⁹ Diplomatic correspondence, such as Castlereagh's communications with Stratford Canning, as well as the Foreign Office circulars found at the National Archives in Kew helped to establish the evolution in Castlereagh's foreign policy. Treasury documents, including the complete Civil List books, also found at the National Archives, provided a sense of the changing nature of domestic expenses in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. It should be noted that this research does not primarily use original economic data, rather it is built upon a variety of data derived from Willard Thorp's *Annals of England*, Phyllis Deane and W.A. Cole's *British Economic Growth*, and Brian R. Mitchell's *British Historical Statistics*.⁵⁰ Additionally, economic data compiled from the Civil List records and data derived from Lord Grey's 1830s audit of diplomatic spending helped to shape the assumptions of this research.⁵¹

⁴⁶ PRONI D3030.

⁴⁷ Canning Papers (Add. MSS 38736-49; 38193-412, 38568, 38738-48; 42790); Huskisson Papers (Add. MSS 38734-70, 39948-9). Liverpool Papers (Add. MSS 38190-38489, 38564-38581, 59772, 61818; Loan 72/1-68).

⁴⁸ Charles Grey Papers (DUL GB033 GRE-B); John Ponsonby Papers (DUL GB033 GRE-E).

⁴⁹ Louis J Jennings, (ed.), *The Croker papers: Correspondence and Diaries of the late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker, secretary to the admiralty from 1809 to 1830* (London, 1885); Herbert Maxwell, (ed.), *The Creevey Papers: Correspondence and Diaries of the late Thomas Creevey, M.P.* (London, 1904); Charles Vane, Third Marquess of Londonderry, (ed.), *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry, Edited by his brother* (London, 1848-53).

⁵⁰ Willard Long Thorp, (ed.) 'The Annals of England', *Business Annals* (London, 1926), pp. 146-179; Phyllis Deane and W.A. Cole, *British Economic Growth: 1688-1959* (Cambridge, 1969); Brian Mitchell, *British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1988).

⁵¹; 'An Account of total charge of his majesty's Diplomattick and Consular Service abroad from 1815 to 1832' (TNA TO 56/38); (DUL Gre/B14/8a/19).

A Sudden Change?

What then was the ‘great and sudden change’ that occurred during the Liverpool administration?⁵² In his 2005 book *Collapse*, Jared Diamond argues that the gradualist model of systemic change, perhaps most famously depicted in Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*, is rooted in a misreading of evidence.⁵³ Instead, Diamond argues for a model of change rooted in sudden disruptive environmental shifts. In these arguments lie a fundamental, underlying model of societal transformation that emerges from the confluence of environmental inputs, such as climate change or the spread of disease, and the complex interplay of interstate rivalries, which function much like biological arms races, such as have been described by Alex Rosenberg.⁵⁴ Rosenberg sees these strategic arms races as the core of historical change, as societies compete for scarce resources, they are forced to interact with increasingly complex competitors. The adaptations that arise from these struggles allow for the emergence of equilibriums, as strategic innovations eliminate rivals, creating periods of stability and expansion. These equilibriums are followed by the non-volitional emergence of strategic competitors, filtered by random environmental inputs, which challenge the stability of hegemonic equilibriums.⁵⁵ According to such a model, social norms and identities, governmental systems, and international institutions all appear as byproducts of these conflicts.⁵⁶ By utilizing an ‘arms race’ approach this thesis also builds upon the work of international relations scholars, such as Claudio Cioffi-Revilla, who are interested in exploring a punctuated equilibrium model of interstate rivalries.⁵⁷ In contrast to Cioffi-Revilla’s work, however, this thesis also applies

⁵² Paul Schroeder in his, *Transformation of European Politics*, has argued similarly for a disruptive ‘sudden’ change, which he sees as occurring between 1813 and 1815. See Paul Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics* (Oxford, 1994), p. 88.

⁵³ Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York, 2005).

⁵⁴ See Alex Rosenberg, ‘From Rational Choice to Reflexivity’ *Economic Thought Review*, pp. 1-33, and *Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford, 1995).

⁵⁵ Hannes Lacher and Julian Germann, ‘Before Hegemony: Britain, Free Trade, and Nineteenth-Century World Order Revisited,’ *International Studies Review*, 14, (2012) pp. 99–124.

⁵⁶ The *Quarterly Review* article, from which the title of this thesis is drawn seems to describe this model of change: ‘The dislocation had taken place in the natural course of things and in the natural course things found their level, but while they were finding it great inconvenience arose and widely extended distress.’ *Quarterly Review*, July 1816, pp. 567.

⁵⁷ Claudio Cioffi-Revilla, ‘The Political Uncertainty of Interstate Rivalries: A Punctuated Equilibrium Model’, *The Dynamics of Enduring Rivalries*, (Urbana, 1998), pp. 64-80; see also Glenn Hueckel, ‘War and the British economy, 1793–1815’, *Explorations in Economic History*, 10/4, (1973), pp. 365–396; For an examination of the interaction between punctuated equilibrium theory and the emergence military innovation, see, Clifford Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, (Boulder, 1995).

these models to the study of intra-state competitors and more particularly, the rivalries between political and class factions in the postwar era.⁵⁸

The economic shock, particularly during the year between Napoleon's return from Elba on 20 March 1815 and the repeal of the income tax on 18 March 1816, triggered an era of disruptive change during which resultant economic destabilization, environmental inputs, and legislative incompetence worked together to create a fundamentally transformed political system in Britain. The phrase, 'a great and sudden change' is taken from an article in the *Quarterly Review*. In that article, the author uses the phrase to describe the postwar transition, then still in progress. Writing in July 1816, the author describes the manner in which peace impacted, 'every branch of trade and every kind of industry which was in any way connected with the war or influenced by it.' However, with the end of the war, 'the amount of not less than forty millions was at once withdrawn from circulation.' The effect of this sudden shift from a wartime economy, lays at the heart of the postwar 'singularity' the after-shocks of which shook the nation until the early 1820s, when stability was finally re-established. The *Quarterly Review* describes the 'sudden diminution' in government spending, much like Rosenberg might, by presenting the change in terms of a natural phenomenon.

A vacuum was inevitably produced by this sudden diminution, and the general dislocation which ensued, may not unaptly be compared to the settling of the ice upon a wide sheet of water. Explosions are made and convulsions are seen on all sides, in one place the ruptured ice is dislodged and lifted up, in another it sinks. Sounds inexpressible by language and wilder than the howlings of the wilderness are emitted on every side, and thus the agitation continues for many hours till the whole has found its level and nature resumes in silence its ordinary course.⁵⁹

While the *Quarterly Review* was a Tory periodical, the painful nature of the postwar change remains palpable. Indeed the shift from one form of government to another had the unintended impact of impoverishing many of the working classes of Britain and Ireland. At the same time, the monarchy, although less immediately impacted by the decline in resources, was experiencing the

⁵⁸ The disruptive change model, within discrete political systems is rooted in an understanding of institutions as tending towards inertia. Paul Pierson argues that 'stickiness is built into the design of political institutions to reduce uncertainty' and as a result, 'formal barriers to institutional reform are thus often extremely high.' Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton, 2004), p. 43.

⁵⁹ *Quarterly Review*, July 1816, pp. 566-567.

tertiary impact of that decline, as the parliament arrogated many of the monarch's traditional powers to itself. As the state shifted away from a monarchy with considerable executive powers, the parliament began to downplay its traditions of rhetorical display and retail politics, and instead took on the practical responsibilities of the executive. The parliament, in turn, which had once been encircled by a highly decentralized collection of essentially-feudal bureaucracies, was forced into efficiency.⁶⁰ By the conclusion of Liverpool's term in office, the cabinet had nearly complete control of the monarchy's executive powers, the parliament had shifted to the practical business of managing the state, and the bureaucracies had been generally centralized, streamlined, and trimmed of sinecurists.

Some scholars, perhaps most notably W.R. Brock, have sought to identify the source of the transformation in British politics, which occurred at this time, in the changing make-up of the cabinet, as younger members gained influence, especially in the aftermath of Castlereagh's death.⁶¹ Such approaches, which have lost popularity in the last half-century, posit a generational transformation, with the old Pittite Tories giving way to a younger generation of 'Liberal Tories' governed by a perspective shaped by the intellectual climate of their era.⁶² While it is certainly true that the ideological center of the cabinet shifted over time, Brock's arguments fail in that they do not adequately account for the timeline of policy changes which, in part, do not match the shifting personnel of the cabinet. More recent approaches which seek to downplay differences between the two halves of Liverpool's administration (1812-1822, 1822-1827), have sought to solve the problem of chronology by presenting the pre-'Liberal Tory' cabinet as anticipating the ideological shift.⁶³ Rather than simply pushing the chronology back, this thesis argues that liberalization was largely a practical response to the poverty forced on the government by its Napoleonic spending patterns. In addition, these changes are presented as emerging from the government's need to placate middle class anger at its fumbling economic policies, as well as the growing influence of Canning on Lord Liverpool's thought in the aftermath of his return from Lisbon.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ See F. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1963).

⁶¹ Derek Beales, *From Castlereagh to Gladstone* (London, 1969), pp. 24-25.

⁶² W.R. Brock, *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism 1820-1827* (London, 1967), pp. 120-171.

⁶³ See Michael Turner, *British Politics in an Age of Reform* (New York, 1999), pp. 141-144.

⁶⁴ This approach is rooted in the arguments of J.E. Cookson and Norman Gash, who have similarly argued that Liverpool-era economic reforms were driven by pragmatic considerations, (albeit, pragmatic considerations that were forced upon the government by their weak political position) and stands in opposition to more recent efforts at identifying an 'evangelical economic-theory' as the primary influence on the government's post-war economic

In *The Age of Atonement*, Boyd Hilton introduced the importance of the intellectual influence of the evangelical movement upon the political and economic thought of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶⁵ Certainly, there was a postwar generational shift and the rise of evangelical religious and political ideologies, as well as the organizational contributions of religious associations, are major aspects of this transformation.⁶⁶ However, these fail to present fully the nuances of why these cultural and religious identities were in flux. Rather than seeing the rise of evangelical political pressure groups as fundamentally transformative, these movements are understood as the byproduct of competition between older aristocratic hegemony within Britain's political system and the post-Napoleonic emergence of contenders for political dominance from both the metropolitan and provincial urban middle class. The leadership within the reform movement of wealthy, but non-aristocratic men, such as Henry Hunt demonstrates the creation of an alternative 'path' to power, outside of the traditional rituals that had surrounded the eighteenth century processes of crossing the highly demarcated division between classes.⁶⁷ The extent to which religious and reformist factions both cooperated and conflicted is indicative, as well, of the degree to which the evangelical political movement, was either a competitor or subset of the larger reformist movement in English society, rather than its driving force.⁶⁸

policy pivot. See: J.E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool's Administration, 1815-1822, The Crucial Years* (Edinburgh, 1975); Norman Gash, *Lord Liverpool, The Life and Political Career of Robert Bankes Jenkinson, second Earl of Liverpool* (Cambridge, 1984). Gash's earlier perspective that Tory policy was 'religious' rather than 'social and economic' is far closer to Boyd Hilton's arguments than the position taken in this thesis. See Norman Gash, *Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics* (Oxford, 1965).

⁶⁵ Boyd Hilton, *the Age of Atonement, the Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (London, 1988); Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 303-14.

⁶⁶ See A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel, and Social Change 1740-1914* (London, 1976).

⁶⁷ These gentlemen leaders were, ostensibly 'chosen' by the working classes, because they, 'knew the forms and language of high politics' they also helped to speed the process of 'normalizing' eighteenth-century style working class political speech by imbuing working class radicalism with the norms and practices of the emerging middle class. See, E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), pp. 622-3; Patrick Joyce has argued that liberalism was made personal and enacted as drama in the government's crack-down on radical gentlemen, thus making a political system intelligible to the largely unschooled working class. Patrick Joyce, *The Self and the Social in Nineteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1994). These gentlemen leaders, however, also utilized their position vis-à-vis the working classes, in an attempt to circumvent the tightly restricted 'paths' to political power. See: John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt: Henry Hunt and English Working Class Radicalism*, (Oxford, 1985). Linda Colley countered that such depictions of class relations rely on *ex post facto* judgments and that contextually the Napoleonic War-era British 'were the most national people in Europe.' Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750-1830', *Past & Present*, 113 (1986), p. 97.

⁶⁸ Betty Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization* (London, 1984); As David Turley has argued 'the key to understanding the struggle to achieve emancipation lay in the ways in which the anti-slavery campaign intersected with the struggle for power in an undemocratic political system.' David Turley, 'British Antislavery Reassessed', Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, eds. *Rethinking the Age of Reform, Britain 1780-*

At the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, the government of Britain was faced by the prospect of repaying the debt of two decades of warfare. The sheer extent of this debt led to a cascade of austerity measures whose drastic nature destabilized the market.⁶⁹ In addition, this emphasis on austerity forced Castlereagh to alter his tendency towards intervention, such as was displayed during negotiations prior to the outbreak of the Hundred Days. The parliament, concerned by the threat of another period of conflict, sought immediately to ensure a stable national food-supply and to calm their most important constituents: major agriculturalists and landowners.⁷⁰ This effort, the Corn Law of 1815, repeated some aspects of the 1804 grain tariff. However, in the context of postwar economic difficulty, attempts to prop up the price of food-stuffs for the benefit of a small, well-connected minority had the effect of mitigating the shared experience of Britain's military victory by leaving many working-class families outside of the victory narrative.⁷¹ This situation was further exacerbated when the Corn Laws proved ineffective at stabilizing prices and the government's efforts at maintaining the income tax were defeated. Although the government repealed the malt tax, in part, to expand the benefits of the tax cut across the classes, the effort largely failed to aid a working class in crisis. This failure, fatally worsened by the catastrophic decline of global temperatures in 1816, allowed the resentment triggered by

1850 (Cambridge, 2003), p.186; Many of the key issues promoted by evangelical political thought had resonance with the economic concerns of the middle and upper middle classes. See, Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, (Richmond, VA, 1944); for the complex relationship between abolitionist rhetoric and the wool industry, see Kirsten McKenzie 'My Voice is sold, & I must be a Slave': Abolition Rhetoric, British Liberty and the Yorkshire Elections of 1806 and 1807' *History Workshop Journal*, 64, (2007), pp. 48-73; For the impact of colonial economic pressures on abolitionism, see, David Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge, 210); By understanding these 'resonances' as confluences of interest, this interpretation seeks to avoid namierite reductionism, and is rooted in the thinking of Bruce Yandle. See, Bruce Yandle, 'Bootleggers and Baptists: The Education of a Regulatory Economist.' *Regulation*, 7/3, (1983), pp. 12-16.

⁶⁹ The logistical challenge of this task was substantial, C.A. Bayley has effectively made the case that Britain's military establishment, including imperial forces, had reached approximately one million combatants by 1815. C.A. Bayley, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), p. 3.

⁷⁰ This interpretation is based upon arguments presented by Hilton, however, in more recent years, this approach has been critiqued as overly-rooted in political-minded tendencies to privilege 'free-trade' narratives. This thesis has not altered its usage to reflect this critique, in light of the free-trade consensus within much of the economic literature. Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, pp. 127-132; Travis Crosby, *English Farmers*, pp. 25-56.

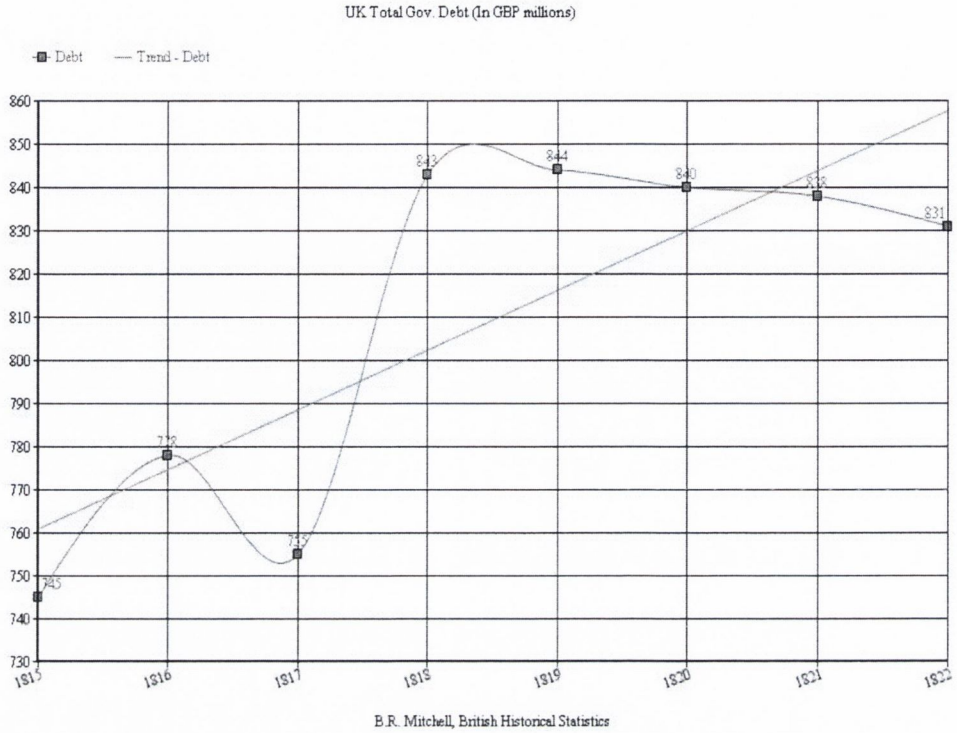
⁷¹ Scholars, for the past century, have argued that the Corn Laws were not, as popularly believed at the time, 'carried by a combination of the landed interests against the rest of the community.' However, popular perceptions at the time had a long term impact on the nature of dissent, and should to be examined *in situ* in addition to the perspectives of economic analysis. See, William Smart, *Economic Annals of the Nineteenth Century, 1801-1820* (London, 1910), pp. 372-384.

the parliament's class biases to ferment into outright hostility. In addition, the repeal of the income tax led to an explosion in Britain's debt, reaching over 250% of GDP at its peak.⁷²

In the aftermath of the repeal of the income tax, and the subsequent explosion of the government's debt to GDP ratio, the government began the process of returning the British pound to a metallic standard, which produced destabilization in the short run and deflation over the course of the final years of Castlereagh's life. These effects, when combined with the costs associated with the Corn Laws and the wartime taxes, left the working class in a difficult position with few options besides the traditions of violent protest that had long characterized eighteenth century working class political speech. Additionally, the government's lack of funds left it increasingly unable to maintain the complex system of patronage that had shaped its bureaucracy throughout much of the eighteenth century.⁷³ Meanwhile, however, rather than dealing with the deprivations at the heart of working and middle-class protest, the government sought to limit the expression of political speech and public dissent. These efforts were highly effective at limiting ultra-radicalism, and helped to shift the radical reform movements into the gradualist moderation which characterized dissent during the 1820s.

⁷² See B.R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 602.

⁷³ See W. D. Rubinstein, 'The End of 'Old Corruption' in Britain, 1780-1860' *Past & Present*, 101, (November, 1983), pp. 55-86.



Violent political protest was in many ways a result of the exclusion of the working and middle classes from full participation in the peace dividend and the victory narrative in general.⁷⁴ Much of the dissent that followed came from working class radicalism that embraced its role in winning the war, while playing with the transgressive personas of the French revolution. In the aftermath of government suppression, these mixed identities were further comingled with the influences of women’s culture and middle class concepts of propriety, as well as forms of display developed from wartime military drills and rural working class festivity, and the organizational structures of religious groups and voluntary societies, such as evidenced by the military drill, Phrygian caps, and reed-carts at the St. Peter’s Field protest.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Steven Parissien offers an illustrative example of this exclusionary tendency in his description of George IV’s rejection of, ‘Wellington’s eminently sensible suggestion...that the names of officers who had served at Waterloo be inscribed on the [victory] arch.’ Steven Parissien, *George IV* (New York, 2001), p. 275.

⁷⁵ Robert Poole, ‘The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England’, *Past & Present*, 192, (2006), pp. 109-153.

The explosion of debt, high food costs, and deflation, when coupled with the government's efforts at austerity and need to suppress the growth of destructive internal dissent, helped to create a climate of increased governmental efficiency, cycles of internal repression, and foreign policy non-interventionism. Thus the British government's decision to demobilize its army rapidly, its subsequent efforts at ensuring high prices for its agriculturalist constituents, the repeal of the war taxes, along with the debt that resulted from it, and the period of deflation that stemmed from the resumption of a metallic standard can be seen as major contributing factors in the rise of radicalism. Similarly, this radicalism, when coupled with government austerity-measures, fundamentally altered Castlereagh's foreign policy, which had been rooted in policies common within his milieu, and contributed to his shift away from both a highly interventionist foreign policy and his commitment to the 'confederacy' of the European states.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ *Hansard*, xxvii, c. 84.

Chapter 1

Castlereagh's Legacy

Lord Castlereagh's position in history is both unique and in many ways bizarre. To his contemporaries Castlereagh was an incompetent, an icy mountain peak, a sinister murderer, a traitor, an elitist.¹ Castlereagh's death and its resulting gleeful celebration by much of Britain's radical-leaning literati helped to solidify the negative aspects of his career in the political memory. As a result, Castlereagh's memory, frozen in time, without the benefit of the benign mellowing that often accompanies the careers of elder statesmen, became politicized, with all the violence and division that characterized the postwar era left intact within the common memory. This tendency was acknowledged and accelerated by Charles Vane's ultra-conservative politics and his defensive behavior vis-à-vis the memorialization of Castlereagh's life and career. Such a polarization has tended to obscure the various qualities and mediocrities of Castlereagh's thought and career, as historians have variously lined up on one side or the other. This chapter seeks to recontextualize Castlereagh's career, by examining his interactions with the political and economic trends that shaped parliamentary politics in the postwar era.

When surveying the literature, it becomes increasingly obvious that a strange sense of defensiveness has come to overshadow Castlereagh legacy. In the aftermath of the publication of John Bew's recent biography of Castlereagh, nearly every review seemed to deal, at least in part, with Castlereagh's besmirched legacy, or the restoration of that legacy.²

[Bew] manages to humanise a character who has been an ogre to generations of English Radicals and demonised as a monster in the Irish folk-memory...in rescuing Castlereagh from the

¹ Robert Heron described Castlereagh as unintelligent. 'Lord Castlereagh's...ignorance was so shameful, that even Lord Stewart was considered by the continental Ministers, as evincing the greater share of knowledge of the two brothers.' Robert Heron, *Notes by Sir Robert Heron*, (London, 1851), pp. 125-126; Croker described Castlereagh as, 'a splendid summit of bright and polished frost which like the travelers in Switzerland, we all admire, but no one can hope, and few would wish to reach.' John Wilson Croker, *Croker papers*, p. 219; Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Masque of Anarchy*; Henry Hunt described Castlereagh as a 'traitor to the liberties of his country.' *Freeman's Journal*, 5 August 1817 cited in John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 440; Samuel Whitbread argued that to Castlereagh, 'the sovereigns were everything and the people nothing.' *Hansard*, xxxix, c. 698.

² 'Thanks to Shelley's greatest poem, *The Masque of Anarchy*, Castlereagh's reputation has never recovered. With that knowing sneer, which Sir Thomas Lawrence's famous portrait of him so knowingly catches, Castlereagh has ever since been a byword for reactionary Toryism...so John Bew has some heavy lifting to do in this consciously revisionist take.' *The Telegraph*, 14 November 2011.

vituperation of Shelley, Byron and Thomas Moore, and the contempt of those who dismissed him as illiterate, inarticulate and unfeeling, Bew explores his cultural and intellectual hinterland in New Light thinking and the Scottish Enlightenment....in presenting this re-assessment he has established his own reputation as an academic historian.³

Historians seem strangely keen to revive Castlereagh's reputation, yet one is hard pressed to find a history, written in the last century, which describes him strictly as a villain.⁴ In the introduction to Wendy Hinde's *Castlereagh* it is argued that with the publication of it, Castlereagh, who had been seen as, 'reactionary, cold, heartless, and brutal' is now, 'revealed to us...as a very different figure...[whose] gentleness and good humor...endured him to subordinates and colleagues.'⁵ In *The Duel*, Giles Hunt similarly argues that, 'the mask of villainy simply will not fit Castlereagh. He was...a man of principle...and in his personal life...kind, generous and loyal.'⁶ Ione Leigh makes essentially the same argument, in his *Castlereagh* stating that the statesman, 'has come down to us in the pages of history as a...malignant fiend, but searching through the few personal letters that remain to us...there emerges gradually a human being.'⁷ In Bartlett's biography, he begins by arguing that Castlereagh has, 'never attracted the imaginative writer.'⁸ However, Bartlett quickly acknowledges that, 'Castlereagh's rehabilitation began' when his correspondence was, 'published by his half-brother and by Sir A. Alison' beginning in 1848.⁹

While Castlereagh's rehabilitation began in 1848, the true moment when scholarly opinion permanently shifted occurred with the publication of Webster's first volume on Castlereagh's foreign policy during the Congress Era.¹⁰ Webster, a practicing diplomat himself, saw Castlereagh's promotion of the Congress System in light of the League of Nations. Similarly, Castlereagh's pragmatism made him an attractive figure to scholars interested in foreign policy

³ *The Irish Independent*, 22 October 2011.

⁴ E. P. Thompson has indirectly attacked Castlereagh by arguing that, 'the *Masque of Anarchy* does not reveal the 'ignorant injustice' of Shelley's judgments, but judgments which the greater part of Shelley's countrymen came to share.' E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963), p. 659.

⁵ Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh* (London, 1981).

⁶ Giles Hunt, *The Duel* (London, 2008), p. xiii.

⁷ Ione Leigh, *Castlereagh* (London, 1951), p. 11

⁸ C. J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh* (New York, 1966), p. 1

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3

¹⁰ It can be argued that Arthur Hassall's biography of Castlereagh likewise sought to vindicate his position in history as well, arguing as he does that 'ignorance of [Castlereagh's] career still remains as deep as ever [and]...misconception with regard to the character and value of his life-work has steadily increased.' Arthur Hassall, *Viscount Castlereagh*, (London, 1908), p. viii.

realism, such as Henry Kissinger, in his *A World Restored*, and those interested in international law, such as Philip Bobbitt in his *The Shield of Achilles*.¹¹

In recent years, Castlereagh scholarship has taken the form of an effort at re-contextualizing Castlereagh's political tendencies within the political, intellectual, and economic climate of his day. Among these, perhaps the most influential have been those written by John Bew and Mark Jarrett. Additionally, Castlereagh's career has been given a more insightful reading, by scholars such as Boyd Hilton and Paul Schroeder, within the larger post-war transformation in British politics.¹² Of scholars particularly focused on Castlereagh, John Bew's major contribution has been to uniquely illuminate the intellectual life of Castlereagh, thus offering deeper insights into the origin of his political perspectives and pushing past the often simplistic assertion that Castlereagh was merely pragmatic, thus opening Castlereagh's intellectual evolution to scholarly analysis. This analysis, however, only briefly touches on Castlereagh's role in the emergence of Britain's economic policies. Mark Jarrett, in both his dissertation *Castlereagh, Ireland and the French Restorations of 1814-1815* and more recently in his book *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy: War and Great Power Diplomacy After Napoleon* has similarly dealt with the impact of Castlereagh's context on his political and intellectual tendencies, in particular he has examined Castlereagh's formative experiences in Ireland and their long-lived role in Castlereagh's perspectives. Jarrett has also explored, in brief, some of the same issues examined in this thesis, for instance the impact of the scale of the Foreign Office on policy and the importance of domestic tax policy on how foreign powers perceived Britain.¹³ Rather than seeking to counter these arguments, this thesis seeks to expand upon them to build a more comprehensive vision of the

¹¹ Henry Kissinger *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22* (New York, 1954); Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, (New York, 2002).

¹² Of the major scholars to examine Castlereagh and his era, Boyd Hilton alone has commented on Castlereagh's understanding of monetary policy, but again has only briefly delved into its development. Likewise his examination of the Corn Laws, largely ignores the strategic level political implications of why the government sought to pass the legislation. Likewise, recent analysis has thrown doubt on some aspects of his analysis, requiring further examination than that provided in this document.

¹³ In particular, Jarrett has argued that it is important to understand Castlereagh's 'pre-eminent role in the decision-making process quite unimaginable in our time' within the context of his tiny staff, a still-assertive Prince Regent and cabinet, and 'the constant constraint of having to defend his policies in Parliament.' (Jarret *Castlereagh, Ireland, and the French Restorations of 1814-1815*, p. 6); Similarly, Jarrett highlights the foreign policy implications of tax policy when he argues that 'De la Chatre was wholly satisfied, writing to Talleyrand on April 26 that "the British Government ...has decided to act with vigor. The public spirit powerfully supports it. One saw the effect by the ease with which the proposal for the renewal of the property tax was adopted.'" (De la Chatre to Talleyrand, London, 26 April 1815, AMAE., *Correspondance Politique, Angleterre*, v. 606, p. 202, cited in Jarrett, *Castlereagh, Ireland, and the French Restorations of 1814-1815*, p. 549).

impacts of these tendencies. Where this thesis does break with Jarrett is on the issue of Castlereagh's personality, with Jarrett emphasizing underlying consistencies in Castlereagh's perspectives, while this thesis emphasizes the manner in which Castlereagh's perspectives changed in response to the shifting political, economic, and strategic situation. During a particularly heated debate in parliament Castlereagh declined to, 'say...one word in his own defense, but appeal[ed] to posterity.'¹⁴ Castlereagh's appeal has clearly met with success.

Recontextualizing Castlereagh's Career

Rather than seeking to counter Castlereagh's restored reputation, this thesis seeks to continue the project of re-contextualizing Castlereagh's career through a careful reading of contemporary sources. By placing Castlereagh in context it becomes more and more obvious that, rather than the reactionary Judas, or the enlightened Europeanist, Castlereagh was instead a highly representative creature of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy's admittedly rarified cultural milieu, whose political success and failures derived in large part from his familial connections, his work-ethic, and his political flexibility.¹⁵ This thesis does not seek to roll-back the excellent scholarship, from Charles Webster to John Bew, that has gone into restoring Castlereagh's reputation in British political history. However, by necessity it will seek to amend several assumptions, largely due to its emphasis on Castlereagh's interactions with economic policy.

During Castlereagh's career as Leader of the House of Commons the institutions of government were changing rapidly. The vast expansion of financial resources managed by the parliament and the demands of supervising the war effort, permanently transformed the parliamentary workload.¹⁶ This rapid increase in the amount of business conducted by the House of Commons led to the institution of the Private Bill Office in 1810 and the creation of a working library for the Commons in 1818.¹⁷ These efforts at increased efficiency were still constrained by

¹⁴ Brougham to Creevey, 1 April 1817, (*Creevey papers*, i, p.262).

¹⁵ While Castlereagh was born into a dissenting Presbyterian family, of Scottish extraction, his status, education, and sympathies were clearly more aligned with the Anglo-Irish sub-culture than that of the Scots-Irish. See, David A. Valone, (ed.), *Anglo-Irish identities, 1571-1845*, (Cranbury, 2008).

¹⁶ In a letter to his brother, Castlereagh commented on this fact, complaining that 'The fatigue of 8 or 9 hours attendance daily in the House of Commons and the preparatory Enquiries have absorbed all my time as well as strength.' Castlereagh to Charles Stewart, 15 April 1816 (PRONI D3030/22/2 f. 168); 'We have sat on an average 8 or 9 hours a day since the House met.' Castlereagh to Charles Stewart, 4 June 1816, (PRONI D3030/22/2 f. 174).

¹⁷ For a full account of the effect of these reforms, see, Frederick Herbert, *Municipal Origins: An Account of English Private Bill Legislation*, (London, 1911), p. 72; Spencer Frederick Clifford, *A History of Private Bill Legislation*, ii, (Oxford, 1887).

the social calendar of Members, and schedules for votes and other parliamentary business always had to take account of the inflexibility of the Season. Although the amount of business conducted in the Commons continued to grow, much remained the same. Most Members would have seen relatively little change, with required committee meetings growing at a slow but steady pace, and the introduction of later gatherings emerging only gradually. Meanwhile, the balance of increased labor was borne almost entirely by cabinet members. Castlereagh, juggling both the management of Commons and the complicated task of Foreign Minister, was seemingly incapable of delegating tasks. Canning, whose time as Foreign Minister often gets compared to Castlereagh's, managed to occupy both of Castlereagh's positions with considerably more ease simply by, 'presiding over a little team' that required less direct oversight.¹⁸ Castlereagh, although clearly overworked, managed to retain the personal touch that had been allowed to previous Leaders of Commons and of the Foreign Office by their fairly moderate work-loads, thus making Canning's arrangement the first that truly acknowledged the postwar transformation of the British government. The Regent, still capable of dissolving ministries, was prevented from exercising that right due to difficulties with the Whig leadership. Even in 1820, when George IV was seeking a divorce, and the government proved unable to arrange it due to popular opposition, the monarch's hands remained tied by the greater difficulty that would have been associated with a Whig ministry.¹⁹

A World in Flux

It can be difficult to fully grasp how dramatically Britain changed between the final years of the Napoleonic Wars and those that followed the conclusion of peace. From 1812 onwards, the upper classes, buoyed by government spending and the resultant effects of inflation, had been on a spending spree. Perhaps the best evidence of this upswing in aristocratic self-confidence can be found in the rise of figures such as the dandy Beau Brummel, the poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, and the courtesan Harriette Wilson. As Boyd Hilton describes it, it was an era, 'when conventions were relaxed and traces kicked over, when aristocrats took advantage of high rentals to indulge in binge spending on everything from books to claret. It was the age of the waltz, of plays, balls, and masquerades, of silver forks, bucks and blades, dandies, beaux, bloods and swells, of West End clubbers and porter louts, their numbers boosted by returning officers on half-pay, as

¹⁸ Wendy Hinde, *George Canning* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 337-339.

¹⁹ According to Wellesley-Pole, 'the King...hated L[or]d L[iverpool] but could not get rid of him, without losing the rest' of the cabinet. Robert Plumer Ward, *Memoirs*, ii (London, 1850), p. 53.

well as by foreign visitors coming to try their luck at dice.’²⁰ Carried along by this explosion of war-driven wealth however, was a new, and culturally distinct branch of society: the middle class.²¹ By 1815, as the ebullient mood was beginning to shift and a new, moralizing middle class was emerging, with the conviction that, ‘it is to the cultivation of the moral qualities that England is indebted for her power and influence.’²² This sentiment, however, took on the attributes of class conflict, when understood in conjunction with Wilberforce’s assertion that, ‘a much looser system of morals commonly prevails in the higher than in the middling [classes].’²³

Wilberforce and the Saints, or the Clapham Sect, were developing as a political and cultural force in Britain, and the wartime taste for, ‘artificial spirits, and mere frivolous glitter’ was fast evaporating, as revenues declined.²⁴ The ancient power of upper class entitlement was also beginning to wane with the rising middle class.²⁵ These new members of society, empowered by the social and economic turmoil of the war years, and less affected by the postwar downturn, made up for their backgrounds by first pursuing superior tastes and later superior morality. As a result, ‘integrity and moral worth’ began to supersede talent as the key to success.²⁶ These events conspired to bring, ‘a blanket of propriety...down after the brilliant 1817-18 season...and brought five years of aristocratic and metropolitan bullishness to an end.’²⁷ These years of exuberance mirror the binge of spending that had characterized the final years of the war and the equally excessive debt accumulation and austerity measures that had followed immediately on their heels. Indeed, by the early 1820s an ache for propriety and moderation had settled in, much like that which would blanket Europe and North America in the early 1950s.

²⁰ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), p. 249.

²¹ ‘The middle class increases in greater ratio... [and] arises from the creation of capital made by commerce or manufactures. In no country in Europe have these been so flowering as in England.’ William MacKinnon, *On the Rise, Progress, and Present State of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Other Parts of the World*, (London, 1828), p. 5.

²² *Morning Chronicle*, 2 February 1815.

²³ William Wilberforce, ‘Practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians in the higher and middle class in this country’, *British Historical Documents*, p. 639.

²⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, 24, (1815).

²⁵ The shifting balance of power within British society can be traced in the definitional shift of the terms ‘middle ranks’ or ‘middling’ from a pejorative, connoting *arriviste* tendencies, to a synonym for post-war propriety. See, Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, pp. 157-183.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad Bad and Dangerous People*, p. 250.

The Impact of Castlereagh's Subsidy Program

From 1812-1815 Britain spent £550 million on the war effort, fueling a period of rapid economic expansion and wealth. Much of this spending had been distributed by Lord Castlereagh to the European powers in the form of subsidies.²⁸ Total subsidy spending amounted to £55,228,892 with nearly £17 million spent during the Waterloo campaign alone.²⁹ At their peak, these subsidies amounted to approximately 14% of yearly war expenditures.³⁰ The extent of Castlereagh's subsidies may have been informed, in part, by the assumption that, with victory, France could be forced to pay war indemnities capable of offsetting the expenses incurred in the final years of the war. Initial estimates assumed that that French indemnities would amount to around £80 million.³¹ These estimates began to drop rapidly in the years that followed the war, and the government was forced to accept that only a fraction of the French indemnity would be paid, in part due to Castlereagh's unwillingness to press the matter.³² Castlereagh, in a speech given before the House of Commons on 19 February 1816, argued for a collection process that was both equitable and fair as, 'no arrangement could be wise that carried ruin to one of the countries between which it was concluded.'³³ This speech, which set a tone of generosity towards French indemnity payments, took place in the midst of the Income tax debates, just as British debt was on the verge of exploding. While Castlereagh's generosity helped to quickly normalize France's role within Europe, the sudden realization that French indemnity payments would not be forthcoming sent shockwaves through the British economy.

A 'Return' to Antebellum Britain

During the final years of the war the economy had been buoyed by a series of successful harvests between 1812 and 1814. However, poor weather and the decline of army contracts pushed the economy towards depression by the beginning of 1815. Landowners, who so recently had enjoyed the fruits of high prices, found their situation threatened. Tenant farmers suffered from

²⁸ *Hansard*, xxxv, cc. 1868-9.

²⁹ William H. Mott, *Military Assistance: An Operational Perspective* (Westport, CT, 1999), p. 281.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 98.

³¹ Edwin F. Gay, 'War Loans or Subsidies' *Foreign Affairs*, 4/3 (1926), p. 394.

³² According to Niall Ferguson, 'the financial position of the restored Bourbon regime was less shaky than it appeared... [as it had] more or less wiped out the accumulated debts of the eighteenth century. Its total public debt in 1815 stood at just 1.2 billion francs, roughly 10 percent of its national income.' Niall Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild* (New York, 1998), pp. 115-116.

³³ *Hansard*, xxxii, cc. 673-675.

high rents, while laborers were forced to deal with decreasing wages and increased prices.³⁴ While the final parliamentary sessions of the war era, 1813 and 1814, had been some of the least contentious in parliamentary history, the looming crisis of 1815 would bring an end to the relative calm. As the war wound down, public confidence remained high, and the opposition had little grounds on which to criticize government measures. This stability allowed Castlereagh, the leader of the House of Commons to depart for the continent in the early months of 1814, without much concern for the government's political well-being. That April, Thomas Grenville remarked, 'in the meantime the general success of the moment carries on the business of the House of Commons, without Lord Castlereagh.'³⁵ However, within months the House's tone radically shifted as the postwar depression rapidly kicked into high gear and by November 1814 parliament had returned to its earlier contentiousness. While Waterloo demonstrated to the British self-consciousness, 'the firmness, and nerve, and independence of the British soldier.'³⁶ It also returned Britain to the practical considerations of day-to-day politics, divorced from the grand spectacle of the last, successful years of the war.

The government only came to discover Waterloo's decisiveness gradually and after some delay. Even several weeks after Britain's success, it still remained unclear that the war had come to its final conclusion. Beyond the economic effects of the peace, Britain's victory brought about a sea change in the national self-identity.³⁷ Britain had a long tradition of looking to historical precedents during periods of political change and as the war came to a close, that tendency shifted into high-gear. The most important shift being the nearly universal desire to quickly return the state to its prewar form.³⁸ This desire, amongst nearly every faction in British politics, was one of

³⁴ See Arthur Aspinall, *Lord Brougham and the Whig Party* (London, 2005), pp. 93-94.

³⁵ Richard P. G. Buckingham, *Memoirs of the Court of England, during the Regency, 1811- 1820*, ii, (London, 1856), pp. 63-64.

³⁶ *The Times*, 24 June 1815.

³⁷ Although typically historians have understood British national identity as deriving from wartime nationalism or perhaps politically-oriented Protestantism, neither of these truly point to the complex and ephemeral mood that gripped Britain post-war. Boyd Hilton has argued quite effectively, that muscular Protestantism, powerful during earlier conflicts with Catholic France, and again during the increasingly tense relationship with post-Union Ireland, was largely dormant during the years in question. In addition, many of the clubs and societies which helped to bend British political power to the will of the evangelical wing of the Anglican Church, did not begin their emergence until the late 1820s. See, Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People?*, p. 238.

³⁸ The Whig establishment and radicals alike pressed to return the government to its pre-war size, as quickly as possible. See, Grey to Grenville, 25 January 1815, (BL Add. MS. 58949, ff. 149-150.); Boyd Hilton has also discussed this tendency, Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: the Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford, 1988), p. 220.

the primary reasons that spending was radically cut.³⁹ Parliament, in the early nineteenth century, was largely made up of individuals familiar with agriculture and, as such, made agricultural concerns of a greater importance than would likely have been the case otherwise. Yet the war had brought significant social change, as an urban middle class began to emerge, newspaper readership rapidly increased, and coffee houses helped to spread new political consensuses.

One of the most noticeable aspect of the peacetime House of Commons was the extent to which it remained unaltered in the face of major increases in its work load. Unlike later periods of conflict, army officers did not form a political faction nor did merchants, many of whom had become wealthy during the war years. Postwar change seems more manifest, perhaps, in the function of the House of Commons. Increasingly the House of Commons resumed its pre-war practice of doing business rather than functioning as a showcase for rhetorical fireworks or the settling of local and personal complaints. This businesslike nature, was accelerated by the Union with Ireland in 1801 which quickly began to absorb roughly two days of every week during the parliamentary session.⁴⁰ This shift in workload was complicated by the fact that the vast majority of wartime reforms had failed to combat the disorderly nature of the parliament, the organization of which had, ‘arrangements, rather than [a] system.’⁴¹ While some historians discuss the politics of the postwar period as a discrete system, the political structure of the day was transitional, governed by *ad hoc* efforts at restoring normalcy. Parliamentary practice was rooted in, ‘the montage of constituencies and franchises with their archaic boundaries and qualifications...a cumulative past but only the beginnings of a history. This, ‘cake of custom, as Bagehot would later call it’ formed the complex, loosely organized guidelines that shaped parliamentary practice.⁴²

Castlereagh’s treaties with the Continental Powers engaged Great Britain to continue remittances until 1 April 1816 or, if peace had been established by then, until the various militaries had demobilized. As a result, regardless of victory, Britain was still subsidizing the Allied armies at the end of 1815. These subsidies, had they been paid in full, amounted to approximately £11,000,000.⁴³ Castlereagh argued that it was better to be overly generous with the Allies rather

³⁹ J. E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool’s Administration, 1815-1822* (Edinburgh, 1975), p. 20.

⁴⁰ Michael Bentley, *Politics without Democracy* (London, 1984), p. 24.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.* 21-22.

⁴³ *Wellington Supplementary Despatches*, xi, p. 153.

than risk a break between members of the Alliance, during the complex process of reconstructing Europe. Additionally he saw Britain's subsidies as an essential contribution, considering the vast manpower mobilized by the continental powers.⁴⁴ However, Castlereagh's generosity came at a price. That price was the continuation of higher wartime taxation in the years that followed Napoleon's final exile, with the opening shots of this debate occurring earlier during the Hundred Days. Ironically enough, the opposition decided to push against continuation, by making the unlucky argument that war was likely to continue indefinitely. This push occurred, only briefly before news of Waterloo's dénouement reached London. 'Mr. Ponsonby [who led the charge] ridiculed the idea of getting rid of the [Property] Tax at the end of the year. It was idle to suppose that this new war in which we were about to be involved, would soon be terminated.'⁴⁵ In the end, regardless of victory, expenses, while not as grand as first imagined, were extensive, and required a budgetary rethink. As John Sherwig has pointed out, 'all told, a war in which the actual fighting lasted no more than a few weeks saw nearly £7,000,000 paid out in reimbursement of foreign allies.'⁴⁶ The government, although flexible in retrospect, often seemed obdurate and confused in the months following the war in their handling of the postwar public's desire to rapidly seize hold of the benefits of peace, as well as the quickly changing public opinion of national debt. The rising influence of the middle class and 'public opinion' had not yet been fully digested by the government, and the government's usage of propaganda remained ham-fisted and narrowly limited to the purchase of friendly newspaper coverage. Castlereagh's preoccupation with the settlement of peace in Europe likely distracted him during these junctures, as no representative of the government took firm control of its response to the opposition during his absence. This failure of public relations, coupled with a healthy hesitancy to upend the economy, especially on the topic of retrenchment, provided a useful rallying point for opposition political rhetoric. In an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, Liverpool's government was accused of opposing the nation's desire to conclude its wartime obligations.

The present ministry are in their hearts and in their whole conduct the enemies of every reform, and none more than of retrenchment. They will yield nothing of the patronage of the crown; and

⁴⁴ See J. E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool's Administration*, p. 23.

⁴⁵ *The Sun*, 22 April 1815.

⁴⁶ John Sherwig, *Guineas and gunpowder: British foreign aid in the wars with France, 1793-1815* (London, 1969) p. 339.

until forced they will lessen none of the people's burdens. They are friendly to large military establishments; [and] patrons of arbitrary power abroad.⁴⁷

The nation, long linked by a common fear, and a common enemy suddenly felt its shared values dissolving. Frederick Artz, describes a world in which 'within a few years [after Waterloo] half the population in many parishes was on the poor-rates. In the factory towns thousands were thrown out of work, and even for the employers, with markets fluctuating and uncertain, the struggle for survival was desperate. Banks and commercial companies went to the wall by the hundreds.'⁴⁸ However, the Liverpool government, never the most perceptive of institutions, was blinded by their success. For, 'in [the cabinet's] view the successful conclusion of the wars had invested the whole existing social and political system with a halo of sanctity.'⁴⁹

During the four months that followed the conclusion of the war, the British army, like its continental counterparts, remained at ready. In Paris, however, diplomatic agreement was advancing at a painstakingly slow pace. As negotiations dragged on, the Treasury was faced by the enormous increase in government debt. By July the Army's expenses had already reached £400,000.⁵⁰ At first, these expenses were driven by an insufficient and poorly organized provisioning system. However, as the army shifted towards the requisition of French supplies, costs dropped considerably.⁵¹ This simple change eventually cut the price of occupation by approximately a third, but did little to assuage growing concerns over the cost of maintaining an occupying force in France.⁵²

Castlereagh's subsidy payments, while useful at maintaining the unity of the Alliance, took a heavy toll on Britain's finances. After years of expenditures abroad and the enormous costs of the Waterloo campaign, Britain's bullion reserve was severely depleted. This weakening, worsened by the instability of the metal exchange and the weakness of British paper, had the effect of driving the Bank of England to reduce its issuance of commercial paper, a move which had problematic impacts on the long-run health of the economy.⁵³ By the end of the war the

⁴⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, lix, p. 204.

⁴⁸ Frederick Artz, *Reaction and revolution, 1814-1832* (New York, 1934), p. 63.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Vansittart to Lord Castlereagh (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, x, p. 482).

⁵¹ *Wellington supplementary despatches*, xii, 557

⁵² N. Vansittart to Lord Castlereagh, 4 September 1815 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xi, p. 3).

⁵³ J. E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 24.

government increasingly sought to raise money in continental Europe in order that it might finance its expenses using foreign reserves. Sterling, which remained weak through the remainder of 1815, forced the continuation of the program. Foreign policy was in part shaped by this need and subsidy treaties stipulated that the continental powers were to utilize funds drawn from European rather than English banks.⁵⁴ The government, which was slowly realizing that a crisis, both political and economic, was upon them, panicked. Castlereagh, although a weak speaker, was repeatedly summoned, from his work in Vienna, as the best hope for the government. While Castlereagh returned as quickly as was feasible, he looked on the 1816 session with considerable concern.⁵⁵ Britain had triumphed, but at considerable cost in both treasure and human lives. As Lord Denman put it, ‘many a British mother bewailed a son fallen on that fatal field, [Waterloo].’⁵⁶ Soon the majority of Britons would bewail the implications of overspending and indebtedness which had ensured that victory.

From the beginning, the long war with France had hinged on distinctive constitutional forms. With the conclusion of peace, Britain’s own, much fought for, way of life began to radically shift, ironically making way for the adoption of many of the precepts of the early French revolutionaries. Perhaps more importantly though, Britain’s empire had expanded radically, setting the stage for the exportation of Britain’s constitution.⁵⁷ The peace treaties agreed upon between 1814 and 1815 had added Cape Colony, the Ionian Islands, Trinidad, St. Lucia, Tobago, Malta, Guyana, and Mauritius to Britain’s Empire. The vast majority of these acquisitions came in the form of naval bases whose locations helped to shape the size and scope of Britain’s imperial holdings in the years that followed.

The Liverpool administration was unable to sustain a rock-solid collection of supporters within parliament as it increasingly lost its ability to bring the traditional inducements of sinecure to bear. In the face of this expansion of the British Empire, and the simultaneous decline in government resources, this would prove a problematic restraint. These limitations on government incentives had been an ongoing trend, however the process had been mitigated by the enormous

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁵ Arthur Aspinall, *Letters of George IV*, ii, p. 150.

⁵⁶ Thomas Denman, *A Letter from Lord Denman to Lord Brougham on the Final Extinction of the Slave Trade* (London, 1848), p. 39.

⁵⁷ By 1820, C.A. Bayley has argued, the British Empire constituted approximately 26% of the world’s population. See C.A. Bayley, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), p. 3.

expenditures of the war, and the government's nearly free-hand with the steering of contracts. Indeed, many of the reforms of the war era may have been made possible by the concurrent emergence of alternate and even more remunerative forms of patronage. However, as war spending was replaced by extreme economy even that avenue of influence peddling was cut from the government's arsenal. It was as a result of this postwar shift that the government began to explore a reassessment of its platform.

Castlereagh's Role in the Ministerial Policy Adjustment

The government's reappraisal of its platform led to a dramatic shift in policy.⁵⁸ As the government increasingly embraced a more inclusive set of political goals drawn, in part from the liberalism of the radicals, Castlereagh's political moderation helped to guide their path. Castlereagh's flexibility thus informed the government's postwar pivot, forcing radicals away from policy disagreement and towards identity politics. It is thus no surprise that he personally became the focus of radical opprobrium.⁵⁹ Indeed, it is only within this light that the intensity of attacks on Castlereagh's rhetorical skills and intellect become fully intelligible. Castlereagh's intellectual abilities, in great part, indistinguishable from his colleagues, have remained a bone of contention for historians. The nature of these attacks has given a permanently defensive character to those seeking to resist the negative consensus. Of the arguments in favor of Castlereagh's intellectual capabilities, the most important comes from Charles Webster.⁶⁰ This defense, found in Webster's enormous two volume *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, seeks to place Castlereagh's thought in history as the inheritance of Pitt's foreign policies. Indeed, Webster was one of the first

⁵⁸ Peel worried that the government was abandoning the principles 'on which without being very certain...they have hitherto professed to act.' Instead, it appeared that they would execute 'moderate Whig policy' or perhaps even give up the government to the Whigs, and let them carry those measures into effect.' 'Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker', (*Croker papers*, i, p. 170); This move to adopt 'moderate Whig policy' was not limited to domestic policies. As John Bew has pointed out, the 'Whig...shift to an anti-interventionist stance...hardened in opposition to Castlereagh from 1815.' That shift helped to push Castlereagh towards non-intervention, and the emergence of an 'anti-intervention consensus.' John Bew, 'Intervention in the wake of the Napoleonic wars', *Humanitarian Intervention: a History* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 123.

⁵⁹ One notable, for the era, example came in Francis Horner's attack on Castlereagh during a debate on 25 May 1816, in which Horner accused Castlereagh of having 'thrown out such a mass of language and ideas and hav[ing] made such a novel combination of twisted expressions that it was difficult in the many theories he urged to understand that one which applied to the resumption of cash payments or to the manner in which they might be most speedily effected'. *Cobbett's Political Register*, 30, p. 665.

⁶⁰ It should be noted that Webster's interpretation of Pitt's influence on Castlereagh was predated by Holland Rose, who believed, for instance, that while Castlereagh claimed authorship of the Treaty of Chaumont 'in a larger sense the treaty was Pitt's treaty.' Holland Rose, *Napoleonic Studies* (London, 1904), p. 81.

major scholars to highlight the degree to which Castlereagh's policies were derived from Pitt's.⁶¹ Such arguments have been repeatedly attacked, as scholars have sought to distinguish Castlereagh's distinctive contribution to foreign policy. Recently Philip Bobbitt has devoted much thought to Castlereagh's position, arguing for his place in the pantheon of the founders of modern international law thought.⁶² It is clear from all these arguments that Castlereagh's intellectual reputation is undermined by his rhetorical limitations.⁶³ However, in many ways these debates shed little light on contemporary interpretations of his career, as intellectual strength was hardly a selling point to many early nineteenth century parliamentarians.⁶⁴ Indeed, Castlereagh's lack of intellectual rhetoric suited the tastes of the, 'country gentlemen [who] delighted in uncomplicated politics, [who] disliked brilliance and Classical allusions...nor were [the country gentlemen] worried when Castlereagh stumbled in his discourses in his weakest subject-finance-for they were no better at figures themselves.'⁶⁵ In addition, while Webster's efforts to draw a line between Pitt and Castlereagh has tended to oversimplify the range of influences on Castlereagh's thought, the extent of Castlereagh's indebtedness to Pitt is not really at issue. Castlereagh himself made several very explicit references to his indebtedness.⁶⁶ It is clear that such interpretations are problematic in several ways, perhaps most concerning is their tendency to obscure the degree to which both Pitt and Castlereagh espoused views considered standard at the time.

Castlereagh's economic thought was largely practical in nature, and while some have argued that his policies reflected a distinct perspective, the extent of his theoretical understanding

⁶¹ 'From the moment of his entry into office he had before him the new Europe which Pitt had planned, and every step that he took was directed towards bringing it into existence.' Charles Webster, *Foreign policy of Castlereagh*, i, (London, 1931), p. 486.

⁶² 'From our current perspective...one can see in Castlereagh's work an achievement of such magnitude that it becomes clear how, despite the incomprehension of his successors and the hostility to his designs of his continental collaborators, it survived to give peace for forty years....The Congress System took the wartime coalition of collective security and applied it to peacetime, in much the same way that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has operated in our own time.' Phillip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, pp. 160-161.

⁶³ A contemporary poem summed up this dichotomy: 'They much in truth misjudge him who explain, His graceless language by a witless brain. So firm his purpose so resolved his will, It almost seem'd a craft to speak so ill... As if like Cromwell flashing towards his end. Through cloudy verbiage none could comprehend.' George Henry Jennings, *An Anecdotal History of the British Parliament* (London, 1892), p. 188.

⁶⁴ Evidence from Castlereagh's correspondence, it should be noted, seems to indicate that Castlereagh's intellectual pursuits were perhaps more adventurous than is commonly reported. For instance his youthful love of Rousseau, whose *Nouvelle Eloise*, he described as, 'Eloquent beyond measure' containing 'everything good in philosophy, morality, and true virtue.' Robert Stewart to Lady Elizabeth Pratt (PRONI D3030/2/1).

⁶⁵ C. J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh*, p. 164.

⁶⁶ In a letter to Cardinal Consalvi, Castlereagh wrote, 'the world is most indebted [to Pitt] both for its peace and for its triumphs.' Castlereagh to Consalvi, 22 January 1817 cited in Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, ii, p. 30.

remains unclear. Although he hailed from a family that held vast quantities of land both in Ireland and Britain, Castlereagh was not immune to the effects of the economic difficulties facing the country.⁶⁷ His economic thought, shows traces of the practical training received during his upbringing. Castlereagh's responses to economic problems largely reflected, the practical opinions, more than the theoretical stances popular during his era. However, Castlereagh was by no means immune to the need to economize, especially in the wake of the 1816 income tax debacle.⁶⁸ Castlereagh's 'conversion' to austerity however, should not be construed as rooted in a firm grasp of Britain's economic situation. As John Bew has argued, 'Castlereagh was...out of his depth on financial questions-certainly in comparison with more innovative thinkers in the government, such as William Huskisson.'⁶⁹ Boyd Hilton, in contrast has asserted, less-convincingly, that Castlereagh, in fact, did have distinctive, fully-conceived economic policies. Hilton, for instance, argues that, on the question of currency, 'Castlereagh...attacked[ed] the bullionists' empiricist belief in a uniform measure of value, he postulated an 'ideal standard' or a 'sense of value' a concept which was not without insight but puzzled the cognoscenti.'⁷⁰ Hilton's understanding of the distinctive aspects of Castlereagh's economic perspectives may be over-generous, but Castlereagh's vision, perhaps accidentally, does seem oddly in-sync with modern day monetary policy. Regardless of these potentially forward-thinking perspectives, Castlereagh still struggled at first to recognize the vastly increased importance of economic policy in the period immediately following the war. Bathurst, concerned by Castlereagh's failure to understand this transformation cautioned Castlereagh, that he 'very much undervalue[s] our parliamentary difficulties.'⁷¹ Similarly, Liverpool, worried that Castlereagh did not understand, 'the extent of our financial embarrassments.'⁷²

⁶⁷ The first Marquess of Londonderry was no stranger to the importance of economy, as indicated in many of his letters. As shown in a letter from his father, their tenants' inability to pay rent was beginning to effect the family budget. His father writes, 'the distress and difficulties of the times, instead of diminishing seem to me in this country to grow every day more serious-hardly any rents can be said to be coming in, the tenantry pay so badly.' Londonderry to his son Castlereagh, Mount Stewart, 25 March 1817 (PRONI D3030/22/2).

⁶⁸ Robert Hamilton quotes William Groom as stating that 'Lord Castlereagh has particularly requested that I would attend to economy.' 'Letter from Robert Hamilton to Nugent, Portaferry, 12 March 1816, in which he quotes from letter by William Groom, Lincoln's Inn Fields, 9 March 1816 (PRONI D552/A/8/4/95).

⁶⁹ John Bew, *Castlereagh: a Life* (Oxford, 2012), p. 436.

⁷⁰ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad Bad and Dangerous People?* p. 258.

⁷¹ 'Bathurst to Castlereagh' 18 January 1815 (PRONI D3030/4394).

⁷² 'Liverpool to Castlereagh, Bath' 6 January 1815 (PRONI D3030/4375).

Castlereagh's Relationship with the Cabinet

The concerns expressed by the Prime Minister, and members of the cabinet, over Castlereagh's misunderstanding of the government's financial situation, hint at a divide between Castlereagh and Liverpool that would continually deepen in the following years. Liverpool enjoyed a deep and lasting friendship with Canning and while Castlereagh and Canning had resolved the differences that led to their duel, a coolness remained. As Canning returned from Lisbon to rejoin the cabinet in 1816, his friendship with Liverpool pushed his role far beyond the nominal limits of the President of the Board of Control. While Castlereagh remained amenable to Canning's advice, it was clear that Canning's intentions were less generous. While Castlereagh's position remained dominant, Canning's influence on Liverpool, and thus indirectly on the other members of the cabinet, would slowly erode that superiority in all but name until Canning's resignation in 1820.⁷³

To fully understand Castlereagh's complex status within the cabinet, it is important to first examine the nature and function of the Liverpool-era cabinet itself. The cabinet, without the monolithic discipline of its modern day iteration, was divided not only in political views, but also in structure between a nominal and an efficient cabinet. The nominal cabinet consisted of the leading members of the monarch's traditional retinue including the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, the Lord Steward, the Lord Chamberlain, the Master of the Horse, and the Groom of the Stole, as well as the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Archbishop of Canterbury. To these were added heads of departments, including those positions that now form the modern cabinet. This second group, known as the efficient cabinet, had emerged as dominant over the course of George III's reign, to the point that the nominal cabinet was considered almost entirely vestigial during the Liverpool administration. The ceremonial nature of the nominal cabinet was highlighted by the fact that the monarch was present at all its meetings, thus ensuring that business was almost entirely taken up by ceremonial. While the nominal cabinet had evolved into a largely decorative entity, the real cabinet remained in flux, slowly expanding to the point of similar irrelevance. In 1818, the working cabinet had expanded to include fifteen members, a number that concerned George IV. The Board of Trade and the Mint positions were considered to be particularly unnecessary, and the monarch argued that Liverpool 'ought well to consider, upon any

⁷³ Edward Stapleton (ed.), *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning* (London, 1887), pp. 4-10.

vacancy occurring in several of those offices which have lately been made cabinet situations, before you suffer them to be filled up with the like important trust being attached to them.’⁷⁴ Just as George IV was growing concerned with the steady expansion of the working cabinet, another difficulty was becoming plainer. Liverpool, who had for several years, managed the government with a remarkable degree of open-mindedness, was losing credibility amongst the more traditional members of parliament as the postwar population grew increasingly restive. As Boyd Hilton has pointed out, Liverpool’s hesitancy and accommodation towards the populace led to him being branded as someone controlled by public opinion or as Sheffield put it the, ‘miserable apprehension of the possible loss of a little popularity among...the swinish multitude.’⁷⁵ Additionally, on matters of great importance Liverpool allowed his subordinates to make key decisions.⁷⁶

Liverpool’s tendency to delegate important tasks shifted much of the responsibility of government onto his cabinet. In addition, Liverpool’s personality failed to inspire great faith, especially amongst the conservative land-owning classes which made up the vast majority of parliamentarians.⁷⁷ Castlereagh’s lack of rhetorical skill, often laughed at by his opponents, actually had the result of inspiring confidence amongst the country gentlemen, who saw him as a kindred spirit, much more than Liverpool. Castlereagh’s ‘sincerity and...conviction’ had more ‘influence over the House of Commons than the most brilliant flights of fancy and the keenest wit.’⁷⁸ That sincerity, and pragmatism, helped ensure that Castlereagh managed the fringe of the government’s supporters with relative ease. These skills were tremendously important, as an essential aspect of Castlereagh’s work was ensuring that government supporters actually turned up for votes. Indeed the archives are full of examples of Castlereagh’s personally drafted appeals for assistance from errant government supporters. Castlereagh’s personal simplicity and

⁷⁴ Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, iii, (London, 1886) p. 206.

⁷⁵ Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce* (Oxford, 1977), p. 11; Sheffield to Hardwicke, 30 November 1814, (BL Add. MS 35651 ff. 178-9).

⁷⁶ For instance, his willingness to cave to William Vesey-Fitzgerald’s demand that grain pricing legislation policy be run out of the cabinet. While Hilton argues that Liverpool’s decision was driven by a strategic interest in gaining the initiative over more ardently protectionist voices, it remains unclear that this wasn’t simply another example of Liverpool’s willingness to delegate. Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, p. 38.

⁷⁷ William Wellesley-Pole described Lord Liverpool as lacking ‘warmth’ and ‘that power of mixing himself with others so necessary to every public man.’ Instead, Liverpool preferred to ‘shut himself up with clerks, was very honest and very able in his way, but was totally ignorant of the arts of party government; all were left to themselves or chance.’ Robert Plumer Ward, *Memoirs* (London, 1850), p. 53.

⁷⁸ Lord John Russell, *Recollections and Suggestions, 1813-1873* (London, 1875), p. 262.

persuasiveness, however, were not always sufficient to consistently rally all the government's wavering supporters. As a result he employed five whips, who served also, nominally, as Lords of the Treasury.⁷⁹ In addition to his whips, Castlereagh also had recourse to weekend meetings with parliamentarians, typically held at his modest country house, Cray Farm, in Kent about fourteen miles east of London.⁸⁰ These were known to be quite effective, and William Wilberforce swore them off, as Castlereagh's in-person persuasiveness was simply too effective.⁸¹ A consistent problem for Castlereagh's management came from his home country: Ireland. Castlereagh remained an important figure in Irish politics, and during much of the immediate postwar era Irish members remained largely connected to the government, with roughly seventy percent seated as government supporters at its peak in 1818, although poor attendance reduced those numbers to around fifty.⁸² The combination of a remarkable degree of support for the government, and a very shoddy voting record, meant that Castlereagh was consistently at work ensuring that Irish government supporters actually voted on close issues. The distraction of managing government supporters, allowed no diminution in Castlereagh's remaining workload. In a letter to his brother, Castlereagh complains that, he had 'never been so hard worked' and that his 'mornings are now entirely consumed in the Finance, and Poor Law Committees, which I make it a point to attend, and which sit six days in the Week or alternative days. I hope we have a successful campaign of it...by a timely attention to the Economical feelings of the day conciliated in a considerable degree the confidence of the Country Gentlemen, who had known and prefer'd us as War Ministers, but began to doubt our intents for Peace, and retrenchment.'⁸³

Castlereagh and the Austerity Movement

While the endless talk of money, and hours spent in parliamentary meetings on the state of the economy and the welfare of the poor, may have been beyond Castlereagh's capabilities, the cabinet's growing emphasis on austerity clearly had an effect. In the same letter as above, Castlereagh makes a powerful statement of his personal belief in the importance of sound economic policy.

⁷⁹ Arthur Aspinall, *English Historical Review*, xli, pp. 396-7.

⁸⁰ Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Lord Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 33.

⁸¹ Jane Robins, *The Trial of Queen Caroline*, p. 99.

⁸² R. B. McDowell, *Public Opinion and Government Policy in Ireland, 1801-1846*, ii, (London, 1952), pp. 46-49

⁸³ Castlereagh to Charles Stewart, 16 March 1816 (PRONI D3030/22/2).

Nothing shall be wanting on my part to bring our Expenditure within our income and to make an effective progress during peace in the reduction of debt. But to do this, we must Combat many strong feelings in the highest Quarters, we must perhaps run some risks, but rest assured that if we do not firmly pursue a peace policy in the Scale of our establishments, we shall not either as Members or as a Nation maintain our station.⁸⁴

Here we find a Castlereagh, in many ways unlike the spendthrift who had distributed vast sums across the continent only a year previously. Additionally, Castlereagh was becoming more accepting of the fact that ‘we must all learn to narrow our expenditure.’ At the same time, the increasing toll of economic hardship was beginning to figure into his thought. In a letter to his brother, Castlereagh informed him that ‘internal Sufferings [are] such as hardly to admit of Exaggeration, and yet I hope things somewhat mending...we have rallied the loyal, and shall keep the cronies down. If the ensuing Harvest is good, we shall improve, but another bad year would shake us to the center.’⁸⁵

In the years that immediately followed the war, Castlereagh’s foreign policy was often at odds with the postwar era’s priorities. As a result Castlereagh’s Europeanist tendencies, which cost enormous amounts to fund, found few friends. Even Liverpool and Vansittart, the finance ministers ‘could muster up little sympathy for this ‘European’ point of view; with the war over they saw no need to subsidize armies to march into France and back again.’⁸⁶ Without friends, even within his own cabinet, Castlereagh’s policy goals were gradually bypassed, in favor of those promoted by his eventual successor: George Canning.

Castlereagh’s work was complicated by the diversity of opposition against the government’s policy. The opposition, however, was unfocused, and characterized more by its differences than by its pursuit of any particular distinct policy. In contrast, the Whig leadership, keen to bring their party back into power, kept their platform simplistic and broadly libertarian by emphasizing austerity, foreign policy non-interventionism, and Catholic emancipation. Meanwhile, radicals, while often sympathetic to aspects of the Whig platform, also sought more dramatic parliamentary and voting reforms, or even outright republicanism. The extremism of

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ J. E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool’s Administration*, p. 23.

some radicals who embraced violence and revolution tended to most harm the more moderate reformers, by driving away middle class support. While many centrist factions existed, such as the Grenvillites and Canningites, the most persistent independent voice of opposition came from the country gentlemen voting bloc. A group made up of the rural agricultural interest, it remained sympathetic to the government, but resolutely refused to toe the line on issues of economic importance to its personal and constituent interests. However, the majority of independent members favored the government. In some parts this was due to a persistent taint left by the pro-French sympathies of the radicals and some Whigs. These sympathies were given highly damaging publicity during the Hundred Days by the publicly expressed desire, of many in the opposition, to avoid a resumption of open warfare with France.⁸⁷ While such opinions seem rational given the knowledge available to the modern historian, the victory at Waterloo with its resulting emergence as a defining moment in the British psyche meant that such efforts at due diligence were depicted instead as cowardice.

Castlereagh's Health

Castlereagh was frequently absent from parliament due to ill health. Castlereagh's health during the final years of his life was widely discussed at the time, but was not introduced to scholarly examination until the publication of Montgomery Hyde's *Strange Death of Lord Castlereagh*.⁸⁸ In recent years, first in Giles Hunt's *The Duel* and again in John Bew's biography, the possibilities that Castlereagh was infected with either rabies or neurosyphilis have both been explored.⁸⁹ While it may very well have been that one or both of these illnesses brought on the insanity and suicide which ended Castlereagh's life, what is less well considered is the degree to which illness hindered his career, earlier in Castlereagh's life. Charles Arbuthnot stated that 'there is the greatest confidence in [Castlereagh]' and when he is 'present and...from good health able to make exertions, all does well.'⁹⁰

⁸⁷ See J.E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-war Liberalism in England, 1793-1815* (Cambridge, 1982).

⁸⁸ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Strange Death of Lord Castlereagh* (London, 1959).

⁸⁹ Giles Hunt, *The Duel*, pp. 180-185, 187-191; John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 555.

⁹⁰ Arthur Aspinall, (ed.), *The Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot* (London, 1941), pp. 13-18.

Although hindered by ill health, Castlereagh's managerial skills remained unsurpassed within the government.⁹¹ Webster described Castlereagh as the 'best manager of the...House of Commons since Walpole.'⁹² Thomas Creevey, with less reason to flatter, admitted that Castlereagh, 'managed a corrupt House of Commons pretty well, with some address.'⁹³ Even in his, admittedly tepid praise, Creevey's good opinion of Castlereagh's management style indicates, some distinctiveness. Indeed, in spite of his limitations, or perhaps due to them, Castlereagh was well-known as a highly convincing, if ineloquent, speaker in the small settings at which much of the practical business of government was accomplished.⁹⁴ Greville, writing in his memoirs, argued that 'he was considered one of the best managers of the house of Commons who ever sat in it...he was eminently possessed of the good taste, good humour, and agreeable manners which are more requisite to make a good leader than eloquence, however brilliant.'⁹⁵ While highlighting Castlereagh's limitations, Greville manages to explain more clearly what qualities established his managerial *bona fides*, amongst Castlereagh's parliamentary colleagues. On a more practical level, Lord Melbourne, believed that Castlereagh's managerial skills resulted 'partly from the easiness of his nature, which let everybody do as they liked, partly from a knack which he had of shuffling over important questions nobody knew how.' These skills were made possible, Melbourne argued, due to the fact that 'Castlereagh had either taken or suffered to be cast upon him the whole business of the House and management of every question.'⁹⁶ The sheer work-load associated with Castlereagh's managerial style meant that 'when Canning succeeded...him, he at once determined to make each Minister transact his own business and only himself to exercise a general superintendence.'⁹⁷

Castlereagh's career encompassed a period of unprecedented difficulty and upheaval. Of the many challenging years, in that career, perhaps the most complex occurred in 1815 during

⁹¹ Bartlett has argued, 'the leadership of the House of Commons is the least explored aspect of Castlereagh's career,' C. J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh*, p. 162.

⁹² Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 31.

⁹³ Brougham to Creevey, (*Creevey Papers*, ii, 44).

⁹⁴ Castlereagh, while better in smaller settings, still suffered from certain speech difficulties, as he was known to have 'a habit of using the first word that came to hand without much regard to its significance...[a tendency which] had exposed him to criticism and even ridicule, nor was he in private conversation altogether free from the same defect.' Stanley Lane-Poole, *Life of Stratford Canning*, i, p. 213.

⁹⁵ Henry Reeve, (ed.). *The Greville Memoirs: a Journal of the Reigns of King George IV and King William*, i, (London, 1887), pp. 127-128.

⁹⁶ L.C. Sanders, (ed.), *Lord Melbourne's Papers* (London, 1889), pp. 98-99.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

which Castlereagh worked to establish both a lasting peace on the Continent, and a stable return to politics as usual in the House of Commons. This process was complicated, not only by the extent of Castlereagh's overseas obligations but also the dichotomous requirements of agriculturalists and the majority of Britons for whom wheaten bread formed the core of their diet. In addition to the complex network of demands, there were underlying, persistent cyclical patterns of recession and high food costs driven by the unpredictable environment of early-nineteenth century Europe.

Due to the low-complexity diet of many Britons and Britain's limited ability to import wheat, a persistently high demand for wheat remained a consistent strain on the British economy for much of the period in question.⁹⁸ Strong harvests, without the ability to simply shift excess onto the international market, created massive shifts in price, which could easily ruin cultivators of second rate lands reclaimed during the Napoleonic Wars. Major agriculturalists, land-owners, and tenant farmers were each subject to substantial harm during bountiful years, a fact which perversely disincentivized agricultural productivity during an era of increasing global demand.

Until the Reform Act of 1832, parliament was largely the domain of major agriculturalists and landowners, and that over-representation is obvious in much of the legislative program pursued throughout the Napoleonic Wars and in their aftermath. During the era of conflict, Corn Laws were passed in 1791, 1804, 1814, and 1815, with a revision of the 1815 law passed in 1822 with a minor amendment proposed by Castlereagh. Each iteration of the law was largely designed to benefit the agricultural sector, but was paid for in the form of higher food prices by the poorest members of British society. This blatant class warfare pushed Britain into a period of lower and middle class dissent, strengthened by the ranks of discharged soldiers and enriched by the leadership of members of the emerging upper middle class, such as Henry Hunt, keen to display their growing power and political influence.⁹⁹ Just as the wide-spread unemployment of hand-loom weavers led to the emergence of Luddite machine breaking, the rapid demobilization of former soldiers led to the rise of militarized dissent.¹⁰⁰ In the following chapter, this explosion of dissent on the streets of London will be examined as the foundational event in a period of extreme social tension that would shape the face of British society for years to come.

⁹⁸ For a contemporary analysis of Britain's reliance on bread, see, William Playfair, *A Letter on our Agricultural Distresses, Their Causes and Remedies* (London, 1821).

⁹⁹ Benjamin Weinstein, *Liberalism and Local Government in Early Victorian London* (Rochester, NY, 2011) p. 56.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Poole, 'The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England', *Past & Present*, 192, (2006), pp. 109-153.

Chapter 2

The Corn Laws and the Emergence of Postwar Dissent

1815

On 3 March 1815, Castlereagh disembarked in Dover, after his return from the Congress of Vienna. Upon his arrival he was greeted by the sounds of cannon and the ‘acclamation of a crowd.’¹ This warm welcome, however, was not to last, and on the following Monday, while walking to the House of Commons, Castlereagh was confronted by a boisterous crowd, protesting against the Corn Bill. Provision riots, such as those surrounding the Corn Bill, were exceedingly common throughout the eighteenth century.² However, with the passage of the Seditious Meeting Act of 1795, outdoor meetings experience a period of decline, only to ‘re-emerge powerfully after 1815.’³ The Corn Bill riots, while rooted in the same impulses as the eighteenth century provision riots existed in a radically altered world.⁴ As John Bohstedt has argued, ‘the Corn Law riots of 1815 occurred in an altered theater of provision politics.’⁵ The Corn Bill riots can thus be understood as a transitional moment in the nature of British public disturbance. E. P. Thompson has similarly argued that ‘the radicalism of the London Crowd was no new phenomenon, but in the postwar years it assumed more conscious, organised, and sophisticated forms’ as dissent responded to changes in print technology and the militarization of repression.⁶ At the same time, petitioning, although a long-term aspect of British political expression, increased to an unprecedented scale. Indeed, on 9 March, in the midst of the Corn Law protests, over 800,000

¹ *The Examiner*, 5 March 1815.

² Provision riots occurred throughout the century, with particular flare-ups in, ‘1709-10, 1727-9, 1739-40, 1756-7, 1766-8, 1772-3, 1783-4, 1794-6.’ John E. Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England, 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 28.

³ Robert Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-century England* (New York, 2004), p. 150.

⁴ Perhaps the greatest similarity between eighteenth century and post-war provision rioting lay in their common roots in food prices and, to lesser degree, malnourishment. John E. Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England*, p. 29; Rostow makes similar, if less nuanced claims. W. W. Rostow, ‘Business Cycles, Harvests, and Politics: 1790-1850,’ *The Journal of Economic History*, 1/2 (1941).

⁵ John Bohstedt, *The Politics of Provisions: Food Riots, Moral Economy, and Market Transition* (Farnham, 2010), p. 247.

⁶ E.P. Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963), p. 605.

signatures had already been logged from petitions opposed to the legislation.⁷ Recent research has overturned the consensus long present in the historiography that the 1815 Corn Laws had a relatively neutral impact on the British economy.⁸ Utilizing these recent improvements in historical understanding of the economic impact of the legislations, and a careful re-reading of correspondence, contemporary pamphlets and newspaper accounts, this chapter explores the conflict which fueled the emergence of these ‘organised, sophisticated forms’, Castlereagh’s previously ignored role in the passage of this legislation, and the evolution of the government’s perspectives on grain tariffs.⁹

In the wake of the exile of Napoleon to Elba, Britain began a period of rapid transformation from the fiscal-military state inaugurated in the late eighteenth century to the much smaller, much cheaper government that had emerged by the end of Castlereagh’s life.¹⁰ Created during the waning days of the Napoleonic era, the Corn Laws of 1815 proved inefficient at both ensuring autarky and stabilizing the British grain trade.¹¹ However, the impact of this failure, was superseded by its outsized effect on the reorganization of popular protest, which shaped the social and political infrastructure for dissent and eventually opposition to a continuation of the income tax.¹²

⁷ *The Scots Magazine*, 77, p. 304.

⁸ Recently, it has been argued that the impact of the Corn Laws were more substantial than had been previously argued, with prices increased by as much as 9% and ‘consumption about 1.5 % lower’. Tony Ward, in particular, has argued that ‘under a free-trade regime, [wheat prices] would have fallen [by] an average of 17 percent.’ ‘This would probably have devolved largely on landowners in the form of reduced rents’. Tony Ward, ‘The Corn Laws and English Wheat Prices, 1815-1846’, *American Economic Journal*, 32/3, (2004), p. 252.

⁹ British Library, Huskisson Papers, Add. MSS 38739, 38740; BL Canning Papers, Add. MS. 38833; *Report from the Select Committee to whom the Referral Petitions Complaining of the Depressed States of the Agriculture of the United Kingdom*, ix, (London, 1812); William Hone, (ed.) *Political Letters and Pamphlets* (London, 1830); Castlereagh’s role in the Corn Law process has been essentially ignored. Wendy Hinde does briefly mention their occurrence, but downplays Castlereagh’s role, only briefly mentioning the riots. ‘On...the day [Castlereagh] reappeared in the Commons, the military had to be called in to deal with the huge crowd’ Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh*, p. 229; Likewise, Ione Leigh addresses the attacks on Castlereagh’s house that occurred during the riots, but presents them as disembodied events, with no apparent cause or context. Ione Leigh, *Castlereagh*, pp. 320-321;

¹⁰ Philip Harling and Peter Mandler, ‘From Fiscal-Military State to *Laissez Faire* State, 1760-1850’ *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 32/1, (1993), pp. 44-70.

¹¹ Philip Harling, *The Waning of Old Corruption: The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 136-190.

¹² The popularization of dissent that occurred during the Corn Riots should not be understood as a purely spontaneous, but rather rooted in a new Whig effort at discrediting the ministry. This effort, launched in September 1814 called for ‘economy, opposed new subsidies to the allies, and criticized the...proceedings at Vienna.’ Dean Rapp, *Samuel Whitbread* (Baltimore, 1970), p. 202; An example of this shift in the organization of dissent can be found in the popularization of Hampden Clubs which spread from London, under the leadership of Francis Burdett, in the aftermath of the rioting, and eventually went on to play a role in the St. Peter’s Field meeting *The Guernsey Magazine*, 4 January 1876; E. P. Thompson has similarly argued that as Cartwright ‘passed rapidly from town to town, the incipient clubs which he left behind him had the greatest difficulty in maintaining themselves. It was not until 1816 that they struck root in the manufacturing districts.’ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working*

Additionally, the rioting which arose from protests against the legislation, and the government's harsh response, helped to set an adversarial tone which was to have a long term effect on the nature of postwar political discourse.

This chapter builds upon the study, pioneered by W.W. Rostow, of the outsized impact of minor or perceived economic disruptions which occurred during the reemergence of a peacetime order in Great Britain.¹³ As Rostow explains, even minor 'cyclical fluctuations and cost-of-living movements served to detonate and to give expression to...underlying trends.'¹⁴ Thus, rather than focusing only on long-run conceptions like 'the growth of the free-trade movement,' or 'the industrial revolution' it is essential that the practical concerns of particular populations remain central.¹⁵ This chapter follows Rostow's dictum by seeking to identify the impact of the first of three legislative debates which 'detonated' long-simmering tensions within British politics and society. These debates, inaugurated by the 1815 Corn Bill, were driven by the fears of overextended agriculturists and consumers worried by the prospect of persistent high prices. However, the debates themselves had significant implications for the society at large, and subsequently for the nature of British foreign and domestic policy.¹⁶

One of the most notable aspects of the passage of the 1815 Corn Laws is the degree to which their historical importance is derived from the response that their passage provoked rather than from their regulatory impact.¹⁷ While similar tariffs were passed, such as those on timber,

Class, p. 610; See also, Elie Halévy, *The Liberal Awakening, 1815-1830* (New York, 1961), pp. 11-12; J.R. Dinwiddie, *Radicalism and Reform in Britain, 1780-1850*, pp. 115-116; The increased organization of radical societies may have allowed the movement to apply pressure to Henry Brougham, who had supported the Corn Laws. Pressure that may have played a role in the intensity of his later advocacy for abolition during the income tax debates. Arthur Aspinall, *Lord Brougham and the Whig Party* (Stroud, 1927),

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 68.

¹⁴ W. W. Rostow, 'Business Cycles, Harvests, and Politics: 1790-1850,' *The Journal of Economic History*, 1/2 (1941), p. 206.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 207.

¹⁶ In addition, the government's decision to repurpose an unconnected committee report, on the Irish grain trade, as the basis of one of its most important pieces of postwar legislation offers a unique window into the chaotic legislative processes of the early nineteenth century British parliament. The Report included no data on its intended markets in Britain, focusing solely on Ireland. See, *Report from the Select Committee to whom the Referral Petitions Complaining of the Depressed States of the Agriculture of the United Kingdom*.

¹⁷ As the *Quarterly Review* put it, 'When the [Corn] bill was passed the proposed remedy which had been solicited so eagerly and so violently opposed produced no perceptible effect in either way.' *Quarterly Review*, July 1816, p. 566; Albion argued that the timber duties resembled the Corn Laws, and functioned as their 'silent partner', however, their direct impact on the economy was substantial, their lack of publicity left them uncontroversial, a fact which is illustrative of the degree to which political dissent is decoupled from true economic impact. R. G. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power* (Harvard, 1926), p. 401; The impact of the 1804 iteration was considerably more moderate. As Boyd Hilton has argued, 'the [1804] law never operated, inflation having immediately dwarfed the price at which it had imposed effective import duties.' Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, p. 4.

‘there was no opposition...comparable with the popular, organised agitation’ that first sought to prevent, and later to repeal the Corn Laws.¹⁸ The spread of information, and the immediacy of grain prices, however, led to the popularity of protests against the legislation, and the sheer numbers of protesters helped to trigger the government’s intimidating response. It seems likely that the gatherings had originated in the traditions of communal shaming, exemplified by rough music, rather than intentional rioting.¹⁹ Castlereagh’s role in the crack-down helped to create the conditions that led to the eventual passage of the Six Acts.²⁰

The Corn Laws of 1815 were a largely improvised piece of legislation, which proved to be both ineffective and provocative. In addition to creating an infrastructure for dissent, popular reactions to the bill shifted debate from economic policy to domestic security and thus led the legislation to be passed without the standard review and debate. Castlereagh’s parliamentary denouncement of the protests, which he described ‘as the disgraceful outrages of a lawless rabble’ and his support for the harsh crackdown, helped to create networks of violent political opposition that were to plague the country in the following years.²¹ In addition, the failure of the Corn Laws to resolve postwar agricultural distress and their impact on wheat price shifted the attention towards the abolition of the income tax, the effects of which would influence the legislative debates of the following several years.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, critical understandings of the 1815 Corn Laws were firmly rooted first in the debates that led up to its 1846 repeal and later in the larger triumphalist narratives of the trade liberalization movement.²² Interpretations of the events that surrounded the 1815 passage of the Corn Laws were thus seen within the context of this debate, lending a highly politicized, combative tendency to much of the early historiography. Early

¹⁸ J. Potter, ‘The British Timber Duties, 1815-60’ *Economica*, 22/86 (1955), p. 122.

¹⁹ Castlereagh, in either a show of bravado, or a recognition of the traditional nature of such rioting, appeared unruffled by the attacks. *Captain Gronow’s Recollections and Anecdotes* (London, 1864), p. 221; See E. P. Thompson, ‘Rough Music Reconsidered’ *Folklore*, 103/1, (1992), pp. 3-26.

²⁰ For an examination of the government’s use of military force to quell protests against the Corn Laws. See, James Bonar, ‘The Disposition of Troops in London, March 1815’ *The English Historical Review*, 16/62 (1901), pp. 348-354; The effectiveness of these troops has been questioned. See J. L. Hammond, *The Town Labourer: 1760-1832* (London, 1917), p. 86.

²¹ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 104.

²² One of the most popular pamphlets on the Corn Laws, was written as a satirical catechism by the radical politician Thomas Perronet Thompson. Thomas Perronet Thompson, *Catechism on the Corn Laws: With a List of Fallacies and the Answers* (London, 1827) pp. 54-55; Thomas Babington Macaulay, ‘The Corn Laws’, *The Complete Works of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, ix, (New York, 1900), pp. 430-443.

defenses of the law were largely written by those directly involved in its creation, such as Charles Western.²³ Western, the protectionist Whig MP, argued that ‘it was a measure to prevent the recurrence of that scarcity, which had been felt in so dreadful a manner some years ago, and ultimately [it was intended to] make the price of corn moderate and cheap.’²⁴ Over time, however, the Corn Laws came to be associated with an outdated Tory protectionism, and the authoritarian overtones of such opinion.²⁵ In 1910, with the publication of his *Economic Annals of the Nineteenth Century*, William Smart, sought to reemphasize the role of autarky, that occupied much of the bill’s initial debate. Smart argued against the belief, then common, that the passage of the Corn Laws ‘was due to the apprehensions of the landed classes that the end of the war was in sight and that with peace would come large importations from abroad and a heavy fall in prices.’²⁶ Boyd Hilton, in particular, played a major role in shifting interpretation away from an emphasis on political identities and towards the construction and intentions of the Corn Laws.²⁷ This emphasis on political intentions, rather than the economic theory has come to dominate the historiography of much of the last thirty years. In this process, the passage of the 1815 Corn Laws has emerged as a defining moment in the development of organized political action, amongst radicals as well as within the agricultural sector.²⁸ Such approaches are preferable, in that analysis of the intentions surrounding the passage of this legislation, outside of a pointillist emphasis upon the shifting opinions of the individuals involved in the creation of the bill, it is unclear that the support for the legislation, indeed, had an overriding, centralizing purpose.²⁹ Rather, due to the labyrinthine route that this legislation took to passage, it is more accurate to understand its passage as resulting from the confluence of a wide range of rent-seeking, autarchic, and political purposes. This stands in contrast to recent tendencies in the historiography which have tended to assert, either that ‘the Corn Laws of 1815’ were part of an effort to turn ‘the clock back toward the protection of a

²³ Western’s preeminent role in defending the Corn Laws, was rooted in his role in its passage. As F. W. Fetter has pointed out, Western played a major role ‘in the course of the debate’ as Western was ‘the only economist to make any substantive remarks.’ F.W. Fetter, *The Economist in Parliament, 1780-1868* (Durham, 1980), pp. 34-35; Additionally, this early defense was rooted in Western’s efforts to justify his role in the legislation, after his marginalization by the Whig leadership ‘on the question of protection.’ See Anna Gambles, *Protection and Politics* (Rochester, NY, 1999), p. 26.

²⁴ *Hansard*, v, c. 1087.

²⁵ Daniela Garofalo, *Manly Leaders in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (New York, 2008), p. 12.

²⁶ William Smart, *Economic Annals of the Nineteenth Century, 1801-1820* (London, 1910), pp. 372, 380.

²⁷ Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, pp. 15-30.

²⁸ Travis Crosby, *English Farmers and the Politics of Protection: 1815-1852* (London, 1977).

²⁹ Lord Sheffield, *Letter on the Corn Laws* (London, 1815); Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, p. 12.

politically powerful sector' or that they were simply reflective of the 'autarchic consensus that self-sufficiency in food could be secured by ensuring high prices and secure markets for domestic agriculture.'³⁰

In contrast to previous accounts, this discussion of the Corn Laws emphasizes the disruptive impact of the legislative debate itself upon the victory narrative. This sudden conclusion to wartime unity, in turn, was mirrored by the disruption of debate midstream by widespread protests, which led to the passage of the legislation at an unusually rapid pace.³¹ Boyd Hilton's account, which addresses protests only in passing, fails to recognize fully the degree to which the physical attacks by protesters foreshortened debate.³² The physical presence of protesters outside of parliament facilitated the 'radicalization' of ministerial response to traditional statements of dissent, which in turn, helped to shape emerging middle class radical identities, and the expression of 'public opinion'. As such, the Corn Bill protests can be understood as a disruption of traditional forms of communication between parliament and the lower classes.

While the parliament's victory narrative was concluded by the physical attacks at the House of Commons, the Corn Law legislation had already 'detonated' latent expressions of dissent amongst the working and especially the middle classes. By contradicting the government's standard assertions that legislative intervention could not resolve the difficult transition to peace, the ministry 'broke the spell' of war-time unity.³³ As Lord Liverpool, quoting Samuel Johnson, put it, several years later, 'How small, of all the ills that men endure, the part which kings or state can cause or cure.'³⁴ Castlereagh similarly argued that the 'depression since the conclusion of the war...was inevitable' and that 'in making the transition from war to peace no rational man can for one moment suppose that [the depression] can be remedied by legislative interference.'³⁵ The

³⁰ Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, p. 153; Anna Gambles, *Protection and Politics*, p. 27.

³¹ Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, p. 14.

³² Hilton's emphasis on the government's autarkic intentions, tends to artificially delineate government and agriculturalist intentions. As Hilton himself acknowledges, economic theory was often used as an *ex post facto* justification for policies rooted in more practical concerns, likewise autarkic arguments provided useful cover for largely self-interested policies. *Ibid.* pp. 9, 20.

³³ 'An important factor in awakening this new awareness of economic and social change was government policy...After 1815...when faced with the severe problems of the post-war economy' the government began 'an unprecedented involvement of the state in social and economic matters.' Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, p. 233; Similarly, E. P. Thompson has argued that 'the war-time Ministry found it convenient to accept the arguments of 'free competition', in so far as they militated against working-class, rather than landed, interests.' E.P. Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963), p. 546.

³⁴ *Hansard*, xli, c. 497.

³⁵ Archibald Alison, *Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart*, p. 104.

obvious tension between such sentiments, and the passage, of what Joel Mokyr described as ‘the crowning achievement of rent-seeking land-owners’ could not go unnoticed in a society increasingly capable of accessing what had previously been restricted information.³⁶ On 29 November 1814 *The Times* issued its first edition printed on the newly invented König steam-driven printing press, vastly decreasing the costs of production.³⁷ The technology quickly spread to other major newspapers, leading to what amounted to a media revolution.³⁸ Now that the opinions, economic or otherwise, of major parliamentarians were becoming common knowledge, the ‘economic views of...parliament’ helped to foster ‘agitation for parliamentary reform.’³⁹

This process was driven by the expanded availability of newspapers, pamphlets, and periodicals.⁴⁰ These media were intentionally taxed at a rate ‘beyond the reach of...members of the urban artisan classes, whom the government suspected of political sedition.’⁴¹ The influence of these papers in rapidly spreading dissent was aided by the fact that they were ‘read aloud in tap-rooms and pot-houses’ to members of the working class.⁴² The rise of newspapers as a truly mass media removed the divisions between populace and parliament, demystifying the nature of government, in the process.⁴³ This artificial sense of proximity, led many Britons to strongly

³⁶ Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, p. 150.

³⁷ Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows, *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 6.

³⁸ Frederick Artz, *Reaction and Revolution*, p. 123; The importance of declining prices in boosting readership was highlighted by the British politician, John Arthur Roebuck ‘Mr. Cobbett during the time of great distress that followed the peace of 1815 commenced a publication called *Two-penny Trash*. This publication from its price was within the reach even of the poor Mr. Cobbett chose to indulge in strictures upon the conduct of the then government, and he clothed his strictures in language so striking, while his price was so low that not only did he render the people able, but what was worse in this case, he made them willing to buy and read them.’ John Arthur Roebuck, *Pamphlets for the People* (London, 1835), p. 3.

³⁹ Frank Fetter, *The Economist in Parliament: 1780-1868* (Durham, 1980), p. 36.

⁴⁰ Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill, 1981) p. 32; This spread of ideas should not be seen in purely national terms however, as Innes and Burns have indicated ‘the conclusion of the Napoleonic episode opened the way once more for the pan-European circulation of ideas. One area of lively exchange was the relatively novel discipline of political economy.’ Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain, 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 15.

⁴¹ Mary Poovey, *The Financial System of Nineteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2003), p.26; This process was antedated by a less commonly discussed government effort at targeting intellectuals associated with liberal or radical idea. See John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment: Science, Religion and Politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 187-236.

⁴² Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth Century England*, (Cambridge, 1996), p. 102; The government noted the growing influence of these papers in the months after Corn Bill riots, and Liverpool expressed his worry to Castlereagh concerning the ‘injurious effect which must result from the general line on present politics taken by our daily papers.’ Lord Liverpool to Lord Castlereagh, Fife House, 15 September 1815 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xi, p. 16).

⁴³ The government, however, sought to counteract the media-driven growth of transparency. For an examination of the impact of this adjustments, see David Vincent, *The Culture of Secrecy: Britain, 1823-1998* (Oxford, 1998).

identify with the major media and political figures of the day, and as a result ‘the cause of reform was personalised into the encounter between William Cobbett and...Castlereagh.’⁴⁴ The working-class audience who had listened ‘greedily when they [were] told that their rulers fatten upon the gains extracted from their blood’ were presented by a grain tariff that very much appeared to do just that.⁴⁵ In addition the rising audiences for newspapers allowed for the rapid dissemination of economic theory and allowed economists, such as David Ricardo who published many of his thoughts in the *Edinburgh Review*, a platform for their beliefs.⁴⁶

The provocative aspects of the legislation were highlighted, in the midst of debate, when Baring argued that the Corn Bill, ‘if carried, would be [more] efficacious towards producing a reform in that House, than any speech that hon. baronet [Francis Burdett] had made.’⁴⁷ In addition, this examination of how the Corn Bill debates were experienced, is aided by an examination of Castlereagh’s role in the creation and passage of the Corn Law.⁴⁸ As a member of the corn committee, and the Leader of the House of Commons, Castlereagh played a significant role in the law’s passage. His support for the suppression of the riots with military forces, and his decision to fast-track the legislation shaped the pace and nature of debate.⁴⁹ Coming immediately after his return from the Congress of Vienna, his defense of his actions at Vienna and the public’s opinion of his reports cannot be understood outside of the context of the Corn Bill riots.

⁴⁴ E.P. Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 627; This process of identification also extended amongst newspaper readers. As Hannah Barker has argued, ‘newspapers encouraged readers to believe that they had a close relationship with each other’ a process which she links to the emergence of ‘public opinions’. Hannah Barker, ‘England, 1760-1815’, *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820*, (Cambridge, 2002), p. 94.

⁴⁵ Robert Southey, *Essays, Moral and Political*, i, (London, 1832), p. 120.

⁴⁶ The impact of these articles was substantial, as the *Edinburgh Review* has been estimated as reaching ‘an audience of about fifty thousand within a month of each issue’s publication’ in 1814. Mary Poovey, *The Financial System in Nineteen-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2003), p. 27.

⁴⁷ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 112.

⁴⁸ In his discussion of Castlereagh’s interaction with the Corn Laws, John Bew has argued effectively, that Castlereagh ‘never really engaged with theories of political economy’ nonetheless, Castlereagh’s role in the practical aspects of the legislation, from its time in committee onwards, does indicate a significant, if not ideological role in, in the legislation’s passage. John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 437.

⁴⁹ At the time, Robert Heron saw the previously slow process of passage as the result of ‘our feeble Chancellor of the Exchequer [Nicholas] Vansittart’ who had mismanaged the legislation and ‘yielded to the first wish of delay.’ Robert Heron, *Note by Sir Robert Heron*, (London, 1851), p. 40.

Origins of the 1815 Corn Law

The Corn Laws of 1815, when compared with their antecedents, represent a significant break with standard practices.⁵⁰ Although the legislation has been described as ‘nothing new’ alterations did have significant impact, both on the effects and the perception of the Laws.⁵¹ While the legislation itself did change in some substantial ways, the public protests that occurred during its legislative process brought about a wide range of secondary impacts, which have had long-term tertiary influence on British society. Lord Castlereagh’s role in the government’s suppression of the riots and his defense of the decision helped to shape his legacy. In addition, the popularity of the riots and the government’s response proved a transitional moment in the history of British radicalism.

In order to understand the debates over the 1815 law, it is essential to understand Britain’s long history of grain tariffs. From 1670 until 1765, efforts at regulating the grain trade, designed to promote exportation and discourage importation, had been a standard aspect of Britain’s tariff system. In 1765 this system of preferences was inverted. Under the earlier model, prices had remained stable and low with an average of 33s 3d per quarter, but under the second, prices had shot from an average of 44s 7d from 1769 to 1794 to an average of 88s 11d in the years following the passage of the 1804 law.⁵²

Between 1804 and 1812 parliament largely ignored the topic, as it focused on issues directly relating to the war.⁵³ On 21 November 1806, Napoleon issued the Berlin decree that began the era of the Continental System. The Continental System, a blockade which prevented Britain’s trade from reaching most of Europe, would last until 11 April 1814 in the aftermath of Napoleon’s abdication. The era of the Continental System was, due largely to restrictions on trade, one of exceptionally high grain prices. In addition to Napoleon’s trade embargo, the harvests in Britain from 1809 to 1812 were far below average. Beyond these concerns, the Government was increasingly worried that in their current situation, ‘a large and sudden influx of corn might...lead

⁵⁰ This thesis treats the debate that surrounded the 1814 iteration of the law as part of the larger process of arriving at the 1815 revision. The 1814 bill removed the up to 48s bounty on exportation; *Hansard*, xxv, appendix lvi-lxv; Donald Barnes, *A History of English Corn Laws: From 1660-1846* (Oxford, 1930), pp. 117-118.

⁵¹ Michael Bentley, *Politics without Democracy*, p. 34.

⁵² Donald Barnes, *A History of English Corn Laws*, pp. 68-95.

⁵³ In addition, the period was part of what Boyd Hilton refers to as ‘a golden decade for most agriculturalists.’ Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, p. 1.

to a drain of specie from the Bank,’ as well as a ‘consequent contraction of its circulation.’ Such a contraction could bring about ‘a panic amongst the country banks’ after ‘the resumption of cash payments.’⁵⁴ The combination of these worries pushed grain prices to stratospheric new heights.

In 1813, however, an enormously successful harvest sent shockwaves through an agricultural sector grown used to consistently high prices. It was the success of the 1813 harvest that provided the impetus for the creation of a select committee to inquire into the grain trade in Ireland. This sudden decline in prices led the agricultural sector to reassess its business model. As Patrick O’Brien has argued, in the aftermath of peak agricultural prices in 1813, the sector largely settled on a new policy of ‘stabilizing food and raw material prices’ while seeking to ‘appropriate productivity gains from an inelastic supply of land by raising rents.’⁵⁵ This strategy had resulted from the agricultural sector’s push for enclosure and wartime expansion into marginal lands. This massive investment in expansion disincentivized investments in productivity gains for roughly the next half-century.⁵⁶

The committee, which first met on 22 March 1813, was designed to examine the status of the Irish grain trade only.⁵⁷ However, in the midst of the select committee’s meetings its portfolio was expanded to include the entirety of the United Kingdom.⁵⁸ The decision to include an examination of the weakness of the grain trade in Great Britain led to the addition of Castlereagh, Vansittart, and Huskisson to the committee.⁵⁹ The committee, many of whom were large land holders, found the rapid decline of the price of wheat, from an average of 105s 5d over the previous four years to a low of 77s 3d, to be deeply concerning. Thus the committee reached the conclusion that they must ‘induce our own people to raise a sufficient supply for themselves from their own soil, and at the same time reduce the price of corn.’⁶⁰ In so doing, the committee hoped to prevent,

⁵⁴ *Report from the Select Committee to whom the Referral Petitions Complaining of the Depressed States of the Agriculture of the Depressed State of the Agriculture of the United Kingdom*, ix, (London, 1812), p. 12.

⁵⁵ Patrick O’Brien, *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ ‘When the committee was first appointed, its only object was to examine the Corn Laws of Ireland’ *Hansard*, xxvi, c. 708.

⁵⁸ *Journals of the House of Commons*, 68, p. 337.

⁵⁹ *Hansard*, xxvi, c. 708; From February 1815 onwards, Huskisson, a Canningite, came to function as Liverpool’s primary advisor on economic policy, superseding Vansittart. Chapter 6 of this thesis presents the argument that Liverpool similarly allowed Canning to supersede Castlereagh from Aix-la-Chapelle until Canning’s resignation in 1820 from the Presidency of the Board of Control.

⁶⁰ *Report from the Select Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Corn Trade of the United Kingdom*, 11 May 1813, p. 184; This assertion continued to form the core of arguments during debate, incensing opponents who

‘the various evils which belong to so great an importation from foreign countries, to so great an expenditure of our money, in promoting the improvement and cultivation of those countries, at the loss of a similar extent of improvement and cultivation of our own and to the established high price of corn.’⁶¹ Patrick O’Brien has argued, that these fears stemmed primarily from the agricultural sector’s concern that it could not ‘successfully compete with foreign imports let alone sell much farm produce beyond the frontiers of the kingdom.’⁶²

On 15 June 1813, Henry Parnell presented the results of the corn committee.⁶³ Parnell urged ‘a variety of considerations in support of the plan [and] moved that the Report of the Committee on the Corn Laws be referred to the consideration of a Committee of the whole House.’⁶⁴ This motion was carried by a vote of 154 to 32, with Castlereagh, Vansittart, Preston, Brand, William FitzGerald, Pole, J. Newport, and Dysart supporting it and Rose, Western, Lascelles, Gooch, Horner, and Hamilton opposing it.⁶⁵ The opponents contended ‘that its real object was, by raising [the] price of grain, to increase the rents of lands, and prevent many thousand persons in every parish from procuring bread, already too high, by their daily labour.’⁶⁶

The committee's conclusion was that Britain's dependence on foreign wheat for its food supply had been in part a result of the ‘great...advance in the price of [domestic] wheat.’⁶⁷ Concerned that continued reliance on foreign wheat could again cause rapid spikes in the cost of food the committee recommended the imposition of prohibitive duties on imported wheat.⁶⁸ The committee’s report included six recommendations. The majority of these recommendations were aimed at integrating Ireland’s grain trade into that of the rest of the United Kingdom. Beyond this the committee advised that the 1804 Corn Law be abandoned and in its place a system whereby the exportation of wheat was prohibited when priced higher than 90s 2d per quarter.⁶⁹ In addition, the committee put forward a sliding scale of duties based on average grain prices, provided that no

considered ‘the specious profession that the object of the Bill is to reduce the price of corn’ to be ‘a mockery of common sense.’ *Morning Chronicle*, 3 March 1815.

⁶¹ *Ibid*; *Hansard*, lxi. Appendix.

⁶² Patrick O’Brien, *the Industrial Revolution and British Society*, p. 20.

⁶³ *Hansard*, xxvi, cc. 644-645

⁶⁴ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 114, p. 70.

⁶⁵ *The Scots Magazine*, 75, p. 540.

⁶⁶ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 114, p. 70.

⁶⁷ *Report from the Select Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Corn Trade of the United Kingdom*, 11 May 1813, Appendix, c. lv.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*. lxii

⁶⁹ *Hansard*, xxvii, c. 689.

wheat was imported from the continent unless domestic prices had passed 103s per quarter. At the same time the committee recommended prohibiting the importation of foreign flour or meal.⁷⁰

Of the many objections raised to the committee's results, the most problematic was the fact that all the data consulted by the committee in reaching its decisions were derived from the committee's original, Irish sources.⁷¹ Indeed, the committee provided only fourteen pages of evidence that specifically dealt with their recommendations. Of this evidence, much of it was derived from interviews with individuals ostensibly involved with the Irish grain trade. However, these interviews were of dubious usefulness as they included conversations with businessmen, such as Edward Wakefield, who had 'not been [in Ireland] since Christmas 1809'.⁷² Much of the parliamentary opposition to the corn committee's results was driven by this surprising dearth of information, considering the vast sweep of the committee's recommendations.⁷³ Of the many parliamentary voices raised against the results perhaps the strongest came from Archibald Hamilton, George Rose, Charles Western, and Francis Horner.⁷⁴ Huskisson, who would later come out against the Corn Laws, became an early supporter, broadly seconding Henry Parnell's recommendations. Huskisson argued that Parnell was 'actuated, in his consideration of the important matters referred to it, not by any particular solicitude for the corn growers or the land owners, or for Ireland, in which he had no personal interest. But for the general interests of the whole empire, which, he was satisfied, would be best consulted by securing to all classes of the community an adequate supply of corn.'⁷⁵ According to the committee, perhaps unsurprisingly considering the committee's population and original purpose, Ireland was the key to British autarky. With two thirds of grain imports, over the previous five years coming from Ireland, the committee argued that 'Irish corn will not only lower its price, but contribute to the conversion of much land in England now under corn, into cultivation...for sheep and cattle, and thus allow of milk and butchers' meat being sold at much lower prices than they can be sold for, while the

⁷⁰ *Report from the Select Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Corn Trade of the United Kingdom*, Appendix, lxiii-lxv.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* lxv-lxvi.

⁷² *Ibid.* pp. 84-98; William Smart wrote critically of this barely disguised effort at rent-seeking. 'The most charitable judgment that could be passed on such a Report is that it was disingenuous.' William Smart, *Economic Annals Of The Nineteenth Century, 1801-1820* (London, 1910) p. 377.

⁷³ *Hansard*, xxvi, c. 694

⁷⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 83, p. 70.

⁷⁵ William Huskisson, *Huskisson Speeches*, p. 645.

quantity of land applicable to this sort of produce is limited, as it now is, by the scanty supply, and consequently high price of corn.’⁷⁶

Huskisson believed that by increasing demand for Irish grain, the Government could foster a market for British manufacturing.⁷⁷ Similarly, Huskisson assumed, like Parnell, that high duties were necessary for Britain to create a sustainable agricultural sector capable of dealing with the exigencies of warfare such as those dealt with by Britain during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. As Huskisson wrote in a letter to his constituents in Chichester.

My sole object is to prevent...corn from ever again reaching the late extravagant prices. But if we wish to cure an evil of this alarming magnitude we must first trace it to its source. What is the source? Obviously this, that until now we did not even in good years grow enough corn for our own consumption...in order to ensure a continuance of cheapness and sufficiency we must ensure to our own growers that protection against foreign import.⁷⁸

The gradual shift from a small scale Ireland-centered plan for grain tariffs to a large-scale effort at autarky and the dramatic events of 1814 led to long periods of delay during the legislative process. After its initial discussion the Corn Laws debates were indefinitely postponed. The arrival of good news on the military front led to a decline in grain prices. The effect of this decline in grain prices, from an average of 109s per quarter in 1813 to 77s in 1814, led to an outcry from the agricultural sector.⁷⁹ Due to a growing confluence of interests, it became increasingly clear that Parnell's plan would now be able to muster enough support for a comprehensive legislative package to pass. Parnell seized the moment by expanding his earlier arguments to include Smithian economic theory to bolster his essentially pragmatic legislative initiative.⁸⁰

At the beginning of the first session of 1815, parliament resumed debate. The Vice President of the board of trade, Frederick Robinson, introduced a variety of resolutions concerning the legislation. According to the board of trade's recommendations the importation of wheat was

⁷⁶ ‘Report from the select Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Corn Trade of the United Kingdom,’ 11 May 1813, *Hansard*, xxv, Appendix, lvii.

⁷⁷ *Hansard*, xxix, c. 822.

⁷⁸ BL Add. MSS 38739, f. 198.

⁷⁹ In the December 1814 edition of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, argued that ‘the blessings of a general peace to have created much alarm in all the rural districts of the country...upon my lately conveying to a neighbouring farmer the intelligence of the pacification...he exclaimed, with evident terror of mind, then we are completely ruined!’ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 86, p. 638.

⁸⁰ *Hansard*, xxvi, c. 707.

to be prohibited at any price below 80s per quarter.⁸¹ This recommendation involved a radical break from the manner in which grain tariffs had historically functioned. Traditionally grain tariffs had functioned on a sliding scale of duty. According to the new recommendations wheat could enter the country whenever prices exceeded 80s per quarter with no duty imposed, while all foreign wheat was prohibited when wheat was below this price. According to Robinson's recommendations, in order to placate imperial economic concerns colonial wheat would be priced at 67 shillings per quarter.

On 19 January 1815, Vansittart wrote to Huskisson to discuss ideas for the Corn Bill.⁸² In his letter, Vansittart argued for 'an invariable protecting duty, operating at high prices as well as low in favor of the British farmer; and repealing all publications of averages, etc.' He went on to recommend William Jacob's *Considerations on the Protection Required by British Agriculture, and on the influence of the Price of Corn on Exportable Production*, describing it as a 'plausible and ingenious' plan.⁸³ William Jacob, like Thomas Malthus, was part of a growing movement of pragmatic economists, more interested in rooting their theories in contemporary political realities than in the more abstract theories of earlier economists, such as Adam Smith.⁸⁴ Jacob was concerned that English lawmakers were being guided by anachronistic 'principles deduced from a state of affairs such as that which existed in 1773 before the first war with America, the Revolutions of France, or before the Continental System had been created.'⁸⁵ According to Jacob, concerns over a potential Malthusian disaster or threats from the continent could be overcome with strong, practical legislation designed to create an economic buffer against these threats.⁸⁶ In a letter to Samuel Whitbread, Jacob wrote that 'the subsistence of our people depends...at least principally on retaining in cultivation those [marginal] lands' which consistently low prices would eventually push back into grazing lands.⁸⁷ Underpinning Jacob's autarkic argument was the 1801 Act of

⁸¹ Castlereagh would eventually support these recommendations. *Hansard*, xxx, c. 39

⁸² Vansittart to Huskisson, (BL Add. MSS 38740, f. 42).

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ As Malthus wrote of the Corn Bill, 'we are [not] to pursue our general principles without ever looking to see if they are applicable to the case before us.' Thomas Malthus, *The Grounds of an Opinion on the Policy of Restricting the Importation of Foreign Corn* (London, 1815), p. 158; Gertrude Himmelfarb has argued that Smithian economics also differed from its descendants in that it conceived of an economic policy rooted in Smith's fundamentally optimistic understanding of human progress. According to Himmelfarb, unlike Smith, Malthus and Ricardo tended to be more pessimistic about the possibility of real progress. See Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, pp.108-110;

⁸⁵ William Jacob, *Considerations* (London, 1814), p. 13.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁸⁷ William Jacob, *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread* (London, 1815), p. 6.

Union with Ireland. In a similar vein to Jacob's arguments, Frederick Flood argued that 'Britain and Ireland were now one, and engaged in a common cause; formerly they pulled opposite ways, but now he trusted the same wealth would entwine the rose, the leek, and the shamrock.'⁸⁸ Although many English protectionists expressed disagreement with the full integration of Ireland into the British economy, eventually Ireland's economic integration became the lynchpin of the Corn bill negotiations.⁸⁹ By the height of negotiations, supporters of autarky, such as William Elliot, could argue that such a scheme was feasible with the aid of Ireland as the 'granary [of] the British Empire.'⁹⁰

By mid-February debate had intensified and parliamentary meetings began to extend late into the night. On 17 February 1815, Frederick Robinson announced the four measures that make up the Corn Laws of 1815. On 1 March 1815 at five in the afternoon, Napoleon came ashore in the Bay of Juan near Cannes. That same day Robinson brought into the House of Commons the bill to amend the laws respecting the importation of foreign corn. On 22 February the House agreed to the first three resolutions of the earliest amendments to the Corn Laws. An attempt, by Alexander Baring, to make any new law temporary failed to pass the following day.⁹¹ Over the next several days argument in the House of Commons reached an increasingly tense state. The *Sun* describes the debate's continuation 'until 4 o'clock [in the] morning.'⁹² The newspaper further described the debate as lacking in substance, and that 'no great question has ever elicited less ability and less knowledge, and when the historian shall have occasion to record the whole proceedings, he will, we fear, have a little cause to compliment one single member of the House of Commons for his masterly consideration of the subject.'⁹³

Debating the Corn Bill

The bill was read for the first time on 1 March. However, that same day petitions began to pour in from around the country, predominantly from industrial and manufacturing centers arguing forcefully against any amendment to the existing Corn Laws.⁹⁴ According to Robert Heron,

⁸⁸ *Hansard*, xxix, c. 826.

⁸⁹ *Report of the Select Committee*, pp. lv-lvii; *Hansard*, xx, cc. 665-726.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xxix, p. 1230.

⁹¹ *Hansard*, xxix, cc. 978-979.

⁹² *The Sun*, 24 February 1815.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ The Corn Law protests saw an enormous increase in the use of petitions to express political dissent, this tendency, which played out in subsequent protests against the government's economic policies, would eventually help

protesters were inspired to confront the legislature by speeches from Alexander Baring and Matthew Wood.⁹⁵ By the following day, the *Morning Chronicle* reported that ‘two or three persons were taken into custody’ for throwing rocks at members of the Life Guard, and for carrying loaves ‘covered with crepe’.⁹⁶ The bill came up for a second reading on 3 March, by which time protest had become organized and increasingly vocal. The *Caledonian Mercury* reported that that evening placards were put up around London protesting the bill.

No Corn Laws—Rents Lowered—Small Farms—The Reduction of National Expenditures! Then bread, meat, and other necessaries will be as cheap as on the Continent. Englishmen, be not imposed on. Be just to your wives and children. What? Shall twelve millions of people suffer starvation, misery, and privations, to support the rapacity of landowners and iniquitous monopolists! No! Let the spirit of the people rise that bread may fall! The soldiers will join us. They won’t fire on their countrymen. Let our rallying point for our King, our country, and our laws.⁹⁷

While the radicalism of such protests did not, in themselves, damage the bill’s likelihood of success, it did strengthen and solidify opposition. Although earlier accounts of the Corn Law protests described as a ‘middle class movement, and not a labourer’s movement at all’ more recent evidence has pointed to a far more inclusive opposition.⁹⁸ E. P. Thompson has argued that this popularity was so widespread, that it amounted to consensus.⁹⁹ Boyd Hilton similarly has described the protesters as representing a wide swathe of the community, including ‘radicals, manufacturers, and the urban poor.’¹⁰⁰ While protester drew from variety of backgrounds and motivations, they shared a broadly libertarian outlook, and a sense of the injustice of the legislation.¹⁰¹

transform the eighteenth century traditions of working class rioting into a ‘reformed’ form of political speech common in the 1820s, which was more expressive of the values of the ‘middling orders.’ See Peter Fraser, ‘Public Petitioning and Parliament before 1832’, *Political Studies*, 3, (1955); For instance, a petition from, the ‘Freeholders, Landholders, Tradesmen, Manufacturers, and Inhabitants of the County of Wilts’ wrote that while they had been, ‘expecting to enter on the Enjoyments of the Blessings usually attendant on Peace to which they had so long been Strangers perceive with the deepest Sorrow that Attempts are making to prolong and perpetuate the Sufferings of War by enhancing and upholding the Price of Corn.’ *Cobbett’s Weekly Political Register*, 27, p. 293.

⁹⁵ Robert Heron, *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Baronet*, p. 50.

⁹⁶ *The Morning Chronicle*, 2 March 1815; symbolic ‘funerals of the loaves’ were common practice in provision riots. John Bohstedt, *The Politics of Provisions*, pp. 167, 213.

⁹⁷ *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 March 1815.

⁹⁸ *Gunton’s Magazine*, 25, p. 262.

⁹⁹ ‘The men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights and customs, and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community’ E. P. Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd’ *Past and Present*, 50, (1971), p. 78.

¹⁰⁰ Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ E. P. Thompson has argued that the popularity of radical ideas post-1815, helped to shape a wave of radical journalism that worked towards a ‘piecemeal exposure of the abuses of the ‘borough-mongering’...system: taxes,

Three days later, Lord Castlereagh arrived in London from Vienna after having been summoned by Lord Liverpool several weeks before.¹⁰² Walking to the House of Commons on 6 March Castlereagh was confronted by a ‘tumultuous mob, which obstructed the usual avenues using insolent and threatening language.’¹⁰³ After he arrived at the House of Commons, Castlereagh discussed the situation with Charles Abbott, and he ‘immediately sent for the civil magistrate, and directed him, that if he felt his force insufficient for the performance of his duty, he must call in further aid...[and] in pursuance of this directive...a military force [was] called’.¹⁰⁴ When Castlereagh finally made his way into the chamber, he addressed the House with an appeal to fast-track the legislation.¹⁰⁵ Arguing that ‘on a subject so calculated to agitate the popular mind it was not desirable to protract or multiply discussion. For the sake of the lower orders, who were affected not so much by an actual price as by uncertainty or fluctuation, he wished to see the Bill before the committee pass into a law.’¹⁰⁶ Castlereagh’s motivations for speeding the legislation may have resulted from the government’s intentions of renewing the income tax, and consequently the Corn Laws were intended to incentivize country support.¹⁰⁷ Discussion in the House of Commons, both of the proposed bill and of the Congress of Vienna was stalled by the boisterous

fiscal abuses, corruption, sinecures, [and] clerical pluralism. E.P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 603.

¹⁰² On 12 January 1815 Lord Liverpool wrote to Castlereagh stating that Castlereagh ‘must come on immediately [as] the consideration of the Corn Laws cannot be long deferred, and I have no doubt will be mooted before the Houses have been assembled a week.’ Liverpool to Castlereagh, 12 January 1815 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, x, p. 239); On 28 February, Liverpool had expressed worry that the opposition was making ‘every effort is made to create a clamour amongst the People’ over the Corn Bill. (BL Liverpool MSS Loan 72/22, f. 103).

¹⁰³ *The New Annual Register* (London, 1816), p. 109.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*; Mr. William Vesey-FitzGerald, offered an alternative to this narrative, stating that after ‘seeing an hon. friend of his [John Wilson Croker] very rudely treated, and with difficulty rescued from this mob, he deemed it his duty to inform the Speaker, as the first magistrate in that House. It was probably in consequence of this information, that a military force was brought into the neighbourhood of the House—not to overawe its proceedings, but to defend its members from violence. *Hansard*, xxx, c. 29. Castlereagh defended the decision by arguing that ‘the evidence appeared quite sufficient to establish the necessity of the interposition of the military for the protection of the members of parliament. Whether the conduct of the magistracy had been as vigilant as possible, was a point that might become a question of inquiry. A future day might be appointed, with a view to inquire into that matter, and to provide more certainly for the security of members upon future occasions.’ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 37.

¹⁰⁵ The legislation had, prior to Castlereagh’s recommendations, already progressed more quickly than was usual, due to the government’s concerns, as noted by *the Examiner*, ‘The Corn Bill seems to be hurried through all its stages with a haste which the question cannot certainly require.’ *The Examiner*, 5 March 1815.

¹⁰⁶ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 39.

¹⁰⁷ During debate, on 6 March, Sir Gilbert Heathcote called ‘the attention of the House to the real question, which was this. The Government wanted to wind up the expenses of the war; the sum was no less than £20,000,000; and in order to prevail on the landed interest to support them in the measures necessary to raise this sum [a continuation of the war taxes], ministers had thrown out the alluring bait of giving their aid to this measure respecting the corn laws.’ *Hansard*, xxx, cc. 15-16.

crowd of opponents gathered outside, chanting 'No Corn Bill!'¹⁰⁸ These crowds grew so large over the course of the protests that they began to prevent the efforts of petitioners against the legislation to collect signatures from opponents.¹⁰⁹

Many protesters were motivated by a fear that the legislation could lead to large scale unemployment.¹¹⁰ Sensitive to the accusation that the government was proposing the legislation out of self-interest, Liverpool sought to make the case for its universal benefit, stating that:

Were the measure one which stood upon the narrow ground of affording relief to a particular class, I would not support it, not from any want of feeling towards the sufferings of any particular body of men, nor from any indisposition to alleviate these sufferings but because from long experience I have come to the conclusion that you cannot relieve one class of people without injuring some other class more or less...With regard to the present measure, it is so far from being one which looks only to the relief of a particular class, that it embraces the interests of all, and of the poor above all.¹¹¹

Such appeals fell on deaf ears, and as the day went by, the crowds grew increasingly agitated and members of parliament, who attempted to leave the premises were 'stopped, questioned as to their votes [and] maltreated and bandied about' if they expressed support for the legislation.¹¹²

Efforts to move the crowds gathered outside the House of Commons were unsuccessful and the assistance of the military merely had the effect of shifting the gathering's location. In the aftermath of being pushed away from the House of Commons, the rally, now broken into smaller contingents, shifted increasingly to attacks on the houses of political figures associated with the Corn Bill. That night (6 March) serious rioting broke out in London and continued for the following three days in protest against the Corn Bill.¹¹³ These riots had deep roots in the traditional antipathy between London's working class population and its grain dealers. Indeed, just fifteen

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *The Advertiser*, 7 March 1815.

¹¹⁰ W. Spence, *The Objections Against the Corn Bill Refuted; and the Necessity of this Measure to the Vital Interests of Every Class of the Community Demonstrated* (London, 1815).

¹¹¹ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 147.

¹¹² *The Statesman*, 7 March 1815.

¹¹³ While rioting, as political speech, had a long history in the British working classes, the violence of the Corn bill protests may have resulted in part from a population boom. This increase in birthrates had shifted the average age in Britain to the extent that, by the mid-1820s, sixty percent of Britons were under the age of twenty four. E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 529.

years before in 1800, crowds had similarly attacked the homes of grain merchants whom they wished to stop from importing foreign grain.¹¹⁴

On 7 March, Napoleon, in what would prove to be one of his most noted speeches, converted monarchist troops under the command of Marchand with the following address, ‘Soldiers, you have been told that I dread death; behold my bosom, fire into it, if such be your will.’¹¹⁵ Instead of shooting Napoleon, the French troops joined the rebellion, a decision that marked an early turning point in the Hundred Days. That evening in London, the rioting continued with an attack on Lord Castlereagh’s home in St. James Square, where several of his windows were broken. The attack on Castlereagh’s home was recorded in some detail in a memoir by Rees Howell Gronow, In Captain Gronow’s account, after having taken part in a patrol by the Life Guard, he encountered Lord Castlereagh making his way down King Street. Castlereagh briefly thanked the Captain, but cautioned ‘more discretion in the future [as]...the mob is not so dangerous as you think.’¹¹⁶ Gronow goes on to describe Castlereagh ‘quietly looking on while his windows were being broken...perfectly calm and unconcerned.’¹¹⁷ After its attack on Lord Castlereagh’s home, the crowd moved to Robinson’s house, where household staff and soldiers protecting the residence opened fire on the crowd.¹¹⁸ The individuals involved eventually were tried for the deaths of protesters: Edward Vize, a midshipman, and Mrs. Watson.¹¹⁹ Robert Peel wrote, ‘there is a great clamour out of doors, and last night in the neighborhood of the House of Commons we were indebted to the military for the preservation of peace. Some members were most vehemently hissed and hooted, and some did not make their escape without the loss of their coats and a little personal injury.’¹²⁰ Newspapers, such as the *Morning Herald*, that supported the legislation were

¹¹⁴ Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England* (Oxford, 2006), p. 215.

¹¹⁵ *The Newry Magazine*, 1815, 1, p. 35.

¹¹⁶ Rees Howell Gronow, *Captain Gronow’s Recollections of the Camp* (London, 1864), p. 221.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*; A similar account of Castlereagh’s attitude towards the rioters was given in a story recounted by Castlereagh’s niece Emma Sophia Brownlow. ‘Lady Brownlow records an instance of the coolness and self-possession of Lord Castlereagh One night when an excited mob attacked his house in this square and paving stones were being thrown at his windows he quietly mixed with the crowd outside till some-one whispered to him, ‘You are known you had better go in’. He did so and then went to the drawing room, and with the utmost composure, closed the shutters while a shower stones fell all around him. When I called next day, adds her ladyship, I found him on the point of walking out and as I knew that he would have the mob to encounter, I, with difficulty, persuaded him to let me take him in my carriage.’ Edward Walford, *Old and New London: a Narrative of its History, its People and its Places* (London, 1873), p. 190.

¹¹⁸ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, March 1815, p. 272.

¹¹⁹ ‘The Coroner’s Inquest...have found a verdict of Willful Murder against some person or persons, firing shot from and out of fire-arms, from Mr. Robinson’s front parlor, windows....The jury...returned a verdict of Willful Murder against Mr. Butler, and three soldiers.’ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, March 1815, p. 272.

¹²⁰ C.S. Parker, (ed.), *Sir Robert Peel: From his Private Papers*, i, (London, 1899), p. 168.

attacked and others, sympathetic to the rioters, such as the *Morning Post*, were cheered as the rioters passed their offices.¹²¹ Lists of members of parliament who had been attacked were printed in newspapers across Europe.¹²² In a letter to Huskisson, Canning congratulated him on escaping the list ‘of those who have suffered by them either in your windows or in your carriage, or in your person or, like Croker, in all these.’¹²³

On 8 March, the rioting continued with the crowds gathering ‘about Whitehall and Charing Cross’ before marching to the House of Commons where they assembled, until they were ‘driven away from the vicinity of the Houses of parliament.’¹²⁴ In a pattern similar to previous days, once driven away from their primary destination, the crowds targeted the private homes of the Corn Bills’ supporters. That Wednesday, the crowds particularly targeted Lord Ponsonby’s house at 19 Curzon Street and to Sir Joseph Bankes’ house on Soho Square. The increased violence of the crowds began to undermine the opposition’s efforts, as debate began to shift from the particulars of the legislation to the means of minimizing the physical and political damage brought by the bill’s opponents. With the mobilization of military forces, the Corn Bill transformed from tariff legislation to a symbol of the growing class division that was about to rend Britain. Castlereagh, sensing the changing political mood in the House of Commons, defended the decision to move troops into London by arguing that it was intended to defend the rights ‘of every man in the House and...those of every man out of it, who...valued the British constitution, and the blessings enjoyed in this free and happy country.’¹²⁵ Returning to a favorite theme, Castlereagh argued that the

¹²¹ Newspapers played an indispensable role in shaping the Corn bill debates, ‘The *Quarterly* and *Blackwood’s*, as Tories, were favorable to the Corn Laws, solicitous for the interests of agriculture, suspicious to the industrialization and concerned about its abuses; the *Edinburgh* and the *Westminster* were lined up in opposition to the Corn Laws, to almost any kind of government regulation.’ p. 428; Frank W. Fetter, ‘Economic Controversy in the British Reviews, 1802-1850’ *Economica*, 32/128 (1965), pp. 424-437. For a larger examination of the role of newspapers in the rise of post-war radicalism, see Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth Century Britain*, (Cambridge, 1996); a specifically radical press can be seen as emerging in the aftermath of Whig criticism of the rioters, including William Cobbett’s *Twopenny Trash* (1816), Thomas Wooler’s *Black Dwarf* (1817), and Richard Carlile’s *The Republican* (1818).

¹²² In its efforts to secure sufficient votes, the government had actively pursued endorsements of the legislation, and the publication of lists helped to dissuade members who had not yet committed. Wilberforce, for instance, had been approached, but worried by the possibility of attack, avoided making an immediate commitment. In a 10 March entry into his diary, he wrote that he had ‘reflected seriously on if it was not my duty to declare in favour of the Corn Bill.’ After being offered a government concession on his Register Bill, Wilberforce elected to support the corn legislation, but he was ‘advised to evacuate’ his home. He instead chose to ‘hav[e] four or five soldiers’ stationed outside. Robert Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, iv, (London, 1839), pp. 245-247.

¹²³ George Canning to William Huskisson (BL Add. MSS 38740/42 f. 97).

¹²⁴ *The Morning Post*, 10 March 1815.

¹²⁵ *Hansard*, xxx, cc. 78-79.

presence of the military guard would allow parliamentarians to do their ‘duty’ regardless of the cabal of ‘ignorant and infatuated persons (for such he trusted they were) with whom these disorders originated.’¹²⁶

By the evening of 9 March, the enormous buildup of military force in the capital had quelled the vast majority of protests.¹²⁷ That day ‘the military were in great numbers, particularly the horse; and at the several houses belonging to the members who had supported the Corn Bill foot soldiers were stationed. In fact, London was environed with troops on all sides.’¹²⁸ Castlereagh wrote to Wellington on 14 March to inform him that ‘our corn riots have ceased in London; and as there is no movement, in the manufacturing towns beyond some wicked placards, I hope this embarrassment will go away’.¹²⁹ In the immediate aftermath of the suppression of the rioting, it became increasingly clear that violent opposition to the bill, which had at first been supported by the legislation’s opponents, in fact, proved essential in gaining the law a sufficient number of votes to ensure passage.¹³⁰ The *Morning Post*, which the rioters had taken time to cheer, argued that, ‘the Bill would have stood no chance of passing in its present shape’ if the riots had not broken out.¹³¹ Besides their effect on the Corn bill debate, the violent clashes also helped to instigate a more civil conflict between Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo. This ‘friendly but intense debate’ helped, as Robert Dorfman has argued, to ‘set the course that English economics followed for the rest of the nineteenth century.’¹³²

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ In addition to the presence of the military, rewards were offered for the ‘conviction of anyone taking an active part in the outrages.’ *The Gentlemen’s Magazine*, March 1815, 85, p. 272.

¹²⁸ *Annual Register Chronicle*, p. 25, cited in James Bonar, ‘The Disposition of Troops in London, March 1815’, *The English Historical Review*, 16/62 (1901), pp. 348-354.

¹²⁹ *Wellington Supplementary Despatches*, ix, p. 595.

¹³⁰ Francis Burdett, at the time, believed that ‘under present conditions a man in the position of Castlereagh could carry through, by a large majority any measure he saw fit.’ Donald Barnes, *A History of English Corn Laws from 1660-1846*, p.137.

¹³¹ *Morning Post*, 9 March 1815.

¹³² Robert Dorfman, ‘Thomas Robert Malthus and David Ricardo’ *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3/3, (1989), p. 159; see also, Neri Salvadori and Rodolfo Signorino, *The Malthus Versus Ricardo 1815 Corn Law Controversy: an Appraisal*, University of Pisa, 9 October 2013 (unpublished).

The Political Impact of Napoleon's Return

On 10 March, Castlereagh announced to the House of Commons that the 'Government had received information that Bonaparte had landed in France.'¹³³ This landing reopened an ongoing argument between factions in the opposition, namely, the Foxite and Grenvillite parties, which stood against and for the resumption of hostilities with France, respectively. Grenville's decision to support the government's war policies, began the process by which his party would eventually join the government. Such a move, while a natural progression in retrospect, proved infuriating to ranking members of the opposition. Lord Grey, writing in 1816, reflected that 'to bring [Grenville] to listen to arguments which impeach in the slightest degree the original policy of the wars which have sprung from the French Revolution, I know to be impossible.'¹³⁴

On the same day that Napoleon inadvertently divided the opposition, the reformist Sir Francis Burdett presented the House of Commons with a petition collected in Westminster of over 42,000 signatures.¹³⁵ While presenting the signatures, Burdett took the opportunity to decry the riots, which had given Castlereagh political cover for the bill's passage. The legislation's rapid passage was described as the result of Castlereagh's suppression of the Corn Bill riots, which had given him 'the mantle of a prophet.'¹³⁶ Instead, Burdett argued that Castlereagh 'ought to have lost his head' not only for his 'mode of suppressing riots' but also for the fact that he had been 'exposed and detected in trafficking in seats.'¹³⁷ In response to Burdett's attack on Castlereagh's management of the Corn Bill riots, Castlereagh argued that Burdett did not wish to 'oppose the Corn Bill...but to subvert the Constitution.'¹³⁸ Later that day, after several attempts were made to delay passage, the Corn Bill was passed and sent to the House of Lords.¹³⁹ Once in the House of

¹³³ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 114; *The Examiner* described Castlereagh's reaction to Napoleon's escape, 'Lord Castlereagh's late indisposition, it is said, attacked him on the very day the news of Bonaparte's arrival in France reached London. The particular nature of it was not mentioned, but report has it, that it affected his Lordship in rather an odd manner, for when any of his friends mentioned the word 'Congress' a visible agitation was observed in his whole frame. *The Examiner*, 26 March 1815.

¹³⁴ Grey to Holland, 14 January 1816, (GRE/B34/23).

¹³⁵ *Hansard*, xxx, cc. 107-108.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*; According to Buckingham, when Castlereagh was 'accused of bartering a seat in the House of Commons...the noble Lord, with that coolness by which he was characterized, turned round upon his accusers, and exclaimed, 'What! Is it then come to this? Are we all at once become so pure and immaculate, that a fair exchange like this is to be called corruption?' *Hansard*, xviii, c. 761.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 105

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, cc. 115-125

Lords, the bill provoked what Lord Grey called ‘the greatest number of petitions that had ever perhaps been known in the history of parliament.’¹⁴⁰

Opponents of the bill held out hope that the measure would be defeated in the House of Lords. Lord Grey made an effort to stall the legislation, arguing that the Lords ought to ‘investigate this important question in all its bearings, before they come to their decision.’¹⁴¹ A committee, earlier appointed to examine the potential impact of the bill on wages, was caught unprepared to offer advice and requested more time.¹⁴² As Lord Grey put it, the ‘committee have proceeded in the investigation of this important subject [yet] have not been productive of all the information...yet are not without hopes that their proceedings will...have the effect of proving in the most authentic manner...the duties confided in their charge.’¹⁴³

Proponents of the legislation, however, had a clear majority and began to push for a quicker pace. Liverpool made an effort to tie the legislation to the promotion of commercial interests.

For the last three years...I have read with all the attention in my power, all the evidence which has been given upon the question and all the publications which have been given to the world. If there ever was a question on which my mind was free from all undue bias towards one particular view...my decided opinion is that the commercial interests of this country ought not be sacrificed to the agricultural; but with all due regard to the commercial interest, and I have been educated in a school where I was taught to value the commercial interest.¹⁴⁴

Lord Liverpool argued that ‘by agreeing to this Bill nothing was risked [and] if the Bill were passed, and any inconvenience were found to arise from it, a remedy might be immediately applied.’¹⁴⁵ However, Liverpool believed that ‘if the measure was rejected, and capital in consequence withdrawn from agriculture, fifty years might be necessary to replace us in our present situation.’¹⁴⁶ Following this speech, Liverpool moved that the bill be read a second time. On 20 March, after having spent several hours debating the admissibility of petitions sent to the House of Lords, the bill was read for the third time and passed. That same day, Castlereagh addressed the House of Commons for over four hours, in defense of his actions at the Congress of

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, c. 115.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, cc. 126-127.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, c. 128.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* c. 185.

Vienna.¹⁴⁷ *The Statesman* held out hope that the Prince Regent might refrain from giving his assent, however this hope was misplaced and on 23 March, the Prince Regent granted his assent.¹⁴⁸

The Immediate Aftermath of Passage

Two weeks after the passage of the Corn Law of 1815, an event occurred, unnoticed at the time that radically impacted Britain's economy and indirectly its entire political system. That event was the 5 April 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa. A British East India cruiser sailing more than two hundred miles north of the eruption noted the event in its logbook.¹⁴⁹ In the ensuing months, the ash cloud from the Tambora eruption slowly made its way into the atmosphere, gradually decreasing temperatures around the world as it spread. The long term impact of this event would not be felt in Britain until the summer of 1816, during which heavy rains and unseasonably cold weather together brought about a failed harvest.

In the first months after its passage, the Corn Laws of 1815 appeared to be effective at steadily increasing the price of wheat. However, the increase from 59s 6d per quarter on 15 February 1815 to 69s 8d on 15 May 1815, while initially claimed as a victory by proponents, proved to be a side-effect of Napoleon's Hundred Days rather than the effect of the Corn Laws. By November of 1815, prices had dropped back below their pre-Corn Law levels and continued to fall throughout the winter. From 1815 to 1822 the new Corn Laws were in effect. Huskisson described the Corn Laws as gradually 'bring[ing] things to their level and to prices approximating to those of other countries.'¹⁵⁰ However, rather than leveling the markets, the legislation led to radical fluctuations that pleased neither the agricultural sector nor the average consumer.¹⁵¹ Instead, the law exposed 'the markets of the country...to be occasionally overwhelmed with an inundation of foreign corn, altogether disproportionate to its wants, or in the event of any...deficiency in our own harvest' that 'rapidly and unnecessarily raised' prices by creating 'sudden competition on the continent.'¹⁵² Boyd Hilton has argued that the Corn Laws were intended to quell just this sort of unpredictability. According to Hilton, volatility in the grain

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, vol. 77, p. 380; *Ibid*, xxx, cc. 265-305.

¹⁴⁸ *The Statesman*, 8 March 1815; *New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register*, 3, January-June 1815, p. 263.

¹⁴⁹ 'Toward sun-set the reports seemed to approach much nearer and sounded like heavy guns occasionally with slighter reports between. During the night of the eleventh the firing was again heard but much louder and towards morning the reports were in quick succession and sometimes like three or four guns fired together and so heavy that they shook the ship as they did the houses in the fort.' *Asiatic Journal*, August 1816, p. 165.

¹⁵⁰ Huskisson to Canning, 27 March 1815 (BL Add. MSS 38833.)

¹⁵¹ Timothy Davis, *Ricardo's Macroeconomics: Money, Trade Cycles, and Growth*, p. 123.

¹⁵² *Hansard*, v, Appendix, lxxxii.

market derived from the lack of available intelligence on European grain harvests, which in the past had led British farmers into massive sell-offs whenever European grain started to appear in British markets.¹⁵³ Although, in effect this is accurate, little evidence exists to demonstrate that such a function was an intentional component of the law. Lord Liverpool defended the legislation by arguing that it was designed to ‘prevent... fluctuation in the price of the first necessary of life which was so injurious to the consumer.’¹⁵⁴ However, the decade that followed the passage of the Act of 1815 demonstrated the failure of the legislation to achieve these goals. Indeed, prices fluctuated far more dramatically in the wake of its passage than they had prior to 1815. In addition to its inability to quell massive price fluctuations in the grain market, the Corn Laws of 1815 increased dissatisfaction amongst agriculturalists, industrialists, and consumers.¹⁵⁵

From 1815 until the reforms of 1821, corn prices were based upon the average sales in 139 towns in England and Wales.¹⁵⁶ All parties in the corn trade were obliged to maintain careful records of each transaction. These records were then submitted weekly to grain inspectors, who in turn passed their data to the Receiver of the Corn Returns office where the staff would average prices from across the country, to determine when prices had reached the cut-off point determined by the laws. These pricing records included wheat, rye, oats, beans, peas, and barley. The Corn Laws allowed for the free entrance of foreign wheat for three months after the national average price had been at or above 80s a quarter for six weeks, for barley the price was 40s and for oats 27s. This price was considered to be the lowest that would grant British agriculturalists sufficient remuneration. Unfortunately, these price assessments failed to judge accurately the true national averages, due to measuring differences and the prevalence of clerical errors. In the House of Lords, Lord Grey expressed concern that ‘they were ...legislating for a price of 76s.’¹⁵⁷ In reality, average prices were never assessed more than three percent off true price¹⁵⁸ As a result, pricing errors had

¹⁵³ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?* p. 266.

¹⁵⁴ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 1815.

¹⁵⁵ While some historians, such as Paul Bairoch, have argued that the agricultural recession brought about, in part, by Britain’s tariff system helped to kick-start the rising post-Napoleonic industrial sector, such arguments are, as Joel Mokyr has argued, ‘hard to prove’ as there is no record of what, ‘technological creativity [would] have been like in the absence of protection.’; Paul Bairoch, *Economics and World History* (Chicago, 1993); Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, p. 149.

¹⁵⁶ Wray Vamplew, ‘A Grain of Truth: The Nineteenth-Century Corn Averages’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 28, (1980), pp. 1-17, 30.

¹⁵⁷ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 136.

¹⁵⁸ Wray Vamplew, ‘The Protection of English Cereal Producers: The Corn Laws Reassessed’, *The Economic History Review New Series*, 33/3 (1980), p. 383.

little impact on the cost of wheat, as true prices were always well above the 80s cut-off in the period prior to the reforms of 1821. There is a possibility, however, that mispricing did effect the opening of ports for several other grains, including oats and barley.

After the special committee looked into several potential modifications, Huskisson's 1821 recommendations led to a number of key reforms. Under the new system prices were weighted to take into account the proportion of sales in each market and the market analysis itself was increased to include 148 towns.¹⁵⁹ Huskisson's reforms decreased the role of smaller towns in setting average price, thus increasing the accuracy of the data on national price averages. Between 1817 and 1818, wheat prices exceeded 80s per quarter. However, excessive production capabilities and the previous year's harvest continued to hamper agricultural recovery. All sectors of the economy, including the agricultural, began to pursue the possibility of repeal. Between 1819 and 1821 approximately 1,200 petitions were received by the parliament, predominantly from agricultural regions.¹⁶⁰ Largely concerned with the influx of foreign grain onto the British market, most petitions operated under the erroneous theory that increased tariffs would produce higher prices on the domestic market. In 1820, Robinson, who had by then been elevated to President of the Board of Trade, researched the difficulties facing the agricultural sector and determined that the expansion of Britain's agricultural sector into marginal lands during and immediately after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars led to an oversupply, especially in Britain's wheat production capabilities.¹⁶¹

Long-term Aftereffects of the 1815 Corn Law

By 1820, demand for the repeal or amendment of the 1815 law had become increasingly strident, especially from those who had most forcefully argued for the measure. That same year can be marked as the beginning of a long-term effort by the industrial and commercial sectors to abolish the special privileges of agriculture. This shift is often dated to the protests which revolved around Thomas Tooke's famous statement of free market ideology presented in the Merchant's Petition of 1820. The petition argued that the Corn Laws must be repealed, as 'foreign commerce is eminently conducive to the wealth and prosperity of a country.'¹⁶² And that 'by enabling

¹⁵⁹ J. C. Platt, *History of the British Corn Laws* (New York, 1845) p. 179.

¹⁶⁰ Terry Peach, *Interpreting Ricardo* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 100.

¹⁶¹ *Hansard*, i, c. 643.

¹⁶² Thomas Tooke, 'The Petition of the Merchants', Francis W. Hirst, (ed.), *Free Trade and Other Fundamental Doctrines of the Manchester School* (London, 1820), p. 12.

[Britain] to import [the grain] of other countries...and to export in payment those articles for which its own situation is better adapted' Britain would be granted economic freedom. Such economic freedom would allow British merchants to buy 'in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest.'¹⁶³ From here, Tooke developed his argument that the goal of repeal will be to 'render the commerce of the world an interchange of mutual advantages, and diffuse an increase of wealth and enjoyments among the inhabitants of each State.'¹⁶⁴

Liverpool's economic vision gradually came to reflect the influence of Huskisson's thought, as William Huskisson increasingly argued for an 'economic world order based on peace and mutually advantageous exchange.'¹⁶⁵ This emerging ideology was derived, in part, from David Ricardo's influence on Huskisson.¹⁶⁶ Huskisson argued that while free trade principals formed a sort of ideal, they should not be forced without consideration of existing protectionist laws:

If our other regulations with regard to the price of commodities stood upon the basis of the principles of free trade, then there could be no possible objection to our leaving our agricultural productions to find their own level. But, so long as our commerce and manufacturers were encouraged and forced by protections, by bounties, and by restraints on importation from abroad, he saw no reason why the laws relating to the growth of corn should alone form an exception to this general system.¹⁶⁷

This approach, in turn helped to shape Castlereagh's economic thought, which remained unsettled during much of this period.¹⁶⁸ According to Mokyr, while there was slow and steady acceptance of free trade thought within the government, this process had been set back by the 'temporary resurgence of neo-mercantilist thinking prompted by the wars with France' and that while 'the mercantilist zero-sum view of the world' had faded, economic special interest groups 'were still a force to be reckoned with.'¹⁶⁹ Norman Gash and Michael J. Turner have both argued that Castlereagh was an early adopter of free-trade ideologies, while Boyd Hilton has argued against this position.¹⁷⁰ Evidence, however, is inconclusive, as Castlereagh intermittently embraced both

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Joel Mokyr, *Enlightened Economy*, p. 151.

¹⁶⁶ Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, p. 117-125.

¹⁶⁷ William Huskisson, *Huskisson Speeches*, p. 298.

¹⁶⁸ BL Add. MSS 38741 f. 91.

¹⁶⁹ Joel Mokyr, *Enlightened Economy*, p. 151.

¹⁷⁰ Michael Turner, *The Age of Unease: Government and Reform in Britain, 1782-1832* (Stroud, 2000), p. 183; Boyd Hilton, *A Mad Bad and Dangerous People?*, p. 265

ideologies throughout his career, a tendency which indicates the degree to which context and tactical necessity shaped Castlereagh's economic perspectives.¹⁷¹

The Corn Laws of 1815 failed to achieve either autarky or market stability. That disappointing outcome led to a search for alternatives capable of improving the economic situation. However, Huskisson who had initially favored a sliding scale, which was gaining renewed support in 1820, argued that a revision would be ill conceived. In a letter to Edmund Wodehouse, Huskisson stated that he had 'always considered a graduated duty as a much wiser and more efficacious regulation than a contingent prohibition.'¹⁷² However, while the Huskisson plan had initially gained support during meetings at Fife House, the alternative format eventually proved more popular and Huskisson's plan was shelved. While Huskisson was flattered that his sliding scale was being reconsidered, he did 'not think it safe...under all the present circumstances of the country, to attempt to change from the principle which then prevailed, to that which was rejected.'¹⁷³

1821 brought with it a renewed wave of alarms from the agricultural sector.¹⁷⁴ In spite of this, the government's response failed to coalesce around any particular response, with some who sought to 'alter the standard of the currency, some suggested the propriety of expunging part of the national debt, some placed their hopes in the removal of taxes, and some had a perfect faith in the omnipotence of high protecting duties.'¹⁷⁵ At the same time, a growing faction within parliament argued that as action had previously failed, perhaps a return to inaction might prove more successful. Such *laissez faire* attitudes contributed to the sense that, as 'it was not by any act of the legislator that the land had been called into cultivation...it was not therefore to be expected that by an act of the legislator it should be continued in cultivation.'¹⁷⁶ This new outlook led to explicit calls for de-cultivation and the government openly began to blame agricultural distress on the over cultivation of marginal lands. Castlereagh, who had previously supported the 1815 Corn Laws, increasingly became critical of efforts to maintain 'unnatural' marginal lands.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812-1815*, pp. 492-493; Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams: England and the United States, 1812-1823* (Berkeley, 1964), pp. 232-233.

¹⁷² Huskisson to Edmund Wodehouse, 20 January 1820 (BL Add. MSS 38742, f. 3).

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Donald Barnes, *A History of English Corn Laws: From 1660-1846*, p. 167.

¹⁷⁵ *Annual Register*, 63, 1821, p. 66.

¹⁷⁶ *Hansard*, i, c. 643.

¹⁷⁷ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad Bad and Dangerous People*, p. 267.

Eventually the government allowed for the creation of a select committee to investigate the continued issue of agricultural distress. The committee proved deeply important to the history of the Corn Laws of 1815. The committee itself was composed of William Huskisson, Thomas Gooch, Lord Castlereagh, David Ricardo, Frederick Robinson, Henry Brougham, and Henry Parnell. The committee met for fourteen weeks, during which time it reviewed an extensive amount of evidence. Huskisson composed the final report, which was described as ‘one of the most valuable documents ever laid before parliament.’¹⁷⁸

The report concluded that real economic difficulties were facing the agricultural sector. Rather than attributing these challenges to one particular cause, the report concluded that a wide range of complications had led to the current recession. In its analysis, the committee drew attention to the effects of the resumption of cash payments. According to the report, the effects of this process had been exacerbated by similar efforts by Continental states to likewise resume a metallic base for their currencies.

The publication of the 1821 report was of little immediate importance. Rather than sticking strictly to the report’s guidelines, Lord Castlereagh, who sat on the committee, proposed several of his own resolutions. In his proposals, Castlereagh sketched out the concepts that would go on to form the core of the 1822 Corn Laws.¹⁷⁹ Castlereagh’s proposals consisted of fairly minor amendments to the 1815 law, including a sliding scale of tariff rates. These tariffs were to be set at 1s when grain was above 85s per quarter, 5s when prices were between 80s and 85s, and 12s when grain was between 70s and 80s with an additional 5s per month during the first three months of importation. Huskisson, who created much of the original report, found Castlereagh’s motions to be insufficiently free-trade oriented and responded with a series of counter-proposals.¹⁸⁰ Huskisson’s proposals, which largely resembled those that he attempted to add to the original Corn bill in 1814, were designed to leave trade as free as possible, with no planned port closures regardless of the prices of wheat.

The protectionism of the Corn Laws remained a persistent aspect in British politics, however public opposition to the 1815 Corn Laws had an outsized impact on British society, due ‘to the intensity of the debates over the Corn Laws’ rather than necessarily representing an

¹⁷⁸ *Hansard*, v, Appendix, lxi; ‘It is full of the soundest views, and at the same time as it admits abstract principles in all their extent, it modifies them by due regard to the circumstances of the times.’ *Annual Register*, 63, p. 68.

¹⁷⁹ Mary Marks, *The Corn Laws: A Popular History* (London, 1908), p. 93.

¹⁸⁰ *Hansard*, vii, c. 190.

emerging free-trade consensus, which would emerge more gradually in the following years.¹⁸¹ While the Corn Laws of 1815 failed to bring about stability in wheat prices or ensure British autarky, its impact remained substantial in the years that followed its passage, in often unexpected ways. Anna Clark has argued that the rise in ‘food prices and unemployment’ which resulted from ‘the passage of the Corn Laws in 1815’ transformed the radical movement by bringing ‘family issues to the forefront of radical politics.’¹⁸² This shift in emphasis led radicals to embrace a ‘wider conception of citizenship based on the needs of families.’¹⁸³ This addition to the radical identity would continue to form an increasing component of radicalism in the following years as protesters repeatedly took to the streets of London to express displeasure with the government’s subsequent economic policies. In turn, these changes helped to transform perceptions of radical political ideology as they were integrated into British self-identity in the following decades.

¹⁸¹ John Vincent Nye, ‘The Myth of Free-Trade Britain and Fortress France: Tariffs and Trade in the Nineteenth Century’ *The Journal of Economic History*, 51/1, (March, 1991), p. 33; Anna Gambles provides a convincing argument for the longevity of protectionism, even in the aftermath of the 1846 repeal of the Corn Laws. See Anna Gambles, ‘Rethinking the Politics of Protection: Conservatism and the Corn Laws, 1830-52’ *The English Historical Review*, 113/453 (1998), pp. 928-952.

¹⁸² Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (London, 1995), p. 158.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

Income Tax Repeal and the Impact of Britain's Debt

1816

While the economic effect of the Corn Laws has been downplayed in much of the historiography, its impact on the British economy was substantial. In the spring of 1816, nearly every aspect of the economy was 'in flux' and economic conditions would only worsen over the course of the summer.¹ When the income tax came up for renewal, it was in the context of these persistent economic pressures. In the eyes of many Whigs and radicals, the government's efforts at maintaining the income tax were rooted in the machinations of the Congress System, and associated them with both a continuation of conflict and a loss of sovereignty to the continental powers. Charles Tierney, in particular objected to 'the renewal of this tax' as its proceeds would 'be guided by the Congress' and he did not wish to see 'Prince Metternich and Prince Talleyrand...mete out the property of this country.'² In particular he was concerned that 'nothing would make this great and respectable body [the Congress] so ready to go to war as plenty of money from this country.'³ Additionally, radicals understood the renewal of the income tax as fundamentally intertwined with the Corn Laws. According to Martin Daunton 'the income tax was linked...to [the] maintenance of the Corn Laws and preservation of fiscal inequalities.'⁴ J. R. Dinwiddy likewise saw 'the passage of the Corn Law in 1815, in spite of a massive urban petitioning movement against it' as a defining moment in the emergence of postwar dissent, as many 'middle-class liberals' felt 'that parliament was inattentive to their interests and opinions.'⁵ In addition to these underlying tensions, Castlereagh's mismanagement of the government's case for continuing the income tax, in particular his criticism of, what he called, the public's 'ignorant impatience to be relieved from the pressure of taxation' and the widespread dissemination of his

¹ Elie Halévy, *The Liberal Awakening* (New York, 1961), p. 9; The extent of the depression's impact on rural labor patterns was substantial. The Cambridge Records Office indicates that during the harvest of 1816 male agricultural laborers were employed for only thirty-five percent of the standard number of harvesting days. (CRO R55.7.8/23) cited in Penelope Lane, (ed.), *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850* (Bury St. Edmunds, 2004), p. 196.

² *Hansard*, xxx, cc. 684-685

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ They argued that the people were taxed by the Corn Laws, paying higher food prices and hence maintaining high rents' which essentially redistributed funds to landowners. The income tax only took 'back some of the rent, so that landowners in effect paid nothing to the government,' while other 'income[s] were hit both by the Corn Laws and by the income tax.' Martin Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan: The Politics of Taxation in Britain* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 83.

⁵ J.R. Dinwiddy, *From Luddism to the First Reform Bill: Reform in England, 1810-1832* (Oxford, 1986), p. 12.

characterization in the form of political cartoons helped to further set back political discourse.⁶ This chapter presents evidence that the repeal of the income tax should be treated as a disruptive event in British history, and its aftereffects, in particular the rapid increase in government debt, as central in defining austerity as the chief legislative agenda of the postwar era.

The Corn Law's failure to stabilize the market, its role in increasing consumer prices, and the violence which surrounded its passage played a role in reshaping the nature of economic and political debate, as discussed in the previous chapter. That shift, in turn, played out shortly afterwards in the income tax debates as violence increased. By denying the role of high tariffs in causing the 1816 depression, many supporters of protectionist policies were forced to seek after the causes of distress in other economic inputs. Increasingly that search developed into a discrete political program, typically presented as 'the relief of agriculture', committed to lowering taxes and 'returning the currency to a metallic basis.'⁷

According to Patrick O'Brien, 'with the suspension of income tax in 1816...tax burdens on landed wealth declined.'⁸ At the same time strong postwar population growth, and inflation, pushed agricultural profits steadily higher.⁹ While the industrial sector's productivity gains far outdistanced agriculture's during this era, the Corn Law's influence, when combined with labor market trends, and the distribution of agricultural land ownership tended to slow the shift of Britain's agricultural labor force into the more productive industrial sector just when the demobilizing military was causing massive labor market disruptions.¹⁰ Such inefficient allocations of labor would prove highly disruptive in the years to come.

In order to fully understand how, in the wake of the passage of the 1815 Corn laws, the income tax lost its parliamentary support, it is first important to review the history and significance of the income tax itself, in the years prior to the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. Although that period of conflict had dragged on with minor interruptions, from 1793 onwards, no substantial military engagement took place on British soil. This remarkable achievement was realized by

⁶ Washington Wilks, *Half Century, Its History, Political and Social* (London, 1853) p. 96; Henry Brougham, recalled Castlereagh's phrase as, 'an ignorant impatience of the relaxation of taxation' which alters Castlereagh's meaning, somewhat. Henry Brougham, *Works of Henry, Lord Brougham*, iv, (London, 1860), p.111; For an example of the use of this phrase in caricature, See British Museum 1935,0522/11/74, *State Physicians Bleeding John Bull to Death!* Caricatures, xi, p. 74.

⁷ Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, pp. 98-105; Travis Crosby, *English Farmers and the Politics of Protection* (Hassocks, 1977), pp. 16-56.

⁸ Patrick O'Brien, *The Industrial Revolution and British Society*, p. 21.

⁹ Robert Woods, *The Population of Britain in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 10.

¹⁰ J.G. Williamson, *Did British Capitalism Breed Inequality?* (Boston, 1985), pp. 641-678.

Britain's unique ability to effectively mobilize its financial resources, as well as the resources of much of the world. Britain was able to support both a massive buildup of its own armed forces and subsidize the efforts of those of the continental powers primarily via its economic, rather than its military arsenal. Of the many weapons in the British economic arsenal, one of the most powerful was the income tax. While British security during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars can be considered one of the greatest achievements of Britain's imperial moment, the enormous economic effort that produced it brought about changes as lasting and important as the war itself.

While many historians have dealt with the income tax itself, notably Stephen Dowell, Edwin Seligman, and Arthur Hope-Jones, the tax's long term impact on government policy has, in many ways, been ignored.¹¹ Moreover, even fewer historians have addressed the process and effect of repeal. Instead, most analysis of the income tax focuses on either the structure of the tax or the nature and effect of its collection. Partisans of the progressive income tax, such as Seligman, have used British tax history as a platform for extolling modern fiscal theories.¹² This approach impoverishes our understanding of how the income tax was understood within its time. One particularly problematic aspect of such partisanship in understanding the income tax's repeal is that it tends to misrepresent pragmatic political competition as ideological debate.

Arthur Hope-Jones crafted the first comprehensive, non-polemical history. However, as B.E.V. Sabine has pointed out, the formative nature of his study left his work prone to errors, later corrected by Sabine himself.¹³ In contrast to Seligman and Hope-Jones, other more modern historians of the income tax, such as Peter Harris, have focused almost exclusively on the technical aspects of bureaucratic structure and enforcement.¹⁴ Work by these historians has produced excellent analysis of the income tax's bureaucratic structure and economic impact. Such analysis is very useful, but fails to fully contextualize the process of repeal. Unlike previous analysis, this history seeks to place the tax firmly within the larger narratives of party politics and in particular within Whig party dynamics. By examining contemporary attitudes towards postwar economic instability, especially amongst those of the upper- and middle-class ruling elites, we can better

¹¹ Stephen Dowell, *A History of Taxation and Taxes in England* (London, 1888); Edwin Seligman, *The Income Tax* (New York, 1911); Arthur Hope-Jones, *Income Tax in the Napoleonic Wars* (London, 1939).

¹² In many ways, Seligman's *Income Tax* can be seen as a companion piece to his 1909 tract on the importance of adopting a progressive structure in the income tax. See Edwin Seligman, *Progressive Taxation in Theory and Practice* (Princeton, 1909).

¹³ B. E. V. Sabine, *A History of Income Tax* (London, 1966).

¹⁴ Peter Harris, *Income Tax in Common Law Jurisdictions: From the Origins to 1820* (Cambridge, 2006).

understand how and why the income tax's repeal impacted both the nature and effectiveness of government and how its repeal set off a series of economic and political reforms. Rather than focusing exclusively on the economic data, which were often misunderstood at the time, this chapter will examine the political and personal climate that motivated the repeal process.¹⁵

In addition to a moderate decline of the export industries during this era, off-limits or unstable European markets drove prices up and disrupted export-based employment. The combination of increased taxation and market instability led to a number of credit crunches, especially between 1795 and 1812. The enormous increase in tax-funded wartime spending tended to crowd out independent capital raising efforts, thus concentrating investment narrowly in war related industries. This focus likely distorted the allocation of capital and perhaps led to a moderate slowdown in industrialization during this period.¹⁶ Others, such as Joel Mokyr, however have argued that data supporting this view are inconclusive, pointing to the relatively stable state of domestic capital formation.¹⁷

As discussed in the previous chapters, increased grain tariffs and the rapid demobilization of the British military all contributed to the postwar economic malaise. However, of the many contributing factors the most threatening to British stability was the enormous wartime debt. Indeed, at the close of 1815, as the government concluded its review of the postwar military, it became apparent that the permanent taxes were insufficient to balance the budget. Moreover, the consolidated fund was increasingly unable to keep up with debt payments, with over £32 million spent on interest and fees in 1816 alone.¹⁸ The government, set on a quick return to its peacetime footing, faced the dilemma of how to deal with its wartime debt.

Of the many changes to occur during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, one of the most important was the emergence of enormous massed armies, driven by universal conscription and a growing sense of the nation-state. The mobilization of nations brought to the world a new

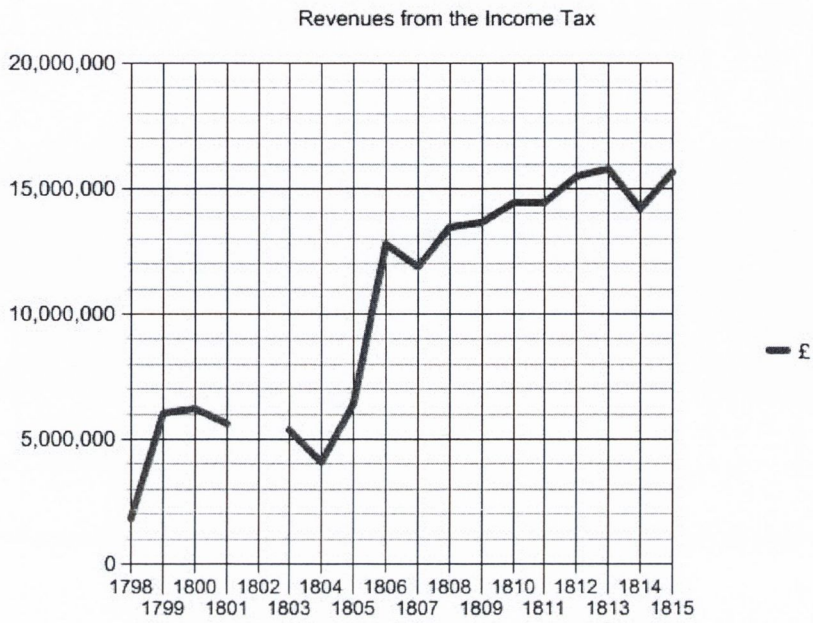
¹⁵ Much of the economic data used in this chapter is gleaned from the 1852 and 1870 Inland Revenue Reports, which are considered to be the most concise and accurate. *Sessional Papers. House of Commons*. 'Report of the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue on the Duties under their Management', British Parliamentary Papers. 1852, vol. 9; 1870, vol. 20; Although it should be pointed out that copying errors in the tables of the 1870 Sessional Papers render it somewhat less reliable these errors were largely confirmed to schedule D returns. See Deane and Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1688-1959*.

¹⁶ Jeffrey Williamson, 'Why Was British Economic Growth So Slow During the Industrial Revolution?' *The Journal of Economic History*, 44/3, (1984), pp. 687-712.

¹⁷ Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy* (New Haven, 2009).

¹⁸ *Hansard*, xxxii, cc. 376-89.

form of warfare. While the tactics and strategies of citizen armies have often been considered, the equally important changes in tax policy required to finance those strategies are less well understood. Taxation in Britain during the early years of the war came from a variety of well-established sources. These included customs and excise receipts, which were to remain a vital part of British war funding throughout the duration. Many taxes, required by the increasing costs of war, proved less successful at providing steady revenue streams for the government. These taxes included the often evaded tax on windows, the taxation of female servants, jokingly blamed at the time on Pitt's antipathy towards the gender, and even a tax on hair powder. Although relatively profitable these taxes failed both to meet the government's rapidly increasing need for funds and to prevent wholesale tax evasion. An attempt was made to use these assessed taxes as the basis for a more lucrative yet relatively non-invasive tax. From the wreckage of this attempt came one of Pitt's most important contributions to Britain's wartime success: the income tax. Besides the eventual military outcome, the British income tax is important for several technical reasons. Firstly, Pitt's decision to shift from the taxation of expenditures to the taxation of incomes simplified and stabilized the tax system and in so doing allowed the government a steady flow of revenue and the citizen a predictable liability. After the income tax lapsed, following the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, Addington took the opportunity to have the tax examined for faults. The result of this investigation led to Addington's decision to use a schedular system and a deduction at source mechanism, both of which were unique to the 1803 version of the tax and likely the causes of its enormous success. [see table] While none of these concepts were entirely new, their use radically changed the British tax system and improved the collection of revenues substantially.



Report of the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue, 1870 volume II, pg 184

The innovations brought about by Pitt and Addington did much to transform the nature of taxation, less often considered, however, are the cultural issues raised by the nature of these innovations. While it is easy to empathize with popular resistance to increased taxation, it is more difficult to grasp the extent to which the income tax broke with the manners and norms of late eighteenth century Britain. These norms were violated by three distinct aspects of the income tax. Firstly, the tax invaded privacy in substantial and culturally sensitive ways.¹⁹ As Pitt wrote, ‘the great practical objection to such a contribution is the impossibility of ascertaining property without a degree of inquisition which would be generally invidious and perhaps often, particularly in the case of persons of trade, seriously mischievous.’²⁰ The late eighteenth century English taxpayer

¹⁹ This concern was highlighted in the House of Commons by Pascoe Grenfell, who described, in a speech, that while ‘travelling in a common stage coach from London to Oxford’ he had been ‘entertained by a fellow passenger with a minute account of the diminution of income, and of the other affairs of a gentleman whose residence they passed. On his arrival at Oxford, his friend inquired who his fellow passenger was, and was informed that he was a commissioner of the Property-tax.’ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 1023; A contemporary pamphlet discussed the privacy component of opposition to the tax. See *Resist or be Ruined! The Property Tax must be abolished now or a State Inquisition will be established in England forever. The immediate Resistance of the whole Nation shewn to be the only Means of averting an Inquisitorial and Perpetual Income Tax from which Mr. Vansittart has declared no Class of Society will be exempted. With a full Account of the Proceedings in London* (London, 1816).

²⁰ See John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Consuming Struggle* (Stanford, 1996), p. 99; (TNA Pitt Papers 30/8/273, f. 27.)

would have been familiar with assessments, from windows to silverware. These assessments, while intrusive, never involved the whole-scale auditing required by the collection of the income tax. Incomes in this era played a major role in where individuals were located within the incredibly complex social hierarchy of the day. Thus, any public investigation of income called into question the very nature of any given taxpayer's place in society. As such, the use of self-assessment was a brilliant mechanism for allowing sensitive taxpayers to avoid the possibility of unwanted publicity. It may also have encouraged a certain degree of overpayment by those most concerned about the possibility of an audit.

The nature of the self-reporting system, however, caused an alternate offense to the sensibilities of the age. By only requiring audits in cases of apparent dishonesty on the part of the assessee, the assessor by carrying out his bureaucratic duties was simultaneously accusing the assessee of dishonesty. In an era in which insults were taken very seriously and honor carefully tended, such an accusation in any other context could easily have resulted in a duel.²¹ Lastly, the multi-tiered, quasi-progressive nature of the tax opened it up to accusations that it was attempting to redistribute wealth.²² In the midst of an ideological war, the potentially Jacobinical tendencies of the income tax caused serious concern, and were discussed on several occasions.

The Development of the Income Tax

After the Austrians made peace with France with the Treaty of Campo Formio in October of 1797, Britain was left exposed. This exposure exacerbated what was already a precarious situation. Pitt, having exhausted increases in previously levied indirect taxes, was forced to contemplate the introduction of a more radical solution. Pitt, then serving as both Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, sought to utilize the nation's increasing economic strength to prevent her diplomatic isolation from turning to military defeat.

The Aid and Contribution Act of 1798, commonly remembered as the 'triple assessment' was designed to function as a *de facto* expenditure tax by combining previously assessed taxes,

²¹ To get a sense of the auditing process, see 'Tax Office. Returns to orders of the Honourable House of Commons, dated the 4th and 8th days of March 1816; copies of correspondence between commissioners for the affairs of taxes, and the house of Messrs. Williams & Grenfell; and other papers mentioned in such orders' (*Parliamentary Papers*, 'Accounts and Papers' House of Commons, v, ff. 14, 45. 1816).

²² As Castlereagh admitted, in his defense of the tax, the 'Income Tax...affected only higher ranks of life the merchant and land owner', *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 2 March 1816, p. 283.

generally on luxury items. The tax used a sliding scale to either triple, hence the ‘triple assessment’, or quintuple those assessments.²³ Returns from this tax brought in around £2 million, where over £4 million had been predicted, largely because of evasion.

In the aftermath of these failures, the income tax was eventually turned to, to avert an impending fiscal crisis. Although its predecessors had been relatively expensive and inefficient, the costs of putting the income tax into effect were even more substantial. In addition to these expenses the tax faced considerable opposition from its very first moments. Strategically Pitt had worked to exhaust every possibility before turning to the income tax, and even the structure of the income tax itself was designed to leave untapped many potential revenue streams, later utilized by Addington’s tax. However, that is by no means to say that the income tax allowed for easy evasion.

Already competent at preventing evasion from its years of collecting the excise tax, the government’s income tax enforcement became remarkably efficient, remarkably quickly. Although the tax faced opposition, the war provided Pitt with sufficient political cover to move ahead. In addition Pitt co-opted much of the nation’s gentry by ensuring that the tax would only be administered by gentlemen, this was accomplished by creating a wealth requirement, briefly as high as £10,000, for tax commissioners. This also helped to grant the institution a measure of respectability severely diminished the previous year by a scandal during which it was discovered that the Land Tax commissioners in Coventry had included an assortment of rather seedy characters including ‘horseflesh and cat’s meat’ dealers and ‘ideots’.²⁴ By linking the income tax’s bureaucracy to the gentry, Pitt managed to simultaneously deal with the concerns of the gentry, inhibit the possibility of graft, and endow the tax with the strength of Britain’s traditional social hierarchy.

Pitt estimated that the income tax would generate £10 million in the first year. In 1799, however, actual returns were roughly £4 million shy of government estimates. Estimates for the next year were revised to £7 million, but actual returns remained essentially unaltered, leading to a further drop in the next year’s estimation to £6 million, which ironically only managed to realize slightly more than £5 million. These failures forced the government to increase indirect taxes, in order to make up the shortfall. However, while the income tax’s early returns were disappointing; its revenues easily tripled those derived from the triple assessment.

²³ *Hansard*, iii, c. 12.

²⁴ *Woodfall’s Register*, ii, p. 342.

By mid-1802 Henry Addington, later Viscount Sidmouth, had taken over the reins of power from Pitt. France and Britain had concluded what would prove to be a transitory peace with the Treaty of Amiens, and it became imperative that the government follow through with its promise to end the income tax within six months of a treaty. Addington, however, brought back the tax as soon as was possible after the resumption of hostilities albeit newly rechristened as a property tax and with several distinct technical improvements. During the interim Addington requested via the Treasury that the Revenue Department submit potential plans for a revised income tax system. According to B.E.V. Sabine it is likely that the five schedules that formed the core of Addington's revisions were first seriously considered during these discussions, although the basic concept dated to 1799, after the initial, disappointing returns of that year.²⁵ Unlike Pitt's tax, Addington's divided revenues into five distinct schedules, a system largely retained in the modern day version of the tax.²⁶ The second alteration from the 1799 tax was the introduction of deduction at the source, which allowed for deductions to be taken on a variety of income sources, including rents and the interest and dividends deriving from investments, which in turn shifted the tax burden from investors to corporations. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly for the average taxpayer, Addington cut the rate in half.

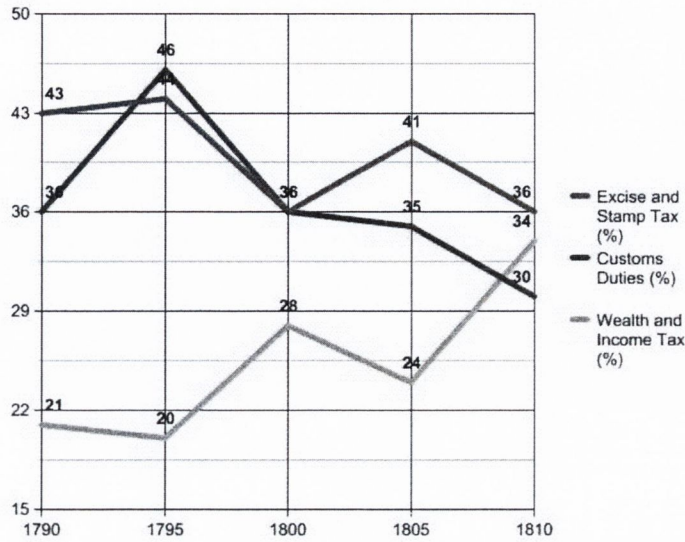
The final form of the income tax was established in 1806 during Henry Petty's year as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He raised rates from six and one fourth to ten percent and increased the size and power of the income tax collection apparatus.²⁷ These reforms, in addition to Britain's economic woes, helped to drive up the relative contribution of the income tax [see table] Although over the next few years the income tax saw only gradual change, such as an increased system of oversight, and further transparency requirements on the part of surveyors, little else was altered over the course of the tax's duration. Indeed, parliament almost entirely dropped the income tax from discussion, besides a brief review in 1811.²⁸

²⁵ B.E.V. Sabine, *A History of Income Tax* (London, 1966), p. 37.

²⁶ An Act Passed, August 11, 1803 for granting to His Majesty, until the sixth day of May next after the ratification of a definitive treaty of peace, a contribution on the profits arising from property, professions, trades, and offices, 1803. p. 4. (43 Geo. III c.122).

²⁷ *Hansard.*, xxxiii, c. 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xxiv, c. 6.



Abstracts of the Net Produce of the Revenue. (Niles Weekly Register, New Annual Register).

The good harvests of 1813 and 1814 led to reductions in grain prices, thus making life for the working class temporarily better. Furthermore, declining food prices helped the government by denying oxygen to radical voices. However, these lower prices also had their downside as the success of the 1813 and 1814 harvests had cut grain prices by nearly half from 1813 to 1815.

Under normal circumstances these declines, while problematic, would hardly have been considered truly dangerous. However, high demand over the course of the war had driven the cultivation of less productive pastoral lands and these required high grain prices to maintain. Much of this land had been reclaimed at costs only capable of being made up over the course of several harvests, in addition the government considered the improvements in agricultural productivity, spawned by these reclamations, as an essential aspect of Britain's strategic interests. These concerns, as discussed in the previous chapter, largely drove the rise in parliamentary support for agricultural tariffs.

The economic instability brought on by shifts in food prices and the growing realization that the war was increasingly going Britain's way drove anti-tax sentiment into the public sphere. However by this point the tax's success had placed its revenues at the very core of British policy-making. According to budget estimates that year, the army was set to spend £40 million, the navy £20 million and £10 million were to be set aside for foreign subsidies. Although, on average the income tax only contributed about one sixth of war funding, without the income tax these

expenditures would have been impossible. In a letter to Canning, Lord Liverpool describes his sense that growing anti-tax sentiment will shortly become a major political issue:

I have not seen for several years so much party animosity as appeared during the three weeks of November whilst parliament was sitting. A great struggle will probably take place on the property tax. I hope we shall be able to carry it for a year, in which case, if peace continues, substitutes may be found, though none in my judgment so equal and just.²⁹

In the same letter Liverpool discusses the recently concluded Treaty of Ghent, writing that continuing the war with America had become impractical in part because the nature of the war, but also because, ‘in addition to these considerations, we could not overlook the clamour which has been raised against the property tax, and the difficulties we shall certainly have in continuing it for one year to discharge the arrears of the wars.’³⁰

Liverpool’s concerns about the effects of anti-tax sentiment were obviously not confined to his private correspondence. In another letter from the same richly documented Christmas recess Brougham wrote to his friend Thomas Creevey that ‘Liverpool (the town) is all in an uproar (indeed I might say the same of the man of that name) about the property tax.’³¹ Although, in this letter, Brougham makes clear that he will do whatever is necessary to ensure that the public’s desire for repeal is fulfilled, Tierney, who largely set the tone for the opposition’s economic policy, was more circumscribed. In a letter to Grey, written several days after Brougham’s, Tierney argued that anti-tax sentiment ‘has resulted entirely from the impatience of the country at large.’³² The Whigs had experienced only moderate losses in the 1812 election, however this ended up being a moot point as they had been unable to organize themselves since the Ministry of All the Talent

The Opposition and the Income Tax

Although the end of the war had given the Whigs ample ammunition against the government, the rapid pace of events prevented them from thoroughly utilizing it. Although the division between Grenvillite and Foxite factions had ostensibly been resolved in 1808, the return of Napoleon exposed the underlying tensions amongst the Whigs. With the more conservative

²⁹ Liverpool to Canning, 28 December 1814, Quoted in Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, ii, p. 77.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³¹ Correspondence picked up over Christmas recesses, during which the separation of many MPs forced them to communicate by post; Brougham to Creevey, 17 January 1815 (*Creevey Papers*, i, p. 211).

³² Tierney to Grey, 28 January 1815 (DUL GRE/B55/198/1).

Whigs supporting the resumption of hostilities, the Foxite remnant fell back on arguments of self-determination and non-intervention in their efforts against a continuation of the war. Tierney argued that, if continued, there was ‘no possibility that the war would be a short one.’³³ The division amongst the Whigs is well illustrated by the disagreement between George Ponsonby and the radical Samuel Whitbread, which culminated in their public spat in the House of Commons on 6 April, only months before Whitbread’s suicide. Whitbread’s death, on 6 June 1815, opened a void in the leadership of the radical ‘Mountain’ faction, a position which Brougham aspired to. As Heron put it, ‘Brougham is desirous of taking Whitbread's place in the House of Commons, but he is inferior to him in talents, in character...and he is possessed of no sound judgment.’³⁴ This aspiration and Brougham’s simultaneous attempt to take command of the repeal process, strangely unexamined in the secondary literature, seem to indicate the degree to which the income tax debate revolved around Whig party dynamics. Brougham’s ambitions, obvious in his correspondence, pushed the Whigs to take an ever more uncompromising stance on the income tax and with it to adopt an increasingly shrill tone. Throughout the correspondence and speeches of the time the term ‘clamour’ in particular returns time and again. To understand the repeal process fully, this change of tone and its origin must be taken into account.

By February 1815, the government’s concerns about popular opposition to the income tax had coalesced into a specific argument. This argument, presented by Vansittart to the Ways and Means Committee emphasized the tax’s efficiency and the necessity of continuing it until the significant war debt was dealt with, at least in part.³⁵ Any possibility, however, evaporated with the escape of Napoleon from his exile on Elba. During the period prior to the Hundred Days, income tax collection had declined in effectiveness, likely because the tax had specifically been perceived as a war tax. However, during the Hundred Days, Palmerston wrote to the deputy auditor asking for a list of all the receivers-general in order to remind them that the relaxation of enforcement allowed during Napoleon’s exile could not carry on now that he had escaped.³⁶ It seems likely that ineffective enforcement was, at least in part, responsible for declines in the 1814 revenues.

³³ *Hansard*, xxxi, c. 815.

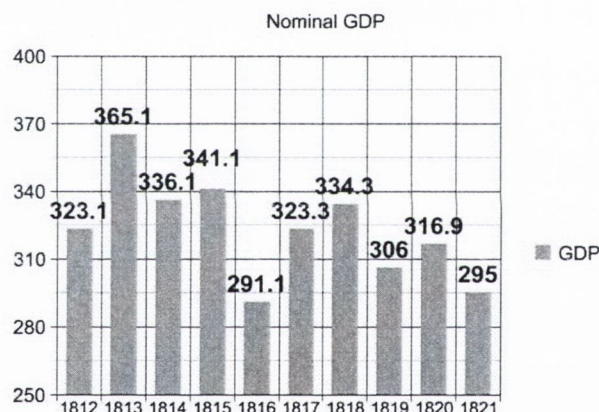
³⁴ Robert Heron, *Notes by Sir Robert Heron*, p. 68.

³⁵ *Committee of Ways and Means Reports*, 20 February 1815 and 19 April 1815.

³⁶ TNA, *Papers of the Office of the Receivers General*, T 182/1360, f. 29.

Although collection may have returned to a war footing, opposition to the tax had not. On May 1, 1815, the Mayor of London presented a petition against the income tax.³⁷ The use of petitions was to become an integral part of opposition to the tax during the coming debate.³⁸ During the summer of 1815, Addington worried that although the public's 'disposition to disturbance [is] less than might have been expected....it is to the autumn and winter that I look with anxiety.'³⁹

On 20 November 1815 the era of conflict came to a final end with the Paris Treaty and with it went the remainder of Britain's wartime national unity. The early nineteenth century climate has been remembered as being unusually cold, with short damp summers and poor harvests across the northern hemisphere. These effects were particularly problematic in 1816, the 'year with no summer.' The particularly poor harvests across Europe when added to already dismal economic conditions helped to substantially reduce Britain's GDP. [see table]



SOURCE: BRITISH ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE BUSINESS CYCLE, 1700-1850: Stephen Broadberry and Bas van Leeuwen

During the negotiations over the income tax, Castlereagh was often unable to attend due to ill health.⁴⁰ Castlereagh's illness was particularly problematic for the government, because the income tax was a topic 'with which Lord Castlereagh was so familiar that... Lord Liverpool had

³⁷ There were roughly 150 petitions on the tax during the 1815 Spring session.

³⁸ During earlier debates, George Tierney mentioned that the unusual number of petitions in a 19 April speech. 'On the subject of the property tax, there had been more petitions than on any other tax that had ever come before the House.' *Hansard*, xxx, cc. 684-685.

³⁹ *The Life and Correspondence of the Right Honorable Henry Addington, first Viscount Sidmouth*, iii (London, 1847), p. 148.

⁴⁰ *European Magazine*, 69, p. 253.

reason to think his aid in discussing the financial policy of the year would be all important.⁴¹ Furthermore, it opened up the government to jibes such as Brougham's that Castlereagh was sick from the 'property tax, aggravated by the petitions.'⁴² With Castlereagh's scattered attendance, Vansittart, then Chancellor of the Exchequer was forced to continue to argue the government's case in the House of Commons:

This tax would press less on the lower orders of society than any tax which could be devised... It was a tax more upon the rich than upon the poor...When the act was revised, it would be found the least oppressive and the least objectionable of any tax that had ever been imposed... A small portion of the property tax would be less burthensome than those taxes on consumption, which, though less immediately felt, were ultimately more burthensome and less productive... No minister had pledged himself to its indispensable continuance...it was continued only for the purpose of defraying the extraordinary charges occasioned by the war in the first years of peace.⁴³

While these arguments may have been convincing from a fiscal perspective, they failed to convert the public. From 1793 until 1815, on average, over ninety percent of government spending went towards either the war effort or towards servicing the debt.⁴⁴ With the war ended, and Britain's economy in tatters, taxpayers had little interest in the continuance of what had all along been marketed as a war tax. Seligman has argued that the government's decision to continue the tax was the result of the influence of George Rose's pamphlet, *Examination into the Increase of the Revenue* on Vansittart.⁴⁵ At the time, William Cobbett argued that Rose's support for the tax derived from his interest in maintaining sufficient funding for Rose's personal sinecures, offering a vista into the role of vested interests amongst supporters of the income tax.⁴⁶ In his diary, John Quincy Adams noted the prevalence of discussion on the pending income tax debate. On 12 January, he describes a conversation with Alexander Baring, in which Baring argued that 'as to the property tax poor Vansittart was like the man with his wife, *Nec possum tecum vivere, nec sine*

⁴¹ Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, ii, p. 133.

⁴² *European Magazine*, vol. 69, p. 253.

⁴³ *Hansard*, xxxiii, cc. 240, 425-432.

⁴⁴ *Hansard*, xxxv, pp. 868-9. 'Accounts of the public income and expenditure.'

⁴⁵ Rose's pamphlet, at the time was described as 'a pompous parade of figures'. Figures which seemed impressive until they had been 'examined with a degree of diligence and acuteness which it [was] very little prepared to endure.' Seligman and other historians of the income tax have largely ignored this debate. *Monthly Magazine and British Register*, vol. 7, 513-514; Edwin Seligman, *The Income Tax*, p. 110.

⁴⁶ William Cobbett, *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 30 March 1816.

te.’ Baring thought that the ‘clamor against the tax...made it almost impossible for him to renew it and yet he could not well do without it.’⁴⁷

Public ‘impatience’ with the tax, and the particularly long recess that Christmas, allowed the Whigs ample time to plan their next move. In a letter to Creevey, written on January 14, Brougham wrote that the ‘property tax’ is ‘the richest mine in the world.’⁴⁸ Meanwhile, members of the cabinet were beginning to anticipate that the income tax could become a matter of the government’s survival. In a somewhat panicked letter, Liverpool wrote to Peel in Dublin on 20 January 1816, to ensure that Irish MPs who supported the government were in London for the vote. This was in addition to letters that Castlereagh had already written to most of the Irish MPs, likely in mid-December.⁴⁹ These efforts were almost entirely fruitless, as Peel indicated to Lord Whitworth in a 2 March postscript to a 29 February letter, ‘I am afraid we have little hope of carrying the property tax. The Irish members begin to rat.’⁵⁰

On 1 February 1816 the new session of parliament opened with a message from the Prince Regent befitting the transformational moment in British history. Beyond the sort of triumphalism expected in such a message, the Regent hinted at the social and economic problems that the session would have to deal with.⁵¹ The opposition leapt upon the Regent’s use of the word ‘economy’ as a *carte blanche* authorization to pursue their wide-ranging economic policies. A typical form of this usage can be found in Heron’s description of a discussion early in the session:

I asked a question of Ministers, which produced the curious fact, that in the very week that succeeded the opening of the Session, with the word *economy* in the royal speech, they had been employed in augmenting the salaries of the customs and excise officers in England and Scotland. Ministers were so much annoyed at the impression created by this discovery, that they declared they would answer no more questions, and the next day answered them as usual.⁵²

These attacks proved disheartening to the government and on 9 February, Western wrote to Creevey that Castlereagh looked ‘chopfallen...beyond belief, I can see it in every line of his face.’ The Whigs could sense that with the fig-leaf of the Regent’s support for ‘economy’, they

⁴⁷ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 277; It should be noted that Baring was a proponent of repeal. Edwin Seligman, *The Income Tax*, p. 108.

⁴⁸ 14 January 1816, (*Creevey papers*, i, p. 248).

⁴⁹ Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, ii, p. 551.

⁵⁰ Robert Peel, *From his Private Papers*. vii, p. 212.

⁵¹ *Hansard*, xxxii, cc. 18-24.

⁵² Robert Heron, *Notes by Sir Robert Heron*, p. 69.

could quickly win a series of tactical or perhaps even strategic victories. As indicated in a letter to Creevey, Western believed that the issue of the property tax could lead to the Tories being ‘totally thrown out.’⁵³

London, which had been outspokenly against the tax since its petition during the Hundred Days, continued to be a center of resistance. In a letter to Grey on February 10, Tierney wrote, ‘the city of London have set a good example as to the property tax and I hope it will be followed up by the country, but I confess I have my doubts. Vansittart is to state to us on Monday the amount of the peace establishment and if that be as high as report states it may produce an effect on the public.’⁵⁴ On February 17, as momentum continued to build Western wrote to Creevey to discuss recurrent splits within the Whig ranks, similar to those which had previously hindered action. Yet at the same time Western expresses his concern that repeal could cause substantial problems. As he wrote, ‘how can a man talk of such *impossibilities*? The interest of all debts and sinking fund together amount to...£72,000,000.’⁵⁵

Regardless of wavering within the Whig ranks, by late February the government began to stonewall the Whigs from gaining new information, forcing them to pass motions for every new piece of information, a process very frustrating for Brougham. On 20 February, Brougham, while in the process of seeking the release of documents connected to the army estimates, spoke out against the government’s obdurate refusal to simply make the data available all at once.⁵⁶ These methods played a major part in the government’s efforts, and eventually paid off in the post-repeal debate over naval spending. Such techniques reached their zenith, or perhaps nadir, when government bureaucrats willfully misunderstood Whig requests for information on the income tax, by replying that the income tax had been repealed in 1802. In light of these maneuvers Castlereagh’s request for Whig patience likely was understood at the time as being somewhat disingenuous:

If the gentlemen opposite would only have the patience to wait, the Ministers of the Crown, in the exercise of their duty, would soon have to submit to the House a particular account of all that they had done.⁵⁷

⁵³ Western to Creevey, 9 February 1816 (*Creevey Papers*, i, p. 249).

⁵⁴ Tierney to Grey, 10 February 1816 (DUL GRE/B55/230/1).

⁵⁵ Western to Creevey, 17 February 1816 (*Creevey Papers*, i, p. 251).

⁵⁶ *Hansard*, xxxii, c. 739.

⁵⁷ *European Magazine*, 69, p. 251.

Such tactics, as public sentiment became more obvious, caused delays that the government could ill afford. With the shift in public opinion becoming more palpable, the Whigs themselves began to delay proceedings in order that those opinions could become even more obvious within the halls of Westminster.

On 26 February, Vansittart decided to shift the army estimates to the committee of supply. Such a move would normally have been fairly routine; however, the Whigs had already decided to use the negotiations as the basis of an argument on the status of the standing army in the postwar era, as a preparation for the income tax debate. Although it was unlikely, given Britain's emerging status, not to mention her treaty obligations, that the retention of a standing army was ever really in question, the Whigs wished to use the debate as the basis of a conversation on the postwar constitutional order. The debate that followed took place over the course of three days, during which the history of the British constitution took up a great deal of the conversation.⁵⁸ While the debate itself was more about Whig self-identity than practical politics, it did manage to delay the motion on the property tax, while public opposition to the tax was growing. A letter from Peel to Lord Whitworth, dated 27 February, illustrates the degree to which support for the income tax had eroded even amongst government supporters.

The property tax comes on, on Friday, and will be the toughest battle of the session. My father, who is a very staunch friend of Government in general, seems not very steady on the property tax. Probably he will not vote at all. Every expedient has been tried, and not without success, to raise the country against it.⁵⁹

Castlereagh's role in managing the government's case was diminished by a period of intermittent illness which hindered the ability of the government to take control of the army estimates debate. Castlereagh's absences would prove severely damaging to the government's efforts throughout the remainder of the income tax fight. However, once his recovery had proved sufficient for him to return to the House of Commons, Castlereagh immediately began to attack the Whig's delaying tactics, arguing that there was 'no instance in the history of this country of any military establishment having undergone so long a discussion. This was the tenth night on which it had been discussed; and...never had any discussion produced more general conviction and this

⁵⁸ *Hansard*, xxxii, c. 997; *European Magazine*, 69, p. 251.

⁵⁹ Robert Peel, *From his Private Papers*, vii, p. 210.

conviction was, that the establishment was wise, fit, and becoming.’⁶⁰ Additionally, Castlereagh saw the potential abolition of the Income Tax as a risk to the sinking fund. Arguing that ‘half the present Income Tax must be continued or the Sinking Fund must be trenched upon’ an institution that ‘he conceived ought to remain inviolate’.⁶¹ Even as it became clearer that support for retention was fading, the government continued to hold out hope.⁶² Indeed, even in the very last moments, some members of the government were convinced that the tax would be passed.⁶³ Castlereagh continued to make up for lost time, arguing confidently for retention. Castlereagh went so far as to argue that without the tax,

They would plunge the nation into all the dangers of an imperfect system of finance; that they would remain stationary in their debts; that the tax was not an expedient, but was absolutely necessary to the well-being of the state; and he conjured the House, and solemnly entreated them not to refuse this only means of saving the country.⁶⁴

Although the final impact of repeal proved to be not nearly as dire as Castlereagh predicted, it did have a variety of negative impacts which disproportionately hurt many of its greatest proponents. Ironically, the downturn of 1816 which helped to drive opposition, also temporarily decreased the number of income tax payers. In addition, the income tax’s replacements hurt lower income Britons far more than their coalition partners, in that expenditure taxes tend towards regressiveness. Perhaps then, while the metropolitan and provincial urban middle class efforts against the tax were driven by aspirational motives and a desire for upward mobility, their success instead briefly halted that upward trajectory. Another possibility, put forward by Castlereagh, was that the petitions were, in fact, not truly supported by many of their middle class signatories.

Lord Castlereagh said that no one could affirm that all the petitions were against the Property Tax.

An honourable and learned gentleman, who came to that house to plead against the Property Tax,

⁶⁰ *Hansard*, xxxiii, c. 387.

⁶¹ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 119, p. 163.

⁶² After a 13 March concert, John Quincy Adams recounted a conversation with Lord Westmorland on the property tax. Adams ‘asked him how he thought the property tax would go. He spoke of it doubtfully and rather unfavorably of the tax. I told him I had thought the Ministers intended to lose it in the House of Commons. He did not deny it and expressed his expectation that they would not have to debate upon it in the House of Peers.’ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 311; Canning’s planned return to cabinet and opposition to the Congress System, may have played a role in shaping Adams’ theory. The tax’s ostensible connection to the Congress System would have made its abolition a tactical gain for non-interference.

⁶³ On the day of the vote, Adams ‘asked [Castlereagh] if he thought the property tax would be carried in the House of Commons. He said it would be hard run and spoke doubtfully. I hinted that I thought the Ministers intended to lose it, but he said ‘Oh no, it was a measure of too much importance for that.’ *Ibid.* p. 313.

⁶⁴ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 30 March 1816, p. 393.

could not obtain a hearing in another place, where a meeting was held, not simply to petition against that tax, but for purposes of a very different description. The petitions which had been presented to that house, were, he admitted numerous, but he would venture to say that they did not express anything like the real sense of the people of Great Britain. In fact one-fourth of the counties of Great Britain had sent up no petitions at all.⁶⁵

Regardless of its real impact on the middle class, the repeal of the income tax was understood by many as its first great postwar victory. However, to understand repeal in strictly these terms misses the variety of changes that made repeal possible. The income tax would have been untenable without the willingness of most citizens to self-report with a relatively high degree of honesty.

This willingness stemmed, in part, from the increasingly easy communications between London and the remainder of Britain brought about by the improvement of roads and the rise of newspaper, periodical, and pamphlet consumption.⁶⁶ These improvements in communications allowed the government to more efficiently make its case for the income tax to many Britons. Simultaneously, these same improvements in communications also provided the conduit for the movement which sought their repeal. More than a year before repeal, in a letter to Canning, Liverpool wondered that ‘many of the persons who have been praising the tax for the last ten years as the greatest discovery in finance are now the most loud in disapproving and objecting to the continuance of it.’⁶⁷ Indeed, he went so far as to question if ‘prejudice could have been created against it.’⁶⁸ The rapid growth in communication allowed opinions to travel and intensify at unprecedented speeds, speeds that may have seemed to indicate conspiracy to the nineteenth century mind.

The degree to which a Whig cabal was behind the 1816 repeal movements has been the subject of a great deal of debate.⁶⁹ Although excellent arguments have been made on both sides, it seems highly implausible that the Whigs were surprised by an almost exact reprise of the public’s clamor for repeal following Napoleon’s imprisonment on Elba. In a letter written during the repeal

⁶⁵ *European Magazine*, 69, pp. 348-349.

⁶⁶ The rise of subscription reading rooms helped to expand the popularity of newspaper reading and by the 1820s many reading rooms throughout the country included the Parliamentary Papers for their subscribers. See Arthur Aspinall, ‘The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century.’ *The Review of English Studies*, 22/85, (1946), pp. 29-43.

⁶⁷ Liverpool to Canning, 28 December 1814, cited in Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, ii, p. 77.

⁶⁸ Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, ii, p. 134.

⁶⁹ Austin Mitchell, *Whigs in Opposition*, p. 95

debate, Peel argued that ‘the universal disaffection of the lower order’ was maintained ‘by those who have influence over them.’⁷⁰ Inasmuch as the second wave of anti-tax sentiment was at least partially spontaneous speaks more to the ineptness and disorganization of the Whigs rather than to the absence on their part of any efforts to stir up dissent. Certainly the timing of petition campaigns and newspaper articles immediately following the Christmas recess seems to point to at least some unified effort at motivating public opinion.

Regardless of how public opinion was motivated, the tax was doomed, and on 18 March 1816 it was defeated 238 votes to 201. After the vote, Brougham, who considered himself the leader of the anti-tax campaign, read out, quoting from the law itself, ‘be it enacted that this act shall continue in force...until April 6th next and after the definite signing of a treaty of peace, and no longer.’⁷¹ Although the tax was only defeated by a thirty-seven vote margin, the opposition treated it as a major victory. After the celebratory noise had died down, Brougham moved that all the documents related to the tax be destroyed, as a means of wiping clean the slate of a tax despised in large part for its invasion into citizen’s privacy. While many of the income tax’s records were publically destroyed, secondary records ironically remained largely intact. Brougham’s showmanship, illustrates the degree to which his efforts at repeal had been largely motivated by an interest in publicity and political advancement.

On 21 March the government made its first attempt to regain the initiative by acceding to the repeal of the war malt tax, modifying the duties on agricultural horses, and announcing the retention of customs and excise rates.⁷² After these conciliatory gestures, however, contention returned during the debate over Admiralty salaries. In a letter written after the session, Peel described the debate.

It was proposed to make the peace salary of the Secretary of the Admiralty equal to the war salary. Methuen, the seconder of the Address, moved a resolution, not merely curtailing the salary of the Secretary, but censuring the proposed increase as an unnecessary expenditure of the public money. We resisted and beat Mr. Methuen, but only by a majority of twenty-nine. If the question had simply

⁷⁰ Robert Peel, *From his Private Papers*. vii, p. 211.

⁷¹ Edwin Seligman, *The Income Tax*, p. 113.

⁷² Daunton has pointed out this ‘concession’ to the working class, ‘was also a concession to landowners, who were already facing criticisms of protection of their interests by the corn laws.’ Martin Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan: the Politics of Taxation in Britain*, p. 54.

been whether the salaries should be reduced or not, we should have been beaten decidedly, but Banks and others who require the reduction voted against the censure.⁷³

While Methuen's overly exuberant censure motion prevented the Whigs from achieving a successful vote, Brougham's oddly manic speech during the same debate proved more fatal. Not only did the speech manage to halt the Whig's short-term post-repeal momentum, it also likely destroyed Brougham's political prospects.

If the house did but assent to the motion of the honorable gentlemen then it would establish its claims forever to the gratitude of the public: then it would be too late for the profligate expenditure of the court to be tolerated or continued. It was not the squandering of one sum only, but the deliberate and systematic disregard of the cry for economy, that excited indignation; and it was full time now not to turn a deaf ear to the awful voice of the people.⁷⁴

This blatant attack on the Prince Regent, very similar to sentiments expressed in his correspondence, was far beyond the norms of the era. As Robert Heron argued at the time, Brougham's 'indiscretion has already diminished, if not annihilated that hope, too hastily adopted. His speech against the Prince consisted of violent and unqualified invective, unconstitutionally applied to the person of the Regent, instead of his advisers.'⁷⁵

Although Brougham's speech ended the Whigs' likelihood of taking power, it was not immediately understood as such. In a letter to the Regent's secretary Major General Bloomfield, written on 21 March 1816, Liverpool wrote that 'the government certainly hangs by a thread...the victory which has been obtained against us on the property tax, and determination since taken of conceding the loan malt tax, has not had the least effect in conciliating those who have deserted us...under these circumstances, both Lord Castlereagh and myself are of the opinion that it is of the utmost importance that the Prince Regent should come to town the very first moment he can do it without risk...the country is indeed in a state in which his ministers ought to have opportunity of daily, and even hourly access to him.'⁷⁶

While Liverpool and Castlereagh strategized about how to regain the initiative, Castlereagh, who had still not entirely recovered from his illness prior to the vote, appeared

⁷³ Robert Peel, *From his Private Papers*. vii, p. 217.

⁷⁴ *European Magazine*, 69, p. 349.

⁷⁵ Robert Heron, *Notes by Sir Robert Heron*, p. 68.

⁷⁶ Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*. ii, p. 270.

publicly depressed.⁷⁷ Clearly the quick return to fierce partisanship after his European triumph left Castlereagh in a particularly dark mood. So dark, in fact, that his depression was obvious to the political commentators of the time. As we find this description in *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*:

Castlereagh, with all his hardihood, has manifestly sunk under the weight of the popular voice, joined with that of the land-owners. He was vastly bold and dashing at the out-set; talked in the Pitt-style; made long and rattling periods; affected to hold his opponents in contempt; and flung out a tirade now-and-then against popular clamour and ignorance. Faith! He has found, that John Bull, though he will bear a great deal when his belly is full, is not so very good humoured when it is empty.⁷⁸

Similarly, in a letter to Lord Clancarty, Castlereagh wrote that he did not 'recollect ever to have experienced a more severe or disagreeable attendance: the temper of the House sour, the support of our best friends uncertain and their attendance difficult to procure.'⁷⁹ Besides parliament's postwar incivility, Castlereagh also hated the 'eternal debates on money' that allowed him 'few moments to devote to foreign considerations.'⁸⁰ Indeed the sudden disappearance of nearly eighteen million pounds from the budget precluded the government from nearly any other immediate concern. After the tax's abolition, the government was forced to increase their £6 million loan from the Bank of England to £9 million. In addition the government renewed £2.5 million worth of exchequer bills that were about to come due. In a letter to his brother, written during the income tax debate, Castlereagh wrote that 'a sound state of finance is the true lever of our power, and...our credit is the real basis of our influence abroad.'⁸¹ With that soundness now in question, Britain's relationship with Europe and the world at large would have to change.

Liverpool and Castlereagh both feared that the government could have fallen at any moment.⁸² While the Whigs self-destructed, with Brougham's infamous speech, Castlereagh and

⁷⁷ Robert Peel, *From his Private Papers*, vii, p. 219.

⁷⁸ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 30 March 1816, p. 395.

⁷⁹ Castlereagh to Clancarty, 12 April 1816 (PRONI D3030/2).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² John Quincy Adams, in his diary, notes repeated attempts on his part to determine if the ministry was planning on intentionally losing the 'property' tax. On 29 March, Adams recounts that 'Lord Westmorland told me that my prophecy about the property tax had come to pass and I told him I was more than ever convinced that I had given him the true reason for the event.' Adams however provides no explanation for his 'prophecy' and the topic was not addressed again. Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 321.

Liverpool were preparing countermeasures. The government's efforts were rolled out relatively slowly. After requesting and receiving the monarch's clear continued support, they had a period of time to prepare their position. This position included a good deal of conciliation combined with efforts merely aimed at the appearance the same. The Prince Regent cut his spending while the cabinet sacrificed a number of unneeded sinecures. Lastly in February of 1817, Castlereagh moved to set up a public income and expenditure committee. In addition to these, and perhaps most importantly, Lord Liverpool made the decision to offer George Canning the Presidency of the Board of Control, in order to strengthen the ministry.⁸³

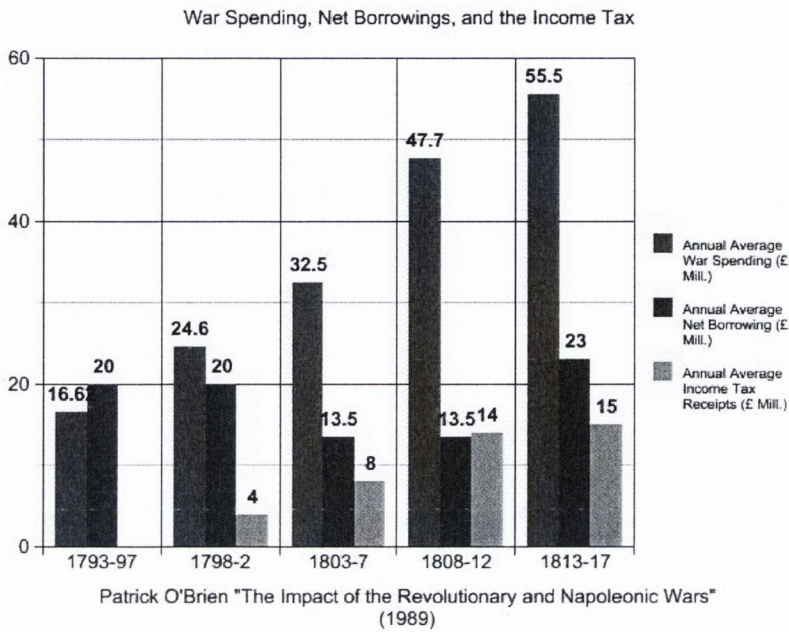
The immediate aftermath of repeal was threefold. First of all, the debt was issued. Second, the importance of economy was reinforced in parliamentary budgeting. Lastly, it quickly became obvious that a wide variety of indirect taxes would have to make up the shortfall. The use of indirect taxation to make up the shortfall had several unintended consequences. Primary amongst these was the regressive nature of indirect taxation. Opponents of the income tax, fixated on its invasiveness and promised duration, failed to see how its effects were ameliorated by protections afforded to the poorest tax payers. Many, however, were not so oblivious, as Wilkinson wrote in 1820, 'the present fiscal system compels the laborer, a dwarf in wealth, to carry the load of the lord, who is a giant in affluence'⁸⁴

The excess debt issued to cover the peace settlement was most likely treated by the economy as if the tax had remained in play, minus the amount not covered by increased borrowing. This may have inhibited the 'bounce' in capital formation that would likely have been stronger without the increased debt.⁸⁵ In addition, the fact remained that British national debt stood at over £850 million thus ensuring that austerity measures alone would be unable to fill the income's tax's long term void. [see table]

⁸³ This decision was reached by Liverpool in the aftermath of the Earl of Buckinghamshire's death, at the height of debate. Liverpool to Canning, 13 February 1816 (Yonge, *Life and Administration of Robert Banks* ii, p. 253.); Elie Halévy, *The Liberal Awakening*, p. 8.

⁸⁴ Harrison Wilkinson, *The Principle of an Equitable and Efficient System of Finance* (London, 1820), pp. 10-11.

⁸⁵ David Ricardo, *The Works of David Ricardo* (London, 1888), p. 515.



From the beginning, the use of loans to finance the government's expenditures, in the absence of the income tax, had been a stop-gap measure. In its place the government was forced to fairly quickly revert to a broad swathe of indirect taxes. These new taxes emerged piecemeal as expenditures arose and included everything from increased licensing fees and inheritance taxes to a renewed effort at collecting the myriads of assessed taxes.⁸⁶

While, in general, indirect taxation is more efficient, the degree of self-regulation within the income tax had tended to minimize those differences. Distinctions, however, remained. One of the most obvious difficulties was the fundamentally regressive nature of the taxes which replaced the income tax. Although the government had gone out of its way to allow the repeal of the malt tax, so that it could appear evenhanded, the return of indirect taxation meant that the lower classes were forced to shoulder a great deal of the nation's tax burden.

The austerity measures that followed the repeal dramatically changed the nature of government via the tertiary effects of panicked reform, however these changes likely resulted less from the economic effects of tax repeal than their perception by elites. According to fairly recent research, the long held theory that tax cuts can 'starve the beast' have proven largely unfounded.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Robert Tyrwhitt and Thomas Tyndale, *A Digest of the Public General Statutes from Magna Charta*, ii, (London, 1822), p. 1510.

⁸⁷ William Niskanen, 'Limiting government: the failure of *starve the beast*.' *Cato Journal*, vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall 2006).

Instead of leading to cuts in spending, lower taxes tend to obscure the costs of government and paradoxically lead to increased spending. The study itself deals specifically with modern, representative democracies, however, the underlying principle remains the same.

Long Run Impact of Repeal

Through much of the 1820s Britain's economy continued to recover and as a result inefficient alternatives to the income tax managed to undo the fiscal risks brought about by repeal. Thus the direct implications of repeal were fairly limited in the long run, in that alternate forms of taxation were sought, and furthermore these alternates were successful enough that the British debt to GDP ratio continued to decline consistently in the following decades. However, the austerity measures put in place in the aftermath of repeal continued to effect government policy long after the need that produced them had ended.

In order to truly understand the long term implications of the income tax and its repeal, we must divide into clear categories the various aspects of the tax and how these aspects played out over the long run. Firstly, there are outcomes associated with the income tax itself. Perhaps, as mentioned before, the most important and obvious implication of the tax was the British victory over Napoleonic France, along with all the strategic benefits to British influence and power both on the continent and around the world. Indeed any understanding of the nineteenth century would be incomplete without noting the role of British war making and use of war subsidies in establishing a period of relative peace and colonial expansion. While the transfer of funds from Britain to the continent and elsewhere helped to establish peace and British political dominance, it also helped to transform the domestic scene as well. Although established on the bureaucratic foundation of the unproductive land tax, the income tax expanded rapidly, especially after Addington's reforms. These improved collection methods were in large part driven by the success of the tax-collecting bureaucracy. This well-trained, efficient, and surprisingly uncorrupt tax collecting infrastructure remained largely in place after abolition and helped to improve the rate of assessed tax collection through the 1820s. At the same time, the tax apparatus would almost certainly have failed without the successful implementation of self-report. Although, the cultural implications of an audit likely improved the accuracy of self-report, Britons' willingness to accurately report their finances, far surpassed norms, and both resulted from and contributed to a

sense of civic duty and pride. Perhaps the most extreme version of Britons' attitude towards the tax during its early years was the extraordinarily high number of voluntary overpayments. Although the intrusiveness of the income tax was often at the top of taxpayers' complaints, British society was increasingly acclimated to bureaucratic intrusion. Such changes, when viewed in aggregate, point towards a slow but steady transformation of the state, and the manner in which the average citizen understood themselves vis-à-vis the state. While perspectives slowly changed, government and opposition emphasis on the income tax's wartime status built anticipation for repeal. Although this emphasis likely improved collection rates by tying it to the war effort, it also tied the government's hands during the postwar era and may in fact have led to net losses for the government's efforts towards dealing with the war debt.

The end of the income tax increased the debt, did not improve capital formation, as increased debt was perceived as future tax, and sped up Britain's transition to a peace economy by rapidly flooding the labor market with approximately 300,000 unemployed men.⁸⁸ In turn, the rise in employment increased popular support for radical reforms. Similarly popular radicalism was boosted by the actual effort at repeal. Largely ignored by historians, the effort at repeal had major implications for the growth in popular radicalism through much of the remainder of the Liverpool era. As mentioned before, the growth in subscription rooms meant that rural, middle class populations could keep up with political developments in London almost as they happened. This involvement became a very important part of the public debate over the income tax. One of the most important tools to develop from increased middle class participation in political dialogue was the petition. In two waves, one in 1815 and the other in 1816, hundreds of petitions poured into parliament, demonstrating an organization that would eventually have major political implications. Although the petitions, and indeed public opinion in general, had little impact on the final decisions of parliament, they did illustrate the postwar transformation of Britain, which had been instigated originally by industrialization. More importantly though, the petitions which came from a changing sense of the status of the middle class, helped to build a collective identity that would eventually play a role in the Reform Act of 1832. In the short term, the Whigs' temporarily successful effort to unite as a party crumbled into failure after Brougham's speech. Yet even after the Whig division, many within the party still considered victory possible. Because their efforts

⁸⁸ *Hansard*, xxxvi, c. 1; Richard Tames, *Economy and society in nineteenth century Britain* (Oxford, 1972), p. 20.

at bringing down the government had been thwarted by Brougham's radicalism, many Whigs sought to distance themselves from him. Brougham's failure led to a decline of the influence of radicals within the party, which, in turn, may have helped drive radicalism into the streets, and towards the influence of individuals such as Henry Hunt and Arthur Thistlewood. Whig divisions helped ensure that economic reform would dominate the political discourse of the day. As a result, economic reform became the primary occupation of both parties well into the 1820s.

The implications of repeal for the government are both more diverse and more difficult to identify, in part because of the small number and proximity of the key decision-makers. However, a few major results can be identified. Perhaps the most obvious was an increased willingness to make concessions to Whig policy goals. Indeed, it seems likely that Castlereagh's ideological flexibility, as well as the return of George Canning to the cabinet, helped the government reimagine itself, post-income tax repeal as it pivoted towards a more conciliatory approach to the opposition. Similarly, as the government experienced embarrassment beyond the practical implications of repeal, through much of the remainder of the Liverpool administration, the government sought to avoid taking obvious stands on legislation unlikely to pass muster. In addition, government policy was made even more opaque by shifting the decision-making process out of cabinet and into smaller *ad hoc* collections of advisors. The fact that in the lead up to the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, Liverpool tied the conclusion of the War of 1812 to public opposition to the income tax indicates the degree to which economic considerations, or even the possibility of future economic considerations, dictated the government's policy.

Chapter 4

Shifts in Postwar Monetary Policy

1819

After the 1816 repeal of the income tax, the regressive nature of its replacements helped to reinforce pressures placed on lower income Britons. Simultaneously, the abolition of the income tax set off a period, during which the resumption of cash payments increasingly formed the core of economic policy debate. Castlereagh, although by no means an expert in the economic theories of the period, played an essential role in setting both the consensus and the priorities of British monetary policy during the transition to peace. Almost entirely absent from biographical accounts of his life, Castlereagh's role has likewise been ignored in the historiography of British monetary policy. As a dissenting member of the Bullion committee he eventually shifted to a firm support of resumption in 1819. This chapter explores Castlereagh's ideological transition in relationship to the larger shift in ministerial policy. This shift can be seen in his arguments during the debate over the Bullion Committee's report in which he claimed that the value of a pound should be understood as 'a sense of value in reference to currency'¹ According to Castlereagh's most distinctive stance, instead of seeking to restore the metallic standard, the government should pursue a standard that 'is neither gold nor silver; but is something set up in the imagination, to be regulated by public opinion.'² Increasingly, however, Castlereagh's monetary thought reflected a pragmatic acceptance of the growing support for 'sound money' which had come to the fore via the influence of David Ricardo on William Huskisson. By 1819, Castlereagh's monetary views had fundamentally shifted and accepted a 'sound money' perspective, with the proviso that he sought to avoid a resumption which might harm Britain's military and foreign policy goals.³

¹ *Hansard*, xix, c. 1087.

² *Ibid.* lxxiv, c. 725.

³ In a letter from Huskisson to Castlereagh, written on 27 January 1817, Huskisson seems to imply that Castlereagh had come to him, in order to procure economic advice. 'I send you the paper to which I referred in our conversation yesterday and for which (at least for all the argumentative part)...I shall be glad to talk over any points which may appear to you to require explanation at any time...[although] this paper was written two months ago, my conviction [has not changed] that be our retrenchments what they may, the revenue will linger, and the country continue in an unsatisfactory and laboring state, till the wants of our circulation are more liberally supplied. (BL Add. MSS 38741 f. 91).

The Origins of Suspension

In 1793, in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolutionary government's declaration of war on Britain, few anticipated the length and breadth of the conflict which was about to rend the world for the next two decades. Pitt's decision to support Britain's continental allies, led to a rapid drain on the state's gold reserves between 1794 and 1795, declining from approximately £7 million in early 1794 to £3.3 million by the end of 1795. This process was largely conducted by the government's use of foreign exchange bills. According to this system, European markets utilized bills drawn in London that were then used by merchants to purchase imported British and colonial goods. However, as the war progressed and continental buying power no longer warranted the use of these bills for purchases of British and colonial goods, there was an increasing tendency to redeem these bill in British gold rather than goods.⁴

In September 1796, the *Times* reported that 'apprehension of an invasion of this country seems to have taken possession of men's minds.'⁵ These fears grew steadily worse, as reports of French ships off the United Kingdom's coast became more common. In December of 1796, the Bank of England found itself in an increasingly tenuous position. With only £2.5 million in reserves and over £16 million worth of notes in circulation, that position could only worsen. By February of 1797, the situation had grown even more untenable. The Bank's holdings had declined a further £1.5 million. On 18 February, a run on gold occurred in Newcastle, quickly followed by similar runs in Durham and Sunderland.⁶ On 22 February, a small contingent of French soldiers attempted a landing in Wales. Deeply concerned by these events, the cabinet held an emergency meeting attended by George III himself. In light of the run on gold, the Bank's declining reserves, and the very real threat of invasion, the cabinet decided to take steps to ensure the Bank of England's continued ability to meet its obligations. Acting on an order in council, issued by the government, the Bank of England immediately suspended cash payments on 26 February 1797. The Council of State declared that 'it is indispensably necessary for the public service that the Directors of the Bank of England should forbear issuing any cash in payment until the sense thereupon for maintaining the means of circulation and supporting the public and commercial

⁴ L. Neal, *The Rise of Financial Capitalism, International Capital Markets in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 201.

⁵ *The Times*, 13 September 1796.

⁶ F. W. Fetter, *Development of British monetary orthodoxy 1797-1875* (Cambridge MA, 1965), p. 21.

credit of the kingdom at this important juncture.’ The monarch’s message was a calculated attempt to make the measure palatable, as he put it, the suspension of convertibility was ‘calculated to meet any temporary pressure’ caused by the ‘peculiar nature and exigency of the case.’ Furthermore, the monarch’s statement tied these temporary moves to the ‘defense of the...dearest interests’ of Britain.⁷ On 27 February the government continued to strike a calming tone, explaining that they were acting forcefully to ‘preclude every doubt as to the security of its notes.’ In addition, they intended ‘to continue their usual discounts for the accommodation of the commercial interest, paying the amount in bank notes, and the dividend warrants...in the same manner.’⁸

The government’s decision was the result of a wide variety of causes, beyond merely the immediate pressures of the war. The first of these pressures was France’s decision, the previous year, to return to a metallic standard after the failure of the assignat. France’s return to a metallic standard led to a growing demand for gold on the continent, and a gradual diminution of available supplies in the United Kingdom. Concerns over a declining cash supply, were exacerbated by Britain’s military spending and by several invasion panics which launched spikes in demand for gold.⁹ These spikes resulted in a drain of over £100,000 per day.

Rather than fighting against the new restrictions, British merchants declared themselves firmly in favor of the suspension. At a meeting of London merchants, it was declared that, as long as the crisis should last London’s business community would ‘not refuse to receive Bank Notes in Payment of any Sum of Money to be paid to us.’¹⁰ This widespread support, assisted by the real threat of a French invasion allowed the transition to be a peaceful and largely painless one. Petitions of support were posted in pubs around the metropolis and beyond and eventually gathered

⁷ *Hansard*, xxxii, c. 1517.

⁸ Benjamin Bannister Turner, *Chronicles of the Bank of England* (London, 1897), p. 83; The term ‘discount’ is worthwhile explaining. While banknotes were fairly straightforward, the bill of exchange is less well understood. Bills of exchange were fully transferable debts, which could be used for purchases, assuming that the receiver of the note was willing to endorse the debt, and with the understanding that the note could be exchanged for banknotes when the note came due. Importantly, unlike a banknote, bills of exchange were backed only by a merchant’s assets. To offset the riskiness of these instruments, purchasers of bills of exchange, a relatively high rate of interest was charged. This interest was charged upfront and was referred to as the discount. Thus accepting a bill of exchange was called ‘discounting a bill.’

⁹ Henry Thornton, *An Enquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Paper Credit of Great Britain* (London, 1802), p. 97.

¹⁰ *The Times*, 28 February 1797.

over 4,000 signatures in an inversion of the public's habitual responses to the government's postwar economic policies.

Several days later the Order of the Privy Council was enshrined by parliament as the Bank Restriction Act. These restrictions were set to last from 3 May until 24 June 1797. By the Bank Restriction Act, the Bank was indemnified against any legal action against its directors. The Act also prevented the Bank from issuing cash payments above twenty shillings. The Bank was also allowed to advance up to £100,000 in cash to the Banks of London, Westminster, and Southwark. Over the following twenty-two years, parliament would repeatedly renew this suspension. In addition to its initial brevity, the Act declared that 'all Sums of Money, which now are or shall become payable for any Part of the Public revenue shall be accepted by the Collectors, Receivers and other Officers at the Revenue, authorised to receive the same, in Notes of the said Governor and Company, expressed to be payable on Demand, if offered to be paid.'¹¹ Thus, while the Act came close, rather than declaring the Bank notes to be legal tender, the legislation managed to narrowly avoid it.¹² This decision was largely driven by concerns that the move would draw comparisons to France's failed experiment with fiat currency. The decision, however, would bring with it a number of minor complications, and require the passage of further legislation. The 1797 decision to avoid declaring the banknote to be legal-tender led to growing concerns over inflation in the business community. These concerns were encouraged by the publication of several pamphlets that questioned the continuation of suspension after the threat of invasion had subsided.¹³ In response to these concerns, Francis Baring argued that permanent suspension could be more easily prevented by temporarily granting the notes the status of legal-tender, with the proviso that there were clear limits placed on their production, and that their status was forbidden from becoming the permanent 'circulating medium of the country.'¹⁴ Baring's goal in this was to prevent the 'convulsions' which might come from the Bank 'reassuming their payments...during

¹¹ Act 37, Geo. III.

¹² During this period of non-legal tender bank notes, Bank of England issued notes in the denominations of £10 and £20. Smaller denominations were issued in silver coins. These Bank of England notes circulated only in London and its immediate environs. Throughout the rest of Britain, local 'country banks' issued their own distinct notes. The total supply of notes was likely around £25 million with half being printed in London and the remainder by the country banks.

¹³ James McCulloch, (ed.) *A Select Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts and Other Publications*, 'Note on the Suspension of Cash Payments.' (London, 1857), pp. 93-98.

¹⁴ Francis Baring, *Observations on the Establishment of the Bank of England, and on the Paper Circulation of the Country* (London, 1797), p. 81.

the war whilst there is a possibility of their being obliged to suspend them again.’¹⁵ These arguments failed to convince at the time, however and bank-notes were eventually declared legal tender in 1811.¹⁶

During the first three years after suspension the Bank’s situation quickly improved, to the point that in August of 1798 a resumption was discussed. While feasible for the Bank, the government’s concerns over potential future need for accessible gold prevented resumption. From 1799 until 1815, the cash ratio experienced an extended period of decline. This decline was largely the result of cash expenditures related to the conflict on the continent. It is thus no surprise that in 1800 the first signs of inflation began to appear. With those indications came an increasingly vocal opposition movement, spearheaded by Henry Thornton, Francis Baring, and Francis Horner. In a pamphlet, published in 1801 as an open letter to William Pitt, Walter Boyd argued that excessive issuance of banknotes was ‘the principle cause of the great rise in the price of commodities and every species of exchangeable value.’¹⁷ Furthermore, Boyd argued, that this excessive issue had been the result of the fact that the Bank of England’s ‘profit chiefly arise from the circulation of its notes’ which have been regulated only ‘by persons participating in the profits’ made possible by the suspension of cash payments.¹⁸

In 1803, the parliament enacted that the resumption of convertibility of banknotes would be tied to the end of the war. Accordingly, the Act ordered that resumption occur no later than six months after the conclusion of a lasting peace agreement. It is difficult to determine the exact effects of suspension due to the absence of data and the impact of the economic variables of warfare. However, it is clear that the Act’s temporary nature helped to strengthen the public’s trust in a resumption of the gold standard. The Act prevented the Directors of the Bank from pursuing an inflation-based strategy during the darker periods of suspension. In addition, the government’s commitment to rapid resumption forced them to pursue a strategy of augmented borrowing and tax increases to pay wartime expenditures.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 69.

¹⁶ Act 51 Geo III, c. 127.

¹⁷ Walter Boyd, *A Letter to the Right Hon. W. Pitt on the Influence of the Stoppage of Issues in Specie* (London, 1801), p. 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 4.

During the first decade of suspension, money supply remained relatively stable. However, beginning in 1808 with the opening of access to South American markets the economy began to grow rapidly. The defeat of Portugal and Spain by France, led to an explosion of opportunity in South America, as freedom from Iberian competition created a speculative boom for British merchants in 1809. This in turn led to an expansion of paper currency issue as banks sought to keep up with the boom's currency requirements. In addition, the Bank of England's embrace of the real bills doctrine led to an expansion of the money supply from £17 million in 1808 up to £27 million in 1816.¹⁹ At the same time, the economy faced two surprising phenomena, the rapid rise of the cost of bullion and the decline of foreign exchanges. These two pieces of evidence led David Ricardo to conclude that 'there is at present an excess in the paper circulation of this country, of which the most unequivocal symptom is the very high price of bullion, and, next to that, the low state of the continental exchanges.' According to Ricardo, 'this excess is to be ascribed to the want of sufficient check and control in the issue of paper from the Bank of England, and originally, to the suspension of cash payments which removed the true and natural control.'²⁰ Ricardo did not stop there, however, and in 1809 he published a series of three letters in *the Morning Chronicle* which spelled out in an accessible manner that the rising price of gold was clear proof of inflation. Ricardo pointed out that 'the mint price of gold is 77^{7/8} shillings and the market price has been gradually increasing...as high as 94s per ounce.'²¹ These articles helped to increase the public's awareness of the effects of suspension and in turn led to the creation of a parliamentary committee designed to look into the inflationary tendencies which Ricardo had described.²² While some may have enjoyed the economic boost of inflation, Huskisson grew concerned that such growth was purely artificial, arguing that 'the immense and increasing produce of its territory...the unwearied extension of its manufacturing industry' were both 'fed and put in motion by capital' which relied on 'genuine growth...and not the factitious result of any artificial contrivance' such as that

¹⁹ The Real Bills Doctrine holds that as long as currency is backed by real assets, inflation can never occur regardless of quantity. Earlier opposition argued for countercyclical monetary policies, while later opposition increasingly admitted that suspension had hurt many within the economy, but argued that such impacts had been mitigated by the fact that it primarily hurt the drones of society while benefitting the productive element. See Robert Torrens, *A comparative Estimate of the Effects which a Continuance and a Removal of the Restrictions upon Cash Payments are Respectively Calculated to Produce* (London, 1819), pp. 52-69.

²⁰ *Hansard*, xvii, c. 258.

²¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 29 August 1809.

²² Between 1797 and 1810 average yearly inflation had been roughly 3%. See W.S. Jevon, *Investigations in Currency*, p. 144.

produced by currency manipulation.²³ The fact that prices were rising vis-à-vis those of other countries was considered to be directly a result of inflation caused by an over-issuance of paper currency. This belief, rooted in the quantity theory of money, was the primary argument of bullionists, who believed that money supply should reflect the relative economic performance of the state producing the currency.²⁴ Malthus and Ricardo were both bullionists, as were the majority of economic thinkers at the time. Opposition to the bullionists came primarily from the commercial sector and politicians.

Francis Horner, an anti-war Whig thoroughly immersed in Ricardo's economic theories, requested the creation of a committee designed to investigate the effects of suspension on 1 February 1810. On 19 February, the committee was created. The Select Committee on the High Price of Bullion was given the primary task of discovering the causes of the increasing price of gold bullion. As part of this task they were ordered to examine the veracity of Ricardo's claim that the Bank had over-issued banknotes, causing the increase in the cost of gold bullion. From February through May the Committee interviewed twenty-nine witnesses at thirty-one meetings. These interviews were carried out by a committee which included some of the most powerful members of parliament including the chairman Francis Horner, William Huskisson (co-chair), Lord Castlereagh, Nicholas Vansittart, Spencer Perceval, Henry Parnell, Henry Thornton, and Charles Tierney. The witnesses called by the Bullion committee were primarily made up of members of the business community associated most directly with exchanges: importers, brokers, and gold dealers. The testimony of these men established that from 1808 onwards inflation had become evident. Once this became clear, the committee began looking for evidence of which Bank policies had caused this inflation. In order to facilitate this research, the committee called the directors of the Bank of England as witnesses.

The committee argued that the rise of bullion prices in 1809 was rooted in events on the continent, in particular the French occupation of northern Germany. This conflict had led to a fall in the exchange, yet this had not been the fatal component. According to the committee, 'the evil

²³ Ellis, Huskisson, and Canning, 'Huskisson on the depreciation of currency' p. 451; William Huskisson, *The Question Concerning the Depreciation Stated and Examined* (London, 1810), p. 153.

²⁴ The modern quantity theory was first stated by David Hume: 'It seems a maxim almost self-evident, that the prices of everything depend on the proportion between commodities and money, and that any considerable alteration on either has the same effect, either of heightening or lowering the price' David Hume, *Essays: moral, political, and literary* (London, 2011), p. 4.

had been, that the exchange, when fallen, had not had the full means of recovery under the subsisting system [due to] the suspension of the cash payments of the Bank' which had been exacerbated by 'a sudden and extravagant issue of paper.'²⁵ The Bank's governor, John Pearce, denied that such an overissue had occurred, as the Bank's issue, 'is so controlled that it can never amount to an excess.'²⁶ Former Governor, John Whitmore likewise argued that 'by avoiding as much as possible to discount what does not appear to be legitimate mercantile paper' the Bank had entirely avoided overissue during his tenure as director (1808-1810).²⁷

In its interview of Whitmore, the bullion committee specifically sought to determine the degree to which the printing of banknotes had increased over the recent short-run. In testimony records, Whitmore was asked, if he considered 'the amount of Bank of England notes during the last year to have borne nearly the same proportion to the occasions of the public as in former times?' Whitmore, unwilling to admit any expansion of the money supply, replied that the Bank had printed 'the same proportion exactly.' The committee, unhappy with this dodge, rephrased the question, asking the governor if he took 'into consideration the increased price of all articles and the consequent increase of the amount of payments.' Finally, the questioner asked if the governor believed 'that the quantity of notes ought to be increased in proportion to the increase of the amount of payments.' Whitmore responded, arguing that:

The Bank never forces a note into circulation, and there will not remain a note in circulation more than the immediate wants of the public require; for no banker, I presume, will keep a larger stock of the Bank's notes by him than his immediate payments require, as he can at all times procure them... I have taken into consideration not only the increased price of all articles, but the increased demands upon us from other causes.²⁸

On 25 May, the committee completed its final interviews and on 8 June 1810, the committee submitted its report, recommending that cash payments be resumed within two years' time. The report was reviewed by parliament and released to the public on 20 September. The Bullion Report is, in many ways, the defining ideological document of the early era of the bullionist movement,

²⁵ Nicholas Vansittart, *An Inquiry Into the State of the Finances of Great Britain* (London, 1816), pp. 197-198

²⁶ 'Testimony of John Pearce, Governor of the Bank' Edwin Cannan, *The Paper Pound of 1797-1821* (London, 1919), p. 46.

²⁷ 'Testimony of John Whitmore, a former governor of the Bank' *Ibid.* p. 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

and its public release helped to publicize the philosophy to a broader audience. By attributing the high price of bullion to the practices of the Bank of England, rather than to the country banks, it also helped to stoke resentment against, not only the Bank itself, but also the Real Bills doctrine embraced by its directors and, members of the cabinet. The committee condemned the doctrine as ‘wholly erroneous in principle, and pregnant with dangerous consequences in practice.’²⁹

Bullionism, as a discrete ideology can be traced to the publication of Walter Boyd’s *Letter to the Right Honourable William Pitt on the Influence of the Stoppage of Issue in Specie at the Bank of England on the Prices of Provisions and Other Commodities*. Boyd’s arguments were in part rooted in personal experience, as his company Boyd, Benfield, and Co. had recently gone out of business due to the government’s decision to not use its lending services. Thus the initial statement of Bullionism as a doctrine was rooted in a sense of indignation which the movement would retain throughout its history. Anti-bullionism, as its name suggests derived its existence from its opposition to the emerging doctrines put forward by Boyd and his supporters. Anti-bullionism’s roots, however, were deeper and largely drawn from pre-existing economic theories. Nachane and Hatekar have summarized the debate between bullionists and anti-bullionists in a very cogent manner. According to them, ‘bullionists asserted that a circulation in excess of what, under similar conditions, could have been maintained under a metallic standard, was tantamount to an overissue of currency.’ Additionally, they point out that as ‘bullionists also subscribed...to Hume’s quantity theory’ they tended to view the ‘relative rise [and fall] of prices in England vis-à-vis those abroad... [as] additional evidence of depreciation.’ On the other hand, the Anti-bullionists’ ‘argument was the denial of a premium on bullion as a proof of excess currency.’ According to anti-bullionists, ‘under inconvertibility the state of the exchanges and the premium on bullion would be governed solely by the balance of payments and that, in a period of heavy military remittances or grain imports, the exchanges could fall substantially without necessarily implying an excess issue’³⁰

Francis Horner, the chairman of the Bullion Committee and Henry Thornton the report’s co-author, were both prominent advocates of Bullionism. Their work together would prove a decisive moment in the history of the bullionist ideology. However, the two had not always seen

²⁹ Edwin Cannan, *The Paper Pound of 1797-1821*, p. 46.

³⁰ D. M. Nachane and H. R. Hatekar. ‘Ricardo versus Tooke: An Old Controversy Revisited.’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31, (1996), pp. 65–73.

precisely eye-to-eye, as demonstrated by Horner's 1802 review of *Paper Credit* in the *Edinburgh Review*, in which he described Thornton's book as poorly organized and lacking in accuracy.

The author has so little management in the disposition of his materials and is frequently so much embarrassed in the explanation of arguments that his reader must undertake the trouble of reducing these to a more precise statement as well as of digesting the general subject in a more distinct form. Even in point of accuracy his reasonings are not to be trusted with the same confidence to which his information is entitled for if examined with care they will sometimes be found defective.³¹

Regardless of these differences, Horner seems to have been converted to Thornton's perspective, as the report's efforts at discrediting the Real Bills doctrine were largely gleaned from Thornton's *Paper Credit* rather than from the original work of the committee itself.³² However, some changes are apparent. The evolution of Thornton's thought is evident when one compares the two texts. In *Paper Credit* Thornton had expressed a degree of optimism, in that he seemed to see the Bank of England as capable of handling the power granted it by suspension if the right legislative limitations could be set in place. This perspective is notably absent in the Bullion Report. The Bank directors' testimony, largely rooted in the Real Bills doctrine, deeply concerned Thornton, and the shift is evident in the hardening of his desire for a rapid resumption, in the hopes that he could constrain the apparent negative outcomes which would result from a Bank policy guided by the Real Bill doctrine.

At the beginning of the report, perhaps in the hopes of mollifying anti-bullionists, the committee recognized that the rising price of bullion, which had led to the founding of the committee itself, had resulted in part from the 'unusual demand for [gold] upon the continent...for the use of the French Armies.' This, in turn, had led to a 'failure of confidence, which leads to the practice of hoarding' thus exacerbating the situation.³³ Whether these arguments indicate that Horner and Thornton were moderating or simply attempting to win converts is unclear, however the report quickly shifted to a more doctrinaire approach by arguing for resumption within two years at the 1797 rate.³⁴ Such a move would have brought about massive deflation in the midst of

³¹ *Edinburgh Review*, i, pp. 173-174.

³² David Laidler, *Macroeconomics in Retrospect: The Selected Essays of David Laidler* (Cheltenham, 2004), p. 163.

³³ *Hansard*, xvii, c. 834; *Annual Register*, 52, p. 455.

³⁴ The push towards resumption at 1797 prices was rooted in deep constitutional concerns. Any attempt at resumption at a lower rate was considered to be 'the plainest implication of the Sovereign's right to the property of his subjects, which has ever been hazarded in modern times. These doctrines struck at the root of all sound political

a war, which at that time was still completely undecided. By refusing to present a more moderate recommendation that reflected dissenting voices within the committee itself, Horner and Thornton ensured failure. Neither would live to see resumption occur, in spite of their efforts, with Thornton dying in 1815 and Horner in 1817.

Responses to the report were remarkably diverse, and spanned a wide variety of approaches to monetary policy. The government's initial strategy in responding to the report, was an argument for the functionality of bank notes. In a speech to the House of Commons, George Rose argued that bank notes are equivalent to money, 'for every common and legitimate transaction in life, except for foreign remittances.'³⁵ Although not yet a member of the government, Vansittart helped to spearhead the government's response to the report. Like Rose, Vansittart argued that 'the promissory notes of the [Bank of England] have hitherto been, and are at this time, held in public estimation to be equivalent to the legal coin of the realm, and generally accepted as such in all pecuniary transactions to which such coin is lawfully applicable.'³⁶ In a similar vein, others within the government were concerned that a return to convertibility would hamstring the government's power to deal with crises. Vansittart stated that he was 'anxious that the arm of government [would be] crippled,' by the loss of power.³⁷

During the debates which followed the issuance of the report, it became increasingly clear that that a variety of opinions existed outside of the well-known dichotomy between Bullionism and its opponents. Some advocates of a return to convertibility, such as William Greenfield, rejected the bullionist narrative. Greenfield argued that, '[bullionists] content themselves with proving synthetically...that a redundance of currency must occasion depreciation; whereas it would be at least equally interesting to trace the actual steps by which this consequence was brought about.'³⁸ Greenfield, whose arguments mirrored Castlereagh's, worked to expand beyond the bullionist focus on overissue by examining the role of a diverse set of potential causes. Others, such as Alexander Baring, who took a more theoretical approach, countered the bullionists by arguing for a continuation of paper currency as a means of deflating away the debt. 'To support

economy, of our constitutional privileges, and of our public honour and good faith.' Edward Copleston, *A Letter to the Right Honorable Robert Peel* (Oxford, 1819), p. 76.

³⁵ 'Report of the Bullion Committee, 6 May 1811' *Hansard*, xvii, c. 834.

³⁶ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 13 May 1811, 20, p. 70.

³⁷ *Hansard*, xix, c. 966.

³⁸ William Greenfield, 'The High Price of Bullion', *Quarterly Review*, iii, February 1810, pp.152-161.

such a system, we must give a fictitious value to property, and must have a fictitious medium of circulation for carrying it on.’³⁹ George Rose took such arguments a step further by positing that fluctuation in the price of gold had demonstrated that its value as a commodity was too instable to be used as the basis of a stable currency, such as was being promoted as essential to economic stability by bullionists.⁴⁰

In this complex political environment, Castlereagh attempted to seize control of the narrative. This effort was begun on 8 May 1811 when Castlereagh responded to the Bullion Committee’s report. Castlereagh began by explaining that after having ‘studied the bullion-question’ he had ‘formed a very decided opinion on it.’ According to Castlereagh he was ‘hostile to the views and recommendations of the Bullion-Committee.’ During the committee’s meetings, the reestablishment of the Bank of Ireland’s exchange in 1805 had been discussed as a test case. Castlereagh, who had been appointed Lord High Treasurer of Ireland in 1797, asserted his credentials, countering that such analogies were misleading, as this reestablishment had not been ‘accomplished by a reduction of the circulating paper of the Bank of Ireland.’ This misunderstanding was rooted, Castlereagh argued in a lack of understanding of the Irish currency situation. After suspension, guineas which had usually been transmitted from the Bank of England had not been transferred after the passage of the Restriction Act. As a result, the currency in Ireland had gradually shifted to being largely made up of paper, without experiencing any dramatic inflation, at least within Ireland. According to Castlereagh, ‘if the note commands the same value in commodities, and performs all the same functions, so far as relates to internal circulation, as the coin, there is no just ground to consider the note as depreciated.’ In the remainder of the speech Castlereagh shifted to the more common assertion that ‘the disappearance of our guineas’ is the result of ‘the extraordinary crisis of our commerce with the continent, together with the magnitude of our military expenditure abroad.’ Interestingly, Castlereagh tied the Restriction Act to the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* Act as legislation which violated the rules of the system in order to ensure the ‘preservation of the system itself.’⁴¹

³⁹ *Hansard*, xix, c. 1060.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* c. 854.

⁴¹ In an address to parliament Castlereagh stated that ‘like the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, or the proclamation of martial law, [suspension] is a surrender for a time of the sound and legitimate regulations of our ordinary system; the object being, by such temporary surrender, to preserve the system itself from ultimate destruction.’ Such a commitment to resumption seems at odds with his earlier, more philosophical, belief in a,

In many ways, the 8 May speech indicated a transitional moment in Castlereagh's monetary perspective, as later in his address to parliament he spelled out a monetary policy which combined both his earlier interest in a fiat currency and the gradual rise of Bullionism as the orthodox ministerial monetary policy. Thus Castlereagh argued for a currency 'of bank paper and coin in such proportions as will enable any man at pleasure to convert his notes into coin.' It remains clear, however, that some of Castlereagh's animosity towards Bullionism remained intact, when he described metallic currencies as 'the device of barbarous ages...wholly incompatible with the wants of a commercial country such as this.'⁴² Interestingly, this speech draws much of its conceptual undergirding from the writings of Lord Rosse. As Parnell pointed out shortly after Castlereagh's address, 'the pamphlet of Lord Rosse' was the origin of Castlereagh's belief that depreciation was caused by 'the war and its consequences.' In fact, according to Parnell, Lord Rosse's arguments provided the majority of 'the language...of the noble lord [Castlereagh] whose speech [was] a complete counterpart of this pamphlet.'⁴³ Castlereagh, did heavily borrow his speech's content from Rosse. Indeed, Castlereagh's use of the phrase 'Barbarous ages' seems gleaned from the following passage:

The idea that Bank-notes should be always convertible into coin, and that money must be an universal equivalent, is the offspring of *barbarous times*. When there was little confidence between man and man, exchanges were made only for intrinsic equivalents; commodity for commodity; and afterwards other commodities for gold and silver. There was no credit; therefore an equivalent in value must be given for every exchange. Just as now, a man who has no credit in this great city, must go to the pawnbroker, and leave his watch or his clothes in pledge to get what he wants.⁴⁴

Castlereagh's growing belief in 'hard currency' becomes evident when he described fiat currencies as 'defective' even when 'well administered.' This defect, according to Castlereagh, is that fiat currencies led 'from ignorance, misstatement, and public alarm, to distrust and discredit.' Additionally, Castlereagh's longing to return to the 'sound and natural state of our currency...such as existed before the Bank Suspension Act' is worth noting. That is to say, Castlereagh's desired monetary system of 'mixed circulation' was rooted in the general conservative ache, especially

'standard...neither gold nor silver...set up in the imagination, to be regulated by public opinion.' *Hansard*, lxxiv, c. 725.

⁴² *Hansard*, xix, c. 1087.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Lawrence Parsons, *Observations on the Present State of the Currency of England* (London, 1811), p. 9.

evident amongst members of the government, for a return to the idealized world of antebellum Britain. Castlereagh's gradual shift in monetary opinions does not entirely reflect a shift in economic theory, rather as Anna Gambles has argued, this shift was 'inextricably connected to a constitutionalist discourse on the implications of monetary policy for the relationship between the state and private property in a propertied polity.'⁴⁵ As Vansittart put it, 'a fixed and invariable equivalency between our legal money and bullion [has] never been established by our laws.'⁴⁶ This lack of definition left monetary policy adrift in a complex set of possible constitutional narratives.

Regardless of the influence of constitutional thought on this shift, in the remainder of his discussion, Castlereagh seems to return to this more pragmatic tone arguing that 'former wars were brought to a conclusion sooner than we wished, in consequence of financial pressure: but this war may be carried on year after year, in consequence of our discovering the means of substituting a paper for a metallic currency.' Castlereagh particularly contrasted Britain's loss during the American Revolutionary War, with its successful prosecution of its ongoing war with France.

In the American war, a termination would with certainty have been predicted from the decline of our resources during its continuance; in this war we feel that our resources are augmenting, and that there is no necessary limit to our exertions in point of time, so long as the injustice of the enemy shall leave us no other rational choice but perseverance in the contest. What is this difference so remarkable, so important, owing to? Principally to the Bank having been enabled to do its duty by the country without trembling, as it must otherwise have done, for its own safety. Instead of ruinously, so far as the public interests are concerned, contracting its issues at every moment of temporary pressure or alarm to prevent itself from being drained of its gold, it has been enabled on every emergency to support public credit with a steady hand. And thus the productive labour of the country, its true and real wealth, has not only been kept up, but enabled to extend itself; whereby the taxes, how heavy soever, have been paid with facility, the loans raised on moderate terms, and the whole machine provided without betraying a symptom of decline.

This argument too, seems drawn from Rosse:

In the American war, the Bank of England was nearly exhausted of its guineas and bullion. It had less left of each even than in the year 1797; and the price of foreign gold was so high, that, if the

⁴⁵ Anna Gambles, *Protection and Politics*, p. 97.

⁴⁶ *Hansard*, xx, c. 35.

war had continued, the Bank could not have afforded to continue importing gold for coinage to supply the demand. Now, as the Bank was then paying its notes in good standard guineas, the currency could not then have been depreciated. Again, in 1797 foreign gold was from 7 to 12 per cent, above the mint price; and because the notes of the Bank were then also payable in guineas, the currency of this country could not then have been depreciated. Yet if, according to the Committee, the high price of gold be a proof of depreciation of currency, at both those periods the currency was depreciated: that is, according to the theory of the Committee, the currency at the same time was depreciated and was not depreciated; which is impossible.⁴⁷

At the conclusion of his speech, Castlereagh returned to a strictly pragmatic tone arguing against the ‘practicability of adopting, in these times of disorder, measures which appear to him susceptible of execution only in a period of tranquility.’⁴⁸

Castlereagh’s attempts to reframe the conclusions of the Committee were largely unsuccessful and lead to some sharp disagreement in the House of Commons. Castlereagh argued that ‘the Committee were guilty of a great breach of duty in having framed a report containing doctrines and conclusions diametrically opposite to the evidence of all the witnesses, except two, that they called before them.’ Henry Parnell responded by denying ‘the accuracy of the assertion of the noble lord [Castlereagh] that the Committee whose Report is now under consideration had retroceded from their original opinion.’ According to Parnell, as ‘a member of that Committee, and well acquainted with the sentiments of those members who sanctioned the Report, I distinctly declare that there has not been among them any retrocession of opinion.’ Additionally, Parnell believed it a strong evidence of their success, that the committee had not been ‘entirely guided by the opinions given in the evidence.’⁴⁹

At the end of the session, on 8 May, George Canning presented a lengthy response to Castlereagh’s speech. Relations between Canning and Castlereagh remained frigid two years after their duel, with Canning’s future not yet settled. The bubbling resentment is still palpable in his speech, which Francis Horner described as ‘the best speech... [it] astounded everybody by the

⁴⁷ Lawrence Parsons, *Observations on the Present State of the Currency of England*, pp. 17-18

⁴⁸ Ralph Griffiths, (ed.) ‘The Substance of a Speech delivered by Lord Viscount Castlereagh, in a Committee of the House of Commons, 8 May 1811, on the Report of the Bullion-Committee’ *The Monthly Review*, 66, (London, 1811), pp. 326-327.

⁴⁹ *Hansard*, xix, cc. 100-128.

knowledge he showed of the subject.’⁵⁰ Canning, however, admitted that ‘the detail of this intricate and perplexing subject [monetary policy] are as little agreeable to my taste, or habit, as to those of any person in the House.’⁵¹ Regardless of this assertion, Canning spoke at length on the topic, attacking particularly, Castlereagh’s ‘singular definition’ of abstract value. Castlereagh’s arguments concerning the report were rooted in his belief in a ‘sense of value in reference to currency’ rather than a fixed belief in the immutable stability of a gold-backed currency, seemed to deeply confuse Canning.

I hope I do not misquote him. To the best of my recollection, these were the very words— ‘A sense of value!’ But whose sense, with whom is it to originate? And how is it to be communicated to others: who is to promulgate, who is to acknowledge, or who is to enforce it? How is it to be defined? And how is it to be regulated? What ingenuity shall calculate, or what authority control its fluctuation?—Is the ‘sense’ of to-day the same as that of yesterday, and will it be unchanged tomorrow?—It does fill me with astonishment that any man, of an accurate and reasoning mind, should not perceive that this wild and dangerous principle (if principle it can be called) would throw loose all the transactions of private life—all contracts and pecuniary bargains—by leaving them to be measured from day to day, and from hour to hour, by no other rule than that of the ‘fancies and interests of each individual conflicting with the fancies and interests of his neighbour.’^{52 53}

The Bullion Report’s case for resumption at the 1797 rate led to a number of counterarguments. Edward Tatham argued that ‘it is very unfit and inconvenient, that gold or any other metal should be made current legal money at a standing settled rate. This is to set a price upon the varying value of things by law, which justly cannot be done; and it is, as I have shewed, as far as it prevails, a

⁵⁰ Francis Horner, *Memoirs*, 2, p. 86.

⁵¹ *Hansard*, xix, cc. 100-128.

⁵² *Hansard*, xix, cc. 1087-1088.

⁵³ Interestingly, in 1816 David Ricardo launched another attack on Castlereagh’s argument that the pound ought to be understood as ‘a sense of value in reference to currency as compared with commodities.’ Ricardo argued, that ‘it has indeed been said that we might judge of its [paper money’s] value by its relation, not to one, but to the mass of commodities. If it should be conceded, which it cannot be, that the issuers of paper money would be willing to regulate the amount of their circulation by such a test, they would have no means of so doing it; for when we consider that commodities are continually varying in value, as compared with each other; and that when such variation takes place, it is impossible to ascertain which commodity is increased, which diminished in value, it must be allowed that such a test would be of no use whatever.’ ‘Use of a standard commodity—objections to it considered’, ‘Pamphlets and Papers 1815-1823’, David Ricardo, *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, iv, p. 59; *Hansard*, xix, c. 1811.

constant damage and prejudice to the country where it is practiced.’⁵⁴ While constitutional arguments had been marshaled for revaluation at 1797 rates, Tatham believed that revaluation would violate the government’s obligation to equally protect all property.

Castlereagh’s belief in a currency ‘regulated by public opinion’ was expanded upon, during the debates, by Vansittart, who argued that while ‘legal coin has a specific value affixed to it by law’ its value is determined in the process of its usage. That is to say, beyond that legally-assigned value, the degree to which ‘they actually possess [value] must be decided by the public opinion.’⁵⁵ Thus, according to Vansittart, currency values can only be measured by ‘ordinary transactions.’ This ordinary transactions argument was derived, according to Vansittart, from the speech ‘given by the noble lord opposite to me [Castlereagh], who referred to the equal value allowed for each in the purchase of commodities as the test of their equivalency.’⁵⁶ From this point onwards, Vansittart goes on the offensive, arguing that bullion cannot function meaningfully as a hedge against fluctuations in price, as bullion is ‘among [the] commodities.’ This status, in fact makes it a riskier option, ‘on account of the temptation which must always occur to convert the gold coin into bullion of superior value by illegally melting it down.’ As such he posits that ‘bank notes...to which the same temptation does not exist’ have a considerable advantage.⁵⁷

It was becoming increasingly evident that the report would have little influence on policy, however, Thornton continued to attack Castlereagh’s arguments, describing them as simple copies of Locke’s quantity theory.⁵⁸ Thornton went further by attempting to paint Castlereagh’s stance as radical, stating that ‘according to [Castlereagh’s] view of the subject, even additional issues [of] paper, would operate as a remedy; for it might be said than an increased emission of it tended, to encourage manufactures, and augmented quantity of manufactures supplied the means of enlarging our exports, and more extended exports, improved the balance of trade; and thus an increased issue of paper might be assumed to be the, means of rectifying the exchange, instead of prejudicing it.’⁵⁹ Such attempts backfired by encouraging members to publicly espouse exactly the kind of stances, Thornton was attempting to pin on Castlereagh. Two days later during the final discussion

⁵⁴ Edward Tatham, *On the Scarcity of Money* (London, 1816), p. 51.

⁵⁵ *Hansard*, lxxiv, c. 725

⁵⁶ *Hansard*, xx, c. 44

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* c. 84.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

of the report John Sinclair argued that paper currency ‘possesses a species of magical influence on the internal prosperity of a nation. Even in the midst of a long and expensive war, we see its effects—industry abounds, agriculture flourishes, commerce and manufactures have increase, money is procurable at a moderate rate of interest, the public revenue becomes every year more productive...and every species of domestic improvement...are multiplied to an extent, not to be equaled in any period even of our own history.’⁶⁰ In light of such apparent ‘radicalism’ Castlereagh’s moderate willingness to ‘admit, a recurrence to cash payments, when circumstance will permit’ seemed the most rational choice to members and as a result, Horner’s committee report was negated 156 to 75 in the House of Commons on 15 May 1811.

On 7 June, Castlereagh returned to parliament after an extended absence due to illness. At his return session, Castlereagh spoke on the role of economic policy in sustaining Britain’s efforts in Spain, arguing that the economic hardships facing the country were ‘the crisis of the commercial struggle between us and our mighty antagonist.’ ‘No one’ Castlereagh argued, had ‘any doubt that the war as at present maintained [was] a great burden, but is any man prepared to say that the time has arrived when it should be abandoned?’⁶¹ Such efforts at rallying the troops were proving both useful and necessary, as Russia’s desire for access to British commercial goods was leading Napoleon into the final *dénouement* of his military career. Regardless of Castlereagh’s efforts, Bullionism was on the ascent, and Castlereagh’s ability to repeat the victory would prove difficult. As the government sought to build on its victory, Castlereagh was yet again called on to present the government’s case, this time as it sought to establish paper currency as legal tender. The Act, referred to at the time as Lord Stanhope’s Act, was designed to prevent:

The current Gold Coin of the Realm from being paid or accepted for a greater value than the current value of such coin; for preventing any Note or Bill of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England from being received for any smaller sum than the sum there in specified; and for staying proceedings upon any distress by tender of such notes.⁶²

After being sent to committee on 17 July, with a vote of 75 to 11, the House of Commons began a period of debate which continued for much of the remainder of the month.⁶³ The government’s

⁶⁰ *Hansard*, xix, c. 160.

⁶¹ *Hansard*, xx, cc. 526-527.

⁶² *Ibid.* c. 1115.

⁶³ *Ibid.* cc. 1013-7.

case for ensuring that bank notes were treated as legal tender hinged on its desire to achieve a 'remedy for a pressing evil.' This 'evil' was the growing tendency of 'landlords insisting upon their rent in gold.' At that time, the law allowed for 'a landlord insisting upon his rent in gold' and without legal protection tenants across Britain faced the possibility of eviction.⁶⁴ Such arguments, were problematic, in that they indirectly revealed that banknotes had depreciated enough for landlords to require payment in gold. These internal contradictions within the government's case, opened it up for attack and more specifically demonstrated the flaws in Castlereagh's arguments. For instance, Castlereagh's tendency to pivot between arguments which posited paper currency as equivalent to metallically based ones, and those which clearly did not. As Johnstone pointed out, in the midst of debate, Castlereagh had argued that it was a 'monstrous injustice' to pay 'the public creditor in paper, while the private creditor is paid in metallic money?' While Castlereagh attempted to equalize this difference by taking 'from the private creditor the right of demanding payment according to the terms of his contract...by compelling them to accept payment in depreciated paper' such arguments hardly strengthened his assertion that depreciation was not occurring. In addition, it led to accusations that beyond the inconsistency of his arguments, Castlereagh's policies were simply seeking to extend 'a common measure of injustice...to all other members of the community.'⁶⁵ Castlereagh contested Johnstone's assertion, arguing that his goal was to ensure that 'effectual protection was provided both for the person and the property of tenants.' Castlereagh instead argued that it was best 'to rely on a moral [rather] than a legal sense of duty; that had been found an effectual protection for 14 years.' It was 'infractions on this moral law [that] had imposed on the House the painful duty it was now in the course of discharging; and he only hoped that the remedy adopted would be effectual.'⁶⁶

The many faults in the government's case, led it to alter its plan of attack, with a pivot towards constitutional arguments. On 22 July the last day of discussion, Lord Liverpool made this new strategy obvious by arguing that the value of currency was a matter of monarchical sovereignty, rather than a practical or political matter.

The value of the gold coin of this country was not to be estimated according to its weight in gold, but according to the value fixed upon it by the reigning sovereign of the country. The value of bank

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* cc. 980-981.

⁶⁵ *Hansard*, xx, cc.103-106.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

notes, as for every purpose of internal negotiation, he contended, was by the general consent of the country declared not to be depreciated.⁶⁷

The argument proved successful enough and on 22 July, the Act passed in the House of Lords, with the proviso that it would only ‘continue and be in force to and until the 25th day of March 1812, and no longer.’ In the wake of this decision, public attention temporarily shifted away from resumption and onto events taking place on the continent. However, the acts of one committed bullionist, helped to refocus the public eye and galvanize opposition to the continuation of inconvertible money.

The man to bring about this shift was an old Etonian, a lawyer by the name of John Berkeley Monck.⁶⁸ An avid bullionist, who would later go on to enter the House of Commons in 1820, Monck decided, in the wake of the repeated defeats of bullionist measures, to stake part of his considerable fortune on promoting the importance of hard money. In Britain, at the time, a dearth of coinage forced the creation of privately managed local token currencies, and Monck’s tokens functioned in much the same way as any other private issuer, who provided ‘light’ silver coins to fill the void of official circulating coinage. However, Monck’s intentions were not driven by a desire for profit. Monck believed that the Gold Coin and Banknote Act was simply an effort to release ‘from their engagements a set of wealthy debtors, very competent to pay, and imposing on their creditors a loss perfectly unnecessary, and therefore perfectly unjustifiable.’⁶⁹ However, in his solution, Monck went far beyond many bullionists of his time. Instead he sought, by personal exertion, to bring the gold standard ‘back by degrees’ by issuing his own gold tokens.⁷⁰ Even with his considerable resources, Monck’s issuance never circulated, as they were immediately purchased by bullionist supporters as collectibles, however they did bring the potential threat, posed by private coinage, to the attention of the state.⁷¹

On 27 April 1812, Perceval announced that legislation to ban the circulation of privately manufactured token coins would shortly be introduced. However, the Prime Minister’s

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 111.

⁶⁸ George Selgin, *Good Money: Birmingham Button Makers, the Royal Mint, and the Beginning of Modern Coinage, 1775-1821* (Ann Arbor, 2008), p.228.

⁶⁹ John Berkeley Monck, *A Letter to the Right Hon. Spencer Percival* (London, 1812), p. 6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁷¹ George Selgin, *Good Money*, p. 232.

assassination on May 11, temporarily halted progress on the bill. After some debate, the Local Tokens Act was passed on 28 July.⁷² The legislation allowed until 25 March 1813 for all tokens to be redeemed by their issuers. Over the course of the year, token coinage slowly dried up, and without any government issued replacement, many parts of Britain were forced to operate without small coins. On 8 December 1813, Henry Thornton brought the issue to parliament's attention, stating that 'small change for the common transactions of life is everywhere wanted...when they [local tokens] are withdrawn the governor of the Bank has admitted that that establishment has it not in its power to issue any silver to make good the loss.'⁷³ Unable to acquire sufficient silver within the original legislation's timeline, Vansittart proposed legislation to extend the deadline through to December of 1813.⁷⁴ This deadline was delayed that November until December 1814, at which point the legislation finally went into effect, albeit with the necessary silver still unavailable to the government.⁷⁵ The subsequent dearth of small coins, hurt the economy, at a deeply critical moment and helped to exacerbate the difficulties faced by the government at the close of the war.

In February 1812, Castlereagh had begun his term as Foreign Secretary thus shifting his attentions increasingly away from monetary policy insofar as it did not align with his primary tasks. Throughout that spring parliamentary debate continued to rage over the issue of legal tender. With Castlereagh's attentions engaged elsewhere, the government's economic positions were increasingly presented in the House of Commons by Vansittart. Vansittart, while in many ways a superior orator to Castlereagh, failed to express himself with as much subtlety and tact. During a 17 March, debate over the renewal of the Gold Coin Bill, set to expire on 25 March, Lord Folkstone expressed 'his astonishment at the very flippant manner in which the right hon. gentleman [Vansittart] had introduced and argued the present motion...[to make] Bank-notes a legal tender.'⁷⁶ Vansittart, however, was not alone in being singled out for criticism. During the same debate, Castlereagh's inconsistency came up for criticism from Lord Folkstone, as during the previous year during debates over the Gold Coin and Banknote Bill he had 'objected particularly to the extending of this Bill to Ireland, because bargains in the north of that country being made for

⁷² 52 Geo. III c. 157.

⁷³ *Hansard*, xxiii, c. 234

⁷⁴ 53 Geo. III c. 114

⁷⁵ 54 Geo. III c. 4

⁷⁶ *Hansard*, xx, cc. 6, 17.

payment in gold, it would have the effect of defrauding the creditors.’⁷⁷ Rather than arguing with Lord Folkstone, Castlereagh apparently did ‘not think it necessary to enter...on the merits of the Bill.’ As, Lord Folkstone had ‘pointed out evils, which he magnified, but never suggested a remedy.’ Castlereagh argued that he did ‘not see that the extension of the measure to Ireland was attended with such insuperable difficulties, as to deter parliament from completing a system deemed necessary for the prosperity of the empire.’ At the same time, Castlereagh made no indication that he would, in fact, seek to expand the measure to Ireland. Castlereagh did not ‘deny that difficulties existed; but they were not of the nature represented. He must, for instance, contradict the idea which seemed to have been entertained, that a double price for goods, the one in gold coin and the other in paper, existed all over Ireland.’ Proof, however, seemed to contradict Castlereagh’s assertion, and even friends of the government admitted the extent to which multiple pricings had emerged in both Britain and Ireland. Lord Lauderdale offered similar criticism, in the House of Lords, to Castlereagh’s desire to exempt Ireland from the Act.

If...this Bill was considered so good a Bill by those who supported it, why was it not extended to Ireland? Why were the landlords in Ireland to be allowed to insist on their rents in gold, which the landlords in Great Britain were forbidden to do, unless upon the most vicious principle in legislation, that the crime, as it was now to be called, was so frequent in Ireland, that it was in vain to attempt to check it.⁷⁸

Regardless of any counterarguments, Castlereagh continued to contend that ‘there were not generally two prices stipulated in a contract’ in Ireland. Instead, the tradition of ‘payments in gold stipulated by contract in Ireland’ was a relatively rare occurrence limited to only ‘three or four counties, which stood as an anomaly.’ This tradition did not apply to trade, which for the previous seven or eight years had been carried out exclusively in banknotes. According to Castlereagh, ‘there remained only rents, for which, according to the old system, payment was to be made in gold.’ Castlereagh argued that while the ‘petition he had presented to the House,’ had been primarily drawn from ‘the first landed interest in the neighbourhood of Belfast’ many of the signatures ‘were not so, they were not landlords.’⁷⁹ Any attempts at either expanding the Act to

⁷⁷ *Ibid*; During the previous year’s negotiations Castlereagh had ensured ‘that nothing in this act contained shall extend to Ireland’ *Hansard*, xx, c. 1115.

⁷⁸ *Hansard*, xx, c. 1113.

⁷⁹ *Hansard*, xxii, cc. 200-201.

Ireland or preventing its renewal via accusations of unfairness, were unsuccessful and the Act was renewed in full. These sessions, however, had allowed opponents of continued suspension the opportunity to express their opinions, and these debates functioned in many ways as a proxy war for bullionists and their opponents. It thus allowed the bullionist movement the opportunity to sharpen its arguments in an environment with only moderate risk. Some, such as Thomas Turton, developed arguments rooted in natural law, contending that treating banknotes as legal tender, and thus doing away with even a notional gold standard, was a violation of the ‘sacred contracts between landlords and tenants... [which] at present he could only regard as the worst of evils, the only effect of which would be to destroy the compact between man and man, and create dissensions and disagreements which could not be too strongly-deprecated.’⁸⁰ While the debate continued to shift, events on the continent began to make their way into the negotiations in parliament. During the same debate, Turton mentioned that ‘he did hear of a flag of truce having arrived, and of some overtures having been made from France.’ These events would have a major impact on how many members would vote. Turton admitted that ‘he would give it [the renewal of the Gold Coin and Bank Note Act] his support....if the necessity of the measure was clearly established’ by a continuation of the war.⁸¹

In the wake of the renewal of the Gold Coin and Bank Note Act, there was a period of relative silence on issues of currency. Opponents of inflation came to a *modus vivendi* with the fact that resumption would remain impossible due to the circumstances which Britain found itself in. In April of 1814, the war reached its first conclusion and with it the bargain made by bullionists convinced by the government’s acceptance of resumption within the legally agreed-upon post war limitations. However, when inflation reached its peak in 1814 with commodities at their all-time restriction-era high and gold prices at twenty-four percent above par, the mood of parliament began to noticeably shift. Vansittart, who had denied that the currency had depreciated during the Bullion Committee report debates in 1811, increasingly sided with bullionists. In 1814, it was decided that rather than force through a resumption within the six month period stipulated in 1803, that resumption would be delayed until 5 July 1815, with this date later to be extended by one year.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* c. 495.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* c. 497.

⁸² John Wood, *A History of Central Banking in Great Britain and the United States* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 47.

The good harvests of 1815 and the contraction of the paper circulation that had resulted from a spate of country bank failures led to a decrease in the price of gold, thus leading many to conclude that the time was right for the resumption of cash payments. Vansittart, seeking to head off a major deflationary episode, however, requested two more years, in the hopes that a longer period of resumption could allow the business community to better adjust to the economic effects of resumption. When the war finally came to its true end on 20 November 1815 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, the government began to plan, for a transformation to a peacetime economy. This proposal established long-term financial guidelines, set out by Liverpool in a memorandum for the Committee on Cash Resumption.⁸³ Under the plan, the enormous debts racked up during the war's later years were to be paid down relatively quickly by maintaining the income tax and using the proceeds to buy up bullion so that the gold standard could be resumed. As made clear in the last chapter, Liverpool's desire for 'the continuance of the tax' was made impossible by a concerted effort at its repeal.⁸⁴

In the aftermath of the defeat of the income tax, the government was forced to deal with, not only the explosion of debt, but also the defeat of their overarching postwar economic plan.⁸⁵ With an increased openness to ideas, the government was willing to experiment. The income tax debacle, which had in large part resulted from popular opposition, pointed to the importance of tending to popular opinion, and at that moment the absence of legal token coinage was proving to be a liability to the government. As a solution to that problem, the government elected to enact a plan put forward originally by Lord Liverpool's father, Charles Jenkinson, more than a decade before in his *Treatise on the Coin of the Realm*. With the popularity of token coinage, it was clear that the time had come to end bimetallism. On 21 May the Committee on Coin reported its approval of the measure. According to the plan 'one ounce of sterling silver [would] be made into 66d, rather than 62d, that seigniorage be charged on the coinage, and that silver coin be legal tender only for payments of up to two guineas.'⁸⁶ This proportion was deemed necessary so that 'it should

⁸³ House of Lords Report on Cash Resumption, Appendix A (BL Add. MSS 38741, f. 271).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Some, such as Elisa Newby, have linked the abolition of the income tax with the resumption of cash payments, arguing that 'the start of the adjustment to the gold standard coincided with abolition of the income tax easing the deflationary pressure on wage earners.' See Elisa Newby, 'The Suspension of Cash Payments as a Monetary Regime', *Centre for Dynamic Macroeconomic Analysis Working Paper Series*, (2007), p. 27.

⁸⁶ Angela Redish, 'The Evolution of the Gold Standard in England' *The Journal of Economic History*, 50/4 (1990), p. 803.

not be liable to be melted down' as previous coins had been.⁸⁷ The legislation was passed and received assent on 22 June 1816. The token system proved successful, as its privately produced predecessors had been, and allowed Britain to abandon its long standing nominal bimetallism by offering 'the possibility of a medium of exchange with high- and low-denomination coins circulating concurrently.'⁸⁸

By October 1816, with the price of gold at 78s. 6d. the price of gold was only 7.5d above par. These prices offered an ideal opportunity for resumption, however, the Bank declined to make the transition due to pressing debt and a concern as to the vast supplies of gold required for resumption to meaningfully occur. In 1818, Castlereagh, looking back at this moment, argued in parliament that even though cash payments might have been resumed at this point, the government's decision to wait, had been proven correct 'by the result of the partial resumption which has since taken place [as] the sovereigns which were but lately issued from the Bank...were melted down and sent out of the country for profit as must always be the case when the rate of exchange is against us.' This conclusion led Castlereagh to ask how 'any reasoning man could justify the sudden resumption of cash payments when such resumption must obviously lead to the most mischievous consequences.'⁸⁹ The following month, gold and silver purchases remained steady, as prices persisted at around 78s. 6d. The Bank had been able to build its holdings to around £8 million. Feeling certain that resumption could occur in the near-term, the Bank elected to send out several experimental feelers, to determine demand. On December 2, 1816 the Bank announced that it would convert £1 and £2 notes, dated prior to 1812 into gold. By 2 May 1817, prices had risen to 79s and the Bank's holdings were at £10 million. As a result, the Bank decided to expand its offer to include £1 and £2 notes, dated prior to 1816. In addition, the average total circulation for the quarter was above £27,000,000, and exchanges remained considerably above par. On October 1, the bank resumed convertibility of all notes dated prior to 1817. With the price of gold now over 80s, 'exchanges below par had created demand.'⁹⁰ This, ill-conceived attempt to partially restore convertibility, led to a drain of the Bank's gold reserves, and between August, 1817 and February, 1819, the Bank's holdings declined by nearly £8 million. In spite of these setbacks, gold

⁸⁷ *Hansard*, xxxiv, c. 914.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, c. 803.

⁸⁹ *Hansard*, xxxviii, c. 496.

⁹⁰ Charles Yonge, *Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, p. 153.

supplies slowly headed towards a level that would allow for resumption, if not in the near-term. However, even as steady progress was being made, further complications arose. Lord Liverpool pushed to delay resumption for an additional year, until July of 1819. Even though the Bank ‘was perfectly prepared to resume cash payments at once.’ Lord Liverpool was deeply concerned by the potential effects of the ‘extraordinary amount of the loan about to be raised by the French Government... [o]n the circulation of this and every kingdom in Europe. That it would affect the currency of every country he thought a proposition too clear to be disputed; and it was absolutely necessary to guard against the danger arising from this cause. Nor could he conceive anything more to be deprecated than the resumption of cash payments at such a moment.’⁹¹

On 22 January 1819, the new parliamentary session began, in the House of Commons, with a message carried by Hart Davis from the business community of Bristol to the government. The statement expressed worries about ‘the distressing effects which would follow the too early resumption of cash payments.’⁹² As part of this concern Davis asked Vansittart if ‘it was the intention of his majesty's ministers to recommend a continuance of the restriction on payments in cash?’⁹³ Vansittart responded that ‘it had been his intention to bring forward a measure for the purpose of continuing the Restriction act, in the course of the ensuing week.’ However, due to several other pressing matters, he thought it more ‘convenient to defer his own proposition till after the discussion of’ those other motions.⁹⁴

On 25 January, Vansittart announced that rather than introducing ‘a bill to continue for a short period the restriction on cash payments.’

He had now, in consequence of a communication on Friday morning last, from the committee of directors of the Bank of England, been induced to take a different course, as he thought it necessary that the motion should be preceded by a committee of inquiry. This motion he should bring forward after the motion of the right hon. gentleman opposite. The committee he should propose would be one of secrecy, which would select from the information which would be submitted to it, such as could without detriment be laid before the House.⁹⁵

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 359.

⁹² *Hansard*, xxxix, c. 72.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, c. 104.

Tierney, who was about to bring his own motion on the topic announced that, regardless of the government's move, he would 'persevere...in his motion, as he suspected some trick was in contemplation...and that the inquiry, managed as it was to be, by a secret committee, would be of no service to the country.'⁹⁶ The following day Tierney's motion on resumption was brought forward.⁹⁷ Along with his motion several others were introduced on the same day.⁹⁸ In a letter to Grey, Lambton described a Whig dinner held the night of Tierney's motion as boisterous, large, and celebratory.⁹⁹ The government's initiative prevented the Whigs from gaining any traction on the issue, however, and Tierney's motion was defeated 277 to 168. While, at surface level, it seems that the government's decision to push for resumption was rooted in a political attempt to coopt Tierney's motion, James Graham in his book *Corn and Currency* argued that a secret effort had been underway for nearly a year.

The government, in the course of the year preceding, had resolved to return to cash payments, and with this view it had reduced its debt to the Bank of England, and thereby diminished the paper circulation, both of the Bank itself, and also of the country banks. The approximation of the price of gold to the mint price, in 1819, was effected by these means.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, Graham argues, that, approximately £7 million of gold had, as part of this plan, been 'poured into the market at the standard price of the Bank of England' to suppress prices, even before 'the [secret] committee[s] on Mr. Peel's bill assembled.'¹⁰¹

Although, by 1819 there were still many, such as the Rector of Lincoln College, Edward Tatham, who were willing to argue that 'there is no such intrinsic, natural, settled value of anything, as to make any assigned quantity of it constantly worth any assigned quantity of another.'¹⁰² The bullionist position was increasingly the consensus, and any efforts were ever more intended to score political rather than existential goals. With the bullionist consensus increasingly strong within the ministry itself, the government set out to trap, as Asa Briggs put it, the opposition

⁹⁶ *Hansard*, xxxix, c. 105.

⁹⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, January 26, 1819.

⁹⁸ *Hansard*, xxxix, c. 111.

⁹⁹ Lambton to Grey, 5 February 1819 (DUL GRE/V/B4/7).

¹⁰⁰ James Graham, *Corn and Currency: In an Address to the Land Owners* (London, 1826), p. 38.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Edward Tatham, *On the Scarcity of Money* (Oxford, 1819), p. 56.

in parliament to advocate measures which it wished to put into effect but for which it was reluctant to accept full responsibility.’¹⁰³

In a draft memorandum, found amongst Castlereagh’s papers, dated January 1819, the government set out to craft their response to the upcoming report from the secret committee on resumption. The ministerial response to the report ‘which may eventually cause the most awful consequences to the revenue, and to the general prosperity of the country’ set two primary goals.

1. That of obviating the clamour that has arisen mostly among the lower orders, by the increased number of convictions and consequent punishments of those who have forged the Bank of England notes.
2. The conciliating or obviating the profess[ed] apprehension of those among the higher orders, because the bank of England notes are not now convertible into coin.¹⁰⁴

After spelling out these core goals, the draft report begins by stating that although bullionist doctrines ‘rest...upon erroneous principles, and upon impracticable theory’ the government must acknowledge that its tenets had been accepted by a ‘large portion of the community.’ As such, the government would be wise to begin ‘conciliating, or...meeting their wishes to a certain extent as soon as it can be done with safety.’¹⁰⁵ The two pronged plan was to be carried out thus:

First then to obviate the clamour chiefly among the lower orders arising from the punishment for forgeries. I submit that silver coin be made the legal tender for any sum, and that it be not confined, as hitherto to payments not exceeding [forty] shillings and that the standard be consequently fixed in silver. In that case an increased coinage of silver becomes necessary and as soon as that be effected...holders of bank of England one and two pound notes have the option of exchanging them at the bank of England for the silver coin of the realm; this I propose to be done, not by any recommendation from the committee no more than for the present by any enactment of parliament but to let these notes like the others continue in circulation as they now are until the bank and the mint are fully prepared.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Asa Briggs, *The Age of improvement* (Harlow, 1959), p. 206.

¹⁰⁴ Plan for a gradual return to Cash payments, January 1819 *draft* (PRONI D3030/5684/1).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

According to the second aspect of the plan, that ‘of obviating the professed apprehension of the bullionists or say of conciliating their apprehensions to a certain extent in respect to the Bank of England notes not being convertible into coin.’ This goal was to be achieved by legislating that ‘the Bank become sellers as well as buyers of gold, at the current market prices of the day, and thus the holders of bank of England notes of £5 upwards will then have the power of converting them into gold bars at the current market price, whatever that may be, and thus they will in the interim until the restriction be discontinued be represented to the public by gold as being convertible into that metal at their option’ However, while forcing the Bank to ‘become sellers and buyers at that market price, it is proper to consider in the first place, how the bank is to be guarded against any inconvenient demand on the one hand, while on the other it will be proper to consider whether there be a sufficient check against the Bank fixing an inordinate high price for the sale of gold when demanded in exchange for its notes, both of which are easily arranged for as the bank will be buyers as well as seller at the same time and at the same price, this double capacity of buyer and seller must operate and the most secure check imaginable as is hereinafter explained.’¹⁰⁷

After Liverpool moved to form a secret committee, the Marquess of Lansdowne, speaking in the House of Lords, was concerned by the decision to use a secret committee. As he argued, while ‘some communications from the Bank might require secrecy...the whole subject, in all its branches, was so completely before the public, that he could see no necessity whatever for secrecy.’ Lansdowne, made clear, however, that he did not intend ‘to take the sense of the house as to whether the committee should be secret or not, but merely to observe, that as to all the most material part of the investigation there was no necessity whatever for any secrecy.’¹⁰⁸ Many in the opposition, within the House of Lords had similar concerns. The Earl of Lauderdale, thought that Liverpool’s motion on forming the secret committee on the expediency of resuming cash payments, was ‘calculated to limit the committee in the expression of their opinion. The words seem to imply that the Committee could only make observations on such evidence of a very important nature for the foundation of their opinion but on which according to the terms of the motion they must conceive that they could not be warranted in reporting any observation.’¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Plan for a gradual return to Cash payments, January 1819 *draft* (PRONI D3030/5684/1).

¹⁰⁸ *Hansard*, xxxix, c. 205, (2 February 1819).

¹⁰⁹ *The Courier*, 3 February 1819.

In the House of Commons, Castlereagh fended off preemptive concerns that Britain might repeat the deflation experienced in France in the aftermath of its return to a metallic-based currency. Castlereagh waved off these critiques, in a speech quoted in *the Courier*, by arguing that French currency had fallen due to ‘speculative men of less experience than those who regulate the currency of this country.’ Castlereagh held up the example of the French, who had ‘by forcing a metallic currency...deprived themselves of the little of it which they had’ as strong evidence for the gradualist resumption that the government was seeking to bring about.¹¹⁰ In the same speech, Castlereagh expanded on this point by positing that while ‘he considered a metallic standard the only legitimate standard of currency...no country ought to resume a metallic currency when the metals were going out of the country.’¹¹¹ Furthermore, he believed that ‘the first duty of the house was to afford protection to the poor man’ and that a rapid resumption, such as promoted by Tierney’s motion would ‘injure this country by forcing the appearance of that which could not be real or lasting.’¹¹² Huskisson responded to Castlereagh’s arguments for a gradual resumption by stating that the ministry’s plan was unsustainable as:

The mystery of our financial system no longer deceives anyone in the money market; selling exchequer bills daily to redeem funded debt daily, then funding those exchequer bills once a year, or once in two years, in order to go over the same ground again; whilst the very air of mystery, and the anomaly of large annual or biennial loans in times of profound peace, create uneasiness out of the market, and in foreign countries an impression unfavorable with respect to the solidity of our resources...in finance, expedients and ingenious devices may answer to meet temporary difficulties; but for a permanent and peace system, the only wise course either in policy or for impression is a policy of simplicity and truth.¹¹³

Vansittart’s policy had indeed been one of obfuscation. Throughout 1818, the government had sought to conceal the extent of its deficits by issuing exchequer bills, the proceeds of which were used to maintain the sinking fund, which in turn was maintained in order to keep consol prices high. This policy had the direct effect of boosting inflation, and thus feeding the fires of bullionist arguments. It was during this period that Huskisson’s arguments began to find support from within the ministry, even converting such opponents as Robert Peel to the bullionist cause. Vansittart

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Charles Yonge, *Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, ii, p. 383.

appointed secret committees, with Peel, who was at that time still seen as generally within the anti-bullionist camp, as the chairman of the House of Commons committee. This committee included Castlereagh, Tierney, Canning, and Huskisson.

On 8 February 1819 Whigs attempted to gain a seat on the secret committee for Brougham.¹¹⁴ Castlereagh ‘felt it necessary to oppose the motion, because the grounds on which it was introduced, were in truth, in spirit, and in practice, wholly destructive of the principle on which his majesty’s government called for a ballot, when a secret committee was about to be formed... Without making any personal objection to the individual, he would only say that the best course for parliament to pursue was, to adhere strictly to the old plan, which had been adopted, for a long series of years, in the formation of committees of secrecy.’¹¹⁵ The motion was unsuccessful and was defeated by forty-two votes.¹¹⁶

On 5 April 1819, the secret committee released its first report on the resumption of cash payments, simply explaining that it would be able to produce a final recommendation. The first report informed parliament that the committee was preparing to present its findings ‘after the approaching recess’ and that those findings would ‘fix a period, and recommend a plan, for the final removal of the present restriction on the Bank.’¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the committee recommended that ‘the Bank... pay in cash all its notes outstanding, of an earlier date than January 1st 1817, and on account of the payment in cash of fractional sums under £5.’ Lastly, the secret committee advised that legislation be passed ‘restraining all such payments in gold coin, until the report of the committee shall have been received, and considered by the House, and a legislative measure passed thereupon.’¹¹⁸ After presenting the report, its chairman, Robert Peel moved ‘for leave to bring in a Bill to restrain the Governor and Company of the Bank of England from making Payments in Cash, under certain Notices given by them for that Purpose.’ Peel concluded by adding that, he believed that ‘it was of the highest utility that the measure should pass as

¹¹⁴ Tierney to Grey, February 1819 (DUL GRE/B55/287/1).

¹¹⁵ *Hansard*, xxxix, c. 351.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* c.1415.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

expeditiously as possible, [and] he hoped the House would allow it to go through its several stages that evening.’¹¹⁹

Peel’s request for expediency was clarified by Castlereagh when he explained, while ‘the precedent of 1797...in which case the executive first took measures and came to parliament for approbation and indemnity’ seemed to indicate a different model for the current legislation ‘there was...marked distinction between the case of 1797 and the present [as]....An inquiry was pending as to the means of resuming cash payments.’¹²⁰ Confusion was evident in the responses of many, who had gradually grown acclimated to the over two decades of periodic continuations of suspension, and who were stunned by the suddenness of the government’s decision to push through resumption. In the House of Lords, Lord Grey ‘expressed his astonishment at the proposition which had so unexpectedly been made, and which had filled him with dismay and confusion. He felt it difficult, indeed, on so sudden and unlooked-for a proposition, to collect his thoughts upon the subject sufficiently to give an opinion.’¹²¹ Regardless of these concerns, Castlereagh urged that ‘if the measure was to be passed at all, it must be passed with all the rapidity which the forms of the House admitted of...if the measure also were not carried through as fast as the accelerated forms of parliament would admit, a notice would be given to all holders of notes of an early date to carry them in for payment.’¹²² If, the ‘Bank was unnecessarily drained, the period of the restriction would be prolonged. Due to these concerns it was considered unwise to follow ‘the precedent of 1797’ and he ‘hoped the House would concur in speedily passing the measure.’¹²³

On 6 May, the secret committee released its second report. The report walked the House of Commons through much of the history of suspension, before explaining its recommendations for the resumption of cash payments. In the aftermath of the war, the government had begun paying down its debts, successfully ‘between the month of August 1815 and the month of February 1816.’ However, with the abolition of the income tax ‘this debt was again increased between February 1816 and the August following. In that interval, war taxes to a very considerable amount were remitted; a large addition, authorized by several acts of parliament, was made to the unfunded debt,

¹¹⁹ *Hansard*, xxxix, c. 1405.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.* c. 1393.

¹²² *Ibid.* c. 1406.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

and to the advances for which the government were indebted to the Bank.’¹²⁴ This debt had largely been taken up by the Bank and as such, the legislation required that in order ‘to give the Bank greater control over their issue, provision ought to be made for the gradual repayment of £10 million of its holdings of government securities.’ Once the government’s immediate debts were settled, progress could be made towards securing sufficient resources to provide the sheer quantity of gold required for full resumption. Thus the legislation called for the following gradual plan:

1. From February 1, 1820, the Bank shall be liable to deliver, on demand, a quantity of gold of standard fineness of not less than 60 ounces in exchange for the Bank’s notes at the rate of £4 1s per ounce.
2. From October 1, 1820, the rate shall be £3 19s 6d.
3. From May 1, 1821, the rate shall be £3 17s 10½d.
4. The Bank may at any time between February 1, 1820, and May 1, 1821, fix any rate between £4 1s and £3 17s 10½d, but that such intermediate rate having once been fixed by the Bank, that rate shall not be subsequently increased.
5. From May 1, 1823, the Bank shall pay its notes on demand in the legal coin of the realm.¹²⁵

This plan, the committee report explained, was necessary to compensate for the failure to contract their issue ‘when the exchanges became unfavourable, and the price of gold rose above the Mint price.’¹²⁶ The secret committee, however, made every effort to avoid the blatant partisanship of the bullion committee, and specifically attempted to avoid the offensiveness of this argument to anti-bullionists by distancing their argument from the specifics of the quantity theory.

Your committee have forbore from entering into any reasoning upon the effect produced upon the value of our currency, by variations in the numerical amount of Notes issued by the Bank of England. So many circumstances contribute to affect that value; such, for instance, as the varying state of commercial credit and confidence-the fluctuations in the amount of country bank paper-the different degrees of rapidity with which the same amount of currency circulates at different periods, that your Committee are of opinion, that no satisfactory conclusions can be drawn from a mere reference to the numerical amount of the issues of the Bank of England outstanding at any given time.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ *Hansard*, xl, cc. 152-178.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, xl, cc.170-171.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*. cc. 152-78.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*.

While the secret committee attempted to remain above the bullionist fray, the Bank of England's concerns over the legislation remained palpable. These apprehensions were expressed, during testimony submitted on 20 May. In that testimony, it was made clear that the Bank was most concerned by the legislation's requirement that the Bank forcibly decrease the 'market price of Gold by a limitation of the Issue of Bank Notes.' As the legislation did not accurately calculate the 'distress such limitation may be attended to individuals, or the community at large.'¹²⁸ The Bank continued to argue the legislation's assumption that the 'Bank has only to reduce its issues to obtain a favourable turn in the exchanges, and a consequent influx of the precious metals was not based on 'any solid foundation.'¹²⁹

These worries, were not limited to the directors of the Bank. One instance is Lord Lauderdale, who in earlier years had admitted to being 'old fashioned enough to believe that gold was necessary to a sound and healthy circulation' had now grown more cautious. On 21 May, he argued against the resumption bill, stating that it was 'sporting with the commercial greatness and prosperity of the country to...fix the value of gold through legislation.'¹³⁰ ¹³¹ That same day, Lauderdale presented a petition from around five hundred London merchants in favor of continued suspension.¹³² Such an outpouring of support for continuation indicates the fact that many in the business community did not see suspension, as reflecting badly on the good faith of the British government. The decline of the value of the pound had had numerous, beneficial effects on the economy, especially on those whose business relied on a low pound for their products to remain competitive. Additionally, an accidental, unforeseen benefit of inflation had been the redistribution of wealth. Huskisson, however, argued that this redistribution was undermining the stability of the nation.¹³³ In part, supporters of resumption at the parity of 1797 were driven by a desire to undo this redistribution.¹³⁴ Bullionists could argue that suspension had given 'one man's right and possession to another, without any fault of the suffering man's side, and without any the least

¹²⁸ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Monetary Policy, General, 2, ff. 359-62; *Hansard*, xl, c. 603.

¹²⁹ *Report from the Secret Committee on the Expediency of the Bank Resuming Cash Payments* (London, 1819), p. 262.

¹³⁰ *Hansard*, xx, c. 984.

¹³¹ *Hansard*, xl, c. 640.

¹³² *Ibid.* c. 597.

¹³³ William Huskisson, *The Question Concerning the Depreciation of our Currency Stated and Examined* (London, 1810).

¹³⁴ *Hansard*, xl, c. 689; 'Robert Peel, Committee Report House of Commons, 24 May 1819'.

advantage to the public.’¹³⁵ However, the business community’s objections seemed to offer contrary evidence.

While suspension’s friends were becoming more outspoken in the business community, proponents of resumption were about to gain a powerful supporter. On 24 May 1819 Peel publically converted to Bullionism, confessing that he had re-read ‘the bullion report of 1810 with the utmost attention [and could] find no defect in the argument and therefore [was] bound to come to the conclusion that paper was depreciated, and that the high price of bullion and the low rate of exchange were the criteria by which to judge the extent of that depreciation.’¹³⁶ While the government’s policies had shifted considerably in the nine years since the Bullion Report had been issued, Castlereagh remained incompletely convinced, and Lord Folkstone used Castlereagh’s two-mindedness as a means of attacking the bill. According to Folkstone, Castlereagh had, even recently, expressed ‘objections to the mode of recurring to cash payments, which the resolution embraced... [as] it would occasion a degree of distress to the country which ought not to be inflicted at any time, and least of all in the present time of pauperism and wretchedness.’¹³⁷

In an address, given at the end of that same day, Castlereagh responded to Folkstone’s accusations and spelled out in detail his position in a lengthy speech. Castlereagh began his speech by stating that he had waited ‘for a later period of the night, that he might not only receive information from the views of others who thought with him, but that he might offer answers to the objections that might be started.’ According to Castlereagh, ‘no question of greater interest to all classes of the community had ever called for the deliberation of parliament’ and as such it was very important to clearly explain the legislation, not only for the benefit of parliament, but for the general public as well, as ‘he was sorry to observe, that a degree of alarm prevailed out of doors.’ Thus, he argued, it was necessary ‘he was convinced...to bring the public mind to a correct view of the question.’ While Castlereagh understood that ‘there were complaints against this system’ rooted in the difficult truth that with resumption ‘some inconvenience must be occasioned.’ Additionally, Castlereagh acknowledged that he had been attacked ‘for some inconsistencies, some abandonment of principle in regard to the opinions... [he was] supposed to have entertained upon

¹³⁵ John Locke, *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money* (London, 1824), p. 70.

¹³⁶ Robert Peel, *From his Private Papers*, p. 293.

¹³⁷ *Hansard*, xl, c. 766.

former occasion.’¹³⁸ Instead, he argued ‘it was possible to account for discrepancies of opinions, at different periods, by a very plain statement.’ Castlereagh then proceeded to deny that ‘he had [ever] argued the question in any other light than that the suspension of cash payments by the Bank of England was a measure infinitely to be regretted, and only justifiable on the ground of strong necessity.’ While Castlereagh denied the accusation that he had ever favored a permanent shift to fiat currency, he did admit that he had not yet converted to the quantity theory.

He must in candour tell the House, that he was one of those persons who had held the opinion, that there were no fair grounds for considering the Bank note to be depreciated. Whatever might be the fact upon that head, he could only say, that the measures he had formerly voted for, under this feeling, had effected all the good which was expected to result from them.¹³⁹

This admitted, Castlereagh then proceeded to defend the suspension of cash payments as having been absolutely necessary for Britain’s victory over France. He asked rhetorically ‘what, then, would they have done had the Bank been obliged to contract its issues, to keep up a metallic currency, which at the same time that it cramped those issues, would have drained its treasures to preserve?’¹⁴⁰ Instead, Castlereagh described the decision to suspend cash payments as one rooted deeply in patriotism, rather than the narrower interests of banking. Castlereagh admitted that ‘it was impossible to disguise from themselves the impossibility of returning to a metallic currency without causing some pressure to the country.’¹⁴¹ Indeed, his position as foreign secretary made it clear to him that ‘very many causes were at present in operation throughout continental Europe which greatly affected the resumption of cash payments, almost indeed to prevention.’¹⁴² When the current foreign policy complexities were ‘combined with foreign loans, the large sums of money taken by them out of the country, and the extensive investments of capital in foreign funds.’¹⁴³ Although, Castlereagh admitted, it might have been best ‘to have locked up this question until another session, when it would have been less difficult to deal with it than at present’ the issue, once raised, was best dealt with quickly and decisively. Castlereagh argued that ‘if the exigencies of the country called for paper,’ cash payments could always be suspended again.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* c. 791.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* c. 792.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

However, ‘he conceived that it would be more expedient for parliament to deal with the danger when it arrived, than suffer the prospect of it to arrest the course of the present measure.’ Furthermore, Castlereagh believed that, as ‘the Bank held the regulation of the market price of gold in its own hands’ there was little cause for concern. In addition, Castlereagh argued that the legislation represented a bipartisan consensus, as it had brought together members of parliament who ‘differed upon most other political questions.’ Indeed, the Bank directors, normally considered by historians to have been avid anti-bullionists were held up by Castlereagh as supporters of the bill. As he argued, ‘of four Bank directors...three had approved of the principle of the measure.’ According to Castlereagh’s case, ‘the whole alarm which had prevailed had arisen from a false and inaccurate notion of the mode in which the details of the arrangement were to be effected.’ As a result, it was only possible to counter these by providing sufficient information to counter false assumptions. Thus the legislation could, via ‘almost imperceptible steps, return [the United Kingdom] to our ancient system of circulation.’¹⁴⁴ The gradual resumption trumpeted in Lord Castlereagh’s speech, was not viewed favorably by all, however. The following day, Lord Grenville expressed concern with the pace spelled out by the legislation, arguing that until resumption ‘no class of society, from the highest to the lowest, could know what were their means, what their income, or their wages.’¹⁴⁵

On 2 June 1819 Robert Peel moved the second reading of this Cash Payment bill.¹⁴⁶ Before the reading took place, a brief discussion of the legislation was held. During that discussion, Grenfell raised concerns about Castlereagh’s statements on the timing of resumption. As Castlereagh was reported to have stated ‘that the period for the resumption of payment in gold was not fixed at a time prior to the 1st of February next...if any reason arose for altering or interrupting the progress of the present measure’ it could be delayed. Lord Castlereagh replied ‘that the committee had recommended the 1st of February rather than the 1st of March, or the 1st of April, or the 1st of May’ and Castlereagh could see no reason for its likely alteration. According to Castlereagh, ‘the only objection which he thought could be raised against the plan recommended

¹⁴⁴ *Hansard*, xl, c. 790-792.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xxxviii, c. 928.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xl, c. 857.

by the committee... [would involve] so extreme a case, as could only be the offspring of the utmost necessity, and, therefore, ought not to be admitted as an argument in opposition to the new plan.’¹⁴⁷

On 14 June, the third and final reading of the bill was held. Before its reading, Manning argued that if the Bank of England were ‘to resume payments in bullion at a certain period, and ultimately to pay in specie, they ought to adopt such measures as would enable the Bank to meet the wishes of the House.’ Manning argued that, as things stood, the Bank’s holding would be insufficient for resumption until ‘more than two months later than the Chancellor of the Exchequer contemplated.’ Thus Manning proposed amending the bill to include language to ‘enable them [the Bank of England] to provide for the proposed payments in gold, [as] it was necessary that government should secure the payment of the proposed sum of £5,000,000 to be paid in monthly installments of £500,000 commencing on the 15th July next, and to be continued monthly until the 15th of April which would make good the above sum.’¹⁴⁸

The following week, on 21 July, the Bill was discussed and committed.¹⁴⁹ Legislation was simultaneously passed, barring the Bank from lending to the government without the express permission of parliament. From the passage of the Cash Payments Act on, the Bank’s accumulation of bullion increased exponentially. However, even as movement towards resumption seemed inevitable, many continued to express their concerns. None amongst these had more influence than noted financier Nathan Rothschild. Nathan Rothschild, a friend of Castlereagh’s, and a private banker to the Stewart family, was deeply concerned by the violence of Peterloo, which had occurred shortly after resumption was passed, and paid private visits to several members of the government that autumn. As Niall Ferguson has argued, this concern was driven by a fear ‘that the short-run effects of a deflationary policy would be economically destabilizing, and that this might tend to run counter the government’s goal of fiscal and monetary stabilization.’¹⁵⁰ Both Liverpool and Vansittart had been paid visits, however the die had already been cast politically and Lord Liverpool counseled Vansittart that Rothschild’s desire to continue ‘the restriction from the dread of their diminishing their circulation too much...would be ground for perpetual restriction, and is

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* c. 858.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* c. 1150.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* c. 1232.

¹⁵⁰ Niall Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild*, p. 121.

the idea of all others that it was most necessary to combat last year. Let us therefore determine to stand upon our present system, and let no one entertain a doubt that this is our determination.’¹⁵¹

The government’s determination to see through the resumption of cash payments was to have extensive tertiary effects over the coming years, including a disastrous period of deflation in the years immediately following the passage of the Cash Payment Act. In the aftermath of passage, gold prices fell to par rapidly, as banknote circulation declined and the Bank’s gold reserves expanded. The Bank of England, deeply concerned at the prospect of resumption, responded to the legislation by ‘rapidly contracted their discounts, the paper under discount at that establishment which in 1815 had been £820,660,000 was reduced in 1819 to £6,321,000 and in 1821 sank to £2,722,000.’¹⁵² Although the Bank was allowed until the 1st of May, 1823, full specie redemption was begun 31 May 1821. This sped-up timetable, blamed at the time on the risk of forgery, brought with it massive unemployment and deflation. Between 1818 and 1819, prices fell by seven percent, a decline which was to grow to thirty-six percent between 1819 and 1822.¹⁵³ In 1818 there had been £27,771,000 worth of Bank of England notes in circulation, however by 1822 these had been reduced to £18,172,000. Simultaneously, country bank notes had declined from £20,507,000 to £8,416,000. Exports to America ‘fell from \$42 million in 1818 to \$14 million in 1820.’¹⁵⁴

While the harvests of 1821 and 1822 were both successful they were unable to improve the situation for many impoverished and unemployed Britons. *The Dublin University Magazine*, looking back at this period in 1855, describes the period immediately after resumption, in apocalyptic terms, stating that the United Kingdom ‘exhibited all the appearance of a dying nation. Peace had brought greater horrors than war.’¹⁵⁵ The Birmingham financier Thomas Atwood similarly argued that resumption had brought ‘more misery, more poverty, more discord, more of everything that was calamitous to the nation...than Attila caused in the Roman Empire.’¹⁵⁶ However, none of these effects should have come as a surprise. An anonymous pamphlet found

¹⁵¹ Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, p. 416.

¹⁵² Thomas Tooke, *A History of Prices, and of the State of the Circulation, from 1793 to 1837* (London, 1838), p. 383.

¹⁵³ John Wood, *A History of Central Banking*, p. 57.

¹⁵⁴ Murray Newton Rothbard, ‘The Panic of 1819’ *Reactions and Policies* (Auburn, 2007), p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ *The Dublin University Magazine*, 46, (1855), p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ William Hone, (ed.). *Political letters and pamphlets* (London, 1830) p. 2.

amongst Castlereagh's papers predicted many of the eventual outcomes of resumption, predicting that resumption would bring with it:

A diminution beyond all former precedent in the quantity of Bank paper; the only circulating medium...The immediate rise in Gold far exceeding any we have ever yet witnessed, for the Bank must then in good earnest, by its Agents, purchase Gold in every Market of Europe, in which Markets, they will be met by every Man of Wealth understanding such operations. 3rd. The private Banks throughout the United Kingdom will all contract their Issues and the greater part in all probability will close their concerns on grounds of prudence and the certainty of the loss they would sustain by purchasing the necessary quantity of Gold to form the basis of their issues.¹⁵⁷

On 29 April 1822, Castlereagh introduced legislation, the Small Note Act, which was designed to maintain access to smaller denomination currency in paper form, and to prevent the country banks from being liable to produce around £4 million in silver coinage.

The House are aware that the act, empowering private bankers in the country to issue notes under £5 in value, will expire in the year 1825; and that consequently, if parliament do not interfere, by extending the operation of that act, all the small paper currency of the country—all that currency which consists of notes under £5 in value—must be put out of circulation, and its place be supplied by a metallic currency.¹⁵⁸

As a result, the Small Note Act preserved the ability of country banks to print one and two pound notes. This measure proved beneficial for the economic conditions of the day and helped prevent the economic difficulties of 1822 from developing into more dangerous trends. The legislation would also prove to be some of the last proposed by Castlereagh.¹⁵⁹

Supporters of metallic currency learned little from the depression of 1819, insisting that the period of economic difficulty was rooted in 'unfounded alarms...created in some men's minds.'¹⁶⁰ Thus bullionism emerged as the dominant monetary orthodoxy of much of the remainder of the nineteenth century. However, the victory of resumption brought with it an excessively high economic cost; and deeply harmed the middle and lower classes, hindered

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous, 'Cash payments' (PRONI D3030/5683 f. 2).

¹⁵⁸ *Hansard*, xxix, c. 158.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* vii, cc. 157-159.

¹⁶⁰ 'Mr. Western's Motion Concerning the Resumption of Cash Payments', David Ricardo, *Works*, v. p. 198.

Britain's postwar recovery, sustained radicalism, and reduced Britain's political influence abroad for much of the immediate future.

The impact of resumption, when combined with the economic drag of increased debt, regressive taxation, and disruptive grain tariffs had a powerful impact on Britain's political system, but an even more dramatic effect on its international relations. In the years that followed the Napoleonic Wars, merchants unable to find domestic markets for their, often industrially produced goods, began to rely increasingly on emerging markets. These markets included those that were long established, such as the United States, as well as new markets in the former Iberian colonies of South America. These international markets would pull British diplomatic concerns away from Castlereagh's euro-centrism towards the international focus of Britain's mid- and late-nineteenth century foreign policy. Simultaneously, the government's economic policies and the domestic disturbances that, in part, resulted from them, led Britain to disengage from continental affairs. As declining resources and domestic political pressures prevented Castlereagh from participating in the Congress System, the continental powers tended to view Britain as an outside force, whose political interests had little impact on the maintenance of continental order. Dissent within Britain and overwhelming British opposition to the Holy Alliance made involvement with the repression of radical movements on the continent politically complex, especially as middle class Britons came to gain a voice in the country's policy-making process. Perhaps most importantly, this disentanglement from Europe was a result of a lack of support for Castlereagh's foreign policy agenda from within the cabinet.

Chapter 5

Castlereagh's Colonial and Emerging Market Policies

While Castlereagh's career in the Foreign Office has typically been understood primarily in terms of the theory and practice of Anglo-European relations, this chapter examines a less well understood aspect of Castlereagh's foreign policy, in particular his understandings of both formal and informal empire. This chapter presents evidence that in the wake of postwar economic instability, domestic commercial pressures drove Castlereagh's foreign policy. Castlereagh's policies should be understood as transitional, with their emphasis shifting from the strategic to the commercial. Recent tendencies in the historiography have demonstrated a problematic tendency to avoid conceiving of postwar non-European policy as transitional.¹ This tendency, rooted in a justifiable reaction to the resilience of Liberal teleology in imperial history, has tended to minimize the degree to which ministerial attitudes remained in flux throughout this era. While avoiding the tendency to understand free trade as an inevitable, unstated goal of post war imperialism, ministerial entanglements with emerging economic philosophies were not without impact.² Post war economic exhaustion and the overwhelming effect of austerity have both been underrepresented in depictions of the origins of Castlereagh's policy.³

The central emphasis of Castlereagh's policy towards much of the non-European world transitioned dramatically over the course of his career. During the Napoleonic Wars, and in their immediate aftermath, Castlereagh understood Britain's relations with the non-European world strictly in light of the national interest. By 1822, however Castlereagh had shifted Britain towards disengagement, a process with roots in economic reform and subsequent diminutions to the British Foreign and Colonial Offices budgets.⁴ The impact of these reductions were mitigated by the fact

¹ C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), p. 11; Anna Gambles, *Protection and Politics, Conservative Economic Discourse, 1815-1852* (Suffolk, 1999), pp. 146-150.

² Alexander Brady tended to understand the rising tide of late and post-Napoleonic Imperialism as symptomatic of a transition between the sort of protectionism endemic in military-fiscal states and the emergence of Victorian free trade ideologies. Alexander Brady, *William Huskisson and Liberal Reform* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 132-167.

³ While unsuccessful, the effort in 1816 to abolish the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies is indicative of the degree to which the opposition was willing to abandon the non-European world post-war. *Hansard* xxxiii, cc. 893-899; Boyd Hilton has similarly sought to link imperial policy and domestic economic legislation. Boyd Hilton, *Corn, cash, commerce* pp. 175-201.

⁴ D. M. Young, *The Colonial Office in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, 1961), p. 37.

that ‘between 1815 and 1880 much of the British Empire existed in a power-political vacuum,’ which allowed Britain’s second imperial effort to remain relatively affordable.⁵

Castlereagh’s management of British relations with the developing world followed an arc, in many ways, similar to that of his European policy. This arc, which begins with a highly interventionist foreign policy, ended with a largely *laissez-faire*, commercial emphasis.⁶ Rather than understanding this as a purely ideological shift, this chapter seeks to demonstrate the degree to which this pivot was dictated to Castlereagh by the challenges brought about via the economic reforms discussed in the previous chapters and the internal dissent which followed from them.⁷ Castlereagh’s portfolio in the Foreign Office consisted primarily of the traditional tasks incumbent upon his position, foremost amongst these the management of Britain’s diplomatic relationship with the great European powers.⁸ However, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars the Foreign Office’s responsibilities remained fluid. This chapter examines Britain’s shifting relationship with emerging international markets, especially those of the former North and South American colonies.⁹ Starting in 1801, Britain had consolidated its status as an imperial power, by its political union with Ireland. Motivated by fears of French intervention, Britain’s union with Ireland provided the imperial narrative a re-set. This second wave imperial policy, inaugurated by Castlereagh’s efforts in Dublin, was shaped first by the war with France and then by the poverty brought about by that war.¹⁰ To understand Castlereagh’s colonial policies, and the Liverpool administration’s vision, it is essential to understand the period as one of *ad hoc* imperial expansion,

⁵ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, 1500-2000* (New York, 1988), p. 155; The persistent emphasis on ‘affordability’ in Britain’s imperial expansion, had substantial downsides. As Martin Daunton has argued, the cost of Empire were increasingly shifted from the ‘metropole to the periphery’ as ‘demonstrations on the streets of London...were all too visible; the attraction of passing the costs of meeting the urgent demands for retrenchment’ to the colonies ‘were obvious.’ Martin Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan*, p. 111; Daunton and Halpern have argued that the shift of expenses, played a significant role in both increasing authoritarian behaviors and brutality in Britain’s colonial management, as well as a rise in ‘racist ideology’ as ‘military conflict bred contempt’. Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp. 365-366.

⁶ ‘Castlereagh’s Confidential State Paper. 5 May 1820’, *English Historical Documents, 1783-1832*, xi, pp. 957-966.

⁷ For a contrasting view see Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, pp. 160-173.

⁸ In 1815, Britain maintained only nineteen official foreign missions, of these only the United States and Turkey were outside of Europe. Other diplomatic affairs were dealt with on a semi-official basis by local businessmen, in general. See Raymond Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service 1815-1914* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1983), p. 198.

⁹ While Castlereagh’s contributions to summit-style diplomacy are often noted, it was not his only pioneering effort in the field of diplomacy. Indeed, his decision to require weekly dispatches from foreign missions can be seen as the first attempt by the Foreign Office to directly control the policy decisions of foreign missions, a major step towards modern diplomatic methods. Circular, 1 January 1816 (FO 83/81).

¹⁰ As Patrick Geoghegan has pointed out, Pitt, the instigator of the Act, saw it ‘as a framework to restructure the empire.’ Patrick Geoghegan, *Act of Union*, p. 7.

as colonial holdings acquired for strategic purposes, such as Ireland had been, were digested by a war-weary and indebted government, gripped by fears of rebellion. The emergence of this second empire reflected the embattled, cost-conscious environment of the Liverpool administration.¹¹

The ambiguity of Liverpool-era relations with the post-Colonial states of South and Central America were, in particular, rooted in the soul-searching which followed in the wake of Britain's defeat in the American War of Independence. One of the persistent aftereffects of Britain's split with America, was a loss of faith in the exportability of the British political system.¹² In its place, the second empire took up an altogether distinct purpose. Rather than exporting 'Englishness' or the British political system, Britain's approach was increasingly driven by the demands of trade. The spread of the 'English way of life', which had occurred during the colonization of North America, was reflected in the names and designs of the urban outposts of New England and the Maritime Provinces. However, this form of colonization, present also in the Antipodes, declined in importance, but did not disappear, during the early nineteenth century. In its place, Britain instead pursued efforts which allowed it to achieve its military and commercial interests.

Although, Castlereagh himself did not directly oversee colonial and new market policymaking postwar, such being primarily the domains of the secretary of State for War and the Colonies (Henry Bathurst, 1812-1827) and the President of the Board of Control (George Canning, 1816-1821), his enormous influence within Commons and his position as Foreign Secretary placed him in a central position in setting the political tone.¹³ Furthermore, the lack of clear delineation between portfolios within the Liverpool administration meant that there were overlaps between various cabinet posts. In addition, several regions came under the Foreign Office's supervision, during Castlereagh's tenure as Secretary.

¹¹ C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, p. 102.

¹² George Canning, speaking before the House of Commons, expressed his wish 'that the British constitution were capable of being transplanted into other countries, and of taking root in their soil!' However, the very public rejection of the British constitution, by the American revolutionaries had stripped this idea of its power. As Canning argued 'the idea of establishing [the British constitution] in other countries by the force of the sword, was too chimerical to be entertained.' '20 March 1821', *Hansard*, iv, c. 1374.

¹³ The management of Britain's overseas interests were highly diversified, and occasionally overlapping, 'British overseas interests were managed by the Foreign Office, the India Office, the War Office, the Admiralty, the Board of Trade, and the Colonial Office and for much of the nineteenth century the last was almost the least important.' Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, p.6.

Castlereagh's Management of Anglo-American Relations

Castlereagh's management of Anglo-American relations is highly illustrative of a larger change evident in his foreign policy during the late and post war era. The personal diaries of American ambassadors to Britain, reflect Castlereagh's distinctive approach to diplomatic negotiations.¹⁴ Castlereagh's work towards normalizing relations between Britain and America reflect a shift from the strategic to the commercial, as his early efforts at Ghent to establish an anti-American coalition with the Native American Nations of the Midwest gave way to a cooperative commercial emphasis. Anglo-American diplomatic relations can, as a result, be best understood as operating within the confines of an emergent sense of economic cooperation.

Growing restrictions on the slave trade, during this period granted American producers the ability to undercut competitors and led to an integration of the British imperial and American economies. Dale Tomich has argued that the decline of slavery 'within the British Empire led to the intensification of slavery...in Cuba, Brazil, and the United States.'¹⁵ As Britain was producing goods, such as 'coffee, sugar and cotton at relatively high prices' the expansion of slave labor in the Americas 'was financed to a large extent by London-based financial institutions' as American slave production provided outlets for surplus British capital.¹⁶ The gradual abolition of slavery in the British Empire can be seen as having 'consolidated a new international division of labor.'¹⁷ This integration was far reaching, and by 1818, nearly half of America's foreign debt was held by British Banks.¹⁸

¹⁴ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*; Richard Rush, *Memoranda*.

¹⁵ Marcel van der Linden, (ed.) *Workers of the world: Essays Towards a Global Labor History* (Leiden, 2010), p. 296.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Anthony Kaye, 'The Second Slavery: Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century South and the Atlantic World', *The Journal of Southern History*, 75/3 (2009); Growing demand for slave produced products and increased restrictions on the slave trade had substantial impacts on the slave market. Average slave prices in the United States doubled from approximately \$250 in 1813 to \$500 in 1820. Susan Carter, et al, (eds.), *Historical statistics of the United States: earliest times to the present* (Cambridge, 2006). Tables, Bb 212; Castlereagh commented on the growth of American slavery in a conversation with John Quincy Adams. Castlereagh 'passed immediately to that of the slave trade which he said was now carrying on to a very great extent and in a shocking manner, that a great number of vessels for it had been fitted out in our Southern States and that the barbarities of the trade were even more atrocious than they had been before the abolition of it had been attempted The vessels sailed under the flags of the nations which still allowed the trade Spain and Portugal they were very small and sailed like lightning.' Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 454.

¹⁸ Mira Wilkins, *The History of foreign investment in the United States to 1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), p. 54.

After the signing of the Treaty of Ghent the Foreign Office increasingly had to seriously deal with the multifaceted implications of Anglo-American relations.¹⁹ This relationship was complicated by a number of factors, including American and Spanish sensitivities vis-à-vis the South American revolutionary movements, as well as domestic pressures from the commercial sector in Britain. In addition, Britain's rapid demobilization led to an exodus of former British officers and enlisted men to serve in the revolutionary armies of South America.²⁰ In the end, amongst these competing claims on British policy in South America, Castlereagh opted to allow the stable transition to an independent South America, while minimizing expense and ensuring steady trade for British economic interests in the region. As J.E. Cookson has pointed out, '[Castlereagh] did not care much for the money side of government.'²¹ This chapter will examine how that dynamic played out as Britain's emerging market and colonial policy transitioned from a strategic to a commercial emphasis.

Although Castlereagh was notably a supporter of the United States during his Whiggish student days, his opinion of the country was complex and transitional during his time in government.²² During the lead-up to the War of 1812, Castlereagh generally 'preferred a milder line,' however, rather than forcefully making his case, he 'deferred to his subordinates...tactical judgment.'²³ As a result, Castlereagh's subsequent policy rarely, if ever, broke with cabinet orthodoxy, unlike his European policy. The war with America, characterized by a long series of

¹⁹ The rapid normalization of Anglo-American relations may have been the result of largely sympathetic opinions amongst cabinet members. According to Alexander Baring, 'The Ministry he said were... quite pacific in their disposition Lord Liverpool was a very worthy amiable man so was Lord Sidmouth There was but one very warlike man among them and that was Lord Bathurst It was entirely upon his suggestion that the troops from Spain had been sent over to Canada The expedition to New Orleans had been entirely a plan of his.' Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 278.

²⁰ According to *The Examiner*, in 1819 over ten thousand veterans departed from Irish ports alone 'to fight against the cause of despotism in South America.' *The Examiner*, 23 May 1819; Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 406.

²¹ J. E. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 27.

²² Robert Stewart to his Uncle, 6 October 1777 (PRONI D3030/29/2). A good example of this transitional attitude can be found in John Quincy Adam's diary entry from 13 May 1815. 'Lord Liverpool was understood to be inclined to continue at peace [with America]. Lord Castlereagh was ardent for war, I asked him if he was certain of this. He said he had reason to believe it. He knew at least that Lord Liverpool had been so earnest for the peace with America that he had tendered his resignation to the Prince Regent, if it was not made. Lord Castlereagh was for continuing the war. I said that we knew perfectly well what were Lord Castlereagh's dispositions when he passed through Ghent on his way to Vienna, but we had heard that from Vienna he had written home advising that they should conclude with us. He said that was true. It was in consequence of the discussions with Russia and with Prussia respecting Poland and Saxony Lord Castlereagh was then much at variance with the Emperor of Russia and did write to advise the peace with America. All this was fully disclosed in the correspondence from the French Ambassadors at Vienna with his Department and was now among the archives. May 13 1815, Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 195.

²³ Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams* (Berkley, 1964), p. 78.

misunderstandings and poor communication, was pursued, by Castlereagh with the same lack of commitment. Negotiation was also hindered by Castlereagh's strategic emphasis, which was characterized by an 'extreme sensitiveness that discouraged all hope of compromise' on maritime issues.²⁴ The combined challenges posed by Castlereagh's European goals and lack of clarity is particularly evident in Castlereagh's confused handling of the negotiations at Ghent.²⁵ After issuing very stringent instructions to his negotiating team, which hindered the early pace of negotiation, Castlereagh later dropped many of his preconditions, without clear explanation.²⁶ The Americans, suffered under similarly strict instructions, as Clay wrote in a letter to W.H. Crawford, that 'on the subject of our instructions, in relation to the great questions on which the War has turned, my opinion is, that [our diplomatic instructions] do not leave us at liberty to conclude a treaty.'²⁷ While Castlereagh was drafting his instructions, the mood of the cabinet was already beginning to shift and shortly after the meetings began, Castlereagh came to the conclusion that British demands could be sacrificed for the sake of upcoming negotiations.

This change of heart was driven by the changing status of both the war in Europe, and by the growing realization that British finances could no longer handle the expenses of both the continental and the American conflict. British negotiators at Ghent were placed in the complicated position of having received strict instructions for negotiation from Castlereagh, and pressure from a cabinet increasingly willing to make concessions, and furthermore, largely unwilling to put up with the delays caused by the instructions, they themselves had authorized.²⁸ Another instance of Castlereagh's distracted management of the Ghent negotiations came in the form of his personnel

²⁴ Charles M. Gates, 'The West in American Diplomacy, 1812-1815', *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, v, 26/4 (1940), p. 500.

²⁵ The vagueness of Castlereagh's policy may have resulted from an intentional effort to forestall decisions, or from the more practical challenges posed by the sheer amount of work required by his aversion to delegation.

²⁶ Castlereagh in particular sought to prevent the establishment of any American military installations or warships on the Great Lakes, and required sizeable territorial concessions from the Americans as *sine qua nons* for his negotiating team. 'Instructions and Dispatches of the British Ghent Commission' (FO 5/101-102); In addition, the British negotiators were instructed to insist on, the 'setting apart [of] a country for [Britain's Native American allies] to create a permanent barrier between the British provinces and the U.S. within which neither the U.S. nor G.B. are to be at liberty to purchase from the Indians...the rights of fishing etc. within the jurisdiction of G.B. which were granted to America by the Treaty of peace will not be continued without an equivalent.' However, it quickly became clear, that the British team had been instructed to 'pass over in silence...the subject of impressment.' Clay to Crawford, 11 August 1814, *Crawford Transcripts*, Library of Congress, cited in John Franklin Jameson, (ed.), *The American Historical Review*, xx, October 1915), pp. 114-115.

²⁷ Clay to W.H. Crawford, 2 July 1814 *Crawford Transcripts*, Library of Congress, cited in, *Ibid.*, pp. 108-129.

²⁸ It should be noted that on certain issues the resulting delay was substantial, indeed it was not until 1871, with the signing of the Treaty of Washington that the Great Lakes were completely demilitarized.

choices, which both insulted the American team and hindered the progress of negotiations.²⁹ Wilbur Jones has argued that the choice may have been simply due to the fact that ‘no one of greater prominence was then available,’ rather than an ‘intentional slight to the United States.’³⁰ These symptoms of neglect, on Castlereagh’s part, however, hint at the peripheral nature of Anglo-America relations.

In addition to the increasingly troubling economic pressures on the British negotiating position, the military situation itself remained fluid, and as British military action continued to flounder indecisively in the United States, the position of the Ghent negotiating team became even more tenuous.³¹ In addition to these difficulties, the Ghent team also increasingly had to deal with Castlereagh’s shifting attention, as he first prepared for and then personally led the peace negotiations in Vienna. As time went by, American recalcitrance and rising demands for retrenchment, left British policy even more exposed, thus largely shifting control to the American negotiators.³² Finally, in December 1814 an agreement was reached, freeing Castlereagh to deal more decisively with the Saxony crisis.

The difficult ending to the peace negotiations, as well as emerging budgetary issues, combined to force a re-set in Castlereagh’s relations with America. This became even more the case in the aftermath of Napoleon’s escape from Elba and the resulting ‘hundred days’ of renewed conflict. Castlereagh, now increasingly watchful for potentially expensive break-downs in Anglo-American relations, helped to smooth the transition to normalization, even as British policy vis-à-vis America moved out of the foreign policy periphery.³³

²⁹ Liverpool had originally suggested to Castlereagh that only one negotiator be sent. Eventually, however, the number was increased to three: Vice-Admiral Lord Gambier, a veteran of the assault on Copenhagen; William Adams, an Admiralty lawyer; and Henry Coulburn a relatively inexperienced Colonial Office under-secretary. Liverpool to Castlereagh, 4 February 1814 (PRONI D3030/3).

³⁰ Wilbur Devereux Jones, ‘A British View of the War of 1812 and the Peace Negotiations’ *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 45/3 (1958), pp. 481-487.

³¹ Clay wrote, at the opening of negotiations, that he did ‘not believe, whatever efforts the British Government may make, that they can throw any considerable force into America so as to affect materially the present Campaign.’ ‘Clay to Crawford, Ghent 2nd July 1814’ Quoted in ‘Letters relating to the Negotiations at Ghent, 1812-1814’ *The American Historical Review*, 20/1 (1914), pp. 108-129.

³² Lord Liverpool believed that continuing the war with America was impossible as ‘we could not overlook the clamour which has been raised against the property tax, and the difficulties we shall certainly have in continuing it for one year to discharge the arrears of the wars.’ ‘Liverpool to Canning, 28 December 1814’ Charles Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, ii, p. 75.

³³ Richard Rush, *Memoranda*, pp. 25-27.

Besides concerns that another, untenably expensive war with the United States could begin at any time, there were persistent calls from radical and Whig parliamentarians, many sympathetic to the United States, for rapid normalization. In addition, British business interests in America remained extensive and interest in securing access to American markets came to define the postwar era. Concerns over American power remained a major issue in British foreign policy. This fear led to calls from the more hawkish members of parliament for a stronger policy of naval containment, and a build-up of British naval power capable of dealing with any return of American bellicosity.³⁴ Castlereagh's pacific policy, had domestic ramifications, such as can be seen, for instance, in 1818. After the execution of two British agents in Florida, Castlereagh avoided escalating the issue, leading to widespread outcry against the government.³⁵

Furthermore, Castlereagh had become more outspokenly pro-American, arguing before the House of Commons that British and American 'interests were more naturally and closely connected,' than any other two nations.³⁶ This shared interest and the expense of the war, when combined with its indecisiveness, and the likely insurmountable difficulty of the sheer expanse of American territory, led to the emergence of an essentially permanent détente between the two states.³⁷ In addition, there was a growing sense that American exports were essential ingredients to a British recovery. This came as expectations for Canadian exports were proving disappointing in the face of enormous defense costs.³⁸ In addition, trade between the British West Indies and the United States further impelled Castlereagh to pursue a rapid path towards Anglo-American normalization.³⁹ This process was largely superintended by Bagot, the foreign office representative

³⁴ C. J. Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power*, p. 7.

³⁵ Alexander Arbuthnot, a Scottish tradesman, and Robert Chrystie Ambrister, a former auxiliary Second Lieutenant in the British Royal Marine were both executed by Andrew Jackson during his campaign against the Seminole Nation, for their alleged role in supplying weaponry and organization advice to the Seminole and Creek Nations. Although both men were found guilty of aiding the Seminole by a court martial, Alexander Arbuthnot had been sentenced to lashes and imprisonment, however, Jackson elected to execute both men. *British State Papers, 1818-1819* (London, 1835); David Heidler and Jeanne Heidler, *Henry Clay: The Essential American*, pp. 137-38, 140, 141; The role of growing economic ties in preventing an escalation in the aftermath of the Arbuthnot-Ambrister incident is discussed in detail in *The Seminole Wars*. See John and Mary Lou Missall. *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville, FL, 2004), p. 45.

³⁶ *Hansard*, xxxii, c. 567.

³⁷ These concerns had played a role in the income tax debate, as well, as the maintenance of the tax was understood as insurance against renewed fighting with America. The defeat of the tax limited Britain's ability to renew warfare. Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 311.

³⁸ *Hansard*, xxxv, c. 1020.

³⁹ Additionally, imperial trade-preferences were increasingly coming under attack for violating free trade principles, with Ricardo and McCulloch in particular leading the attack; Alexander Brady, *William Huskisson and Liberal Reform*, p. 136. *Hansard*, xxxv, c. 1043.

in Washington until 1819. Bagot, a close associate of Castlereagh's, most notably paved the way for a permanent peace between the two countries with the Rush-Bagot Agreement, signed in 1817.⁴⁰ The Rush-Bagot plan, while certainly the result of Castlereagh's policy and hard work from diplomats on both sides, was less important than the underlying commercial interests of both states. Domestic disturbance in Britain, and budgetary pressures worked together to make a renewal of Anglo-American conflict politically and economically unfeasible. With these limitations, Castlereagh's policies nonetheless effectively normalized, what had been a strained diplomatic relationship.

Castlereagh's efforts paid off increasingly during John Quincy Adams' tenure at the State Department. Starting in 1817, Anglo-American relations experienced a prolonged period of improvement, with the completion of a variety of agreements on new territory boundaries, access to fisheries, and many of the more pressing commercial disputes.⁴¹ Just as with his contribution to the Ghent negotiations, Castlereagh's groundwork prepared the way for the resolution of many of the seemingly intractable difficulties which had haunted Anglo-American relations, while he allowed the particulars of the agreements to be worked out by his subordinates. The Anglo-American negotiations of 1818, brought about a new era of financially inspired flexibility, which had been absent in Castlereagh's Ghent instructions. The rapid resolution over the issue of Canadian fisheries, the American-Canadian border, and the settlement of the Far West were all negotiated with a minimum of difficulty. Other issues such as the northeastern frontier and the status of slaves captured during the War of 1812, remained unsettled, but the new tone prevented these contentions from becoming overly problematic.⁴² The issue of the economically essential triangular trade between Britain, the United States, and the West Indies, however, remained a sticking point. The mercantilism, enshrined in the Navigation Acts, ensured persistent difficulties. Prevented by the Act from anything but direct Anglo-American trade, American merchants found it difficult to overlook lucrative opportunities with the British West Indies. Pressure on the American government, from the business community, led to increased tensions with Britain,

⁴⁰ The Rush-Bagot agreement was not a formal treaty, but was rather an executive agreement between Britain and America. Arthur Schlesinger commented on the unusual nature of the format, and its constitutional implications for the United States in, Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (New York, 1973), pp. 86-87.

⁴¹ This shift demonstrates a pivot on Castlereagh's part, as according to Adams, 'a liberal principle of commercial intercourse with foreign nations was...a fundamental principle of our relations with other powers.' Adams, *Memoirs*, v, p. 427.

⁴² Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 204.

tensions, which eventually spilled over into what became a low-grade trade war. By 1818, American retaliation against the Navigation Acts, led Britain to finally offer several trade concessions, these concessions, including the legalization of the trade of certain commodities, subject to regulation, and the acceptance of preferential treatment for British traders, were quickly rejected by American representatives.⁴³

In the intense period of Anglo-American negotiations, leading up to Aix-la-Chapelle, Rush and Castlereagh were able to sort out the majority of outstanding diplomatic issues between the two states, including a renewal, for ten years, of the commercial convention, originally signed in 1815. However, the thorny issue of American access to West Indian trade, remained problematic. Castlereagh's policy on trade in the West Indies was held hostage, in many ways, by the persistence of mercantilist sentiment within the cabinet, and to some extent his own ambivalence on the topic.⁴⁴ In 1818, Rush, during a meeting on commercial relations between British holdings and the United States, was lectured by Castlereagh on the British colonial economy, Castlereagh, for the moment at least, taking a strongly mercantilist stance.⁴⁵ Castlereagh's position, however, would become difficult to maintain, as America responded to Britain's persistent mercantilism, with a series of increasingly damaging measures, designed to harm the triangular trade. By 1820, these efforts had proven so successful that trade concessions began to be reconsidered, and eventually the trade limitations were dropped in 1822.⁴⁶

In addition to the problem of trade limitations, the issue of impressment remained a thorn in the side of Anglo-American relations, an issue which had in part brought about the War of 1812.⁴⁷ Beyond the complications of American concerns over issues of sovereignty, Castlereagh

⁴³ *Speech of the Hon. Rufus King on the American Navigation Act delivered in the Senate of the United States*, (New York, 1818).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

⁴⁵ Richard Rush, *Memoranda*, pp. 56-64.

⁴⁶ This process had been a long-term goal of the United States. Rush indicated in his account of trade negotiations, that his instructions had been to abolish all restrictions on trade between the two countries. *Ibid.* p. 59.

⁴⁷ Castlereagh defended the government's decision to impress as many as 9,000 naturalized American citizens in terms of *realpolitik*. Castlereagh 'maintained that that [the American] government ought to have recollected, that the exercise of the right [of impressment] itself was not merely a convenience to Great Britain, but belonged to her very conservation as a state; and that the abandonment of it would not have been merely inconvenient, but would have proved vitally dangerous if not fatal to her security. As a nation, therefore, Great Britain was amply justified in insisting upon that, the relinquishment of which would have shaken the foundations of her power. We had an undoubted right to consider the question with other feelings, and with greater tenacity than America, towards whom it did not threaten the loss of freedom or safety, but merely the inconvenience of a small portion of her citizens.' *Hansard* xxiv, c. 600.

faced the difficulty of a divided cabinet. Lord Bathurst, was a supporter of the American plan to limit naval service to citizens, in return American vessels would be ensured freedom from search and seizure. While other cabinet members considered this a gross surrender of British prerogative, Castlereagh appears to have supported it. Castlereagh responded to this tension by allowing negotiations to break down in order to avoid a personal disagreement with Liverpool. As these negotiations were carrying on, Castlereagh's attentions were increasingly focused on the coming Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle, and the failure of the negotiations can be in part blamed on his inattention. This tendency was evident in both his diplomatic and domestic political career, as Castlereagh often allowed negotiations to break-down, preferring to allow time to work towards a settlement, rather than to force an agreement.

British use of liberated slaves during the war remained a long unresolved difficulty and American efforts to gain compensation for freed and escaped slaves from the War of 1812, met with little success. However, the diplomatic pressure on Britain, on behalf of slaveholders, helped to give the conflict an *ex post facto* purpose in the minds of many British abolitionists.⁴⁸ In a letter to Castlereagh written on 20 May 1815, John Forbes complained that slaveholders trying to reclaim their slaves were 'treated with the grossest abuse for daring to claim them and dared scarcely utter a murmur from dread of the Indians whom [General Edward Nicolls] held at his back.'⁴⁹ Even in non-slave-holding areas, Castlereagh's work towards abolition was greeted with cynicism. William Duane, writing in Philadelphia for *the Aurora*, argued that while '[Castlereagh] manifested the most pious concern for the poor Africans,' he had no trouble handing over 'about forty millions of white men to new masters.'⁵⁰ Duane, and other American critics, such as the anonymous author of an article in *the National Intelligencer* published on 10 June 1819, linked Castlereagh to the Saints, arguing that both were guilty of hypocrisy, 'feel[ing] only for the wrongs of Africa' while dismissing the rights of 'white slaves' in Ireland.⁵¹

⁴⁸ See Arnett Lindsay, 'Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Great Britain Bearing on the Return of Negro Slaves, 1783-1828.' *Journal of Negro History*, 5, (1920), pp. 391-419.

⁴⁹ John Forbes to Lord Castlereagh, 20 May 1815 (FO, 72/219).

⁵⁰ *The Aurora*, 19 July 1815.

⁵¹ *National Intelligencer*, 10 June 1819 cited in Matthew Mason, 'The Battle of the Slaveholding Liberators: Great Britain, the United States, and Slavery in the Early Nineteenth Century' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 59/3, (2002), p. 687.

While Castlereagh's management of Anglo-American relations was often marred by clumsiness, the new tone helped to establish two centuries of peace between Britain and her former colony.⁵² Castlereagh summed up his policy of détente in 1818, when he discussed the Anglo-American relationship with Richard Rush, stating, 'let us, in short, strive so to regulate our intercourse in all respects as that each nation may be able to do its utmost towards making the other rich and happy.'⁵³

Castlereagh's Shifting Emphasis in South America

Castlereagh's policy of establishing a network of friendly South American monarchies was rooted in his strategic vision. However, the failure of efforts such as the British invasion of the Río de la Plata, and tensions between Castlereagh's European foreign policy goals and British commercial interests forced Castlereagh to transition to a policy of inaction. British trade with the former colonies of South America experienced a period of expansion during the postwar era, which later stagnated as demand for British-made goods failed to reach expectations. Castlereagh's policy towards South American revolutionary movements pivoted from a wartime desire for a direct military intervention to instigate and support revolutionary movements, to an increasingly neutral, non-interventionist stance in the wake of British military action on Spain's behalf during the Peninsular Wars.⁵⁴ In 1807, during his early, interventionist stage, Castlereagh argued that 'the liberation of South America must be accomplished through the wishes and exertions of the inhabitants; but the change can only be operated...under the protection and with the support of an auxiliary British force.'⁵⁵ This plan, which was to be overseen by Arthur Wellesley, who was intended, by Castlereagh, to 'design the establishment of a military base in Venezuela' that would follow a revolution to be fomented by Francisco Miranda, a Venezuelan expatriate, intended by Britain to function as their puppet.⁵⁶ However, other, more budget oriented, observers such as the Earl of Selkirk, argued that 'it may be fairly doubted whether the revenue that would arise from

⁵² John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, p. 204.

⁵³ This growing emphasis on mutual benefit came to define the rapprochement characteristic of Richard Rush's tenure as the United States' Minister to the United Kingdom. Richard Rush *Memoranda*, p. 368.

⁵⁴ Some historians, have entirely missed Castlereagh's interventionist phase, and as a result have argued that for a philosophical rather than a practical basis for Castlereagh's dealings with the South American-Iberian struggle for an example see Robert Latham, 'History, Theory, and International Order: Some Lessons from the Nineteenth Century' *Review of International Studies*, 23/4, (1997) pp. 419-143, esp. p. 430.

⁵⁵ *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vii, p. 385.

⁵⁶ Eric Lambert, 'Irish Soldiers in South America, 1818-30' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 58/232 (1969), p. 376.

these Spanish American provinces would be sufficient indemnification for the burdens which the possession would involve.’⁵⁷ These pecuniary considerations, however, had little impact on Castlereagh’s interest in direct military intervention. In a cabinet memorandum, drafted by Castlereagh, and dated 21 December 1807, he wrote, ‘if we are to look to any operation against the possessions of Spain in South America, particularly in Río de la Plata, the present moment seems to be peculiarly favourable to such an attempt....Lord Castlereagh is apprehensive, from an attentive perusal of Admiral Campbell’s able paper on the Brasils, that France may lay the foundation not only of her own power in the Spanish Colonies, but render the Brasils not tenable even with our military aid to the Portuguese Government.’⁵⁸

Years later, reviewing the issue of intervention, Wellington, perhaps with the clarity of hindsight argued that he had always found efforts to stir up South American revolution ill-conceived, as he stated, ‘I always had a horror of revolutionizing any country for a political object. I always said, if they rise of themselves, well and good, but do not stir them up; it is a fearful responsibility.’⁵⁹ Regardless of the many and, seemingly convincing arguments against intervention, Castlereagh remained committed, arguing in 1808 that a military expedition, regardless of the risk of South America becoming ‘democratic and revolutionary’ was justified in strategic terms.⁶⁰ Lord Castlereagh believed that Britain should use its naval capabilities to prevent competing European powers from establishing hegemony in South America, and thus its policy should be ‘creating and supporting an amicable and local government, with which those commercial relations may freely subsist which it is alone our interest to aim at, and which the people of South America must equally desire.’⁶¹

With time, however, Castlereagh was forced to accept ‘the silent and imperceptible path of commercial penetration.’⁶² In a letter, dated 3 August 1812, Lord Harrowby argued that ‘it seems to me that we should secure a good deal to ourselves, and open a considerable market to South America, if we could prevail upon the Spanish Government to propose that, during the war with

⁵⁷ Thomas Douglas, ‘Observations on the proposed expedition against Spanish America.’ 7 June 1806, (BL Add. MSS 37886, ff. 16-17).

⁵⁸ Memorandum for Cabinet Measures suggested respecting South America, St. James Square, December 21, 1807 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, viii, p. 98).

⁵⁹ Philip Henry, *Notes of Conversation with the Duke of Wellington 1831-1851*, (London, 1918), p. 69.

⁶⁰ Memorandum, 1 May 1807 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, vii, pp. 320-321).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Matthew Brown, (ed.), *Informal Empire in Latin America: Culture, Commerce, and Capital* (Oxford, 2008), p. 37.

France, the commerce of Great Britain, or of any other friendly nation, should be carried on with Spanish America upon the same footing as it is now carried on with Old Spain, perhaps admitting further a considerable difference of duties in favour of Spanish goods, or even of goods brought in Spanish ships.⁶³ This commercial emphasis, which manifested itself most specifically in an avoidance of overly specific obligations to either side, formed the core of British policy for many years.⁶⁴ As Ronald Hyam has argued, Canning had no choice but to ‘follow the line of policy set out by Castlereagh’ in South America, a line which consisted in a reliance ‘on the pervasiveness of British trade, prestige, and example to win general confidence.’⁶⁵

In *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh* Webster makes several distinct, if perhaps misleading, arguments concerning Castlereagh’s South American policy, including the assertion that the role of the United States in the emergence of independent states in South America was essentially non-existent. Webster instead quotes approvingly from a Portuguese historian who argued that ‘the emancipation of Latin America was performed without any positive help from the United States.’⁶⁶ His emphasis on American ‘passivity’ while true of American military intervention, misleads by failing to address the degree to which South American revolutionaries consciously mimicked America’s successful revolutionary model, to the point of copying constitutional forms. The echoes of American revolutionary method, ideology, and rhetoric were obvious, and would certainly have had some effect on British foreign policy.⁶⁷ Additionally,

⁶³ Memorandum on the commercial relations between Great Britain and Spanish America, July 1809 (PRONI D3030/3373).

⁶⁴ Domestic pressure groups, especially the abolitionists, also played a role in shaping Castlereagh’s policy towards Spain and South America. An excellent example can be seen when Castlereagh pushed the Foreign Office’s representatives in Spain to ‘press the Spanish Government to give us some more facilities on the Slave Trade...the nation is bent upon this object, I believe there is hardly a village that has not met and petitioned upon it, both Houses of Parliament are pledged to press it; and the Ministers must make it the basis of their policy.’ *Castlereagh Correspondence*, x, p. 73.

⁶⁵ Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century: A Study of Empire and Expansion, 1815-1914* (New York, 1976), p. 57; Seymour Drescher, ‘Whose Abolition? Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave Trade’, *Past and Present*, 143, p. 164; This position was to remain consistent in the following decades. See ‘Hood to Lord Aberdeen, London 24 February 1830,’ (FO 51/6); Castlereagh’s colonial policy towards South America, regardless of Canning’s grandiose claims on the topic, remained British policy for many years.⁶⁵ Distinctly, Castlereagh-style efforts in South America, such as the establishment of an Uruguayan elite, clearly within the English sphere of influence led to accusations by U.S. Diplomat John Forbes of secretive efforts by the British to establish ‘a colony in disguise.’ William Manning (ed.), ‘John Forbes, 21 June 1826’ *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States Concerning the Independence of the Latin-American States*, i, (New York, 1925), p. 654.

⁶⁶ De Oliveira Lima, *The Evolution of Brazil compared with that of Spanish and Anglo-Saxon America*, p. 64. Cited in, Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 406.

⁶⁷ Robert Freeman, ‘The American Revolution and Latin America: An Essay in Imagery, Perceptions, and Ideological Influence’ *Smith Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 20/4 (1978), pp. 421-441.

Webster makes the argument that Castlereagh's efforts in South America 'reveal him at his highest as a diplomatist-courageous, far-seeing, tactful, and fertile in expedients to meet new and unknown contingencies.'⁶⁸

While Castlereagh did work on Anglo-South American relations for nearly the entire length of his career in the Foreign Office, his policies were not altogether successful. Of the many efforts which Castlereagh put forward, the most distinctive, by far, was his effort towards establishing monarchies over the newly independent states in South America. While, each of the great powers had contemplated 'granting independence under European princes to the Spanish provinces of America' Castlereagh was almost certainly first when in 1807 he proposed 'installing the Duke d'Orléans on the throne of Buenos Aires.'⁶⁹ By providing British support for anti-Iberian, yet monarchist forces, Castlereagh hoped to separate the new states, both from their former colonial masters, and from the American sphere of influence. Castlereagh, however, was not the only diplomat pushing for monarchies in South America. In a 21 June 1819 letter, Cathcart informed Castlereagh of an 'overture made by [the] French Government...of exchanging the South American Colonys with a Monarchy...which proposes the separate interference and then application of the influence of the [French] court to bring it into activity. The terms and the spirit in which this overture is rejected will, I think, prove highly satisfactory to HRH the Prince Regent and to his government.'⁷⁰ This had not been the first time that French representatives had attempted to intervene in the region. In a letter from Bagot to Castlereagh, dated 18 October 1816, Bagot describes a meeting, in Philadelphia, during which a Mexican informant had alerted Bagot that a plan was underway for 'Joseph Bonaparte to offer himself as King to the insurgents of Mexico... [and that he was] inclined to believe that his information respecting Joseph Bonaparte's views is correct.'⁷¹ The popularity of such plans lay in their ability to both protect legitimacy and disempower the Iberian states. In the end, however, the majority of South American citizens did not agree with these thoroughly reactionary plans.⁷² Castlereagh's plan did draw some supporters from within the revolutionary movements, including Jose de San Martín, who advocated

⁶⁸ Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 406.

⁶⁹ Rafe Blaufarb, 'The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence' *The American Historical Review*, 112/3 (2007), p. 33.

⁷⁰ Cathcart to Castlereagh, 21 June 1819 (PRONI D3030/ 5731).

⁷¹ Bagot to Castlereagh, 2 October 1816 (PRONI D3030/5073).

⁷² Webster, interestingly, argued that a monarchist South America could have succeeded 'as well or better than the republics which finally survived.' Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 406.

monarchy. Although not broadly popular Castlereagh's monarchist initiative in South America, eventually, if indirectly, bore fruit in the 1822 declaration of the Empire of Brazil.

The underlying emphasis of British diplomatic relations with the emerging nations of South America is illustrated in an 1817 letter from Wellington to Castlereagh, in which he argued that, attention ought to be paid to 'the revolutions in Spanish America [as they] have [influence] upon questions of great interest to Great Britain,' including the status of the Iberian nobility and the possibility of conflict between Spain and Portugal.⁷³ While the revolutionary threats of the Iberian Peninsula posed a significant challenge, even more important to British merchants, was the maintenance of an unusual trade opening brought about by the decline of Iberian control. Castlereagh wrote in 1817, that 'the avowed and true policy of Great Britain, is to 'appease controversy, and to secure, if possible, for all states a long interval of repose.'⁷⁴ In the midst of the postwar economic crisis, Castlereagh's South American policy relied upon, in part, allowing the conflict to go unresolved.⁷⁵ There is no evidence that Castlereagh promoted the extension of the conflict for trade purposes, however Castlereagh's desire to maintain both trade access in South America and a stable alliance in Europe led him to unintentionally foster an extended period of stalemate between Spain and her American colonies. According to Blaufarb, 'like European intervention, recognition [of the South American states] would upset the balance that [Castlereagh] was trying to preserve, dash any hope of compromise, polarize the international community, and produce changes that none could foresee.'⁷⁶ This delay was not without risk, as it created an unintentional power vacuum, which Castlereagh feared would provide an opening for America to expand her sphere of influence into the region. As part of an effort to prevent this from happening, Castlereagh specifically warned John Quincy Adams, that if America decided to begin 'pursuing a system of encroachment upon [her] neighbors,' Britain would be prepared to pursue military options.⁷⁷ This warning was enough to prevent a direct American intervention in the region and it

⁷³ Wellington to Castlereagh, 19 December 1817 (PRONI D3030/5565).

⁷⁴ Lord Castlereagh to Charles Bagot, London, 11 November 1817 (FO, 5/120).

⁷⁵ John Quincy Adams described the situation in a letter to the American Ambassador to Russia, George Campbell. 'The revolution in South America had opened a new World to [Britain's] commerce, which the restoration of the Spanish colonial dominion, would again close against her. [Britain's] cabinet therefore devised a middle term, a compromise between legitimacy and traffic.' Adams to Campbell, 28 June 1818, Worthington Ford, (ed.), *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, iv, (New York, 1916), p. 377.

⁷⁶ Rafe Blaufarb, 'The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence' *The American Historical Review*, 112/3 (2007), p. 25.

⁷⁷ Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, pp. 290–291.

was only after Castlereagh's death in 1822, once the state of Florida had been formally ceded to the United States that American diplomats began to take an increasingly muscular position on Britain's role in South America. However, by this point, Castlereagh's delaying, be it tactical or otherwise, had had an enormous effect. By doing nothing, Castlereagh had managed, perhaps unintentionally to ensure the best possible situation for British interests in South America, without expending nearly any effort or gold.⁷⁸

While Anglo-American relations were placed on an increasingly stable footing in the years following the Ghent treaty, a divergence of interests emerged as the Spanish and Portuguese colonies dissolved across South America. These new states, many fired by the republicanism of the American Revolution, offered a truly baffling series of conflicting diplomatic problems to Lord Castlereagh's Foreign Office. If Britain allowed America to dominate the chaotic South American situation, it would be difficult to regain a foothold in the region, and would furthermore ensure a naval buildup by the United States, likely to pose a threat to British maritime interests in the long run.⁷⁹

In retrospect it is clear that besides Alexander Hamilton, and several others of mildly imperial disposition, the United States' government had neither the desire nor the capability of seriously expanding into Central, South, or even Caribbean America. To many observers in Westminster this would have not been clear. With the rapid expansion brought by the Louisiana Purchase as well as moves into Spanish Florida, American hunger for territory seemed inexhaustible. Just as the lengthy continental war had provided enormous opportunities for British colonial expansion, America too was taking advantage of the declining fortunes of France and Spain, to create for herself an unprecedentedly large, contiguous state. Castlereagh, therefore, had not only to be concerned with containment. He also had to prevent the decline of Spanish power in the western hemisphere, from leading to American expansion. In addition, although Spanish cooperation with Britain during the later years of the Napoleonic Wars had been central to British efforts, as rebellions in South America opened trade opportunities, Britain increasingly had to

⁷⁸ William W. Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America, 1804–1828*, (New Haven, 1951), pp. 105-113.

⁷⁹ This was, to an even more pressing degree, the case as well in the West Indies, where Castlereagh supported slave populations in order to prevent American expansion into the region. As he wrote in a letter to Bathurst, 'I should prefer Blacks to Americans.' Henry Bathurst, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst* (London, 1923), p. 485.

calculate the expediency of siding with one side over the other. This tenuous construct forced Britain to maintain a complex balancing act, both defending Spanish continental interests, while it undermining their colonial holdings.

Britain's unique role in Spain during the Peninsular Wars helped to establish its influence on the Spanish government. In 1811, when it became clear that the Prince Regent of Spain was nearly bankrupt, Britain used its influence, and to some extent the proximity of its army, to step in as a mediator between the Spanish crown and the South American rebels. By presenting itself as a disinterested intermediary, Britain was enabled to pursue the dual policies of promoting traditional legitimacy on the continent and expansion of British trade interests in developing economies, newly freed from the strictures of colonial dominance. According to the British plan, Spain would accept a considerably less favorable trade status vis-à-vis the South American states, while South America would be opened up to free trade, which would provide it with a replacement for the faltering economic and political influence from its former colonial masters. This mediation, was simply an attempt by the Foreign Office to establish British interests in both regions. Spain, although without any real power, turned down the British plan, seeking instead direct British military aid in the suppression of republicanism in South America and a continued monopoly on trade within its empire.

Starting in 1812 when Castlereagh began his tenure at the Foreign Office, French power was experiencing the first pangs of its eventual decline. In contrast, with the expulsion of the French in 1813, Spain was entering a period of increasing self-confidence. That self-confidence, however misplaced, prevented Britain and Spain from reaching agreements on the status of its South American colonies. Spanish interest in reestablishing traditional colonial trade monopolies in South America was one of the most difficult aspects of Spain's new-found confidence. While Castlereagh was lecturing Richard Rush on the importance of traditional colonial protections, while simultaneously arguing the value of free trade to Spain.⁸⁰

In the months that followed, Spain was unable to retain her South American holdings but still held out in the hope of retention by offering Britain a share in the monopoly in exchange for

⁸⁰ Bagot to Castlereagh, 8 February 1818 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii, pp. 405-406); Richard Rush, *Memoranda*, pp. 56-64.

military aid.⁸¹ The government, by this point, had become increasingly convinced that Britain's best option lay in pursuing free trade in South America, rather than the complex and likely impossible plan laid out by the Spanish government. However, the long delays in negotiation between the three parties worked in Britain's interest, as the absence of a solution left the situation chaotic, a situation within which, British trade interests could thrive. Meanwhile, Britain continued to aid the insurgencies, both directly via assistance to the rebels, and more indirectly by the assistance provided by former-British military men now serving as mercenaries in the rebel armies. These forms of assistance, which damaged Britain's role as a disinterested mediator, simultaneously prevented Spanish negotiators from growing over-confident. However, after the expulsion of the French army, Spain entered a period of increasingly successful efforts against the rebels, a run of luck that was to last more or less until 1817, when it again became clear, this time with some finality, that Spain would not be able to retake her South American colonies. In response, Castlereagh fell back on his old strategy of waiting.

In the aftermath of the treaty, and Britain's promise to cease aid to the rebels, Castlereagh re-initiated an attempt at opening mediation, in part to maintain British preeminence on the issue and thus to warn off the Americans, as well as other potential mediators in Europe. Although, Castlereagh repeatedly sought to prevent direct American intervention in South America, his greatest ally came in the form of internal American disagreement on the role of the new nation in spreading its form of government to other former colonies. That disagreement, in union with Castlereagh's efforts, helped prevent the issue of American intervention from sparking another Anglo-American crisis. Additionally, through much of this period, American foreign policy, fairly insignificant at the time, was mostly focused on negotiating American claims in Florida. Beyond those concerns, American policy was, at the other end of the spectrum still concerned, not only with British intervention in the new world, but also with the manner in which the United States was treated by the British government. As such, American foreign policy was dominated, in part, by its need to be assured and to assure other new republics of their legitimacy. This need, however,

⁸¹ This unwillingness to pursue a monopoly with the South American states, however, did not reassure Americans, as Bradford Perkins has argued 'Castlereagh's promise not to seek a commercial monopoly never quite convinced the Americans' as 'each nation was anxious to secure a predominant share of [the] market.' Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams*, p. 298; This reluctance may have resulted, in part, from the mercantilism evidenced during Britain's brief occupation of the Río de la Plata in 1806-1807. Matthew Brown, (ed.), *Informal Empire in Latin America: Culture, Commerce, and Capital*, p. 37.

was not fully resolved until 1822 when the United States began to appoint and send diplomatic representatives to the emerging South American states.

Because of Castlereagh's decision to pursue a South American policy rooted in free trade, and not in the maintenance of Spanish colonial monopolies, Spain was forced to search elsewhere in Europe for assistance in maintaining its colonial dominance in the new world. Spanish offers of special trade concessions, in addition to the emotionally appealing nature of intervention, brought Russia briefly into Spanish plans for a South American *reconquista*, however, practical issues as well as firm Anglo-Austrian resistance, prevented Russian involvement from moving forward.⁸²

In March 1817, Brougham attacked a recent proclamation against trade with the South American rebels, forcing Castlereagh to reaffirm British commitment to neutrality. By the end of that summer, with Bolivar well-established at Angostura, in Venezuela, domestic calls for support became more evident. Amongst the many new British supporters of Bolivar's cause, the foremost were General Robert Wilson, who had served in Portugal, and the Duke of Sussex. The increase in arms shipments in that year was also an indicator of the extent to which the South American colonies were gaining an advantage, and British efforts to remain neutral were becoming more difficult to sustain, especially as illicit arms shipments to the rebels increased in size and number.⁸³ In a letter, dated 6 August, Liverpool asked Castlereagh to 'seriously consider' the question of allowing British officers on half-pay to serve as officers to the South American insurgents. After giving a long series of historical examples of acceptable service in foreign armies, he pronounces himself to have 'no decided opinion upon this subject.'⁸⁴ Fueled by press from the *Courier*, popular support for the rebellion reached an all-time high in the early months of 1817. Eric Lambert has argued that the 1817 resumption of interest in intervention in South America was rooted in the fact that 'about this time...the Duke of Wellington arrived from France...pondering

⁸² Mark Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and its Legacy* (New York, 2013), p. 198.

⁸³ In a letter on the subject, Clancarty described the nature of arms exports from the Netherlands, thus: 'I [have] little doubt that arms are frequently shipped from [Ostend] and other ports in the Netherlands whose ultimate destination is the Spanish revolting Colonies the usual cause is as I am informed for the vessels to clear out for some port in France, in the first instance; and so lately as the 23d the L'Eugene, Capt Flaubart a French kapel laden with muskets sailed from Ostend for Nantes where it is believed her cargo will be deposited for the purpose of being afterwards reshipped on board of other vessels for the use of the S. American insurgents. I know not how any intermission can be given to this trade, by any effort we can make in this Country.' Clancarty to Castlereagh, 29 August 1817 (PRONI D3030/5447).

⁸⁴ 'British Officers serving with the Insurgents' Lord Liverpool to Lord Castlereagh, 6 August 1817 (PRONI D3030/5440/1).

the problem of disbanding his vast army of occupation.⁸⁵ By autumn of 1818, it was becoming evident that Spain would not regain its colonial holdings.⁸⁶ Throughout this period of growing certainty, Castlereagh maintained a strict policy of neutrality. In 1819, with the passage of a new Foreign Enlistment Act, Britain continued to signal, perhaps disingenuously a desire to facilitate reconciliation between the South American rebels and their Iberian counterparts.

In the final years of his life, Castlereagh continued to promote the creation of independent monarchies in South America and in July 1820, he presented a blanket offer of recognition to any South American state that declared itself an independent monarchy. By 1822, however, on the verge of American recognition of the South American states, Britain was forced to change its tack, finally dropping its goal of establishing monarchies across the continent, in order to maintain access to lucrative emerging South American markets, using the renewal of the 1822 Navigation Acts as a pretext for delaying the process of recognition as long as possible. On 28 June 1822 Castlereagh urged Spain to 'be aware that so large a portion of the world cannot, without fundamentally disturbing the intercourse of civilized society, long continue without some recognized and established relations.'⁸⁷ Castlereagh then proceeded to open negotiations to ensure a united Anglo-French position on both political and economic policy towards South America.

Castlereagh, while a capable manager of events, was most successful in South America in his benign neglect. British merchants, by providing needed supplies to the new states kept the rebellion alive and provided British manufactures with an expanded supply of consumers. If economic conditions in Britain had allowed Castlereagh to fully pursue his South American policy, the outcome would have been radically different and likely far more reactionary.

Castlereagh's success in preventing South America from falling into the American sphere of influence was greatly aided by the 'sheer volume' of British trade.⁸⁸ American exports, at this time, were minimal and limited to low quality raw products such as cotton, flour, and marked-up goods originating in Britain. In certain former colonies, such as Cuba, proximity allowed American exports to achieve predominance over their British competitors, but this was hardly the case in

⁸⁵ Eric Lambert, 'Irish Soldiers in South America, 1818-30' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 58/232 (1969), p. 378.

⁸⁶ *Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, pp. 76-78.

⁸⁷ Charles Webster, *Latin America*, ii, p. 388.

⁸⁸ John Roberts, *Revolution and Improvement: The Western World, 1775-1847* (Berkeley, 1976), pp.184-185.

most of the South and Central American states. Indeed, it has been pointed out that British naval power, which guaranteed that stability of British trade to South America, was less influential than the sheer force of the economic power of British trade itself.⁸⁹ As such, Castlereagh had little ability to control the tempo of events, which were driven by British trade. At the same time Spain, in its weakened economic state, could not persist in holding the colonies, regardless of its intentions to the contrary. As demonstrated by events on the ground, even Spanish victories could not hinder the unstoppable progress of British merchandise to its South American customers. Castlereagh largely failed to see the fundamental weakness of his position, and allowed his South American policy to be dominated rather by his need to limit the expense of maintaining the European Alliance along with his emotional reaction to the ideas of rebellion and republicanism. Another component of British involvement in South America was the importance of gold. With growing concern over the value of British currency, the possibility of augmenting gold supplies became increasingly important to British policymakers.⁹⁰

Castlereagh's Buffer State System in Asia

In the immediate postwar era, Castlereagh, primarily interested in creating anti-French buffer states, pushed a pro-Dutch foreign policy with the signing of the 1814 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. At the colonial level, this effort translated into the return of Dutch colonial holdings, as part of a long-term process of strengthening the Dutch economy, and as a result, its deterrent capabilities.⁹¹ In particular, this involved the return of the Dutch East Indies, a decision which would prove

⁸⁹ H. S. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 86.

⁹⁰ The relationship between Britain's emerging markets and monetary policies is highlighted in a letter to Grey, dated 14 October 1821, Ponsonby argued that 'it is an admitted fact that among the causes of existing difficulties, the change in the value of the circulating medium, is one of great power-all debts and contracts and taxes are affected by it and the state, the greatest of debtors, pays more in value than it borrowed and the same taxes demand for their payment a larger share of the produce of labour than they did before- the remedy in part for these evils and many others would be found in lowering the relative value of the circulating medium; the only sound method of doing that, is by increasing the quantity of the precious metals. The contest between Spain and South America seems near its end-the Americans must be desirous of extracting as much produce as possible from these Gold and Silver mines and I imagine it would be easy to induce any Govt. that may exist amongst them to employ British capital and British skill in working the mines and equally [ready] to find British capital and skill ready to be employed. Probably by the mere affording of facilities to the two parties would be sufficient. I possess but little information upon which I rely, on the subject, but believe that even moderate skill would multiply many fold the present produce of the mines. The effect of a great augmentation of such commodities in the market upon England need hardly be alluded to. Ponsonby to Grey, Naples, 14 October 1821 (DUL GRE/E/489/1A/6).

⁹¹ Temperley attributed Castlereagh's decision to return Dutch territory after the war, to an ignorance of Asian geography. Harold Temperley, *Life of Canning*, (New York, 1905), p. 129.

unpopular amongst British merchants.⁹² When the buffer state plan went into effect, in 1814, Castlereagh was still entirely preoccupied by the need to limit French power. However, as the pressures from the British commercial interest strengthened, Castlereagh's effort on behalf of the Netherland's colonial holdings, could not be sustained. Castlereagh's pro-Dutch policy eventually led to open rebellion from the emerging British trade interests in the region.

In the years that followed the war, Anglo-Dutch competition in the region resumed its former tension.⁹³ However, as British sea-power increased local British interests sought to expand their access to Dutch ports in the East Indies.⁹⁴ Tensions increased exponentially as Anglo-Chinese trade accelerated, making the East Indies an important stop on that trade route, as British ships passed through the straits of Malacca. In addition, Dutch authorities, returned to power by Castlereagh's strategic goals and largess, were proving uncooperative with local British businessmen. By late 1816, the Foreign Office became involved after British shipping interests expressed a concern that the Dutch might attempt to exclude British trade with Java. In response Castlereagh formulated the outlines of a plan to erect consular posts in the East Indies in order to establish a more direct means of countering Dutch moves against British trade interests in the region.

Castlereagh's policy of seeking to minimize Dutch concerns, while simultaneously establishing a regional colony set the stage for Stamford Raffles' unauthorized acquisition of Singapore. In January of 1819 a consortium of British businessmen, took matters into their own hands, and persuaded Lord Hastings, the Governor General of India, to accept Raffles' occupation of Singapore.⁹⁵ Castlereagh desired that Britain would receive from the Netherlands 'some explicit avowal of [their] views and pretensions [and wished to understand] by what rules of intercourse the Netherlands government proposes to consider the rights and authority of that state to be restrained or modified towards the subjects of other powers frequenting those seas.'⁹⁶ Although Anglo-Dutch negotiations were largely managed by George Canning and Lord Clancarty, the

⁹² Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, p. 15; John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 360.

⁹³ Anthony Webster, *Gentleman Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia 1770-1890* (New York, 1998), p. 89.

⁹⁴ Nicholas Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World 1780-1824*, pp. 70-75.

⁹⁵ Harold Temperley, *Life of Canning*, p. 129; Lady Sophia Raffles, (ed.), *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* ii, (London, 1835), p. 6.

⁹⁶ Nicholas Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry*, pp. 104-105.

British Ambassador to the Hague, Castlereagh sought to retain some control, as proven by his lengthy policy letters on the topic of Anglo-Dutch relations in the East Indies. Castlereagh's policy of moderation, helped to smooth over the often difficult process of shifting away from his earlier support of Dutch colonial power, and helped to peacefully rectify, in the eyes of British business interests, the 'mistakes' of his immediate postwar policy in the East Indies. While Dutch representatives made clear that they had no interest in establishing sovereignty over the East Indies, they also claimed that all previous agreements, including prewar treaties remained in effect in the reestablished Dutch East Indies. As such, this was a *de facto* assertion of sovereignty, and undermined their assertions to the contrary.⁹⁷ Regardless of this fact, the India Board, wishing to minimize expense and maintain relative peace in a region already made dangerous by piracy, decided to favor the establishment of new colonial territories in the region, rather than challenging Dutch holdings, a policy that ensured relative stability in the region and led to the eventual creation of British Malaysia in 1824.

While the British government had abandoned its colonial holdings in modern day Indonesia, in India, a different process was at work. With the passage of the Charter Act of 1813, the East India Company lost its monopoly on trade, while Britain asserted crown control and extended the rights of missionaries in India.⁹⁸ Conservatives, many of whom supported the continuation of the monopoly, maintained a distinctive perspective on the East India Company. Rather than understanding the revocation in terms of free trade or colonial preference, the tendency was to argue for the traditional rights of chartered companies.⁹⁹ Beyond traditional rights, Tory perspectives on colonial preference were often rooted in an autarkic foundation, itself determined by Britain's experiences during the Napoleonic era. On the opposite side, merchants from outside London helped push for an end of the monopoly, primarily on commercial grounds.¹⁰⁰ While both

⁹⁷ Confusion over the nature of Dutch sovereignty has been addressed in detail. See Elisabeth Locher-Scholten, *Sumatran Sultanate and Colonial State: Jambi and the Rise of Dutch Imperialism* (Ithaca, NY, 2004), p. 33.

⁹⁸ Margaret Makepeace, *The East India Company's London Workers* (Rochester, NY, 2010), p. 3; Castlereagh had earlier resisted pressures from mission agencies for government support. John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 190.

⁹⁹ *Hansard*, xxv, cc. 422-429.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, xxii, cc. 111-112.

sides utilized Adam Smith's economic theory to bolster their arguments, commercial interests ruled supreme.¹⁰¹

A Transitional African Policy

Africa, although not the central venue of colonial expansion that it would become later in the nineteenth century, had already emerged as an economically important region during the immediate postwar era. Castlereagh's foreign policy towards emerging markets was firmly rooted in his desire for equilibrium in Europe, and North Africa was no exception. Thus Castlereagh's North African policy, post-Congress of Vienna, was largely concerned with the effects of North African-based piracy on the stability of Sardinia, a state essential to Castlereagh's plan for its role as a Mediterranean buffer between France and the Italian states.¹⁰² As such, those concerns drove Castlereagh to offer Sardinia the assistance of British naval protection, subsequently Castlereagh sent Lord Exmouth with a fleet in 1816 to defend against Barbary attacks.¹⁰³ Writing to Bathurst, Castlereagh argued that the move would ensure that 'the flag and commerce of His Sardinian Majesty shall be hereafter respected by the powers of Barbary equally with those of Great Britain.'¹⁰⁴ Castlereagh's policy in Sardinia had the added benefit of providing increased protection against Barbary Pirate attacks for the inhabitants of Britain's newly acquired holdings in the Ionian Islands.¹⁰⁵ By expanding the rights of Englishmen to the Ionian populations, Castlereagh consolidated the emerging power dynamic between British trade interests in the Mediterranean and the declining powers of North African piracy.¹⁰⁶ Thus Castlereagh's policy vis-à-vis North Africa had two distinct approaches towards projecting power. One approach was quite traditional, and simply offered British rights to the Ionian population. The other, offered to

¹⁰¹ Interestingly, Adam Smith's argument that India's caste system represented 'the most complete system of division of labor that has ever been' helped to ensure British recognition of the institution. Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, p. 748.

¹⁰² Adams, *Memoirs*, pp 354-355.

¹⁰³ Castlereagh, however, was concerned that the United States might misinterpret British naval action against the Barbary pirates as threatening. Adams was summoned by Castlereagh on 12 May 1816 to explain British intentions to him. During this meeting, Castlereagh shared Exmouth's orders with Adams. Adams, *Memoirs*, pp. 353-360.

¹⁰⁴ Castlereagh to Bathurst, 29 January 1816 (FO 8/2, f. 21).

¹⁰⁵ Castlereagh, however, treated Exmouth's role in the Mediterranean as strictly defensive. Although Adams wished for Britain's 'naval force' so that 'the Christian world should never more hear of tribute, ransom, or slavery' Castlereagh 'thought that mild and moderate measures and persuasion would be better calculated to produce this effect than force.' Adams, *Memoirs*, pp. 354, 358.

¹⁰⁶ Many of the arguments presented in this section find their roots in Nicholas Harding's 'North African Piracy, the Hanoverian Carrying Trade, and the British State, 1728-1828'

Sardinia, granted self-determination, with British naval protection, in order to safeguard Britain's interest in a stable series of European buffer-states. Together, these methods were to inform much of Castlereagh's approach towards emerging markets and new colonies.¹⁰⁷

At the same time that Britain was altering its North African policy, the issue of the slave trade was emerging as a central plank in British foreign policy.¹⁰⁸ Castlereagh, who earlier in his career had opposed the abolition of the slave trade on the grounds that it would be meaningless without general enforcement, became a very efficient supporter in the aftermath of the abolition of the slave trade.¹⁰⁹ Wilberforce himself praised Castlereagh's efforts, despite their earlier disagreement over the issue.¹¹⁰ Once Castlereagh's efforts had essentially stamped out the British trade in slaves, Wilberforce and his followers shifted to an effort at ending the trade elsewhere as well. During the postwar negotiations Castlereagh pushed, moderately, for concessions from the continental powers. The degree to which this was a result of pressure from abolitionists is unclear. However, it is clear that abolitionist pressure did complicate Britain's negotiating position.¹¹¹

The spread of abolitionism was inextricably linked with rising British interest in missionary work.¹¹² With the advent of the revolutionary era, the traditionally Catholic, and specifically Jesuit, dominated field of Christian overseas missions began to experience a wave of Protestant interest.¹¹³ The first step in this process occurred in 1759 when the Society of Jesus was suppressed by the Vatican, eventually leading to an outright Papal ban in 1773. As the Catholic

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas B. Harding, 'North African Piracy, the Hanoverian Carrying Trade, and the British State, 1728-1828,' *The Historical Journal*, vol. 43, No. 1 (March 2000), pp. 25-47.

¹⁰⁸ Castlereagh understood British policy on the Barbary pirates and slavery as connected and distinctly diplomatic problems. Arguing that just as the government had not 'felt justified in resorting to war to compel [abolition in Spain and Portugal] they 'could not make war on the Barbary States to force them to renounce the practice of making slaves.' Adams, *Memoirs*, p. 358; Maeve Ryan has argued that the emergence of international abolitionism as a major foreign policy goal was a result of 'a British population overwhelmed by abolitionist fervour' and that the Liverpool administration adopted this plank as it would have been 'politically unthinkable [to do otherwise for] a government that wished to stay in office.' Maeve Ryan, 'The abolition of the West African slave trade', Brendan Simms, et al, (eds.), *Humanitarian Intervention*, p. 235.

¹⁰⁹ Castlereagh argued in 1807 that slavers would simply continue to 'import contrary to the wish and order of parliament, and the number of deaths would most probably be increased.' *Hansard* ix, c. 138.

¹¹⁰ John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 394.

¹¹¹ Abolitionist, in the wake of the ban, had a further impact in the pressure they brought to bear on Castlereagh personally, forcefully urging Britain to retain territories, such as the Gold Coast, which due to their specialization in the slave trade, lost value in the wake of abolition. Zachery Macaulay to Castlereagh, May 8, 1807 (CO 267/24). These territories were retained, in spite of economic pressure in order to facilitate the transformation of local African economies.

¹¹² Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (New York, 2008), pp. 121-124.

¹¹³ Brian Stanley, (ed.), *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 2.

nations of the continent were riven by conflict, often religious in nature, Britain increasingly emerged as a missionary-sending superpower. The decline of Catholic missions was further exacerbated by Napoleon's 1809 ban on French missionaries. Traditionally ambivalent towards missionary work, Britain rapidly shifted in the 1790s with an enormous rise in the number of Protestant missionary agencies. While earlier, proto-missionary agencies such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge had existed for some time, the earliest examples were intended almost exclusively to ensure the continuing influence of the Anglican Church within the English colonial populations. In addition to the rising role of the Anglican Church, non-conformist Protestants, trained in evangelical work within Britain itself, established themselves as powerful forces in the early years of Britain's missionary movement. In 1792, the English Baptist Society was founded. This was followed by the creation of the London Missionary Society (1795), the Scottish Missionary Society (1796), and the Church Missionary Society (1799). This early wave of missionary groups were followed by a continuing consolidation of missionary organizations and the rise of similar associations in the United States including the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810) and the American Baptist Missionary Society (1814).

Much of this first wave of Protestant missionary activity was facilitated by the rise of abolitionism amongst the evangelical wing of the Anglican Church and amongst non-conformists.¹¹⁴ The organizational structures which emerged from the abolitionist movement when combined with the rise of Evangelicalism brought about a dramatic ideological shift. However, it was not until that shift could be supported by the Royal Navy's protection that the missionary movement moved into high gear. Evangelicalism itself emerged specifically from the French Revolution's ferocious anti-Christian message, its destruction of churches, and its overwhelming violence. The Christian church across Europe was forced to reconsider its own permanence in ways it had not for millennia. This self-searching gave rise to a period of eschatological fixation, common within the church since its inception, during times of crisis. It was this sense of the looming eschaton that in some part pushed the tempo of social justice measures, such as abolition. Evangelicalism was rooted in a fear of a potentially imminent apocalypse, a fear that also helped to place Biblical analysis at the center of the movement. This study helped to propel an increasingly strong drive to provide Bibles in translation to the developing world. As the long war with France

¹¹⁴ Gelien Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement* (Baton Rouge, 2006), p. 129.

drew to a close, British self-confidence grew with it, and that self-confidence informed the growth of the missionary movement during the following decades.

Castlereagh's conduct on the issue of the abolition of the slave trade bears many of the hallmarks of his political style: gradualism and an interest in nascent international law.¹¹⁵ Seeing the issue through the lens of high politics Castlereagh was less apt than his Clapham sect compatriots to push through abolition quickly. Initially, during the 1805-1806 period, Castlereagh objected on the grounds that British naval power being what it was that it would be impossible to prevent the trade from simply shifting away from British-flagged ships.¹¹⁶ Although he was supported by Wilberforce and consistently favored eventual abolition, Castlereagh was criticized for timidity and sluggishness.¹¹⁷ After the final conclusion of the slave trade in Britain, accomplished in 1811, Castlereagh increasingly had to deal with pressure to expand suppression outside of Britain. In the following years Castlereagh, under pressure from the Saints began a concerted effort to push for an end to the slave trade first in Sweden and then in France. Castlereagh's ability to gain concessions on the issue in the immediate postwar era was hampered by concern over French sensibilities, especially the fear that too much pressure might lead to greater French recalcitrance. This concern, however, proved of little importance, as Napoleon's return and subsequent ban on slavery made the issue moot. Napoleon cynically approved the measure with the purpose of appealing to European liberals. In the aftermath of the Hundred Days, Castlereagh continued to struggle with accomplishing any sort of European unity on the topic of common action against the slave trade.

Castlereagh's efforts against slavery included three distinct diplomatic tools. The first, and most important, were treaty agreements with the great powers of Europe and with America. These treaties established, in America's case, a shared obligation to interdict slave ships off the coast of Africa. Secondly, these treaty agreements established a mutual right of search and ability to try captured slavers in national courts. The third, and most important to the history of international

¹¹⁵ During a 23 December 1816 meeting, Lord Castlereagh informed Adams that he believed it 'would be ultimately necessary...that the nations which were agreed upon the abolition should authorize the capture of the slave trading vessels by the armed force of other nations but that the trial should be by Commissioners.' Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 454.

¹¹⁶ *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, vii, p. 546.

¹¹⁷ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 458.

law, established a shared jurisdiction, with special collectively established courts.¹¹⁸ Other types of treaties included those with African tribal groups, reflecting the distinctness of the Liverpool administration's approach to Africa, these treaties treated the tribal groups with a degree of parity, unheard of in later years.¹¹⁹

Larger Trends in Castlereagh's Policy

When examining the sweep of Castlereagh's policies towards emerging markets and former colonial holdings, a series of patterns appear. The first, and most notable, is the overall lack of interest Castlereagh displayed towards extra-European affairs. In many ways, this tendency was an innate aspect of the nature of the early-nineteenth century Foreign Office. Without established embassies and consulates, Castlereagh was forced like his predecessors to rely upon British expatriates for information on the status of international affairs. It is thus no great surprise that Castlereagh's policy initiatives largely failed to accomplish their intended purposes. While Britain's power experienced an enormous degree of growth in the international arena during the post-Napoleonic era, this growth occurred almost wholly in spite of Castlereagh's efforts. Castlereagh's policy, when it existed, towards emerging markets, was rooted in his plans for Europe. The worldwide expansion of the buffer-state system, was largely a failure, expending naval resources in the north Mediterranean, seeking to protect Sardinia and the Ionian Islands from the quickly fading threat of North African attacks. Similarly funds spent to reestablish a Dutch presence in the East Indies, proved both problematic for British interests in the region and brought about numerous complex diplomatic squabbles with the Netherlands that could otherwise have been avoided.

In the Americas, Castlereagh's focus on European affairs, and subsequent mishandling of the negotiations at Ghent, helped to unnecessarily harm Anglo-American relations. Meanwhile in South America, Castlereagh's attempts to establish independent monarchies, failed to treat the Americas as anything but of tertiary importance to his European plans. As a result of these failures, British interests were paradoxically allowed to flourish, primarily in areas that Castlereagh had benignly neglected. One distinct pattern obvious in Castlereagh's extra-European career, is the

¹¹⁸ Adams, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 454.

¹¹⁹ Edward Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy: British Treaty-Making against the Slave Trade in the Early Nineteenth Century' *International Organization*, 61/2 (2007), p. 320.

emergence of a pattern of increasing disengagement. Early during the uprisings in South America, Castlereagh sought to intervene with an expeditionary force, however, with time he grew increasingly interested in a non-interventionist approach. The following chapter, will examine the arc of this trend in Castlereagh's European policy and examine its origins in the economic transformation that was concurrently altering nearly every component of the British government.

Chapter 6

The Congress System, Austerity, and the Shift in Castlereagh's European Policy 1814-1822

Castlereagh's role in the violent suppression of dissent in Ireland and Britain and his affable relationships with despotic governments on the continent have left a permanent stain on his legacy. While Castlereagh's reputation has improved over the past century, an alternate tendency to 'exaggerate the internationalist aspects of his approach to the relations between the Powers' has emerged.¹ While Castlereagh did express an interest in international cooperation, he also persistently pursued the national interest.² C. J. Bartlett dismissed contemporary criticisms of Castlereagh's foreign policy arguing that 'Castlereagh's critics were not interested in international cooperation.'³ However, it is unclear that Castlereagh himself was universally concerned with international cooperation. Indeed, Castlereagh's later career evidences a growing faith in unilateral actions and non-intervention.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of deciphering Castlereagh's foreign policy lies in interpreting which policies should be treated as canonical.⁴ As the previous chapter indicates, Castlereagh's policy towards the non-European world underwent an ideological arc as he gradually shifted from a strategic to a commercial emphasis. This flexibility, rather than being understood as a fault can rather be seen as an important asset to Castlereagh's foreign policy, as he reacted to parliamentary and cabinet level pressure to alter his approaches. This chapter presents evidence that, similar to his South American policy, Castlereagh's approach to Europe shifted from a highly interventionist, wartime ideology rooted in Grenville's vision of a confederated Europe to *de facto*

¹ John Derry, *Castlereagh*, pp. 12-13.

² Derry argues that this policy can be summarized as the belief that 'collective security was a necessary insurance against any renewal of French aggression...linked with revolutionary ideology, [without]...*carte blanche* to meddle in the internal affairs of the various states of Europe.' Derry, *Castlereagh*, p. 14.

³ According to Bartlett, this opposition may be rooted in 'blindness or deliberate intent' by those who 'failed to distinguish between the Quadruple and Holy Alliances.' While twentieth century scholarship, in general, made this delineation, the connections between the two were numerous, and while distinct, the two organizations were rooted in shared origins. C. J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh*, p. 202.

⁴ One persistent difficulty in understanding Castlereagh's thought lies in his preference for 'frank conversation' over 'official notes'. Richard Rush, *Memoranda*, p. 57.

isolationism. This policy pivot was derived, in turn, from his somewhat tepid, willingness to acknowledge the post-Hundred Days shift in political mood.

Additionally, this chapter explores changing power dynamics, within the cabinet. With Castlereagh's return from the Congress of Vienna, his relationship with the Prime Minister had become tense, as Liverpool 'found his Foreign Secretary wanting.'⁵ Castlereagh's long-absence in Vienna had left him unaware of the degree of change that had occurred in the domestic political arena. The government's concerns over debt incurred during the final military campaign of the war and Castlereagh's subsidy spending had been exacerbated by a rising tide of public opposition. The differences of opinion between Castlereagh and Liverpool continued and during Castlereagh's absence at Aix-la-Chapelle, Canning superseded the Foreign Secretary as the dominant foreign policy voice in the cabinet. This process reached its dénouement with the circulation of the 1820 State Paper, in which Castlereagh appears to have embraced Canning's austerity-influenced vision for Britain's foreign policy.⁶

The complex power dynamics within the cabinet have led to some conflict in the historiography. John Bew has argued that the foreign policies of Canning and Castlereagh should be treated as largely similar. As he has asserted, 'it is highly misleading...to see George Canning's appointment as Foreign Secretary as signaling a significant new departure in British foreign policy.'⁷ Canning himself, however believed that his 'arrangements [for the Foreign Office] taken together...will amount to a revirement of the whole system.'⁸ Some scholars, such as Bartlett and Bobbitt, have taken Canning's assertion at face value and argued that Canning's foreign ministry represented a significant break.⁹ In contrast to these arguments, this chapter contends that while

⁵ John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 389; This division with Liverpool came as his 'rapport with Metternich' was growing. Giles Hunt argues that Metternich and Castlereagh's relationship may have hinged on Castlereagh's 'experience of trying to hold together two very different peoples, the Irish and the English' which made him sympathetic to 'Metternich's desire to hold together the vast, polyglot Austrian Empire.' A sympathy that 'enabled Metternich to influence him towards a more conservative policy.' Giles Hunt, *The Duel*, p. 157.

⁶ Bew likewise argues that Canning 'concurred entirely with the notions expressed in Castlereagh's State Paper of 1820.' *Ibid.* p. 581.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Edward Stapleton, (ed.), *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, (London, 1887), p. 154; Raymond Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service*, p. 31.

⁹ C.J. Bartlett argued, that 'although their analyses of Britain's world interests did not differ, a considerable gulf existed between them as to the means by which these objectives could best be pursued. Where Castlereagh rested his hopes on the Alliance, Canning believed that Britain could disengage herself from continental affairs.' C. J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh*, pp. 264-265. Philip Bobbitt has seen the break as more dramatic, arguing that 'Canning...despised the

Castlereagh's foreign policy *initially* differed significantly from Canning, those distinctions decreased in the aftermath of a major disagreement that occurred during Castlereagh's absence at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, which left Castlereagh marginalized in the cabinet.¹⁰

Charles Webster indisputably did more for Castlereagh studies than any other scholar of the twentieth century. However, that legacy can only be properly understood as complex and in some ways problematic. By reassessing Castlereagh's contributions and allowing for a scholarly re-set from the negativity associated with Castlereagh's nineteenth century legacy, Webster set the tone of twentieth century understandings of Castlereagh's foreign policy. At the same time, Webster's failure to properly contextualize the intellectual climate of early nineteenth-century Britain, often led him to misread events. By seeing novelty and innovation in diplomatic strategies which, to Castlereagh, would have been rooted in tradition and habit, Webster tended to project the concerns of his own context onto the early nineteenth century. Indeed, Webster's misreading of the political conventions of Castlereagh's day has had numerous knock-on effects, such as the widespread misapprehension that 'Britain could have imposed her will on Europe' in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, and that Castlereagh should be lauded for holding back outright British hegemony on the continent.¹¹ Beyond the obvious misunderstanding of how late eighteenth century politicians, such as Castlereagh and his milieu, viewed the conclusion of wars, such arguments are fundamentally rooted in a tendency to see Britain's military power and comparative GDP without accurately assessing the nation's political will and more importantly its ability to continue deficit spending at the rates it reached by the conclusion of the war. Castlereagh, and Mulgrave and Grenville before him, were not held back in asserting British hegemony by morality, or diplomatic innovations, rather they were restrained by the ingrained belief in balance-of-power politics, diplomatic tradition, parliamentary resistance, and a sheer lack of resources.

Congress system, had no relationship with the tsar [and] was determined to reduce the Alliance to its component parts.' Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, p. 171.

¹⁰ *Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, pp. 56-57: While Harold Temperley presented Canning's tenure as bringing reform to the 'whole system' Jones's research indicates that this has been overstated and that his 1824-25 reforms amount to a reduction in the Civil List charge for salaries from £135,850 to £128,900, changes not compatible with Canning's assertions of 'revirement' but rather a moderate, austerity minded reform. Harold Temperley, *Canning*, p.283; Raymond Jones, *British Diplomatic Service*, pp. 59-60.

¹¹ John Ikenberry, *After Victory* (Princeton, 2001), p. 85.

The Origins of Castlereagh's Congress System

One of the most vocal, early supporters of the policies eventually adopted by Castlereagh in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars was Edmund Burke. In 1793 Burke published his *System of Europe*.

SYSTEM OF EUROPE. Europe forms a political system, a body, where the whole is connected by the relations and different interests of Nations inhabiting this part of the world. It is not, as anciently, a confused heap of detached pieces, each of which thought itself very little concerned in the fate of others, and seldom regarded things which did immediately relate to it. The continual attention of Sovereigns to what is on the carpet, the constant residence of ministers, and the perpetual negotiations, make Europe a kind of a Republick, the members of which, though independent, unite, through the ties of common interest, for the maintenance of order and liberty. Hence arose that famous scheme of the political equilibrium, or balance of power; by which is understood such a disposition of things, as no power is able absolutely to predominate, or to prescribe laws to others. Confederacies would be a sure way of preserving the equilibrium, and supporting the liberty of Nations, did all Princes thoroughly understand their true interests, and regulate all their steps for the good of the state.¹²

This text, which popularized many of the core concepts which governed Pitt's plans, was in turn rooted in concepts that can be traced to the 1758 publication of Emer de Vattel's *Law of Nations*.¹³ The historiography of the Congress System yields such extensive results that it is clear that Castlereagh's policies during the Congress of Vienna were rooted in a *zeitgeist* common from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.¹⁴ As Burke put it, many parliamentarians were deeply concerned that, Britain's emerging power might disrupt 'the balance, especially the maritime and commercial balance, both in Europe and the West Indies...from fear of what France may do for Spain hereafter.'¹⁵ Although Burke denigrated such a threat from a state that was 'infinitely weaker than we are' he argued that such a concern pointed to the dangers of Britain's colonial expansion.¹⁶ This expansion increasingly placed Britain in the crosshairs of competitor nations and risked her

¹² Edmund Burke, *Three Memorials on French Affairs: Written in the years 1791, 1792 and 1793* (London, 1797), p. 207.

¹³ Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations: Or, Principles of the Law of Nature Applied to the Conduct and Affairs Of nations and sovereigns* (London, 1797).

¹⁴ For an extensive examination of this subject, See Stephen R. Graubard 'Castlereagh and the Peace of Europe' *Journal of British Studies*, 3/1 (1963), pp. 79-87.

¹⁵ Edmund Burke, *Works*, iii, (London, 1906), p. 447.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

long term security, in favor of the negligible benefits of territorial expansion.¹⁷ Politicians of the era would likely have been exposed to the dangers of colonial expansion highlighted by Burke.¹⁸

Beyond the general Burkean assumptions that undergirded Castlereagh's foreign policy, the rubric of his Congress of Vienna era program was rooted in a long tradition within the Foreign Office, first enunciated by Lord Grenville and later expanded upon by Lord Mulgrave.¹⁹ This plan, which was first proposed on 14 January 1798, when Grenville argued for 'the formation of a system of Quadruple Alliance which should oblige France to conclude a peace with the Empire on terms as favorable as the fatal system adopted by Austria can now admit of and should also lead to the conclusion of a Maritime Peace upon such a footing as could be admitted by this Country.'²⁰ In that same letter, Grenville went on to present the case that 'when general tranquility is thus restored...the four Great Powers should guaranty the then state of their different Possessions and the Mutual Independence & Security of their Governments, and also those of the lesser Powers of Europe against any further aggression from France.'²¹ In a subsequent letter, sent to Elgin on 20 April of that same year, Grenville further expanded upon the theme of his previous correspondence. According to Grenville's plan the four great powers would strike at France with a united front. However, in order for this union of military and diplomatic force to be effective, it was imperative that command structures and decision-making processes be integrated, ideally in one location, so as to avoid the miscommunications which had plagued earlier alliances. In order to achieve this central decision-making organ, Grenville instructed Elgin to create a 'central place

¹⁷ Edmund Burke, *Works*, iii, (London, 1906), p. 447

¹⁸ Webster argued that 'both Pitt and Castlereagh were more interested in constructing the new Europe than in completing the ascendancy of the British Empire in the rest of the world. Their instinct told them that a monopoly of colonial power was unwise.' Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, ii, p. 491. It is here that Webster and the inheritors of his arguments fundamentally misread Castlereagh's foreign policy perspectives. While Webster believed that 'it would have been easy to take the opposite line, but who can doubt that Castlereagh did the wise as well as the right thing in refusing so obvious a temptation' this is not entirely clear. Burke's argument that once France's ideology of expansion had been 'removed it will be a serious question how far her further reduction will contribute to the general safety' set the precedent of generosity in territorial adjustment long before Castlereagh's post-war negotiations began. (Edmund Burke, *Works*, iii, p. 448).

¹⁹ C. J. Bartlett, failing to address the origins of Castlereagh's foreign policy, argued instead that it 'was...one of the most personal ever pursued by a British Foreign Secretary.' C. J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh*, p. 200.

²⁰ The origins of the Congress System are complex and rooted in a wide range of sources. Edward Ingram has identified foreign secretary Lord Mulgrave as the source. Ingram, *In Defense of British India* (London, 1984), pp. 103-114; Ikenberry highlights these differences without supporting one interpretation. John Ikenberry, *After Victory*, p. 100; Graubard's argument that these concepts were extremely widespread seems evidenced by these disagreements. Stephen R. Graubard 'Castlereagh and the Peace of Europe' *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 3, No. 1 (November 1963), pp. 79-87.

²¹ Grenville to Elgin, 14 January 1798 (FO 64/47).

for the residence of Ministers authorized to treat from time to time on all points of common concern with relation to [the war with France].²² According to this plan, the great powers, by ‘concerting together and establishing...a real and sincere understanding...would put all four of them in a position to present in an imposing manner to France the bases of the future tranquility of Europe, founded on whatever arrangements may issue from their discussions.’²³ Grenville saw persistent negotiation as an integral component of his policy recommendations, an aspect which would eventually form the core of Castlereagh’s Congress System.²⁴ Beyond this, however, Grenville’s plan was rooted in a highly interventionist perspective which would also be adopted by Castlereagh, during the first half of his tenure at the Foreign Office. As John Clarke has made clear, ‘Grenville...argued that countries should pledge themselves to interfere in the internal affairs of their neighbors if they believed that changes in the style of government presented a potential threat to international peace. The Great Powers would be committed to using their joint resources to strangle revolution at birth wherever this monstrosity appeared.’²⁵

While Grenville’s vision was not implemented during his time as Foreign Secretary, his plans and the underlying beliefs that shaped them continued to influence Britain’s foreign policy during Lord Mulgrave’s term as foreign minister. Tsar Alexander’s plans, first presented in 1805 to Pitt and later expanded upon in the Holy Alliance treaty contains a number these proposals. Based upon Castlereagh’s use in 1815 of Pitt’s proposals of 1805, some scholars have argued that Castlereagh was responsible for the document, however this remains a matter of conjecture.²⁶ In the later reiteration of the Grenville plan, Pitt argued that European peace should be given, ‘solidity and permanence’ via a ‘treaty to which all the principal powers of Europe should be parties, by which their respective rights and possessions, as they then have been established, shall be fixed

²² Instructions, 20 April 1798 (FO 64/49).

²³ Grenville to Haugwitz, 14 January 1798, (BL Add. MSS 58855, ff. 58-60).

²⁴ Thomas Grenville to Lord Grenville, 22 July 1799, (FO 64/55).

²⁵ John Clarke, *British Diplomacy and Foreign Policy* (London, 1989), p. 97.

²⁶ Edward Ingram, *In Defense of British India*, p. 106; The continuity between Pitt’s policies and those pursued by Castlereagh can be summarized as: 1. French occupied territories should be returned to independent rule. 2. Smaller states should be joined into larger conglomerates capable of successfully countering future French aggression. 3. Austro-Prussian tensions should be minimized. 4. Newly conquered colonies, not being used by the Royal Navy should be treated as bargaining chips in European negotiations. 5. The belief that regular meetings of the great powers could ‘re-establish...a general system of public law in Europe.’ Walter Phillips, *The Confederation of Europe*, p. 152.

and recognized, and they shall all bind themselves mutually to protect and support each other against any attempt to infringe them.’²⁷

Castlereagh’s early plans for Europe were deeply rooted in this long tradition. While Grenville and Mulgrave had been unable to enact their goals, implementation would have brought with it a number of substantial obstacles. As John Clarke has pointed out, ‘a policy of maintaining an active involvement in European affairs carried the risk that one day Britain would have to fulfil its engagements in war’ at a cost it was increasingly unable to pay.²⁸ Indeed, Castlereagh’s adoption of these plans, would go on to put Britain into exactly that sort of risk. Regardless of these dangers, Britain’s enormous military power initially gave Castlereagh *carte blanche* to pursue these long neglected plans, believing that Britain’s military forces on the continent ‘will put an end to any doubts as to the claim we have to an opinion on continental powers.’²⁹ However, Britain, unchecked by Napoleon’s army did not possess unlimited powers, a fact sometimes lost on her allies. As Castlereagh complained to Thornton, ‘it is almost impossible to make foreigners understand the delicacies and difficulties of our parliamentary system.’³⁰

Although Castlereagh was interested in mobilizing British military preeminence in order to pursue his diplomatic goals, he could not, due to increased parliamentary oversight. Castlereagh’s wish to ‘guarantee possessions’ was permanently limited unlike the ‘continental governments...that are amenable to no authority for the prudence of such engagements.’³¹ Castlereagh very obviously wished for the freedoms of his continental counterparts.³² However, as Patrick Geoghegan has argued, by the beginning of the Hundred Days, ‘Castlereagh no longer had full cabinet or Commons support for his conduct.’³³ However, this did not alter his behavior, as he was ‘convinced that he alone knew what was best for the United Kingdom.’³⁴

²⁷ ‘Official Communication made to the Russian Ambassador at London, 19 January 1805’ cited in Charles Webster, *British Diplomacy 1813-1815*, pp. 389-394.

²⁸ John Clarke, *British Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*, p. 145.

²⁹ Castlereagh to Hamilton, 10 March 1814 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, ix, 335-336).

³⁰ Castlereagh to Thornton, 20 October 1812 cited in Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh: 1812-1815*, p. 101.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Castlereagh’s opinion has been critiqued by Philip Bobbitt who argues that the British government ‘did have positive characteristics that Castlereagh understood perfectly...it could take decisions quickly and make commitments over the long term...it was, in short, ideal for the innovation of the Congress.’ Phillip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, p. 163.

³³ Patrick Geoghegan, *Castlereagh*, p. 51.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

In part due to his maverick policy initiatives, Castlereagh was expected to make a full account, after his return to Britain. Parliament increasingly concerned by the ballooning expenditures and interventionist tendencies on display during his time in Vienna, was in no mood to humor him.³⁵ Castlereagh's speech, summarizing his work, functions as statement of the state of Castlereagh's thinking at the time, and as such his 20 March 1815 speech, given on the same day that Napoleon triumphantly returned to Paris, offers important insights into Castlereagh's interventionist phase, and stands as a bookend to the State Paper of 1820. Castlereagh began his speech by offering that it was intended as an 'explanation and defense' of his conduct on the continent. As 'the House were aware that the object of the Congress was to carry into effect the Treaty of Paris' Castlereagh explained that he intended to answer the question of 'whether the allied Governments had fairly and honourably executed the task which they had prescribed to themselves.' Criticism of the government's policies in general, and Castlereagh's conduct in particular had clearly hit their mark, as Castlereagh went on to decry 'the foul calumnies with which the hon. gentleman, doubtless, in misapprehension, had impugned the Government of this country.' At this point, Castlereagh initiated the core of his argument, stating plainly that 'the question which the House would have to decide was, whether a system had been created under which all countries might live in that peace which it was the great object of the confederacy to establish.' To those that argued that the Congress of Vienna had not respected the rights of the lesser powers to their traditional sovereignty, Castlereagh argued that a strict recreation of pre-Revolutionary Europe would be apt 'to recreate the dangers from which Europe had so happily escaped, and without providing any safeguards against their recurrence.' Such a system, Castlereagh derided as a 'confederacy founded on...imbecility.'

It was perfectly understood, during the whole of the negotiations for the general peace, that the great object of the sovereigns of Europe was the re-establishment and the re-organization of those two great monarchies, which, to all practical purposes, had been destroyed during the war—Austria and Prussia. To do this it became necessary to establish a security for the flanks of those monarchies: a power between the north of Germany and France, and a power acting as a barrier between Italy and France, to prevent them from coming into contact. It was necessary also to maintain the independence of Switzerland, and to restore the constitution of the German states. The

³⁵ According to Wendy Hinde by the end of the Congress of Vienna, 'Castlereagh decided he had had enough of the stream of letters from London.' Eventually Castlereagh sent his brother as a representative to the cabinet to prevent further communications. Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh*, p. 232.

question was, whether the arrangements which had been made were calculated to effect these great objects—whether the assembled powers had endeavoured unduly to aggrandize themselves, or faithfully to execute their trust.

Castlereagh sought to answer those concerned by French protests against the great power's decision to throw 'the whole population of Europe into a general fund, and then draw...it out again in different portions, for the advantage of particular sovereigns.' Castlereagh 'admitted the truth of the general principle' that while ethnicity should be a factor in determining the shape of states 'the annexation of Saxony to Prussia [was] called for by all the circumstances of the case.'³⁶ While admitting the problematic aspects of the policy, Castlereagh argued that it was permissible in the circumstances as 'the object was to give Prussia additional force, and increased population was that force.'³⁷ According to Castlereagh, these reorganizations of state boundaries were built solidly upon 'the Treaty by which the great confederacy was bound together.' In turn, the confederacy was designed so that all the great powers 'should act in unison, for the purpose of giving independence to Europe generally' even if such actions were accomplished via the dismemberment of ancient borders. As Castlereagh continued, the creation of the new European order 'was incompatible with the re-construction of that ancient government in Italy...[as] Austria could not be restored to the rank which, for the security of all, she ought to hold in Europe, unless at least the northern parts of Italy were under a sovereign not an Italian.'³⁸ The Congress of Vienna's decision to graft the Duchy of Genoa onto the Kingdom of Sardinia, which Castlereagh envisioned as one of his series of buffer states, was extremely unpopular in Genoa. From the length of his defense, many parliamentarians had similarly expressed concerns about the practicality and morality of creating such buffers against French power by denying both the traditional rights of both sovereigns and their peoples. In order to calm the consciences of parliamentarians concerned by this move, Castlereagh 'distinctly denied that they [the Genoese] had in any way aided the British: not a Genoese had raised his hand on the part of the British army on their approach, however disinclined they felt toward the domination of France.' Thus Castlereagh sought to draw a firm line dividing the Genoese uprising against Napoleon and the larger British efforts against the despot on the continent. Castlereagh's part in these circumstances was complicated by the role

³⁶ *Hansard*, xxx, cc. 265-305

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

played by the British agent William Bentinck, who had encouraged both the Genoese revolt and the understanding that Britain wished to restore their ancient constitution. Castlereagh, instead, claimed that Britain had merely promised ‘the interposition of our good offices with the Allies, for the restoration of the ancient Government’ rather than the actual restoration of that constitution. As ‘Lord W. Bentinck not only had received no instructions to restore the ancient Government, but that he had received positive instructions to establish merely a provisional government’ the ministry could not be held responsible for any pledges which exceeded Bentinck’s instructions. Castlereagh went further, claiming that the ‘Genoese had never been deceived on this subject, from the very first moment of our appearing before the place, up to the present; they had always understood what was established to be merely a provisional government.’ As such, Castlereagh’s claim that Britain was under no obligation to respect ancient constitutions, nor the will of the local populations had not been compromised by any binding international obligations, as ‘they never were deceived with respect to the ultimate possibility of their annexation to the possessions of the king of Sardinia.’

He begged leave to repel the charge made against the Allies of having departed from their declarations, and having been actuated by the same love of conquest and aggrandisement which they themselves had so loudly condemned. The odious sense of conquest, on the principle of which the Allies were said to have acted in this and other cases, they positively disclaimed. In no part of their conduct had they departed from the principles professed by them; but they would have been most unfit, indeed, for the situations which they assumed, by entering into the general obligation to restore the peace of Europe, had they so stultified themselves in the eyes of the world and of Europe as to disqualify themselves from changing the face of Europe, the ancient governments of which had been broken down and destroyed, in such a manner as might thereafter be found best calculated for the preservation of its future peace and tranquillity.³⁹

Castlereagh argued that the seizure of Genoa could not be compared to Napoleon’s actions due to ‘the principle upon which the allies had acted.’ Furthermore, while ‘the prejudices of the Genoese people could not on this occasion be attended to....there were grave and solid reasons why they could not grant to Genoa what was demanded of them in behalf of that people, arising out of the very situation of Genoa, consistently with the security of Europe, and the objects to which they were pledged [as that]...very state of Genoa had in a great degree contributed to the former

³⁹ *Hansard*, xxx, cc. 265-305

weakness and overthrow of Europe; for it had first contributed to the overthrow of Sardinia, and thus been the means of enabling the French to achieve their conquests.’ Castlereagh then moved on to a discussion of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, which functioned in much the same as the Kingdom of Sardinia in Castlereagh’s strategic vision. In many ways, Castlereagh’s creation of political unions between culturally and ethnically distinct nations harkens back eerily to the Act of Union between Ireland and Great Britain, which Castlereagh had personally managed.⁴⁰ In the case of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, the similarities are particularly striking with Protestant and Catholic nations being linked under a Protestant monarch. Castlereagh argued, using traditional balance of power reasoning that ‘by erecting Holland into a powerful and independent kingdom, under the House of Orange, by the annexation of territory formerly belonging to Austria, an essential service was rendered to all the continental powers.’⁴¹

Castlereagh concluded his speech by addressing ‘the events that had recently occurred in France.’⁴² Calling on Britain to ‘resume her station as a military people, and again to struggle for the independence of the world’ he argued that the renewed struggle against Napoleon was essential to the British national interest. Castlereagh responded to those who felt his policies on the continent were in opposition to those laid out in the British constitution, by arguing that ‘he had not, like a missionary, gone about to preach to the world its excellency and its fitness, because he by, no means felt convinced, that in countries yet in a state of comparative ignorance, and brought up under a system so diametrically opposite, it could be advantageously introduced.’⁴³ He closed by arguing that for Europe to ‘look forward to brighter days than those which it might now anticipate’ it must begin by returning to the fight against Napoleon, a statement that was greeted with ‘loud and repeated cheers.’⁴⁴

Castlereagh’s Changing Perspective

While Castlereagh attempted to defend his continental policies and reinvigorate another British effort at dethroning Napoleon, a change in his outlook becomes apparent. Three days later,

⁴⁰ Castlereagh, who admitted a personal lack of national affiliation perhaps similarly lacked an ability to empathize with those for whom nationality played a significant role in their identity. Stewart to Haliday, 27 February 1792 (PRONI, D3030/37).

⁴¹ *Hansard*, xxx, cc. 265-305.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

on 23 March 1815, the Corn Bill received royal assent, marking the beginning of a period of economic reforms that were to transform the nature of British policy both at home and abroad. As Richard Langhorne notes, during the pre-Hundred Days negotiations, ‘there seemed to be a general assumption, most often alluded to by the tsar, that the military alliance held always in reserve would be accompanied by a treaty of general guarantee. This would be attached to the settlement and would be signed by all parties as indicating their commitment to the maintenance of the public law in its new definition.’⁴⁵ Suddenly, however, ‘the idea of a guarantee disappeared...in the midst of the confusion created by the return of Napoleon from Elba.’⁴⁶ Ikenberry claims that ‘it remains a mystery why this is so’ but then goes on to explain that ‘in the end it appears that Britain could not summon the domestic support to make a general security guarantee.’⁴⁷ Ikenberry goes on to argue that, this shift in policy was not based on capabilities, as the British government was ‘able to extend such a guarantee if it were so inclined.’⁴⁸ His argument, however that Britain ‘was the major proponent of a comprehensive and binding postwar settlement’ falters, in that, neither Britain, nor more specifically the government were particularly interested in such a persistently expensive endeavor in the face of its war debts and the growing strength of the opposition.

With the outbreak of the Hundred Days, the government was faced with the difficulty of remobilizing an economy that had already begun a transition into peace. While opposition figures, marginalized during the final years of the conflict, were beginning to reemerge, the government’s primary concern lay in the inevitable return to subsidies and war expenditures. Government worries over the wayward country gentlemen were dwarfed by fears over a public outcry as the war-debt began to re-expand. During the first years of the war, Pitt had relied nearly exclusively on debt to finance the war effort. However, with time it became apparent that the war would continue far longer than originally assumed and as a result Pitt enacted a series of measures designed to reduce the increasingly politically unpopular British debt, such as the various war taxes and the suspension of specie payments, which proved in turn to be equally unpopular. Beyond their unpopularity, the war taxes and specie payment suspension were still insufficient to cover the combined expenses of the War of 1812, the Peninsular War, and Castlereagh’s lavish subsidies to

⁴⁵ Richard Langhorne, ‘Reflections of the Significance of the Congress of Vienna’, *Review of International Studies*, 12/4, (1989), p. 317.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ John Ikenberry, *After Victory*, p.109

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

the continental powers. As a result, Britain returned to the short-term solution of the increased issuance of treasury bills, an expedient made possible by the enormous growth in productivity which was, in part, a side effect of Britain's war spending and concurrent industrialization. This expansion, provided funds for the continued cycle of investment in treasury bills, which in turn sustained Britain's military expenditures.

These expenditures gave the long dormant opposition a real, and politically useful platform. Tierney wasted no time in accusing Castlereagh for his tendency to see government monies, acquired by the issuance of debt as 'an inexhaustible fund.'⁴⁹ Castlereagh was a firm believer in the methods spearheaded by Pitt, and his opposition to bullionism and support for the war taxes can be seen as resulting from both his proximity to Pitt and the spending habits he had grown reliant upon during his time in government. During the final years of the war, even as Britain tottered on the brink of economic collapse, Castlereagh continued to press for expanded subsidies as well as costly debt assistance to Russia during negotiations revolving around the postwar United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Liverpool sought to prevent Castlereagh's extravagant effort to put into place Grenville's plan arguing that 'the continuance of the American war will entail upon us a prodigious expense, much more than we had any idea of; and I cannot, therefore, avoid pressing upon you the importance of not entailing upon us any part of the Russian debt to Holland if you can avoid it. Consider only what this charge will be in addition to our war expenditure and to our pecuniary obligations to Holland and Sweden.'⁵⁰ Castlereagh, however, refused to change his policies. Vansittart, with whom Castlereagh was often in agreement on economic matters, wrote to Castlereagh, stating that he

was not pleased, at what you say of the Russian Dutch Loan...I cannot disguise that I think it one of the most awkward questions which ever came before parliament and that the present is by no means a time when it will be favourably received. Economy and relief from taxation are not merely the war-cry of Opposition but they are the real objects to which public attention is turned. We propose to meet again on the 9th of February and I do not see the possibility of again adjourning considering that we have the Bank Restriction Bill and the Property Tax to renew before the 5th of April.'⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Hansard*, xxx, c. 686.

⁵⁰ Liverpool to Castlereagh, 2 November 1814 (*Wellington Supplementary Despatches*, ix, p. 401).

⁵¹ Vansittart to Castlereagh, 26 November 1814 (BL Add. MSS 31, f. 230).

Although Castlereagh had received repeated notice from the government, he continued to pursue an extremely expensive interventionist policy. In early 1815, he established an anti-Russian alliance that put Britain at risk of a renewed period of conflict, despite pleas to the contrary from London.

Castlereagh's unwillingness to comply with his instructions from London would not go unanswered, and by the summer of 1815 there were active attempts underway to reduce the size and influence of the Foreign Office bureaucracy.⁵² These attempts were complicated by the influential position occupied by Castlereagh as leader of the House of Commons and by the sheer weight of tradition which governed the diplomatic community. Despite opposition efforts against it, in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, much remained unchanged within the diplomatic community, with familial social networks doing much of the information sharing work. Throughout negotiations Charles Stewart represented his brother frequently at cabinet meetings, adding depth and context to Castlereagh's sometimes terse communications.⁵³

Despite Castlereagh's interest in cultivating Anglo-Austrian relations and his emphasis on summitry, the Anglo-French relationship remained at the core of British foreign policy. Wellington's appointment as the first British ambassador to France, post-Waterloo, was an obvious signifier of Castlereagh's continued sense of the importance of the French mission.⁵⁴ Likewise, many traditions redolent of an earlier era of monarchical privilege were retained, although much to the chagrin of Castlereagh's increasingly professionalized Foreign Office. Perhaps most frustratingly, George IV retained and acted upon the ancient tradition of conducting private meetings with the diplomatic staff of foreign states. This practice proved frequently embarrassing to the government and was discontinued after Castlereagh's death.⁵⁵ Similarly, Castlereagh has been remembered for his use of summitry as a means of improving communications between diplomats. This emphasis, however, did not fully translate to his management of communications

⁵² Jones demonstrates that efforts at reducing the costs of the foreign office had been on-going. However, these efforts, which resulted in the fixing of salaries, simply led the foreign office to shift an increasingly large percentage of its expenses, including the entire expenses of the mission in Frankfurt, and the total salaries of several *chargé d'affaires* to extra-ordinaries, a practice which led extra-ordinary expenses to increase from £41,000 in 1803 to £170,000 in 1815. Raymond Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service*, p. 55

⁵³ Liverpool to Castlereagh, 28 August 1815 Quoted from Charles Yonge, *Life and Administration of Robert Banks*, ii, p. 217.

⁵⁴ Castlereagh to Wellington, 13 April 1815 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, ix, p. 461); Charles Webster, et al, *British Diplomatic Representatives 1789–1852* (London 1934), p. 50.

⁵⁵ Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812-1815*, p. 28.

within his own office. Although he did improve access to regular couriers for major missions, Castlereagh failed to fully expand the use of regular messengers to maintain the flow of information to and from diplomats attached to some of the smaller courts.⁵⁶ Thus leaving communication channels within the Foreign Office outmoded and inefficient for all but the most important embassies and missions.

Reforming the Foreign Office

While much remained the same, it was clear that within the framework of retrenchment the diplomatic traditions of the eighteenth century were coming to an end. Always an exceedingly badly paid profession, diplomacy had appealed largely to those of independent means. However, as the service experienced the emergence of the earliest hints of modernization, the tradition of recruiting exclusively from the ranks of the aristocracy became increasingly untenable. At the same time, changing social mores, made alternative forms of compensation increasingly suspect and the government sought mechanisms for banning the acceptance of traditional gifts and bribes. For a considerable period of time the government, spearheaded by Liverpool himself, had sought to reduce the diplomatic practice of exchanging presents at many of the major events which shaped the career of diplomats. However, even Liverpool had to admit that ‘presents are always reciprocal and it would be difficult for one court to abolish them unless there was a general agreement upon the subject.’⁵⁷ However, these traditional exchanges were gradually phased out during Castlereagh’s tenure at the Foreign Office.

Hiring practices in the Foreign Office remained inefficient throughout Castlereagh’s career.⁵⁸ During Castlereagh’s absence on the continent, Lord Bathurst had taken his place. The Foreign Office at the time lacked sufficient mechanisms to allow for continued functionality in the absence of the executive. Even appointments to diplomatic posts were considered the sole purview of the foreign minister. While Castlereagh was engaged on the continent, no appointments were made.⁵⁹ With the exception of William A’Court’s emergency appointment, which was left

⁵⁶ Clancarty to Castlereagh, Frankfurt am Main, 1 January 1816 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xi, p. 117); Cathcart to Castlereagh, 16 Dec 1815, (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xi, p. 102).

⁵⁷ Liverpool to Castlereagh, 27 July 1815 (Add. MSS 38261 ff. 250-251).

⁵⁸ The information presented in this section on Foreign Office reform is largely derived from Charles Middleton’s *The Administration of British Foreign Policy, 1782-1846*.

⁵⁹ Minutes, 8 February 1814, (FO 83/25).

tentative until Castlereagh had officially approved it after his return to Britain.⁶⁰ Such inadequacies slowed the productivity of the Foreign Office and left the organization inefficient. As a result, one of Castlereagh's first steps, after the conclusion of a permanent end to the Napoleonic Wars, was to begin a comprehensive reorganization of the Foreign Office. According to Castlereagh's plan diplomatic missions were broken into various grades, depending on their importance to Britain's overall foreign policy goals. Using the new ranking system he had devised, Castlereagh also altered the traditional secretarial positions at high value missions. Instead of their original, occasional use, Castlereagh elected to utilize these secretaries of legation at all missions after the conclusion of the war, as many missions had begun using private secretaries. Castlereagh deemed these private secretaries to be security risks, as their primary employment was in the copying of private correspondence and mission record-keeping.⁶¹ Additionally, postwar diplomatic missions increasingly employed paid attachés to augment staff, overwhelmed by the volume of work required.⁶² These paid attachés added to the traditional retinue of friends and family that accompanied and assisted British diplomats on foreign assignment, typically on an unpaid, occasional basis. Castlereagh himself often sought the assistance of his half-brother Charles during his time in office, proving the extent of this practice.⁶³

Castlereagh's policy changes were not limited to the diplomatic service. Castlereagh also sought to improve the nature of the often-neglected consular service. Prior to his tenure in the Foreign Office, consuls were typically drawn from expatriate British businessmen with local experience. However, these consular employees were given no instructions and were essentially free agents. Castlereagh began the long process of reforming the consular service and in 1815, he distributed the first, relatively vague guidelines. These instructions encouraged consuls to promote British trade at their posting, and granted them 'responsibility by every fair & proper means to do so.'⁶⁴ Castlereagh's instructions also required consuls to report on the slave trade, protect the subjects of the Ionian Islands, give physical aid to British vessels and seamen, and send regular reports on trades and tariffs.⁶⁵ Castlereagh's instructions provided the first official standards for

⁶⁰ Hamilton to Castlereagh, 8 February 1814 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, ix, p. 254).

⁶¹ Hamilton to Arbuthnot, 12 July 1817 *draft*, (FO 366/525).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Hamilton to Robert Gordon, May 1815, (BL Add. MSS 43057 ff. 200-201).

⁶⁴ Charles Middleton, *The Administration of British Foreign Policy*, p. 248

⁶⁵ FO 366/247, ff. 113-117.

how the Foreign Office expected consular employees to conduct their day-to-day business and were part of Castlereagh's larger project of establishing centralized authority over the diverse and decentralized nature of Britain's foreign policy apparatus.

Castlereagh also sought to modernize Foreign Office compensation. Although unable to ensure regular salary payments to diplomats, he did ban loans between members of the diplomatic service. Due to the Foreign Office's meager salaries and its sluggishness in paying them, affluent diplomats could become *de facto* payday lenders, providing short term loans on the expectation of eventual payment once salaries were forthcoming. However, as Britain's debt exploded, the Civil List proved unable to keep up with the bare minimum of its traditionally leisurely approach to distributing salaries. As a result many diplomatic lenders were ruined, leading Castlereagh to ban such lending.⁶⁶

The Impact of Worsening Economic Conditions

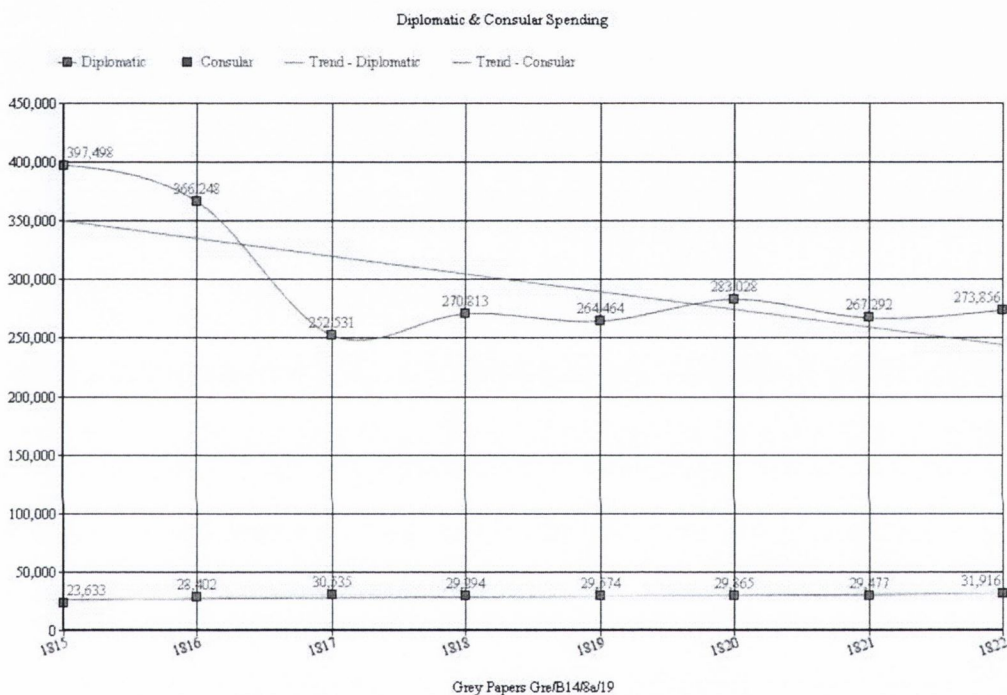
Even while Castlereagh sought to rapidly modernize the structure of the diplomatic and consular services, the underlying economic difficulties facing the government grew steadily worse. With interest payments in excess of thirty million pounds and the national debt at nearly 250% of GDP, it was clear that economic crises could appear at any time. Indeed, from the first conclusion of peace, to Napoleon's escape from Elba, major economic difficulties were already becoming apparent. These difficulties were exacerbated, as has been discussed in previous chapters by the passage of the Corn Laws, and the decision by many tax-collectors to cease collection of war taxes, in the expectation of a rapid repeal. These government missteps occurred in a context in which military demobilization, increased foreign competition, industrialization, and climate fluctuations were already straining the stability of the British economy.

In February 1816, expenses associated with the British delegation at the Congress of Vienna were investigated by the Audit Office of His Majesty's Treasury for failure to be in compliance with Act 46, c. 141, Section 8 (Geo. III) by not reporting seven bills of exchange amounting to £70,000. In a letter from John Lewis Mallet, Clancarty was apprised of the fact that if the expenses of the British delegation were not properly reported, Clancarty himself would be billed the expense.⁶⁷ Such efforts were part of the larger efforts at austerity. During the immediate

⁶⁶ FO 83/27.

⁶⁷ PRONI D3030/4883.

postwar period the Treasury had ordered each branch of the government's bureaucracy to review its personnel. Castlereagh was able to successfully fend off the sort of mass layoffs that left the Colonial Office with only one translator, one librarian, and nine clerks.⁶⁸ Regardless of his successful defense of the Foreign Office's personnel, Castlereagh's department had taken a major budgetary hit, with diplomatic spending declining from £397,498 in 1815 to £252,531 in 1817. [See Table]⁶⁹



With each year Castlereagh's refusal to reduce the foreign office's staff grew less sustainable and in 1821 parliament returned to the issue of austerity in the Foreign Office. Early in the summer of 1821 parliament passed a measure calling for an across-board reduction in foreign office salaries to their 1797 rates.⁷⁰ The recommendation that all salaries be returned to 1797 levels however was treated by departmental chiefs as a general guideline rather than a requirement.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Treasury Circular, 3 August 1816 (FO 366/672 ff. 125-126); For an explanation of the Colonial Office layoff. See D. M. Young, *The Colonial Office in the Early Nineteenth Century*, p. 37.

⁶⁹ 'An Account of total charge of his majesty's Diplomatick and Consular Service abroad from 1815 to 1832' (DUL Gre/B14/8a/19).

⁷⁰ *Hansard*, v, cc.1345-1445, 1464-1474.

⁷¹ Lushington memorandum, 13 Aug 1821 (T 27/81 ff. 181).

Castlereagh thus had some leeway in determining how he would effect the changes requested by parliament. Castlereagh was faced with the difficult decision of whether he ought to reduce salaries or personnel. For many already impoverished employees of the Foreign Office a reduction to the 1797 level would be untenable, at the same time Castlereagh had not added to the Foreign Office work force, which had remained unaugmented since 1809.⁷² Meanwhile, however, the Foreign Office's workload had vastly expanded. Castlereagh's plan, which was submitted in January 1822, made no recommendations for layoffs within the core of the Foreign Office workforce. Instead, the plan called for the creation of various grades of clerk, with four senior clerks, four second-class clerks, six junior clerks, and three supernumeraries who were paid out of the contingent fund.⁷³ While Castlereagh avoided laying off any Foreign Office staff, this was accomplished via some complex reassigning of tasks. Simultaneously, Castlereagh refused to reduce wages to their 1797 levels by arguing that the transformation of job titles and organizational structures made it impossible to determine 1797 salaries. Furthermore, he was able to successfully argue that Foreign Office employees by the nature of the work and by the requirements of travel and secrecy set their positions apart from those of other bureaucratic positions whose pay rates were then being reassessed. By avoiding the pay cuts and maintaining the staff levels of the Foreign Office, Castlereagh was able to ensure that British interests had representation in many of the major capitals of the day. However, the extremely low pay and intense work load remained problematic, especially in a climate in which bribery was common practice in many diplomatic circles.

While Castlereagh continued his fight to maintain funding for the Foreign Office, the postwar transformation of parliamentary politics left him unsettled and depressed. In a letter to his brother, written on 15 April 1816 Castlereagh complained that 'whatever I may have done for Europe as to Peace, it is pretty plain I have not succeeded for myself at least in a parliamentary sense-there never was more of Malice, Violence, and persevering Obstruction known in parliament and there is Every appearance that we shall have hard work after Easter on Economy-Civil List-Ireland etc. The Prince as you may suppose is very sore at the personal attacks made upon Him, especially by Brougham.'⁷⁴ In addition to the pressure of the new emphasis on austerity, Castlereagh found himself overwhelmed by 'the fatigue of 8 or 9 hours attendance daily in the

⁷² Order in Council, 11 January 1809 (FO 366/542 f. 29).

⁷³ Castlereagh to Lords of the Treasury, 3 April 1819 (FO 366/672, ff. 170-171).

⁷⁴ Castlereagh to Charles Stewart, 15 April 1816 (PRONI, D3030/22/2)

House of Commons and the preparatory Enquiries have absorbed all my time as well as strength. I never recollect a more difficult period for a Minister....This nation last year would have given Millions to save the Continent. At this moment, the Continent and those who saved it sink into Insignificance compared with an imaginary Savings by the reduction of some trifling office of £1000 a year. I never found the House of Commons so dead to my voice.’⁷⁵ Even members of the government, converted by the new austerity movement, turned against Castlereagh’s tendencies. As John Clarke, has pointed out, on 19 March 1819 William Huskisson, a Canningite, attacked ‘Castlereagh’s claim for £8432 expenses incurred at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle.’⁷⁶

Although strongly in disagreement with the new mood, Castlereagh, in a later letter to his brother, highlighted the fact that Pitt’s failure to heed such shifts in opinion had led to ‘a decided schism of Publick Opinion...brought on by bad management.’ In order to avoid such a ‘schism’ it was imperative that the government listens to the ‘voice of the Nation. This is our Compass and by this we must steer, and our allies on the Continent may be assured that they would deceive themselves, if they supposed that we could for six months act with them unless the mind of the Nation was in the cause-they must not therefore press us to place ourselves upon any ground that John Bull will not maintain.’⁷⁷ Clearly the lesson of good public relations altered not only Castlereagh’s political decisions, it also forced him to cultivate the support of the public, a task to which he was not entirely amenable. However, in an article published in the *Morning Chronicle*, Castlereagh seems to have adapted his appeal for the retention of Foreign Office funding by marketing the efficiency of the service, the salaries of which he had fought hard to maintain.

Lord Castlereagh said that the expense of Ambassadors to foreign courts was very different now, in time of peace to what it had been in time of war, and this saving, instead of being at the disposal of the Crown, was carried to the Consolidated Fund. It was impossible to avoid, altogether, the charge for extraordinary expenses, but the amount of those expenses were annually laid before parliament to be scrutinized by them.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Hansard*, xxxix, 1090-93, cited in John Clarke, *British Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*, p. 156.

⁷⁷ Castlereagh to Charles Stewart, 24 February 1820 (PRONI, D3030/22/2).

⁷⁸ *The Morning Chronicle*, 22 June 1820.

In spite of the changed mood, and his decreased access to the resources which had so emphatically strengthened his hand at Vienna, Castlereagh remained committed to the importance of summitry. In a letter to Liverpool, written in the midst of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, Castlereagh wrote

It really appears to me to be a new discovery in the science of European government at once extinguishing the cobwebs, with which diplomacy obscures the horizon-bringing the whole bearing of the system into its true light, and giving to the councils of the great powers the efficiency and almost the simplicity of a single state.⁷⁹

This ‘new discovery’ was in many ways a fallback for Castlereagh, whose original hopes for a general guarantee had been hijacked by Britain’s economic situation and a general lack of interest from the war-weary nation. As Ikenberry has put it, ‘the failure of Pitt’s idea for a general guarantee moved Castlereagh back in the direction of institutionalized consultations as the mechanism to manage order. The successful use of a great-power consultation process had made a favorable impression on Castlereagh.’⁸⁰ Castlereagh’s belief in the importance of summitry was, however, to be severely shaken by the conclusion of the Aix-la-Chapelle Congress.

Aix-la-Chappelle

The Second Treaty of Paris, signed on 20 November 1815, called for a meeting on the status of occupation forces in France three years after the signing of the peace. According to the treaty, ‘if, at the end of three years, the Allied Sovereigns, after having, in concert with His Majesty the King of France, maturely examined their reciprocal situation and interests, and the progress which shall have been made in France in the re-establishment of order and tranquillity, shall agree to acknowledge that the motives which fed them to that measure have ceased to exist’ they may elect to terminate the occupation of France prior to the five years stipulated in the treaty.⁸¹ Thus as the three year anniversary of the Second Treaty of Paris began to approach, the members of the Quadruple Alliance began to discuss the possibility of another meeting.

The upcoming Congress proved unsettling to Castlereagh. Already deeply concerned by the negative manner in which his time in Vienna had been perceived, Castlereagh began to consider the parliamentary fall out of another Congress. In a letter written in March of 1818, he discussed

⁷⁹ Castlereagh to Liverpool, Aix, 4 October 1818 (BL Add. MSS 38566 ff. 67-68).

⁸⁰ John Ikenberry *After Victory*, p. 111.

⁸¹ *Historical Chronicle*, 85, p. 617.

how the upcoming summit could be presented by the government. His plan called for an active effort at disassociating Aix-la-Chapelle in both how it was referenced, and how it was organized. According to Castlereagh, it was ‘desirable to give to this meeting [Aix-la-Chapelle] as much as possible the character of *Special Conferences* held under the stipulations of a Treaty of Alliance and as little as may be that of an European Congress, that the objects of its deliberations should as far as possible be understood beforehand and that in order to compress its labours within the narrowest practicable compass in point of time, the place of its reunion should be selected with a view to the course of business being as little as may be broken in upon by other objects.’⁸² This avoidance of the term ‘Congress’ had a two-fold purpose. First it was intended to shield the government from anti-Congress sentiment in Britain, and to avoid the awkward necessity of inviting the lesser continental powers. Castlereagh was so concerned as to how parliament might ‘read’ the events at Aix-la-Chapelle, ‘that he was unwilling that it should assemble until after the Congress had finished.’⁸³ Due to these concerns, Castlereagh was uncertain whether, in fact, a ‘General Congress is desirable or not. As there does not appear to be new matter for deliberation sufficient to call for so extraordinary a measure as the movement of such a body is necessarily slow as it might be productive of more embarrassment than utility and give rise to ideas of change which it cannot be desirable to encourage.’⁸⁴ Throughout the secondary literature Aix-la-Chapelle is, almost universally, considered part of a series of Congresses, and its role in concluding several issues opened at Vienna seem to place it on similar ground, however, Castlereagh’s reticence with the term should not be entirely ignored.⁸⁵

While the occupation of France may have been given as its ostensible purpose, the meetings at Aix-la-Chapelle had, in fact, little to do with the status of occupation forces. Indeed, negotiations over the occupation of France were exceedingly brief, with all parties agreeing to withdraw their troops once France was able to settle its debts to the Allies with the assistance of funds provided

⁸² Castlereagh to Cathcart, 27 March 1818, (*Wellington Supplementary Despatches*, xii, p. 445).

⁸³ Marcus Robert Phipps Dorma, *A History of the British Empire in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 240; In a letter posted to Liverpool on 4 October 1818, Castlereagh wrote, ‘The wonderful struggle the Queen has made [Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, who was then dying] will I trust enable you to stave off Parliament till after Christmas, it is most desirable. Let me know what you have finally decided about estimates &c.’ (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, p. 48).

⁸⁴ Castlereagh to Cathcart, 27 March 1818 (*Wellington Supplementary Despatches*, xii, p. 445).

⁸⁵ Canning’s influence on Liverpool played a major role in the government’s loss of confidence in the Congress System. In 1818, Canning described Castlereagh’s support for the Congress System as rooted ‘in the foolish spirit of romance.’ Harold Temperley, *Life of Canning*, p. 152

by the Hope and Baring banks making this process simple and quick. Agreement was reached on 30 September.⁸⁶ While the issue of the continuance of a small force along the border of the Netherlands was briefly discussed, the concept did not gain traction. Another, potentially messy, political difficulty was likewise quickly resolved. During Castlereagh's journey to Aix-la-Chapelle, he and Wellington briefly met with Richelieu in a small inn in Cambrai. In a letter to Liverpool, written on 27 September, Castlereagh described the unscheduled meeting as an intentional 'accident' in that 'the Duke de Richelieu, I have reason to believe took Spa in his way to this place expecting to find me' with the purpose, Castlereagh quickly discovered, of arguing for 'the evacuation and the admission of the King into the Alliance.'⁸⁷ While Castlereagh refused the proposals, he succeeded in convincing Richelieu 'to admit the importance of not suffering the conferences to train into length...by confining our formal discussions to the single object for which the Sovereigns have declared that they were to assemble.'⁸⁸

In spite of the odd beginning of the Congress and the rapid completion of its major task, much was left to be accomplished and Castlereagh remained emphatically pleased with the system, regardless of his concerns. In an 3 October letter, Castlereagh wrote, 'I am convinced that past habits, common glory and these occasional meetings, displays and re-pledges are among the best securities Europe now has for a durable peace.'⁸⁹ However, the Congress was set to test his faith in several distinct manners. On 12 October 1818 at Aix-la-Chapelle, shortly after Alexander's return from Paris, he and Castlereagh sat down for a private meeting to discuss plans for Alexander's vision for the alliance. 'I thought it material, towards the close of my audience, to speak fairly to the Emperor [Alexander] of the critical situation in which not only the Government, but the cause, might be placed by a proceeding here which might unnecessarily awaken contest at home; That we had a new parliament, and a nation as intensely bent on peace and economy, now, as they have been, some years since, on war and exertion.' The impact of retrenchment had clearly been felt by Castlereagh, who thought, 'that it was neither the same nation, nor the same parliament now; That it would become so again, at least in a great degree, if the exigency called it forth, but

⁸⁶ Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 145.

⁸⁷ Lord Castlereagh to Lord Liverpool Aix 27 September 1818 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, pp. 42-43)

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ 'Private and Most Secret', 3-4 October 1818. (FO 35).

that to put at issue now any new policy of eventual exertion would be to run the hazard of losing the sanction already obtained from parliament, in favour of our continental engagements.⁹⁰

One of the great benefits derived from the Congress System, was the ability of states' representatives to settle the complex affairs of state without the difficulties and delays typically faced by ambassadors dependent upon their instructions. During Castlereagh's time at Aix-la-Chapelle, he increasingly faced the same difficulty, as the proximity of the summit's meeting-place allowed the cabinet to manage Castlereagh's decision-making process from London. Largely negating many of the benefits of the format, this oversight was to have several important effects. Perhaps most importantly, the results of Aix-la-Chapelle were far more reflective of the cabinet's foreign and economic policy goals than those which emerged from the Congress of Vienna. More personally, tensions become palpable in the letters exchanged between Liverpool and Castlereagh, as the tight ideological and personal bond between Liverpool and Canning becomes increasingly obvious. This bond and the political consensus it entailed, in turn eventually concluded with Castlereagh adopting Canning's non-interventionism in the 1820 State Paper.

The Cabinet's Growing Influence

Liverpool was increasingly losing faith in Castlereagh's foreign policy. Castlereagh's awareness of his disapproval can be found in an 20 October letter, in which Castlereagh reassures Liverpool that 'there has not appeared the slightest disposition to push the discussions here beyond the line that had been chalked out by the circular from Paris and that we have received notice from the Sovereigns to finish all business before the 15th of November.'⁹¹ Castlereagh goes on to defend the summit with exceedingly mild praise, arguing that 'at all events it is satisfactory to observe how little embarrassment and how much solid good grow out of these reunions which sound so terrible at a distance.'⁹² That same day, however, Castlereagh received word from Liverpool, in very ominous tones, that the cabinet was concerned by Castlereagh's behavior at Aix-la-Chapelle. In Lord Bathurst's letter, he explained that at a meeting of Liverpool, Sidmouth, Melville, Canning, Vansittart, and himself concerning the possibility of the Allies announcing future Congresses.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Lord Castlereagh to Lord Liverpool, 20 October 1818 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, p. 54).

⁹² *Ibid.*

We were all more or less impressed with the apprehension of great inconvenience arising from a decision being now publicly announced of continued meetings at fixed points. It is very natural in you to feel a strong wish that they should continue from having experienced the advantages which have been derived by this which has taken place, but even if we could be sure that the subsequent meetings would be equally cordial, is there any advantage in fixing beyond the next period?

Bathurst continues by explaining that ‘you will understand that the objection which I am now stating is not to the system but to the expediency of declaring it in a circular letter [as]...such letters seldom do any good whatever and are generally productive of much inconvenient discussion in parliament.’⁹³ While Castlereagh could count on Bathurst’s support, he cautions the foreign secretary that the entire cabinet was not in agreement with him.

The objections which Canning feels on this subject are not confined to the inexpediency of announcing a decision of meeting at fixed periods but to the system itself. He does not consider the ninth Article as having been generally understood to apply to any meetings except for the purpose of watching the internal state of France as far as it may endanger the public tranquility.⁹⁴

Here it becomes clear that Canning’s reading of Britain’s treaty obligations, as spelled out in the Second Treaty of Paris, have become dominant within the cabinet’s understanding of the Congress System. While this shift is important in understanding the cabinet’s underlying perspective, more particularly it demonstrates that Canning’s efforts at preventing Castlereagh’s establishment of a planned series of Congresses, were rooted in a larger strategic vision, rather than in a tactical effort to fend off opposition attacks in the House of Commons. Bathurst goes on to explain that Canning has developed, what could be understood as a sort of nineteenth-century iteration of the Powell Doctrine.⁹⁵

[Canning] thinks that [a] system of periodical meetings of the four great Powers, with a view to the general concerns of Europe, new and of very questionable policy that it will necessarily involve us deeply in all the politics of the Continent whereas our true policy has always been not to interfere except in great emergencies and then with a commanding force.⁹⁶

⁹³ Lord Bathurst to Lord Castlereagh, 20 October 1818 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, p. 57).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Both emphasized the importance of limited military entanglements and the use of decisive force. See Colin Powell, ‘U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead’ *Foreign Affairs*, 71/5, (1992/1993), pp. 32-45.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Bathurst explains further that Canning's concerns extend beyond his strategic interest in maintaining Britain's ability to pursue a strategy of limited intervention, with overwhelming force. Canning, Bathurst explains, has posited that summits, rather than creating a more transparent mechanism for negotiating the European balance of power, are in fact, increasing the importance of obfuscation and conspiracy amongst the great powers, and potentially increasing the likelihood of the emergence of revolutionary movements on the continent.

[Canning] thinks that all other States must protest against such an attempt to place them under subjection that the meetings may become a scene of cabal and intrigue and that the people of this country may be taught to look with great jealousy for their liberties if our Court is engaged in meetings with great despotic monarchs deliberating upon what degree of revolutionary spirit may endanger the public security and therefore require the interference of the Alliance.⁹⁷

While Bathurst did 'not subscribe to Canning's opinions' he did not think it 'unreasonable to apprehend it may be felt by many other persons as well.' Thus hinting at Canning's increased influence during Castlereagh's absence.⁹⁸ In a letter, sent three days later, Liverpool requested that Castlereagh 'send over the Declaration for our consideration before it is definitively settled' as the cabinet 'cannot but feel anxious on this subject on many accounts.' Liverpool goes on to repeat Bathurst's caution that Castlereagh was not 'to fix a period at which the Sovereigns will again assemble.' Likewise, Liverpool expressed concern that Castlereagh might 'agree to secret stipulations or Protocols...[as] the question will certainly be put to us whether there are any other engagements than those which are brought forward and it would be awkward to have to equivocate upon such a matter.'⁹⁹ In a subsequent letter, written on the same day, Liverpool's increasing concern becomes evident, as Castlereagh's dispatches left the cabinet 'very nervous' about 'the possibility of a new treaty to which France might be a party... [as] such a measure would open every obnoxious topic to discussion in the most invidious manner and we could not prevent parliament from pronouncing an opinion upon it.' Liverpool here shifts tones, expressing himself with what verges on anger. Warning Castlereagh that if he fails to follow his instructions, he will

⁹⁷ Lord Bathurst to Lord Castlereagh, 20 October 1818 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, p. 57).

⁹⁸ Giles Hunt has argued that the events of this interaction provide evidence 'that Castlereagh was quite happy for Canning to offer advice on foreign affairs' and that rather than resenting 'Canning's interference, actually welcomed it.' This may be the case, as Castlereagh pivoted towards the positions Canning espoused during the exchange in communications, however the tone of the letters seems to evidence significant tensions. Giles Hunt, *The Duel*, p. 164.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

‘create serious differences amongst ourselves as it might certainly be represented as contrary to the clear spirit of your instructions.’ Liverpool continues by reminding Castlereagh of the importance of transmitting every document from the Congress, preemptively warning Castlereagh against pleading ‘any pressing necessity which could preclude your transmitting such a document for the opinion of Government at home.’

Liverpool’s tendency to delegate was well-known even in his own time, thus this all-encompassing assertion of control seems likely to have emerged from an internal power-grab on Canning’s part. Liverpool concluded his letter by again reiterating the political importance of following cabinet instructions as,

The Russians must be made to feel that we have a parliament and a public to which we are responsible and that we cannot permit ourselves to be drawn into views of policy which are wholly incompatible with the spirit of our Government.¹⁰⁰

This complex communication between Liverpool, Bathurst, Canning, and Castlereagh continued throughout the Congress, with Canning increasingly seeking to micro-manage negotiations. In a 9 November letter to Liverpool, Castlereagh went over specific wording concerns, which had been raised by Canning, particularly concerning the use of the revolutionary term *solidarité* within the documents of the Quadruple Alliance, which Canning found objectionable. Castlereagh explained to Liverpool that he had fully complied with Canning’s concerns, insisting that ‘there is no difficulty about the word *solidarité*. They will I dare say leave it out.’¹⁰¹ However, Castlereagh could not help adding that the Alliance had intended only ‘to use it in the fair sense of *solidarité* of the four Powers.’¹⁰² Similarly, Liverpool expressed concern that Castlereagh was not including the totality of documents being discussed at the Congress. In a 10 November letter to Castlereagh, Lord Liverpool complained that Castlereagh had forgotten to include all of the documents, as he had found that ‘the Protocole reserve to which you refer is not amongst these papers.’¹⁰³ He then reminded Castlereagh to ‘take care that there shall be nothing in it which will involve us in any difficulties when we come to explain ourselves to parliament.’¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Lord Liverpool to Lord Castlereagh, 23 October 1818 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii p. 63).

¹⁰¹ Lord Castlereagh to Lord Liverpool, 9 November 1818 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, p. 75).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 78).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

On 15 November, the Quadruple Alliance against France was renewed, thus bringing an end to the various matters decided by the Congress. Two days later, Queen Charlotte died after an extended period of ill health, which delayed the meeting of parliament until 21 January 1819. After the Prince Regent's speech had been read, debate immediately opened concerning Aix-la-Chapelle, with the Marquess of Lansdowne and others expressing disappointment at the failure of Castlereagh to receive any 'assurance...that the slave trade would be abolished.' In the House of Commons a similar degree of concern was expressed, and it was argued 'that the Power which had opposed so desirable a consummation [the abolition of slavery] was France.' A position, which it was darkly hinted, resulted from the fact that 'France [was] a member of the Holy Alliance.'¹⁰⁵

The ostensible purpose of the Congress System had originally been intended to be the maintenance of peace and stability in Europe and the prevention of the re-emergence of the revolutionary violence that had wracked Europe over the previous decades. However, in the aftermath of Aix-la-Chapelle, instability and violence roared back to life, much of it driven by revolutionary or quasi-revolutionary movements in the southern European periphery. As Webster put it, 'the three years that followed Aix-la-Chapelle were...to disappoint. The unrest in Europe, which had been to some extent held in check while the Powers still occupied France, soon began to appear in every European country.'¹⁰⁶ Thus, just as the final contingent of the British occupying force withdrew from France on 30 November 1818, revolutionary movements were beginning to percolate in Spain, Naples, and Greece.

The State Paper of 1820

On 29 January 1820 George III died, bringing about a series of crises. The first and most complex of these, George IV's desire to divorce his wife Caroline, would overshadow much of the first year of the reign of George IV. As the governments of the European powers focused on potential resolutions to the growing problem of revolutionary movements on the southern European periphery, the Liverpool administration was firmly focused on the dissolution of the monarch's marriage vows.

In the midst of these negotiations, on 5 May 1820, Castlereagh set about constructing his Great State Paper. The purpose of the 1820 State Paper was to define, in a highly public manner,

¹⁰⁵ *Hansard*, xxxix, p. 50.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh: 1815-1822*, p. 175.

what the government's policy on Spain would be. However, the text emerged instead as a larger, more general statement of the core beliefs that shaped Britain's foreign policy. According to Canning's private secretary Augustus Stapleton, Canning, claimed an authorial, or at least, an advisory role in the creation of this document.¹⁰⁷ Although there is little direct evidence of Canning's composition of the document, there are some indications of his influence. Stratford Canning records, in a 28 May 1820 diary entry, that he had congratulated George Canning on 'the line which I knew had been taken with the other Allied Courts on the occasion of the late revolutionary events in Spain,' seeming to indicate that, Stratford Canning believed George Canning to have played a role in the policy change.¹⁰⁸ At very least, the work was based upon arguments made by Canning in cabinet. As Ward and Gooch have argued, 'its sentiments bear a striking resemblance to those uttered by Canning in the cabinet in October, 1818'¹⁰⁹

The State Paper marked a dramatic departure from Castlereagh's earlier foreign policy. From its opening, the State Paper makes obvious this new approach, as it presents Britain's foreign policy as being the purview of the 'British cabinet' rather than the foreign secretary. At the same time, by asserting that 'the British cabinet...is ever ready to deliberate with those of the Allies' it undermines the importance of periodic summits. This emphasis on the cabinet, although subtle, reflects the growing role of the cabinet in managing the negotiations at Aix-la-Chapelle. This intensive monitoring, seemingly pushed by Canning, essentially invalidated the benefits of proximity. By nullifying the benefit that originally had recommended the Congress System, the assertions made at the very start of the State Paper offer a *de facto* call to eliminate the Congress System altogether. From here, the State Paper shifts to more practical concerns, making clear that

¹⁰⁷ There are numerous examples of Canning's influence on work drafted by Castlereagh. One example was documented during Canning's final cabinet meeting. At that meeting Castlereagh requested assistance with a dispatch. Canning happily assisted and the two reworked the document over the course of three hours. Harewood MSS. 26, 20 December 1820 cited in Hinde, *George Canning*, p. 305; Bobbitt, in contrast to the position taken in this paper, argues that 'the State Paper of May, 5 1820...had come straight from [Castlereagh's] own pen.' (Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, p.167; Augustus Stapleton discussed the evidence for Canning's authorship at some length in his biography of Canning and concluded with the statement that 'the author of this history does not know by means of any personal confidence from Mr. Canning that what he here surmises is true, if he had been made the depositary of such confidence he would hold it to be of a nature too sacred to be revealed. He has however reasons for thinking that parts of this paper were written by Mr. Canning and it is singular enough that in the only history of these transactions that he has read he finds that the judgment of the writer of that history coincides with his own that the document in question bears in its language and even in its tone internal evidence of not having been drawn up by Lord Londonderry himself. Augustus Stapleton, *The Political Life of the Right Honourable George Canning*, i, (London, 1831), p. 302.

¹⁰⁸ See Stanley Lane-Poole, *Life of the Right Hon. Stratford Canning*, i, p. 291.

¹⁰⁹ A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch, *The Cambridge History of British foreign policy 1783-1919*, i, p. 622.

it is, advisable to ‘studiously...avoid any reunion of the Sovereigns...at least in the present stage...from charging any ostensible Conference with commission to deliberate on the affairs of Spain.’ In so stating, Castlereagh is removing Britain from participating in one of the core concerns of the continental powers. From this practical disavowal of obligation, the State Paper moves to eviscerate the fundamental concept, at the heart of the originally conceived Congress System model. According to the State Paper, due to the ‘necessarily limited powers of the Individuals composing [the Congress] it must ever be better fitted to execute a purpose already decided upon, than to frame a course of policy under delicate and difficult circumstances.’¹¹⁰

Having argued against the original purpose of the Congress System, the State Paper then explores the practical implications for British foreign policy on the continent, in large part spelling out the implications of non-intervention.¹¹¹ Here, Canning’s emphasis on minimal intervention, using overwhelming force when necessary, becomes an underlying aspect of the conceptual framework being spelled out. However, Castlereagh explains, such kinetic action is unnecessary at this time.

That circumstances might arise...directly menacing to the safety of other States cannot be denied and against such a danger well ascertained the Allies may justifiably and must in all prudence be on their guard, but such is not the present case. Fearful as is the example which is furnished by Spain of an Army in revolt and a Monarch swearing to a Constitution which contains in its frame hardly the semblance of a Monarchy, there is no ground for apprehension that Europe is likely to be speedily endangered by Spanish Arms.¹¹²

In its conclusion, the paper argues that ‘any attempt to push [the Alliance’s] duties and...obligations beyond...its original conception’ could prove dangerous.¹¹³ However, Castlereagh’s foggy understanding of the requirements of the treaty of the Alliance, leave his understanding of this ‘original conception’ somewhat confused. If Castlereagh had simply

¹¹⁰ *British and Foreign State Papers*, xi, p. 957.

¹¹¹ One of the persistent difficulties posed by Castlereagh’s post Aix-la-Chapelle interactions with the continental powers was their disagreement over the nature of the Alliance. Much of this ambiguity was the result of a passage in the initial Quadruple Alliance treaty, which asserts that it was intended to suppress not only French revolutionary activity, as Castlereagh would later argue, but also to suppress ‘the same revolutionary principles which supported the last criminal usurpation, [if they] again, under other forms, disturb France, and menace the repose of other states.’ ‘Treaty of the Quadruple Alliance, 20 November 1815’ from Comte d’Angeberg, *Le Congrès de Vienne et les traités de 1815*, ii, (Paris, 1864), pp. 1636-1638; *Historical Chronicle*, 85, p. 617.

¹¹² *British and Foreign State Papers*, xi, p. 957.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

understood the Quadruple Alliance to be ‘an Union for the re-conquest and liberation of a great proportion of the Continent of Europe from the military dominion of France’ and nothing more, then it seems difficult to comprehend the wholesale reorganization and outright creation of states carried out at Vienna. While Castlereagh strains to insist that the Congress System, or as he called it: ‘the Confederacy’, was never ‘intended as an Union for the Government of the World or for the Superintendence of the Internal Affairs of other States’ such assertions are contradicted by his earlier excited promotion of this ‘new discovery in the science of European government’ that granted ‘to the councils of the great powers the efficiency and almost the simplicity of a single state.’¹¹⁴ While Castlereagh insisted that ‘the Alliance which exists had no such purpose in view in its original formation’ the map of Europe could not help but contradict him.¹¹⁵

Often the State Paper of 1820 is held up as an important statement of the true nature of Castlereagh’s political thought. Indeed, in the month which followed it did seem to guide British policy towards the July 1820, revolution in Naples.¹¹⁶ Some scholars have used this confluence to demonstrate that Castlereagh’s true intentions were not exemplified by the Vienna era interventions.¹¹⁷ It is important to note, that even had the State Paper been exclusively the work of Castlereagh, Castlereagh’s tendencies, even at that time, were not exclusively non-interventionist, in the abstract manner sometimes attributed to him.¹¹⁸ John Bew has rightly pointed out that Castlereagh did not consider ‘intervention...objectionable in theoretical terms.’ Indeed, he was a strong supporter of a unilateral intervention, by Austria, in Naples. This revolt, against the Bourbon monarch, however, had potential side-effects that deeply concerned him. Among these concerns, perhaps the greatest was that interventions ‘to suppress a revolution or a constitution’ might tempt states in general, and Russia in particular, into the ‘expansionist intentions’ that had brought about the Napoleonic Wars, interestingly enough, within the year he would be promoting a Russian intervention in neighboring Piedmont.¹¹⁹

In a letter to Charles Stewart, written on 29 July 1820, Castlereagh informed his brother that the ‘change of Government...in Spain was brought about...almost exclusively by the army.’

¹¹⁴ Castlereagh to Liverpool, Aix, 4 October 1818 (BL Add. MSS 38566 ff. 67-68).

¹¹⁵ ‘1820 State Papers’, *British and Foreign State Papers*, x.

¹¹⁶ However, it should be noted that Castlereagh’s non-interventionism remained somewhat skin-deep, as he instructed A’Court to protect the Neapolitan royal family from revolutionaries using British naval resources, should the need arise. Castlereagh to A’Court, 16 September 1820 (FO 70/89).

¹¹⁷ Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, pp. 167-168.

¹¹⁸ John W. Derry, *Castlereagh*, p. 210.

¹¹⁹ John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 456.

This fact raised deep concerns within government, as the similar ‘forcible subversion of the Government of Naples by their army’ seemed to indicate a dangerous trend. Perhaps more concerning for Castlereagh were the implications of this rapid destabilization of peripheral Europe for the Austrian government. Castlereagh, in private, seemed shocked by the fact that from his perspective, ‘the Neapolitan Army had no grievance whatever, as an army, to complain of...it was well clothed and regularly paid, it nevertheless constituted the principal if not the sole agency by which the state has been overthrown.’ Interestingly, his belief that the revolution had occurred ‘not on account of any reproach...[to] impute to the government of their Sovereign, as a justification’ mirrored a speech that he gave introducing the Six Acts, in which he argued that the rebellious behavior then occurring in Britain had had no justifiable cause.¹²⁰

Castlereagh was deeply worried by the course of events. According to him, the domino effect of military takeovers was likely to ‘excite uneasiness in the Austrian cabinet for the security of their Italian possessions.’¹²¹ As such Castlereagh argued that it was essential that any possible ‘ministerial conference’ be postponed until ‘the opinion of Austria shall be declared’ and Metternich informed ‘what is our line of policy.’¹²² However, even at this early stage Castlereagh made clear that all military options were off the table, as Britain ‘cannot act forcibly’ however, Metternich’s intervention would not be hindered, so long as it remained unilateral.¹²³

The Congresses of Troppau and Laibach

Austria’s moves towards a suppression of the rebellion, with tacit British support, was deeply concerning to France and on 10 August 1820, French diplomats made a formal request for a Congress on the issue of Naples. Etienne Pasquier, the French Foreign Minister, argued that due to its longstanding dynastic ties to the monarch of Naples, France ought to have some input on a possible Austrian intervention. As a result, the Congress of Troppau was called, and its first meeting began on 20 October. Earlier that month, on 12 October, Castlereagh had announced that Britain would not participate in this conference, but that his brother Charles would be sent as an observer. John Bew has argued that Castlereagh’s nonattendance was a result of the fact that ‘the government did not see the need for an allied conference on the question of Naples and due to ‘the

¹²⁰ Castlereagh to Charles Stewart, 29 July 1820 (BL Add. MSS 41532, ff. 65-73.); *Hansard*, xli, p. 403.

¹²¹ FO 52/43 cited in Marcus Robert Phipps Dorman, *A History of the British Empire in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 284.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

ongoing crisis over the Queen's trial' it was impossible for Castlereagh to leave the country.¹²⁴ Wendy Hinde sees Castlereagh's absence from Troppau in a slightly different light, arguing that the Congress put Castlereagh into a problematic position.

It was difficult to participate in a conference when he strongly disapproved of its aims and feared it might lead to commitments which neither he nor parliament could accept. On the other hand, he was desperately anxious not to advertise a breach in the Alliance. In the end, the cabinet decided that Stewart should attend, but as an observer only.¹²⁵

Unlike more contemporary scholars, Harold Nicolson, writing in 1946, argued that Castlereagh's absence was evidence of a more significant shift in the status of the Congress System. Nicholson asserted, instead, that 'the Great Coalition was thus finally dissolved; the Concert of Europe had disintegrated; the Holy Alliance had succeeded in destroying the Quadruple Alliance; the Congress system had failed.'¹²⁶ Although nominally still in existence, the Congress System ceased to function as it had originally been intended, and this, largely due to Britain's non-participation, thus permanently shifting the European balance of power. Chateaubriand, who understood the decline of Anglo-Austrian relations as beneficial to France, wrote that 'Austria deprived of [British influence] will be forced to come near to France.'¹²⁷ Although scholars tend to group subsequent summits together with the Congresses of Vienna and Aix-la-Chapelle, their function and organization had fundamentally changed with the presence of active British representation. Thus it would be clearly a taxonomic improvement to classify the Congresses of Carlsbad, Troppau, Laibach, and Verona as a distinct class of summits more specifically connected to the purposes of the Holy Alliance than to Castlereagh's initial goal of creating a confederacy of Europe.¹²⁸

During the Congress, Castlereagh continued to monitor events via his brother's dispatches and conversations with foreign ambassadors.¹²⁹ Castlereagh explained to Lieven that he 'had never before so much regretted as now, not being with the Emperor and able to submit my thoughts to

¹²⁴ John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 502.

¹²⁵ Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh*, p. 262.

¹²⁶ Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna* (Constable, 1946), p. 268.

¹²⁷ Adhemar d'Antioche, *Chateaubriand: Ambassadeur à Londres* (Perrin, 1919) p. 348.

¹²⁸ In addition, the Congresses of London in 1832 and Berlin in 1878 are often, and even more spuriously, linked to the Congress System.

¹²⁹ Castlereagh increasingly expressed concern 'on viewing the spectacle now presented by the Troppau reunion' as it was 'impossible not to consider the right which the Monarchs claim to judge and condemn the actions of other states as a precedent dangerous to the liberties of the world. No man can see without a certain feeling of fear the lot of every nation submitted to the decisions and the will of such a tribunal.' (Lieven to Nesselrode, 4 December 1820 cited in Phillip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, p. 167.

him.’ Castlereagh believed that he ‘could have got the Emperor, always so accessible to a frank account of the truth, to share opinions which must have convinced a judgment so enlightened as his own. The Emperor has repeated on every occasion his unshaken determination not to contract new engagements, not to form new ties outside those already existing, not to seek new guarantees outside the General Alliance. This determination is, in fact, Europe’s safety anchor. Why change it now?’¹³⁰

The protocols were signed on 19 November 1820. In keeping with the Holy Alliance’s purposes, they sought ‘to assure the development peaceably and happily of civilization, justice, and law under Christian morality’ and more importantly granted Austria authorization for an invasion.¹³¹ In a letter to his brother, Castlereagh discussed his perspective on how his absence had been perceived by the representatives of the continental powers. Castlereagh saw the perception that his loss of interest was rooted in the government’s political and economic difficulties as flawed. As he wrote on 13 March 1820,

Our Allies will still deceive themselves upon the political attitude of this Government. They idly persevere in attributing the line we have taken, and must steadily continue to take, to the temporary difficulties in which the Government have been placed, instead of imputing them exclusively to those principles which in our system must be immutable, and which, if the three Courts persevere much longer in the open promulgation of their ultra-doctrines, will ere long work a separation which it is the wish of us all to avoid.¹³²

Castlereagh, however, remained willing to violate the new principles when provided with a non-controversial opportunity. It was the opinion of Esterhazy that Castlereagh secretly supported the interventionist policies of the continental powers, but without sufficient resources or political support was forced to merely observe, writing that, Castlereagh ‘is like a great lover of music who is at Church; he wishes to applaud but dare not.’¹³³ Bobbitt as argued that while ‘Castlereagh did not oppose Austrian intervention [he] strongly opposed intervention by the Alliance.’¹³⁴ Castlereagh made obvious, in his correspondence that he was fully in support of the Austrian

¹³⁰ Lieven to Nesselrode, 8 December 1820 cited in Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 302.

¹³¹ ‘Protocol of the Holy Alliance, 19 November 1820’, FO 52/43.

¹³² Archibald Alison, *Lives of Lord Castlereagh*, iii, p. 223.

¹³³ Charles Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p. 326.

¹³⁴ Philip Bobbitt, *Shield of Achilles*, p. 167.

intervention that had been agreed by the Congress.¹³⁵ What is obscured, however, by the language of the State Paper, and little discussed in the historiography of the decline of the Congress System, is the degree to which Castlereagh's opposition to interventions by the Alliance was rooted in the sheer expense entailed by the fulfillment of Britain's treaty obligations. Expenses that the government had neither the wherewithal to support, nor the political capital to promote.¹³⁶

The lack of Castlereagh's full commitment to the policies outlined in the Canning influenced, or authored, State Paper can be detected in his response to the revolt in Piedmont. His support for a Russian intervention violated the sphere of influence policy recently promulgated.¹³⁷ On 5 April 1821, with Austrian troops engaged in Naples, Castlereagh wrote to British envoy Robert Gordon, expressing his belief that 'if a foreign force must needs enter Piedmont, I had infinitely rather see a Russian than a French army destined to undertake that service' of functioning as the occupying army.¹³⁸ Castlereagh's willingness to allow Russian troops into Piedmont, was not exercised and the revolt was suppressed by loyalists troops, aided by a small Austrian contingent, instead. Regardless of Castlereagh's sporadic support for interventions not in keeping with the post-State Paper non-interventionist doctrine, it was becoming more and more evident as time passed that Canning's influence, even from outside the cabinet was substantial. This policy

¹³⁵ 'Up to the present stage of our proceedings the view taken at Vienna of the Neapolitan Revolution corresponds exactly with what I always thought it must be. The change was such as satisfied me that the Court of Vienna would not delay for a moment to pour a large and commanding Military Force into the Italian Dominions. That they would as little hesitate to take under their immediate protection such Italian States, and especially Tuscany and Lucca, as might with them dread the conflagration. That they would be prepared, if called upon, to defend the Papal State, and that in this imposing attitude, they would watch and ascertain the actual state of affairs at Naples, communicated with their Allies, and thus be prepared to act upon that system which sound policy and their own immediate safety might dictate.' Castlereagh to Stewart, 5 August 1820 (FO 7/160).

¹³⁶ Even if Britain had not been required to contribute to the expenses of an Alliance intervention, Castlereagh believed that the intervention 'would most certainly be disapproved by our Parliament; and even if it could be sustained, it is obvious that, from that moment, every act of the Austrian army in the Kingdom of Naples would as much under the immediate cognizance and jurisdiction of the British Parliament.' Castlereagh to Stewart, 16 September 1820 (FO 7/160).

¹³⁷ This stance was taken in direct contradiction of the Circular of 19 January 1821, in which Castlereagh argued, in a manner reminiscent of Canning, that the cabinet 'do not regard the Alliance as entitled under existing Treaties to assume in their character as Allies any such general powers [to intervene in the domestic affairs of states outside their sphere of influence] nor do they conceive that such extraordinary powers could be assumed in virtue of any fresh diplomatic transaction amongst the Allied Courts without their either attributing to themselves a supremacy incompatible with the rights of other States or if to be acquired through the special accession of such States without introducing a federative system in Europe not only unwieldy and ineffectual to its object but leading to many most serious inconveniences.' 'Circular, 19 January 1821' *British and Foreign State Papers, 1820-1821* (London, 1830), pp. 1160-1164.

¹³⁸ Castlereagh to Gordon, 5 April 1821 (FO 165/35).

was exemplified by a speech given by Canning on 20 March 1821, in which he argued in the midst of the Congress of Laibach that Britons ought not to suppose:

Highly blessed as we were in the enjoyment of our envied constitution, that there was no salvation without its pale. Whatever might be the result of the present portentous, struggle, it was not in our power to lead the parties to the point we wished, either by persuasion, remonstrance, or force. Let those who did not enjoy the happiness which we derived from a stable constitution, and who had grievances to redress, seek that happiness and that redress with our best good-will; but let us not, in the foolish spirit of romance, suppose that we alone could regenerate Europe...the price at which political liberty is to be valued and the cost at which it is to be obtained, constitute the nicest balance and one which those immediately interested in the calculation are competent to decide.¹³⁹

The Congress of Laibach, which convened between 26 January and 12 May 1821, merely continued much of the work outlined at Troppau. During the meetings of the Congress, beginning on 24 February 1821, Alexander Ypsilantis, a former member of the Russian delegation at the Congress of Vienna, launched a revolt against Turkish rule in Greece.¹⁴⁰ The British government wavered briefly before coming down on the side of the Porte; initially Castlereagh sought to have the Greek rebels classified as combatants, however, his perspective seemed to shift with time and by mid-June Castlereagh was arguing that the Greek national cause, was the ‘head of the revolutionary torrent’ and ‘had originated in the secret societies of coldblooded philosophers.’¹⁴¹ While many in Britain, with Lord Byron eventually to become the foremost, pressed for an alignment with the Greek nationalists, Castlereagh using one of his favorite methods, did nothing in the hopes that delay would resolve the issue. Indeed, when the British ambassador to the Porte, Lord Strangford, requested instructions from Castlereagh, ‘nothing happened’ as ‘asking Castlereagh for guidance...was like asking for the governor-generalship of India.’¹⁴²

This same internal division in Castlereagh’s thinking can be seen in his response to the Laibach circular, which he addressed in some detail in parliament, both accusing and defending the Congress’s results. He argued that ‘for certain states to erect themselves into a tribunal, to judge of the internal affairs of others, was...in defiance of the law of nations and the principles of

¹³⁹ Allan Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters in the Age of Revolution* (London, 1993), p. 216; *Hansard*, iv, cc.1374-1375.

¹⁴⁰ See Richard Clogg, *The Movement for Greek Independence* (New York, 1976), p. 201.

¹⁴¹ *Hansard*, v, c. 1258.

¹⁴² Allan Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters*, pp. 216-217.

common sense.’ However, Castlereagh, sought to present this as an error, rather than a true division, as he ‘believed they had been guided by no other motive than a real desire to preserve the peace of Europe—that they had had no view to aggrandize themselves by the acquisition of territory.’¹⁴³ After seeking to delineate the differences between revolutions which sought to destroy old systems and those designed to restore traditional rights, Castlereagh returned to what had become an obsession: conspiracy.¹⁴⁴

There was now a conspiracy abroad which menaced the existence of every regular government. When that was the case, he was not prepared to say how far general principles like those contained in the declarations of the sovereigns might not be defended, as the means of preventing evils with which all governments were threatened. A system of universal subversion existed throughout Europe, and one revolution was made the means of giving birth to another. The sovereigns of Europe did not know how soon the blood of their own people might become the sacrifice of the revolutionary principles which were advocated throughout Europe.¹⁴⁵

Castlereagh was by no means alone in his irrational fixation, as Janet Hartley has pointed out, Tsar Alexander likewise believed the Greek rebellion to be part of a secret conspiracy, arguing imaginatively that Ypsilantis was the agent of a French secret society devoted to countering the goals of the Holy Alliance.¹⁴⁶

Castlereagh’s worries, irrational as they may have been, laid the foundations for a reconciliation with Metternich.¹⁴⁷ In the wake of his coronation, George IV travelled to both Ireland and Hanover to mark his ascension. During their trip together, Castlereagh was able to spend ten days in mid-October 1821 with Metternich, for what would be their last meeting. Although representatives from Russia and Prussia were also invited, the last-minute nature of the meeting prevented Lieven from arriving until it was nearly over, and Bernstorff elected not to

¹⁴³ *Hansard*, v, c. 1258.

¹⁴⁴ Castlereagh’s tendency to understand events in terms of conspiracy, in which ‘weak’ participants were misguided by a conspiratorial elite, may have had roots in anti-Catholic bigotry. In a letter to William Wickham, Castlereagh explained that he believed the 1798 rebellion was ‘a Jacobinical conspiracy throughout the kingdom pursuing its object with Popish instruments; the heated bigotry of this sect being better suited to the purpose of the republican leaders than the cold, reasoning disaffection of the northern Presbyterians.’ Castlereagh to William Wickham, 12 June 1798 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i, p. 219).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Janet Hartley, *Alexander I, Profiles in Power* (New York, 1994), p. 153.

¹⁴⁷ In addition to this, personnel changes in the government, likely has some effect. Canning’s resignation on 12 December 1820 seems to have shifted the balance of power within the Cabinet, and Castlereagh’s rapprochement with Metternich, may have been the outcome of Canning’s absence from the decision-making process, allowing Castlereagh to drift back on the ‘path’ of his earlier tendencies.

attend. During their reunion, which involved not only Castlereagh, but George IV as well, a wide variety of topics were covered, many centering on British domestic politics, and the malingering divide between the Monarch and Lord Liverpool in the aftermath of the divorce crisis. At the end of the meeting Lieven arrived and announced that the Tsar was ready to support the Anglo-Austrian consensus on Greece.

The Congress of Verona

With the Tsar gradually coming around to Metternich's arguments, Castlereagh 'stak[ed] everything on a new congress somewhere in Italy...at which he and Metternich would persuade the Tsar to stand firm against the appeals of the Greeks.'¹⁴⁸ Alexander, whose interest in a Russian role in Spain, was willing to participate, in the hopes of securing what he had not been able to at Troppau or Laibach. Metternich, who was pleased by his meetings with the Russian delegation in Vienna, had no need to pursue the issue at a meeting of the Alliance, however, having secured Castlereagh's interest, the issue remained on the agenda, in order to provide Castlereagh a reason for attending the conference. Metternich thus elected to divide the conference into two separate meetings, with a pre-conference held from 1-15 September on the issues of Spain and the Greek rebellion. Followed by a meeting of the sovereigns, after which Castlereagh would return to England and the conference would then consider questions pertaining to Italy. Likewise, Alexander forced Metternich to accept the Spanish question into the Alliance's deliberations. Metternich, who had recently patched up his differences with Castlereagh, was concerned that their reestablished connection might be damaged by the issue of Spain, as from April 1820 onwards Castlereagh 'had vigorously opposed even a joint demarche or consultation on the Spanish question.'¹⁴⁹

While in the midst of these plans, Castlereagh's suicide brought a sudden end to the Anglo-Austrian reconciliation. Although Castlereagh left brief notes for Verona, J.E.S. Green has argued that 'an examination of these papers will reveal the total absence of Castlereagh's instructions from the original papers, [and] the omission of half of them from the additional papers.'¹⁵⁰ Green argues that these had likely been tampered with by Canning prior to being made public. Canning's

¹⁴⁸ Allan Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters* (London, 1993), p. 216.

¹⁴⁹ Paul W. Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy at its Zenith, 1820-1823* (Austin, 1962), p. 204.

¹⁵⁰ Green argued that Canning, altered Castlereagh's instruction to 'deceive Parliament, and incidentally the country, by placing the responsibility for the collapse of British diplomacy at Verona upon the shoulders of his former rival.' J. E. S. Green, 'Castlereagh's Instructions for the Conferences at Vienna, 1822', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 7, (1913), pp. 103-128

decision to edit the Verona instructions stands as a fitting conclusion to his relationship with Castlereagh. Canning's influence on British foreign policy during much of Castlereagh's diplomatic career had been substantial, however with his ascension to Castlereagh's former positions, the transformation was complete.

Chapter 7
The Domestic Impact of Postwar Reform
1819-1821

In the previous chapters there emerges a narrative in which the Liverpool government, victorious in its war with Napoleon, was confronted by persistent attacks from the opposition. Disorganized and incompetent, the Whigs hardly appeared to be a serious enemy, and indeed, the government from retrospect seems unusually secure. However, in the aftermath of major budgetary reductions at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, the government was more and more left without the persuasive power brought by substantial resources and the useful emoluments enabled by the methods of ‘Old Corruption’. In lieu of these older methods, the government’s stability was instead secured via the acceptance of a large proportion of the opposition’s platform, creating a government which, in its policy-making, took on the characteristics of a grand coalition. This chapter presents the argument that this moderation of policy goals, when combined with the government’s suppression of ultra-radicalism together helped to reform the nature and expression of dissent in the postwar period.

The government’s decision to accept the Whig leadership’s policy goals: non-interventionism and political economy led to an extensive shift in the British political system. Beyond the immediate effect of austerity and non-interventionism, this flexibility, in many ways rooted in Castlereagh’s personality, intended to de-fang the opposition, but in practice forced Whigs and radicals to pursue new venues of attack, in order to clearly delineate their ideological distinctives. What followed was a strategic shift, in which the opposition began to target the status of the ministry and the monarchy, by austerity measures, and then more indirectly by radical support for the cause of Caroline of Brunswick, a movement with enormous implications for British politics, culture, and gender relations.¹ Additionally, as the economy improved and the government’s reaction grew more oppressive, radicals were forced to drop the Jacobin-style components of their political playbook. As radicalism pivoted to include the concerns of women

¹ The distinct political agendas of the Whigs and radicals is well evidenced by their responses to the Queen Caroline affair, with Henry Brougham and Matthew Wood competing for influence on the Queen Consort during her journey back to England after the death of George III. See Jane Robins, *the Trial of Queen Caroline*, pp. 87-89, 109-119.

and members of the middle class, these interest groups progressively came to define the Whig and ministerialist strategies as well, thus pushing political debate towards the concerns of unrepresented sections of the British population, prior to both the 1832 Reform Act and the 1928 passage of voting equality.

William Huskisson identified the government's efforts at cultivating middle class support, by arguing that the 'clamor for economy' grew 'out of the present straitened circumstances of the yeomanry contrasted with the ease which they enjoyed during the war.' As 'the infection of radicalism, which is prevalent in the towns, is gradually making its way into the villages...we may find it necessary to do something to secure the affection and more cordial goodwill of some great class in the State.' Huskisson, however, understood that 'to bid for the lower classes or the manufacturing population is out of the question. Duty and feeling would equally forbid it; but the yeomanry are still within our reach, and to them in my opinion we must look.'² Although the government recognized the growing importance of cultivating the middle class, both rural yeoman farmers and urban industrial and commercial workers, it was often unwilling to acknowledge the importance of their influence. As Castlereagh had earlier commented to Wilberforce 'one does not like to own that we are forced to give way to our manufacturers.'³

In the final years of the Napoleonic Wars, tensions between Foxite and Grenvillite parties had become increasingly pronounced. While the Whig leadership struggled to hold these factions together, it quickly became obvious that within the complex structure of postwar political debate that the divisions which had grown up during his final years had finally become irreparable. Increasingly the Whig leadership was forced by the moderate Grenvillite party to function as the enforcers of moderation on radicals. This division became particularly noticeable during the 1815 Corn Law debates. During that debate Grenvillite liberalism came into violent contact with the protectionism embraced by Earl Grey and his supporters. Whig agriculturalists by and large followed Grey in supporting the government's recommendations on grain tariffs, principally in order to protect their personal holdings. Grenvillite liberalism, however, was embraced by the radical wing of the Whig party and by the many Britons who expressed their distaste for this legislation during the rioting described in chapter two of this thesis. Mainstream Whig support for

² Huskisson to Arbuthnot, 24 March 1820 (BL Add. MSS 38742, f. 6-9.)

³ Ewing Ritchie, *The Life and Times of Viscount Palmerston*, i, (London, 1866), p. 162.

the Corn Law legislation left radicals disenchanted and demonstrates the growing alienation of the various Whig factions. Although Tierney operated as the titular head of the Whigs from 1817 until 1821, for much of that period the party remained barely intact. Indeed, his eventual resignation was the result of his inability to bring about reconciliation among the factions. In the aftermath of his resignation, nearly a decade went by before his position was filled. With the secession of the Grenvillite in 1817, and their decision to join the government in 1821, the government's position was strengthened, but annexation came at an exceedingly high cost. Post-1817 the Whig party existed as a rump, primarily constituted of old Foxites. The division of the Whig party, however, purchased by what amounted to outright bribery, had been quite gradual. Perhaps the most important moment in this transition occurred when Grenville along with his followers elected to support the government's decision to suspend *habeas corpus*.

In the aftermath of the departure of the Grenvillites in 1817, the Whig party began a period of reassessment, during which the leadership was forced to both recognize the newly important position occupied by the remnants of the Foxite party, and simultaneously, to note the central importance of avoiding any further secessions by more moderate factions within the party. It was thus that the partially shorn Whig party began the process of honing their legislative purpose down to three distinct, straightforward planks. These three planks, consisted of the following: Catholic emancipation, austerity, and non-intervention. These three planks managed to appeal to a wide audience of both conservative and radical factions and granted the party a cogent, easy-to-understand set of policies. While the accomplishment of these three planks would take until 1829, their impact would have dramatic, persistent effects on the nature of the British government. As discussed in the previous chapter, the emergence of what John Bew calls the 'non-intervention consensus', would prove disastrous to Castlereagh's plans for a European Confederacy, and would lead from 1818 onwards to the ascension of Canningite diplomacy, reaching its apotheosis immediately prior to Canning's resignation in 1820.⁴ The rising influence of Canning, long before Canning himself became Foreign Secretary, can be seen in many domestic policy issues, as well. Canningite moderation was thus ascendant long before the staff changes in the cabinet, which occurred following Castlereagh's death. Catholic emancipation, would similarly have a dramatic

⁴ John Bew, 'Intervention in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars', Brenden Simms, (ed.) *Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 123.

impact, first by altering the nature of Britain's political identity, and perhaps more importantly by demonstrating in 1829 that the status of the monarchy had permanently been reduced.

The most important of these reform measures was the Whig's decision to emphasize retrenchment. Retrenchment itself had been forced upon the Whigs as a long-term central plank to their political platform by a complex mix of inputs. The policy proved to be a useful tool in attacking both the government and the monarch. Both Tierney and Brougham found that their political agendas, previously ineffectual, developed a following from a wide range of parliamentary factions when they began fighting to limit the funding of the monarch and reduce the civil list. After the death of Princess Charlotte in 1817 the government had made a variety of grants designed to induce marriage and procreation amongst George III's sons. The dissipation and unpopularity of these sons however allowed the Whigs to capitalize on public distaste for these grants by arguing for their reduction or elimination. The 1816 repeal of the income tax provided an important precedent for future Whig attacks on the government, due to its success and broad popularity. In the following years radicalism initially expressed in the traditional working class riots that broke out during the Corn Law debates coalesced into a form of dissent reminiscent of older, eighteenth century forms of political speech, increasingly out of keeping with the growing dominance of loyalist, constitutionalist, and primarily middle class forms of dissent.

In 1817, the opposition was unable to fully follow up on the previous year's success, in part due to the overt radicalism of Brougham's rhetoric.⁵ While many Whigs were concerned by the government's repressive legislation, the opposition was unable to mobilize sufficient votes against it. While many sought parliamentary reform, economic legislation remained far more palatable. As the agricultural sector recovered from the disastrous 1816 harvest and its subsequent impact, the radicals influence on public policy simultaneously declined. This was in no small part aided by the suspension of *habeas corpus* on 24 February 1817.⁶ The 1818 general election, called early by the government to take advantage of the relatively good conditions still saw moderate losses on the government side. In order to adequately respond to these losses the Liverpool

⁵ Brougham, who suffered repeated bouts of depression, exhibited signs of a manic episode during this speech, and as such it may be more equitable to describe the speech as resulting from a mental health issue, rather than a particular political agenda. See Robert Stewart, *Henry Brougham* (London, 1985), pp. 93-96.

⁶ '57 Geo. III, c. 3' from Arthur Aspinall, *English Historical Documents, 1783-1832* (London, 1959), p. 329.

administration began to openly embrace many of the planks of the Whig platform. In many ways the government outdid the opposition in its efforts at austerity and modernization.

While the Whig leadership maintained its emphasis on practical improvement and retrenchment, more radical members of the opposition began to argue for a distinctive platform. This search for a distinctive voice led many Whigs to press for parliamentary reform against the will of the leadership. The Whig leadership's complex situation can be best exemplified by their response to the suppression of the protests at St. Peter's Field. Grey sought to distance the Whig party from both the repressive government and the radicals present at the demonstration. While most Whigs were concerned by the government's response, and what was deemed an excessively punitive series of punishments, they remained just as concerned by the radicalism exhibited by Hunt and his followers.⁷

In the wake of the Grenvillite secession and growing dissatisfaction with his personal response to Peterloo, Lord Grey began to take a more lenient approach towards Whig members who proposed piecemeal parliamentary reform legislation. Of the several members that embraced this new openness from the Whig leadership, perhaps the most fervent proposers of reforms were Russell and Lambton. At the conclusion of the 1819 parliamentary session, issues of reform were openly voiced. Among the proposals put forward by radical members of the opposition were arguments for the expansion of suffrage, a limitation of the duration of parliaments, and a proposal for the elimination of rotten boroughs.

Status of the Monarchy

Calls for a push beyond 'economical' reforms brought with them criticism of not only the government's policies, but also the status of the monarchy. Although, radical republicanism failed to coalesce into a viable political movement, interest in a reform of the status of the monarchy emerged as a distinct goal, especially during the trial of Queen Caroline in 1820. Middle class dissent, previously fragmented by a diversity of purpose, was unified with radicals in its opposition to the King.

While the powers of the monarch had consistently been in flux across the many centuries of its existence, during the post-Napoleonic era it experienced significant alteration. The emergence

⁷ Donald Read, *Peterloo* (Manchester, 1958), pp 199-200.

of a 'modern' form of the monarchy's limited and largely symbolic powers, are often depicted as a gradual arc from the Glorious Revolution up to Queen Victoria's absenteeism during the later years of her reign. Even those, such as Vernon Bogdanor, who argue that this transition was more rapid, tend to see the shift in powers as occurring between '1689 and the Reform Act of 1832.'⁸ While it is clear that the status of the monarch's power was in gradual decline throughout that period, such assumptions fail to see the truly dramatic shift which occurred in the postwar period during both the regency and reign of George IV. While George IV's serial mistreatment of his supporters, and his overwhelming self-indulgence left him with few supporters the actual mechanism of the decline in his personal influence came via a steady erosion of constitutional powers.⁹ Between the beginning of his regency in 1812, when it seemed constitutionally obvious that George could have dismissed the cabinet, by the time of his death in 1830 this power had diminished to the extent that it was clear that this power, if extant, could no longer be exercised with propriety.¹⁰ Indeed, although George IV threatened to abdicate, Catholic Emancipation was passed against his will. Although the King, oblivious to these changes, continued to consider his Prime Minister to be 'a sort of maître d'hotel which he might dismiss any moment that it happened to suit him' it was clear that a sea change had occurred during his reign.¹¹ The extent to which George IV even particularly noticed this shift has been obscured by time, and perhaps by the alcohol and opium induced blur of his reign. Regardless of his occasional attempts to interject himself into foreign policy, George IV's lack of interest in much government policy created a vacuum in executive power, which concerned Liverpool, but which did not tempt him into assuming those vacated powers. Instead, over the course of his reign, the cabinet as a whole tended

⁸ Vernon Bogdanor, *Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford, 1996), p. 10.

⁹ A major component of this erosion of powers came in the form of Parliamentary oversight of Crown finances. Although a persistent component of the changing relationship of the monarch and the Parliament, the years following the war saw a vast expansion of this avenue of attack on the monarchy. Castlereagh, in a letter to his brother, describes the 1816 fight over the monarch's expenditure, and offers insight into the changing status of the monarchy, as well as the degree to which Castlereagh's organizational expertise impacted history: 'The Opposition were sanguine in their hope of beating us upon Civil List, and I was not without apprehensions, that our Country Gentlemen would have fail'd us, upon this the most difficult of all Questions from its Complexity, its Unpopularity, and the Impression that prevailed of mismanagement in Regent's Expenditure-by framing our Measure well and by what Tierney calls a previous Drill of about 50 of the Country Gentlemen at my office, the Tide was stem'd, and we carried the Crown very triumphantly through this its greatest difficulty, and I rather hope laid down a very improved System for the future management of this difficult Branch of the Publick Service.' Castlereagh to Charles Stewart, 4 June 1816 (D3030/22/2).

¹⁰ George III and IV throughout much of their reigns were, in fact, unable to freely dissolve ministries by concerns over the nature of a Whig ministry, rather than by entrenched tradition preventing them from doing so freely, with the exception of the Ministry of All the Talents, which was not incidentally a coalition government.

¹¹ Harriet Arbuthnot, *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot, 1820-1832*, i, (London, 1950), p. 79.

to function in a collaborative manner, dividing executive tasks amongst themselves. George IV described Liverpool's method of managing dismissively as 'a government of departments.'¹²

Despite the declining powers of the monarchy, the absence of strong party organization helped to sustain George IV's role in the government. While the person of the monarch remained at the heart of government, his powers derived primarily from traditional deference. This respect frequently left Castlereagh in awkward positions, caused by George IV's efforts at personal diplomacy. Such efforts at undercutting his ministers, however, were mitigated by Castlereagh's relationship with the monarch. Castlereagh, indeed, described himself and the monarch as the only people in Europe who understood his foreign policy.¹³ For many members, participation in the legislative process was of secondary or tertiary importance when compared with the management of estates, or simply the pursuit of leisure. Without the resources of his predecessors, or the strength of party discipline, Castlereagh's frequent entreaties to absentee Irish supporters of the government demonstrate a persistent weakness. This difficulty, while at cursory examination, simply an example of the dilettantism of a government run by wealthy aristocrats who saw their role in parliament as simply an onerous aspect of their exalted patrimony, actually points at an important transition, at the heart of the shifting status of the monarchy and subsequently of the government as a whole.

The monarchy's decline occurred during the years immediately following the war's conclusion, during which budget cuts and efforts at 'tidying up the administrative and fiscal system...severely limited the whole flow of Crown influence.'¹⁴ Practical political considerations, however, often slowed the process of reform. Ireland in many ways lagged behind England in its transition away from the old corruption of eighteenth century government. Due to the overwhelming government focus on prosecuting the war with France, few efforts had been made during the period following the Act of Union. With the ascension of Liverpool to the premiership in 1812, a new chief secretary, Robert Peel, was sent to Ireland, where he would remain until 1818. As the war came to its denouement, Peel was empowered to modernize Ireland's traditional patronage system, in order to bring it more thoroughly in line with reforms in Britain. This process was complicated by Castlereagh's dependence on the votes of the roughly seventy members from

¹² Arthur Aspinall, (ed.), *The Letters of George IV*, iii, (London, 1938), p. 39.

¹³ Neumann to Esterhazy, 21 September 1822, cited in Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, ii, p.489.

¹⁴ Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (London, 1959), p. 186.

Ireland that supported the government, in no small part due to his continued ability to incentivize that support via a wide variety of emoluments.¹⁵ While Peel enacted a number of moderate reforms during his first years in office, a major restructuring of the Irish patronage system did not occur until the aftermath of the repeal of the income tax, the explosion in government debt, and the subsequent push for retrenchment. Only twelve percent of Irish members voted for the repeal of the extremely unpopular income tax, indicating the extent to which crown patronage remained in force four years after Peel had begun reforming the system.¹⁶

Castlereagh and the Evolution of Public Dissent

In the aftermath of the unsuccessful Corn Bill riots of March 1815, radicalism experienced a period of internal divisions. Ultra-radicalism, embodied by the Spencean Philanthropists, remained in conflict with informal remnants of the more moderate London Corresponding Society. As components of the radical agenda grew in popularity during the postwar period, a new faction of middle class radical leadership, personified by Francis Burdett and Henry Hunt, began to displace the older factions. Middle class radicalism was often more attentive to the growing influence of female radicals, and helped to shift the movement away from violence towards constructive changes. While efforts at shifting government policy via petition grew in popularity, their failure to effect change tended to encourage ultra-radical violence.¹⁷ The Spa Fields Riots of 2 December 1816 and the Blanketeers march of March 1817 both highlighted the ineffectiveness of petitioning, by ironically emphasizing the process.

Peterloo

16 August 1819

By the final years of the war, working class desire for political and economic reform had grown immensely. The depression which followed the disastrous harvest of 1816, and the widespread perception that the Liverpool administration had mismanaged the transition back to a peacetime economy, led to growing resentment amongst both the middle and working classes. Hopes ran high, at first, among those who hoped for the benefits of a peace dividend. However, as one economic reform package after another failed to bring relief, radicals increasingly turned to parliamentary reform as their chosen method. Additionally, the growth of the popular press,

¹⁵ BL Add. MSS 38195/20.

¹⁶ *Hansard*, xxxiii, cc. 451-55

¹⁷ *The Anti-Gallican Monitor*, 4 August 1816.

personified by William Cobbett, allowed elite political philosophies to rapidly be digested and acted upon by the masses. It was especially William Cobbett's *Weekly Political Register* that began to spread interest in parliamentary reform to the working class. As interest in political reform grew, the traditional practice of working class political rioting began to decline. In many ways, the extensive riots which hit London during the first years which followed the conclusion of peace, represent both the epitome and conclusion of an eighteenth century form of political speech. While political riots by no means disappeared, their status had unalterably changed, to be replaced by a more benign alternative.¹⁸ The earliest iteration of this alternative, was best exemplified by the meeting held at St. Peter's Field, Manchester which combined a complex mixture of traditional festivals, military parade, and a domesticated form of Jacobinical demonstration.¹⁹

With the economy still slow to recover, a poor harvest in 1818, and the expiration of the 1817 ban on public meetings, protests again became a feature of the political environment. Beyond a spate of strikes which struck the textile industry, there came a renewed interest in parliamentary reform. On 12 July 1819 approximately 20,000 protesters gathered in Birmingham. The culmination of these mass protests occurred on 16 August when over 70,000 people gathered at St. Peter's Field, Manchester to call for 'universal suffrage, yearly parliaments, and repeal of the Corn Laws.'²⁰ The gathering centered on an address by the well-known orator Henry Hunt. The yeomanry attempted to arrest Hunt, however in the process both the tightly packed crowd and the ill-trained police force panicked and the resulting police violence and stampede led to the deaths of eleven protesters and over 400 injuries. The deaths and injuries quickly led to an outcry against those involved.

The government's tepid support for the local police force and Castlereagh's role as spokesman in the House of Common, led many to associate him in particular with the violence in Manchester. In particular, the opposition rankled at Castlereagh's efforts to block an inquiry into 'the proceedings at Manchester' so that the government could quickly pass 'remedial measures' due to the immediacy of the 'danger to themselves and the state.'²¹ Although not published until

¹⁸ Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, pp. 158-164.

¹⁹ Robert Poole, 'The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England', *Past & Present*, 192, (2006), pp. 109-153.

²⁰ Donald Read, *Peterloo: the Massacre and its Background* (Manchester, 1958), p. 42.

²¹ *Hansard*, xli, cc. 557-558.

1832, Shelley's response to Peterloo, *the Masque of Anarchy* shaped Castlereagh's legacy for many years to come.²²

I met Murder on the way-
He had a mask like Castlereagh-
Very smooth he look'd yet grim;
Seven bloodhounds followed him:

All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew,
Which from his wide cloak he drew.²³

The government violence evidenced at St. Peter's Field, and its emergence as a divisive symbol helped to further separate radicalism and aspirational middle class reformers.²⁴ Peterloo was thus a transitional moment 'for many alarmed observers' as the violence of the day 'drove home the urgent need to demonstrate the rallying of the 'middle class' on the side of order and stability.'²⁵ As a result, 'middle-class dissent would increasingly demarcate itself from, the more working-class forms of political speech.'²⁶ This shift was as much symbolic of a changing political culture, as it was evidence of a changed economic system, within which the middle classes played an increasingly important role. Radicals, were thus divided, with often-'misogynist' ultra-radicals drifting away from this family-oriented approach, while middle-class sentiment increasingly sought redress in the forms of quasi-conservative protests, such as those which would surround

²² Additionally, the non-violence espoused by Shelley, and his calls to passive resistance ('stand ye calm and resolute, like a forest close and mute') in the aftermath of Peterloo can be understood as emerging from the growing middle class disgust with postwar violence, both radical and governmental. Shelley, *The Masque of Anarchy* (London, 1832).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ The Whig leadership attempted to turn public outrage at Castlereagh's refusal to allow an inquiry into Peterloo into political gain by 'repeat[ing] the tactics which had proved so successful against the Property Tax.' However, the government, instituted a policy of dismissing supporters of the protests, such as Earl Fitzwilliam, from government employment, which Brock has argued, inhibited the Whig's efforts. W.R. Brock, *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism* (London, 1967), pp. 111-113; Castlereagh, likewise argued that when Lord Fitzwilliam... went to the meeting at York' he 'tendered the resignation of his office.' *Hansard*, xli, c. 102; Robert Plumer Ward recounts the speech in his journal, and explains that the 'House rung with applause' after Castlereagh's speech. Robert Plumer Ward, *Memoirs*, ii (London, 1850), p. 34.

²⁵ Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 200.

²⁶ Anna Clark has done much to clarify this process, according to her, 'radicals, especially from the north, imbued the movement with greater discipline' which, as a result led to 'more women participating in the movement.' As women participated more fully in the radical movement, their points of entry into political activism, 'organized religion, strikes, and friendly societies' can be seen as contributing to this change in tone, away from the rioting which had surrounded earlier expressions of radical dissent. Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class*, p. 158.

the Queen Caroline movement. Additionally, petitions and political influence were becoming seen as the appropriate form of political speech, even by those excluded from the franchise. It was thus that universal manhood suffrage could be approached via a new political culture that increasingly excluded traditional working class political speech, in favor of the sort of benign gradualism that defined much of the late nineteenth century's political reforms.

The rise of suffrage as one of the primary goals of working-class radicals and their middle-class and aristocratic organizers came about by a fairly circuitous concatenation of circumstances. Perhaps the most important of these was the failure of economic reform, followed closely by the evident nihilism of machine-breaking and other examples of Luddite extremism. The government's responses to postwar rioting demonstrated to the working-class that such methods, redolent of the more violent days of the French Revolution, were no longer the acceptable traditional means of airing working-class grievances to the government which otherwise would not have responded to its interests. The loss of this means of expression forced the working-class to increasingly seek alternative means. To those interested in repeating the violence of the French Revolution, the government's extremely effective penetration of the Cato Street conspiracy, as well as other radical movements, demonstrated the ineffectiveness of such means. The government's willingness to utilize *agents provocateurs*, suspend *habeas corpus*, and to violently break up and suppress popular protests forced moderation on many radicals, inspiring them to join moderates in the pursuit of strictly peaceful approaches to reform.²⁷

The divisions that emerged within the radical movement oftentimes were rooted in class distinctions. As members of the emerging middle class began to abandon the more distinctly radical factions in the aftermath of Peterloo, leadership within working-class radical circles grew exasperated. In his 1820 *Black Book*, John Wade decried the 'criminal apathy' and 'criminal neutrality, which neither supports any measures to alleviate the sufferings, nor to guard them against the diabolical machinations of their enemies.'²⁸ Similarly, middle-class radicals who split from the movement in the aftermath of the government's crackdown were described as being filled with 'insensate selfishness and torpid indifference' who sacrifice 'every honest emotion, every ennobling sentiment, at the altar of Mammon.' According to the speaker, it was this self-serving

²⁷ John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1810* (Harvard, 1983), p. 9.

²⁸ John Wade, *The Black Book or Corruption Unmasked* (London, 1820), pp. 143-4.

interests in personal gain that prevented the middle classes from continuing in the pursuit of liberty. Indeed according to a Mr. McKenzie, the working classes were prepared 'to act and to suffer in support of their rights' and that it was disingenuous of the middle classes then deserting the movement to be 'silent when blood calls aloud from the earth for vengeance.'²⁹

As members of the middle class departed from radicalism they increasingly embraced a concept which, although not new, had certainly not emerged in common parlance until the post-1816 transformation of the British political environment. This newly emergent and increasingly important concept, was a belief in the importance of public opinion. Public opinion as a term can be traced to the late eighteenth century, however it was not until the postwar period that it began to take on a complex set of meanings inextricably intertwined with a new middle class identity. Rather than simply expressing a generic expression of democratic will, the term 'public opinion' came to represent the collective strength of the middle class, newly empowered by the social upheavals of the Napoleonic wars and eager to distance themselves both from the Jacobinical violence of the working classes and the increasingly unpopular, eighteenth-century morality of the upper classes and nobility. The combination of the middle class' abandonment of traditional expressions of dissent and their embrace of the concept of public opinion and subsequently emergence of middle-class morality can thus be seen as being accelerated by the government's suppression of dissent, the uncertainty of the postwar era political and economic system, and the effect of the Napoleonic Wars on expanding the power and scope of the middle class.

The growth of the middle class, was not universally welcomed. In a letter to John Wilson Croker, Robert Peel discussed, with some concern, the rise of 'public opinion' which he described as a 'great compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy, and newspaper paragraphs.' According to Peel this 'public opinion' was 'more liberal...than the policy of the Government.' Peel saw this shift as originating from 'the pressure of taxation' and other, 'immediate cause[s]' but increasingly decoupling from those practical concerns, into something more vague, into a general, desire for, 'some undefined change in the mode of governing the country.' He found it deeply confusing that, while 'public opinion never had such influence on public measures...[it] never was so dissatisfied with the share which it possessed.' Presciently,

²⁹ John Marshall, *A Full Account of the General Meeting of the Inhabitants of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Vicinity* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1819), pp. 2, 9.

Peel saw the political movement of middle class ‘public opinion’ as ‘growing too large for the channels that it has been accustomed to run through.’³⁰

The gradual stabilization of the economy reduced the influence of radicals, such as Cobbett. Perhaps the most important cause of the steadying of British political culture came from the end of the British government’s efforts at normalizing the economy. The completion of this complex and often mismanaged project brought with it an improved economy, with relatively intermittent periods of recession in the following decade. Attempts at reinvigorating the radical movement were unsuccessful as those who remained faithful to its most extreme goals tended to splinter into increasingly diverse factions. The outright republicanism that had once categorized the extreme radicals had lost popularity. On 13 November 1819, writing in his *Weekly Political Register*, William Cobbett argued that ‘if we stick to our one, legal, reasonable object, we succeed. If we do not, we fail. The man, who under the present circumstances, would propose republicanism as the ultimate object, must be nearly mad, or must have a desire to prevent any change at all.’³¹

One persistent aftereffect of Peterloo, was a decline in the popularity of the Prince Regent, who was, in part, blamed for the government’s response to popular protest. Increasingly the opposition began looking to the Queen, in much the same way that they had earlier pinned their hopes on the Prince. Henry Brougham, William Cobbett, Francis Place and Mathew Wood, each became involved in a movement to bring the Queen back to England, and to promote her as a figurehead for opposition to the Prince; an effort which would bear fruit in the coming year.

The Six Acts *30 December 1819*

In the aftermath of Peterloo, the government, most likely influenced by the 20 September Carlsbad Decrees, began to discuss the possibility of a similar legislative response to the possibility of rebellion in Britain. By November the government had prepared the legislative package which would come to be known as the Six Acts.³² These Acts were designed to prevent the sorts of situations that had led to the Peterloo massacre. On the evening before the 23 November special

³⁰ Peel to Croker, 23 March 1820 (*Croker Papers*, i, p. 170).

³¹ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 35, p. 384.

³² The Training Prevention Act, also known as the Unlawful Drilling Act 1819, (60 Geo. III & 1 Geo. IV c. 1), The Seizure of Arms Act (60 Geo. III & 1 Geo. IV c. 20), The Misdemeanors Act (60 Geo. III & 1 Geo. IV c. 4), The Seditious Meetings Prevention Act (60 Geo. III & 1 Geo. IV c. 6), The Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Act or Criminal Libel Act (60 Geo. III & 1 Geo. IV c. 8), and the Newspaper and Stamp Duties Act (60 Geo. III & 1 Geo. IV c. 9).

session began, a large dinner party was held at Lord Castlereagh's home in London. At the party, Robert Plumer Ward wrote in his diary, 'Castlereagh...looked remarkably well, and was in gay spirits' happy, he told Ward, as 'it was always much better to have a great object to fight for, than to be lingering on mere general business.'³³ Castlereagh's strong personal support for the legislation was evident when he introduced it on 29 November 1819. In his speech Castlereagh argued that the legislation was aimed primarily against those 'poor deluded souls' who had been misled into believing the tenets of the Jacobins. Castlereagh believed that unlike these confused individuals targeted by the legislation, 'the main body of the nation was sound and loyal...it was attached to the law and the constitution. Even in the disaffected districts...the great, mass of the population was untouched and untainted by disaffection.'³⁴ Interestingly, Castlereagh denied that popular disaffection had resulted from economic conditions, as according to Castlereagh, 'the internal state of the country [is] perfectly prosperous' and 'in our foreign trade [there is] nothing to apprehend' besides the 'distress' brought about by 'the diminution of the trade with America.' 'Where' he argued 'the diminution was to be attributed to temporary circumstances.'³⁵ Intriguingly, this argument, later in the speech, takes a different form, when dropping the pretense of British prosperity, Castlereagh 'admitted the distress, though...he believed [it] to be exaggerated.' Instead Castlereagh presented the case that dissent had not arisen from economic difficulties, as 'the most disaffected' were not 'the most distressed.'³⁶ By his conclusion, however, Castlereagh seems to have swung to the opposite extreme in his argument, accepting that there were economic challenges, but positing 'that the distress depended upon causes to be removed by time alone, not by the hand of parliament.'³⁷ In the meantime, Castlereagh believed that, as the nation was 'bordering on rebellion' it was imperative that the legislation be passed quickly. In addition, Castlereagh 'thought the House ought to make [the legislation] perpetual' due to the persistent risk of rebellion.³⁸ Castlereagh's recommendation was not taken, however, and a temporary set of laws were passed on 30 December.

In a letter, written on 1 January 1820, the Marquess of Londonderry congratulated his son on the passage of the Six Acts, writing that they were 'such judicious and indispensable Acts as

³³Robert Plumer Ward, *Memoirs*, ii, (London, 1850), pp. 28-29.

³⁴ *Hansard*, xli, c. 403.

³⁵ *Ibid.* c. 403.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, c. 412.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 400.

could alone have contracted the seditious and rebellious spirit which was fast spreading through all parts of the country.’³⁹ This rebellious spirit, however, had not been fully quenched, and the death of George III on 29 January 1820, opened an entirely new front for radicals. William Cobbett wrote that the Six Acts ‘passed on the plea that they were necessary to give this security and to cause prosperity to return and to be permanent’ however, even though the Six Acts had been passed ‘both sides of the house say that the distress of commerce and manufactures was never a tenth part so great as it is now.’⁴⁰ With his ascent to the throne, George IV sought to divorce his wife, first having her name removed from the Church of England liturgy on 12 February and then seeking to have Caroline tried on charges of treason. The following day, Castlereagh wrote to his brother ‘to enable [him] to understand the curious posture of affairs at home.’⁴¹ According to Castlereagh, as the members of the government ‘were not prepared to advise his Majesty to proceed by way of divorce, his determination was taken namely to change his Government.’⁴² As a result, Castlereagh considered ‘the Government as virtually dissolved and that the existing Ministers only hold their situations till their successors are named.’⁴³

On 14 February, Castlereagh met personally with George IV for over four hours ‘to endeavor to sooth the King’s mind.’⁴⁴ The remarkable duration of the audience hints at the difficulty of the disagreement, however after their extended argument, Castlereagh appeared to be of a ‘subdued tone of mind’ content that he had carried the day.⁴⁵ Evidence of Castlereagh’s success came three days later when the King formally acquiesced to the government’s proposal that Caroline be offered £50,000 a year to remain abroad. Brougham, the Queen’s legal advisor accepted the proposal, pledging to do his best to secure her agreement to the terms. The fragility of the government had been made obvious, however, and coupled with the unpopularity of the new monarch, it was clear that the radicals were now presented with a remarkable opening, only hindered by the suppression of political speech brought about by the Six Acts. While the Six Acts proved successful at hindering continued radicalization on the part of the masses, it also had a darker side. American Ambassador Richard Rush worried that ‘to interfere with [radical]

³⁹ John Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 465.

⁴⁰ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 57, p. 617.

⁴¹ *Castlereagh Correspondence*, xii, pp. 212-214.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ John Wilson Croker, *Croker Papers*, i, (London, 1885), p.161.

⁴⁵ Jane Robins, *The Trial of Queen Caroline*, p. 9.

publications' could prove counterproductive 'since it irritated feeling' and if those feelings 'were not allowed vent in that way, [they] would find modes more dangerous.'⁴⁶

Cato Street Conspiracy *February 1820*

On February 23, a group of conspirators met in a small barn on Cato Street, spurred on by the fragile state of the government. The gang, headed by Arthur Thistlewood, were followers of Thomas Spence, a radical from the eighteenth century. The leader's aid-de-camp, George Edwards, however was in fact an *agent provocateur* and the gang's plot to assassinate the cabinet at a dinner party was the result of an elaborate government ruse designed to entrap radicals.⁴⁷ Due to George Edward's involvement, and the advice of others, Lord Castlereagh was kept abreast of the radical's fantasies of impaling Lord Sidmouth and himself on pikes, and seizing power via an absurdly complex plot, which involved following the assassinations with the seizure of cannon at a barracks and subsequent attacks on the Bank of England and the Tower of London.⁴⁸ Castlereagh wished to personally carry out a counter ambush on the plotters, using the brace of pistols which he increasingly carried with him during the last years of his life, perhaps evidencing the deepening paranoia which led to his eventual suicide. In lieu of Castlereagh's plan, the government elected to arrest the conspirators using more traditional methods. During the arrest, one police-officer was killed. The scope of the conspirators' vision is evidenced by the substantial firepower that they had accumulated, including gunpowder, bombs, and hand grenades.

As George Parsons has argued 'the failure of the Cato Street Conspiracy of 1820 was in reality the end of the 'old Radicalism' in England, and this movement which was an extension of Eighteenth Century Jacobinism.'⁴⁹ The social reformer Francis Place similarly argued that improvements in the economy and the spread of middle class concepts of respectability and the simultaneous decline in working class forms of political speech pushed radicalism into a decade

⁴⁶ Richard Rush, *Memoranda*, pp. 267-268.

⁴⁷ The Cato Street Plot apparently had a long term impact on Castlereagh's perspective. During a parliamentary debate which discussed the revolt in Naples, Castlereagh responded to the assertion that the Carbonari's 'crimes' were the result of 'despotism' with surprising emotion. Instead, Castlereagh retorted he 'declare[d] them to have grown out of secret conspiracies.' Castlereagh, argued, one supposes, with empathy derived from his experiences, that there was no reason that he ought to feel embarrassed of his protests 'against the Carbonari and their assassinations.' *Hansard*, iv, c.1358.

⁴⁸ Lord Winchelsea to Castlereagh (HO 44/5/11 ff. 30-31); John Pope to Lord Castlereagh (HO 44/5/24 ff. 57-58); William Osmond to Lord Castlereagh (HO 44/5/10, ff. 28-29).

⁴⁹ George Parsons, 'The Cato Street Conspirators in New South Wales', *Labour History*, 8, (1965), p. 3

of hibernation during the 1820s.⁵⁰ E. P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* similarly argued that 'popular radicalism was transmogrified into a lively, self-improving intellectual culture' following the government's successful suppression of radicals. Iain McCalman has countered that while 'the death of the Cato Street leaders was thought to mark the end of the old 'Jacobin' mode of conspiratorial *coup d'etat*' there is little evidence for such a conclusion as 'sources for popular radicalism in London in the 1820s are unusually thin; most postwar ultra-radical periodicals were silenced by the Six Acts, and crucial Home Office intelligence for the first half of the decade is unaccountably missing.'⁵¹ Regardless of such arguments, the decline of violent, republican radicalism can be observed in concrete ways, via the decline of the legal radical press. A good example of this decline can be seen in the final edition of the *Black Dwarf*, a radical newspaper. In his final note, the editor, Thomas Jonathan Wooler expressed his disappointment in the declining sales of the *Black Dwarf*, which had once been as high as 12,000 copies per week, and the shifting political climate. His note reads as follows: 'In ceasing his political labours, the *Black Dwarf* has to regret one mistake, and that a serious one. He commenced writing under the idea that there was a public in Britain, and that public devotedly attached to the cause of parliamentary reform. This, it is but candid to admit, was an error.'⁵² In the place of this form of radicalism, a long extant quasi-conservative tradition, within British radicalism gradually emerged as the dominant strain. This branch, referred to as 'restorative radicalism' by Philip Harling and 'romantic radicalism' by Peter Spence, sought to distance itself from the taint of Jacobinism by rooting its demands for reform in the, occasionally fictive, Anglo-Saxon past.⁵³

The early months of 1820 brought with them the final coda to postwar radical violence. Parliament was dissolved on 29 February 1820 after several weeks of internal conflict, and in keeping with the tradition of the reformation of governments in the wake of the death of a monarch. Shortly thereafter on 1 May 1820, the Cato Street conspirators were executed. Enormous crowds gathered to watch the proceedings, many paying a small fee to observe from windows and rooftops. To hold back the enormous crowds, large barricades were built to surround the gallows, and riot

⁵⁰ 'Improvement in Manners and Morals of the People', (BL Add. MSS 27825; 27827; 27828; 27829.)

⁵¹ Iain McCalman, 'Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating-Clubs in London, 1795-1838', *The English Historical Review*, 102/403 (1987).

⁵² Martin Conboy, *The Press and Popular Culture* (London, 2004), p. 101.

⁵³ Philip Harling, *The Waning of Old Corruption* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 96-104; and Peter Spence, *The Birth of Romantic Radicalism* (Aldershot, 1996).

act banners were prepared. According to Hobhouse, ‘the men died like heroes. Ings, perhaps, was too obstreperous in singing *Death or Liberty*, and Thistlewood said, ‘Be quiet, Ings; we can die without all this noise.’⁵⁴ With ‘the violence of political agitation...fast subsiding’ Charles Knight wrote, ‘there was only one chance of a convulsion: the Queen.’⁵⁵ Many in the radical leadership agreed with this conclusion. Indeed, Matthew Wood was already on his way to the continent to ensure that Queen Caroline would become a symbol of political agitation upon her return to Great Britain. The alliance between the Queen and her radical supporters produced an odd series of alliances. The paradoxical support of radical republicans can be seen in an editorial in the *Republican*

As Republicans we should not deign to meddle with this question, if the rights of royalty were the only matter in dispute, but as men struggling to be free we feel it an imperative duty to support this injured woman, this victim first to unbridled lust and now to despotism.⁵⁶

Further arguing that, as men struggling to be free, we feel it an imperative duty to support this injured woman.’ Especially as she had been the victim of George IV’s ‘unbounded extravagance and licentiousness.’ And furthermore, as ‘the prostituted part of the press, or that which Lord Castlereagh terms respectable, is arraigned against her and every artifice resorted to, to bring her into contempt’ it was essential that radicals supported her, regardless of their distaste for the monarchy as an institution.⁵⁷ Similarly the Queen’s predicament appealed to women of the lower classes, who were often in danger of abandonment themselves. As the *Examiner* argued, supporters of the Queen ‘are doing no more than protecting their own liberties when they oppose themselves to an attack of this illegal and unjust nature against the Queen.’⁵⁸

Queen Caroline

5 June 1820-7 August 1821

In late 18th and early 19th century politics the royal family had increasingly come to be seen as an integral aspect of national self-identity. It is thus no surprise that the strained relations between George IV and Queen Caroline would be understood as thoroughly integrated into the

⁵⁴ John Cam Hobhouse, *Recollections of a Long Life*, ii, (Cambridge, 1909), p. 126.

⁵⁵ Charles Knight, *Passages of a Working Life during Half a Century: with a Prelude of Early Reminiscences*, (London, 1864), p. 258.

⁵⁶ *The Republican*, 24 November 1820, pp. 436-437.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *The Examiner*, 20 July 1820.

nation's postwar political conversation. Married in 1795, the royal marriage had been the unhappy results of parliamentary pressure on George to marry. The marriage itself had been arranged in order that George might pay off his extensive gambling debts, and the essentially mercenary motivations behind the wedding left a permanent taint on the relationship. As a popular song of the time put it:

There's Caroline of Brunswick,
Has got a pretty hand, Sir,
If you will pay off all my debts,
I'll take her at command, Sir.⁵⁹

Famously upon meeting his bride-to-be, George called for a glass of brandy and immediately left his fiancée's presence.⁶⁰ The nearly instantaneous enmity between the two led to their separation shortly after the birth of Princess Charlotte. After the separation, the two lived separate lives with George continuing to live with Lady Jersey and Caroline with a sort of court in miniature. Due to her numerous affairs George elected to have Caroline investigated on two separate occasions, the first in 1806 in the aftermath of rumors of an illegitimate child and again in 1813. The outcome of the second investigation into Caroline's paramours was the removal of Princess Charlotte from her custody. In the aftermath of this loss of face, Caroline sought solace in exile, leaving the country for the following six years.

With the death of George III, the new monarch decided that the moment had come to secure a divorce from Caroline. The government, deeply concerned by the unpopularity of such a move, during a period already wrought with political tensions, found itself constitutionally unable to resist the King's demand. The government's position was made even more complex by the King's complex marital past, which included not only a previous marriage to a Catholic woman, but also a long series of very public extra-marital affairs. Although these affairs were considered public knowledge, the possibility of airing the details surrounding them in court was considered out of keeping with the status of the monarchy, and inappropriate for the ecclesiastical courts. Thus the Liverpool ministry was left with a complex, and little-known legislative maneuver: a Bill of Pains

⁵⁹ *The Republican*, 24 November 1820, p. 436.

⁶⁰ James Howard, (ed.), *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris First Earl of Malmesbury*, iii, (London, 1844), p. 218.

and Penalties, which would allow parliament to rescind the Queen's royal title as well as the royal couple's marriage.

News that George IV was planning to divorce her did not reach the Queen immediately. In a flurry of letters written in mid-March, it becomes evident that not only had Caroline been made aware of her precarious situation, but also that she had a plan prepared. On 16 March 1820 Queen Caroline, writing from Rome, questioned Castlereagh, requesting, that in order to provide a 'proof of Lord C[astlereagh]'s sincerity and loyalty...he should command by a general order that all the English Ministers or Consuls and even the Hanoverian Minister at Milan Mr. Ryden should pay all due respect to the Queen and...should no longer use improper language against the Queen nor call her simply Caroline of Brunswick.'⁶¹ That same day, Caroline wrote again, this time to enquire of Castlereagh 'for what reason or motive the Queen's name has been left out of the general prayers?'⁶² That same day, Caroline wrote to her attorney, the MP Henry Brougham, asking him why she had been informed of her situation only 'very unsatisfactorily through the public papers.'⁶³ She went on in her missive to explain that now that she was aware of her situations, she was preparing to 'fly to England...the moment I can travel with safety.'⁶⁴

The government, forced to take on the case, took a lackluster approach to its prosecution. *The Times* argued that the support of Queen Caroline represented a shift in 'public opinion' and her voyage to Britain simply was her attempt to 'claim her rights as Britain's Queen.' A journey in which 'this woman comes arrayed only in...conscious innocence; and presents her bosom, aye, offers her neck to those who threatened to sever her head from it, if ever she dared to come within their reach.'⁶⁵ On the same day as her return to England, Lord Castlereagh presented a message from George IV to the House of Commons. This message included the presentation of 'certain papers respecting the conduct of her majesty since her departure from this kingdom, which he recommends to the immediate and serious attention of this House.' After reading the message

⁶¹ John Wilks, *Memoirs of Her Majesty Queen Caroline*, i, pp. 408-409.

⁶² The Queen's relationship with Brougham had been strained for some time, due to her decision, in 1814, to accept the government's offer of an annuity of £50,000. Complaining in letters that her 'snapping eagerly at the cash' was, 'botching the thing...completely.' Brougham, however, had 'decided not to desert her'. 'Brougham to Creevey, 2 July 1814', Whitbread MSS W/1/2900, cited in Dean Rapp, *Samuel Whitbread, 1762-1815*, (Baltimore, 1970), p. 362; *Ibid*, p. 409.

⁶³ John Wilks, *Memoirs*, i, pp. 409.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 410.

⁶⁵ *The Times*, 6 June 1820.

Lord Castlereagh ‘laid on the table of the House the papers referred to in the said message, sealed up in a green bag and moved...that his majesty's Message be taken into consideration tomorrow.’⁶⁶ In private, Castlereagh was deeply concerned by ‘the scandal and the dangers of a public trial in these factious times.’⁶⁷ However, he felt constitutionally compelled to pursue the King’s directives, regardless of his personal convictions.⁶⁸ The nature of the conflict had played directly into the hands of the radicals, with even the green bags in which George IV’s evidence was presented, becoming a rallying point for anti-ministerialists and radicals, some of whom saw the possibility of a new ‘ministry composed of all parties.’⁶⁹ This, perhaps unavoidable mismanagement of the affair, by the government led Queen Caroline’s cause to ‘spread like wildfire over the kingdom; the public mind was electrical.’ In this process, however, the British public rapidly lost interest in the fact their nation was being, according to William Hazlitt, ‘trampled upon’ by restrictive legislation. As the ‘annihilation of their rights’ brought forth only ‘a momentary burst of vain indignation....At the very time when all England was mad about the poor Queen, a man named Bruce was sent to Botany Bay for having spoken to another man who was convicted of sedition; and no notice was taken.’⁷⁰

The government’s response to the outcry was hindered by the absence of one of its most eloquent speakers: George Canning. On 7 June, while presenting the government’s case, Canning began, seemingly impulsively, to excuse his support of the case against the Queen by praising her personal qualities.⁷¹ This praise raised questions of his rumored affair with Queen Caroline, and enraged the King, who had already expressed a deep dislike for Canning. The monarch made clear that he would have no communication with the government, until Liverpool himself had explained Canning’s apparent overfamiliarity with Caroline.⁷² After Canning’s resignation had been refused by Liverpool, the Prime Minister scheduled a meeting between the King and Canning, to resolve their ongoing differences. While the reconciliation was successful, it was decided that for the sake

⁶⁶ *Hansard*, i, cc. 870-81.

⁶⁷ *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv, p. 210.

⁶⁸ Castlereagh’s personal opposition was not widely known however, and he elected ‘as a precautionary measure against the possible violence of the crowd’ to keep ‘the windows of his mansion closely shuttered.’ Lewis Melville, *An Injured Queen, Caroline of Brunswick*, ii, (London, 1912), p. 477.

⁶⁹ Wilson to Grey (BL Add. MS. 30123 f. 167).

⁷⁰ Howe, Percival, (ed.), *The Complete Works* (London, 1934), v. 20, p. 136.

⁷¹ *Hansard*, I, c. 950; Croker noted this speech in his diary, stating simply: ‘Canning’s [speech] highly complimentary to the Queen’s person and manners.’ John Wilson Croker, *Croker Papers*, p. 174.

⁷² Bloomfield to Liverpool, 10 June 1820, Arthur Aspinall (ed.), *The Letters of George IV*, ii, p. 344.

of the government's case, and for the prevention of any worsening in Liverpool's already fragile connection to the monarch, that Canning would travel to Venice for a visit with his wife until the trial was concluded.

The nation found itself transfixed by the proceedings. Charles Greville, who attended 'the trial every day' was able to provide unique insights into the course of the trial due to his relationship with Brougham, was allowed to observe the proceedings from within. This proximity allowed him 'to hear extremely well everything that passes...and puts me behind the scenes so far that I cannot help hearing all their conversation, their remarks, and learning what witnesses they are going to examine and many other things which are interesting and amusing.' Greville was deeply fascinated by the proceedings, but was even more interested by the intensity of interest in the trial itself. As he describes it, he could not 'remember any question which so exclusively occupied everybody's attention and so completely absorbed men's thoughts and engrossed conversation....everybody is gone mad about it. Very few people admit of any medium between pronouncing the Queen quite innocent and judging her guilty and passing the bill.'⁷³ To contemporaries it was not clear that the agitations would end without catastrophe. Indeed, the nature of the London public's response to the Queen's return was reminiscent of protests which had swept the metropolis throughout the postwar period. Lord Colchester worried that the public outcry against the trial was leading to an outcome 'to which I cannot foresee the termination.'⁷⁴

The attacks of the Queen's supporters were felt across London, impacting a large swathe of the population. Richard Rush, the American ambassador was stunned by the nature of the trial and, in particular, the intensity of the public's response. As he described it, there was a 'boundless rage of the press and liberty of speech. Every day produced its thousand fiery libels against the King and his adherents, and as many caricatures, that were hawked in all the streets.'⁷⁵ Violence was, however, not confined to political speech, and the London mob remained active throughout much of the trial. At the height of the conflict, cabinet members were singled out for attack. Indeed, for several nights in a row, Lord Sidmouth's home was surrounded by the Queen's supporters, however as the attacks were 'feeble and of brief duration' and instead of formal security, a night watchman 'had been left in charge...[and] shortly afterwards he heard the mob returning and

⁷³ Charles Greville, *The Greville Memoirs*, (New York, 1887) p. 21.

⁷⁴ *The Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester*, iii, (London, 1861), p. 246.

⁷⁵ Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London*, p. 530.

hastened back to his Lordship's door against which the watchman placed himself. Before however they could gain admittance' to the house, the Queen's supporters were 'filling the whole doorway and hemming them up in the entrance.' It was at this extremely inopportune moment that Lord Sidmouth's coach appeared, bearing himself and the Duke of Wellington. As the carriage pulled into the midst of the rioters, the watchmen heard Sidmouth and Wellington arguing within, with Sidmouth insisting that he 'must get out' and Wellington preventing him and urging the coachman to 'drive on.' Just as the coach set off, 'the glass of the window nearest the speaker [was] shattered to atoms by a stick or stone. According to the watchman, 'in a moment afterwards...the mob dispersed.' Sometime later the 'same carriage returned, escorted by a small party of the Life Guards.'⁷⁶

Unrest persisted through much of Great Britain throughout the remainder of Queen Caroline's trial. When the vote was finally held on 10 November 1820, the final tally was 108-99.⁷⁷ In the aftermath of this extremely small margin, the government elected to not proceed with the case. On 19 November, the *Examiner* declared the victory as an example of 'what public opinion, without physical force, can effect against established corruption.'⁷⁸ The parallel examples of Queen Caroline's vindication and the humiliatingly beheaded Cato Street conspirators had left their mark on the national subconscious.

With the trial completed, opposition and ministerial attention both quickly waned, and the resolution of the Queen's situation fell into limbo as the cabinet elected to delay resolving her funding until radical support had fully dissipated. George Canning, who returned shortly after the government elected to drop its case against the Queen, grew increasingly frustrated with his colleagues lack of interest in quickly resolving the matter of the Queen's funding. Upset that his advice was going unheeded, and generally unsatisfied with his rank in the cabinet, George Canning resigned on 12 December 1820. Castlereagh, whose career he had repeatedly sought to undermine, wrote to him in the wake of his resignation, to thank Canning for 'the uniform attention and the

⁷⁶ Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court of George IV, 1820-1830*, (London, 1859), v. 1, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁷ Jane Robins, *the Trial of Queen Caroline*, p. 286

⁷⁸ *The Examiner*, 19 November 1820, p. 741

kindness' with which he had aided Castlereagh's work 'in the business of the [Foreign Office] department.'⁷⁹

Although Canning was absent from the cabinet, he remained very close with Lord Liverpool. On 10 June 1821, Lord Liverpool presented George IV with a proposal for reshuffling the cabinet, in part to give the government a 'fresh face' in the aftermath of the Queen Caroline protests, but also to bring Canning back into the government, as First Lord of the Admiralty. Two days later, on 12 June, Lady Liverpool died, a devastating blow to Liverpool. The monarch, still stinging from the government's failure to secure a divorce, elected to embarrass the Prime Minister. As Wendy Hinde has described the period, 'the King openly abused Liverpool, graciously entertained some of the Whig leaders at Brighton, and frequently talked of changing ministers.'⁸⁰ However, Liverpool's deep depression left him unwilling to put up with the King's behavior, and the row quickly escalated into something of a constitutional crisis. This disagreement between the monarch and his Prime Minister would continue unabated until later that year during Castlereagh's trip with the monarch to Hanover which lasted from September through early November.⁸¹ During their voyage together, Castlereagh convinced George IV to accept Canning with the proviso that Canning not be in regular contact with the monarch.

By 19 July 1821, Queen Caroline's support had nearly vanished and during her unsuccessful, tragi-comic attempt to gain entrance to Westminster Abbey during George IV's coronation, the Queen found herself laughed at by high society, and heckled by onlookers.⁸² Within weeks of the coronation, Caroline suffered from a painful intestinal blockage, possibly due to the large quantities of laudanum mixed with milk of magnesia she was taking. After only a brief period of illness, Queen Caroline died on 7 August. The King accompanied by Castlereagh had, some

⁷⁹ Augustus Stapleton, *George Canning*, (London, 1859), p. 318.

⁸⁰ Wendy Hinde, *George Canning*, p. 308.

⁸¹ The King, who according to Wellesley-Pole, 'was fond of Castlereagh' was convinced after what had proven to be a prolonged effort by Castlereagh during their journeys together. Robert Plumer Ward, *Memoirs*, ii (London, 1850), p. 53.

⁸² 'Queen Caroline did her best to amuse us. There came a sough to the Hall that the Queen was come down and that she had got into the Abbey alone. Just as the crowded boxes and galleries were all murmuring about this news, we were electrified by a thundering knock at the Hall door and a voice from without loudly said 'The Queen, open.' A hundred red pages ran to the door which the porter opened a little and from where I sat I got a glimpse of her... standing behind the door on their own ten toes with the crossed bayonets of the sentry under her chin. She was raging and storming and vociferating, 'Let me pass, I am your Queen, I am Queen of Britain.' The Lord High Chamberlain was with the King, but he sent his deputy who with a voice that made all the Hall ring cried, 'Do your duty, shut the Hall door' and immediately the red pages slapped it in her face.' *Blackwood's Magazine*, 162, p. 694.

days prior, set off for a post-coronation tour of Ireland. It was while waiting to cross the Irish Sea, on 9 August, that news arrived that Queen Caroline had died. In the aftermath of her death, radical supporters made one last effort to politicize her mistreatment at the hands of the monarch, by forcing her funeral procession through the heart of London.⁸³

In the wake of Queen Caroline's death, the last vestiges of radical Jacobinical dissent came to an end. The following decade would experience a calm, hardly imaginable during the intense period of social and political transformation which followed the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars.⁸⁴ The government had weathered the storm, in large part due to Castlereagh's flexibility, and the larger ministerial acceptance of the main planks of Whig policy. Radicalism had likewise been tamed by its openness to the hybridized conservatism of the Queen Caroline movement, and the increasing dominance of a politically cautious middle-class, empowered by the wartime economy, threatened by the violence of radicalism, and fearful of further ministerial economic intervention, but thoroughly committed to leaving its mark on the British political system. It was to be this newly influential group that would shape the coming years, as the British political system embraced change, first in Catholic emancipation in 1829 and later in the Reform Act of 1832.

Castlereagh's Role

Castlereagh played a major role in presenting the government's case during the immediate years following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. As its spokesman in the House of Commons, Castlereagh's voice came to be closely associated with that of the ministry. As a politician, Castlereagh first dealt with the issue of domestic dissent in Ireland, and as a result his role in the post-war suppression of dissent cannot be disentangled from his early years in his home country. His experiences in Ireland, from his role in the suppression of the 1798 Rebellion to his part in pushing through the Act of Union, helped to create a model for his understanding of post-war dissent in England. His response to these protests was thus driven not by ideology, but rather by a tendency to fall into preexisting methods, also evidenced by his foreign policy. His strategic focus and use of re-purposed policies lent his outlook a flexibility on the tactical level that made

⁸³ For a contemporary account of the funeral, See *Henry Lord Brougham, The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham written by himself*, ii, (London, 1871), pp. 424-427.

⁸⁴ As J. R. Dinwiddy argued 'probably the most important [reason] was a markedly improved economic climate, which lasted...until towards the end of the decade.' J. R. Dinwiddy, *From Luddism to the First Reform Bill* (Oxford, 1986), p.38.

him an enormously successful parliamentarian and diplomat. However, at the close of the war, without a central purpose, or the clear road-map of his predecessor's policies Castlereagh's actions increasingly lost a uniting thread and in its absence his perspectives came to increasingly reflect either underlying prejudices rooted in his Irish career, or simple ministerial consensus. Even though he harbored doubts on some of the government's domestic policy positions, such as the prosecution of Queen Caroline, his weakness in the cabinet, sense of obligation to the older traditions of deference to the monarch, and tendency towards flexibility left him unable, or unwilling, to alter the course of the government's response to post-war dissent. Without Canning's ability to present policy in populist terms, Castlereagh's role as the voice of the government, exacerbated an already tense period, and helped to fuel a particularly troubling time of economic crisis and political repression in the years following the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Conclusion

Lord Castlereagh has remained a controversial figure, both in Ireland and Britain, from his rise to the cabinet to today. Long associated with the violence surrounding the Irish Rebellion of 1798 and the repressive policies of his Congress System partners, his legacy has been left permanently in dispute, struggled over by historians keen to reevaluate his complex and contradictory policies. While more recent consensus has improved perceptions of his thinking, linkage between Castlereagh's two careers has remained insufficiently explored. While Castlereagh's career in the Foreign Office has attracted deep and persistent attention, his role as Leader of the House of Commons has been, unduly neglected. By examining his role, in representing the government's controversial economic policies, it becomes increasingly evident that his private opinions, on a wide variety of policy issues were in flux over the course of much of his career. These shifts in opinion offer insights into the changing power dynamics both within parliament and the cabinet.

In the final years of the Napoleonic Wars, Castlereagh spent enormous sums on subsidies to Britain's continental allies, and adopted an elaborate and expensive plan designed by his predecessor to bring peace to Europe. Liverpool and his colleagues on the cabinet grew increasingly concerned by the costs of these projects. Under pressure from the opposition as well as the growing force of 'public opinion', and in order to forestall parliamentary reforms, the Liverpool ministry adopted the opposition's policies and embraced a Canningite perspective.

These shifting dynamics, in turn, led Castlereagh to abandon his plan for pacifying Europe and the government to transform itself into an entity entirely distinct from what it had been at the beginning of Liverpool's tenure.

The major contributions of Castlereagh's foreign policy were not original to him. Rather than pursuing a multipolar approach willingly, his early tendencies show his primary interest lay in projecting power in Europe and to some extent around the globe. Castlereagh's overspending on subsidies granted him sufficient power to sustain the Alliance during the final years of the war. However, with Canning's return to the cabinet in 1816, Castlereagh found his independence undercut. Without Liverpool's support, or the powers granted by debt-financed subsidies, his leverage was radically diminished on the continent. These circumstances led to a decline in Castlereagh's freedom to pursue his own policy goals, as well as his interest in participating in the Congress System. The debt incurred by wartime spending left Britain with insufficient funds to sustain its influence on the continent, and indirectly led to the reforms typically understood as 'Liberal Toryism'.

Castlereagh's loss of interest in the Congress System began during the Hundred Days, but was cemented during Aix-la-Chapelle, which was likely the last time Castlereagh fully supported the original intentions of the system. During that meeting, Castlereagh's lack of authority and the frequency of parliamentary communications removed the appeal of Castlereagh's first experiences at Vienna. This shift in opinion was clearly illustrated by Castlereagh's decision to send his brother to the two following congresses as an observer. After the resignation of Canning, Castlereagh's older policies briefly returned in a weakened form. Castlereagh's post-coronation travels with George IV, who admired the Congress System, led Castlereagh to restore his relationship with Metternich. The result of this revived connection with Metternich led to Castlereagh's plan to attend Verona. Castlereagh's renewed interest in the Congress System, however, was cut short by his death, which permanently ended the possibility of a British reengagement with the Congress System.

Several *leitmotifs* emerge in this thesis as explaining the key elements of change which transformed Britain from a fiscal-military state to the *laissez faire* tendencies of the late Liverpool administration. These themes include Castlereagh's flexibility, the shock of change, and the impact of economic reform on both the nature of dissent and the government's policies.

Castlereagh's Flexibility

Castlereagh's childhood and youth, which were spent within the tight-knit confines of the embattled and often isolated Anglo-Irish elite, contributed to his tendency to identify with collectives. This tendency, on display during his time in the cabinet as well as at the Congress of Vienna, granted him a unique flexibility and willingness to embrace, sometime self-contradictory norms and opinions. Castlereagh's tendency to adopt the policies and ideas of his context allowed him to adapt to the changing political environment of the postwar period. This adaptability left him uniquely prepared for the ideological flux brought about by the dramatic social, ideological, and economic impact of the end of the war. Castlereagh's flexibility, however, also had the negative impact of leading him to embrace, sometimes self-contradictory positions such as occurred during his time at the Congress of Vienna. By embracing the community norms and opinions of Metternich and his milieu, Castlereagh found himself isolated in his foreign policy opinions on his return to Britain. This estrangement, which grew in intensity after Canning's addition to the cabinet, led Castlereagh to abandon the Congress System for the following half-decade, both ideologically as he embraced Canning's foreign policy advice, and physically by not attending subsequent Congresses. Castlereagh's interest in maintaining the *appearance* of a continuation of the Congress System to Metternich, and its conclusion to opponents in Britain has created some confusion in historical understandings of his position. In the aftermath of Canning's departure from the cabinet, and Castlereagh's meetings with George IV and Metternich, Castlereagh briefly returned to the Metternich's policies. Although Castlereagh had been in the process of reestablishing his connections to the Congress System, his death prevented the return from being completed and Castlereagh's death inaugurated a nearly forty year period of British independence from European entanglements.⁸⁵

Castlereagh's opinions, however were not absolutely malleable, and certain distinct tendencies do emerge over the course of his career. In particular, Castlereagh tended to understand the course of political changes, then occurring both in Britain and abroad, as emerging from the manipulations of a conspiratorial elite. Such readings of events derived from the anti-Catholic bigotry of his childhood. Such bigoted attitudes, which tended to excuse prejudices by envisioning local Catholics as well-intentioned, but controlled by an exoticized

⁸⁵ Kenneth Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 10-13.

other. By depicting local Catholicism as 'atypical' and unrepresentative of the hidden intentions of the stereotyped other, Catholicism came to be understood as a sort of cabal.⁸⁶ This same tendency is present throughout Castlereagh's interpretations of French Jacobinism, his attitudes towards domestic dissent, and his opinions on the uprisings which swept across southern Europe in the early 1820s.

The Shock of Change

While recent trends in the historiography have downplayed the rate of economic change during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this tendency has had unfortunate consequences. By understanding the postwar period as one of gradual industrialization, the experience of radical change has been largely ignored. Additionally, the impact of economic legislation has been underestimated. During the Napoleonic Wars government spending had quadrupled, and by the end of the war it accounted for roughly 30% of GDP. By suddenly removing a major component of the British economy, and laying off approximately 300,000 soldiers, the transition to peace was suddenly forced on a society that had spent over two decades at war. While the government sought to sustain a wartime price for grain, the Corn Laws drove food prices up and hindered the return to peace by encouraging the expression of popular protest. At the same time the opposition's successful abolition of the income tax set off a chain of tertiary effects which went beyond the economic reforms intended. In the end these reforms were largely responsible for the reductions in the size and scope of the government, the monarchy, and the British diplomatic corps.

The Centrality of Economic Debate

Beyond their impact on the emergence of the mid-century minimal state, postwar economic reforms also had long lasting philosophical implications. Tory political philosophy, traditionally rooted in historicist approaches, was confronted during the economic reform debates by a Whig outlook increasingly rooted in the arguments of economists and theorists. To combat the onslaught of theoretical opinion, Lord Liverpool gradually came to rely upon advisors capable of understanding not only the practical retail politics perfected by Castlereagh, but also a firm grasp of emerging economic and political theories. In particular, his appointments of

⁸⁶ Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, c. 1714-80: A Political and Social Study* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 11-12.

William Huskisson and George Canning in 1815 and 1816 illustrate this shift. Castlereagh's absences on the continent, as well as his lack of interest in economic and political theory, left him ignorant of the government's changing emphases. Liverpool's growing reliance on Canningite advisers led him to lose faith in Vansittart's economic policies and Castlereagh's foreign policies. The *laissez faire* and non-interventionist attitudes of both these men made a virtue of the austerity forced upon the government by the repeal of the income tax. While most histories of the Congress System assert that the Congress' original intentions were usurped by the reactionary purposes of Metternich and Alexander, it seems more likely that Britain shifted its policies more dramatically under the growing influence of Canning's foreign policy.

The Liverpool government's emphasis on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the postwar government derived from its wartime experience of managing the complex infrastructure of warfighting. At the same time, the government's fears of a Jacobinical rebellion, led it to largely ignore calls for political reforms. The government's decision to drive away Corn Bill protesters with military force, and its unwillingness to address the growth of petitioning, led ultra-radicals to embrace violent means of overthrowing the government, a tendency that eventually reached its apex with the Cato Street conspiracy. Castlereagh's interaction with dissent is perhaps the most troubling aspect of his career. Nicknamed 'Derry Down Triangle' in part due to his association with public lashings, Castlereagh remained convinced throughout his career that public expressions of dissent should be suppressed, with violence if need be. The government's draconian suppression of radicalism and the negative impacts of its economic reforms forced dissent to adopt new methods, in particular it indirectly increased the influence of female and middle class radicalism, a change that would reshape the British political system in the following decades.

In the end, the 'great and sudden change' at the center of this thesis consisted of a series of dramatic events brought about by the outbreak of peace. These changes fundamentally transformed the nature of British politics. Castlereagh was uniquely placed as the manager of both the government's voice in parliament and its policy overseas during a period in which the size of government had not yet expanded to the scale of its obligations. Castlereagh's personal influence on the course of parliamentary business and foreign policy were both unprecedented and unsustainable. Having spent nearly his entire career pursuing, with single-minded determination, the defense of British interests, Castlereagh was left at the helm of government from 1815 to 1822

in a world drastically changed. In this new world of retrenchment and internal dissent, Castlereagh was ill at ease and occasionally incompetent. Outmaneuvered by his old rival Canning, Castlereagh lost both his position of influence in the cabinet and, more importantly, the legacy which he had earned by implementing the Congress System. Canning's ability to intuitively understand the new political landscape led to his almost inevitable rise as Castlereagh's influence on Liverpool declined. Castlereagh's diminishing importance, in the aftermath of the 'great and sudden change' offers insights essential in explaining both the government's foreign policy pivot away from the Congress System, and domestically towards what eventually became known as liberal toryism.

As a politician who occupied such a centrally important role in such a diverse series of circumstances, and in such a varied set of positions, Castlereagh's many careers have oddly been generally interpreted as distinct and unconnected. While Castlereagh was a 'quintessential balance-of-power statesmen' an overemphasis on his overarching foreign policy goals has, as Mark Jarrett argued, 'obscured the equally important role that [Castlereagh's] beliefs about the domestic political order played in the evolution of [his] policies.'⁸⁷ This thesis, by understanding each aspect of Castlereagh's career as connected, has sought to use those insights to offer a more nuanced explanation of the relationship between Castlereagh's various post-Napoleonic careers and the evolution of his political tendencies. While not absolutely challenging existing current scholarly assumptions, especially those of Bew and Jarrett, this thesis has sought to counter the tendency amongst scholars to ignore Castlereagh's time as 'the leader...of the House of Commons' and to improve scholarly understanding by placing Castlereagh's foreign policy firmly within the context of his domestic political career.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Mark Jarret, *Castlereagh, Ireland, and the French Restorations of 1814-1815*, pp. 4-5

⁸⁸ C. J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh*, p. 162

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