

## BONUS CHAPTER

### Foreign Affairs, 1815-30

#### Summary of events

The period was dominated by two outstanding Foreign Secretaries, *Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh* (from 1812 until his death in 1822) and *George Canning* (1822-7). After Canning's death, the key influence on foreign policy was Wellington, who became Prime Minister in 1828.

The most pressing problem at the end of the Napoleonic Wars was how to deal with the defeated France, and at the same time how to redraw the map of a Europe whose frontiers and governments had been drastically re-organized by Napoleon. The Bourbon monarchy was restored in the person of Louis XVIII, and other details were dealt with by *the First and Second Treaties of Paris* (May 1814 and November 1815). In the intervening period, Napoleon escaped from exile on the island of Elba and had to be crushed once and for all at Waterloo. The wider problems of Europe were settled at *the Congress of Vienna* (1814-15), though the arrangements, like those of most peace treaties, were controversial and were to cause problems later.

1815 saw the formation of *the Holy Alliance*, the brainchild of the Tsar Alexander I of Russia; its members pledged themselves to rule their countries according to Christian principles. More important was *the Quadruple Alliance* of Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia, a continuation of the 1815 alliance which had defeated Napoleon; this became *the Quintuple Alliance* in 1818 when France was allowed to join. Its aims, broadly speaking, were to maintain the Vienna Settlement and preserve peace by holding Congresses to solve any awkward problems which arose. After the initial Congress at *Aix-la-Chapelle* (1818) it gradually became apparent that Britain was not in agreement with the other members of the alliance

about how to deal with the revolutions which had broken out in Naples, Spain and Portugal, where liberals (see Section 1.2(d)) were trying to force autocratic monarchs to allow democratic constitutions. Following the Congresses of *Troppau* (1820) and *Laibach* (1821), troops were sent in to suppress the revolutions in Spain and Naples, in spite of strong objections from Castlereagh who disapproved of interfering in the internal affairs of other states.

There were other revolutions as well, this time caused by nationalism (see Section 1.2(e)): the Spanish colonies in South America were trying to assert their independence, while the Greeks were struggling to break away from Turkish rule. These problems were considered at the Congress of *Verona* (1822). Unlike the outbreaks in Naples and Spain, these revolutions were successful, partly because of British support. In the case of the Greek revolt, Russia and France agreed with Britain, while the Austrians and Prussians were incensed at Canning's attitude. Although further Congresses met in St Petersburg in 1824-5, Britain took no part and the Congress System (sometimes known as the Concert of Europe) was at an end. The general feeling in Britain was that this was no bad thing since the Austrian and Prussian idea of preserving peace and the Vienna Settlement seemed to be to keep as many autocratic governments in power as possible.

#### **KEY EVENTS IN BRITISH FOREIGN AFFAIRS 1815-30**

	1812	Castlereagh becomes Foreign Secretary
May	1814	First Treaty of Paris
Oct 1814-June 1815		Congress of Vienna
June	1815	Battle of Waterloo - Napoleon finally defeated and exiled to St Helena
Nov	1815	Second Treaty of Paris
Nov	1815	Quadruple Alliance of Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia signed - Congress System begins

	1818	Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle. France joins the Alliance which becomes the Quintuple Alliance
	1820	Revolutions break out in Spain, Portugal, Naples and Piedmont
	1820	Congress of Troppau meets - Castlereagh refuses to attend because he knows other members want to crush revolutions
	1821	Congress of Laibach - Castlereagh again refuses to attend - Congress decides to send Austrian troops to crush revolutions in Naples and Piedmont
August	1822	Castlereagh commits suicide
Sept	1822	Canning becomes Foreign Secretary
	1822	Congress of Verona authorizes French army to crush revolution in Spain
July	1823	Canning sends British naval squadron and later 5000 troops to help Portuguese revolutionaries who are eventually successful
	1825	Britain recognizes Mexico, Colombia and Argentina (former Spanish colonies) as independent states
July	1827	Canning signs Treaty of London: Britain, France and Russia promise to help Greeks win independence from Turkey
August	1827	Canning dies
Oct	1827	Battle of Navarino - British and French fleet destroys Turkish/Egyptian fleet - leads to recognition of Greek independence (1830).

### **3.1 What were the aims of the statesmen who met at Vienna in 1814-15 and to what extent were their aims fulfilled in the Vienna Settlement?**

The leading personalities at Vienna were Prince Metternich (Austrian Chancellor), the Tsar Alexander I of Russia, Count Hardenburg (Prussian Minister) and Lord Castlereagh.

#### **(a) Their aims were:**

- To make sure that the French, who were held responsible for the wars, paid for their misdeeds.
- To further their own interests and make sure that the victorious powers gained some compensation for their pains.
- To prevent any further French aggression which might threaten the peace and security of Europe. This could be done by strengthening the states bordering on France and by making sure that the four leading powers remained on good terms with each other in order *to maintain a balance of power* (no single state would be powerful enough to dominate the rest). Rulers who had been expelled by Napoleon should be restored, as far as possible, as the best guarantee of peace and stability (this was known as the principle of *legitimacy*).

There were disagreements about details: each had different ideas about what constituted a balance of power. Castlereagh was worried in case the settlement was too hard on the French so that it made them bitter and likely to go to war again to regain their losses; he argued that 'it is not our business to collect trophies, but to try, if we can, to bring the world back to peaceful habits'. There were jealousies lest one country gained more than another: Prussia wanted Alsace-Lorraine (from France) and the Kingdom of Saxony, and Alexander wanted the whole of Poland; in each case the other states were suspicious and refused to allow it. Austria wanted to make sure that

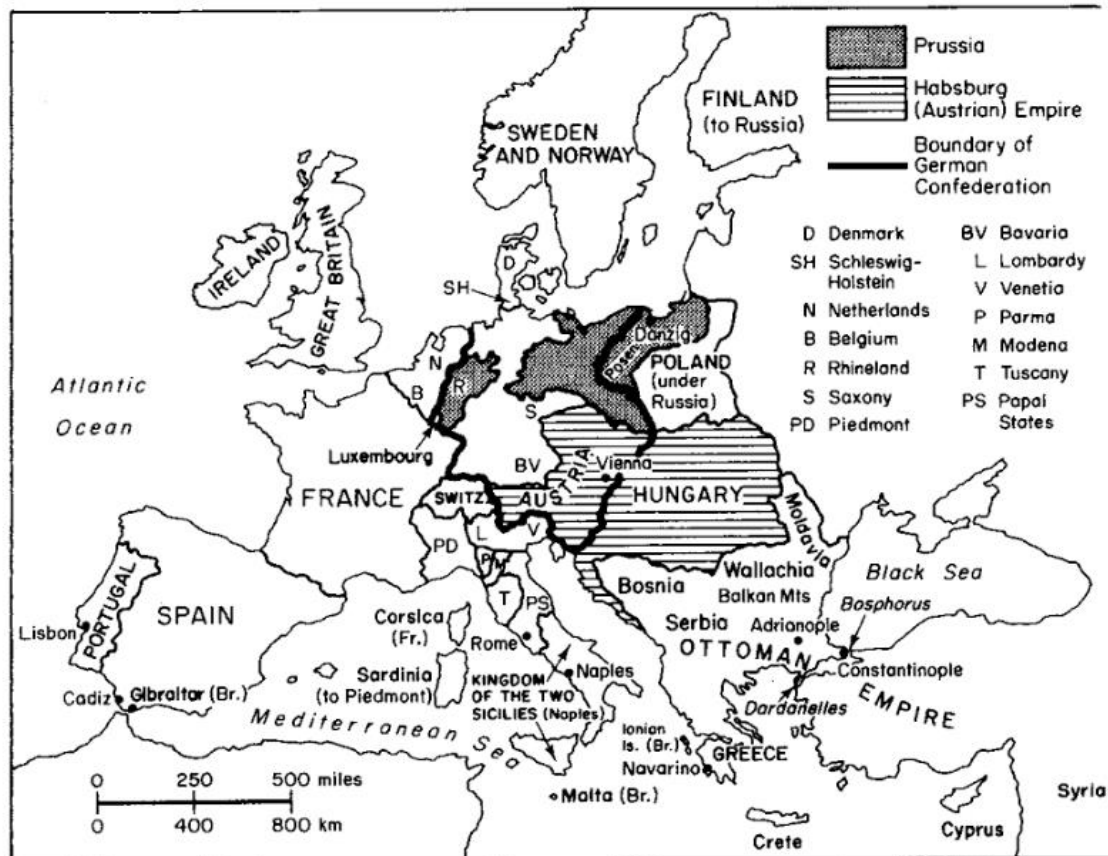
Russia did not take over from France as the most powerful nation on the continent of Europe.

Throughout the entire negotiations Talleyrand, the French representative, was extremely active in protecting French interests and salvaging what he could from the disaster.

**(b) How successful were they?**

1. The treatment of France was finalized by the Second Treaty of Paris (November 1815); though harsher than the First Treaty, it was still reasonably lenient. France was to be reduced to her 1790 frontiers, which meant losing some territory to Belgium and some to Piedmont (see Map 3.1). The country had to pay an indemnity (a fine) and have an army of occupation until the fine was paid; in addition, it lost many of its overseas colonies. The terms might have been much more stringent if Castlereagh had not been so moderate in his demands, and if Talleyrand had not exploited the mutual suspicions of the other powers so shrewdly: for example, France was allowed to keep Alsace-Lorraine in spite of Prussia's determination to get it, because the other states thought this would make Prussia too powerful. The statesmen were successful in their aim: France was penalized yet not embittered enough to want a war of revenge (note the contrast with the treatment of the defeated Germany at Versailles in 1919 - see Section 22.6).
2. The victorious powers all gained territory mainly at the expense of countries which had been unlucky enough to end the war on the losing side. Britain gained Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Mauritius, Trinidad, Tobago, St Lucia, Malta, Heligoland, the Cape of Good Hope, and a protectorate over the Ionian Islands. After some complicated bargaining, Prussia received about two fifths of Saxony, the Rhineland, Western Pomerania, Danzig and Posen; Russia received Finland (from Sweden) and part of Poland; Austria was given Lombardy and Venetia in North Italy and a stretch of Adriatic coast. As compensation for losing Finland, Sweden was given Norway, taken from

Denmark; this move was pressed by Britain so that the entrance to the Baltic would not be controlled by a single power.



map 3.1 Europe in 1815

3. Two of France's smaller neighbours were strengthened: the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium) were combined with Holland to make a strong barrier state to the north-east. Piedmont (also known as Sardinia) in North Italy on France's eastern frontier, regained most of Savoy and Nice (taken by France in 1796) and was given the port of Genoa. The Bourbon family was restored to the Kingdom of Naples in the person of Ferdinand I, though they had a bad reputation for misgovernment. The Pope was restored to the Papal States. Also in Italy, the Duchies of Parma, Modena and Tuscany were given to Austrian princes. Austria, in fact, had a firm grip on northern Italy; this was thought necessary to deter a possible French invasion of Italy. In general, therefore, the

statesmen's aims seemed to have been fulfilled: a balance of power had been achieved and the Quadruple Alliance of Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia seemed likely to preserve good relations.

There was, in fact, no major conflict in Europe until the Crimean War (1854-6), though of course there are many other reasons besides the Vienna Settlement for this long period of comparative peace. William Hague believes that Castlereagh's work at Vienna was one of the most successful sets of negotiations in the history of diplomacy. On the other hand *there were criticisms of the settlement*. The main one was that it ignored the principle of nationalism: Belgians were placed under Dutch rule, Italians under Austrians; Finns, Norwegians and Poles were placed under foreign governments merely to suit the wishes of the great powers. Even in Britain there were dissenting voices: The Whig MP Sir James Mackintosh said that the way the powers had redrawn the national frontiers of Europe was the most unacceptable arrogance. He was particularly incensed by the way in which Norway had been switched from Denmark to Sweden without the slightest regard for the wishes of the Norwegian people.

German nationalists were disappointed: they wanted Germany united into one powerful state, whereas the settlement reduced the old Germany of over 360 small states to 38 (known as the German Confederation); this was an improvement, but not at all what the nationalists had hoped for. By restoring autocratic rulers such as the Pope and Ferdinand I of Naples, the Congress also ignored the newly developing principle of liberalism. Although there was no major war for many years, there were a number of disturbances which resulted directly from the settlement - the Belgian struggle for independence; revolutions in Naples, Piedmont and the Papal States, and the Italian fight to throw off Austrian control. The great powers were concerned in case these disturbances escalated into a major war, as had the French revolution. In conclusion, it has to be said in defence of the settlement, that in 1815 nationalism was still a very new principle, produced mainly by the French Revolution. It was hardly to be expected that the statesmen of Europe would allow themselves to be influenced by such a new and, to them, suspect ideal.

### **3.2 What were the aims and achievements of Lord Castlereagh in foreign affairs after the Congress of Vienna (1815)?**

Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, was an Irish Protestant aristocrat brought up in County Down. At the end of the Congress of Vienna he had enormous prestige among the statesmen of Europe and already had considerable achievements to his credit. He had played an important part in building up and maintaining the alliance which had finally brought down Napoleon. At Vienna he had successfully played the role of conciliator, persuading Prussia to tone down its demands, so that France gained a lenient peace. He had prevented both Prussia and Russia from gaining too much, and had consequently preserved the balance of power. He must take much of the credit for Britain's territorial gains after the defeat of Napoleon; these confirmed British naval supremacy, providing valuable bases, sources of raw materials and markets - the basis for its future imperial and commercial expansion. Britain's position as a Great Power had clearly been consolidated.

#### **(a) Castlereagh's aims after the Congress of Vienna.**

His main concern was to preserve peace, and he hoped that this could be achieved by continuing the co-operation between the great powers started at Vienna, thereby maintaining the balance of power. He wanted regular meetings of the powers to solve problems and quell disturbances by a *Concert of Europe* (states acting in concerted agreement together) instead of by confrontation. However, he did not believe it was right for the great powers to intervene in the internal affairs of other states, and did not want Britain to become involved in any such action. Thus in 1818 when Alexander I proposed that they should sign a written guarantee to preserve all frontiers and monarchs in Europe, Castlereagh refused. His attitude was summed up perfectly by a statement he issued in December 1815: 'It is the province of Great Britain to encourage peace by exercising a



conciliatory influence between the Powers, rather than put herself at the head of any combination of Courts to keep others in check....It is not my wish to encourage on the part of this country, an unnecessary interference in the ordinary affairs of the Continent'. As to specific details, he was keen to get the army of occupation removed from France and France accepted as an equal again by the other powers; this would boost Louis XVIII's popularity and help stabilize the country. Castlereagh felt it was wrong to penalize the Bourbon government too heavily for the behaviour of Napoleon.

**(b) Castlereagh's achievements.**

It seemed as though his policies were beginning well; however, after 1818 his actual achievements were limited.

1. With the help of Metternich, Castlereagh was responsible for *the Quadruple Alliance* (November 1815) of Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia. They agreed to maintain the peace settlement and to hold regular Congresses to discuss any threats to peace and stability. The frontiers of France were guaranteed and the powers would intervene in France to prevent any attempt to restore the Bonapartes. This was an important achievement, because regular conferences in peacetime were a new idea in diplomacy.
2. *The Congress System got under way with the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818)*. It met to consider what to do about France which had paid off the 700 million franc indemnity and was settling down under Louis XVIII. It was decided that the army of occupation should be withdrawn and that France should take part in future Congresses, transforming the Quadruple into the Quintuple Alliance. Relatively minor problems discussed and agreed upon were the rights of Jews in Europe, Swedish payments to Denmark for the acquisition of Norway, and the treatment of Napoleon on St Helena. A discordant note was sounded when the Tsar Alexander I, perhaps carried away by his Holy Alliance (which had been signed by all European rulers except George III, who was insane, the Pope and the Sultan of Turkey, but which was dismissed by Castlereagh as 'a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense'), proposed that the powers should guarantee all frontiers and all monarchs; this would have

meant intervening to suppress all revolutions, including those provoked by bad government. Castlereagh was able to carry the Austrians and Prussians with him in rejecting this proposal. Again Castlereagh seemed to have scored a considerable success: France had been accepted again on equal terms, he had launched his new method of European diplomacy and had avoided a split in the Alliance. Unfortunately for Castlereagh the fragile harmony of the Alliance could last only so long as there were no revolutions and no divergent interests among the powers.

3. *1820 was a year of revolutions inspired by liberalism*, in protest against autocratic government. In January, Spanish troops were gathering at Cadiz before sailing to attempt the recapture of Spain's New World colonies (Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Colombia) which had declared themselves independent during the wars. Instead the troops turned on the government and forced King Ferdinand VII to grant a democratic constitution. Similar revolutions in Portugal, Naples and Piedmont also achieved democratic constitutions. Metternich and Alexander, alarmed at the prospect of disturbances spreading from Italy into their own territories, summoned...
4. *The Congress of Troppau (1820)*. Castlereagh, knowing that they intended to use the Alliance to quell the revolutions and destroy the new constitutions, refused to attend, merely sending his half-brother, Lord Stewart, as an 'observer'. Castlereagh expressed his attitude in a famous State Paper (May 1820); it was not that he approved of liberal revolutions - in fact he sympathized with Metternich's fears; but he was unwilling to involve Britain in general commitments on the continent. It was not morally right for the great powers to force their wishes on smaller countries: 'the Alliance....was never intended as a Union for the government of the world.....such a scheme is utterly impractical and objectionable'. In addition he knew that the Opposition in parliament would be furious if Britain supported intervention, and that even many of his cabinet colleagues were sick of Britain's involvement in Europe. He was extremely suspicious of Russian motives, since Alexander was itching to send an army through Europe to crush the Spanish revolution. Unimpressed by Castlereagh's objections, the other representatives issued *the Troppau Protocol* (a first draft of terms to be agreed), which

asserted their right to intervene in any country where a revolution seemed in danger of infecting other countries. Castlereagh rejected the Protocol and there was clearly a serious split in the Alliance. The Congress adjourned in disarray.

5. *The Congress of Laibach (1821)* was a continuation of the previous one. Castlereagh again sent his half-brother to show his disapproval. He did concede, however, that the Austrians should intervene in Naples, provided it was not done in the name of the Alliance. As a result, Austrian troops quelled the revolts in Naples; they went on to deal with the revolt in Piedmont as well, a step Castlereagh did not approve. No action was taken against Spain and Portugal at this stage. Just before the Congress ended, the European situation was further complicated by the outbreak of the Greek revolt against Turkish rule. Relations between Britain and the rest remained tense, and it was obvious that Castlereagh's idea of international co-operation was being misused by Britain's allies, though he could not quite bring himself to break away from the Alliance completely. A further Congress was planned for Verona in 1822 to consider the Spanish and Greek problems, but before it met, Castlereagh had committed suicide (August 1822).

His mind had given way under the strain of what historian R.J.White calls 'his courageous attempt to be with Europe but not of it, a diplomatic tight-rope act which must have been a nightmare for the chief performer'. He also had the difficult job of leading the unpopular Tory government in the Commons (as an Irish peer, Lord Castlereagh was not entitled to a seat in the House of Lords, and therefore sat in the House of Commons, whereas the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, an English peer, was able to sit in the House of Lords). In addition, though he appeared cool and arrogant, Castlereagh was a shy and sensitive man who was deeply hurt and disturbed by his unpopularity and by the abuse he had to suffer. He was already unpopular with the liberals and radicals in 1815 for allowing the restoration of so many autocratic monarchs. Later he was blamed for the government's repressive policy (see Section 2.4). Not being a good speaker, he failed to explain his foreign policy clearly; consequently, the opposition in parliament and the general public thought he was

committed to supporting autocracy, which seemed to be borne out by his approval of Austrian intervention in Naples. During the summer of 1821 he was convinced that sinister characters were trying to ruin his reputation by accusing him of being a homosexual. He became so unbalanced that although his friends removed his pistols and razors, he succeeded in cutting his throat with a penknife. So great was his unpopularity that crowds hissed and jeered as his coffin was carried into Westminster Abbey.

Though his career was tragically cut short at the early age of 53, Castlereagh's achievements after Vienna deserve to be remembered: he must take the credit for the introduction of the Congress System; this was a new departure in international co-operation and personal contact between the statesmen of Europe, a policy which he pursued with commonsense and restraint.

### **3.3 What were the aims and achievements of Canning in foreign affairs (1822-7) and how did his policies differ from those of Castlereagh?**

#### **(a) Canning's aims.**

Canning was not radically different from Castlereagh in his attitude, though there were differences of method and style.

- Canning was not an enthusiastic supporter of liberalism and revolution abroad, but he did believe that whenever there was bad government, change must come.
- Like Castlereagh, Canning did not approve of great powers interfering all over the world as they saw fit - if a change was necessary, as for example in Greece, the process should be supervised by whichever of the powers was most closely concerned and not simply squashed by the whole Alliance.
- Whereas Castlereagh had merely protested against the Metternich policy of intervention, Canning intended to be more decisive and actually help the revolutionaries in Greece and Portugal. Even here, though, the difference was not completely clearcut, since just before his death, Castlereagh had been contemplating sending a fleet to help the

Portuguese liberals.

- Where he differed most from Castlereagh was that his overriding concern was to protect British interests rather than to preserve the Alliance. As Canning's biographer, Wendy Hinde, put it, 'his policy was based on a careful, even opportunist calculation of what would best preserve peace and promote England's prestige and prosperity'. Not being a founder-member of the Alliance, he had no special affection for it, and did not know the European rulers and politicians personally; if it suited Britain's interests, he was quite prepared to withdraw from the Alliance. 'For *Europe*, I shall be desirous now and then to read *England*', he wrote soon after becoming Foreign Secretary.
- Whereas Castlereagh's policies were misunderstood, Canning took the trouble to explain to the public what he was trying to achieve; this gained him public support and popularity, though other politicians often disapproved and thought him rather showy – one critic remarked that Canning's trips round the country 'speechifying and discussing the intentions of the Gov't were ridiculous....quite a new system among us....which excites great indignation'.
- Canning's specific aims were to prevent the French from interfering in Spain, to preserve the new Portuguese constitution; maintain the independence of the Spanish colonies with which Britain had developed valuable trade, and to help the Greeks, while at the same time making sure that the Russians did not gain too much advantage from the situation.

### **(b) Canning's achievements**

- 1 Canning failed in his first specific aim - to keep the French out of Spain. *At the Congress of Verona (1822)* it soon became clear that Britain's representative, Wellington, was isolated, since all the other powers were determined to destroy Spain's new liberal constitution. British protests were ignored and a French army was authorized to invade Spain; by April 1823 the Spanish liberals had been defeated and Ferdinand's full powers restored. It was a diplomatic failure for Britain, and public opinion was outraged at the presence of French troops in Spain again, only ten years

after they had been driven out by Wellington. However, Canning's anti-French speeches won him popularity at home, which increased as some important successes followed.

- 2 He was successful in upholding the liberal constitution in Portugal. Canning's fear was that unless Britain took decisive action, the French and Spanish, carried away by their crusade against liberalism, might invade Portugal and might even be tempted to regain the lost Spanish colonies in the New World. Following an appeal for help by the Portuguese Foreign Minister, a British naval squadron was sent to Lisbon (July 1823), and later, when it looked as though a Spanish army was about to enter Portugal, Canning despatched 5,000 British troops to defend the Portuguese liberals. This was immensely popular with the public at home: it was felt that Canning had restored Britain's prestige after the Spanish failure, and had defied Metternich and the other reactionaries in the Alliance.
- 3 Together with the USA, Britain was instrumental in preserving the independence of Spain's former colonies. The situation reached crisis point in the autumn of 1823 when Ferdinand VII of Spain proposed another Congress to consider action; it was obvious that Spain and France, and probably the other powers as well, were in favour of a joint expedition to recapture the lost colonies. Canning was determined this should not happen, for several reasons: he felt that the people of South America and Mexico should have the right to remain free from such a reactionary tyrant as Ferdinand VII; he feared that the French might keep some of the Spanish colonies for themselves; probably most important of all, Britain stood to lose the valuable export trade which had developed with the new states, as the Spanish refused to guarantee Britain's right to trade with the colonies if they were recovered. By now Canning was convinced that the Congress System was a waste of time: 'We protested at Laibach and Verona and our protests were treated as waste paper'. Consequently he rejected the idea of a further Congress and warned Polignac, the French ambassador, that Britain would use her fleet in the Atlantic to prevent any expedition reaching South America.

Support for the British stand came from the USA which had already recognized the colonies' independence. In December 1823 President Monroe told Congress (the US parliament) that if any European power interfered in any part of America, whether it be North, Central or South, the USA would oppose it by force. This American policy became known as *the Monroe Doctrine*. The President's motive was to make Central and South America into a US sphere of influence and to warn off the Russians in case they had designs on the rest of America via Alaska, which belonged to Russia. The Monroe Doctrine was actually anti-British as well as anti-the rest of Europe; moreover Canning was disappointed that the USA had recognized the colonies as republics - he would have preferred monarchies. However, the Americans were well aware that their navy alone would be ineffectual and that only with the help of British sea-power could they enforce the Monroe Doctrine. In 1825 Canning recognized Mexico, Colombia and Argentina as independent republics and signed trade agreements with them. Metternich and the others, faced with the double threat from Britain and the USA, abandoned all hope of recovering the colonies.

*Canning was triumphant:* the Alliance had been thwarted and the British defeat over Spain avenged; 'I called a New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old', he remarked. Prospects for British trade were good and Britain had shown that it could take effective action independently of the European powers. The Congress System was almost, but not quite, finished.

- 4 *Canning became involved in helping the Greeks in their fight against the Turks*, but he died (1827) before he could see it through. Though the Greeks eventually won full independence (1830), the circumstances were not particularly to Britain's advantage.

*The origins of the situation lay in what was known as the Eastern Question:* the Turkish Empire (also known as the Ottoman Empire) had once stretched far into south-eastern Europe as well as across Northern Africa. In 1683 the Turks had unsuccessfully besieged Vienna, and since that failure, they had gradually been in retreat. The Turkish government usually neglected and misgoverned its outlying provinces; by 1815 it had lost its authority over North Africa and much of the

Balkans, though nominally these areas were still part of the Ottoman Empire. It was because of the obvious Turkish weakness that the Greek nationalists were stirred to try and assert their independence.

In essence, the Eastern Question was the Russian attempt to take advantage of the weakening Turkish Empire, and the attempts of other powers, especially Britain, to prevent this happening (see Section 9.2(c), Chapter 10 and Section 14.4 for later recurrences of the Eastern Question).

*Canning's motives for intervention in the Greek revolt were:*

- The Greeks were not having a great deal of success since the Sultan of Turkey had received help from Mehemet Ali, the ruler of Egypt. Ali's son Ibrahim had arrived in Greece with a large army, and by 1825 he was well on the way to crushing the rebellion. There was much sympathy in Britain for the Greek cause, and many volunteers, including Lord Byron, had gone out to fight for them. The Greeks themselves sent a deputation to Britain begging for help. All this put Canning under pressure to send active assistance to the Greeks.
- By the early part of 1826, it was clear that the Russians were about to intervene on the Greek side. Alexander I had been keen to help, but Metternich had dissuaded him on the grounds that revolutions, even against the Turks, must not be encouraged. However, Alexander died in December 1825, and the new Tsar Nicholas I was ready for immediate intervention. Russian policy since 1815 had been to suppress revolutions, but this one was different: Nicholas was horrified at the slaughter of Greek Christians by Egyptian and Turkish Muslims; above all though, Greek success would further weaken Turkey. Canning therefore decided that Britain must act too in order to make sure *firstly* that Turkey would not be weakened too much so that she could still serve as a buffer against Russian expansion in the Balkans, and *secondly* that Russia should not gain too much advantage, such as for example, possession of Constantinople.
- Canning may have intervened in order to break up the Congress System, knowing that Anglo-Russian co-operation would infuriate Metternich.



Consequently Canning, now Prime Minister, negotiated *the Treaty of London (July 1827)* by which Britain, Russia and France agreed to bring about Greek self-government, by force if necessary; a joint naval expedition set out for Greece. The Austrians and Prussians objected strenuously at this support of revolution and the Turks refused to negotiate. In August Canning died (aged 57) from inflammation of the liver and lungs, probably brought on by overwork. Meanwhile the combined 27 ship fleet was blockading the Turkish-Egyptian fleet of 81 ships in *Navarino Bay*. Though they were under orders to avoid hostilities, the British Admiral Codrington decided to force the issue by sailing into the bay. The Turks opened fire and a full-scale battle developed lasting four hours. It was a disaster for the Turks and their allies; 61 ships and about 4,000 men were lost (October 1827). This battle was of great importance: Ibrahim was cut off from supplies and reinforcements; French troops landed and organized the evacuation of his troops. There was now no prospect of the Turks recapturing Greece whose independence was recognized in 1830, although its frontiers were not decided until 1832.

After Canning's death Wellington reversed his policy and withdrew Britain from the treaty alliance, because he did not approve of aiding and abetting revolutionaries. The government apologized to the Turks and removed Codrington from his command. With no Canning to keep a watchful eye on them, the Russians declared war on the Turks and forced them to sign *the Treaty of Adrianople (1829)* which gave the area round the Danube delta to Russia.

In the end, *Canning's work in the Near East had mixed success*. He had helped to achieve a completely independent Greece, which in 1832 was recognized as a kingdom, with Otto of Bavaria as the the first king. However, his wider aim of limiting Russian gains by co-operation with Greece had been ruined by Wellington, who had failed to grasp Canning's intentions. Russia had substantially increased its influence in the Balkans, and Turkey had suffered military defeat.

- 5 One result of the Greek revolt which, from Canning's point of view, can be seen as an achievement, was that it marked the end of the Quintuple Alliance and the Congress System as an instrument for crushing revolutions: for the first time Russia was acting *with* Britain and France in opposition to Austria, and there could be no further pretence that Europe was united. Canning had been prepared to break up the Congress System for a variety of reasons: to avoid binding commitments on the continent, to help liberals and nationalists (though this motive must not be exaggerated), but primarily to further Britain's trading and other interests. Metternich had been thwarted; no wonder he was delighted at Canning's death and thanked God for delivering Europe from 'this malevolent meteor'.

## Questions

1. Compare and explain the foreign policies of Castlereagh and Canning.
2. To what extent can British foreign policy be described as 'liberal' in the period 1815-30?

A document question about Lord Castlereagh and his foreign policy and his conduct of foreign affairs can be found on the accompanying website.