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**Deutschland und Rußland  
in der britischen Kontinentalpolitik  
seit 1815**

**Germany and Russia  
in British Policy towards Europe  
since 1815**

Herausgegeben von  
Adolf M. Birke und Hermann Wentker

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## Inhalt/Contents

<i>Adolf M. Birke und Hermann Wentker</i>	
Einleitung .....	7
Introduction .....	11
<i>Paul W. Schroeder</i>	
Britain, Russia, and the German Question, 1815 – 1848: Emerging Rivalry or Benign Neglect? .....	15
<i>Hermann Wentker</i>	
Mitteleuropa als Faktor britischer Rußlandpolitik 1854 – 1871 .....	31
<i>Ulrich Lappenküper</i>	
Annäherung auf Kosten Deutschlands? Der Brückenschlag zwischen den Flügelmächten England und Rußland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg .....	49
<i>John Hiden</i>	
Between Ideology and Power Politics: Britain, Germany, and Russia 1918 – 1922 .....	73
<i>Bernd Ebersold</i>	
Die Diktaturen und das Appeasement. Allianzpolitische Dimensionen bri- tischer Außenpolitik in den dreißiger Jahren .....	85
<i>Albrecht Tyrell</i>	
Deutschland und die Sowjetunion in der britischen Kriegszielpolitik 1941 – 1945 .....	101
<i>Beatrice Heuser</i>	
The Demise of Anglo-Soviet and the Birth of Anglo-German Military Cooperation, 1941 – 1955 .....	123
<i>Colin Munro</i>	
Britain and German „Ostpolitik“ .....	145
<i>Christoph Bluth</i>	
New Thinking in Soviet Foreign Policy under Gorbachev: British and Ger- man Perspectives on a Changing European Security Environment .....	157

<i>Peer Lange</i>	
Der Zerfall des Sowjetimperiums und Westeuropa .....	189
<i>Hermann Wentker</i>	
Zusammenfassung der Podiumsdiskussion .....	205
Summary of Panel Discussion .....	211
Autorenverzeichnis /List of Contributors .....	217

## Einleitung

Mit dem Epochenjahr 1989 hat sich das Staatensystem grundlegend verändert. Trotz der Bemühungen, zu einem *modus vivendi* zwischen den Supermächten und den beiden Blöcken zu gelangen, blieb die Ost-West-Konfrontation seit Entstehung des „Kalten Krieges“ eine Konstante der internationalen Politik, die erst mit den Umwälzungen des „*annus mirabilis*“ 1989 verschwand. Die Auflösung des osteuropäischen Hegemonialsystems bildete jedoch nur die erste Stufe des dramatischen Machtzerfalls der östlichen Weltmacht. Darauf folgte die Implosion der Sowjetunion selbst, so daß Rußland heute zwar immer noch eine regionale Vormacht mit einem nicht zu unterschätzenden militärischen (und nuklearen) Potential darstellt, jedoch keineswegs mehr als Supermacht gelten kann. Die Vereinigten Staaten haben hingegen im Zweiten Golfkrieg gezeigt, daß sie durchaus noch in der Lage sind, weltpolitische Verantwortung zu übernehmen; ihr relativer Machtverlust seit der zweiten Hälfte der achtziger Jahre sowie die Tendenz der Regierung Clinton, sich vorrangig den inneren Problemen der nordamerikanischen Gesellschaft zuzuwenden, sind indes ebenfalls unübersehbar.

Diese weltpolitischen Veränderungen bewirken eine zunehmende Offenheit des europäischen Staatensystems. Der Zerfall des Warschauer Pakts und des Rats für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe sowie die Renaissance der Nationalstaaten in Osteuropa lassen die Erinnerung an Konstellationen der Vergangenheit wach werden. Die westlichen supranationalen Zusammenschlüsse aus der Zeit des Kalten Krieges – wie das Nordatlantische Bündnis und die Europäische Gemeinschaft – konnten zwar bewahrt werden, jedoch verstärkt das Ende der Bedrohung durch die Sowjetunion auch die zentrifugalen Kräfte in Westeuropa. Darüber hinaus hat die Vereinigung Deutschlands im Jahre 1990 alte Ängste vor einem deutschen Hegemoniestreben bei den westlichen und östlichen Nachbarn wiederbelebt. Bedeutet also der Zerfall der bipolaren Weltordnung eine Rückkehr zur multipolaren Ordnung früherer Zeiten?

Ob die Kräfte der Integration oder der Desintegration sich in der internationalen Politik durchsetzen, wird die Zukunft zeigen. In der Gegenwart bleibt uns nichts anderes übrig, als unsere Wahrnehmungskraft auch durch einen Blick in die Vergangenheit zu schärfen. Die Frage, ob die Geschichte des Staatensystems trotz seiner historischen Wandlungen von bestimmten Grundmustern geprägt ist, drängt sich vor dem Hintergrund der jüngsten Entwicklungen geradezu auf. Besonders lohnend erscheint es dabei, das Beziehungsgeflecht Großbritannien-Deutschland-Rußland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert näher zu untersuchen. Denn insbesondere im britisch-russischen und im britisch-

deutschen Verhältnis sind zwei Grundkonstellationen erkennbar, die sich nachhaltig auf die europäische Geschichte ausgewirkt haben. Die Seemacht Großbritannien konnte stets, falls ihr die größte Kontinentalmacht, Rußland, zu bedrohlich erschien, Mitteleuropa als Barriere oder als Bündnispartner nutzen, um dem russischen Expansionsstreben Einhalt zu gebieten. Andererseits war die Inselmacht auch immer wieder bereit, sich der östlichen Flügelmacht anzunähern, wenn Deutschland sich anschickte, eine Hegemonialstellung zu erstreben.

Die 12. Konferenz der Prinz-Albert-Gesellschaft in Coburg vom 24. – 25. September 1993 war dem Thema: „Deutschland und Rußland in der britischen Kontinentalpolitik seit 1815“ gewidmet. Ihr lag die Frage zugrunde, welches Grundmuster die britisch-russischen und die britisch-deutschen Beziehungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert bestimmte und welchen Wandlungen dieses durch den Niedergang der britischen Weltmacht und die revolutionären Veränderungen auf dem Kontinent nach 1917 und 1933 ausgesetzt war.

Die in Coburg gehaltenen Referate sind in dem vorliegenden Band versammelt. Zu Beginn wendet sich *Paul W. Schroeder* (Universität Illinois) dem britisch-russischen Verhältnis im System des Wiener Kongresses zu. Er stellt die traditionelle These in Frage, derzufolge beide Flügelmächte damals um die Kontrolle Mitteleuropas miteinander konkurrierten, und vertritt die Auffassung, daß Rußland und Großbritannien im gegenseitigen Einvernehmen Deutschland als Defensivblock in der Mitte des Kontinents etablierten. Während des Krimkriegs und in den Jahren danach, so legt *Hermann Wentker* (Potsdam) dar, wurde Mitteleuropa zu einem bedeutenden Faktor der britischen Rußlandpolitik: Waren zur Zeit des Krimkriegs beide deutschen Großmächte gesuchte Bündnispartner, so wurde in den sechziger und siebziger Jahren die Stabilisierung Deutschlands in einem mächtigen Nationalstaat von britischer Seite durchaus begrüßt, da dieser als unverzichtbares Gleichgewichtselement galt. Daß sich London seit der Jahrhundertwende trotz des grundsätzlich fortbestehenden britisch-russischen Gegensatzes in zunehmendem Maße an St. Petersburg annäherte, war, wie *Ulrich Lappenküper* (Bonn) darlegt, zwar weitgehend, aber nicht ausschließlich auf die „Weltmachtpolitik“ des wilhelminischen Deutschland zurückzuführen.

Die britischen Regierungen der Zwischenkriegszeit setzten vor allem auf eine Intensivierung des Handels mit dem kommunistischen Rußland. In dieser Strategie, so führt *John Hiden* (Bradford) aus, diente das Baltikum als Sprungbrett. Jedoch hatte Deutschland die bessere Ausgangsposition, um seine Handelsbeziehungen sowohl mit den baltischen Staaten als auch mit dem bolschewistischen Rußland auszubauen. Unter diesen Bedingungen scheiterte die Idee von Lloyd George, Deutschland in ein internationales Konsortium zum wirtschaftlichen Aufbau Rußlands einzubinden, als Berlin und Moskau den Vertrag von Rapallo unterzeichneten. Die britische Außenpolitik der dreißiger Jahre war den Darlegungen *Bernd Ebersolds* (München) zufolge auf die Integration Deutschlands in ein „general settlement“ ausgerichtet, in das die beiden potentiellen Weltmächte, die Vereinigten Staaten und die Sowjetunion, nicht einbezogen werden sollten. Der Wert Moskaus als Bündnispartner stieg jedoch in dem Maße, in dem deut-



lich wurde, daß die Appeasement-Politik gegenüber Berlin zum Scheitern verurteilt war. Wenngleich die britisch-sowjetischen Verhandlungen am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkriegs ergebnislos blieben, fanden sich beide Mächte in der Anti-Hitler-Koalition zusammen. *Albrecht Tyrell* (Bonn) kommt bei seinen Betrachtungen der britischen Deutschland- und Rußlandpolitik in den Jahren 1941 bis 1945 zu dem Ergebnis, daß die Führung in London aufgrund der absehbaren hegemonialen Stellung der Sowjetunion bereits sehr früh für die Nachkriegszeit ein äußerst prekäres Mächtegleichgewicht vorausgesehen und daraufhin den Plan einer „integrativen Konfliktregelung“ (*Werner Link*) entwickelt habe. Ungeachtet einzelner Teilerfolge war diese Strategie jedoch aus vielfachen Gründen zum Scheitern verurteilt.

Der Umkehr der Allianzen im Kalten Krieg wendet sich *Beatrice Heuser* (London) zu. Sie betont vor allem den konsequenten Einsatz der britischen Militärplaner für ein Bündnis mit Westdeutschland, um auf diese Weise Westeuropa so weit wie möglich im Osten gegen einen Angriff der Sowjetunion verteidigen zu können. Eine starke Interessenidentität zwischen London und Bonn konstatiert *Colin Munro* (London) angesichts der „neuen Ostpolitik“ der Regierung Brandt/Scheel. Während die Bundesrepublik die bilateralen Verträge mit Moskau und Warschau aushandelte, habe Großbritannien im Zusammenhang mit dem Berlin-Abkommen darauf geachtet, die Rechte und Verantwortlichkeiten der vier Siegermächte im Hinblick auf Berlin und Deutschland als Ganzes zu wahren. *Christoph Bluth* (Universität Essex) analysiert die britischen und deutschen sicherheitspolitischen Strategien gegenüber der Sowjetunion nach 1985. Er stellt fest, daß Großbritannien lediglich bis zum Jahre 1987 angemessen auf die Außenpolitik Gorbatschows reagiert habe. Der deutschen Politik wirft er mangelnde Kohärenz vor. Er kommt zu dem Ergebnis, daß die Bedeutung Deutschlands bei der Beendigung des Kalten Krieges eher in seiner Schlüsselfunktion für das internationale System als in einer spezifisch deutschen Reaktion auf die Reformpolitik Gorbatschows begründet gewesen sei. Angesichts des Zerfalls des Sowjetimperiums, so *Peer Lange* (Ebenhausen), sind die traditionellen Kategorien zur Beschreibung des Beziehungsgeflechts zwischen Großbritannien, Deutschland und Rußland hinfällig geworden. Weder Großbritannien noch Rußland könnten heute als „Flügelmacht“ bezeichnet werden; das vereinigte Deutschland sei zwar zu einem Hoffnungsträger und damit zu einer Mittlermacht gegenüber dem östlichen Europa geworden, müsse aber noch lernen, den neuen Herausforderungen gerecht zu werden.

Die die Tagung abschließende Podiumsdiskussion zwischen deutschen, britischen und einem amerikanischen Experten (*Paul Schroeder*/Illinois, *Martin McCauley*/London, *Klaus Blech*/Königswinter und *Peer Lange*/Ebenhausen) unter der Leitung von *Adolf M. Birke* (London/Bayreuth) stand unter der Fragestellung: „Was tun? Rußland als Aufgabe für die deutsche und britische Politik“. Nachdem jeder Teilnehmer seine Prognose für die Zukunft abgegeben hatte, wurde über die Modalitäten der Hilfe für Rußland, über die Zukunft des russischen Rechtswesens sowie die gegenwärtige Bedeutung der deutsch-russischen und der britisch-russischen Beziehungen diskutiert. Eine Zusammenfassung der Podiumsdiskussion von *Hermann Wentker* schließt den Band ab.

Ohne die großzügige Unterstützung der Stadt Coburg wäre diese Konferenz nicht zustande gekommen. Sie hat damit gezeigt, welche Bedeutung sie der wissenschaftlichen Arbeit der Prinz-Albert-Gesellschaft beimißt. Wir danken ebenfalls den Vereinigten Coburger Sparkassen und ihrem Vorsitzenden, Klaus-Jürgen Leger, die zum Gelingen der Tagung wesentlich beigetragen haben. Dank gebührt auch denjenigen, die den reibungslosen Ablauf des Seminars ermöglichten; das gilt besonders für Elke Plümer und Maria Zurek in Bayreuth und Elisabeth Geelhaar in Coburg. Bei der Redaktion des Manuskripts waren Mitarbeiter am Lehrstuhl für Neuere und Neueste Geschichte in Bayreuth und am Deutschen Historischen Institut London beteiligt; hier sei vor allem Frank Spörrer und Angela Davies gedankt, die bewährte Hilfe bei der Übersetzung der Texte leistete.

London/Bayreuth, im April 1994

Adolf M. Birke  
Hermann Wentker

## Introduction

The year 1989, a turning-point in world history, saw a fundamental transformation in the system of states. Despite attempts to achieve a *modus vivendi* between the superpowers and the two political blocs, East-West confrontation remained a constant of international politics from the beginning of the Cold War to the *annus mirabilis* of 1989. The collapse of the Eastern European system, however, was only the first step in the dramatic disintegration of Soviet power. It was followed by the implosion of the Soviet Union itself. Since then, Russia has been a regional power whose military (and nuclear) potential should not be underestimated. But it no longer counts as a superpower. In the second Gulf War the USA demonstrated that it is still capable of taking on international responsibilities. However, its relative loss of power in the late 1980s and the Clinton administration's tendency to devote itself mainly to domestic problems are undeniable.

The result of all this has been to open up the European system of states. The disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and COMECON, as well as the renaissance of eastern European nation-states bring back memories of past constellations. While Western alliances dating from the Cold War, such as NATO and the European Community, continue to exist, the ending of the Soviet threat has also strengthened centrifugal forces in western Europe, and German unification in 1990 has re-awakened old fears of German hegemonial ambitions among Germany's neighbours to east and west. Does the disintegration of the bipolar world order mean a return to the multipolar order of earlier times?

Only the future will show whether the forces of integration or disintegration will prevail in international politics. But against the background of recent developments, the obvious question to ask is whether any fundamental patterns in relations between individual states have shaped the system of states throughout its historical transformations. Relations between Britain, Germany, and Russia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries offer a particularly fruitful field for this approach. Two basic constellations which have had a lasting impact on European history are recognizable in Anglo-Russian and Anglo-German relations. On the one hand when Russia, the great continental power, looked too threatening, Britain as a naval power could use central Europe either as a barrier or as an alliance partner in order to put the brakes on Russian expansionism. On the other hand, Britain was quite prepared to come to terms with Russia if Germany's aspirations for hegemony over central Europe became too blatant.

The Prince Albert Society's twelfth annual conference, held in Coburg on 24 – 25 September 1993, was on "Germany and Russia in British Policy towards Europe since 1815". It asked to what extent these basic patterns determined Anglo-Russian and Anglo-German relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Papers also examined the impact on these patterns of Britain's decline as a world power, and of the revolutionary upheavals on the Continent after 1917 and 1933.

The papers given at this conference are assembled in this volume. Relations between Russia and Britain in the system created at the Congress of Vienna provide the starting point, discussed by *Paul W. Schroeder* (University of Illinois). He questions the traditional view that Britain and Russia were competing for control of central Europe at that time. Instead, he suggests, they set up Germany by mutual agreement as a defensive bloc in the centre of the Continent. According to *Hermann Wentker* (Potsdam), central Europe was a crucial factor in Britain's policy towards Russia. At the time of the Crimean War, both German great powers were sought-after alliance partners. During the 1860s and 1870s Britain welcomed Germany's stabilization in a powerful nation-state because it was seen as indispensable in maintaining the balance. After the turn of the century, despite the continuing Anglo-Russian antagonism, London increasingly sought a *rapprochement* with St. Petersburg. As *Ulrich Lappenküper* (Bonn) shows, this was attributable largely, but not exclusively, to Wilhelmine Germany's *Weltmachtpolitik*, its attempt to behave like a world power.

During the inter-war period, British governments banked on increasing Britain's trade with Communist Russia. *John Hiden* (Bradford) argues that the Baltic served London as a springboard for this strategy. But Germany was in a better position to develop its trade both with the Baltic states and with Bolshevik Russia. Under these circumstances, Lloyd George's idea of bringing Germany into an international consortium to develop Russia economically failed when Berlin and Moscow signed the Rapallo Treaty. According to *Bernd Ebersold* (Munich), British foreign policy in the 1930s aimed to involve Germany in a general settlement which was to exclude the two potential world powers, the USA and the USSR. But Moscow's value as an alliance partner rose as it became clear that the policy of appeasing Berlin was doomed to fail. Although the Anglo-Soviet negotiations on the eve of the Second World War were unsuccessful, the two powers eventually came together in the anti-Hitler coalition. In his examination of British policy towards Germany and Russia between 1941 and 1945, *Albrecht Tyrell* (Bonn) concludes that the British leaders, recognizing that the Soviet Union would become a hegemonial power, early foresaw that the balance of power would be extremely precarious after the war. Thereupon they developed what Werner Link has described as a plan for "integrative conflict regulation". Apart from a few partial successes, however, this strategy failed for a number of reasons.

*Beatrice Heuser* (London) looks at the reversal of alliances in the Cold War. She emphasizes that the British military planners consistently advocated an alliance with West Germany because they wanted to be able to defend Western Europe as far to the

east as possible against a Soviet attack. *Colin Munro* (London) claims that the “new *Ostpolitik*” of the Brandt/Scheel government created a general identity of interests between London and Bonn. While the Federal Republic negotiated bilateral treaties with Moscow and Warsaw, Britain ensured that the quadripartite rights and responsibilities for Berlin and Germany as a whole were preserved in the Berlin Agreement. *Christoph Bluth* (University of Essex) analyses British and German security policies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union after 1985. He claims that Britain’s reaction to Gorbachev’s foreign policy was appropriate only until 1987, and accuses German policy towards Moscow of inconsistency. Bluth concludes that Germany’s key position in the international system was more significant in ending the Cold War than any specific reaction to Gorbachev’s reforms. *Peer Lange* (Ebenhausen) argues that the collapse of the Soviet Empire has made the traditional categories for describing relations between Britain, Germany, and Russia obsolete. Neither Britain nor Russia can any longer be described as a flanking power, and a unified Germany, while it has become a mediator with eastern Europe, still has to learn to cope with the new challenges.

The conference closed with a panel discussion on “What is to be done? Russia as a problem for German and British policy”. The panel consisted of German, British, and American experts (*Paul Schroeder*/Illinois, *Martin McCauley*/London, *Klaus Blech*/Königswinter, and *Peer Lange*/Ebenhausen), and was chaired by *Adolf M. Birke* (London/Bayreuth). After each member of the panel had given his views on what the future holds, the discussion turned to ways of helping Russia, the future of the Russian legal system, and the present significance of Russo-German and Anglo-Russian relations. A summary of the panel discussion by *Hermann Wentker* closes the present volume.

The conference on which this volume is based could not have been held without the generous support of the city of Coburg, which has shown how highly it values the Prince Albert Society’s scholarly work. We should like to thank the Vereinigte Coburger Sparkassen, and their Chairman, Klaus-Jürgen Leger, who contributed significantly to the success of the conference. Thanks are due to those who ensured that everything ran smoothly at the conference – in particular, Elke Plümer and Maria Zurek in Bayreuth, and Elisabeth Geelhaar in Coburg. Members of the Department of Modern History at the University of Bayreuth and of the German Historical Institute London assisted in the editing of this volume. Special thanks are due to Frank Spörrer and Angela Davies, who helped translate the German texts.

London/Bayreuth, April 1994

Adolf M. Birke  
Hermann Wentker



*Paul W. Schroeder*

## Britain, Russia, and the German Question, 1815 – 1848: Emerging Rivalry or Benign Neglect?

This essay will argue (though the case, for reasons of space, will be supported only with illustrations and examples rather than massive evidence<sup>1</sup>) that the pattern of Anglo-Russian relations in the post-Vienna era diverged fairly dramatically from those which had prevailed before and would prevail again after this era, and that Germany played a major role in this change. It will try to show why this interpretation of 1815 – 1848 as an exceptional era makes better sense than another current view, and will further suggest what caused this change in the Anglo-Russian relationship and still more briefly what the 1815 – 1848 pattern might mean for other eras, particularly our own.

### I. The Standard View: Emergent Anglo-Russian Rivalry

The interpretation defended in this essay, though it may eventually seem fairly obvious from the evidence and is shared by others,<sup>2</sup> is probably a minority view. The more common and superficially plausible one looks at 1815 – 1848 in terms of the normal pattern of European politics, i.e., balance-of-power competition and the rise and fall of great powers, and sees 1815 – 1848 as the time in which the Anglo-Russian world rivalry prominent in the later 19th century first germinated, took root, and emerged as a distinct feature of European politics. Germany became involved in this rivalry, if not as centrally as it would be later. Considerable *prima facie* evidence can be used in behalf of this interpretation. Russia and Britain undoubtedly were competitors for

<sup>1</sup> The case is made at length in my book, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763 – 1848*, Oxford 1994. For an extensive bibliography, see pp. 805 – 878. The notes in this essay will consist largely of a few references to the main literature at certain points.

<sup>2</sup> One finds at least major elements of it, for example, in *Wolf Gruner*, *Europäischer Friede als nationales Interesse: Die Rolle des Deutschen Bundes in der britischen Politik, 1814 – 1832*, in: *Bohemia* 18 (1977), pp. 96 – 128; *Gruner*, *Die deutsche Frage*, Munich 1985; and at least hints in *F. R. Bridge* and *Roger Bullen*, *The Great Powers and the European System, 1815 – 1914*, London 1980, and *F. H. Hinsley*, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, Cambridge 1963. Almost all scholars, moreover, recognize that interstate rivalry, including Anglo-Russian rivalry, was more muted and restrained during the Vienna era.

leadership of the final coalition against Napoleon in 1813 – 1814. Russia, though it needed British political, military and financial help desperately, was so determined to retain the leading role which Russians felt their defeat of Napoleon in 1812 had earned them that St. Petersburg was reluctant even to ally formally with the British and accept their subsidies except strictly on Russian terms. The divergences between Russian and British views on various questions – war aims and military strategy, the fate and treatment of Napoleon, the future government of France and restoration of the Bourbons, the issues of maritime rights and Britain's colonial conquests, and other concerns – are numerous and well-attested. There were times in late 1813 and early 1814 when these Anglo-Russian differences and others seemed to threaten the life of the coalition. The Russians held out against joining the general alliance Lord Castlereagh was promoting long after other allies were willing to sign. The competition for leadership continued after the final victory over Napoleon and the first restoration and peace treaty with France, and apparently reached its climax at the Congress of Vienna over the Polish-Saxon question. The secret alliance of 3 January 1815 concluded by Britain, France, and Austria against Russia and Prussia seemed a dramatic signal of real hostility and a possible renewal of war. Following the Vienna Congress the competition apparently spread to the New World, with Russia seeking to maintain its North American empire against Spanish and British claims and to expand its trade and influence in Latin America.<sup>3</sup> The two powers took opposed stands in regard to the revolutions in the Spanish and Portuguese American colonies, with Russia trying to help Spain retain them and to mobilize the European Concert to this end, while Britain worked to keep the Concert out of the matter and to draw its various members, France first and foremost, into a gradual recognition of Latin American independence. Signs of nascent tension and disagreement over the Near and Middle East appeared early in the Vienna era. The British at least considered trying to include the Ottoman Empire in the Vienna treaty system to check Russian claims and ambitions; Count Nesselrode, Russia's foreign minister, carefully evaded this, and Alexander warned Britain in 1816 against interfering in Russia's relations with Persia. These facts serve for J.-H. Pirenne and others<sup>4</sup> as evidence of a struggle waged for world leadership in 1813 – 1820 between Russia and Britain, with Britain trying to establish a continental balance against Russia in order to enjoy free security and predominance overseas, Russia seeking Continental hegemony so as to compete with Britain on the world scene.

This scenario is supposed to have persisted in varying forms throughout the pre-March era to 1848. There is no doubt that the Great Game in Asia, i.e. contact and

<sup>3</sup> R. H. Bartley, *Imperial Russia and the Struggle for Latin American Independence, 1808 – 1828*, Austin (Tex.) 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques-Henri Pirenne, *La Sainte-Alliance, organisation européenne de la paix mondiale*, 2 vols., Neuchâtel 1946 – 1949; Karl Griewank, *Der Wiener Kongress und die europäische Restauration*, 2nd ed., Leipzig 1954; Enno E. Kraebe, *Metternich's German Policy*, 2 vols., Princeton (N.J.) 1963 – 1983; Maurice Bourquin, *Histoire de la Sainte Alliance*, Geneva 1954; Ulrike Eich, *Rußland und Europa. Studien zur russischen Deutschlandpolitik in der Zeit des Wiener Kongresses*, Cologne 1986.



competition between Britain and Russia over the great arc of territory stretching from the Bosphorus eastward and southeastward to Northwest India, began to be played in this period, and according to its leading historian the game had roots already in the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.<sup>5</sup> In the early 1830's Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary tried to convince the British Cabinet that Russian ascendancy at Constantinople had to be broken, by force if necessary.<sup>6</sup> By the late 1830's he and various officials in India, including the Governor-General Lord Auckland, had launched the first of Britain's attempts to secure the approaches to India and check Russia through turning Afghanistan into a British sphere of influence.<sup>7</sup>

The ideological pattern of European politics in the Vienna era seems to confirm this picture of emerging Anglo-Russian world rivalry. The bonds of anti-revolutionary monarchical conservatism which helped bind the allies together in the final struggle against France and in the peace settlement soon weakened and disappeared. Late in his reign Tsar Alexander, under the influence of religious mysticism, Metternich's political sermons, and the specter of revolution, abandoned his earlier liberal and reform impulses. His brother and successor Nicholas I took an even more rigid and militant anti-liberal and anti-revolutionary stance at home and abroad throughout his reign. Meanwhile Britain moved in the other direction, ending its conservative partnership with Austria by 1820 – 1821 and its attachment to the European Concert on the death of Castlereagh in 1822, and beginning later to endorse and encourage moderate liberal-constitutional reforms, even when these rose from revolution. The breach between the liberal-constitutional West and the absolutist East showed up, or seemed to, over the revolts in Spain, Italy, and Greece in 1820 – 1823, the 1830 revolutions in France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Poland, the civil wars in Spain and Portugal in the 1830's, the Eastern crises of 1832 – 1841, and a series of events presaging the coming revolution in the 1840's. Rival symbols and doctrines dramatized the ideological split: an Eastern Holy Alliance versus an Anglo-French liberal entente cordiale, the doctrine of intervention versus the doctrine of non-intervention, the Münchengrätz Convention of 1833 versus Palmerston's Quadruple Alliance of 1834.

Thus evidence for an emerging Anglo-Russian rivalry in this period seems abundant and convincing. It is less obvious, to be sure, that the two powers were rivals over Germany and central Europe, at least once the Polish-Saxon question was settled by compromise and the European balance of power supposedly restored thereby in 1815.

<sup>5</sup> *Edward Ingram*, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia, 1828 – 1834*, New York 1979; *Ingram*, *Commitment to Empire: Prophecies of the Great Game in Asia, 1797 – 1800*, New York 1981.

<sup>6</sup> *Charles K. Webster*, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830 – 1841*, 2 vols., London 1951; *Kenneth Bourne*, *Palmerston: The Early Years, 1784 – 1841*, New York 1982.

<sup>7</sup> *Malcolm E. Yapp*, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran and Afghanistan, 1798 – 1850*, Oxford 1980; *J. A. Norris*, *The First Afghan War, 1838 – 1842*, Cambridge 1967; *G. H. Alder*, *The Key to India? Britain and the Herat Problem, 1830 – 1861*, in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 10 (1974), pp. 186 – 209, 287 – 311.

Yet if one looks for evidence of a rivalry over Germany, particularly on the assumption that balance-of-power competition always somehow underlies the international system and makes it work, one can find enough signs of Anglo-Russian competition there to sustain the general picture. Metternich, for example, from 1813 to about 1820 certainly considered Russia, with Prussia as its dependent junior partner and various other states as its potential or actual clients in Germany, the gravest danger to Austria's position in Germany, and even, for that matter, in Italy.<sup>8</sup> When his efforts in 1813 to mediate a continental peace finally failed, frustrating his hope to use Napoleonic France as a bulwark for Austria and Germany against Russia and Prussia, he turned to Britain for the same purpose and leaned on Britain until concluding in 1820 that Britain was no longer a safe support for Austria's position in central Europe and that Russia could be.<sup>9</sup> Some Russians advised Alexander to exploit the rivalry between Austria and Prussia and the desires of smaller German states for protection against the German great powers in order to make Russia the arbiter of Europe,<sup>10</sup> and some German states and leaders actively sought Alexander's protection as a substitute for Napoleon's.<sup>11</sup> The Romanovs had dynastic connections to various German ruling houses, potential means of influence in German politics. George Canning, Castlereagh's successor, certainly aimed to break up the Holy Alliance and alienate Austria from Russia for British purposes in the 1820's, and Palmerston repeatedly entertained similar ideas in the 1830's and 1840's. During the 1830 revolutions and the ensuing Belgian crises, Britain tried more than once to lure Prussia into the Western camp away from the Holy Alliance, and some Prussians were tempted by the notion.<sup>12</sup> The vision of a Third Germany made up of the smaller German states, detached from Austria and safe from its European quarrels, perhaps led by Prussia and leaning toward Britain and France, was frequently discussed and sometimes actively pursued, especially in the early 1830's.<sup>13</sup> Palmerston hoped that his Quadruple Alliance of 1834, plus the attraction of Britain's stability and prosperity, would pull Prussia and the rest of Germany away from Austria and Russia into a British-led liberal-constitutionalist camp, and began actively to pursue this policy during the 1848 revolutions and after.<sup>14</sup> All this tended to make Russia nervous about the security of

<sup>8</sup> Alan J. Reinerman, *Austria and the Papacy in the Age of Metternich*, Vol. I: 1809 – 1830, Washington (D.C.) 1979; Reinerman, *Metternich, Alexander I, and the Russian Challenge in Italy, 1815 – 1820*, in: *Journal of Modern History* 46 (1974), pp. 262 – 276.

<sup>9</sup> Kraehe, Vol. I; Paul W. Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy at Its Zenith, 1820 – 1823*, Austin (Tex.) 1962; Schroeder, *An Unnatural "Natural Alliance": Castlereagh, Metternich, and Aberdeen in 1813*, in: *International History Review* 10 (1988), pp. 522 – 540; G. de Bertier de Sauvigny, *Metternich*, Paris 1986.

<sup>10</sup> The best example is a dispatch of the Russian minister to Württemberg Count Iuri Golovkin in July 1814; see Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 520.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Burg, *Die deutsche Trias in Idee und Wirklichkeit. Vom alten Reich zum Deutschen Zollverein*, Wiesbaden 1989, pp. 33 – 36.

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence J. Baack, *Christian Bernstorff and Prussia, 1818 – 1832*, New Brunswick (N.J.) 1980.

<sup>13</sup> Burg; Baack; Robert D. Billinger Jr., *Metternich and the German Question: States' Rights and Federal Duties, 1820 – 1834*, Newark (Del.) 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Webster; Bourne; Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Vom Wiener Kongreß zur Pariser Konferenz. England, die deutsche Frage und das Mächtesystem 1815 – 1856*, Göttingen 1991; Günther Gillissen, *Lord Palmerston und die Einigung Deutschlands*, Lübeck 1961.

its western glacis against liberalism, revolution, and war in the 1830's, a fear fed by incipient liberalism in Prussia, the constitutional movement and the beginnings of political radicalism in Germany, Britain's growing political influence on the Continent, and Austria's political paralysis, unreliability, and relative decline.<sup>15</sup>

Thus an apparently strong case can be made for an emergent Anglo-Russian European and world rivalry in this period, in which Germany was at least marginally involved. Yet the case is open to challenge on many grounds. Without going into details, one could start by criticizing the evidence for a serious Anglo-Russian rivalry in 1813 – 1815 as intrinsically weak and, still worse, badly misinterpreted. It is true that the Russians did not like having to accept *de facto* British leadership of the coalition as the price of a British alliance and subsidies, but in the end they did. The disputes within the coalition, which actually caused tension between Austria and Russia far more than between Britain and Russia, never caused it to collapse or even came very close to doing so, in contrast to previous Anglo-Russian coalitions which had disintegrated under similar stresses. Throughout most of this period Britain continued to court Russia as its natural ally, not view it as a rival. As for the Polish-Saxon question at the Congress, both the dimensions of the crisis and the danger of war it presented have also been overblown and its significance misunderstood. The core questions at issue, concerning how much of Poland Russia would absorb, how Russia would organize Poland politically, and therefore how much of a military and political threat Russia would pose to the independence of Germany and Central Europe, were again far more vital to Russia and Austria than to Britain. Among British leaders at this time, only Castlereagh really knew or cared much at all about Germany and Central Europe, and even he had learned about them only late and superficially. On these main Polish and Central European issues, moreover, Russia ended up winning a decisive victory. It gained both the autonomous Kingdom of Poland it insisted on and virtually all the territory and strategic positions it had claimed. Austria accepted its defeat on this score already in mid-November, which meant that there never was a serious danger that the coalition would break up or war arise over this question. The crisis that arose in December concerned the fate of Saxony, and this involved Austria, Prussia, Saxony and the rest of Germany more than either Russia or Britain. It was Prussia, trying to hang on to all of Saxony as Russia had made good its claim to most of Poland, which created the threat of war. Prussia, not Russia, was therefore the target of the secret alliance of 3 January 1815, and Russia actually helped the other powers induce and compel Prussia to back down and accept major losses in Saxony. The British government never viewed the secret treaty as a preparation for possible war, above all not with Russia, but rather as a means of preventing war by managing France and restraining Austria. Strange though it may sound, the whole Polish-Saxon crisis was evidence more of Anglo-Russian cooperation and joint leadership in the peace settlement than of Anglo-Russian rivalry. (On this score, more later.)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> P. S. *Squire*, *The Metternich-Benckendorff Letters, 1835 – 1842*, in: *Slavonic and East European Review* 45 (1967), pp. 368 – 390; *Karl Obermann*, *Unveröffentlichte Materialien zur Diplomatie Metternichs 1821 – 1848*, in: *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 19 (1966), pp. 210 – 263.

<sup>16</sup> See *Schroeder*, *Transformation*, pp. 523 – 538.

The same point applies to the peace settlement of 1814/15 in general and the subsequent period of conferences and congresses. All the issues allegedly symptomatic of Anglo-Russian world rivalry show, first, that what rivalry existed pitted Russia more against Austria than against Britain, at least until 1820, and second, that Britain and Russia were really cooperating more than competing with each other. Together they largely determined the terms of both peace treaties with France, especially the second in 1815, while in both instances Russia's junior partner Prussia sought a different, much more punitive kind of treaty and Austria was hesitant and uncertain. Anglo-Russian cooperation was also decisive in settling matters in Switzerland, Italy, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia. Russia, in contrast to earlier stands, accepted without protest Britain's right to dispose of its wartime colonial conquests as it saw fit and to exclude the questions of maritime rights and its peace settlement with the United States from the European settlement. Each power went along tacitly with the other's moral-religious crusades in 1815 – Alexander's Holy Alliance, Britain's campaign to outlaw the slave trade. When Castlereagh objected to some ideas the Prussians and Russians expressed at Aachen in 1818, they were quickly withdrawn. Castlereagh, to be sure, opposed the principles on which Austria, with Russia's support, intervened in Italy (though not the intervention itself), and Canning would later openly publicize Britain's disapproval. Yet the British never dreamed of interfering with Austria's actions or sphere of influence in Italy, much less deny Russia's right to support Austria there, and while Canning resented France's later intervention in Spain, it was for the damage this action did to his and Britain's prestige, not for the principles it represented. When he found he could not stop France there, he took an easy and safe revenge in Latin America in rejecting any joint European stance and moving toward recognition of Latin American independence. The Holy Alliance powers disapproved British actions in principle, but never tried to stop them.

In other words, the supposed world rivalry consisted of the kinds of contests for leadership, influence, and personal pride and prestige that arise in virtually every common enterprise or relationship, including basically peaceful and cooperative ones – every political party convention, city council meeting, bridge tournament, or dog show. Personal ambition and domestic politics were the main driving forces behind them, especially in Britain and France; on the real, important issues of international politics, consensus and cooperation reigned.

There was also less than meets the eye in Anglo-Russian rivalry over the New World and the Middle East. After 1815 Russia's efforts to expand its trade and influence in Latin America and to revive its North American claims and enterprises soon failed and were abandoned. There is no doubt that seeds of the later serious Anglo-Russian rivalry over the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East can be found in this era; this is always true. But seeds often die without sprouting or growing, and the mass of evidence is that these did so in this era. Both powers were fairly active in this arena in 1815 – 1848 (though not nearly so much as they would be later); but neither encountered much opposition from the other – rather the reverse. While the Russians fought two wars against the Ottoman Empire and two against Persia, imposing victorious peace settlements on them

(Bucharest in 1812, Gulistan in 1813, Turkmanchai in 1828, Adrianople in 1829) the British either stood by, doing nothing to help the Turks or Persians, or actually cooperated with Russia. Later in the 1830's and early 1840's, when some British leaders (Palmerston, Ponsonby, Ellenborough, David Urquhart, and others) were becoming highly suspicious of Russia's motives and actions, it was Russia's turn to appease Britain and to seek an alliance and cooperation with her both in Europe and Asia.<sup>17</sup> The most prominent fact about British and Russian Near Eastern policy in this period is that during two great crises, the Greek crisis and Russo-Turkish war in 1826 – 1829 and the second Mohamed Ali crisis in 1839 – 1841, they were acting together to impose their joint solutions to Near Eastern problems, over strenuous objections from other European powers. As for Central Asia, Russia did not pursue an expansionist policy during this era, instead seeking an understanding with Britain for mutual non-interference. The British government under Palmerston's leadership as foreign secretary did try to create a "balance of power" against Russia in Persia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia (at the very moment Russia was cooperating with Britain against France in the Near East). This policy, however, proved both unnecessary and a spectacular failure. The Peel government which succeeded Melbourne's Whig ministry in 1841 sought security for India by other means, and accepted Russia's idea of mutually respecting each other's sphere of influence.<sup>18</sup>

So far as the ideological split between East and West is concerned, many no doubt took it seriously, and what people believe usually influences their actions in some way. But one may doubt that ideology had much real impact on international politics in this era, especially on Anglo-Russian relations. From a practical standpoint, the ideological differences were sound and fury signifying nothing, making no serious difference in what the two sides or the two main powers actually did on any of the European questions supposedly freighted with ideological meaning – Spain, Portugal, the Spanish and Portuguese empires, Italy, Poland, France, Belgium, or the Near East. Moreover, such ideological rivalries and passions as existed after 1820 tended to pit Britain and France more against Austria than against Russia. The man Palmerston and Canning most detested as leader of the Holy Alliance was Metternich, not Nicholas. The French were serious about opposing Austria's influence in Italy, not Russia's in the Balkans or Constantinople.<sup>19</sup> And Germany, finally, was hardly a bone of contention between the two camps even in ideological terms. Here the splits between liberal constitutionalists, moderate conservatives, and hold-the-line absolutists divided the Germans themselves. The British and to a lesser degree the French tended to favor the reformers, the Russians the conservatives, but neither side played an active role.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Edward Ingram*, *In Defence of British India: Great Britain in the Middle East, 1775 – 1842*, London 1984; *Ingram*, *Britain's Persian Connection, 1798 – 1828*, Oxford 1992; *Harold N. Ingle*, *Nesselrode and the Russian Rapprochement with Britain, 1836 – 1843*, Berkeley (Cal.) 1976.

<sup>18</sup> *Yapp*, pp. 340 – 347, 419 – 439, 482 – 591.

<sup>19</sup> This is a central theme in *G. de Bertier de Sauvigny*, *Metternich et la France après le Congrès de Vienne*, 3 vols., Paris 1968 – 1971.

<sup>20</sup> True, Palmerston lodged a protest in 1832 against the Six Acts passed by the Federal Diet, but this was largely pro forma and part of his propaganda war against the Holy Alliance over Belgium and Spain, and had no impact on events.

All this adds up to a fairly powerful case against the “incipient Anglo-Russian world-rivalry” view. The trouble with such a negative critique, however, is first of all that it is seldom decisive. Proponents can always argue that the counter-evidence only modifies the thesis, shows (in this case) that Anglo-Russian rivalry was merely emerging rather than full-blown in this era and that countervailing forces and special circumstances kept it from developing fully. Thus the contrary evidence gets patched into the very interpretation it is supposed to refute, in ways familiar to every historian and exasperating to anyone proposing a real counter-interpretation. More important, until a different overall interpretation is developed which integrates all the evidence, pro and con, more satisfactorily, scholars are likely to fail to see any real meaning emerging from the critique, so that the old interpretation may continue to reign by default. In other words, the “emergent Anglo-Russian world rivalry” interpretation needs not to be revised, but to be supplanted by a different one. To envision such a contrasting view, one has to compare the 1815 – 1848 pattern of Anglo-Russian relations with that of the previous era, 1763 – 1813. The phrase “emergent world rivalry”, though not an adequate and accurate characterization of Anglo-Russian relations in this period all by itself, clearly fits here much better than it does later. A sketch of the late 18th century pattern of Anglo-Russian relations will show this.

Britain and Russia were quite important to each other throughout this period. Commercially, they were active trading partners, with Britain depending on Russia for vital naval stores and being the principal carrier of Russia’s foreign trade. In foreign policy, they seemed to have no conflicting interests and several common ones (for instance, resistance to French hegemony in Europe, the maintenance of peace in Northern Europe, the preservation of the existing constitution against French intrigues in Sweden). Leaders in each country, especially in Britain, frequently termed the other a natural ally.

Their actual relations during this period, however, varied widely from the extremes of close military alliance and partnership (they jointly led four coalitions against revolutionary and Napoleonic France) to open rivalry and conflict (the Ochakov Crisis of 1791, near war in 1800 – 1801, actual war in 1807 – 1812). In between these extremes, during most of the period between 1763 and 1797, their relations can best be described as a combination of attempts at alliance or partnership on the surface, and a more or less thinly concealed rivalry beneath it (the best examples being their strained partnership over Sweden in the 1760’s and 1770’s, Catherine II’s League of Armed Neutrality against Britain in 1780 – 1781, or the Anglo-Russian alliance during the first coalition in 1792 – 1797).

As this indicates, despite their similar perceptions of mutual interests and common threats, above all from France, the so-called “natural alliance” between Britain and Russia never seemed to work smoothly or well, even in peacetime. Their joint efforts to control Sweden broke down in the 1770’s.<sup>21</sup> The British repeatedly sought to gain an alliance

<sup>21</sup> *Michael Roberts, British Diplomacy and Swedish Politics, 1758 – 1773, Minneapolis (Minn.) 1980.*