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Prologue

Though seemingly intangible, a continent's degree of security can be measured by the anxieties of a lone traveller wandering its roads. It all begins with the question of whether the roads are safe. Are they passable, maintained and marked well? Much of the European Union's progress towards an ever closer union runs along interlinked road works, the growing availability of Italian coffee in roadside cafes and the increasingly standardized fares for gas station toilets. The number of toll gates may be on the rise again, but highway robbers have rarely been sighted in the last few decades. This process of an increasing European integration of safety and security on the roads has had its precursors in previous eras. In fact, the first real instantiation of intercontinental safe and secure travel manifested itself as early as two centuries ago, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. A highly engaging and at times stupefying account of such a journey through Europe was offered by an American first-lady-to-be: Louisa Adams, spouse of the US ambassador to Russia (and later president), John Quincy Adams. It has recently been marvellously recounted by Michael O'Brien. After all, nothing illustrates the state of a continent's security so well as the safe passage of a lone lady on the road.

On 12 February 1815, 40-year-old Louisa Adams (Fig. 0.1), a daughter of the British nobility, set out from her home in St Petersburg to join her husband in Paris. In a solitary carriage, she slowly hobbled over the icy roads of a continent that was in the process of being liberated by Allied troops. With her 7-year-old son, two maid servants and a veteran soldier attendant for company she travelled via Riga towards Tilsit (present-day Sovjetsk, just to the north-east of Kaliningrad). There, she saw 'houses half burnt, a very thin population; women unprotected; and that dreary look of forlorn desertion, which sheds its gloom around all the objects, announcing devastation and despair'.[1]

In those days, Europe was far from an ideal place for touristic travel. Journeying was a cumbersome endeavour, and whatever tourism existed was an elite affair. It is therefore all the more remarkable that, from the early

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[1] M. O'Brien, *Mrs. Adams in Winter. A Journey in the Last Days of Napoleon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 124.

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Figure 0.1   Louisa Adams (Mrs John Quincy Adams), 1852. (Universal History Archive/UIG/Bridgeman Images)

nineteenth century, women were increasingly found on the roads without their husbands or masters, which points not only to (civil and female) emancipation but also improved road security.

At Tilsit, Louisa saw the looks of a continent that had been subject to more than twenty years of warfare and devastation. Yet this devastation was only part of the war's legacy. Armed conflicts cause chaos and upheaval, but campaigns also bring in their wake better infrastructure, improved roads and new means of communication. And if these means of communication and transport are not destroyed afterwards, by the victors, or in a strategy of scorched earth, then they will also serve the post-war generations in peacetime. In this respect, Napoleon's mass troop movements – while using the old network of postal routes that dated back to Roman times – led to new roads, with better paving, lined by semaphores (optical telegraph systems), checked by road patrols and overseen through the inspection of standardized passports.

Although the scars of war were visible and at some points still bleeding, the roads Louisa Adams travelled – via Riga, Königsberg, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main and Strasbourg to Paris – were passable, and often paved. When

approaching Berlin, Louisa Adams noticed something remarkable: 'To my utter astonishment I heard nothing but the praises of the gallantry of Napoleon, and his Officers.' Inhabitants assured her that she would 'travel over the most beautiful road in the world, which had been completed by his order'.[2]

Notwithstanding these logistic improvements, Louisa was still astonished by the huge differences in morals and customs of the areas she passed through. The weights, measures and units of length sometimes changed every few kilometres. To her relief, communication (in French) and payment (in Dutch ducats, or via banknotes that were issued by a network of international bankers) were internationalized enough to keep insurmountable obstacles out of her way.[3]

While still in the German lands, and quite unexpectedly, Louisa and her companions got mired up in troop formations that roamed the roads. These troops were gathering themselves for the final battle against Napoleon – who had escaped from Elba and landed in the south of France in early March 1815. The Allies quickly appropriated the roads to France and turned them to their own interest, using them for the remobilization towards Waterloo, and, from then on, issued joint standardized passports of their own making. This also affected Louisa, since, with her British nationality and diplomatic status as an ambassador's wife, she was able to quickly acquire Prussian and Russian letters of safe conduct. Allied cooperation translated into the quick accepting and issuing of passports. Hence, with her Allied passports in hand, Louisa easily passed through the fifty-one postal controls that she met with prior to approaching the border with France.

In the end, it took Louisa Adams forty days to travel from St Petersburg to Paris, arriving on 23 March. (Today the trip takes three and a half hours by plane or about thirty hours by car.) She did not arrive in a state of guaranteed peace yet, but Europe was almost there. There still were unsettling encounters with foraging Prussian, Russian and marauding French soldiers in the last leg of her journey. Still, the continent Louisa Adams travelled through was preparing for decades of peace, after years of 'total war'.[4] After the years of insecurity and confusion, a new age of industrial and commercial growth was about to set in, holding the promise of an end to the population's

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[2] O'Brien, *Mrs. Adams in Winter*, 134–5.

[3] Ibid., 53–4; M. Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796–1814. Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 213–24.

[4] D. Bell, *The First Total War. Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); A. Forrest, K. Hagemann and J. Rendall, 'Nations in Arms, People at War', in Forrest, Hagemann and Rendall (eds.), *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians. Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790–1820* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–19.

destitution. Demobilization would take another couple of months after the final battles were fought in June 1815. But forests that were once ridden with veterans, deserters and vagabonds became gradually pacified. More road patrols and the introduction of new omnibus systems made the continent increasingly accessible for travellers.

Louisa Adams was one of the first ladies that travelled (nearly) alone to reap the fruits of peace – including good coach inns and passable coffee. Others like her would soon follow suit. Tourist guides came into vogue only a couple of years later, and spas were attracting more and more travellers from all corners of the continent. After the tectonic shocks of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the currents of tumultuous times could finally quieten down, and travellers, farmers and citizens alike could start to profit from the newly created state of security.

Map 0.1   General Map of Europe in 1815. (Erik Goosmann © 2020, Mappa Mundi Cartography)

Map 0.2 The Allied occupation of France, July–December 1815. (Erik Goosmann © 2020, Mappa Mundi Cartography)
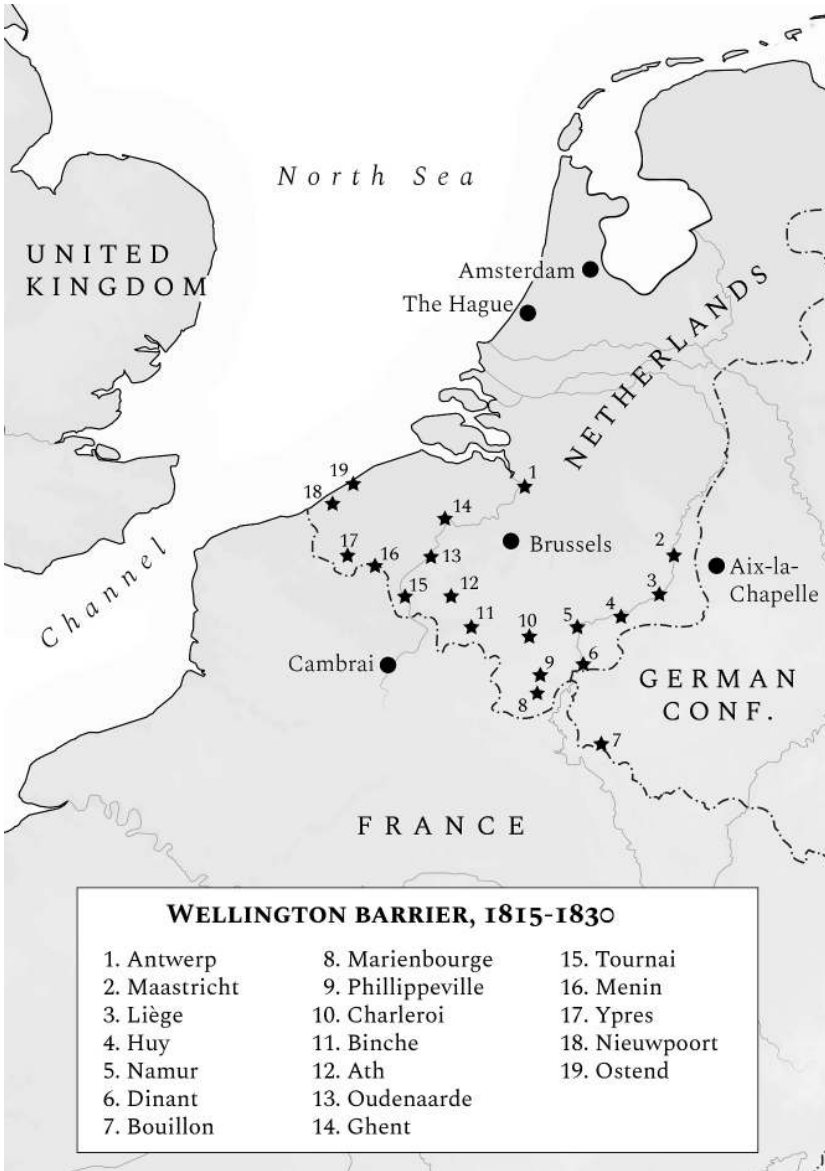
Map 0.3 Map of the Wellington Barrier, 1815–30. (Erik Goosmann © 2020, Mappa Mundi Cartography)

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Introduction

Napoleon's Frustration

What Sort of Peace?

Following Napoleon's refusal to accept the favourable conditions offered him by the Allies after his defeat at the Battle of Leipzig in October 1813, Napoleon is said to have sighed: 'I'm tired of this old Europe! I refuse to rule over a withered empire!'[1] After 1815 the imperial dream of a united Europe under one military ruler came to an end. In its stead came something different: changes that did not revert back to the fragmented world of the *ancien régime*, but that expanded on a fateful sense of solidarity that the European powers *nolens volens* had been subjected to during the Napoleonic Wars. That over twenty-year-long period of insecurity and unstable alliances gave rise to a new community linked by the fear of terror and violence on the one hand, and the dream of peace and repose on the other.

Napoleon's reference to that 'old, withered Europe' expressed his lack of comprehension and frustration with the leading princes and ministers who had allowed him to play them off against each other multiple times, but who had still got the better of him. What he found even more difficult to fathom was why the victors of 1815 did not pick up where he left off and stretch their sway over Europe in their turn. He simply could not comprehend why the head of the largest and most successful contingent of allied troops in history, the Duke of Wellington, submitted himself after the glorious victory at Waterloo to the authority of a government official, the British foreign secretary Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh (1769–1822), instead of ascending to the throne in France, or anywhere else for that matter: 'Can it be possible that the modern Marlborough has linked himself in the train of Castlereagh, and yoked his victories to the turpitude of a political mountebank? It is inconceivable!'[2] What were they, Wellington and Castlereagh, thinking? 'What sort of peace has

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[1] According to Frances Lady Shelley, in R. Edgcumbe (ed.), *The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley, 1787–1817* (London: John Murray, 1912), 57.

[2] Emmanuel, comte de Las Cases(ed.), *Memorial de Sainte Hélène. Journal of the Private Life and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon at Saint Helena*, vol. 4 (London: Colburn, 1823), 221.

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England concluded? Lord Castlereagh had the whole Continent at his disposal, and yet what advantage, what indemnity, has he secured to his own country? He has signed just such a peace as he would have signed had he been conquered.'[3]

Indeed, what sort of peace was this, a peace that had to be enforced with the blood of so many casualties and battles? It was certainly not the quiet of the churchyard, with a new hegemonic power stepping up to claim the now empty imperial throne. Every European power was acutely wary of any other power aspiring to hegemony again. What united them was their abhorrence of the 'iron sceptre' of (French) domination on the one hand and revolutionary terror on the other. That infernal chaos – of revolutionary and Napoleonic warfare – had to be prevented from recurring ever again. The question was how.

This book unpacks a rather forgotten story out of the mothballs of European history: the story of the first collective European fight against terror in peacetime. This fight can be considered a unique and innovative security experiment, that for a variety of reasons only lasted a couple of years and only partially succeeded. This first experiment in collective and institutionalized security management foreshadowed the future European system of mutual security as we know it today. Waging peace can be as complex as waging war, if only because post-war peace objectives may present far larger challenges for a coalition to pursue than fighting a joint enemy. This exceptional period of transition – from concluding a war to consolidating a new order – presents us with a setting and a stage on which very remarkable, well-known and lesser-known figures of military, political, diplomatic or administrative distinction engaged each other in something unheard of.

An (Anti-)Revolutionary Security Experiment

In 1815, the four great powers of Europe – the United Kingdom, Prussia, Austria and Russia (Fig. 1.1) – embarked on a unique experiment: the implementation of a collective security system, via the creation of an Allied Council, and by the leverage of an Allied Army of Occupation.[4] The French

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[3] Emmanuel, comte de Las Cases (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life, Exile, and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon*, vol. 3 (London: Colburn, 1836), 251. See also: Las Cases, *Memorial de Sainte Hélène*, vol. 3, 82. John Bew cites this slightly differently: J. Bew, *Castlereagh. A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 408.

[4] From July to the end of November 1815, the Council consisted of the European great powers' princes and principal foreign ministers themselves. From December 1815 their diplomats took over. Yet differences in rank and stature did exist and continued to do so. Some diplomats were titled 'ambassador', while others were referred to as 'minister'. The title of minister was often confusing, since it had different meanings in different countries; it could be a junior position, a honorary function, or a full-fledged cabinet position, such as a Secretary of State.

Figure 1.1   The Allied entry into Paris, 31 March 1814. By Thomas Sutherland, 1815. (Heritage Images)

Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars had achieved something unprecedented. Not only had they forged the European states together into a wartime alliance against the Bonapartist *Grande Armée*. But even after the conclusion of the armistice and the first peace treaty, the *Grande Peur* that survived after all these years of warfare pushed the powers closer together than ever before.[5] The philosopher Immanuel Kant had speculated on the possibilities of world peace; pundits and publicists had designed blueprints for a post-war federation of European states. But these plans had never reached the baize-covered tables of Europe's diplomats and ministers. The Vienna Congress, convening from September 1814 until June 1815, consolidated the existing wartime alliance and deliberated on the new, post-war peace order. However, contrary to received wisdom, rather than the Vienna Final Act, it was two other treaties that were to be concluded a couple of months later that contained and cemented the real revolutionary requisites for this new post-war security system: the Treaty of the Quadruple Alliance and the Second Treaty of Paris,

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[5] By 'grande peur' Lefebvre meant the fear and chaos in the years of the French Revolution. These primal anxieties constantly loomed in the years thereafter, including after 1815. See G. Lefebvre, *La Grande Peur de 1789. Suivi de Les foules révolutionnaires* (Paris: Armand Collin, 1932).