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!’ 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! What were they, Wellington and Castlereagh, thinking? ‘What sort of peace has

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


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.
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. 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.

both signed on 20 November 1815. When the lights of the Vienna spectacle went out and the princes and their diplomats left, the peace in Europe had not been secured at all. Napoleon had to be fought and beaten once again, after his staggering return in March 1815. The post-Napoleonic security of Europe only found its real shape and framework through the consistent efforts of the ministers of the four great powers, who – after Waterloo – came together in Paris to monitor and enforce the execution of the treaties and encompassing agreements. Only thus, via the persistence of this Allied Council in waging their security efforts in peacetime, could the double-headed serpent of revolution and despotic hegemony be tamed and domesticated.

The innovative part of this anti-revolutionary security system was fourfold. First of all, the ministers of the four great powers introduced a new reading of that classic principle, the ‘balance of power’. Well known in European international relations, it was reinterpreted in the early nineteenth century and renovated to match the challenges of the new international system – not by reverting back to the unstable alliance of the ancien régime of the 1740–89 period, when the so-called balance was highly volatile, unpredictable and transient and aggressive, both towards weaker states and each other, but in a novel, more structured and institutionalized way.

Secondly, the victors of 1815 established an Allied Council, the so-called Paris Conference, or Ministerial and later Ambassadorial Conference, to enable the day-to-day deliberation on and management of the post-war peace and security arrangements. Castlereagh (and Wellington) fondly referred to this council as the ‘Allied Machine’.6 Herein lay the most far-reaching and revolutionary aspect of the peace arrangements – a revolutionary aspect that remained rather unnoticed at the time, and even thereafter, but in practice transformed the European scene of interstate relations into a new system of collective security. Rather than leaving the stage, the generals, princes and their ministers did not go home, but remained in place to translate their fight against terror into new and continuous practices of security management. The great advantage of such an administrative body was its novel and relatively informal format. The participants were not obliged to engage in complicated formalities and protocol that normally characterized official congresses, stately and royal get-togethers, nor did they need to invest in receptions, balls and other pomp and circumstance. The protocols of the Paris Conference, moreover, were understood as binding international law. Once they were accepted and agreed upon, the Allied courts would have to sign up to these commitments and translate the Paris stipulations into national law. Mostly, the foreign minister of the country that hosted such a ministerial or

ambassadorial conference would chair the meetings. During the nineteenth century, many more conferences would follow suit. Yet this one, the Parisian conference, as the first of its kind, was not presided over by the French, but the British ministers. First Castlereagh, later Wellington and Charles Stuart.

The third novel dimension of this post-war security system was the invention and implementation of a series of standardized and centrally conceived security practices in peacetime. The participating ministers and diplomats in the Paris Conference – in the main council as well in the subordinated committees – discussed, developed and disseminated new, professional and institutionalized governmental practices geared towards engendering stability and security. Tedious and bureaucratic as that may sound, the invention and proscription of passport regulations, a joint Allied security service and military police and border controls contributed to an emergent European security culture that made itself felt throughout the continent (as Louisa Adams, the travelling wife of diplomat John Quincy Adams, experienced not to her detriment). These collective exertions in the security field also included substantial military efforts. Together, the Allied powers instigated an immense project for the construction of fortresses along the borders of France. Conceived as the material foundation for the newly re-established balance of power, or perhaps better put, for the balance of deterrence, this project was initiated by the Allied Council, executed under supervision of the British generals, most notably Wellington (Fig. 1.2), with assistance from Dutch and German experts, and financed predominantly through the French reparation funds.

Rather than working towards a restoration, these immediate post-war years saw a gigantesque, unheard of (and soon to be dissolved) attempt to join forces in the fight against terror. Obviously, such a system could only be enforced. Hence, the Allied Council’s crucial leverage was the Allied Army of Occupation – the fourth novelty of the post-war system. Between 1740 and 1815, warfare had been directed towards expansion, and the balance of power had hinged on land-grabbing battles amongst the five great powers – wars in these decades were often waged to partition specific countries or solve succession disputes (Austria, Prussia or Poland). In 1815, the Allied powers opted for another solution. They decided to leave the troops in France after the Battle of Waterloo, in June 1815, and not repatriate them for the time being. Prussian thirst for revenge aside, the other victors had no intention of cutting up the country or dividing the invaded provinces. An overwhelming total of 1.2 million troops remained deployed in France, occupying at first two thirds of the French territories, to be scaled back, but still leaving a substantial

number behind from early 1816 until late 1818. The Allied courts appointed
the Duke of Wellington as supreme commander of this army of occupation,
which was from the beginning conceived as a temporary occupation, in order
to guarantee France’s compliance with the stipulations of the peace treaties
that needed to be concluded. With his authority and his ultimate allied force,
the Paris Conference’s leverage was assured.

After twenty-six years of unprecedented revolutionary upheavals and end-
less fighting, with the unspeakable consequences of invasion, occupation,
exploitation and suppression of their countries in mind, the victorious powers
craved stability. The revolutionary changes that Napoleon had pushed through
in the wake of his armies had left them pining for peace and quiet. At the same
time, the position of France in Europe made it necessary to invite the country
back into the circle of great powers in the long run – a stable balance of power
without France was hardly imaginable strategically. Given this conundrum,
a new settlement, and a dynamic one, involving a temporizing of France’s
position, needed to be designed. And indeed, where Napoleon had tried and
overplayed his hand, the anti-Napoleonic coalition exited the long, winding
wars not only as victors but also as custodians and managers of a new system of
unified rule. With the threat of war and revolutionary terror still looming large,
the necessity to combat these threats together kept the coalition united after 1815. At least in these very first post-war years (far more than ever accounted for) the ‘horseback diplomacy’ (Fig. 1.3), the battle-hardened solidarity and the shocking experiences of the emperor’s return had ripened hearts and minds for a new type of peace. The vagaries of fate ushered in a multilaterally discussed, arranged and secured peace that we may interpret as the birth of the first modern system of collective security in Europe: a system that in the numerous nationalist and patriotic historiographic accounts that were produced throughout the nineteenth century has found little acknowledgement. Long before commercial interest and economic considerations about scale and

Figure 1.3 Meeting between Blücher and Wellington after the Battle of Waterloo, 1815. By Reinier Vinkeles, 1815/16. This image illustrates the so-called ‘horseback diplomacy’. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

productivity dictated and inspired the project of European integration, the common denominator behind this first impulse for a unification of Europe in norms and institutions was the collective fight against terror.

A New History of Terror and Security

This first experiment in European collective security management, in the form of the Paris Conference, has been almost completely lost in oblivion. The reasons for this oblivion are not illogical. The Allied Council convened behind the scenes and did not last long: it dissolved in 1818. The council had completed its main task: to mitigate the threat of war and terror and to design and consolidate a system of deterrence. France was less of a threat in 1818, and the surrounding countries had regained much of their stability. The council could have lasted longer but was downscaled to the level of an ambassadorial (and less effective) conference for reasons of diverging national interests and domestic power changes. Purely coincidental developments, such as the early demise of some of its main agents, precipitated this dissolution of Allied unity.

Moreover, those historians who worked themselves up into a professionalized guild and academic discipline in the nineteenth century predominantly concerned themselves with the historiography of their own nations and national peculiarities. In the wake of the rising power of national movements, they became the heralds of the newly (re)discovered or created national identity. As chroniclers of a supposed European unity and collaboration, they would have stood little chance of making a name for themselves at home. The history of terror and security as a collective, European history therefore remains to be written. This book makes a first start in presenting, assembling and interpreting the protocols of this first collective European undertaking – the Allied Council – as they have been painstakingly collected and contextualized from various archives in European capitals.

The story of this Allied Council, this Paris Conference, is not merely presented as an organizational or institutional history, but is embedded and historicized within the context of considerations, emotions and sentiments as experienced and voiced by the main protagonists and contemporaries that made up this council – or became the object of its manifold activities. Terror and security are highly contested concepts and can only be correctly understood within the web of meanings, emotions and associations that were

attributed to them at the time. From a distance of over two centuries, the salience of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars stands out as deeply incisive in the development of national and European identities. Those years of turmoil and distress ushered in a new European notion of common destiny – albeit a notion that was predominantly fostered by the European elites and that echoed their concerns and sentiments. These elites, the princes and their entourage, had come to realize that they depended on each other in the joint fight against the double-headed terror of revolution and despotism. Their populaces were equally aware of having entered into a new era of transition.

Old monarchs returned; new ones equally stepped out of the shadows of their previous marginal dynasties and pedigrees. Historical privileges of the nobility and clergy were not completely, or only haphazardly restored; confiscated properties and territories were not returned. Neither were the manifold achievements of the Napoleonic rulers in centralized and professionalized governance turned back. A volatile and confusing combination of a desire for normalcy and an end to war and deprivation on the one hand, and the still floating hope for (gradual) change and reform on the other, kept the European continent on alert in 1815. Subsistence crises further deepened the feelings of distress and social unrest in countries that were already suffering from the complicated transition from wartime to peace economies. The discussions, decisions and statements regarding terror and security within the Allied Council should therefore also be read as an expression of the collective sentiments of that time – conflicting and incompatible as they oftentimes seemed. Security is never only a category of governance, management or physical protection, but always also an expression of desire and sentiment. To approach these sentiments, and the way they were channelled by the Allied Council, this book’s narrative is enriched with the accounts of individual travellers, women, diplomats and ordinary citizens that commented upon the coming of this new European system of peace and security.

Finally, a junction is established between security in Europe and beyond the continent. The security threats envisaged and confronted by the Allied Council did not only manifest themselves in and around France, or at other vulnerable places in Europe where crises had not subsided after 1815. They also raised their radical heads in the colonies and on the open waters. Timewise, the great powers’ efforts to implement a collective security system in Europe coincided with the process of colonizing and stepping up imperial efforts outside Europe. What is more, these internal European and external imperial security efforts

underwent a process of cross-pollination: what happened in France was translated into lessons learned elsewhere in Europe, or in the colonies. And vice versa: imperialist and hierarchical notions on security, the division into categories, the political sorting of groups and countries, gleaned while governing intercontinental empires, was implemented at home as well. The security managers of 1815 were not only highly innovative, but elitist and imperialist in the way they developed new methods and techniques of inclusion and exclusion, blacklisting and espionage. They shared their best practices and deployed their best professional agents and experts in trimming the new collective system of security in and beyond Europe. A brief elaboration on these four aspects – the historiographical deficiency in addressing the Allied Council, the need for historicizing security, the importance of applying a cultural and emotional approach, and the imperialist nature of this post-war order – is called for, and will be offered below.

A Forgotten History Reconstructed from Forgotten Archives

The bicentennial commemorations of the Congress of Vienna have produced a wealth of new publications on that Congress. From these manifold studies, it transpires that the Congress did not only concern itself with the protection of the status quo, nor was it merely the platform on which a restoration of the ancien régime order was contemplated. The Congress demonstrated a spirit of renewal and reform: new norms and institutions in international relations, international and constitutional law were created – to which an increasing number of states subscribed voluntarily. These novel studies seem to uphold the findings in the pioneering work of Paul Schroeder from 1994. Where some still interpret the international relationships in the years around 1815 from the perspective of power realism and bellicism, many experts have

13 Including B. Vick, The Congress of Vienna. Power and Politics after Napoleon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); W. Gruner, Der Wiener Kongress 1814/15 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014); R. Stauber, Der Wiener Kongress (Vienna: Böhlau, 2014); M. Jarrett, The Congress of Vienna and its Legacy. War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013). Next to these more academic monographs some other tomes have been published that are more focused on the storytelling aspect and that stand out more by their richness and readability than their source analysis, the main example here being A. Zamoyski, Rites of Peace. The Fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna (London: Harper Collins, 2007).