

## “Compare the successes and failures of Castlereagh and Canning’s Foreign Policies”

The Tory Foreign affairs between 1814 and 1830 was dominated by Lord Castlereagh, foreign secretary between 1814 and 1822 and his successor George Canning, who occupied the same post between 1822 and 1827. During this period, both Castlereagh and Canning were faced with various international problems and I am going to explore their successes and failures with issues they confronted. Initially, I shall examine the achievements and failures of Lord Castlereagh and then moving onto Canning’s era, which I shall compare with the previous period of 1814 to 1822.

Lord Castlereagh knew that for him to be a successful Foreign Secretary, he needed to settle some outstanding issues. Thus, his policies included an appropriate settlement for France, balancing of territorial interests of major powers and the formation of a system of regular consultation to deal with disputes between them.

The first thing that Castlereagh dealt with was France. He knew that France was potentially the greatest of all European powers with enough manpower to undertake renewed conquests. Therefore, he restored the Bourbon monarchy in France and the country had to pay an indemnity as well as support an army occupation in. The French frontiers were pulled back to those of 1790 and states on either side of France were strengthened. He hoped that such changes would prevent France from expanding in future into Europe. However, in his anxiety to contain France Castlereagh had made some major mistakes. He had delivered the prosperous Rhineland to Prussia, which assisted in development of Prussian strength in Europe. Nevertheless, this was regarded as one of Castlereagh’s successes as France made no territorial acquisitions in the nineteenth century and the expansion of the frontier was halted.

Next, Castlereagh was concerned with Territorial settlement in Europe. The gains eventually were moderate and balanced with Britain keeping the essential naval bases, such as Salon (Sri Lanka), Gibraltar and the Cape Colony and his collaboration with Metternich helped in resisting Prussia’s claim for the whole of Saxony. I feel this was one of Castlereagh’s successes as this policy ensured that there was no animosity between the major powers and “Balance of Power” was maintained.

Thirdly, Castlereagh set up an international congress, where heads of major powers would meet to settle controversial issues. He wanted to establish of the congress system to maintain peace. Castlereagh proposed the Quadruple Alliance, whose members would be Prussia, Russia, Austria and Britain. Later, after the first meeting, the alliance was renamed “The Quintuple Alliance” due to the inclusion of France. The second congress of Troppau, Russia and Prussia urged the British, French and the Austrians to intervene in Spanish internal affairs to suppress the uprising there. Castlereagh wanted minimum interference in the internal affairs of any country and he was against the use of international bodies to eradicate the revolution on a wide scale. The Troppau Protocol was signed by the Russia, Prussia and Austria, which stated that any major power could intervene in another country. Castlereagh’s refusal to support this Protocol

distanced him from Metternich and seemed to presage the collapse of diplomacy. The last two congresses, the Congress of Laibach and Verona were not attended by any British representatives, after which it was never held again. I think Castlereagh's suicide just before the Congress of Verona ended any chance of the congress's revival. Could he have brought back the congress from the brink of interventionism is a more open question than the historians are prepared to acknowledge. Although branded as a failure, the Congress system cannot be described as one because I feel that it set the pace for future organisations, like the European Union, United Nations or even the League of Nations, which have met with successes.

However, overall Lord Castlereagh should be given credit for his intelligent and restrained policies. He created a new international system in 1815 and maintained it without distorting British interests. He also maintained co-operation and his personal tragedy had greater impact on foreign policy than it did on home affairs. I am now going to compare his policies with his successor George Canning's.

George Canning was a refreshing change to the British parliament as he was seen as a progressive and positive individual. He thought in terms of responding deal with specific emergencies. He did not have any personal contact with the head of countries, unlike Castlereagh, who was especially close to Metternich. He did not believe in the Congress System at all as he was famously quoted to saying "Every country for itself and God for us all".

He did not attend the Congress of Verona, where it was decided that the Spanish revolt would be suppressed with a French army. Canning watched helplessly as the French troops entered Spain and crushed the liberals/constitutionalists. His early mistake through refusing to go along with military alliance to restore the Spanish monarchy annoyed him greatly. To make amends, he signed a Treaty with the French, where it was stated that they would not intervene in any other Spanish colonies, for example, countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Cuba and etc. He diplomatically recognised independence of these states and was hailed as a major influence in the liberation process. Britain's interest in this was that they were able to securely hang on to their trading interests with Spanish. He also sent five thousand marines to defend Lisbon against possible French attack/occupation or newly-restored Spanish autocracy. This was noted as one of Canning's major successes as he now had warned off all the major powers. This can be seen as a similarity between the two foreign secretaries as they were eager to defend Portuguese independence especially against Spanish intervention.

The next thing that Canning was concerned with was relations with America. President Monroe of United States decided to produce "Monroe Doctrine", which were a set of guidelines, stating that the USA would regard any attempt by Europeans to interfere with their internal affairs as a threat. This was a success as Canning managed to keep other European powers out of interfering with newly independent Spanish states, thus keep their trading interests intact.

Finally, Canning had to deal with the Greek revolt under Turkish rule in Eastern Europe. The Greeks wanted independence from the Islamic Ottoman Empire and

as Greeks were fellow Orthodox Christians, Russians sided with them. Canning was concerned with Russian expansion in the East, which would threaten British India. This is why Canning decides to remain neutral and the Greek independence occurs. However, in 1825, the Greeks asked the British and Russians to mediate with either Greece or Turkey. Canning pledged with France and Russia that if Turkey did not ceasefire, they would interfere. Although, Canning died two months before battle, the Turks were destroyed in the Battle of Navarino in 1827. This is a notable success of Canning as he used his influence to allow Greek independence but not at the expense of Russian expansion.

Castlereagh and Canning both had their fair share of successes and failures. Nevertheless, I feel that Castlereagh's trial to establish of a system to maintain peace and equilibrium is probably a greater achievement than any other. Understandably, Canning was less committed to an international system, in which he had no hand in creating. I believe that Castlereagh's achievements were for the future peace of mankind whereas Canning's achievements were essentially contemporary only.