

“The Conduct of Conduct”: Great-Power Management in the Concert of Europe

ABSTRACT: Some studies of the Concert of Europe have noted its sustained efforts to manage European international affairs, but of these only a few have devoted much attention to the question of what, specifically, management might have constituted in that context. This paper argues that an examination of great-power management at the level of its concrete practices is necessary in order to fully grasp the importance, novelty and distinctive nature of international governance as it first emerged in this period. Important among these was a range of great-power practices oriented to managing the conduct of one another. This paper outlines and analyses one subset of these practices, practices of “grouping” and restraint via intimacy. It does so in the hope of showing that the study of practices can draw our attention to new political phenomena, and of suggesting new ways to understand international governance.

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Occasionally studies of the Concert of Europe (1815-48) have invoked the concept of international management and have noted the period's sustained efforts to manage European international affairs.¹ Of these, few if any have remarked on the profound historical novelty of such activity, activity which represented, in effect, the emergence of modern international governance. Moreover, despite using terms like "security management", "conflict management" and "system management" to describe that activity, few of these studies have devoted any kind of sustained attention to the question of what, concretely and specifically, management constituted in this context. This paper, which is part of a larger project, argues that an examination of great-power management at the level of its concrete practices is necessary in order to fully grasp the importance, novelty and distinctive nature of international governance as it first emerged in this period.

To this end, it will discuss management not in the sense familiar to IR theory — management of Europe or "the international system", or, at a more local level, for instance, Austrian and Prussian management of the Bund and of German affairs. That is, it will not primarily treat international management in the generic sense of great-power supervision and administration of European international relations, though this itself is a topic which requires far more in-depth and broad-ranging engagement than it has typically received. It will instead look at one specific aspect of this management, at management in a narrower (but closely related) sense — at the diverse range of great-power practices oriented to managing *the conduct of one another*, or techniques of mutual control. Even here its focus will be restricted to one particular set of practices which relied on intimate closeness, alone or in a group, to exert guidance and control over dangerous individuals; it will set aside a variety of other practices oriented to the international management of conduct. This paper seeks to sketch some of the main contours and general features of this narrower set of practices. It will also try to discuss some of the common problematisations of political reality that these practices responded to and shaped, in order to set them in their broader context and show some of their common orientations. This paper thus will focus on European international relations in the first half of the 19th century in order to examine the emerging, and at times quite self-conscious, practices and problems of what Michel Foucault has termed "the conduct of conduct".²

Three methodological issues should be flagged at the outset. First, a brief comment on the kind of generalisation that is being implied with the use of terms like "practices" and "problematisations". These terms are not just substitutes for more familiar concepts like "rules", "norms", or "principles", nor are they synonymous with terms like "tendencies" or "dispositions". There is, for instance, no implication of (quasi-)universal generality in designating a phenomenon as a practice.³ Practices are merely generic kinds of action of some unspecified degree of regularity: they are things people often do, where the frequency of "often" is an entirely open empirical question. Nor do practices imply some kind of compulsion, constraint or quasi-necessity: nothing forced or constrained or directed people to act or conceptualise matters in these ways in particular situations. Rather, the patterns identified here were natural and pervasive ways

for statesmen and diplomats to act in and interact with their socio-political environment. They were not universal, but they did crop up with some frequency, and they were not peripheral or marginal. Second, although my use of terms like “Britain” or “Castlereagh” might suggest otherwise, there is no commitment in this account to a specific class of agent held to engage in these practices. One of the many advantages of studying practices is precisely to avoid such commitments; these were simply things that were routinely done in the international realm in this period, with no presumption as to who did them or at what “level of analysis”. Finally, to study practices is not to study “outcomes”. This paper in no way claims that Concert-era management practices were usually or even mostly successful; they failed all the time. I do claim, however, that these practices were, as a matter of empirical fact, routinely engaged in, whether or not their practitioners achieved their conscious aims or they ultimately translated into “outcomes”. Even when these practices consistently failed, however, their importance was not diminished; they were, after all, the very stuff of which international relations in the Concert era was made.

1 Intimacy

The new practices of management in the Concert era were dominated by a very widespread and quite novel orientation to its objects, to that which was to be managed. Management called for intimacy with its object; in order to manage people and their conduct one had to be close to them. There was a corresponding anxiety in this period about distance, alienation, separation, public opposition. Although they do not line up neatly (as we would expect of practices embedded in rather different practical complexes), this new problematisation and practical orientation, and the practices which flowed into and from them, stand in rather stark contrast to many of the common practices and orientations of 18th-century international politics: practices of formal opposition, entrenched enmities, the fierce contestation of claims, systematic efforts to thwart the initiatives and schemes of rivals, the matching of fire with fire, and so on. In the Concert era emerged the idea and practice of managing others, including real and potential dangers and adversaries. Here the period’s ubiquitous thematisation of danger, as an abstract phenomenon and as a central axis of socio-political life, was quite central to the way that the other, the object of action, was conceived and targeted.⁴ The novel notion was that danger was to be managed, and that management required proximity and intimacy, not repulsion, distance or opposition.

1.1 *Anxieties about Distance*

A sign of the new orientation to intimacy was a problematisation of the dangers of alienating and distancing those whom one sought to manage. The requirement for intimacy introduced a note of inherent tension within management practices. Management required wisdom, self-control and caution if the very effort to manage and restrain another were not to alienate that other and thus subvert the management itself. One key problem was how to restrain, via intimacy, one’s partners, wards and allies without alienating them. “Just as [Prussian foreign minister] Bernstorff had attempted to contain the revolutionary impulses of France, he also had to try to curb [Russian Tsar] Nicholas’s antirevolutionary zeal without alienating St Petersburg. This was a difficult

path to follow....”⁵ Distance was dangerous; it made management difficult, if not impossible. In the summer of 1822, British foreign secretary Castlereagh worried that a proposed conference on Spain and the Spanish revolution would publicly expose Anglo-Russian differences over the Eastern Question. He did not want to alienate Tsar Alexander and Russia; for to acknowledge the truth of the distance between Britain and Russia on the Near East would undermine his and Metternich’s ability to constrain and manage Russia, via intimacy, through the medium of the European alliance.⁶ In August 1828 Wellington claimed he had been helpless, given British treaty obligations, to prevent the Turks’ increasing alienation from the European powers in the course of the Greek-Turkish conflict:

Prince Metternich ... blames us for keeping the Turks at a distance. How can we avoid doing so? We are parties to the Treaty of the 6th July; are bound hand and foot by its stipulations; and we cannot approach the Turks excepting in concert with the other parties to the Treaty, or till we can tell the Turks what they can count upon, after settling with the Greeks according to the Treaty.⁷

Years earlier, Castlereagh had already pinpointed the problem, as he conceded that Britain’s policy of neutrality vis-à-vis the Greco-Turkish conflict might in effect turn out not to be so neutral after all:

it may be difficult for this country, if a de facto [Greek] government shall actually be established in the Morea and the Western Provinces of Turkey, to refuse to it the ordinary privileges of a belligerent; but it must be done with caution and without ostentation, lest it should render the Turks wholly inaccessible to our remonstrances.⁸

Here then was the danger of pushing another too far (away), of separating the other from oneself, of rendering the other and his conduct “inaccessible” to one’s influence, control and moral persuasion. Effective management (steering, guiding) of others and their actions required intimacy, and intimacy required not only attention to others’ sensibilities and to the “moral effects” of one’s own actions, but also wisdom, patience and constant caution, self-awareness and self-vigilance.

1.2 *Alliances and Management*

At the level of concrete practices, the importance of intimacy to management was also clear from the sort of regular sites in which management practices were carried out, and from the sorts of instruments they routinely latched onto and deployed. A number of the following sites and instruments were themselves historically novel: alliances; “ententes”, “understandings” and other lower-level partnerships; multilateral diplomacy, decision-making, action and governance; joint activity; co-administration; delegation; practices of attachment; and so forth. In other words, international governance and the management of others, including fellow great powers, took place primarily in and through mechanisms and activities involving close contact between parties; and even within these particular mechanisms and activities, greater or lesser intimacy with the object of one’s management efforts was often seen as significant to the prospects for successful management. The novelty of these practices, and their contrast to those of the ancien regime, is easily seen in terms of the changing functions of formal alliances and informal alignments between the powers. Although the prevalence, scope and significance of the new management practices were in no way limited to these kinds of

arrangements, given the constant attention that IR theory has traditionally devoted to alliances (and, more rarely, to informal alignments), their new orientation is a particularly palpable manifestation of these practices and of the importance of intimacy to them.⁹

Eighteenth-century alliances were very often structured around and contingent upon patterns of deep-rooted enmity and opposition, and their existence and dynamics were powerfully affected by what might be referred to as the logics of compatibility and incompatibility.¹⁰ As ancien-regime diplomacy tended to be dominated by fierce contestation centred on (a) formal/legal claims (pretensions and privileges) and (b) salient diplomatic schemes and initiatives, the basic role of enmity in international relations ensured that alignments often emerged in response to, or were significantly structured by, ongoing efforts to thwart the claims and prospective schemes of rivals.¹¹ Among other things, this meant that alliances were fundamentally bound up with that period's entrenched and dominant practices of opposition. Alliances were also, by any standard, highly targeted and specific — targeted, that is, against a specific party (or, quite rarely, a group thereof) and/or focussed on a specific course of action. The commitments of support which typically bound alliances together hinged on the exchange of specific, concrete, formal *quid pro quos*.¹² These specific reciprocal obligations meant that multi-party 18th-century alliances were almost always a heterogeneous congeries of bilateral arrangements and relationships, each with different bases, conditions, targets and timelines. A closely related feature of 18th-century alliances was their functionalisation: allies and alliances were selected, assessed, valued, treated and manipulated in terms of one or more quite specific functions they were assigned and were supposed to fulfil.¹³ Because of this specificity of functionalisation, allies and alliances were frequently substitutable for one another, so long as the designated replacement was willing and able to execute the desired function.¹⁴

By contrast, the new practices of managing and restraining allies through the very alliances which linked them, and through the intimacy that such connections afforded, were quite often the primary purpose of alliances during the period 1815-48.¹⁵ A broad range of examples can be cited: the “European Alliance” (the Quadruple Alliance of November 1815, expanded after the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle to include France); the so-called Holy Alliance (not the original treaty but the later close partnership between the conservative Eastern powers); the German Bund; Metternich's long-hoped-for (but never realised) *Lega Italica*; the 1826 Anglo-Russian St Petersburg Protocol dealing with the Greek question; the subsequent Triple Alliance between Britain, France and Russia of 1827; the Russo-Turkish alliance of 1833, created via the infamous treaty of Unkiar Skelessi; the Münchengrätz Convention of 1833 between Austria and Russia (almost immediately joined by Prussia; later Metternich tried to expand it into a joint guarantee of the Ottoman Empire's integrity by all five powers); the Anglo-French convention of 22 October 1832 to coerce the Dutch to surrender Antwerp; the Quadruple Alliance of 1834 between Britain, France, Spain and Portugal; the 4-power convention of 15 July 1840, in the midst of the second Mehemet Ali crisis; the second Entente Cordiale between Britain and France; and the Austro-French rapprochement of 1846-8.¹⁶ All of these arrangements — and indeed most of the significant relationships between the European powers throughout this period — were marked by significant and multiple efforts by one or more of their members to use those arrangements, and the kind of intimate contact with allies that they afforded, to manage, steer, control, guide and

restrain those allies and their conduct. It is worth noting moreover that the *kind* of closeness that an alliance entailed was of a very different nature in the Concert era, one that was also historically novel. With multilateral activity, congress and conference diplomacy, bilateral and multilateral joint action and the like, alliance activity — what an alliance did and, more fundamentally, what an alliance was about — had transformed quite dramatically by this period. Alliances now carried out activities, activities like interventions, supervision, tutelage, the engineering of political entities and the construction of multilateral conventional law, activities moreover that were almost always managerial in orientation and nature, in the broader administrative sense of that term.

In the context of this new problematisation and practice of management, in both the broader and narrower senses, virtually none of the distinctive features of the 18th-century alliance could survive intact. The very target of the alliance shifted from without to within; alliances were no longer oriented to the practices and problematic of opposition, no longer structured by the dynamics and rippling effects of efforts to thwart the claims and schemes of enemies, but rather to the corralling, keeping close, keeping watch over and controlling of dangers. The highly targeted and specific character of alliances and alliance terms could not last when those same entities were now primarily tasked with generalised, ongoing and substantively open-ended managerial duties, and when, in the narrower sense, it was important to stick close to a danger, come what may, in order to control it. For the same reasons, the decisive role of the exchange of specific, formal and concrete *quid pro quos* — as the basis for both their creation and persistence and as a touchstone shaping their substantive nature and guiding their activity — diminished massively. Likewise, the self-appointed task of European management and the practice of directed multilateral activity in its service corroded the useful heterogeneity of the 18th-century alliance; so too did the fact, as we shall see, that the multilateral alliance now afforded opportunities for collectively “grouping” dangers in the narrower sense of management.

Management also undermined and altered the 18th-century functionalisation of allies. In the broad sense, the orientation to management vastly multiplied the generic sorts of functions alliances could have, and at the same time shifted the primary locus of functionality from the ally to the alliance itself and generalised that functionality: alliances, that is, came to acquire a generalised, flexible and open-ended utility *vis-à-vis* a wide and variable range of specific functions — the new task of management itself being conceived and practised as temporally and substantively open-ended. In its narrower sense, the orientation to managing allies flipped the logic of functionalisation on its head, for here the point and value of the alliance was precisely to keep the ally close in order to restrain and guide its conduct, and thus instead of the ally being a means to securing specific external goals the alliance itself became an instrument for gaining and preserving control over the ally. The same went for the substitutability of allies in the ancien régime: where the management of allies was concerned, of course, the whole point was to have X as an ally in order to control it, and in this context the practice and concept of substitution was virtually unintelligible.¹⁷

1.3 *Intimacy and Activity*

Earlier I suggested that what alliances and alignments *did* had in many respects transformed quite dramatically between the 18th and 19th centuries. In the Concert era,

one of the primary roles of alliances was to carry out (temporally extended, often managerial) joint activities. Joint action, which began to emerge sporadically in the last third of the 18th century, became a routine practice in this period; parties to the action not only “cooperated”, but in fact did the same thing, often at roughly the same time. A distinctive feature of the practices of managing others was that they were closely bound up with — that is, they latched onto and targeted — action and activity; and in this regard the practice of joint activity in particular allowed for the sort of intimacy required for effective management. Thus one of the preoccupations of the period was that dangerous actors not be allowed to act alone. This was not so much a generic animus against unilateral action (which was certainly tolerated on a number of occasions) as it was a conviction, in specific situations involving specific dangers, that dangerous actors and their activities could not be controlled if they were to act on their own. It was often therefore seen as crucial that one be a part of the other’s action or activity; and even that one participate in the threatening action itself in order to manage, steer and control it. The behaviour of Britain and France with regard to Russia’s threatened involvement in the Greek-Turkish conflict was a case in point. Once his preferred policy of British-led mediation in the Greek-Turkish and Russo-Turkish conflicts had failed, for instance, George Canning sought to cooperate with Russia and even participate in any future intervention in order to prevent it from acting alone.¹⁸ As Temperley has argued:

It was pretty clear now [21 February 1827, when Canning received several Russian dispatches] that, unless he consented to use force, Russia would go forward alone. It seems likely that Canning had now made up his mind that force might be necessary, though he hoped it would not be. In any case, he had tried to prevent Russia from using it. But if force was to be used, England must act with, and restrain, Russia.¹⁹

Once Russo-Turkish hostilities finally began, Britain and France, now Russia’s partners in the Triple Alliance of 1827, undertook a number of measures against Turkey — joint action against the forces of the Sultan’s vassal, Ibrahim, in the Morea, the landing of a French expeditionary force at Petalidi during Anglo-Egyptian negotiations for Ibrahim’s withdrawal — in order to prevent Russia from conducting the war alone.²⁰ In April 1828 La Ferronnays, the French foreign minister argued to the British that there was little hope of getting control over the Russian intervention without associating with it to some extent.²¹ More than a decade later, Britain and France again agreed that they needed to involve themselves in the latest brewing conflict between Turkey’s Sultan Mahmud II and his rebellious Egyptian vassal, Mehemet Ali, in order to prevent Russia from coming to Turkey’s rescue alone, as it had in the first Mehemet Ali crisis of 1832-3. Unlike the other Continental great powers, French leaders did not just tacitly accept Canning’s efforts to exploit the Latin American revolutions but indeed sought to remain at Britain’s side in order to restrain it; one result was the Polignac Memorandum of 1823, a territorial non-aggrandisement pledge and mutual renunciation of the use of force in Latin America. And in May 1830, Lord Charles Stuart, British Ambassador to Paris, expressed concerns about the planned French expedition to Algeria. His suggestion: “Ce que l’Angleterre pourrait faire, ce serait de prendre part elle-même à l’expédition.”²² Activity and intimacy were in this sense mutually constitutive: activity helped make intimacy possible in the first place, all the while providing a salient operational focus for the practices of intimate management.

2 Grouping

The statesmen of this period had a name for one important set of the period's management practices: they called it "grouping".²³ The name itself is evocative of the defining role of intimacy in these practices: dangers and dangerous individuals were to be "grouped", surrounded by others, kept close to the group, caught up and bound in its stifling embrace. As indicated earlier, such practices are in stark contrast to those of the previous century, and betray a new orientation to threat: thus we have Palmerston suggesting to Metternich in 1832 that "Prussia and Austria might come to appreciate how much easier it would be to check French revolution and aggression by joining with England to control her policy by means of cooperation rather than confrontation in Belgium".²⁴ In the early years of the Concert era a series of techniques developed in response to the emergent practices of multilateral diplomacy, techniques growing out of and leveraging the new multilateralism to attempt new forms of intimate control over the conduct of others. Thus joint efforts at international governance in this period tended to be Janus-faced — to look outward, as it were, at the problem to be managed, and inward, at the management of other co-managing parties.

The particular techniques associated with grouping were many and varied. Some grouping efforts made use of new instruments developed in this period, like multilateral guarantees, the neutralisation of politically engineered entities, and self-denying ordinances. In the first category were proposals for the joint guarantee of the papal regime at the Roman Conference in 1831 or the different proposals of Aberdeen, Guizot and Palmerston for a joint European guarantee of the Ottoman Empire; in the second the multilaterally imposed and guaranteed neutrality of Switzerland and Belgium; in the third the mutual clauses against territorial aggrandisement in the 1826 St Petersburg Protocol between Britain and Russia and in the 1827 Triple Alliance Treaty including France. Insofar as they targeted action, most of these primarily legal instruments were preventative in thrust. But others were designed not only to fetter allies and tie up action, but to take control of activity that could not be prevented or was already underway. Although a very wide range of local grouping tactics can be identified, for reasons of space only a handful of the more salient general practices will be discussed here.

2.1 *Internationalisation*

One of the principal grouping techniques was the practice of internationalisation. This could include deliberate efforts to expand the scope of concertation or to designate a given matter as one of collective or "European" interest, in which other great powers should be involved. In some cases internationalisation was built into institutional arrangements, as with the great-power guarantees of the Swiss federal constitution or the neutrality of Belgium: when Swiss Protestants in the canton of the Aargau secularised all cloisters in the canton, upsetting the delicate Catholic-Protestant balance, their actions violated Article 12 of the federal constitution and thus automatically rendered the issue an international one involving the great powers.²⁵ For the most part, however, internationalisation practices were fairly self-conscious attempts to convert a situation into one involving many or all of the other powers. Trying alternately, for instance, to avoid and to control a possible French intervention in Spain to overturn the revolution

and rescue the captive King Ferdinand VII, Metternich sought coordinated four-power “moral action” against the revolutionary Spanish government and a renewed ambassadorial conference in Paris to concert any subsequent joint measures. Prior to Espartero’s ouster in 1843, Guizot, hoping to regain some influence in Spanish politics from which he had of late largely been excluded, insisted to the British that the dynastic question in Spain, particularly the future marriage of young Queen Isabella, was a matter of European concern.²⁶ In 1820 Tsar Alexander, influenced by Capodistrias, became alarmed about the new “dictatorial” powers that the Carlsbad Decrees, recently passed by the German Bund with his support, gave to the Federal Diet; reversing his earlier support, he made a gambit to save the smaller German states from the Diet’s (especially Austria’s and Prussia’s) tyranny through a collective interposition, unsuccessfully proposing to Castlereagh a great-power revision of the Bund’s Federal Act (which the German states alone had created).²⁷ In 1832 Austria and Prussia, faced with the worrisome prospect of British and French intervention to oust the Dutch from Antwerp, preemptively proposed five-power financial coercion against the Dutch instead. In the second Mehmet Ali crisis of 1839-40, which aroused anxieties that Russia would again profit to consolidate its influence over Turkey or even send troops to Constantinople, Metternich proposed and almost secured a five-power conference on the subject in Vienna, and did manage to organise a five-power collective note of 27 July 1839 arrogating to Europe control over the Turkish-Egyptian negotiations. Such efforts at internationalisation were self-consciously designed as means of acquiring control over the conduct of others. As Palmerston noted of an earlier proposal for a collective note warning Mehmet Ali not to declare Egypt’s independence from Turkey,

Separate declarations have the advantage which [French foreign minister] Molé mentions; a joint and collective declaration would give us some hold over Russia, if it was founded upon a previous and recorded agreement between the five Powers, giving to the five some determining authority over the conduct of each....²⁸

Some efforts at internationalisation were in a sense both internal and external, in that they were initiated by an insider hoping, for instance, to manage the behaviour of a partner. Reversing his long-standing repugnance towards the European Concert, and his previous efforts to subvert it, Canning, belatedly sensing that he had lost control of the Eastern Question to his Russian ally, tried to reconstruct the Concert. As a means of applying pressure on Turkey to cede to Russian demands and thus stave off war he proposed to Russia that the five powers effect a joint withdrawal of their ambassadors in Constantinople and issue a collective threat to recognise Greek independence.²⁹

2.2 *Subsumption*

As with many efforts at internationalisation, grouping often sought not just to make an unwanted or potentially dangerous action subject to multilateral authorisation and general decision-making (e.g. the subject of a conference), but also to subsume it within a larger, more general action. In this sense it was similar to the practice of participating or taking part in an ally’s (dangerous) action in order to control it, already discussed in our discussion of intimacy. As we just saw, for instance, Metternich fought in 1822 to subsume imminent French action against revolutionary Spain under a general coordinated four-power action, plus subject it to the deliberations of an ambassadorial

conference in Paris organised to concert any further joint actions. French and allied attempts to group British influence in Latin America, and British efforts to profit from the revolutions in the Spanish American colonies to secure commercial advantages, are another case in point. At the Congress of Verona, Villèle tried to group Britain, and to supplant and supersede British attempts to mediate between Spain and Portugal and their colonies, by proposing a joint allied mediation designed to effect a reconciliation between the two sides.³⁰ The point was to have the group pre-emptively do the same thing as the potentially dangerous party was proposing or likely to do, in order (among other things) to enhance the authority of others over what specifically was to be done, to alter the nature and shape the effects of the action, and to diminish the role of the dangerous party in producing those effects and sharing in them even if, in the end, those effects were by and large those originally sought by that party. Like delegation and many other tactics of restraint-via-intimacy, such efforts simultaneously supported and diluted the dangerous action; they confirmed and shored up its legitimacy and its likelihood, while diffusing its dangers and the part played by its original author. (Because such tactics often sanctioned the rightness of the action and the principle or aims behind it, they also tended to be characterised by efforts on the part of the grouping parties to show that they were even more active and eager than the restless party.³¹)

Such tactics of subsumption were also applied to formal treaties and alliances, and were constitutively connected to new practices and forms of international law, like the creation of “open”, “law-making” treaties, permitting and often inviting the accession of states that were not original signatories.³² For example, the three Eastern powers, which had long resisted joining the network of bilateral treaties Britain had signed, to its advantage, with many states establishing the reciprocal right to search ships off the coasts of Africa (for the purpose of prosecuting the slave trade); when they finally agreed to accept such an agreement, they sought to recast the existing arrangements into a five-power treaty.³³ As early as 1834, French King Louis-Philippe, and later Metternich and Palmerston, proposed to merge Russia’s treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi (1833) with Turkey, a source of anxiety for many of the other powers, into a five-power treaty dealing with rights of passage through the Turkish Straits (Bosporus and Dardanelles) linking the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.³⁴ As the British Ambassador to Vienna, Frederick Lamb, put it, Metternich’s plan to internationalise Unkiar-Skelessi was designed to submerge Russian activities in the Near East under the “general will”.³⁵

2.3 *Authorisation and Delegation*

Also connected with grouping tactics were practices of multilateral authorisation and delegation of action. One fairly obvious way of controlling dangerous individuals within a multilateral context was to insist that their conduct be subject to multilateral approval. The result was that many actions or prospective actions by one of the great powers were formally and publicly authorised by some or all of the others. In January 1832 the five-power Roman Conference, for instance, formally authorised Austria to intervene a second time in the Papal Legations to restore order. In October 1829 Wellington, gloomily convinced that the war with Russia would prove the death-blow to the Ottoman Empire, insisted that the five powers must agree that any future disposition of Turkey’s European domains, if necessary, be done via conference.³⁶ In November 1822, after the four Continental powers had coordinated a diplomatic break with the

Spanish revolutionary government, the three Eastern powers agreed to authorise a French military intervention in Spain in the event that the Spanish government responded by attacking France, ousting King Ferdinand VII, or assaulting the royal family.³⁷ (All three contingencies were in fact highly unlikely, pointing to one way such tactics could be used to control the future conduct of allies.) In a typical attempt at managing a dangerous ally through joint activity, La Ferronnays, the French foreign minister, proposed in 1828 to have the European powers authorise a Russian occupation of the Danubian Principalities (then under Turkish suzerainty), while at the same time Russia's allies, Britain and France, would order Russia not to advance further and would occupy the Greek Morea themselves.³⁸ This sort of simultaneous authorisation-cum-forbidding indicates that multilateral authorisation of prospective action could be used not only to prevent unwanted actions, but also to control and manage those actions that were authorised. To give another example: on 2 August 1831 Dutch forces shocked Europe by invading Belgium; that same day Belgian King Leopold issued an appeal for France's immediate armed help; and the night of the 4th, the day word of the invasion arrived in France, Marshal Gérard left Paris with detailed instructions for an occupation of Belgium. The other powers launched into frenzied diplomatic activity to come to grips with and gain some kind of control over the French action. On 6 August the London Conference hastily issued Protocol 31, authorising the French expedition as an action on behalf of the Conference; the protocol forbade the French army from occupying either Maastricht or Venloo and committed it to leave Belgium once it had re-established the armistice between the Dutch and Belgians. Marshal Gérard crossed into Belgium the following morning.³⁹ As Charles Webster notes, "the only thing to do was to legitimise France's action by adopting her army as the mandatory of Europe".⁴⁰

This example, and Webster's characterisation of the aim and result of the protocol, provides insight into the frequently close relationship between multilateral authorisation and delegation. The multilateral delegation of action to a chosen surrogate of the group, one who was portrayed, as it were, as executing the general will, was a frequent practice of this period. Metternich, perhaps the author of the idea of delegation, provided a rather high-flown expression of the new conceptions associated with this practice when he claimed, in discussing the Austrian intervention in Naples, that

La base de tout salut, la seule que je connaisse et la seule possible doit se trouver dans une confiance absolue et réciproque des grandes cours et dans *une juste distribution des rôles*. Tout ce que peut l'une, toutes ne le peuvent souvent pas; mais toutes doivent vouloir la même chose, et cette identité de volonté doit être prouvée aux yeux de tous.⁴¹

That intervention, responding to the Neapolitan revolution of 1820, occurred in February 1821 with the formal sanction of the powers, after extended negotiations at the Congresses of Troppau and Laibach. Austria was officially and publicly delegated the task of restoring order in Naples on behalf of the European alliance. As Metternich claimed in response to one French memoir, received on 18 August 1820, the intervention needed to be understood as the execution of a multilateral law-and-order enforcement action:

Ses [Austria's] troupes qui, par la position géographique de ses Etats, doivent être les troupes d'exécution, ne doivent pas se présenter comme une armée destinée à faire la guerre, mais

comme une troupe de police appelée à rétablir l'ordre et à exécuter les conditions d'un pacte qui a placé le repos de l'Europe sous la garantie des cinq grandes puissances.⁴²

Others saw the intervention in similar terms. In November 1825 Canning described Tsar Alexander's view of that action in the following terms:

Piedmont and Naples were disturbed, says he [Alexander]; Allied Europe saw the danger, and Austria, as the neighbouring Power, was deputed as the agent of Allied Europe, y mettre ordre. Spain was in a state of anarchy, Allied Europe consulted, armed intervention was decided upon, and France, as the neighbouring Power, was commissioned to carry that decision into effect.⁴³

Of course, such delegation, and the multilateral authorisation it required, allowed other parties to acquire some measure of control over the action itself. French and Russian leaders attempted to use the process, for instance, to preserve some form of constitution in Naples, and a joint council of allied ministers accompanied King Ferdinand I on his return to Naples to advise him and supervise the reorganisation of his kingdom.⁴⁴ The case of the French military intervention in Spain in 1823 was similar.⁴⁵ Here, as in other cases, delegation represented an attempt to convert unilateral action into a form of joint action, and was quite clearly oriented to the attempted control of the agent and its action:

The Neo-Holy Allies [i.e. Austria, Prussia and Russia] now proceeded to demand that Ambassadors' Conferences should be held at Paris to express the moral solidarity of the Alliance (apart from England), or, in less urbane language, in order to enable the Neo-Holy Alliance to control French action in Spain. To this Villèle was thoroughly opposed. But, despite himself, he had to consent to a series of reunions, beginning on the 22nd April, which sought to tie up the action of France, and to prevent her from acting independently of the Neo-Holy Alliance.⁴⁶

Here too the practice of multilateral authorisation and delegation allowed for ongoing involvement of the authorising powers and even for various kinds of joint action after the delegation had already been effected (e.g. the issuing of joint diplomatic notes to the Spanish government designed to provoke a diplomatic break between Spain and the allies). This in turn presented new possibilities for control: even though France had been delegated the authority to decide and execute the intervention, the allies could still, for example, try to shape through their joint actions the environment in which France operated, and thus its delegated actions. Authorising an executor while leaving certain measures of joint action in the hands of the alliance as a whole meant that the other allies could jointly produce effects to which the executor, as authorised middle-man between Spain and the alliance, would be forced to respond. Although French premier, Villèle, had resolved to demonstrate French freedom of action by delaying the dispatch of its diplomatic note to Spain, for instance, Metternich was confident that because the Eastern powers had committed to sending the notes together irrespective of what France decided (and the break with Spain thereby assured), the tide of events was now out of Villèle's hands and France was now tied to the alliance on the Spanish question.⁴⁷

2.4 *Channelling*

On the surface, practices of delegation sought to channel multilateral action through a single executor. This technique of channelling action was quite central to

grouping and practices of control more generally. Grouping and internationalisation and were often undertaken with the aim of encouraging, forcing or habituating dangerous parties to act (in regard to a particular question) only through group activity or through specific collective political bodies or organs. The grouping efforts of Metternich, and the various proposals for multilateral initiatives, during the second Mehmet Ali crisis (a five-power defensive alliance with Turkey, a Vienna/London Conference to concert future measures, a centre for action at Vienna, a mutual self-denying agreement, the collective note, a five-power guarantee of Turkey's independence), aimed to bind Russia to joint activity, and to act vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire only through the European Concert.⁴⁸ Metternich's adherence to the Münchengrätz agreement with Russia (dealing with the Near East) and his subsequent efforts to expand it to Prussia and the western powers can also be understood in this light.⁴⁹ The point was to constrain and funnel action into manageable forms in manageable venues, to narrow the purview and basis and justifiable range of action. Channelling could even be deployed in nested layers of constraint, as with Metternich's complex manoeuvres to gain control of the French intervention in Spain. Metternich sought to make the royalist counter-revolutionaries in Spain the only channel for France's material intervention in that country, and therefore a means for allied control over French action:

Did the Spanish royalists need gold, arms, means of war? France should furnish them at Spanish request, subject to conditions set by the Allies. Did the Spanish insurgents require troops? Again it was up to France to furnish them, under the same conditions and with the understanding that of course France could never be allowed to go to war with Spain herself. In other words, it was up to France to provide all the aid requested and required by the "good Spaniards" and, Metternich stipulated, "up to the Allies to limit it within precise bounds and to supervise its employment".⁵⁰

Here French action was channelled to a single beneficiary; the object of French action was restricted, and thus the type of action itself. A party within the country was selected on whose behalf the executor was intervening (virtually representing a second executor, one inside the country to match the great power delegated outside). The delegated beneficiary provided another means of control over the delegated agent of the alliance: the relations and nature of support between the two, for instance, could be stipulated in advance by the allies. This was another way of controlling an executor after its right and responsibility had been officially staked out; thus the allies could continue to exercise a managing influence even after they had ostensibly given the executor *carte blanche*, via their authorisation of its (pre-specified) action. Channelling techniques could be and were also applied to far more mundane realms of diplomatic action. In the 1840s Aberdeen put fairly constant pressure on Metternich to secure Queen Victoria's uncle, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Cobourg, the title of Grand Duke. In response, Metternich repeatedly insisted that such a grant could only be conferred through the German Confederation.⁵¹ Though the example is fairly trivial, it is evidence of a phenomenon not without significance: the channelling and administration of German dynastic claims through the German Confederation represented an instrument for controlling the international dynastic practices of the *ancien régime* and, at the same time, a token of their changing role and diminishing power in the 19th century.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted a brief sketch of a narrow but important set of international management practices from the international politics of the Concert era, 1815-48: those practices oriented to the management of others' conduct, or mutual great-power control. In this paper, the emphasis has been on grouping practices and restraint-via-intimacy, on the various ways in which closeness was deployed, alone or through a group, in order to exert control over dangerous individuals. The aims of this analysis are twofold: to show by example the value of studying political and historical practices, and to suggest new ways of understanding international governance.

First, by focussing on the actual, specific practices of international politics in a given domain, we may well be able to notice important phenomena which have gone largely or entirely unnoticed. Such a focus can also help sharpen our historical and empirical comparisons, as the earlier discussion of 18th- versus 19th-century alliances might suggest. And in turn these insights may well have implications for our attempts to provide generalisations and explanations — for instance about the marked and important shift from the 18th- to 19th-century “styles” of international politics.⁵² For by studying the political practices and problematisations of each era, we have a much sharper sense of *what precisely it was* that changed between them. Secondly, this study has sought to open up our standard notions of international governance, largely dominated by institutional and legal-regulatory concerns. The practices of what might be called international governance in the Concert era were many and were remarkably varied; among other things they targeted different types of objects and made use of different types of instruments. This paper has sought to underscore and to analyse practices which are not usually thought of in connection with international governance and management. This allows us to see new things about the Concert of Europe, but the influence can run in the other direction, too. For surely there are as many contemporary managerial practices in world politics which by and large have escaped the notice of our discipline. That is just one way in which the study of past practices can at the same time represent a “history of the present”.

Beyond those discussed in this paper, there are other techniques, common to this period, which fall under the umbrella of the “conduct of conduct”. These include efforts to nip unfolding processes in the bud, the pre-specification and micro-management of ongoing activity at every stage, the partitioning of dangers into their noxious and safely manageable elements, the redirection and reshaping of autonomous political activity and processes, efforts at attaching unruly or dangerous parties to oneself (or to a political entity or programme of action), and efforts to lead that which could not be prevented. Together they represent practices premised on the intrinsic temporality of management, the plasticity of conduct, and the possibility of what Metternich often called “moral diplomacy”, or the progressive inculcation of new habits of conduct. Such premises and practices were quite novel in the history of European politics, and were part of the massive wave of social, political and cultural changes which swept Europe in the generation following the French Revolution. They shaped the character and the very possibility of modern international governance as it emerged, for the first time, in this period: as a diverse set of practices and problems oriented not only to the regulation and administration of international politics, but also to the ongoing control and moulding, up close, of political action in all its detail and specificity.

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Notes

¹ E.g. Dougherty (1993); Holsti (1992).

² For this formulation and attendant analysis, see Foucault (1982: 220-1). It should be noted that Foucault uses this expression in the context of his theorisation of power (action upon action), and that there it is to be understood in a generic and universalising sense. Here I want to use it instead as a concept describing a specific historical practice (and widespread problematisation), one which emerges in all its specificity for the first time during the Concert era.

³ Of course, “(quasi-)universal” here is relative to a particular domain of actors, issues or phenomena; few if any theorists who cite shared norms or rules claim that their scope is universal, period. The “quasi-” is meant to accommodate the argument cited by many constructivists that the very ontology of social norms and rules is such that their existence is in no way negated by instances of their violation: see e.g. Ruggie and Kratochwil (1986: 766-8).

⁴ As Foucault perceptively notes, the late 18th and early 19th centuries witnessed the emergence in the nascent field of public health (and elsewhere) of four generalised, abstract concepts which had wide-ranging effects on socio-political rationalities and practices: case, risk, danger, and crisis. These were novel “in their field of application and in the techniques which they enjoined”; they called into being “a whole new range of forms of intervention”. Foucault (2004 [1977-8]: 63); my translation. Koselleck would label these “collective singular” terms — terms, like “progress”, whose number “abruptly increased toward the end of the 18th century”, and which “condense[d] every more complex experiences on a higher level of abstraction”. Koselleck (2002: 229).

⁵ Baack (1980: 226-7); this is Baack’s characterisation.

⁶ Schroeder (1962b: 205).

⁷ Schwartzberg (1988b: 293).

⁸ Castlereagh to Wellington, 14 Sept. 1822, cited partially or in full by Bass (forthcoming: 100); Cunningham (1978: 167); Temperley (1966: 54).

⁹ The important use of alliances to manage and restrain allies has gone largely unnoticed, with the work of Paul Schroeder as an obvious exception. See e.g. Schroeder (1973: Chap. 16); (2004 [1976]), (1983), (1994: Chaps. 13-17). Schroeder’s observations have not received much systematic attention in IR theory; for some exceptions, see e.g. Moul (1983); Press-Barnathan (2006); Temerson (1991); Ikenberry (1998), (2001). Perhaps the most sustained and serious effort to develop Schroeder’s insights is Weitsman (1997), (2004). Grieco (1996) and Weitsman formulate new terms essentially derivative of Schroeder’s (“binding”, “tethering alliances”).

¹⁰ By this I mean something quite similar to the familiar political truisms about enmity and friendship: the enemy of my enemy is my friend, the friend of my enemy is my enemy, etc. See e.g. McKay and Scott (1983: 213) and Lossky (1985: 41) for a similar emphasis. One typical example: in 1735 France refused to ratify a subsidy convention already drafted with Sweden, on account of Swedish Count Horn’s renewal of the 1724 treaty with Russia (France and Russia being, after the 1721 Peace of Nystad, longstanding rivals for influence in Sweden): see Roberts (1986: 35). This may sound like an entirely banal observation to make, and something hardly specific to the period, but it is important to grasp the important role such logics played in structuring the international politics of the ancien regime. Because of the fundamental importance of enmity in this period, the vast number of international actors (of incredibly diverse types), practices of functionalisation and substitution (discussed later in the in-text paragraph), and the consequent kaleidoscopic character of alignments and rivalries in this period, the intense attention paid to considerations about whether putative allies were inherently compatible or incompatible — *ex ante*, simply on the basis of their other alliance/alignment relationships — exerted very powerful structuring effects on the nature of

alliances and of international politics more generally. Moreover, the point is not simply that these “logics” were more intense than they were, say, in the 19th century, or today, for that matter; it is also that, when understood in the context of their relations to other international political practices (some of which were quite unique to the period), they were in fact qualitatively different in important respects from analogous dispositions in other periods — different in how they functioned, in their specific characteristics and in their broader effects.

¹¹ As with, for instance, the piecemeal alliances that built up around Franco-Bavarian and Austrian contestation over the succession to the Holy Roman Empire in the 1730s and 1740s. See e.g. Anderson (1995: Chap. 1).

¹² These could take the form of “compensation”, “equivalents”, territorial exchanges and purchases, formal support for (or renunciation of) claims, payment of subsidies, formal recognition of titles, retrocession of land, and so on.

¹³ The Anglo-French alliance of 1716-31 is a typical example: for most of the alliance, British leaders constantly viewed and treated their French ally in terms of its ability and willingness to provide a Continental defence of Hanover, the German principality from which the British Hanoverian dynasty originated (and which it still held). See e.g. Black (1986: 302). Functionalisation was linked closely to the specificity and targetedness of alliance terms and aims and of the *quid pro quos* which secured them. Alliances in the 18th century were not, for instance, designed to provide generalised “security” over time.

¹⁴ As in the case of the startling British alliance with Austria in 1731, which was quickly followed by the end of the Anglo-French alliance. Austria could in many ways replace France’s earlier functionalisation, both as a Continental power able and perhaps better suited to protect Hanover, and also because it had until then been one of the most serious sources of threat to it.

¹⁵ As also argued by Schroeder (2004 [1976]: 198, 201).

¹⁶ See e.g. Schroeder (2004 [1976]: 199-203); (2004 [1983]: 127); (1994: 765-6, 780, etc.).

¹⁷ Of course it was still possible within a restraining alliance to consider two different possible allies as to some extent mutually substitutable — e.g. as partners in restraining a third party, which in a certain sense is perhaps what Metternich did when considering whether to continue to pursue British cooperation in restraining Russia or to shift Austria’s energies to strengthening ties with Prussia within the context of an Eastern alliance with Russia. (See e.g. Schroeder (1962a).) But even in such restricted contexts, examples like this provide a similarity that is superficial at best. The orientation to substitutability that characterised — even dominated — 18th-century diplomacy encompassed not only allies but relationships of all kinds, territory, legal claims, titles and offices, and so on, and was intimately and constitutively bound up with an extremely wide range of contemporaneous diplomatic practices and problematisations; nothing of the sort is true of the Concert era (or any period in international history ever since).

¹⁸ See e.g. Jelavich (1991: 73); Dakin (1973: 176); Seton-Watson (1945: 109-10, 118).

¹⁹ Temperley (1966: 398). See also Cowles (1990: 706-7).

²⁰ See e.g. Lincoln (1978: 122).

²¹ Bertier de Sauvigny (1966: 403).

²² Reported by Apponyi to Metternich, 24 May 1830, Guichen (1916: 69).

²³ Well, at least it appears to have been a favourite term of Castlereagh’s (and hence of the Anglo-centric historiographical tradition that has substantially shaped Anglo-American thought about the Concert era). It certainly is a felicitous and useful turn of phrase. A few IR theorists concerned with

the Concert of Europe have paid attention to grouping, drawing on the work of Schroeder and Elrod (1975: 168-9) (who in turn draw on e.g. Webster (1963 [1925]) and Philips (1914: 85ff.) before them) — see e.g. Jervis (1992); Cronin (1998: Chap. 3).

²⁴ Bourne (1982: 372); this is Bourne’s paraphrase of Palmerston to Lamb, 27 Oct. 1832.

²⁵ See e.g. Bullen (1971) for a discussion.

²⁶ Johnson (1963: 302).

²⁷ Kraehe (1990: 278).

²⁸ Palmerston to Granville, 8 June 1838, Bourne (1970: 230).

²⁹ Dakin (1973: 181); see also Cunningham (1978: 177).

³⁰ See e.g. Nichols (1971: 145).

³¹ This could be a tactic of resistance against such restraint, too: when the French tried to group Britain and control its actions and advantageous position vis-à-vis a newly emancipated Latin America by proposing a congress on the Latin American question, Canning defeated those efforts by arguing that the congress must be broadened even further, to include the United States (which was not interested in participating). See e.g. Temperley (1966: 117-8, 133, 136).

³² For a discussion, see e.g. Nussbaum (1954: 197-8).

³³ See e.g. Johnson (1963: 286).

³⁴ See e.g. Webster (1934: 137); Bourne (1982: 565, 569-70); Collingham (1988: 222).

³⁵ Bourne (1982: 385).

³⁶ Chamberlain (1983: 221).

³⁷ Nichols (1971: 113-4).

³⁸ Schroeder (1994: 654).

³⁹ See Baack (1980: 217-8); Betley (1960: 195-200).

⁴⁰ Webster (1951: 139).

⁴¹ Metternich to Richelieu, 5 Aug. 1820, Bertier de Sauvigny (1958: 98). As elsewhere in this paper, added emphasis is italicised; original underlined. This kind of characterisation was common, even being metaphorically extended to the “Concert” as a whole: thus the historian J.G. Droysen, founder of the Prussian historical school, asked in 1845: “Are these five powers perhaps delegates of the rest of the European states?” Holbraad (1970: 55).

⁴² Reported by Caraman to Pasquier, Aug. 1820, Bertier de Sauvigny (1958: 102).

⁴³ Quoted by Schwartzberg (1988a: 156).

⁴⁴ See e.g. Schroeder (1962b: 48, 57, 62, 65; 96, 133-7).

⁴⁵ For e.g. Tsar Alexander’s view that a French army authorised by the other allies would represent an “army of the alliance”, see Nichols (1971: 113). Earlier, Metternich had proposed that the allies make representations to Spain against the revolution, suggesting that one power — Metternich wanted Britain — be delegated to make them on behalf of the others. Schroeder (1962b: 216); Nichols (1971: 93, 98, 101).

⁴⁶ This is the judgement of Temperley (1966: 91). See also that of Nichols (1971: 98): at the Congress of Verona, Montmorency, the French representative, “apparently did not realise that by

accepting this discussion [over the alternative possible alliance responses to Spain suggested by Metternich], he was casting France in the role of executrix of the Congress's will".

⁴⁷ Schroeder (1962b: 220).

⁴⁸ For exactly this kind of formulation, applied alternately to Metternich, Palmerston and French leaders, see Schroeder (1994: 661, 737, 741; see also 729). Cf. Bourne (1982: 578).

⁴⁹ See e.g. Puryear (1931: 23); Schroeder (1994: 732-3).

⁵⁰ Schroeder (1962b: 221); much of the quotation is Schroeder's paraphrase of Metternich to Vincent, 27 Nov. and 2 Dec. 1822. Cf. Nichols (1971: 310).

⁵¹ Schroeder (1994: 791).

⁵² To use the felicitous term of Rosecrance (1963).