

British Policy Debates on the Greek Revolt (1821–30)

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free.

Lord Byron, *The Isles of Greece*

What was Greece's status inside the Ottoman order, and how did nationalism arise?

Greeks belonged to the Orthodox **Rum millet**, a religious-political community headed by the Patriarch; identity was framed less by “nation” than by faith, locality, and estate. Greek-speaking elites (Phanariots, island shipowners, merchants, clerics) enjoyed leverage in finance, diplomacy, and trade; some regions (islands, certain mountain districts) had customary privileges, and armed bands blurred lines between local policing and insurgency. From the late 18th century, a **Greek Enlightenment** (schools, printing, diaspora networks), revolutionary models (America, France), and Russia–Ottoman wars seeded a political nationalism. Secret societies organized a revolt (1821), recasting Orthodox community into a putative **Hellenic nation** seeking statehood.

What was Britain's initial stance, and why?

Britain began with strict neutrality under Lord Castlereagh, treating the revolt as an internal Ottoman affair and prioritizing the post-Napoleonic settlement. The cabinet feared that backing the Greeks would split the Concert of Europe, alienate Austria, and trigger Russian unilateralism under the banner of protecting co-religionists. Strategically, London still saw the Ottoman Empire—however frail—as a necessary counterweight to Russia in the Straits and eastern Mediterranean. Neutrality also spared Britain new military commitments that a fiscally cautious, war-weary public might resist. The expectation was that the insurrection would exhaust itself and that the Porte would restore order without a great-power clash. Even after Castlereagh's death (1822), much of the cabinet kept these instincts, though political winds were already shifting against inaction.

How did public opinion and Philhellenism shape policy?

Reports of atrocities at **Chios** (1822) and **Missolonghi** (1825–26), together with Byron's death at **Missolonghi** (1824), generated sustained sympathy across newspapers, pulpits, and lecture halls. The London Greek Committee (1823) raised funds and floated loans; volunteers and adventurers gave the cause a romantic charge. This mobilization did not dictate policy, but it narrowed ministers' freedom to remain aloof. George Canning, sensitive to Parliament and the press, framed mediation as both humane and prudent statecraft: a way to answer moral clamor without ceding the initiative to Russia. After the allied fleet's victory at **Navarino** (20 October 1827), popular celebration overwhelmed official embarrassment, making a return to passivity politically

impossible. Public sentiment thus supplied both cover—and pressure—for a managed intervention.

Who drove the policy shift, and to what end?

George Canning—foreign secretary from late 1822 and briefly prime minister in 1827—steered Britain from passive neutrality to controlled engagement. His principal motive was strategic: prevent Russia from acting alone, annexing advantages under a humanitarian pretext, and rewriting the Near Eastern map. He sought to bind Russia to multilateral commitments and limited aims, while positioning Britain to shape any settlement. Humanitarian language helped to sell the policy domestically, but balance-of-power management set the terms. By co-leading diplomacy, Britain could spare the Greeks from annihilation without collapsing the Ottoman framework or conceding primacy to St. Petersburg. Canning’s successors—including Wellington—largely inherited this framework even when they disliked its consequences.

What role did the Egyptian intervention play?

To crush the revolt, the Sultan enlisted **Mehmet Ali** of Egypt; **Ibrahim Pasha**’s expeditionary corps (from 1824) brought disciplined troops, a modern fleet, and **scorched-earth methods** in the Morea: village burnings, deportations, enslavements, and plans for demographic replacement. European consuls and naval officers relayed grim reports; British commanders judged that, left unchecked, Ibrahim would extinguish the rebellion and turn the Peloponnese into an Egyptian dependency. These excesses fused **humanitarian outrage** with **strategic alarm**: a victorious Egypt under Ottoman warrant would alter the balance in the Aegean and invite unilateral Russian action under the mantle of Christian protection. The Egyptian factor was thus the hinge that made “doing nothing” untenable and moved London, Paris, and St. Petersburg toward **coercive mediation** backed by naval power.

Why do the 1826 Protocol of St. Petersburg and the 1827 Treaty of London matter?

The **Protocol of St. Petersburg (April 1826)** yoked Britain and Russia to a plan for Greek **autonomy** under Ottoman suzerainty—crucially restraining Russia within a concert framework and signaling to Vienna that annexations were off the table. It warned the Porte that the powers would not let the conflict burn indefinitely. The **Treaty of London (July 1827)**, joined by France, formalized mediation and added enforcement: a secret article authorized naval measures to compel an armistice if the Sultan refused. Together, these instruments converted a moral-strategic dilemma into an allied program with **coercive teeth**—limited aims, enforced by pressure rather than conquest—and made an accidental clash at sea more likely, which is what occurred at Navarino.

What competing arguments framed British choices?

Four logics wrestled for primacy. **Strict non-intervention** promised order and economy but ceded initiative to others and risked a Russian fait accompli. **Pure diplomacy** sought Greek autonomy without war but had limited leverage over the Porte or Ibrahim’s army. **Armed humanitarianism** insisted coercion was the only way to halt mass abuses and vindicate Europe’s

conscience. **Strategic balancing** argued for allied intervention chiefly to pre-empt unilateral Russian action while preserving the Ottoman framework elsewhere. By **1827–28**, the working policy was a **synthesis**: coercive mediation with bounded aims—force as instrument, not as a path to partition.

How were humanitarian and strategic aims balanced?

Canning's formula married them: lead a coalition that answered moral pressure **and** fenced in Russia. The target settlement was a Greece autonomous or independent, **modest in extent**, and ruled by a **non-Russian** European prince—thereby relieving suffering without handing St. Petersburg a client on the Aegean. The approach also sought to spare the Ottoman Empire a general unraveling. The balance was imperfect—events outran intentions—but it kept the central British objective in view: avert a Russian unilateral settlement while containing the crisis within the machinery of the Concert.

What did Navarino change?

At **Navarino (20 October 1827)**, the allied fleet annihilated the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet, saving the revolt at sea and blunting Ibrahim's campaign. The **Wellington** ministry recoiled, branding it an “untoward event” in the King's Speech (January 1828), because it weakened the very empire Britain wished to preserve against Russia. The immediate aftermath emboldened **St. Petersburg**, which went to war with the Porte in **1828–29**; yet politically the deed—and public approval—could not be undone. Admiral **Codrington**, who led the fleet, was eased out, but from that point the question was no longer Greek survival; it was **on what terms** and with **what borders**, and how to prevent Russia from monopolizing the outcome.

What was the outcome, and what precedents did it set?

Through the London instruments (1829, 1830), Greece became **independent** with limited frontiers; the Ottoman Empire survived. But the case is often cited as the **first Balkan domino** of 19th-century nationalism and an early **prototype of humanitarian intervention**—a forerunner of the “**right to protect**” (R2P)—yet tightly bounded by great-power management. It showed how public opinion could push a cautious cabinet toward action, and how ministers could channel that pressure to shape, rather than merely follow, the end state.

Timeline

- **March 1821:** Revolt begins; under Castlereagh Britain adopts strict neutrality (“let the Turks deal with their own insurgents”).
- **April–August 1822:** Massacre of Chios galvanizes Philhellenism; Canning replaces Castlereagh and begins a cautious reorientation (still no collective intervention).
- **March 1823:** Britain recognizes Greek **belligerency**—a technical neutrality that materially aids Greek naval operations.

- **1824–1825:** Byron’s death and two London loans (~£2.8m) bind British stakes; **early 1825 Ibrahim Pasha’s Egyptian expedition lands in Greece**, escalating atrocities and reshaping British calculations.
- **April 4, 1826: Protocol of St. Petersburg** (Britain–Russia): joint mediation, Greek autonomy; Ottoman–Egyptian rejection and the **fall of Missolonghi** harden opinion.
- **July 6, 1827: Treaty of London** (Britain–Russia–France): demands armistice; secret article authorizes coercive naval enforcement; no Allied gains claimed.
- **October 20, 1827: Battle of Navarino**—Allied fleets destroy the Ottoman–Egyptian fleet **supporting Ibrahim Pasha’s campaign**; the revolt is saved.
- **January–February 1828:** Wellington ministry calls Navarino an “untoward event,” but Parliament/public force a qualified thanks; Codrington later removed; **French Morea Expedition supervises Ibrahim’s withdrawal**; Britain pivots to containing Russia.
- **April 26, 1828:** Russia declares war on the Ottomans (Russo–Turkish War, 1828–1829), reinforcing Britain’s move toward accepting a Greek buffer.
- **September 14, 1829: Treaty of Adrianople** ends the war; Ottomans accede to London terms; Wellington shifts from autonomy to **independence**.
- **February 3, 1830: London Protocol** recognizes an independent, Western-aligned Greece; a non-Russian monarch stipulated (Leopold first chosen, later replaced by Otto).



George Canning (Foreign Secretary to Stratford Canning (Ambassador to the Ottoman Porte) (excerpt)

10 February 1826

I come now to the matter which is more specifically the occasion and the subject of this despatch.

Your Excellency is already apprised that not long after your departure from England, Count Lieven, who had from the time of the Emperor Alexander's abjuration of any further intercourse with this country upon Greek and Turkish matters, abstained altogether from any communication with me upon them, sought an opportunity of re-opening a discussion upon that subject. Inclosed is the extract of a memorandum of a confidential conference which passed between Count Lieven and me in the month of October.¹

[Content of that extract: "The Court of Russia has positive information that before Ibrahim Pasha's army was put in motion, an agreement was entered into by the Porte with the Pasha of Egypt, that whatever part of Greece Ibrahim Pasha might conquer should be at his disposal; and that his plan of disposing of his conquest is (and was stated to the Porte to be and has been approved by the Porte) to remove the whole Greek population, carrying them off into slavery in Egypt or elsewhere, and to re-people the country with Egyptians and others of the Mohammedan religion."]

The intelligence which it contains appeared to me monstrous, and incredible; and the restrictions of secrecy under which it was communicated to me by Count Lieven, precluded His Majesty's government from acting upon it, until it should have received confirmation from other sources.

Your Excellency's despatch number 2 from Corfu contains the following passage:

You may remember, Sir, that the earliest operations of this Pacha in the Morea, were carried on with some appearances of forbearance and conciliation. Whatever may be the cause of the change, his conduct is no longer the same. *If the statements which have reached me be true*, he now acts on a system little short of extermination. I have not, indeed, heard of any acts of slaughter committed by him in cold blood, but he seems to spare no one where the slightest show of resistance is made. *There is room to apprehend* that many of his prisoners have been sent into Egypt as slaves, the children *it is asserted* being even compelled to embrace the Mahometan faith.²

This passage shows beyond a doubt a general belief of the existence of some such plan as that of which Count Lieven had conveyed to me the first intimation.³

But under the qualified terms in which Your Excellency's statement is (very properly) made, and in the absence of any more direct and detailed information, His Majesty's government did not feel itself warranted in founding upon that passage alone, a direct and positive instruction. From various other quarters, however, there have since reached us repeated allusions to this plan, as having been notoriously adopted by the Turkish government and Ibrahim Pacha, and as being already, at least, in partial operation.⁴

Although, therefore, we have even now no such evidence as would justify us in at once imputing this plan to the Porte, and acting as if they had admitted its existence, it is, at the same time, material that the opinion of the British government upon such a plan, if adopted and attempted to be carried into execution, should be distinctly declared.

Your Excellency will, therefore, if you should have acquired in the interval any more satisfactory knowledge upon this subject, or if your belief in what you have reported thereupon shall not have been shaken, declare, in the most distinct terms, to the Porte that Great Britain will not permit the execution of a system of depopulation, which exceeds the permitted violences of war, and transgresses the conventional restraints of civilization.

The consequences of such a system of warfare must be to change as effectually the face of Greece, as that of the eastern empire was heretofore changed by the first irruption of its Mussulman conquerors.⁵ It goes to establish in the very centre of Christendom a new Barbary state.⁶

The inconvenience which is felt by European commerce, and the disgrace which attaches to all maritime powers from the existence of such states on the opposite coasts of the Mediterranean, is sufficiently known.

It has been the policy of England, out of consideration for the Ottoman Porte, to treat those piratical states rather as independent powers, than as provinces of the Ottoman empire. I say "out of consideration for the Ottoman Porte," because, if we did not treat them as independent, we must, in abundant instances, have demanded atonement and reparation from the Porte for their insolence and aggressions. The British fleet which exacted redress at Algiers, must, in that case, have been directed to the Dardanelles.⁷

But the Porte is not to imagine that we can suffer a state of the like character to be erected anew under Ottoman protection and to have its seat in Europe.

The Porte will take its choice whether to consider a determination on our part to prevent the growth of such a state as a determination with which the Porte has no more concern and which it is no more interested or authorized to resist than our expedition against Algiers, or as a direct

attack upon its own sovereignty. We trust that the Porte will consider it in the former light, but be that as it may, our fixed determination is that such new state shall not grow up in Christian Europe. This determination is one which Great Britain can execute of herself, by interposing, if necessary, for that purpose her maritime power between the Morea and Egypt.⁸

We do not disguise from ourselves, nor intend Your Excellency should disguise from the Porte, that by such interposition, we must incidentally, but no doubt materially, affect the operations of the war in Greece.

That is not our object. The steadiness and perseverance with which we have maintained our neutrality between the Porte and the Greeks, and the measures which we have taken, when necessary, for vindicating it impartially with either belligerent, are sufficient proofs of the sincerity of this declaration.

But the apprehension that such would be the incidental consequence of a step to be taken in the pursuit of an avowed and legitimate object, will not divert us from that pursuit.

The only thing by which we can be diverted from it is the disavowal by the Porte of any compact or connivance with Ibrahim Pacha to the effect imputed in the intelligence which has occasioned this despatch, and a prompt transmission of orders to Ibrahim Pacha, should the plan imputed to that Pacha have been adopted, without the authority or concurrence of the Porte, to desist from the execution of measures which the Porte may be assured that Christian Europe will not tolerate.⁹

I enclose the copy of an instruction on this subject which is sent through the Admiralty to His Majesty's naval officers in the Levant and which will be immediately communicated to Ibrahim Pacha. Your Excellency will let the British admiral know the result of your communication with the Reis Effendi.¹⁰

I have, &c.,

G. CANNING

Notes

1 Count Lieven / October memorandum. Prince (Count) Christoph von Lieven, Russia's ambassador in London, privately reopened the "Greek question" with Canning in October 1825 after a period of Russian non-communication ordered by Alexander I.

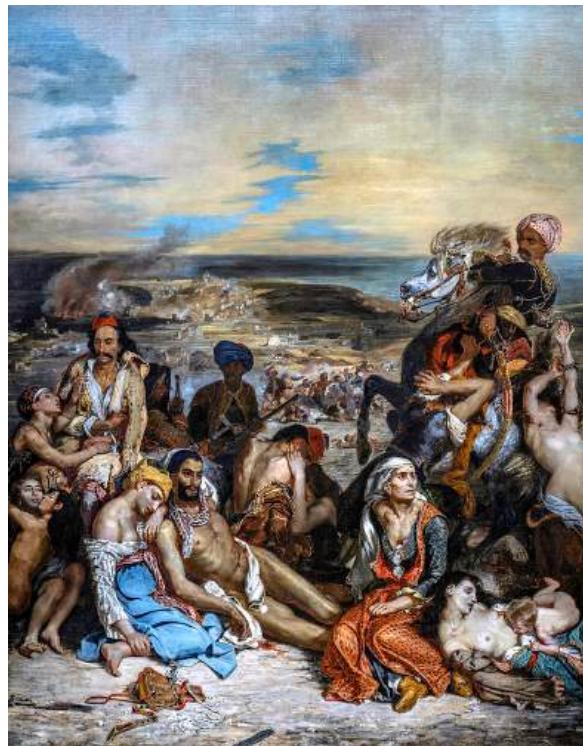
2 "This Pacha in the Morea." Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt, commanding in the **Morea** (Peloponnese) from 1825; contemporary reports accused him of deporting Greeks to Egypt and forcing conversions.

3 First intimation of a "plan." Canning refers to Lieven's confidential claim that a concerted policy of removal/enslavement was contemplated—news he initially found "monstrous."

4 "Turkish government and Ibrahim Pacha." The **Porte** (Ottoman central government) was alleged to

countenance Ibrahim's measures; Canning notes multiple reports but admits proof was incomplete.

- 5 **"Irruption of Mussulman conquerors."** A shorthand for the Ottoman conquest of Byzantine territories, culminating in 1453.
- 6 **"Barbary state."** Allusion to the North African corsair regencies (Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Morocco), known for piracy and Christian slavery; the fear was of a similar entity emerging in Greece.
- 7 **Algiers / Dardanelles.** Britain treated Barbary as quasi-independent to spare the **Porte** liability; the "fleet which exacted redress" is Lord Exmouth's 1816 bombardment of Algiers. The **Dardanelles** are the straits guarding access to Constantinople.
- 8 **"Between the Morea and Egypt."** A threat to interdict Egyptian transports—naval coercion that foreshadowed the allied intervention culminating at Navarino (20 Oct. 1827).
- 9 **Porte vs. Ibrahim.** London presses Istanbul either to disavow any compact with Ibrahim Pasha (Muhammad Ali's son) or to order him to desist.
- 10 **Admiralty / Levant / Reis Effendi.** The **Admiralty** directed the Royal Navy; the **Levant** means the eastern Mediterranean; the **Reis Effendi** was the Ottoman foreign minister.



The Massacre at Chios (1824) by Eugène Delacroix

PROTOCOL relative to the Affairs of Greece.

Signed at St. Petersburg, April 4, 1826.

His Britannic Majesty having been requested by the Greeks to interpose his good offices, in order to obtain their reconciliation with the Ottoman Porte; having, in consequence, offered his Mediation to that Power, and being desirous of concerting the measures of his Government, upon this subject, with his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias; and his Imperial Majesty, on the other hand, being equally animated by the desire of putting an end to the contest of which Greece and the Archipelago are the theatre, by an arrangement, which shall be consistent with the principles of religion, justice, and humanity;^{1 2 3}

The Undersigned have agreed:

1. That the arrangement to be proposed to the Porte, if that Government should accept the proffered Mediation, should have for its object, to place the Greeks towards the Ottoman Porte, in the relation hereafter mentioned:

Greece should be a dependency of that Empire, and the Greeks should pay to the Porte an annual tribute, the amount of which should be permanently fixed by common consent. They should be exclusively governed by Authorities, to be chosen and named by themselves, but in the nomination of which Authorities the Porte should have a certain influence.^{4 5}

In this state, the Greeks should enjoy a complete liberty of conscience, entire freedom of commerce, and should, exclusively, conduct their own internal government.

In order to effect a complete separation between individuals of the two nations, and to prevent the collisions which must be the necessary consequences of a contest of such duration, the Greeks should purchase the property of Turks, whether situated on the Continent of Greece, or in the Islands.⁶

2. In case the principle of a Mediation between Turks and Greeks should have been admitted, in consequence of the steps taken, with that view, by his Britannic Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, his Imperial Majesty would exert, in every case, his influence to forward the object of that Mediation. The mode in which, and the time at which, his Imperial Majesty should take part in the ulterior negotiations with the Ottoman Porte, which may be the consequence of that Mediation, should be determined hereafter by the common consent of the governments of his Britannic Majesty and his Imperial Majesty.⁷
3. If the Mediation offered by his Britannic Majesty should not have been accepted by the Porte, and whatever may be the nature of the relations between his Imperial Majesty and the Turkish government, his Britannic Majesty and his Imperial Majesty will still consider the terms of the arrangement specified in No. 1 of this Protocol, as the basis of any

reconciliation to be effected by their intervention, whether in concert or separately, between the Porte and the Greeks; and they will avail themselves of every favourable opportunity to exert their influence with both Parties, in order to effect their reconciliation on the above-mentioned basis.⁸

4. That his Britannic Majesty and his Imperial Majesty should reserve to themselves to adopt, hereafter, the measures necessary for the settlement of the details of the arrangement in question, as well as the limits of the Territory, and the names of the Islands of the Archipelago to which it shall be applicable, and which it shall be proposed to the Porte to comprise under the denomination of Greece.⁹
5. That, moreover, his Britannic Majesty and his Imperial Majesty will not seek, in this arrangement, any increase of Territory, nor any exclusive influence, nor advantage in commerce for their Subjects, which shall not be equally attainable by all other Nations.¹⁰
6. That his Britannic Majesty and his Imperial Majesty, being desirous that their Allies should become parties to the definitive arrangements of which this Protocol contains the outline, will communicate this Instrument, confidentially, to the Courts of Vienna, Paris, and Berlin, and will propose to them that they should, in concert with the Emperor of Russia, guarantee the treaty by which the reconciliation of Turks and Greeks shall be effected, as his Britannic Majesty cannot guarantee such a Treaty.¹¹

(Signed)

WELLINGTON.

NESSELRODE.

LIEVEN.¹²

Notes

1. **Ottoman Porte:** The “Sublime Porte,” i.e., the Ottoman central government at Constantinople (Istanbul).
2. **Emperor of all the Russias:** Nicholas I, who had just succeeded Alexander I (December 1825); Britain sought to coordinate with the new emperor on the Greek question.
3. **“Greece and the Archipelago”:** The **Greek War of Independence** (from 1821) across the mainland and the Aegean islands (then commonly called the Archipelago).
4. **“Dependency... annual tribute”:** A plan for **autonomy under Ottoman suzerainty**, not full independence—akin to the status of the Danubian Principalities—paying a fixed tribute while retaining internal self-government.

5. **Ottoman “influence” in nominations:** Envisaged a **confirmation/veto** role for the Porte over Greek-chosen authorities, to preserve suzerain prerogatives.
6. **“Purchase the property of Turks”:** A proposed **buy-out of Muslim landholders** to separate communities after years of violence—financially and practically doubtful, but aimed at preventing renewed inter-communal clashes.
7. **British ambassador at Constantinople:** (Sir) **Stratford Canning**, tasked to offer British **mediation** (“good offices”) to the Porte; “Constantinople” = Istanbul.
8. **“Whatever may be the nature of the relations...”:** A tacit hedge anticipating **Anglo-Russian action even if Russo-Ottoman relations deteriorated** (they soon did: Convention of Akkerman, 1826; war followed in 1828–29).
9. **“Limits... Islands... denomination of Greece”:** Boundaries were **left open** in 1826; later instruments (Treaty of London, 1827; London Protocols, 1830–32; Treaty of Constantinople, 1832) progressively **defined a smaller independent Greece** than maximalist proposals.
10. **No aggrandizement clause:** A standard **Concert of Europe** assurance—especially to Austria—that Britain and Russia sought **no territorial gains or exclusive influence** from the settlement.
11. **Guarantee & allies:** Britain and Russia would **invite Austria, France, and Prussia** to join a guarantee; Britain stated the King “**cannot guarantee**” at this stage—reflecting British caution about binding guarantees that might entail future armed enforcement.
12. **Signatories:** **Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington** (British plenipotentiary); **Count Karl Nesselrode** (Russian foreign minister); **Count Christoph von Lieven** (Russian ambassador). The instrument is the **Protocol of St. Petersburg (4 April 1826)**, a precursor to the **Treaty of London (6 July 1827)** that led to allied naval intervention at Navarino.



Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt by George Henry Laporte

TREATY BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND RUSSIA, FOR THE PACIFICATION OF GREECE (excerpts)

(LONDON) JULY 6, 1827.¹

Offer of Mediation.

ART. I. The Contracting Powers shall offer their Mediation to the Ottoman Porte, with the view of effecting a reconciliation between it and the Greeks.² This offer of Mediation shall be made to that Power immediately after the Ratification of the present Treaty, by means of a joint Declaration, signed by Plenipotentiaries of the Allied Courts at Constantinople;³ and, at the same time, a demand for an immediate Armistice shall be made to the Two Contending Parties, as a preliminary and indispensable condition to the opening of any negotiation.⁴

Bases of Arrangement.

ART. II. The Arrangement to be proposed to the Ottoman Porte shall rest upon the following bases:

Greece to be a Dependency of Turkey and Pay Tribute. Appointment of Greek Authorities.

The Greeks shall hold under the Sultan as under a Lord paramount;⁵ and, in consequence thereof, they shall pay to the Ottoman Empire an annual Tribute, the amount of which shall be fixed, once for all, by common agreement.⁶ They shall be governed by authorities whom they shall choose and appoint themselves, but in the nomination of whom the Porte shall have a defined right.⁷

Greeks to become Possessors of all Turkish Property on Payment of Indemnity.

In order to effect a complete separation between the individuals of the two nations, and to prevent the collisions which would be the inevitable consequence of so protracted a struggle, the Greeks shall become possessors of all Turkish Property situated either upon the Continent, or in the Islands of Greece, on condition of indemnifying the former proprietors, either by an annual sum to be added to the tribute which they shall pay to the Porte, or by some other arrangement of the same nature.⁸

Details of Arrangement and Boundaries to be settled by Negotiation.

ART. III. The Details of this Arrangement, as well as the Limits of the Territory upon the Continent, and the designation of the Islands of the Archipelago to which it shall be applicable, shall be settled by a negotiation to be hereafter entered into between the High Powers and the Two Contending Parties.⁹

Pacification of Greece.

ART. IV. The Contracting Powers engage to pursue the salutary work of the Pacification of Greece, upon the bases laid down in the preceding Articles, and to furnish, without the least delay, their Representatives at Constantinople with all the Instructions which are required for the execution of the Treaty which they now sign.¹⁰

Equal Advantages to be Conferred on All Nations.

ART. V. The Contracting Powers will not seek, in these Arrangements, any augmentation of territory, any exclusive influence, or any commercial advantage for their subjects, which those of every other nation may not equally obtain.¹¹

Guarantee of Three Powers.

ART. VI. The arrangements for reconciliation and Peace which shall be definitively agreed upon between the Contending Parties, shall be guaranteed by those of the Signing Powers who may judge it expedient or possible to contract that obligation. The operation and the effects of such Guarantee shall become the subject of future stipulation between the High Powers.¹²

Ratifications.

ART. VII. The present Treaty shall be ratified, and the Ratifications shall be exchanged in 2 months, or sooner if possible.¹³

In witness whereof, the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed the same, and have affixed thereto the Seals of their Arms. Done at London, the 6th day of July, in the year of Our Lord, 1827.

(L. S.) DUDLEY.¹⁴

(L. S.) LE PRINCE DE POLIGNAC.¹⁵

(L. S.) LIEVEN.¹⁶

ADDITIONAL [SECRET] ARTICLE.¹⁷

Commercial Relations to be entered into with Greece in case of Turkish Refusal of Mediation.

I. In case the Ottoman Porte should not, within the space of one month, accept the Mediation which is to be proposed to it, the High Contracting Parties agree upon the following measures: It shall be declared to the Porte, by their Representatives at Constantinople, that the inconveniences and evils described in the patent Treaty as inseparable from the state of things which has, for six years, existed in the East, and the termination of which, by the means at the command of the Sublime Ottoman Porte, appears to be still distant, impose upon the High Contracting Parties the necessity of taking immediate measures for forming a connection with the Greeks.^{18 19}

It is understood that this shall be effected by establishing commercial relations with the Greeks,

and by sending to and receiving from them, for this purpose, Consular Agents, provided there shall exist in Greece authorities capable of supporting such relations.²⁰

Measures to be adopted by Allied Powers in case of Non-Observance of Armistice.

II. If, within the said term of one month, the Porte does not accept the Armistice proposed in Article I of the patent Treaty, or if the Greeks refuse to carry it into execution, the High Contracting Powers shall declare to either of the Contending Parties which may be disposed to continue hostilities, or to both of them, if necessary, that the said High Powers intend to exert all the means which circumstances may suggest to their prudence, for the purpose of obtaining the immediate effects of the Armistice of which they desire the execution, by preventing, as far as possible, all collision between the Contending Parties;²¹ and in consequence, immediately after the above-mentioned declaration, the High Powers will, jointly, exert all their efforts to accomplish the object of such Armistice, without, however, taking any part in the hostilities between the Two Contending Parties.²²

Immediately after the signature of the present Additional Article, the High Contracting Powers will, consequently, transmit to the Admirals commanding their respective squadrons in the Levant, conditional Instructions in conformity to the arrangements above declared.²³

Notes

1. **Treaty of London (1827):** Tripartite accord by **Britain, France, and Russia** to mediate in the **Greek War of Independence** and stabilize the eastern Mediterranean; it set a framework that soon led to the **Battle of Navarino** (20 Oct. 1827).
2. **Ottoman Porte:** The central Ottoman government (“Sublime Porte”) at **Constantinople (Istanbul)**.
3. **Plenipotentiaries at Constantinople:** The allied ambassadors empowered to act—e.g., **Sir Edward/Stratford Canning** (GB), his French and Russian counterparts—making a **joint declaration** to the Porte.
4. **Armistice:** A formal suspension of hostilities designed to stop ongoing campaigns (notably **Ibrahim Pasha**’s operations in the Morea) while negotiations opened.
5. **“Lord paramount”:** Legal phrase for **suzerainty**—Greece to be **autonomous under Ottoman overlordship**, not fully independent.
6. **Fixed tribute:** Intended to end haggling; modeled on earlier Ottoman tributary arrangements (e.g., **Danubian Principalities**).
7. **Porte’s “defined right”:** Envisaged **confirmation/limited veto** over Greek-chosen authorities, preserving suzerain prerogatives.
8. **Transfer of property:** A proposed **buy-out/indemnity** of Muslim-owned land to separate

populations after the war—ambitious and hard to finance, but thought to reduce future friction.

9. **Boundaries left open:** The treaty deferred **frontiers and eligible islands**; later protocols (1830–32) progressively fixed them as Greece moved from autonomy to recognised **independence**.
10. **“Pacification” in practice:** Included diplomatic pressure and **naval measures** authorized by the treaty (and its secret article) to enforce ceasefire conditions.
11. **No-aggrandizement clause:** A **Concert of Europe** assurance that the Powers sought neither territory nor exclusive influence or trade privileges.
12. **Guarantee:** Optional **great-power guarantee** of the final settlement; details to be agreed later (eventually, Britain, France, and Russia guaranteed arrangements for independent Greece).
13. **Ratifications in two months:** A tight schedule to activate mediation quickly during the 1827 campaigning season.
14. **Dudley: John, 1st Earl of Dudley**, British Foreign Secretary (May 1827–Jan. 1828).
15. **Prince de Polignac: Jules de Polignac**, French plenipotentiary in London (later Prime Minister, 1829–1830).
16. **Lieven: Count (later Prince) Christoph von Lieven**, long-serving **Russian ambassador** in London.
17. **Secret Article:** Confidential rider empowering **graduated coercion** if mediation/armistice failed—central to how the treaty was executed at sea.
18. **“Patent Treaty”:** The **public (open)** text, contrasted here with the secret article.
19. **“Six years... in the East”:** Refers to the **Greek uprising since 1821** and its destabilising impact on eastern Mediterranean commerce and security.
20. **Commercial/consular ties:** De facto recognition **short of sovereignty**, contingent on a functioning Greek authority (e.g., the **Provisional Government** at Nafplio).
21. **Preventing “collision”:** The allies meant to **interpose their squadrons** to stop fighting—policy that culminated in the **Navarino** encounter.
22. **“Without... taking part”:** The intent was **coercive neutrality**; in practice, the standoff in **Navarino Bay** escalated into a battle that destroyed the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet.
23. **Admirals & the Levant:** Orders went to the allied commanders in the **eastern Mediterranean**—**Sir Edward Codrington** (GB), **Henri de Rigny** (France), **Lodewijk (Login) Heyden** (Russia).

King's Speech, 29 January 1828

His Majesty has viewed for some time past, with great concern, the state of affairs in the East of Europe.

For several years a contest has been carried on between the Ottoman Porte and the Inhabitants of the Greek Provinces and Islands, which has been marked on each side by excesses revolting to humanity.¹

In the progress of that Contest, the Rights of Neutral States, and the Laws which regulate the intercourse of civilized Nations, have been repeatedly violated, and the peaceful Commerce of His Majesty's Subjects has been exposed to frequent interruption, and to depredations, too often aggravated by acts of violence and atrocity.

His Majesty has felt the deepest anxiety to terminate the calamities, and avert the dangers, inseparable from hostilities, which constitute the only exception to the general tranquillity of Europe.

Having been earnestly entreated by the Greeks to interpose His good offices, with a view to effect a reconciliation between them and the Ottoman Porte, His Majesty concerted measures for that purpose, in the first instance, with the Emperor of Russia, and subsequently with his Imperial Majesty and the King of France.

His Majesty has given directions that there should be laid before you Copies of a Protocol signed at Saint Petersburg by the Plenipotentiaries of His Majesty and of his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia, on the 4th of April, 1826, and of the Treaty entered into between His Majesty and the Courts of the Tuilleries and of Saint Petersburg, on the 6th of July, 1827.²³

In the course of the measures adopted with a view to carry into effect the object of the Treaty, a collision, wholly unexpected by His Majesty, took place in the Port of Navarin between the Fleets of the Contracting Powers and that of the Ottoman Porte.⁴

Notwithstanding the valour displayed by the Combined Fleet, His Majesty deeply laments that this conflict should have occurred with the Naval Force of an ancient Ally; but he still entertains a confident hope that this untoward event will not be followed by further hostilities, and will not impede that amicable adjustment of the existing differences between the Porte and the Greeks, to which it is so manifestly their common interest to accede.⁵

Speeches in response (excerpts)

Earl of Chichester

It may have been apprehended, that the peace which the greater part of Europe has so long enjoyed, might be thereby endangered, and that we ourselves, now scarcely beginning to reap the advantages and to taste the sweets consequent on a restoration of peace, were on the point of being deprived of them by becoming involved in a war with our ancient ally, the Ottoman Porte. My lords, while I am free to confess, that I deeply lament, the loss of valuable lives sustained on that occasion, I cannot but admire—and I am certain every man in the country admires—the signal display of skill and valour made by our countrymen in the conflict—a courage and ability only equalled by the no less meritorious exertions and conduct of our Allies. But, my lords, while I willingly pay my tribute of admiration to the gallantry of our brave countrymen upon that occasion, and however proud I may feel of their conduct, I am convinced that every true and ardent friend of his country must lament, in common with myself, the occurrence of so unfortunate an accident, or event, as that to which I have alluded....

Had this engagement between the allied squadrons and the Ottoman fleet, been, on our part, the result of premeditated design, and not as it was, the consequence of unforeseen accident, or a misunderstanding not to be provided against, I should find this war a difficult one to be defended, and, as it appears to me, we might all have reason to entertain fears for its consequences. However, on referring to the Speech from the Throne, his Majesty, it will be seen, expressly declares, that so far from this engagement being an act of premeditation, or contemplated as a consequence likely to be produced by the instructions sent out by the government at home to the British admiral—so far from this being the case, the engagement, is characterised in the royal Speech, as an unexpected and “untoward event”....

My lords, I cannot help taking this opportunity of alluding to the dignified forbearance that has marked the conduct of the Sultan, since the occurrence of the event which brought the allied squadron in collision with the Turco-Egyptian fleet; and I look upon such conduct as an additional call upon Great Britain to do her part towards maintaining that ancient alliance, which, with scarcely any interruption, has subsisted for so many years between this country and the Ottoman Porte.⁶

Lord Strangford

My Lords, it is impossible to advert to a conflict, the occurrence of which we must all deplore, without admitting, that not even the glory connected with the achievement can, for a single instant, diminish the regret which our triumph at Navarin must continue to excite in the minds of Britons, so long as national honour and gratitude shall continue to be the characteristics of Englishmen—or so long as the remembrance of what Turkey has been to us, in the hour of peril, shall remain.⁷ I feel strongly, my lords, and it may be that I express myself warmly on this subject; and I ought to do so, for well I know the warmth of feeling which, in Turkey, prevails towards this country; and well do I know, and sincerely do I admire, the strict honour, the

downright, undeviating fidelity, with which she has long fulfilled engagements and maintained relations of amity towards us. I will add, my lords, that theirs is a fidelity which has not proved the weaker, because it happens to rest less upon the faith of treaties and written documents, than on the simple guarantee of oral promises, entered into three hundred years ago, and from that period, handed down, traditionally, from generation to generation.⁸ My lords, I look forward with a confidence considerably strengthened by the spirit that pervades his Majesty's Speech, to the renewal and continuance of that cordial feeling, which every friend to both countries must desire to see subsisting between Turkey and England.... Whatever may be said of Turkish apathy and indifference, there is one thing to which that people have never been indifferent—a friendly connexion with England. To those relations, of which there never should have been an interruption, I sincerely hope the two countries will speedily return.

Lord Holland

I trust that I am not yet become a piece of antiquity among you; and yet I recollect the first treaty of alliance that was ever formed by this country with Turkey.⁹ It was thought extraordinary at the time, that one of the stipulations of that treaty should be, that it should only last seven years; and yet it may appear more extraordinary to your lordships to learn, that before those seven years had expired, every article in that treaty had been violated over and over again by Turkey.¹⁰ Our ancient ally! I should like to know what was the nature of the alliance.... To go through the whole of the negative proof which I could produce to convince your lordships that Turkey is not the ancient ally of England would be tedious. I shall content myself with observing, that the anti-social race which now enjoys the empire of the Constantines, considers itself naturally at war with every nation with which it has not entered into a formal treaty of peace. I do not deny that it has entered into a treaty of peace with us; but, can a treaty of peace be fairly considered as a treaty of alliance? The first treaty made between this country and Turkey, I have no doubt, was considered by the Turks, as an act of grace and concession, yielded by them, in the plenitude of their power to those dogs of Christians, the Nazarene nations....

Mr. [Edmund] Burke, speaking, as he always did speak, like a man of genius and knowledge—what did Mr. Burke say about our ancient and faithful ally the Turk? His words, my lords, [in the House of Commons, 1791] were these—"I have never before heard it held forth, that the Turkish empire has ever been considered as any part of the balance of power in Europe. They had nothing to do with European power; they considered themselves as wholly Asiatic. Where is the Turkish resident at our court, the court of Prussia, or of Holland? They despise and contemn all Christian princes, as infidels, and only wish to subdue and exterminate them and their people. What have these worse than savages to do with the powers of Europe, but to spread war, destruction, and pestilence amongst them? The ministers and the policy which shall give these people any weight in Europe, will deserve all the bans and curses of posterity." Very strange language this in an English House of Commons, regarding an ancient and faithful ally! But let us see how this mighty master proceeds.—"All that is holy in religion, all that is moral and humane, demands an abhorrence of every thing which tends to extend the power of that cruel and wasteful

empire. Any Christian power is to be preferred to these destructive savages.”*¹¹ I do not mean to say that I approve of the sentiments here expressed. I do not quote them as rules for the guidance of your lordships; but I bring them, if the learned lord on the woolsack will permit me to use such a phrase, as evidence to the fact, and for the purpose of showing that the Turk was not considered by public men as the ancient ally of Great Britain....

However much I may lament the effusion of blood which has taken place at Navarino—however much I may lament that we have not yet accomplished so great an object as the pacification of two contending countries, and the liberation of Greece—that country from which we derived no small portion of all those virtues which exalt and dignify our nature, and to which we owe all that gives life and animation to our debates—however much I may mourn over the deferred hopes of a brave and gallant people—still if by that word it is meant to say, that the battle of Navarino is an obstacle to the independence of Greece, I cannot agree to its justice. I think it has furthered and promoted it. I look upon it as a step, and a great step, towards the pacification of Europe: and consider it of more use than a contrary policy could have been, in promoting that great and desirable object.¹²

The Duke of Wellington

With regard to the term “ancient ally,” I must state that the Ottoman power has long been an ally of this country; that the Ottoman power is an essential part of the balance of power in Europe; that the preservation of the Ottoman power has been, for a considerable number of years, an object, not only to this country, but to the whole of Europe; and that the revolutions which have occurred, the changes of possession which have taken place in that part of the world, render the preservation of the Ottoman power as an independent power, capable of defending itself, an essential object.¹³ My lords, I would likewise say, that not only has the preservation of that power been an object to this country, but it has likewise been an essential object to Russia. I believe I may safely say that, had it not been for the influence of the councils of this country over the Ottoman power during the late war, the disaster which finally led to the establishment of Europe in the state in which it is now found would not have occurred to the extent to which it did occur in the year 1812.¹⁴ Under these circumstances, although the word “ancient ally” will not apply to an alliance by treaties of a hundred years standing, yet there is no doubt whatever that the Ottoman power has been an ally of this country, and certainly an old ally.

My lords, there is another term made use of by his majesty in his Speech, and in the Address, I mean the term “untoward event.” My lords, the sense in which untoward is used is this. Under the treaty, which has not yet been laid before the House, and which cannot come regularly under discussion until it has been so laid, but which we have all read, it is particularly stated, as one of the stipulations of the alliance, that the operation of the treaty was not to lead to hostilities, and that the contracting powers were to take no part in hostilities. Therefore, my lords, I say, that when, unfortunately, the operations under the treaty did lead to hostilities, it was an untoward circumstance. My lords, it was hoped and expected, I believe, by the former government, that

this object would be effected without hostilities. I believe it, not only from the treaty itself, but I believe it because the force they provided to carry the measure into execution was such as to render it almost impossible that there should be hostilities. That being the case, I say that when these hostilities unfortunately took place, that when the course of the measures of the late government assumed the character of hostilities, instead of that of peace, it was an untoward event.¹⁵

Mr. Bankes

Was it, then, British policy to interfere in the internal affairs of other states. Was it not contrary to the law of nations to do so? And had they not, by the treaty into which they had entered, violated that law? The hon. and learned gentleman maintained that this was a contest for religion and liberty. It was no such thing. The treaty was founded on a false pretence; and they were next told that the intention was to put down piracy. But, was it necessary for England, the greatest naval country under the sun, to call to her assistance two other powers, to check and put down a system of piracy? Was it necessary that a fleet of sixteen sail of the line should be employed in such a business?¹⁷ It was ridiculous to make such an assertion. Could any one imagine it necessary to equip such a force for the purpose of putting down the piratical attempts of either or both of the hostile powers? No such thing. It was apparent, on the face of the matter, that the force was entirely directed against the power which was in amity with this country, and that, too, without any sufficing cause. In his view of the case, the entire subject, the treaty and every thing connected with it, should be referred to a secret committee: for it would not, perhaps, be proper that such an inquiry should be public. He should be glad to know in what situation this country stood at present; and whether we were at war or peace with Turkey.¹⁶

Lord Palmerston

The Speech... contained no censure upon the treaty which had produced the battle, nor any blame of the gallant admiral who had commanded in it.¹⁸ The Speech said, that the conflict was unexpected; and, certainly, there could be no doubt that it had been so. Because, although some collision might have been expected, yet the affair of Navarino took place in a way which could not be expected. It had arisen out of a combination of circumstances which could not be foreseen; and therefore it must have been a collision entirely unexpected by the government. It was impossible that his majesty could be advised to allude to a battle taking place under such circumstances, without an expression of regret,—a battle, speaking without the smallest condemnation of it, which had taken place between his fleets, and the fleets of a country with which we were not only not at war, but with which we were absolutely on terms of alliance.

Lord John Russell

With regard to the affair of Navarino, he regretted the phrase made use of in the Speech. He was bound to take the meaning of the words from the noble lord opposite; but certainly, if they were not intended to intimate, that the gallant admiral who fought that battle had fought it without instructions and unadvisedly, they were the most unlucky words, for their real purpose, that

could possibly have been chosen. For himself, he believed the battle to have been a glorious victory, and a necessary consequence of the treaty of London; and moreover, as honest a victory as had ever been gained since the beginning of the world.¹⁹

Notes

1. **Ottoman Porte.** The central government of the Ottoman Empire; “Porte” (from the Sublime Porte) is shorthand for the sultan’s administration.
2. **St Petersburg Protocol (4 Apr. 1826).** Anglo-Russian agreement proposing Greek autonomy under Ottoman suzerainty and joint mediation to end the war.
3. **Treaty of London (6 July 1827).** Tripartite treaty (Britain-France-Russia) to enforce an armistice and broker Greek self-government; it envisaged “pacific” coercion, not war.
4. **Navarino.** Bay on the southwest Peloponnese (Pylos), where on 20 Oct. 1827 the allied fleets destroyed the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet.
5. **Earl of Chichester** = Henry Thomas Pelham, 3rd Earl of Chichester (1804–1886), a Whig peer who succeeded his father in 1826 and sat in the House of Lords; not to be confused with his father, Thomas Pelham, 2nd Earl (1756–1826).
6. **“Turco-Egyptian fleet.”** The Ottoman fleet at Navarino included a powerful Egyptian contingent supplied by Mehmed Ali; the land campaign in the Morea was led by his son, Ibrahim Pasha.
7. **Lord Strangford.** Percy Smythe, 6th Viscount Strangford—British ambassador at Constantinople (1820–24) and later at St Petersburg.
8. **“Oral promises... three hundred years ago.”** Alludes to the long tradition of Anglo-Ottoman “Capitulations” (commercial privileges) beginning under Elizabeth I in the 1580s, often renewed by sultanic grants.
9. **Lord Holland.** Henry Vassall-Fox, 3rd Baron Holland—a leading Whig and critic of Tory foreign policy.
10. **“First treaty... only seven years.”** The Anglo-Ottoman defensive alliance of 5 Jan. 1799 (during the French invasion of Egypt), concluded for seven years.
11. **Burke (1791).** From Edmund Burke’s Commons speech during the Russian-Ottoman crisis over Oczakov; he argued Turkey was not part of the European balance of power.
12. **Effect of Navarino.** The victory hastened allied diplomacy; Greek autonomy/independence followed (London Protocols of 1829–30), amid the Russo-Ottoman War and the Treaty of Adrianople (1829).
13. **Duke of Wellington.** Arthur Wellesley, newly installed Prime Minister (Jan. 1828), defending the policy of preserving Ottoman independence as a European interest.

14. **“Disaster... in the year 1812.”** Britain encouraged the Porte to make peace with Russia (Treaty of Bucharest, May 1812), freeing Russian forces before Napoleon’s invasion.
15. **“Untoward event.”** The government’s phrase for Navarino: under the 1827 treaty the allies sought coercion short of war, yet contact escalated unexpectedly into battle.
16. **Mr. Bankes.** William John Bankes, Tory MP for Dorset, opposing intervention under the London treaty.
17. **“Sixteen sail of the line.”** A debating flourish; at Navarino the allies had roughly ten ships of the line (with additional frigates and smaller craft), not sixteen.
18. **Lord Palmerston / Codrington.** Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston (then recently out of office) notes the Speech avoided censuring Admiral Sir Edward Codrington, the allied commander at Navarino.
19. **Lord John Russell.** Leading Whig (later Prime Minister) arguing Navarino flowed logically from the 1827 treaty and was a legitimate, even necessary, victory.



The Battle of Navarino by George Philip Reinagle, Royal Museums Greenwich