

# Kent Academic Repository

## Full text document (pdf)

### Citation for published version

Caiani, Ambrogio A. (2020) War and Diplomacy in the Napoleonic Era, Sir Charles Stewart, Castlereagh and the Balance of Power in Europe by Reider Payne. Review of: Reider Payne, War and Diplomacy in the Napoleonic Era, Sir Charles Stewart, Castlereagh and the Balance of Power in Europe; London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, ISBN: 9781788315128 by Payne,

### DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2020.1760042>

### Link to record in KAR

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/81615/>

### Document Version

Publisher pdf

#### Copyright & reuse

Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

#### Versions of research

The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version.

Users are advised to check <http://kar.kent.ac.uk> for the status of the paper. **Users should always cite the published version of record.**

#### Enquiries

For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:

[researchsupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:researchsupport@kent.ac.uk)

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at <http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html>

## War and Diplomacy in the Napoleonic Era, Sir Charles Stewart, Castlereagh and the Balance of Power in Europe

by Reider Payne, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, xvii + 262 pp., £85.00 (hb), ISBN: 9781788315128

Ambrogio A. Caiani

To cite this article: Ambrogio A. Caiani (2020) War and Diplomacy in the Napoleonic Era, Sir Charles Stewart, Castlereagh and the Balance of Power in Europe, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 31:2, 386-388

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2020.1760042>



Published online: 08 Jun 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Guizot, was often compelled to indulge in sabre-rattling due to warmongering liberal politicians and their followers. The micro-principalities of the Italian peninsula replicated this attitude. Fear of revolution and powerful imperial neighbours had restrained the ambitions of such medium-sized principalities. Once the revolutionary conflagration of 1848 removed these restraints, Piedmont seized the opportunity launching a war of aggrandisement, euphemistically called the First War of Italian Independence *ex post facto*.

This book is certainly a major intervention in current debates about the aftermath of the Vienna Congress. Many studies on the negotiations in the Habsburg capital in 1814–1815 have tended to see it as heralding an era of sustained peace and prosperity. Some theorists have gone as far as arguing that the Concert of Europe foreshadowed the beginning of modern international law and global institutions. Šedivý, as he has done boldly in the past, questions such hasty conclusions and presents a nuanced and compelling picture. Metternich's Europe, if such a thing ever existed, was very fragile and beset by crises and war scares. The mastery of the subject, and the in-depth research displayed in this study, make it a magisterial work of scholarship. However, I question the author's decision not to delve more into the context of the 1820s in his introduction. The revolutions of Naples and Piedmont were of the utmost importance in re-shaping European diplomacy, and a deeper analysis would have helped the reader better understand the subsequent events and arguments more clearly. Finally, more engagement with Italian historiography would have been helpful. Much exists in the work of Meriggi, Mascilli Migliorini, and others that would further enrich this book. These are, nevertheless, secondary concerns about a successful work that makes a major contribution to the debate on Europe after the Vienna Congress: one lucidly written, clearly argued, and based on some profound research. Scholars and students alike in the field of nineteenth century diplomatic history must read this.

Ambrogio A. Caiani

*School of History, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK*

 [a.a.caiani@kent.ac.uk](mailto:a.a.caiani@kent.ac.uk)

© 2020 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2020.1760041>



**War and Diplomacy in the Napoleonic Era, Sir Charles Stewart, Castlereagh and the Balance of Power in Europe**, by Reider Payne, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, xvii + 262 pp., £85.00 (hb), ISBN: 9781788315128

In winter 1814, a quarrel erupted between a tall, uniformed gentleman and two Viennese cabbies. Lubricated by alcohol, and in true British sporting fashion, he challenged them to a boxing match. The cabbies declined the confrontation and, instead, proceeded to beat him senseless with their whips. Embarrassingly, the man's face bore the scars of this encounter for some days to come. This incident could be dismissed as trivial were not the gentleman in question Charles Stewart, British ambassador at Vienna and brother of Lord Castlereagh, the foreign secretary. At first glance, the younger sibling of one of the chief architects of Napoleon's defeat is an unlikely subject for a biography. Much to Dr. Payne's credit, he has rescued Stewart from oblivion. There was more to this

quarrelsome, drunken, womanising, and Flashman-like character than would first meet the eye.


This is the first biography dedicated to Stewart since 1861, when Sir Archibald Allison published a three-volume study on the political partnership between Castlereagh and his younger brother. Since then, Sir Charles Webster, one of the doyens of diplomatic history, dismissed Stewart as an inept blunderer in his study of British foreign policy during the Congress of Vienna. Generations of historians, following Webster's example, have not been generous to Castlereagh's younger sibling. Payne's assessment is far more sympathetic and in depth than any to date. This book counters such negative views not only with determination, but does so with some gusto and narrative flair, which will make it appealing to the more general reader. This biography is based on gargantuan archival research. Throughout these pages, the private papers – held in the British Library and Public Record Office of Northern Ireland – of no fewer than 15 nineteenth-century statesmen have been sifted painstakingly to recover Stewart's views and actions during the Napoleonic wars and their immediate aftermath. A scrupulous analysis of Sir George Jackson's papers found in the National Archives adds to this impressive erudition. A fellow diplomat close to Stewart, his observations and correspondence are particularly insightful.

Unlike his well-educated elder brother, Stewart joined the army as soon as he left Eton at the tender age of 16. He received his baptism of fire at the battle of Donauwörth in 1796. Through his family's political patronage, he rose to become Wellington's adjutant general during the Peninsular War. Here he showed immense bravery and participated actively in some of the key engagements against Napoleon's marshals. The death of his first wife, and a personality clash with Wellington, precipitated a period of prolonged leave in Britain in 1811. Two years later, he found himself appointed British minister to Prussia. Here he followed the headquarters of King Frederick William III and Tsar Alexander and got a privileged frontline view of the 1813 campaign in Germany that culminated in Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig. During this posting, he behaved unlike a diplomat by participating actively in military actions and showing great bravery under fire. After the Allies took Paris in 1814, he transferred to the British Embassy at Vienna where he, again, was at the forefront of the negotiations taking place at the Congress held amongst the European Great Powers.

Stewart would remain in the Habsburg capital until 1823, when the suicide of his older brother cut short his political career. The death of his beloved Robert elevated him to the title of Marquess of Londonderry. In the meantime, he had remarried – Frances Anne Vane-Tempest, a fabulously wealthy heiress to a Durham mining fortune. Stewart was to live out the rest of his days as one of the richest men in England. His lavish spending and magnificent homes attracted negative comment when he failed to appreciate how the potato blight threatened the livelihoods of his Irish tenants. His life from 1823 to 1854 was one where he received many honours and became a popular travel writer. However, he dwelled in the political wilderness unappreciated by his fellow conservatives.

Payne's work brings out clearly the restless bravery of this soldier, and his determination to keep his elder brother informed of events in Europe, which he was witnessing first-hand. Remarkably well informed when it came to diplomatic and military events on the continent, Stewart knew how to charm monarchs, ministers, and diplomats when he wished. Like all revisionist biographies, there is a tendency in these pages to go from one extreme to the other. Payne seems to have fallen in love with his hero, which makes him a little too forgiving of his foibles. Stewart was a man beset by inner demons. He had pathological fear of boredom and, when the Napoleonic wars ended, began a prolonged

affair with the bottle. This made him quarrelsome, promiscuous, and plainly rude. This biography lists well the many diplomatic *faux pas* made by Stewart – a ghastly potato-flinging incident is particularly noteworthy. Without Castlereagh's patronage, or constant intervention in his favour, it seems difficult to believe that his younger brother would have made any headway on his own. Indeed, Castlereagh's tragic death proves this beyond any doubt. From 1823, Stewart entered a life of internal exile where he appeared at ceremonial military reviews and became lord lieutenant of Durham. However, never allowed near the levers of power again, as Lord Londonderry, he resented his obscurity and denial of consideration for frontline state service. This is a very fine biography of an extremely adventurous and fascinating, not mention complicated, life – Payne's research will without doubt remain unsurpassed for a long time.

Ambrogio A. Caiani  
*School of History, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK*  
 [a.a.caiani@kent.ac.uk](mailto:a.a.caiani@kent.ac.uk)

© 2020 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2020.1760042>



**Diplomacy and Intelligence in the Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean World**, edited by Mika Suonpaa and Owain Wright, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, 264 pp., \$91.80 (hardback), ISBN: 9781474277044

Nineteenth century wars, and in particular the Napoleonic wars, the Greek Revolution, the French conquest of North Africa, the Crimean War, the Italian wars of reunification, the British occupation of Egypt, and the opening of the Suez Canal created new geostrategic realities for the contending Powers and thus had a direct impact on their contemporary strategies. European emperors, kings, and their chancellors either listed their information demands – today's 'intelligence requirements' – or let their local representatives – ambassadors and consuls – determine them, acquire them, and report their findings. Information had to be relevant to the leaders' needs and led to action. Diplomats had to employ spies to gather secret information on politico-military issues so as to support their national strategy.

A traveller or wondering diplomat-explorer could write interesting and insightful correspondence describing general conditions in a location. Commercial intelligence may or may not have provided the information demanded. Historians are called to assess what constitutes intelligence reporting for state purposes. Furthermore, the existence of a network does not mean intelligence functions as defined today: episodes of trade intrigue and competition do not amount to espionage. This book 'examines the activities of diplomats in the expansion of their home country's informal imperial ambitions ... the book combines a focus on the extension of the informal British Empire with an exploration of the imperial ambitions of other states, such as France, Austro-Hungary and Japan'. The chapters are: 1. 'The Swedish Consulate in Tripoli and Information Gathering on Diplomacy, Everyday Life, and the Slave Trade, 1795–1844', by Joachim Östlund; 2. 'Hanmer Warrington and British Imperial Intelligence Gathering in Tripoli, 1814–1836', by Sara El Gaddari; 3. 'The Russian Consulate in the Morea and the Coming of the Greek War of Independence, 1816–1821', by Lucien J. Fraryl; 4. 'Austrian Intelligence and National Interests in the Mediterranean in the Early Nineteenth Century', by David Schriff; 5. "Playing the Liberal Game": Sir James