

Sir Frank Lascelles - a diplomat of the Victorian Empire, 1841-1920

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

The University of Leeds
School of History

October 2010

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit
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Acknowledgements

This thesis would only have been possible with the aid of a Doctoral Award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which enabled me to complete three years of research without financial worries.

I am most indebted to Professor Keith Wilson of the University of Leeds, for steering me through my first year as a Doctoral student, and to Professor Holger Afflerbach and Dr. Owen Hartley for taking up the reigns thereafter as my supervisors and guiding me to completion of my thesis. I am also indebted for the advice at various stages of Professor Roy Bridge, and Dr. Richard Whiting of the University of Leeds, and Dr. Gaynor Johnson of the University of Salford, to all the staff of the School of History and the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds and of the numerous archives I have visited, especially to Robert Harcourt Williams of Hatfield House; to the staff of the National Archives, Kew; Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge University Library and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; the British Library, News International Archive and Imperial War Museum in London; and of the Bodleian Library and Balliol College, Oxford.

Lastly but by no means least I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to my parents, Andrew and Mary Bourne, and my partner Lisa Baxter for their unstinting encouragement throughout four often very trying years.

For any errors in the manuscript, I alone bear the responsibility.

Abstract

Sir Frank Cavendish Lascelles (1841-1920) was a typical British diplomat, born into an aristocratic family, educated at Harrow and serving in the diplomatic service from the age of twenty to his retirement at sixty-seven. He was in Paris at the time of the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1), in Egypt in the run up to British occupation (1878-9), and was at Prince Alexander of Battenberg's side at the time of the Bulgarian crisis of 1885-86. From here he moved to the forefront of defending Britain's Imperial interests, as Minister to Teheran (1891-94), and then as Ambassador to St Petersburg (1894-5), before finally arriving at Berlin in the last third of his diplomatic life. His career can tell us much about the priorities in British foreign policy, and how they changed throughout the period 1870-1914.

Although previous studies of Lascelles's life have tended to focus on the last years of his career and his estrangement from the growing 'anti-German' trend at the British Foreign Office before the Great War, this work, by examining his Berlin post in the context of his broader diplomatic experience, aims to build up a picture of Sir Frank Lascelles as a Victorian diplomat as distinct from the Edwardian generation, focussed on a policy of conciliation and protecting Britain's interests as he conceived them, and avoiding sources of possible antagonism. For the main part, this meant collaboration where allowable with Britain's rivals, but also a recognition of the value to Britain of the Triple Alliance powers who proved a valuable safeguard against the threat of Russia and France arguably up until shortly before 1907, when Britain came to terms with them. This fact among others explains the ambassador's seemingly disproportionate focus on retaining the friendship of Europe's largest Power and its ruler, the wisdom of which many contemporaries were increasingly inclined to dispute.

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Note on common abbreviations in the text

Series of works

- B.D. *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*
- B.D.F.A. *British documents on Foreign Affairs: reports and papers from the Foreign Office confidential print.*
- G.P. *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914*

A full citation for these series can be found in the bibliography.

Journal titles

- B.I.H.R. *Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research*

Archival sources

- B.L. *British Library, London*
- C.C.A.C. *Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge*
- F.O. *Foreign Office records, National Archives, Kew*
- P.H.A. *Petworth House Archives, consulted at West Sussex Record Office, Chichester*
- S.P. *Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House*

A full guide to abbreviations of archival sources can be found in the bibliography

Introduction

Although in the words of Matthew Seligmann, ‘there is some debate as to exactly when and why it occurred,’¹ in the last years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century, British foreign policy turned away from what is generally termed Great Britain’s ‘splendid isolation’, towards a policy of alignment with other Powers, in an attempt to meet mounting challenges posed to the British Empire’s global interests. The phrase ‘isolation’ brings with it problems of definition; it has generally been taken to mean the eschewing of commitments to, or alliances, with other Powers, or as A.J.P. Taylor puts it, an ‘aloofness from the European Balance of Power’ although whether it was a policy, or simply a frame of mind, is open to debate, with one historian simply concluding that the use of the term isolation ‘vanished’ with the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance treaty in February 1902 and was little heard of thereafter ‘except by way of retrospect and, occasionally, of nostalgia’.²

This change in policy was a response to a confluence of circumstances which dramatically altered the ‘long peace’ of the Victorian era to the detriment of Great Britain. The hardening of alliances between Britain’s Great Power rivals with the conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 meant that Britain had to review her traditional Mediterranean role of seeking, by maritime means, to protect the Ottoman Empire from dissolution. The late-nineteenth century eruption of enthusiasm for imperialism among European powers meant that Britain’s own imperial interests, primarily centred around India and the protection of overland and

¹ Matthew S. Seligmann, *Spies in uniform: British military and naval intelligence on the eve of the First World War* (Oxford, 2006), p.1.

² C.H.D. Howard, *Splendid Isolation: A study of Ideas concerning Britain’s inter-national position and foreign policy during the later years of the third Marquis of Salisbury* (London, 1967), p xiii; *ibid*, pp.96-97.

overseas routes to the sub-continent, were put under increased pressure, by Russia in Asia and by France in Egypt, a threat which was greatly magnified between 1899 and 1902 when Britain became enmeshed in a colonial war in South Africa and was unable to free up resources to defend significant parts of her empire. As the South African war proceeded, Russia advanced in Persia, France made gains in North Africa, and Germany also took advantage of Britain's difficulties to extract colonial concessions for herself and build a powerful fleet to rival that of the Royal Navy. The opening up of the Far Eastern Question between 1894 and 1900, centring on China (where Britain had hitherto enjoyed a monopoly of trade but now faced competition from European rivals), provided an additional challenge to Britain's authority as a Great Power. It was against this background that a re-orientation occurred in British foreign policy from around 1900 if not before (for there is a growing case for locating the seeds of this change in the last Foreign Office administration of Lord Salisbury, 1895-1900), and she apparently abandoned her isolation.³ The tangible results were that Britain aligned herself with another maritime power in the Far East, Japan (1902), in an attempt to redress the alteration in the naval balance of power, and subsequently redistributed her own naval forces (1904); concluded a colonial settlement with France (1904), demarcating spheres of influence in, among other places, Morocco and Egypt, and reached a similar agreement with Russia, agreeing zones of influence in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet (1907). This was all the outcome of intense soul-searching on the part of the diplomatic, military and naval institutions.

³ See e.g. G.W. Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900-1907* (London, 1963); C.J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean 1886-1896* (London, 1965); C.H.D. Howard, *Splendid Isolation*; Aaron L. Friedberg, *The weary titan: Britain and the experience of relative decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton, 1988); Zara S. Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the origins of the First World War*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke, 2003). On the latter point, and a cautious revision of the supposed abandonment of isolation, see T.G. Otte, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894-1905* (Oxford, 2007).

In the welter of books on this subject, the historiography of the period has tended to concentrate overtly on the link between the ending of Britain's isolation and the deterioration of Anglo-German relations as the main driving force for this occurrence. The authoritative academic work on Anglo-German relations in the period prior to 1914 is Paul Kennedy's compendious tome, *The Rise of the Anglo-German antagonism, 1860-1914*, which traces the onset of Anglo-German tension, especially from the 1890s, a phenomenon Kennedy puts down to a mixture of feuds between dynasts, differences in ideology, in foreign policy goals, domestic politics, imperial interests and above all to economic rivalry. Kennedy's approach to the subject is perfectly valid within the carefully prescribed confines of his analysis— he has little time for what he terms the ‘“red herring”’ of earlier studies asking whether a clash between Britain and Germany was ‘“inevitable”’, to which he responds that ‘the forces and personalities which determined events moved, consciously or unconsciously, in a certain direction which the historian obviously wishes to study and understand better’ and that ‘it is idle to speculate upon the alternatives which were *not* chosen.’⁴

This is too determinist for many to swallow.⁵ What T.G. Otte calls the ‘focus on Germany, with its implicit teleology centred on 1914’⁶ proceeds from the knowledge that Britain and Germany did go to war in 1914 (albeit each on behalf of an ally or *entente* partner) and that therefore the historian's examination of nineteenth century diplomacy has been coloured by starting from a predetermined outcome. Otte

⁴ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (London, 1980), pp.465-6.

⁵ As Keith Neilson has written: ‘by linking Great Britain's long-term fall from the ranks of the great powers with the known fact that she went to war against Germany in 1914, a coherence is imposed on the events of the period from 1895-1914.’ Keith Neilson, ‘“Greatly Exaggerated”: The Myth of the Decline of Great Britain before 1914’, *The International History Review*, XIII, 4, (1991), p. 696.

⁶ T.G. Otte, *The China Question*, p.5.

has convincingly argued that the over-emphasis on Anglo-German relations in historiography masks longer term trends in British foreign policy – for example, overlooking the fact that up to 1904 or 1907 at least (if not beyond) France and Russia respectively were Britain’s great rivals in the Imperial sphere. This is not to suggest that Germany did not of course constitute a growing concern for Britain⁷ but suggests that more attention should be diverted to the ‘geo-strategic periphery’ in accounting for these changes.⁸ While historians like George Monger acknowledged the broader context Britain’s global concerns, he too concentrated too much on the threat to Britain from Germany. Otte’s work on the role of the Far Eastern crisis (1894-1905) in the reorientation of British foreign policy has pointed to broader, deeper timeframes for analysis of changes, and wider geographical horizons, and his emphasis on the influence of ‘membership of different political generations’ in shaping outlooks also points to a useful tool for examination the attitudes of British foreign-policy makers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹ In this connection, another recent study, painting 1900-1907 as a ‘hinge era’ when a loss of flexibility of and hardening of diplomatic ties occurred, has used the example of family networks and individual case studies, and in particular the influence of a ‘wendegeneration’ or transitional generation of British diplomats, to demonstrate how perceptions of Germany changed and led to a gravitation away from Germany towards association with other Powers, particularly with the much-neglected United

⁷ Few would go so far as K.M. Wilson, who asserts that the German threat was ‘invented’ by the Foreign Office, who were ‘“painting the German devil on the wall”’ to justify their policy objectives Keith M. Wilson, *The Policy of the Entente: Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy, 1904-1914* (Cambridge, 1985), p.108.

⁸ The use of the term is common to all works by T.G. Otte, but see e.g. Otte, *The China Question*, p. 103.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.5-6.

States.¹⁰ Brechtken's work suggests that by examining individual attitudes a far more variegated picture of the complex attitudes of historical actors may emerge, paying attention to differentiation in outlook, position, and experience.

In his exhaustive work on the rise of the Anglo-German antagonism, Paul Kennedy is quite dismissive of 'detailed character-analysis' as a tool for examining international relations. Speaking particularly about Paul Wolff von Metternich (German ambassador to London, 1903-1912), and Sir Frank Lascelles, he writes: 'since their unenviable and at times unhappy careers were chiefly affected by larger processes, it is to the latter that attention should be focused...The 'stream of time', to use Bismarck's phrase, possessed currents affecting the Anglo-German relationship which few if any individuals could steer against.'¹¹ He thus happily subordinates individual human agency to such larger forces as socio-economic factors. Mainly for reasons of space Kennedy's impressive work indulges in what he terms 'The "lumping" process' to understand 'the overall balance of forces' in both countries, which he says were pointing towards war 'well before the actual events of 1914'.¹²

While not wishing to detract from the merits of Kennedy's work, recent historians have encountered a problem with his methodology. Frank McDonough, historian of the Conservative Party's views on Anglo-German relations attitudes before 1914, criticises what he terms the 'indiscriminate lumping together of different views on Anglo-German relations' in relation to political parties, going on to argue that a detailed study reveals a more intricate diversification of views on foreign affairs

¹⁰ Magnus Brechtken, *Scharnierzeit, 1895-1907: Persönlichkeitsnetze und internationale Politik in den deutsch-britisch-amerikanischen Beziehungen vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Mainz, 2006)

¹¹ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914*, p. 434.

¹² *Ibid*, p.435.

than even a monolith of the scope of Kennedy's would allow.¹³ It is feasible to argue a similar case for the role of diplomats in the pre-1914 era.

The researches of Zara Steiner into the role of officials at the Foreign Office prior to 1914 have already gone a long way to breaking down the perception that '“officials do not make policy...they carry out the policy of the foreign secretary”'.¹⁴ Steiner has issued a clarion call for international historians to identify the actors, the 'human beings' at the heart of 'any...institution engaged in international affairs' to find out 'what roles our actors took,' placing them within their environment, and dominant belief frameworks of the time, and to learn 'something about their assumptions, both spoken and unspoken', and how their perceptions were shaped by 'class, education, generation, department and international assignments'.¹⁵ In the past few decades historians such as Steiner, D.C. Watt, and more recently Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte have paid increasing attention to the role of individual human agency in nineteenth century diplomacy, which was formally conducted by just a few individuals.¹⁶ Sir Frank Lascelles and his colleagues were part of a 'small group of men, who constituted the foreign-policy- making elite', a term first coined by D.C. Watt and now used widely by international historians.¹⁷ This elite were 'united by class, wealth, upbringing, and schooling',¹⁸ and together they constituted what has

¹³ Frank Mc Donough, *The Conservative Party and Anglo-German Relations, 1905-1914* (Basingstoke, 2007), p.10.

¹⁴ Quoted in Zara Steiner, 'On Writing International History: Chaps, Maps and Much More', *International Affairs* 73 (1997), pp. 532-3. See the still seminal work, Z.S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

¹⁵ Zara Steiner, 'On Writing International History: Chaps, Maps and Much More', pp. 536-8.

¹⁶ The Foreign Office itself, numbered just eighty-five souls in 1851. K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886* (Oxford, 1998), p.45.

¹⁷ Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917* (Oxford, 1995), p.3. See D.C. Watt, *Personalities and Politics: Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the 20th Century* (London, 1965), pp. 1-15.

¹⁸ Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar*, p.50; see also Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy*, p.173.

been called either the ‘official’ or ‘Foreign Office mind’¹⁹. It was such individuals – the diplomats, Foreign Office mandarins, and of course their political masters, who helped shape foreign policy. They saw themselves as free actors, not victims of historical forces (albeit they were naturally confined by their social, cultural, economic and political environment), and they operated within the context of Britain’s worldwide imperial concerns, as well as dealing with the ebbs and flows of European diplomacy. Thus the multiplicity of experiences by these officials may help instruct us in trying to unravel the nature and meaning of the changes in foreign policy around 1900. Work on Foreign Office officials has been complemented more recently by a natural broadening out of the study of individual agents in foreign policy, which has seen the publication of monographs on the role of political parties, the press, and naval and military attachés at Berlin before the Great War.²⁰

By contrast to their Foreign Office counterparts, there have been relatively few studies on the role of British diplomats in foreign capitals. The relative lack of interest can easily be explained. By the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ambassadorial independence had been sharply curtailed and few heads of mission contradicted instructions directly. Edwardian ambassadors were ‘expected to report intelligently, represent his country’s interests and conduct whatever negotiations the foreign secretary deemed necessary...’,²¹ but beyond this their role was apparently circumscribed, to the extent that even Britain’s forthright ambassador to Paris from 1905, Sir Francis Bertie, lamenting his lack of influence, complained that he was seen as ‘only a d—d marionette’. However these men were important in providing

¹⁹ See, e.g., Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, chapter 21, pp. 432-441; T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge, forthcoming 2011).

²⁰ Linda B. Fritzing, *Diplomat without portfolio: Valentine Chirol, His Life and The Times*, (New York, 2006); Matthew S. Seligmann, *Spies in Uniform*; Frank Mc Donough, *The Conservative Party and Anglo-German Relations, 1905-1914*.

²¹ Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy*, p. 173.

information on the country they were assigned to, a 'mental map' which informed perceptions and decisions in the metropolis, and in acting as the 'partner' of the foreign secretary abroad.²² Though not hermetically sealed from external and domestic factors, the diplomatic corps formed a group with its own assumptions, interacting with elites with similar views, while holding its own individual viewpoints, and its members are worthy of further study.

Sir Frank Lascelles: a suitable case for treatment?

There are several reasons why Sir Frank Lascelles (1841-1920) stands out as a good case study of a diplomat of Victorian and Edwardian diplomacy. Although Sir Frank Lascelles lived into and beyond the Edwardian age, both his formative and his diplomatic experiences were forged in the Victorian era, during which he served over eighty per-cent of his professional life. Born just after the accession of Queen Victoria, Sir Frank was inducted into the diplomatic service when Germany had yet to unite, France was still Britain's most serious foe in Europe, and Russia, recently defeated in the Crimean war, was making her presence felt in Asia just as Britain was assuming more control over India and had renewed her pledge to uphold the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. When Lascelles ended his career Britain's traditional Mediterranean policy had been abandoned, Russia and France had become the *entente* partners of Britain, a united Germany rather than a revived France was perceived as the greatest threat to the balance of power in Europe, and despite deals with her rivals Britain's ability to defend her Empire was in serious question, especially because of

²² Keith Neilson, "Only a d...d marionette?" The influence of ambassadors on British foreign policy, 1904-1914', in M. Dockrill & B. McKercher, *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy 1890-1950* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 56-57.

the transformation of European countries into Imperial powers, and her maritime preponderance was challenged. Lascelles thus stands Janus-like at a crucial watershed in Britain's diplomatic history.

In addition, the geographical range of Lascelles's career is illustrative of the scope of Britain's power and interests. His career was spent in the vanguard of Britain's Imperial problems – after witnessing the German occupation of Paris (1870-1), he was discharged to Egypt in the run up to British occupation (1878-9), was at Prince Alexander of Battenberg's side at the time of the heightened Near Eastern tension of the Bulgarian crisis (1885-86), and from here moved on into the forefront of defending Britain's Imperial interests, as Minister to Teheran (1891-94), and then as Ambassador to St Petersburg (1894-5), before finally arriving at Berlin in the last third of his diplomatic life (1895-1908). His career can tell us much about priorities in British foreign policy, how they changed throughout the period of 1870-1914, by serving as a prism through which prevailing foreign policy principles can be glimpsed.

Lascelles's final posting at the Berlin embassy where the burgeoning Anglo-German antagonism of the pre-war years took centre stage has naturally received treatment before now. This period has been the topic of two earlier D Phil theses, the first by Cornelia Brooke,²³ and the second, more recently, by Willem-Alexander Van't Padje.²⁴ Cornelia Brooke's thesis dealt exclusively with the first five years Lascelles's Embassy, but W.A. Van't Padje's work has tackled Lascelles' entire

²³ Cornelia E. Brooke, 'The Queen's Ambassador to Her Grandson Sir Frank Lascelles: A Study of Anglo-German Relations from 1895-1900' (D Phil thesis Vassar College, New York, 1971).

²⁴ Willem-Alexander Van't Padje, 'At the heart of the growing Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry: Two Ambassadors at Berlin 1884-1908' (D Phil thesis, St John's College, Oxford, 2001).

career at Berlin in the context of the growing 'imperialist rivalry' between Great Britain and Germany.

Van't Padje's thesis seems to implicitly accept the prevailing narrative on the inevitability of the drift towards deteriorating Anglo-German relations by painting Lascelles as the casualty of forces beyond his control, and as such Lascelles is criticised for his failure to see that his endeavours in Berlin to improve relations would ultimately be fruitless. He is portrayed as a lone voice in the wilderness in the twilight years of his diplomatic life. Yet this picture does little justice to other parts of the diplomat's career, for although Lascelles' professional life is often (understandably) examined chiefly for its relevance to Anglo-German relations, this highlights the underlying bias in the historiography. Berlin accounted for thirteen years of a remarkably colourful and varied forty-seven year career.

This thesis therefore will seek to examine Lascelles not exclusively within the framework of an inevitable drift towards the irreversible event of war in August 1914, but on his own terms, as a diplomat of the Victorian age. There has been no sustained attempt made to examine Lascelles' diplomatic career from 1861 up to and through his time in Germany, and no attempt to study his career as an agitator for great Anglo-German understanding from 1911-1914, despite the fact that Lascelles did leave behind a vast collection of private papers, and that correspondence bearing his name is extant in the private papers of many other statesmen, not to mention of course on the vast pile of official papers in the National Archives, Kew.

Regrettably, Lascelles left no memoirs or extensive diaries, beyond a short extract from his time as a young diplomat in Paris in 1870-1. To some extent the course of events from July 1914 onwards determined that Sir Frank's voice remained muffled thereafter, although he came tantalisingly close to writing down his

diplomatic experiences. According to his close friend, the former *Times* Editor Ignatius Valentine Chirol, in the autumn of 1917 the ageing diplomat conducted ‘one or two “interviews”’ with a man who eventually ‘showed himself to be utterly incompetent and merely a literary hack out for making a bit of money.’ Sir Frank had given him ‘to say the least some encouragement to write a book of sorts about his diplomatic career.’ Realising his mistake but hesitant to put his foot down, Sir Frank was persuaded by Chirol to extricate himself from the project, whose verdict was telling of the disrepute into which the ‘old’ pre-war diplomacy had already begun to sink: ‘anything is better than a book which would – at best – have made him and the diplomatic service, which has enough hostile critics any how nowadays, look extraordinarily foolish.’²⁵

In addition to drawing on Lascelles’s own personal correspondence with successive Foreign Secretaries, this work will incorporate documents from the official archives of the Foreign Office, Lascelles’s often candid correspondence with, among others, Ignatius Valentine Chirol (*The Times*’ correspondent and Foreign Editor) Sir Thomas Sanderson (Permanent Under-Secretary of the British Foreign Office 1895-1905), Sir Nicholas O’Conor and Cecil Spring-Rice (both fellow diplomats and friends) Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (the famous poet and anti-Imperialist), as well as taking into account observations of Lascelles’s character and views from individuals such as George Saunders, the *Times*’ Correspondent at Berlin, and the until recently little consulted diaries of the naval attaché at Berlin between 1906-1908, Admiral Philip Wylie Dumas.

The study will seek to answer the question of whether Lascelles really saw Anglo-German conflict as inevitable or even as a likely corollary of a reorientation in

²⁵ Chirol to Florence Spring Rice, 12 July 1918, Spring Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/17.

British foreign policy. It will ask how important this phenomenon was within the context of Britain's larger concerns? What were the key priorities of British foreign policy as glimpsed through his eyes up to and including the 'end of isolation'? How did generational factors shape his views? To what extent was he a free actor and to what extent did his advice contribute to the decisions in British foreign policy up to 1908? And what does his career tell us about the priorities of British foreign policy in the Victorian and Edwardian eras?

The following study adopts a chronological approach. An initial chapter will look at Sir Frank Lascelles's upbringing and the formative influences – his education, early diplomatic career, and in particular the experience of Franco-Prussian war and Paris Commune – that shaped his outlook.

Chapter two looks at Lascelles's first senior role, as agent and consul-General in Cairo in the last years before British occupation, and asks whether he endorsed the 'new imperialism' which was emerging towards the beginning of the 1880s, and what view he took of Britain's increasing imperial commitments.

Chapters three to five all detail Lascelles's role in and views on the great nineteenth century 'Eastern Question' from his standpoint as Agent at Sofia, during the turbulent era of Alexander von Battenberg's rule, examining especially how he reconciled what he understood to be Britain's interests in Bulgaria with the policy of the Gladstone administration, and what role he took in the Eastern crisis of 1885-6.

Chapter six takes a look at Lascelles's brief tenure first in Teheran and then at St Petersburg and his attempts to secure an Anglo-Russian understanding in both posts, explaining why this was feasible and desirable.

A final, seventh chapter (split into two parts) will examine Sir Frank Lascelles's role in his last, longest and debatably most important post, Berlin. While

paying heed to the existing work on this subject (and thus without making claim to exhaustive treatment) the aim of this chapter will be to locate Sir Frank's views on Germany within the shifting scene of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but also against background of Lascelles's outlook, and prior diplomatic experience. The conclusion will attempt to use Lascelles's career to reflect on the existing debate on the nature of the change in Britain's foreign policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**An ‘aristocrat of aristocrats’: Frank Cavendish Lascelles’ family background,
upbringing and early career in the diplomatic service, 1841-1878**

Frank Cavendish Lascelles was born on 23 March 1841, the third son of William Saunders Sebright Lascelles and Lady Caroline Howard, and one of nine children,¹ and had all the ready-made advantages that an aristocratic pedigree could bestow. His father (b. 29 October 1798) was the third son of Henry Lascelles, 2nd Earl Harewood (1767-1841), of Harewood House in West Yorkshire, and Henrietta Saunders Sebright (1770-1840).² The family’s exalted position sprang from wealth made in the eighteenth-century colonial trade, chiefly in imports from Barbados where the family owned plantations,³ and thus Sir Frank was a direct beneficiary of the economic activity that had helped forge Britain’s Empire. William himself was however ‘far from affluent,’ being a younger sibling and one of nine children.⁴ In 1817 he joined the Army, and became Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards, although he retired on half pay in 1820, and sold his commission in 1837.⁵ From 1820 until his death he was chiefly occupied as an M.P.

¹ Frank’s siblings were: Georgiana or ‘Georgy’ (1826 -1911), Henrietta (1830 - 1884), Claud (1831- 1903), Edwin (1833 -1877), Mary Louise, or ‘May’ (1836 – 1917), Emma (1838 - 1920), Henry Arthur (1842 - 1913) and Beatrice (?- 1915). Lady Caroline’s first child, Dacre, (b. 1824), had died in infancy, as did two other siblings, (*The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1851, p.194). See Lady Maud Leconfield (ed.) and John Gore (rev.), *The Three Howard Sisters: Selections from the writings of Lady Caroline Lascelles, Lady Dover and Countess Gower 1825 to 1833* (London, 1955) p. 40 & 50.

² H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison, (ed.) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 32 (Oxford, 2004), p.591.

³ See Richard Pares ‘A London West India Merchant House, 1740-69’ in idem, *The Historians Business and Other Essays*, ed. R.A. and Elisabeth Humphreys, (Oxford, 1961), pp.198-226.

⁴ Lady Leconfield, *The Three Howard Sisters*, p. 32.

⁵ Henry Schroeder, *The Annals of Yorkshire: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Leeds, 1851), p. 417.

In August 1823 William married a fellow aristocrat, Caroline Howard, the eldest daughter of George Howard, the 6th Earl of Carlisle.⁶ William was ‘too estimable a man’ for her ‘to refuse’ although love happily entered into the equation too.⁷ Caroline has been described rather bluntly by those who knew her: she was ‘slow and stolid...the least good-looking [of her siblings], less quick at the uptake than her sisters,’ and apparently she ‘had little of that indefinable quality known as charm,’ but ‘“pleasing and unpretending”’ were the adjectives applied to her appearance and manners...⁸ William Lascelles, though less fully coloured in, is sketched in his obituary as ‘a man of respectable parts’ in public life, ‘a highly honourable gentleman’, and ‘deservedly much respected’ in his private life.⁹

Frank’s immediate ancestors were a mixture of liberal-Tories and Whigs. Lord Harewood, a Tory peer, was a moderate reformer, (although he stopped short of supporting the 1832 Reform Act),¹⁰ but while the elder Harewood son followed his father, William’s political sympathies were more liberal, foreshadowing an eventual conversion to the Whig cause, when he contested Knaresborough as a ‘liberal and a free trader’ in 1847 and subsequently took a post in Lord John Russell’s first Government (1846-1852).¹¹ Caroline Lascelles also had Whig sympathies. Her father, Lord Morpeth, had served in Pitt the Younger’s Tory administration but under the influence of his wife Lady Georgina Cavendish (1783-1858), daughter of the fifth Duke of Devonshire (a close ally of Charles Fox) he served under the liberal-Tory administrations of Canning (1827) and Goderich (1827-1828) as Lord Privy Seal,

⁶ Leconfield, *The Three Howard Sisters*, p. 31.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 32.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.3; pp. 10- 11. In later life Caroline was also, in the words of her nephew, ‘like most of the Howards an enormous eater’! George Leveson Gower, *Mixed Grill*, (London, 1948), p.188.

⁹ Henry Schroeder, *The Annals of Yorkshire*, p. 417.

¹⁰ H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison (ed.) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 32 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 591-2.

¹¹ Schroder, *Annals of Yorkshire*, p. 417.

before joining Earl Grey's Whig Government (1830-1834) as Minister without portfolio and then Lord Privy Seal.¹²

In the late 1820s politics had become a divisive issue within the Lascelles family, against the backdrop of the Reform debate. In the 'Tory hotbed' there were some heated exchanges 'in which even the placable Caroline sometimes joined', although more often she restrained her husband from talking about politics.¹³ The strained atmosphere was exacerbated by Lord Harewood's bad temper, referred to as the 'gloom,' partially brought on by his eldest son's reckless behaviour which had caused his father to disinherit him, and bequeath the family title and their plantations in the West Indies to the second eldest son, Henry.¹⁴

The Liberal affiliations of the family were strengthened by the marriages of Sir Frank's sisters; in 1849 Henrietta-Frances married the later 2nd Baron Chesham William George Cavendish, a Liberal M.P.;¹⁵ Georgina (or 'Georgy') married the Liberal MP Charles Grenfell in 1852, and in 1865 Emma married the Whig Lord Edward Cavendish.¹⁶ Frank's youngest sister Beatrice married the politically Liberal Frederick Temple, Bishop of Exeter and later Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1876. These familial ties possibly influenced Frank's outlook. In his forties, Frank could describe himself as a 'good liberal,' despite misgivings he had developed about the conduct of foreign policy by Gladstone's Liberal administration, and at sixty-five, on the brink of retirement he was described by one junior colleague as 'more or less

¹² Leconfield, p. 68; 'George Howard, sixth earl of Carlisle (1773-1848)' in H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison (ed.) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 28 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 351-2.

¹³ Leconfield, p. 70; *ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52, 65, & 155.

¹⁵ Only son of Hon Charles Compton Cavendish (Liberal M.P. for Buckinghamshire, 1857-1863).

¹⁶ Emma and Edward were first cousins, and their engagement was private disapproved of by the family. Devonshire diary, Vol. 17, p's. 76-8, 82, 87, & 93-103, 7th Duke of Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth House.

belong[ing] to the entourage of the broad minded Devonshire set in England';¹⁷ he remained faithful to the free trade cause throughout his life.¹⁸

In August 1830 the Lascelles moved to the new and fashionable Wilton Crescent, Belgravia, London,¹⁹ and took their 'official place in London society',²⁰ engaging in 'endless rounds of visits from and to notable figures, and a succession of 'entertainments.'²¹ William could count such noteworthies as Sir Robert Peel, Lord Aberdeen, William Gladstone, and Thomas Babington Macaulay as friends, acquaintances or correspondents.²²

William's political career was however only intermittently successful. Lord Harewood was initially reluctant for his son to enter politics and refused to assist him in his ambitions.²³ After being elected for the family seat of Northallerton in 1820, William stood down in favour of his brother in 1826 and was elected for Looe in Cornwall,²⁴ a seat he lost in 1830. Despite being re-elected for Northallerton in 1831, in the following year's election he was not 'brought in' again for the seat by his

¹⁷ Selby to father, 8 Feb 1907, Selby MSS, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Add. MSS 6615.

¹⁸ Many of Frank's siblings were inclined to support Whigs. Both Emma (who married a Cavendish) and her brother Henry supported the Liberal Unionist cause after the Liberal split of 1886. (See Emma Cavendish to Lord Hartington, 27 March 1887, 7th Duke of Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth House, 378.8; H.A. Lascelles to Hartington 24 Dec 1886, *ibid*, 340.2069). Henry was also on the personal staff of the 8th Duke of Devonshire 'at various times' after 1885. Bernard Holland, *The Life of Spencer Compton, Eighth Duke of Devonshire*, Vol. ii (London, 1911), p. 222.

¹⁹ Leconfield, p. 74 & 137.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.42, 45 & 280.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 66; and see *ibid*, pp. 75-6 for a description of an elaborate fete attended by William Lascelles.

²² The Peel-Lascelles correspondence is at the British Library, Add MSS 40406, 40409 & 40503. A copy of a letter from Gladstone to Lascelles is at B.L. Add. MS 44527. See Thomas Pinney (ed.) *The letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, Vol. i: 1807-Feb 1831 (London, 1974), p. 232; John Bailey (ed.), *The diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, Vol. i (London, 1927), p. 252.

²³ Leconfield, p.59.

²⁴ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1851, pp.193-4.

father.²⁵ In 1835 he lost a contest for Wakefield, winning the seat in 1837 only to have to contest it again in 1841 against the victorious candidate, who was also the returning officer. Finally, after winning Knaresborough in 1847, he entered Lord John Russell's Government as Privy Councillor and Comptroller of Her Majesty's household, although his Ministerial career was foreshortened by his death.

When not in London the Lascelles mixed with other great families in their country houses. They retained their Yorkshire connections with Harewood and Castle Howard, and through Caroline's sister Blanche Howard's marriage to the Seventh Duke of Devonshire, Chatsworth in Derbyshire, Devonshire House and Holker Hall became regular family haunts.

The leisure pursuits of the Lascelles family were also typically aristocratic. William and Caroline attended the York and Doncaster races,²⁶ and the male members of the family, including Frank's elder brothers, Claud and Edwin, would shoot grouse on the moors of Derbyshire and Yorkshire.²⁷ Frank too shot rabbits and pheasants in his lifetime, a pastime he had however given up by 1909,²⁸ and the New Year hunt also met at Harewood.²⁹

The company kept by the family was virtually exclusively aristocratic. Rarely did they encounter the working classes, except as servants or through acts of charity. On 1 January 1828, Caroline aloofly recorded her own children's 'amusement at seeing the boys from the village scramble for their pence.'³⁰ While driving down Bond Street in April 1827, Caroline and William accidentally ran over a child, who

²⁵ Georgiana wrote to her sister Caroline (20 Dec 1832) 'I cannot help feeling angry with Ld Harewood for not bringing William in for North Allerton, which I believe he might have done.' Leconfield, p. 255.

²⁶ *Three Howard Sisters*, Caroline's diary entry for 9 Aug and 10 Aug 1826, pp. 54-55; *ibid*, p. 93 & p. 116

²⁷ Leconfield, p. 55, & 93-94. Devonshire diary, Vol. 7, p.5 & 162 & Vol. 3, p. 236.

²⁸ Lascelles to Blunt, 15 Oct 1909 Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

²⁹ Leconfield, p. 96.

³⁰ *Ibid*.

they later discovered was one of ten children in a poor family. On visiting the boy's abode Caroline described it as 'a most wretched habitation, at the end of a dirty alley out of Bond St.' However as his mother appeared to be 'a respectable person,' the couple 'took charge' of the boy with the intention of placing him at a school in South Audley St. as soon as he was well enough.³¹ Lady Caroline also donated baby clothes for the 'poor Irish,'³² and the couple helped to raise funds for the building of a local Church in 1839, and donated money towards the School of the Yorkshire Society³³ and to the Women's Employment Society,³⁴ both of which they personally visited.

It was in this privileged, patrician, socially conservative but politically liberal, and well-connected culture that Frank and his siblings were born, and raised in the nursery until school age, and Caroline, although 'much involved' in her children's welfare, could also afford to pass time reading, embroidering, or making afternoon calls to her neighbours.³⁵

The family adhered to the Church of England faith; Caroline was drawn to the High Church ritual promoted by the Oxford movement of the 1830s,³⁶ and the two eldest boys, Edwin and Claud, were educated by a certain Revd. C. Bickmore, who had a living near Chester and whom William deemed to be 'a good scholar and an excellent man.'³⁷ The time outside of school the elder boys spent with their parents in

³¹ Ibid, p. 68.

³² Ibid, p. 71.

³³ Devonshire diary, Vol. 1, p.170; Vol. 2, p.62; Vol. 3, pp. 120-121.

³⁴ C. Lascelles, *Extracts from journals kept by George Howard, earl of Carlisle: selected by his sister, lady Caroline Lascelles* (1864), p. 376.

³⁵ Leconfield, p.51 & 45.

³⁶ Ibid, pp.48-9.

³⁷ William Saunders Sebright Lascelles to Sir Robert Peel, 4 March 1842, Peel MSS, B.L., Add MSS. 40503, ff. 57-58; Peel to WSS Lascelles, 24 March 1842, ibid, f.59.

London and on their relatives' country estates.³⁸ The sheer number of Frank's relations and the constant comings and goings of various important personalities left little room for the indulgence of an awkward or shy personality, and must have impacted on his outlook considerably.

In July 1851, aged just 53, William Lascelles died of bronchitis.³⁹ The Duke of Devonshire who attended the funeral wrote of the 'heavy burthen' placed on Lady Caroline, with 'so many children not yet grown up,'⁴⁰ Frank Lascelles was, at the time, just ten years old. At Easter 1853, aged twelve, he went to Harrow School, following in the footsteps of his elder brother Edwin Agar Lascelles.⁴¹ Frank's education was as aristocratic and exclusive as his family life. Harrow had become 'virtually an upper-class boarding school' in the late eighteenth century, and was the favoured school of the Whig aristocracy, a trend which continued into the 1860's, and earlier generations of relatives had gone there from the Howard side.⁴²

This was the era when Thomas Arnold's gospel of converting the public schools, in Asa Briggs' words, into a 'training ground for character' was spreading out amongst old and new institutions. The central aim of the reform movement of the 1850's and 1860's was not 'mere intellectual acuteness',⁴³ but, as Frank Lascelles stated in a speech at Repton School later in his life, 'the development of character and self-reliance.'⁴⁴ In Frank's schooldays, an indulgence in 'athletic sports such as

³⁸ See Devonshire diary, Vol.2, p.103; also C. Lascelles, *Extracts from the journals*, pp.133-34. See for example Devonshire diary, Vol. 1, p.140; C. Lascelles, *Extracts from the journals*, p. 109; *The Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, p. 246.

³⁹ Schroeder, *The Annals of Yorkshire*, pp. 417-418.

⁴⁰ Devonshire diary, Vol. 8, pp. 118-119.

⁴¹ I am grateful to Rita M. Boswell, Archivist at Harrow School, for this information.

⁴² Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education*, (London, 1960), p. 301-02; Leconfield, p. 208.

⁴³ Asa Briggs, 'Thomas Hughes and the Public Schools,' in Asa Briggs, *Victorian People: A Reassessment of People and Themes* (London, 1971), pp. 151-152.

⁴⁴ *The Times*, 29 June 1912, p.4.

cricket and football' took precedence over academic study.⁴⁵ Although in the 1850s Harrow had a reforming headmaster, Charles J. Vaughan,⁴⁶ Lascelles's time there was primarily a 'a process of initiation into a social caste', and would have been spent associating with the sons of peers and statesmen.⁴⁷

On leaving Harrow at 1858, aged seventeen, Frank prepared to enter the diplomatic service. This was not an unnatural decision; seven other old Harrovians chose to enter this small, socially homogenous profession between 1857 and 1879, and although Frank bypassed University by entering the service at the youngest possible age, this too was the norm generally at the time, and also among Frank's family; of his brothers, only Edwin attended Oxford, subsequently pursuing a career in law.⁴⁸ Frank's other brothers pursued military careers. His eldest brother Claud was an Officer in the Royal Artillery, while his younger brother Henry Arthur served as an aide-de-camp in the Indian Mutiny of 1857,⁴⁹ and joined the rifle brigade in 1859, eventually becoming a Lieutenant Colonel.⁵⁰

In an age where diplomacy and war were still the preserve of the ruling class, Lascelles, as an 'aristocrat of aristocrats' to use the epithet later given to him by the

⁴⁵ Lascelles, 'England and Germany', in Stein, *England and Germany*, p. 19.

⁴⁶ Charles Vaughan was Headmaster at Harrow from 1844 to 1859.

⁴⁷ Robert T. Nightingale, *The Personnel of the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service, 1851-1929*, (London, 1930), p. 17.

⁴⁸ Of the 216 recruits for the diplomatic service between 1851 and 1929 one hundred (42%) did not go on to university. Ibid, p.9. See also T. G. Otte, 'Old Diplomacy: Reflections on the Foreign Office before 1914,' *Contemporary British History* Volume 18, Issue 3, (2004), pp. 34-35. I am again grateful to Rita M. Boswell, archivist of Harrow School, for the information on Edwin Lascelles. Edwin died a bachelor, like his older brother Claud. While at University he had befriended Charles Rivers Wilson, who was later Frank's colleague in Cairo as Minister of Finance. Wilson recalled Edwin as a keen smoker, which earned him the nickname 'honeydew,' 'from the tobacco which he affected.' Sir C. Rivers Wilson, *Chapters from my Official Life* (London, 1916), p.17.

⁴⁹ National Archives, WO 76/269, f.79.

⁵⁰ Major Claud Lascelles (1833-1903), remained unmarried. Henry Arthur Lascelles was Lt. Colonel in the Rifle Brigade, and received the Royal Victoria Order. He married Caroline Maria Gore (14 August 1883) and had three sons. He was later the owner of Woolbeding House, Surrey.

naval attaché at Berlin Admiral Philip Wylie Dumas,⁵¹ was entering what was still considered a 'stronghold of the aristocracy.' In 1870 Lascelles's colleague in Berlin, Nicolas O'Connor, could write that while 'in the War Office, Treasury &c. one may find themselves in a Department with [a] Tailor's son,' the diplomatic service was 'still, notwithstanding the liberalism of the day, a closed service' and the Foreign Office was 'the only public office where gentlemen alone are to be found' and 'an acquaintance of or interest with the men in power is undoubtedly of use'.⁵²

Lascelles's aristocratic connections eased his nomination into the service. In contemporary practice, candidates had to be nominated by a social or family connection who personally knew the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,⁵³ at this time Lord John Russell. At Harrow Frank had befriended Russell's son Johnnie, and had become acquainted with the rest of the family through visits to Pembroke Lodge.⁵⁴ There were plenty of other connections too: his sister Henrietta (Lady Chesham), entertained statesmen and diplomats such as Count d'Apponyi and Stratford de Redcliffe, at her stately home in Latimer,⁵⁵ and Frank also commented that his brother Edwin knew 'most people' in Society.⁵⁶

Lascelles undertook some preparatory travel in Europe in the summer of 1858, living in Zürich with a German professor who had taken part in the Revolution of

⁵¹ Dumas autobiography, Imperial War Museum, London, 65/23/1, p. 15.

⁵² O'Connor to mother, 18 June and 1 July 1870, O'Connor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 2/2/9.

⁵³ This was the rule up until 1919. Robert T. Nightingale, *The Personnel of the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service, 1851-1929*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ See F. Russell to Lascelles, 16 Nov 1895, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/16, asking the now ambassador at Berlin to assist a young Bertrand Russell in his studies in Germany. Might Countess Russell have been calling in a favour from many years before?

⁵⁵ See Cecil Y. Lang (ed.), *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, Vol. 3 1866-1870 (Charlottesville, 1998), p. 390.

⁵⁶ Frank Lascelles to Mary Lascelles, 16 April 1871. Sir Frank Lascelles MSS, C.C.A.C., LASC 1.

1848, and also in this year he visited Berlin for the first time.⁵⁷ On 9 July 1861 he entered the diplomatic service,⁵⁸ passing an entrance examination which included writing French and English from dictation, précis, French translation, geography and modern history⁵⁹ and which, according to Zara Steiner, was more exacting than the qualifying exam for the Foreign Office.⁶⁰ Subsequently on 22 July 1861 he received his first official assignment, as attaché to the Court of Madrid.

A diplomat in Europe: 1861-1878

Little information survives on Lascelles' diplomatic life prior to 1878, but previously unused material at Churchill College Archive Centre and letters to his friend Wilfrid Scawen Blunt from Blunt's private papers at West Sussex Record Office make clear that Lascelles' early career served as an extension of his gentlemanly upbringing and education, an induction into diplomatic life in the foreign Courts and Chanceries of Europe, into diplomatic protocol and the amusements of Society, but also –in the case of his time in Paris in 1870-1 – a salient lesson in the consequences of diplomacy's failure.

Lascelles' job description as an attaché was only loosely framed. The Minister at Madrid was instructed to employ Frank 'in the business of the Legation in whatever way you may deem most beneficial for Her Majesty's service',⁶¹ and as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who served with Lascelles as third secretary in Spain, recollected with

⁵⁷ 'England and Germany' by Sir Frank Lascelles, G.C.B. in Ludwig Stein, (ed.) *England and Germany* (London, 1912), p. 18.

⁵⁸ The official entry in the Civil Service records at the National Archives, Kew (C.S.C 2/5) states '9th July' as the date of the exam.

⁵⁹ Certificate of Civil Service Commissioners (for Wilfrid Scawen Blunt), 1 Feb 1859, West Sussex Record Office, LYTTON/33. See Ray Jones, *The Nineteenth Century Foreign Office: An Administrative History* (London, 1971) p. 43 for a description of the Foreign Office exam, which was very similar.

⁶⁰ Zara S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (London, 1969), p.16.

⁶¹ Lord John Russell to Sir John F Crampton, 19 Oct 1861, FO 366/316.

some degree of bitterness, the role of the foreign attaché in Queen Isabella's Spain involved 'purely formal,' duties 'of standing in front of the throne in uniform watching the high officials military and civilian defile before their Majesties in interminable procession.'⁶²

Surviving letters written from Lascelles in his final year at Madrid to Blunt (by then in Paris) suggest that the work was routine, uninteresting, and unsurprisingly the young diplomat cared little for it. 8 February 1864 – messenger day- brought Lascelles 'lots of work,' and on 22 August the same year he complained of 'Mr Forbes' (the Head of Chancery) being an 'intense bore' and assigning lots of work, despite having been kept away from the Chancery by an attack of gout.⁶³

However work was usually intermittent and the leisurely Chancery hours encouraged Lascelles to cultivate a lifelong habit of rising late in the morning. In February 1864, he wrote of an intention to 'turn over a new leaf' by getting up 'at 8 every day' and reading and writing 'immensely.' Over thirty years later, he was renowned as the latest riser in Berlin.⁶⁴

This lack of discipline was fostered by the distinctly Bohemian atmosphere of the British Legation, the head of which, Sir John F. Crampton, had made a 'foolish marriage' to a professional singer, meaning the normal authority provided by a British Minister's wife was also lacking, 'the house being a rendezvous of certain pretenders to her favour who monopolised her interest.' Only 'on official occasions,' did the diplomats dine at Sir John's table; the Legation being 'no home,' to Blunt or Lascelles, who felt 'socially poorer for the lack of it.'⁶⁵

⁶² Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *Alms to oblivion*, Vol. ii, Part 2: 'Esther', Chapter 1: '1863 – Madrid,' Blunt MSS, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, MS 41-1975, pp. 178-180.

⁶³ Lascelles to Blunt, 8 February and 22 August 1864, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

⁶⁴ Lascelles to Blunt, 8 Feb 1864, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *Alms to oblivion*, Vol. ii, *op cit*, pp. 138-140.

Unsurprisingly the younger members of the Legation turned elsewhere to alleviate their boredom, 'wasting their time on card playing' and – being 'desperately poor' and unable to cover their losses – borrowing from the Legation's Church fund, until the legal repercussions deterred them from doing so.⁶⁶ Other entertainments included the bullfight,⁶⁷ while Blunt and Lascelles 'played battledore and shuttlecock in the Chancery, and shared many other pleasures.'⁶⁸ (According to the former's recollections all the attachés, including Lascelles, 'engaged in love adventures of a venal kind'.⁶⁹) In 1862, Blunt procured a twenty-three year old 'respectable' Spanish mistress called Lola, who had been deserted by her husband, was living with her mother and desperately poor, to be his 'instructress in her Castilian tongue, and,' he later recalled, 'what other things might be to our mutual liking.' Lola became Lascelles' mistress when Blunt briefly left for Paris.⁷⁰

It is clear from Blunt's recollections that though he counted Lascelles as his 'best friend', he felt a lack of 'intellectual companionship' -his assessment of Lascelles' character as a young man- as 'a good fellow, well bred and amiable but of little originality or special talent,'⁷¹ tallies with many later descriptions of him, and seems to suggest that it was Lascelles' winning personality, rather than any special ability, which arguably made him a successful diplomat.

Nevertheless Frank was skilled enough to pass his probationary period as attaché, and by early 1864 was keen to leave Madrid. No doubt from a mixture of boredom and a longing to see Blunt, who had since permanently departed for Paris.

⁶⁶ Lascelles to Blunt, 28 Aug 1864, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

⁶⁷ Lascelles to Blunt, 8 Feb, 28 Aug 1864, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ W. S. Blunt, *My diaries, Part Two 1900-1914* (London, 1920), p.230. Entry for 24 Oct 1908.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.128.

⁷⁰ Blunt, *Alms to oblivion*, Vol. ii, p.128 & 178.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.134-136.

By the summer Lascelles accepted a move to the French capital.⁷² As Lascelles was impoverished by 'heavy losses at cards', other members of the Embassy 'clubbed together to feed him' for his round of farewell dinners.⁷³

There was a more tragic side to Lascelles' departure from Madrid, symptomatic of the social mores of the day. With Blunt having abandoned his Spanish mistress, Lola pined to accompany Lascelles to Paris, which he was reluctant to allow her to do.⁷⁴ By late August 1864 a combination of Lola's pestering, rowdy colleagues preventing him from sleeping, and financial concerns, combined to make Lascelles 'low and out of spirits'.⁷⁵ For her part Lola had to abandon travelling to Paris when her child died. Frank was depressed enough by news of the death of the 'poor thing' to dread a scheduled dinner with old acquaintances which would 'call up memories of the happy past and make me still more miserable than I am now!', and he intended to 'go to *L'Hardy's* and eat a cake and drink a glass of sherry to revive me', warning Blunt to 'practice Tennis and beware of women'.⁷⁶ After Frank's transfer to Paris on 17 December 1864, Blunt never learned from him whether any provision had been made for the unfortunate Lola.⁷⁷

Lascelles' posting to Paris necessitated living on a grander scale than at Madrid, and no doubt stretched the young attaché's resources further still. At that time the city was regarded as the most coveted overseas posting. In 1865 Napoleon's Second Empire was at the height of its fame. When Lascelles arrived in Christmas 1864, the picture Blunt painted was of a leisurely Chancery, 'breakfasting at Durand's Restaurant playing Tennis at the court in the Tuileries Garden, cards in the afternoon

⁷² Lascelles to Blunt, 22 Aug 1864, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

⁷³ Blunt, *Alms to oblivion*, Vol. ii, p.134.

⁷⁴ Lascelles to Blunt, 8 Feb & 22 Aug 1864, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

⁷⁵ Lascelles to Blunt, 28 Aug 1864, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Lascelles to Blunt, 22 Aug and 28 Aug 1864, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Blunt, *Alms to oblivion*, Vol. ii, Part II, Chapter II: Paris 1864-1865, pp.182-184.

and a theatre at night....⁷⁸ This picture of high-living is corroborated by the reminiscences of another Chancery member, Wellesley, who many years later recalled to Lascelles ‘the very jolly times’ in Paris, ‘when we used to go to an Offenbach premiere and immediately afterwards you would repeat the performance on your piano!’⁷⁹ Yet leave was also strict and the staff of the Chancery were kept at work by Lord Cowley, Britain’s Ambassador to Paris of fifteen years standing, described by Blunt as ‘a curiously silent man, stiff and awkward, typically British in his anti-social manners, and ill at ease even in the bosom of his own family.’⁸⁰

After nine months at the Embassy, Frank was appointed to the post of third Secretary, on 11 September 1865. While at Paris he was afforded the opportunity of meeting many eminent people the then Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Gladstone, who visited the Embassy in September 1866 the Embassy and with whose daughter, Mary, Frank shared a dance.⁸¹ One afternoon, as Lascelles later recalled, he was tasked by Lord Cowley with fetching Gladstone from his hotel for an audience with the Emperor:

On Sir Frank’s arrival he saw Miss Mary Gladstone who said father is in bed but come & see him & they went in to his room where they found Mr G in bed & the clothes drawn over him. Sir Frank gave his message & said “But Sir as I see you are in bed perhaps I had better not wait but go & tell the Ambassador you will be some time.” “Oh no[?]” said Mr G [“] I have only to put on my hat, I am ready now. I’ll come with you & turning back the bed clothes he emerged fully dressed even to his boots.[?]” Sir Frank naturally looked astonished & Mr

⁷⁸ Blunt, *Alms to Oblivion*, Vol. ii, p.196.

⁷⁹ Wellesley to Lascelles, 4 Nov 1894, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/15. Lady Frederick Cavendish recorded dining with Frank & Mary at the Café Durand, and going to the Theatre Français. John Bailey, *The diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, Vol. II (London, 1927), p.40.

⁸⁰ Blunt, *Alms to Oblivion*, Vol. ii, p.190.

⁸¹ See Lucy Masterman (ed.), *Mary Gladstone (Mrs Drew): Her diaries and letters*, (London, 1930), p. 43.

Gladstone murmured something about finding it much more restful to get between the sheets, that as he was crumpled & dirty he went to see the Emperor.⁸²

It was also while in Paris that Lascelles met his wife. On 25 June 1867, he married Mary Emma Olliffe, the daughter of Sir Joseph Olliffe, the highly regarded Embassy physician.⁸³ The Olliffes were very well connected. Sir Joseph numbered among his eminent patients the Count De Morny, Napoleon III's stepbrother (and a former Minister of the Interior), with whose help, in 1860, he had embarked upon ambitious property development to construct the city-cum-resort of Deauville on the Northern coast of France, although the venture ultimately proved an 'unremunerative speculation'.⁸⁴ Mary Lascelles' mother, Laura Olliffe, was a daughter of the prominent building and civil engineering contractor and Conservative M.P. Sir William Cubitt (1791-1863), and the family were close friends of Charles Dickens.⁸⁵ However in terms of social standing, Blunt thought that Lascelles had made 'a poor marriage',⁸⁶ a judgement seemingly endorsed years later by Queen Victoria who described Mary to be 'a clever agreeable person but...not a grande dame.'⁸⁷ Indeed, personality and physical attraction played a fair part in the marriage. Mary was termed

⁸² Dumas diary, entry for 18 October 1906, Leeds Special Collections, Liddle Collection, HCCM/ DUMAS. Gladstone stayed in Paris between 28 Sept and 2 Oct 1866. H.C.G. Matthews (ed.) *The Gladstone Diaries*, Vol. vi 1861-1868, (Oxford, 1978), pp. 467-8. See Masterman (ed.), *Mrs Drew*, p.27-28

⁸³ *The Era* (London, England), 30 June 1867; Joseph Olliffe, (1808-1869). Born Cork. Educated in Paris; MA 1829; MD 1840. Married Laura (d.1898) in 1841. Fellow of Anatomical Society of Paris, one time President of the Paris Medical Society. Knighted 1853. Nominated by Board of Trade as juror for hygiene, pharmacy, surgery and medicine in French international exhibition (April 1855). Nominated to committee for sanitary appliances in international exhibition (1862). Fellow of Royal College of Physicians of London (1859). d. 14 March 1869. *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 783.

⁸⁴ H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison (eds.) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 41 (Oxford, 2004), p.783.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, Vol. 12, p. 555. See *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, Vol.'s V-XII (Oxford, 1965-2002), *passim*, but especially Vol. VIII, p.713.

⁸⁶ Blunt, *Alms to Oblivion*, Vol. ii, p.214.

⁸⁷ G.E. Buckle (ed.), *The letters of Queen Victoria: Third Series. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal Between the Years 1886 and 1901*, Vol. 2 (London, 1932), p.561.

a 'great beauty.'⁸⁸ Nicholas O'Connor, who got to know the Lascelles at Berlin, wrote on encountering them again in Sofia in 1886, that the couple were 'just as happy & just as fond of each other' as in 1867.⁸⁹ Mary Lascelles' tragic passing in April 1897, after a brief illness of one week, was mourned deeply by those who knew her, and profoundly affected Sir Frank,⁹⁰ and left a social hole in the Berlin Embassy which Sir Frank's sister, Emma Cavendish came to fulfil.

After three years in Paris, Frank was transferred to Berlin, where he arrived in mid-October 1867.⁹¹ The newly-wed couple proved to be a social success. The Ambassador, Lord Augustus Loftus, remembered them as being 'popular in society, and agreeable to our small circle.'⁹² Whilst there the Lascelles also befriended the young attaché O'Connor, later Ambassador to Russia and to Turkey.⁹³ One gains the impression that the Berlin Embassy was a tightly-knit group. The junior diplomats frequently visited the Opera together,⁹⁴ and O'Connor recorded theatre trips 'four or five times a week,' with 'generally a whist party afterward,' at Lascelles' or one of the other young diplomats' residences.⁹⁵ There were also occasional excursions to Bad Schandau or to Potsdam,⁹⁶ where Lascelles stayed at the villa of Lord Brabazon, his Embassy colleague. There the 'Embassy four,' comprising Lascelles, O'Connor, Brabazon and a foreign office clerk, rowed an outriggered four-oared boat, christened 'Victoria' by the Crown Princess of Prussia, on the Spree and Havel, and raced

⁸⁸ *Otago Witness*, 25 March 1908, p.78.

⁸⁹ Nicholas O'Connor to Minna Hope Scott, 11 Dec 1886, O'Connor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 3/1/1.

⁹⁰ See Spring-Rice to Chirol, 7 April 1897, Spring-Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/18.

⁹¹ Hammond to Lascelles 25 July 1867, National Archives, FO 366/327. O'Connor diary, entry for 17 Oct 1867, O'Connor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 1/1/5

⁹² Reginald Brabazon, 12th Earl of Meath, *Memories of the Nineteenth Century*, (London, J. Murray, 1923) p. 147. O'Connor to mother 18 Feb 1870, OCON 2/2/9.

⁹³ O'Connor to mother, 12 Jan 1870, *ibid.*

⁹⁴ See for example, O'Connor diary, 18 Oct, 1 Nov & 10 Dec 1867, OCON 1/1/5.

⁹⁵ O'Connor diary, 17 April 1869, O'Connor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 1/1/6

⁹⁶ He made these trips on 20 May 1868 and 27 July 1868, *ibid.*

steamers 'to the various pleasure-resorts on the banks of the river,' to the admiration of on-looking Germans.⁹⁷

For his part, Lascelles, found the Embassy to be 'composed of very good fellows,' and told Blunt that 'altogether Berlin is not such a bad place as it is supposed to be.'⁹⁸ Indeed Lascelles later recalled these days 'as the happiest of my life.'⁹⁹ He also experienced 'the pleasures of paternity' for the first time;¹⁰⁰ on 2 March 1868 his son Billy was born, and a second son, Gerald, was born at Potsdam on 19 July 1869.

For Lascelles, involved in secretarial duties, interesting work was sporadic. As Augustus Loftus later recalled 'war [between France and Germany] was spasmodically in everyone's mouth,' but it was 'as changeable as the barometer, according to the pressure of events.'¹⁰¹ In one such 'complete lull in politics,'¹⁰² in September 1868, Lascelles was briefly placed in charge of the Embassy, when Loftus, went on leave.¹⁰³ Besides the extra income,¹⁰⁴ Lascelles pointed out the 'very unexpected advantage...for one so young [twenty seven] to be... Chargé d'Affaires for a period of three weeks'; He was 'brought in contact with important persons whose acquaintance I might not otherwise have had the opportunity of making,' and later deemed the training to have been 'of inestimable advantage to me in later life.'¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ Meath, *Memories of the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 148-149. Lascelles later recalled these 'old times' to O'Connor when made ambassador to Berlin. Lascelles to O'Connor, 21 August 1896, O'Connor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 6/1/7.

⁹⁸ Lascelles to Blunt, March 1868, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

⁹⁹ Lascelles, 'England and Germany', p.19.

¹⁰⁰ Lascelles to Blunt, March 1868, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

¹⁰¹ Lord Augustus Loftus, *The Diplomatic Reminiscences of Lord Augustus Loftus*, Vol. i (London, 1894), p. 211.

¹⁰² Augustus Loftus to Stanley, 13 July 1867, Derby MSS, Liverpool RO, 920 DER (15) 12/1/16, p. 59.

¹⁰³ Augustus Loftus to Stanley 2 Sept 1868, *ibid*, 12 /1/7, p.41.

¹⁰⁴ O'Connor to his mother 2 Oct 1868, O'Connor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 2/2/7.

¹⁰⁵ Sir Frank Lascelles, 'England and Germany,' p.19.

After three years in Berlin, the Lascelles were transferred back to Paris, in January 1870,¹⁰⁶ where they again encountered the Blunts. Slipping back briefly into the leisured lifestyle of the upper classes, Frank and Wilfrid played whist while Mary and Lady Anne lunched, shopped or went on excursions together. The Lascelles frequently dined out, either at the Blunts' apartment or at restaurants, visited the races at Bois de Boulogne, picnicked at Versailles, and journeyed by steamer from the Place de la Concorde to St Germaine, with Mrs Milner Gibson, wife of the Liberal MP, and her daughter, and on 2 June day tripped to Fontainebleau where Wilfrid and Frank 'played tennis from two till half-past six' while Lady Anne sketched. Back in Paris, the Lascelles partook in private amateur dramatics at the hotel of Mrs Parnell on the Champs Elysees, acting in *Woodcock's Little Game*, by John Maddison Morton and *The silent couple* by Pierre Courtois.¹⁰⁷

Such light amusements were however rudely curtailed by the real-life drama which unfolded with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in July 1870. Blunt later recalled how on 4 July the news of the declaration of war was delivered by Lascelles, 'or some other diplomatist of our party,'

and how in the beautiful summer's night we walked upon the terrace after dinner, and looked across the river towards Paris, and how someone suggested, though we none of us had much misgiving as to the fortunate issue of the war, the possible trouble there might for the fair city which we loved....¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Hammond to Lascelles, 21 Jan 1870, FO 366/327.

¹⁰⁷ Lady Anne Blunt, pocket diary for 1870 (Vol. XVI), May – July *passim*, B. L., Add MSS, 53832; Lady Anne Blunt to Francis Blunt, 9 & 14 June 1870 Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 63, 2C.; Blunt, *Alms to oblivion*, Vol. iii, Part IV: marriage, Chapter 3: the war of 1870, Blunt MSS, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, MS 42-1975, p.83; W.S. Blunt, *My diaries, Part One*, 1888-1900 (London, 1919), p.472; and 'The Ladies' Column' of *Manchester Times*, 2 July 1870.

¹⁰⁸ Blunt, *My diaries, Part One*, p. 476.

Following news of the French defeat at Sedan in September, the British Embassy were moved to Tours by the last train to leave Paris before its investment by the Prussians. From here they fled to Bordeaux, where they stayed until it was safe to return to Paris,¹⁰⁹

England remained officially neutral in the war, but both Lascelles and his colleague, Sir Edward Malet, Second Secretary at the Embassy, were personally 'staunch Frenchmen'¹¹⁰. Possibly Lascelles shared the opinion of the British diplomat Robert Morier, who accused the British Government of lacking a backbone in abstaining from support for France.¹¹¹ From the outset, Lascelles took a 'brighter view of things'¹¹² than many of his colleagues including Lyons' Private Secretary, Mr. Sheffield, and the Secretary of Embassy Lionel Sackville-West.¹¹³ Lascelles had early on predicted that 'a defeat would not end the war, but that a Republic will be proclaimed under Gambetta or Jules Simon and the war carried on,' (such as happened after Sedan) and that if the Prussians entered Paris they would find a Republic, and would place the Comte de Paris on the throne.¹¹⁴ Even as news trickled in of French military setbacks Lascelles maintained this optimistic tone.¹¹⁵ By 10 January 1871 word had been received 'that the Prussians had dropped shells into Paris itself' which Lascelles admitted was 'very serious, for as he told Blunt: 'I fancy food is getting very scarce in Paris, and that if the Parisians find that they can be

¹⁰⁹ See Lascelles' diary, Dec 1870 – Jan 1871, Lascelles MSS, C.C.A.C., LASC1 (hereafter simply: 'Lascelles diary'); Thomas Woodhouse Legh Newton, *Lord Lyons: A Record of British Diplomacy* (London, n.d.), pp. 226-30. See Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Granville George Leveson Gower, Second Earl Granville K.G. 1815-1891*, Vol. ii (London, 1905), pp. 44-47.

¹¹⁰ Blunt, *My diaries, Part One*, p. 480

¹¹¹ Richard Millman, *British foreign policy and the coming of the Franco-Prussian war* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p.196.

¹¹² Blunt, *My diaries, Part One*, p. 482.

¹¹³ See Lascelles diary, 17 & 31 Dec 1870.

¹¹⁴ Blunt, *My diaries, Part One*, p. 482

¹¹⁵ Lascelles diary, 19, 22, 23 & 24 Dec 1870.

bombarded – they will soon give in.’¹¹⁶ He was clearly moved by news that the Prussians, impatient for victory, had begun to ‘shell the town & kill women & children & kill combatants,’ and concluded: ‘I suppose a more barbarous procedure has never been heard of.’¹¹⁷ While admitting the game would be ‘all up’ if Paris fell,¹¹⁸ he did not despair, so long as Generals Chanzy and Bourbaki held out in Northern France, but on 27 January came news of French defeat and Bourbaki’s suicide.¹¹⁹ The armistice was signed the following day, and at Bordeaux Lascelles witnessed flags ‘hung out of windows in...rejoicing’.¹²⁰

Lascelles was critical of the decision of the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, to allow a London Conference on the issue of Russia’s repudiation of the Black Sea Clauses of the Treaty of Paris to open without the French plenipotentiary, Jules Favre, who was besieged in Paris and for whom Bismarck refused safe passage.¹²¹ Granville talked of being unable to postpone the Conference meeting due to appeals from Turkey and other Powers, but Lascelles lamented the Government had bowed to Turkish pressure and not ‘held out’ longer – France was a signatory to the Treaty of Paris and it was ‘absurd & preposterous’ to meet for ‘business’ in the absence of the French Plenipotentiary.¹²²

After the preliminaries of peace had been signed,¹²³ Lascelles was first to arrive back at the Embassy.¹²⁴ Paris looked much as before - save the bullet holes on

¹¹⁶ Lascelles to Blunt, 10 & 12 Jan 1871, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

¹¹⁷ Lascelles diary, 17 Jan 1871.

¹¹⁸ Lascelles to Blunt, 12 Jan 1871, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

¹¹⁹ Lascelles to Blunt, 10 & 12 Jan 1871, *ibid.* Newton, *Lyons*, p. 254. Lascelles diary, 28 Jan 1871.

¹²⁰ Lascelles diary, 29 Jan 1871.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 22 Dec 1870; Fitzmaurice, *Granville*, ii, pp. 76-7; Newton, *Lyons*, pp. 251-4.

¹²² Lascelles diary, 17 Jan 1871.

¹²³ Newton, *Lyons*, p.267.

¹²⁴ Lascelles to wife, 27 Feb 1871. Lascelles MSS, LASC1.

the Hotel de Ville, the 'scarcity of carriages & the great amount of dust',¹²⁵ although surveying the damage in the surrounding areas, he found plenty of pieces of shell to take away as souvenirs and was dismayed to find that in one spot the Prussians had not only 'cleaned out' an entire house but 'had amused themselves with tearing the papers off the walls destroying the fire places & grates...& in some places tried to set fire to the house.'¹²⁶ He also discovered the Embassy servant Edmond, had got into 'bad company' and run up debts, sold some of the coals and 'committed all sorts of [other] enormities,' which made it necessary to dismiss him: 'it appears he has drunk all my wine (luckily there was very little) and committed sundry petty thefts,' he complained to his wife.¹²⁷

On 28 February, Lascelles witnessed what he termed, 'the great event of the Century,' - the German occupation of the city.¹²⁸ Lascelles worried that the Prussians, who he witnessed 'galloping about with drawn swords,' were 'likely to take severe measures' if resistance was shown.¹²⁹ It was considered 'a crime' for Parisians to speak to Germans, and those that did were 'rather roughly handled' including Lascelles' companion, the newspaper correspondent Laurence Oliphant, who was jostled for shaking hands with a Prussian Officer. Soon after this, Lascelles told his wife:

Oliphant & I being very hungry went into a Café at the corner of the Champs Elysees... Soon after we got there some Prussian Officers came in & asked for beer which was brought them. This enraged the French populace outside who remonstrated angrily with the proprietor. At last the lady of the house requested the Prussians to go which they did immediately as

¹²⁵ Lascelles diary 10 March 1871.

¹²⁶ Lascelles to wife, 7 March 1871, LASC 1.

¹²⁷ Lascelles to wife, 8 April 1871, *ibid*.

¹²⁸ Lascelles to wife, 1 March 1871, *ibid*.

¹²⁹ Lascelles to wife, 27 Feb 1871, *ibid*.

quietly as possible. No sooner had they gone out than the French mob rushed out the doors & tried to get into the place. They smashed the windows and threw stones into the place.¹³⁰

Once the siege was over, Frank witnessed crowds of German soldiers and German bands playing in the streets, and officers riding around 'touching their caps exactly as they used to do in the Thiergarten,' but natives were scarcely to be seen, 'the respectable Frenchmen not liking to see the exultation of their conquerors.'¹³¹

On 3 March the troops quietly left Paris,¹³² but this merely preceded the beginning of fresh drama, as the National Guard, aided by Parisians smarting at the humiliation of defeat and suspicious of the new Republican Government, immediately began to organise themselves into an alternative centre of power. Favre had mistakenly let the National Guard retain their arms after the siege of Paris.¹³³ Lascelles clearly feared the incipient Communist insurgency, and regretted that Government troops, sent from Versailles to deal with the National Guard, had not done more to 'frighten them'.¹³⁴ But even after the Commune was officially proclaimed on 28 March, Lascelles thought Paris very quiet.¹³⁵ Despite nearly being caught in the 'middle of a row' when, on his way dine at a Paris restaurant with Philip Currie (the future Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office) he passed some insurgents, just as the order was being given to 'load with ball'¹³⁶ he was generally surprised to find members of the National Guard were 'altogether very polite' in person,¹³⁷ that individual members of the Commune 'very well behaved individually' and thought it 'extraordinary that now that the whole town is in possession of these

¹³⁰ Lascelles to wife, 1 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹³¹ Lascelles to wife, 3 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Newton, *Lyons*, p. 259.

¹³⁴ Lascelles to wife, 4 March 1871, LASC 1.

¹³⁵ Lascelles to wife, 21 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Lascelles to wife, 19 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹³⁷ Lascelles to wife, 4 March 1871, *ibid.*

people, there should be absolutely no pillage, and no danger in the streets,'¹³⁸ despite reported looting of wine shops and bakeries.¹³⁹

However from the outset Lascelles held few illusions about how the Commune would end- if it succeeded, he told his wife, 'we shall probably see the Prussians in Paris again in a very short time'.¹⁴⁰ Lascelles worried that the Prussians would be 'only too happy' to quell the revolution but thought it 'most disgraceful...that Paris should have to be put down by Prussian bayonets'.¹⁴¹

When in March most of the Embassy staff relocated to Versailles to follow the French Government,¹⁴² Lascelles remained in Paris, with Malet as chargé d'affaires, James Saumarez (another Secretary) and Colonel Claremont, the Embassy's military attaché assisting him.¹⁴³ Lascelles was relieved not to have to 'pack up and be off in a hurry',¹⁴⁴ but as the tension increased, he warned Mary from coming to Paris,¹⁴⁵ and wrote of his 'relief...to think that you & the children are safe in London.'¹⁴⁶ He was clearly pained at being apart from his family, reassuring Mary not to be nervous 'if there were no letters should the railways be cut' asked her to 'kiss the children' and to wish his son Billy a happy birthday.¹⁴⁷

On 2 April the fighting commenced,¹⁴⁸ and on 6 April Lascelles took advantage of good weather to go up to the Arc de Triomphe and gain a view of the combat.¹⁴⁹ He witnessed 'crowds of people looking through their Opera-glasses with

¹³⁸ Lascelles to wife, 1 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹³⁹ Lascelles to wife, 21 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Lascelles to wife, 18 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Lascelles to wife, 1 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴² Lascelles to wife, 19 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴³ Newton, Lyons, pp. 272-3: Lascelles to his wife, 16, 17 & 20 Mar 1871, LASC 1.

¹⁴⁴ Lascelles to wife, 21 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Lascelles to wife, 7 & 19 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Lascelles to wife, 18 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Lascelles to wife, 20 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Lascelles to wife, 2 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Lascelles to wife, Good Friday 1871, *ibid.*

about as much indifference as they look at a race.’¹⁵⁰ Two days later he dared to get even closer by climbing on top of an empty house in a nearby street, but could not see much beyond smoke and shells bursting in the air. ‘The excitement of hearing two or three shells whistling through the air,’ he recorded, was an experience which was ‘new to me and not pleasant to hear,’¹⁵¹ but in time he grew so accustomed to the noise, ‘that when the firing ceases for a short time (which it does very rarely by the way) I feel quite to miss it.’¹⁵² Lascelles deplored the Government’s bombardment of the city, which did ‘much if not more harm to the peaceable people as to the National Guards’¹⁵³ and deemed the interminable fighting a ‘horrible state of things’.¹⁵⁴

In consequence of orders issued by the Commune, many hostages were taken, including the Archbishop of Paris,¹⁵⁵ and countless British subjects whom the Embassy staff worked busily trying to free, including one man reportedly condemned to death.¹⁵⁶ Lascelles himself spent the morning of Easter Sunday getting a certain Mr John Stanley out of prison, as he exasperatedly told his wife:

He was arrested last night & from what he tells me I think it was entirely his own fault. He went out last evening to the forts Maillet, which was in itself a foolish thing to do as that part of the town is being shelled. After stopping there some time, he went along the road close to the fortifications, and got into conversation with a Sentry, who at first was very civil but afterwards got suspicions and arrested him. He was then taken off.....and had to pass the night in a casket, with a quantity of other people, & he describes the state of dirt and filth as something quite abominable. I sincerely hope he will soon leave Paris, as he talks of doing

¹⁵⁰ Lascelles to wife, 6 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Lascelles to wife, 9 & 16 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁵² Lascelles to wife, 16 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁵³ Lascelles to wife, 9 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Lascelles to wife, 12 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Lascelles to wife, Good Friday 1871, *ibid.* The Communists took him with a view to exchanging him with the Communist leader, Blanqui. Newton, *Lyons*, p. 279.

¹⁵⁶ Lascelles to wife, Good Friday 1871, LASC 1.

so[,] because he is so reckless that he is almost certain to get into another scrape if he remains.¹⁵⁷

It became increasingly difficult for British subjects to flee, in consequence of measures designed to stop-able bodied Frenchmen who could be conscripted from leaving the city. Lascelles lamented these restrictions as 'a terrible nuisance,' as the Embassy were advising British subjects to leave imminently.¹⁵⁸ As a consequence, they were 'besieged by people of all sorts wanting protection,' including not only British subjects but Priests and Jesuits.¹⁵⁹ Many Frenchmen came to seek protection which it was impossible to grant them. Despite the workload, on the evening of 20 April Lascelles and Malet contemplated going to the theatre 'but,' the former wearily noted, 'it will depend upon how we feel after dinner.'¹⁶⁰

Indeed, it is surprising the extent to which life continued to function amidst the chaos. In May the two remaining inhabitants of the Embassy who now barely dared leave the building, were invited to a concert given by the *musiques militaires à Paris* on the Place de la Concorde. Malet, writing to his friend Lillie de Hegermann-Lindencrone and enclosing two extra tickets, called his hosts 'mad as March hares,' for thinking he and Lascelles would be 'pleasantly attuned to music on that day.'¹⁶¹ Nevertheless on Sunday 21 May these 'creatures' of polite society dined 'as usual' together at Grand Café, one of the few still open, and afterwards played a game of billiards 'in the deserted halls till about ten o'clock.' Upon returning to the Embassy, they found a letter from Bingham, Paris correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, inviting them to spend the evening with him to witness the firing of a battery which

¹⁵⁷ Lascelles to wife 9 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Lascelles to wife, 11 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Lascelles to wife, 10 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Lascelles to wife, 20 April 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Lillie de Hegermann-Lindencrone, *In the courts of memory 1858-1875*, (New York & London, 1912), pp. 330-331.

had been newly erected on the Arc de Triomphe. Lascelles, as Malet recalled, persuaded him to go on this 'nocturnal expedition,' and after an evening passed quietly in games with 'no sound from the battery' the pair 'groped' their way back to the Embassy at 2 a.m.¹⁶² along the Champs Elysees, deserted except for 'one very drunken Garde Nationale.'¹⁶³

At 7 a.m. the next day Lascelles was awoken to be informed by Malet that Government troops had entered Paris '& that the Tricolor flag was flying from the Arc de Triomphe.' Lascelles had surprisingly slept through the clamour! The fighting was now so close that Malet and Lascelles were 'prisoners in the Embassy.'¹⁶⁴ The following day, (23 May), a Colonel of the Versailles troops asked Malet for permission to take possession of the Embassy garden, and the latter skilfully skirted the issue of Britain's official neutrality by answering that 'he could not prevent' an occupation-unfortunately, the Colonel himself was later mortally wounded. Meanwhile, Lascelles himself, keen to gain a good view of the battle, only narrowly escaped being hit by a bullet after peeping out of the shutters of a top floor window at precisely the wrong moment.¹⁶⁵ Around two that afternoon, Malet and Lascelles, 'heard a tremendous clatter, and immediately afterwards [someone] on the other side shrieked out that the house was on fire.' Rushing upstairs they found Malet's room 'full of smoke, the windows smashed - & a big hole in the wall just above the fire place.'¹⁶⁶ On Malet's suggestion, they wisely retreated to the cellars, taking the Embassy archives and other valuables with them. In the evening they dined, as Malet

¹⁶² Sir Edward Malet, *Shifting Scenes* (London, 1901), pp. 316-7. Lascelles, writing to his wife, says they walked back at 1a.m., Malet says 2a.m. Lascelles to wife, 23 May 1871, LASC 1.

¹⁶³ Lascelles to wife, 23 May 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* See also Malet's version in *Shifting Scenes* p.316 ff, partly quoted from here and Meath, *Memories of the nineteenth century*, pp.181-183.

¹⁶⁶ Lascelles to wife, 23 May 1871, LASC 1.

later recalled ‘the table laid for dinner with its white tablecloth and silver candlesticks, and, to crown incongruities, Frank Lascelles and myself in evening dress and white ties, waited on by the stately butler and Embassy servants...prisoners for the time being, but quite first class.’¹⁶⁷ Despite the damage suffered to the Embassy, both men survived,¹⁶⁸ and by 27 May the ordeal was over though the fighting continued. ‘It is something to have lived through,’ Lascelles reflected, ‘but I dare say that Billy’s children will be sometimes rather bored by their grandfather’s reminiscences of the destruction of Paris.’¹⁶⁹

Lascelles was deeply shaken by the ‘horrors’ perpetrated during the siege of Paris, and what he saw had a profound effect on him.¹⁷⁰ In addition to the gunfire and the burning buildings, set ablaze by the Communards as they abandoned them, he witnessed ‘several dead bodies lying still in...pools of blood,’ and heard rumours, possibly exaggerated, of Communards ‘pouring Petroleum into...cellars and then throwing in lighted matches’ and concealing themselves in ambulances to murder wounded soldiers.¹⁷¹ As the ring closed in around the insurgents, the fighting became more ‘desperate’ and they began to shoot hostages, including the Archbishop of Paris, priests and gendarmes. Still more were killed by the fires, although the exact numbers were hard to calculate: Lascelles heard stories that ‘whole families had been found suffocated in the cellars of Rue Royale.’¹⁷² Lascelles was also distressed by the human tragedy of those caught up in the middle: one man had been obliged to join the National Guard ‘to save himself & his family from starving’ although he was against

¹⁶⁷ Malet, *Shifting Scenes*, p. 225. See also Meath, *Memories of the nineteenth century*, p. 182.

¹⁶⁸ Lascelles to wife, 24 May 1871 (b), LASC 1.

¹⁶⁹ Lascelles to wife, 27 May 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Lascelles to wife, 24 May 1871(a), *ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Lascelles to wife, 24 May 1871 (b), *ibid.*

¹⁷² Lascelles to wife, 28 May 1871, *ibid.*

the Commune, but would now probably be shot for doing so, and there were thousands in the same position.¹⁷³

In this situation, Lascelles' frustration at the reckless behaviour displayed by the British subjects he was tasked with safeguarding only increased. One man was escorted to the Embassy by corporal and four men of the line. 'The stupid idiot had been walking about last night & of course was taken up,' he wrote to Mary; the man had been 'lucky that he was not shot, as when he was first challenged he walked on without paying any attention.' Lascelles had tried 'to impress upon the idiot the folly of his proceedings, and asked him whether he had not seen the notice warning people to remain at home.' He replied that 'he had, but the he thought it applied only to House holders.' [!]¹⁷⁴ Another British subject who had been walking about had been taken prisoner but was recognised by the Secretary of the Belgian Legation as he was marched along the Champs-Élysées. Not long after this eighty of the same batch of prisoners were shot randomly by appearance.¹⁷⁵

Lascelles also dealt with plenty of people angry to find they were 'obliged to remain' in Paris despite having had 'plenty of warning' that if they did so it was 'at their own and peril';¹⁷⁶ only once it had become 'excessively difficult to leave Paris,' did they appear 'in shoals to apply for passes which we cannot give them'.¹⁷⁷

The staff of the Embassy received much applause for their stoic behaviour; Lord Lyons praised Malet's level-headedness and civil co-operation with members of the Commune, and also the conduct of the staff generally.¹⁷⁸ In recognition of his services Lascelles received a commendation from Lord Granville for his 'willing' and

¹⁷³ Lascelles to wife, 29 May 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Lascelles to wife, 27 May 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Lascelles to wife, 29 May 1871, *ibid.* Lascelles called the random shootings 'as barbarous a proceeding' as could be conceived.

¹⁷⁶ Lascelles to wife, 30 May 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Lascelles to wife, 31 May 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Newton, *Lyons*, p.278, 280-281.

‘unwearied’ work, his ‘courage, judgement and discretion’ and the ‘intelligence and ability with which he discharged his duties.’¹⁷⁹

Lascelles had already been informed of his promotion to Second Secretary in February,¹⁸⁰ and his departure from Paris had only been delayed by the Commune.¹⁸¹ In July 1871 he finally left,¹⁸² the high cost of living in Paris having ‘reduced [his] balance to almost nothing,’ so he was glad to hear that ‘Copenhagen is a cheap place’.¹⁸³

After leaving Paris, Lascelles’ appointments were short and again are not well-documented. He remained at Copenhagen until October 1873.¹⁸⁴ While there, he learned Danish to a standard which enabled him to translate and publish the epic poem *Jarl Hakon*, gaining favourable reviews in the newspapers and in private by his Danish colleague Kildgard. Lascelles was ‘proud as Punch,’ of his achievement and sent a copy of Kildgard’s praise to his mother at Castle Howard.¹⁸⁵ After transferring to Rome, in February 1875 he and his wife found time to act again in a private production, this time of *A Merchant of Venice* which was apparently ‘very well done,’ although the couple, ‘dressed in black velvet, played the married couple to the life, but did not look at all Italian.’¹⁸⁶ Mary Lascelles gave birth to a daughter, Florence,

¹⁷⁹ Granville to Lyons 9 June 1871 Despatch No. 401, and Granville to Lyons 28 June 1871. No. 460. Copies of these are in the Spring Rice papers at Churchill College Archive Centre.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Lascelles was officially appointed to Copenhagen on 1 April 1871.

¹⁸² Blunt, *Alms to Oblivion*, Vol. iii, part iv, Chapter 5 – Madeira & Southampton, p.209.

¹⁸³ Lascelles to wife 21 March 1871, LASC 1. Lascelles was grateful when not put to the expense of paying for his own dinner (see 27 Feb, *ibid*), and happily beat the Messenger Conway Seymour at cards, enabling him to pay the cook and rent a piano. However the following night Lascelles ‘played atrociously’ and reduced his winnings considerably.

Lascelles to wife 7 & 8 March 1871, *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Enfield to Lascelles, 27 Oct 1873, National Archives, FO 366/328.

¹⁸⁵ Lascelles to mother 7 September 1874 and enclosure. Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/8.

¹⁸⁶ Lillie de Hegermann-Lindencrone, *In the courts of memory*, p. 427.

in January 1876.¹⁸⁷ The same month, Lascelles was appointed to Washington, and from there briefly transferred to Athens in April 1878, before being appointed as Second Secretary to Rome in December the same year, but in the meantime, he acted as chargé d'affaires in Cairo.

¹⁸⁷John Bailey, *The Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, Vol. ii, p.195.

An agent of imperialism? Lascelles in Egypt, 1878-1879.¹

The timing of Lascelles's first senior diplomatic posting, as acting Agent and Consul-General at Cairo (August 1878), coincided with a set of events that signalled the beginning of an era of 'new imperialism,' as rivalry between the European Powers increased across the globe. Great Britain's mounting involvement in Egypt from 1875, which culminated in her occupation of the country in 1882, has become 'one of the classic case studies of the partition of Africa and of late-nineteenth century imperialism in general.'² In examining Lascelles' role, one might ask how far he, as a diplomat of this late Victorian Empire, and a member of her ruling class, shared in an unspoken assumption about Britain's developing hegemony in Egypt, and also how far his ideas about Britain's policy in Egypt reflected those of other foreign policy makers at a critical point in Britain's diplomatic history, as well as examining Lascelles' contribution to the outcome of British policy itself.

Unlike many Englishmen in Egypt at this time, Lascelles unfortunately left behind no memoirs from his tenure at Cairo, and only a fragmentary private

¹ On Great Britain's Egyptian policy in this period see for example: David S. Landes, *Bankers and Pashas: International Finance and Economic Imperialism in Egypt* (London, 1958); the relevant chapter of R.E. Robinson and J. Gallagher *Africa and the Victorians*, (London, 1962) provides an overwhelmingly traditional interpretation of the reasons for British intervention; head-on criticism of their interpretation can be found in P.J. Cain & A.G. Hopkins *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Harlow, 2002), and more specifically A.G. Hopkins, 'The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882', *The Journal of African History* 27, (1986), pp.363-91; see also A. Ramm, 'Great Britain and France in Egypt,' in P. Gifford and W.R. Louis (eds.) *Britain and France in Africa*, ed. (New Haven, CT, 1971); A.R. Atkins, 'The Conservatives and Egypt, 1875-1880,' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 2, 2, (1974), pp.190-205. The Earl of Cromer's *Modern Egypt* (London, 1908), for all its inherent bias, is still the most detailed narrative of events known to this author.

² Hopkins, 'The Victorians and Africa,' p. 364.

correspondence.³ He also rarely appears in the vast secondary literature on Egyptian affairs, which mainly reflects his subordinate role, but nonetheless, any character study would be incomplete without taking into account this episode which was also a turning point in Lascelles' life; as he later asserted, it was his 'vast & splendid work,' in Cairo, and his acceptance of the new post of Minister at Sofia thereafter, which had advanced his diplomatic career.⁴

In 1878 Lascelles had served only once outside of Europe (in Washington), and had no experience of 'oriental' countries. He was sent to Cairo partly because he was at close proximity at the Rome Embassy and partly 'because there was nothing to do' at Cairo while the resident Agent and Consul-General, Hugh Vivian, was on leave, and so a senior diplomat was not needed to fill in.⁵ Nevertheless, as *locum tenens* he proved his worth to the extent that when in March 1879, the foreign secretary, Lord Salisbury, saw fit to remove Vivian, who increasingly disapproved of Britain's high-handed methods, Lascelles was reappointed and remained there until November 1879, meaning he was in place during the critical transition period running from the crisis of rule of the Khedive, Ismail Pasha, through to the establishment of the Anglo-French Dual Control. Without laying claim to any new interpretation of the reasons for Britain's increased role in Egypt, this chapter will seek to examine

³ Individual personal accounts from the period 1876-1882 abound: To Cromer's *Modern Egypt* must be added Charles Frederic Moberly Bell, *Khedives and pashas: sketches of contemporary Egyptian rulers and statesmen*, (London, 1884); Viscount Alfred Milner, *England in Egypt* (London, 1894); Sir Auckland Colvin, *The Making of Modern Egypt* (London, 1909); Sir Edward Malet, *Egypt, 1879-1883* (London, 1909); Sir Charles Rivers Wilson, *Chapters from my official life* (London 1916); W.S. Blunt, *A Secret History of the British Occupation of Egypt* (London, 1907), provides a rare corrective to the 'official' version of events. The majority of this chapter is based on Lascelles' remaining private correspondence in FO 800/8.

⁴ Dumas diary, entry for 16 August 1907, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds library Special Collections, RNMN/DUMAS (hitherto simply referred to as 'Dumas diary').

⁵ *Ibid.* One can only speculate whether Lascelles' appointment was also due to his prior acquaintance with Philip Currie, who as Salisbury's private secretary now handled personnel matters. Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs* (Palgrave, 2009), p. 81.

Lascelles's role and attitudes within the framework of events, and to understand how events in Egypt both reflected and shaped his outlook on British diplomacy and foreign policy.

I

Lascelles' appointment may have stemmed from commonplace personnel problems, but the post demanded an occupant sympathetic to the protection of British interests. He came to Cairo just as Britain was increasing her stake in Egypt's governance. The country had long been of strategic interest to Britain as a stepping stone to India, an importance which increased after the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), reflected in the British Prime Minister Disraeli's purchase of 44 per cent of Canal shares in November 1875. Britain's policy hereafter was influenced by an intersection of strategic and financial concerns. Between 1850 and 1875, Western, and more especially British and French, investors had loaned money at extortionate rates of interest to Egypt's Khedives Said (1854-1863) and Ismail Pasha (1863-1879), who wanted credit in order to help modernise their country along Western lines.⁶ By late 1876 Ismail, thanks also to an unchecked profligate streak, was deeply indebted to European speculators to the tune of £68 million, forcing him to seek foreign assistance in managing his finances, which led to the setting up of the European-run Commission of Public Debt (*Caisse de la Dette Publique*) in May 1876.⁷ The payment of the interest alone strained Egypt's resources, and a trade depression, the financial repercussions of the Russo-Turkish War, and an exceptionally bad harvest

⁶ John Marlowe, *Anglo-Egyptian relations, 1800-1953*, (London, 1954), p. 90-1.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 91. Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, pp.11-13.

meant that by 1878, Egypt had defaulted on her financial obligations.⁸ By this time, Russia's victory over Turkey in the Balkans, which menaced Britain's Mediterranean supremacy, added impetus to British efforts to co-operate with France in taking further steps towards measures for greater financial control over Egypt's finances, to enable her to repay the debts she owed to Western investors. So in May 1878 a Commission of Enquiry, which numbered among its members the future Consul-General Sir Evelyn Baring (who later, as Lord Cromer, became *de facto* British Governor of Egypt), was instituted to report on the financial situation, and which pointed the finger of blame for the situation squarely at Ismail's failure to distinguish between state and private expenditure, recommending (among other things) the limitation of the Khedive's absolute power through the appointment of Europeans to a Council of Ministers, and the surrender of all the Khedive's property in return for a Civil List.⁹ Ismail officially accepted the Commissions' recommendations on 28 August; and the following day Lascelles, having just arrived in Egypt, found Ismail still visibly reeling from the shock of the report.¹⁰ That blow however was a triumph for British influence; Nubar Pasha, a man "profoundly" servile to British policy, was appointed to preside over the new Council of Ministers, also taking the Justice and Foreign Affairs portfolios, while Charles Rivers Wilson, an Englishman with experience in the British Treasury, took the influential Finance portfolio, with the *de facto* patronage of the British Cabinet.¹¹

⁸ Ibid, p. 34; pp. 37-38. Eighty-five per cent of the country's total revenue was devoted to paying off the debt. Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, (London, 2000), p. 226.

⁹ Cromer, pp.42-45; 55-61; A.R. Atkins, 'The Conservatives and Egypt, 1875-1880,' p.198; John Marlowe, *Cromer in Egypt*, (London : Elek, 1970) p.32.

¹⁰ Lascelles to Layard, 9 Sept 1878, FO 800/8.

¹¹ Atkins, p.198; 196. Sir Charles Rivers Wilson (1831-1916), was a British civil servant and financier. He had been vice-president of the Commission to enquire into Egypt's financial position 1878.

Lascelles role was a subordinate one in this first tenure; power lay with Wilson, who dealt directly with Nubar, and Lascelles was ordered to avoid 'all official interference' with Wilson's work and merely relay the Foreign Office's consent to his actions.¹²

Yet Salisbury also needed a loyal and tactful diplomat at the Cairo Agency to translate his cautious policy. While Britain's financial stakes in Egypt were 'enormous', Salisbury wished to 'steer clear' of further foreign entanglements, not least because of troop commitments in India and Afghanistan, and thus pursued a 'largely opportunistic' policy in Egypt.¹³ While hoping to preserve the gains for British influence in Egypt, he avoided the French Government's forthright approach of acting as "sheriff's officer" for her creditors.¹⁴ The success of this policy was proved by the fact that Nubar favoured the ostensibly more reserved British to the hectoring French.¹⁵

On the other hand, Salisbury sought to avoid alienating the French,¹⁶ for this might equally force physical intervention to safeguard British interests. For this reason, when, in autumn 1878 Egypt applied for another foreign loan to help her service her existing debt, he acquiesced in the appointment of a Frenchman, Monsieur de Blighnières (who alongside Wilson and Baring had served on the Commission of Inquiry), as Minister for Public Works in the Egyptian Cabinet, in return for French

¹² Vivian to Lascelles, 6 Sept 1878, FO 800/8.

¹³ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 228; T.G. Otte, "Floating Downstream"? Lord Salisbury and British Foreign Policy, 1878–1902,' in idem (ed.), *The Makers of British Foreign Policy from Pitt to Thatcher* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.107.

¹⁴ Salisbury, quoted in Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 84.

¹⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 Sept 1878, FO/800/8.

¹⁶ Cromer, *op cit*, p. 40.

financial assistance. Lascelles was fully apprised of the importance of upholding the Anglo-French *entente* in Egypt.¹⁷

He was also shrewd enough to befriend the amenable Prime Minister. Nubar knew of the urgent need to keep the Powers lending credit. Lascelles deduced his pragmatic motives in co-operating closely with Britain; sensitive to (not to say resentful of) foreign interference,¹⁸ Nubar knew Salisbury was reluctant to occupy Egypt, but feared nonetheless lest Britain be forced to take 'serious measures' to protect her interests and secure the route to India and so 'attempted to content the English by securing their influence in Egypt'.¹⁹

Nubar had also to contend with Ismail, who skilfully obstructed the attempts to turn him from an absolute into a constitutional monarch, (for example refusing to cede his personal property as security for the new loan until his civil list was settled)²⁰ and, convinced that Nubar intended to depose him and 'give the country up entirely to the English', sought to embarrass him and arouse the jealousy of France and Britain by backing Italian ambitions for a Ministerial post.²¹

Nubar solicited British help in the form of 'consular support against the khedive in the form of threats and warnings,' and treated Lascelles as a confidante, calling on him to consult him for his advice 'as a private English gentlemen'.²² It

¹⁷ Atkins, p. 198; See Vivian to Lascelles, 6 Sept 1878, Lascelles to Layard, 9 Sept 1878, Vivian to Lascelles, 22 and 25 Sept 1878, and Layard to Lascelles, 8 Oct 1878, FO 800/8.

¹⁸ See for example Lascelles to Layard, 9 Sept 1878, Memo by Lascelles, 16 Sept 1878 Lascelles to Layard, 3 Nov 1878, FO 800/8.

¹⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 15 Nov 1878, FO 800/8. See also Lascelles to Layard, 3 Nov 1878, *ibid.*

²⁰ Salisbury to Lascelles, 16 Sept 1878, FO 800/8.

²¹ F Robert Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives, 1805-1879: From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy*, (London, 1984), p.204 -205. Memorandum by Lascelles, 16 Sept 1878, Lascelles to Salisbury, 15 Nov 1878, FO 800/8. On Italy's Egyptian aspirations see Lucien E. Roberts, 'Italy and the Egyptian Question 1878-1882,' *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1946), pp. 314-332.

²² Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives, 1805-1879*, p.202. Memo by Lascelles, 16 Sept 1878, FO/800/8. See also Lascelles to Layard, 9 Sept 1878, *ibid.*

was a role which greatly suited Lascelles' affable personality, added to which was a notable sympathy for Nubar, whose trials with the Khedive (to the point where Ismail refused to receive Nubar and instead conducted business in writing) he thought 'almost incredible,' and whom he greatly admired, to the point of later owning that Nubar was the cleverest man he had ever met.²³ He was also convinced of the necessity of the Nubar-Wilson Ministry to stabilise Egypt's financial position, and to retain British preponderance, and although officially he was 'careful to avoid committing H[er] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t,' beyond wishing for the 'establishment of a strong & lasting Gov[ernmen]t in Egypt,' privately he encouraged Nubar not to let the Khedive jeopardise his Ministry's survival by making difficulties over the raising of the European loan.²⁴ Contrastingly, there is no evidence that Lascelles showed much compassion for Ismail, for whom Nubar said the 'blow' of losing his property was 'so severe' it had 'taken the soul out of him,' and painted a sorry scene of a ruler seemingly on the verge of a breakdown, 'throwing himself weeping on a sofa & ask[ing] whether some one has not got a dagger to plunge into his heart so that his misery may be ended.'²⁵ By late 29 October the Khedive had finally relinquished control over his property, in return for a loan of £8.5 million.²⁶

In his cautious support of the Nubar Ministry, Lascelles went no further than his instructions allowed, but this faithful execution of duty coupled with the conscientious execution of his routine duties (for the Consulate General at Cairo was 'never an idle Post,'²⁷) earned him praise from colleagues, including Salisbury,

²³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 Sept 1878 FO/800/8; Dumas diary, 3 March 1906. He qualified this praise however by adding that Nubar 'was most dangerous when he was most lucid' and was a good intriguer (ibid).

²⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 Sept 1878 FO/800/8.

²⁵ Memo. by Lascelles, 16 Sept 1878, FO 800/8.

²⁶ Cromer, op cit, p. 63.

²⁷ Vivian to Lascelles, 25 Sept 1878, FO/800/8.

Vivian and Nubar, for his 'discretion and industry,' and 'ability and sound judgement', and quickly paid dividends.²⁸

II

Upon returning from leave, Vivian showed a striking contrast with Lascelles's conduct by showing himself unsupportive of his superiors' policy,²⁹ and openly questioning the high-handed manner in which Nubar and Wilson were attempting to govern without the Khedive; he warned that they overestimated their own strength and ability to defy Ismail, and urged Salisbury to co-operate with the Khedive. Vivian was proved right when, in February 1879, (quite probably with Ismail's connivance) numerous army officers, who had been placed on half-pay due to the stringent financial measures assembled in Cairo, attacked and took hostage both Nubar and Wilson. Nubar subsequently resigned, which the British Government meekly accepted despite Wilson's protests. Ultimately however France and Britain chose to strengthen Ministerial against Vice-regal authority, overruling protests from Vivian and his French counterpart, Godeaux. Ismail was excluded from Cabinet Councils, his more pliant son Tewfik replaced Nubar as President of the Council and France and Britain gained a right of veto in the Cabinet. On 15 March Vivian was also recalled and Lascelles was sent out to replace him.³⁰

Contemporary accounts bear out Lascelles' later assertion that he readily seized the 'chance' to return to Egypt.³¹ The Ambassador to Rome Augustus Paget, who already thought his second secretary was an 'excellent fellow', also notified

²⁸ Salisbury to Lascelles, 27 Dec 1878, FO 800/8; Salisbury to Vivian, 3 January 1879, *ibid.*

²⁹ Atkins, p.200.

³⁰ Cromer, pp.69-90.

³¹ Obituary of Sir Frank Lascelles in the *Westminster Gazette*, 1920, Sir Frank Lascelles MSS, C.C.A.C., LASC 5.

Salisbury of his 'proper alacrity' in setting off within twelve hours of the summons.³²

Lascelles had also kept an eye on developments during his short sojourn in Rome, worrying for the welfare of his 'Cairo friends' Wilson and Baring in the February revolt.³³

In return for being 'packed off' at such short notice, Lascelles was assured by Salisbury's private secretary Philip Currie of a 'liberal treatment', and that the post represented a 'really a good chance' for him, and his Treasury allowance (which had been parsimonious at first) was increased.³⁴ Lascelles' return on the surface symbolised victory for the Nubar-Wilson camp. Nubar even accompanied Lascelles on his journey from Alexandria to Cairo, although Lascelles was disappointed in his wish of seeing Nubar return to office.³⁵ Salisbury wanted someone who supported Wilson 'thoroughly,' unlike the 'irreconcilable' Vivian, and Currie warned Lascelles not to repeat Vivian's mistake of falling 'under the influence of the Khedive'; he should essentially treat Ismail like a disobedient child; 'keep[ing] the power from him of doing mischief' and giving him to understand 'that we do not mean to stand any nonsense from him, and he would suffer for 'any tricks' he might play.'³⁶

There is no doubt that in re-appointing Lascelles the Foreign Office believed they were sending a signal to the Khedive that they would not be trifled with, and they were confident Lascelles would not be as sympathetic to the Egyptians as Vivian had proven. A memorandum written in June 1879 by Lord Tenterden, the Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, for the attention of Lord Salisbury, amply

³² Paget to Salisbury, 19 March 1879, Paget MSS, B.L., Add MSS. 51228, f.70.

³³ Lascelles to Vivian, 27 Feb 1879, FO 800/8.

³⁴ Currie to Lascelles, 21 March 1879; Tenterden to Lascelles, 21 and 28 March 1879, FO 800/8.

³⁵ Hunter, p.221; Lascelles to Currie, 30 March 1879, Salisbury Papers, Vol. 6/16.

³⁶ Salisbury to Lascelles, 22 March 1879, and Currie to Lascelles, 21 March 1879, FO 800/8.

demonstrates this. Whereas Ismail had successfully played off Wilson against Vivian, he argued, the Khedive was:

quite shrewd enough to know that with Vivian's departure on leave circumstances have changed and that Lascelles is by no means on his side and does not seem likely to be wheedled into a belief in "Egypt for the Egyptians".

I think that there is no fear of his being led to rely any longer on a covert sympathy at the English Agency in wh. he probably put more faith than he was entitled, and that if he is not already disabused of that notion he soon will be now that the Agency is in different hands.

In short so far as Lascelles is concerned I am convinced that the matter is in good hands.

Salisbury minuted his concurrence with this view,³⁷ and Lascelles was assured that the Foreign Office had 'great confidence in your tact and judgement.'³⁸ For his part, Lascelles appreciated the necessity of working with Wilson to prevent 'the whole arrangement...go[ing] to mash.'³⁹ The two men were on good terms; Wilson later told Lascelles that had he and not Vivian been in Cairo over the winter, 'Blignières and I would have succeeded without any material force'.⁴⁰ Unlike Vivian Lascelles, while not uncritical of Wilson's ostentatious lifestyle (he appreciated Wilson's 'big house & large salary ,' had 'produced a bad impression, & it might have been wiser if he had not lived so magnificently and entertained so much,') got on 'cordially' with him and also his wife, and he wrote that the latter's 'intense swagger has the effect of amusing & not irritating me.'⁴¹

³⁷ Memo by Tenterden 23 June 1879, and undated minute by Salisbury, The National Archives, FO 363/1.

³⁸ Jervoise to Lascelles, 11 April 1879 FO 800/8.

³⁹ Lascelles to Currie, 30 March 1879, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House (SP hereafter), SP 6/16.

⁴⁰ Wilson to Lascelles, 25 July 1879, FO 800/8.

⁴¹ Lascelles to Currie, 30 March 1879, SP 6/16.

However Salisbury, who admitted the viability of some of Vivian's warnings, also wanted Lascelles to exercise some moderating influence on Wilson, by pressing on him the 'necessity of conciliating... rather than of effacing the Khedive,' for Salisbury was painfully aware that Britain was 'not strong enough to defy him' alone and as a British occupation was materially impossible and a French one undesirable, he was perturbed by Wilson's policy of 'acting as if he were the master of many legions' without physical force behind him, as Ismail, though 'a very timid man...frightened by the appearance of ships of war which cannot possibly hurt him,' might one day 'take advantage of some outbreak of Mussalman fanaticisms to shake off the European concert.' Salisbury regretted that Wilson had cut down Ismail's Civil List and wanted him to feel 'comfortable' and that his position was more 'tolerable' acting with the European Ministers than against them.⁴² Lascelles essentially concurred with Salisbury's opinions about Wilson, although he wearily conceded the Khedive's worrying track record in attempting to escape European control.⁴³

These attempts soon came to test Lascelles' resolve. By early April, the Commission of Inquiry had drawn up a report which would conclude that Egypt could only escape her financial difficulties by a declaration of bankruptcy and Wilson devised a financial plan including proposals to halve Ismail's civil list, and to penalise the 'privileged' elements in Egyptian society.⁴⁴ Lascelles hoped that, with the help of Baring who he dubbed 'a tower of strength,' Wilson's plan could be pushed through.⁴⁵ However, plans were superseded by events. The Khedive, refusing to declare bankruptcy, countered Wilson's plan with his own.⁴⁶ Within ten days of

⁴² Salisbury to Lascelles, 22 March 1879, FO 800/8.

⁴³ All the foregoing is Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 April 1879, FO 800/8.

⁴⁴ Hunter, p.218.

⁴⁵ Lascelles to Currie, 30 March 1879, SP 6/16.

⁴⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury 30 Mar 1879, FO 78/2999. Quoted in Hunter, p.219.

arriving, Lascelles was essentially warning that instructions to conciliate Ismail might have come too late.⁴⁷ He warned Ismail had the backing of his Chamber of Notables, and nationalist elements who, under the direction of their leader Sheikh-el-Bekri, were fomenting ‘considerable agitation’, and attempting to incite religious extremism against the European Ministers. The Minister of the Interior, Riaz Pasha, was ‘denounced’ as a friend of these Christians and warned that his life was endangered, which led Lascelles to press Salisbury to give him British protection.⁴⁸ Ismail was also joined by the ‘wealthy portion of the population’ who stood to lose by Wilson’s financial measures, and those who apparently ‘dared not refuse’ to sign his petition against Wilson’s plan.⁴⁹ Lascelles took the aloof but perhaps not inaccurate view that the remainder had signed Ismail’s petition without understanding it, and was cynical about whether ‘this famous plan,’ was really an ‘expression of the will of the people.’⁵⁰

Lascelles’s overriding concern was with the survival of the Tewfik-Wilson Ministry. Taking Wilson’s advice on board, he despaired of re-establishing harmony between the Khedive and his Ministers, and with the resignations of at least Wilson, de Blignières and Baring hanging in the balance, by early April Lascelles was proposing to Salisbury the radical solution of deposing the Khedive by means of a decree from the Ottoman Sultan, still nominally Ismail’s master. His decision acknowledged the ‘palpable objections’ to a full-blown occupation of the country on the one hand, and a scepticism that the Khedive might wriggle out of ‘mere summons’ to Constantinople by conjuring up an excuse of ill health, on the other. Lascelles was

⁴⁷ Lascelles to Currie, 30 March 1879, SP 6/16.

⁴⁸ Hunter, *op cit.*, p.221; Lascelles to Salisbury 1 April 1879, quoted in Cromer, p.99; Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 April 1879, FO 800/8.

⁴⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury 4 April 1879, quoted *ibid*, pp. 99-100

⁵⁰ Lascelles to Malet, 7 April 1879 FO 800/8.

convinced the measure would find favour with the general populace, excepting those with vested interests.⁵¹

The Khedive confirmed European fears when on 9 April he announced his financial plan, and proposed a wholly Egyptian ministry, abruptly dismissing the European ministers, and appointing the pliant Sharif Pasha as the new President of the Council.⁵² Baring and de Blignières resigned in protest, alongside other high-ranking financial officials.⁵³

Salisbury typically hesitated before resorting to action. Vivian told Lascelles the British Government were in a 'serious dilemma' for they had never intended to 'interfere actively in Egyptian affairs,' and lacked popular support. As Wilson was 'purely an Egyptian official', Britain could only 'remonstrate strongly with the Khedive for his flagrant act of discourtesy,' and threaten him with action from Constantinople.⁵⁴ In late April Lascelles was instructed to warn the Khedive that if he continued to ignore their advice, he renounced 'all pretension' to European friendship, and the Powers might take action to defend their Egyptians, and to secure 'the good government and prosperity of the country',⁵⁵ but as a sign of Salisbury's uncertainty, Vivian was also sent back to assist Lascelles.⁵⁶

In the meantime, Lascelles' reports and private letters put the case for intervention. In decided language he concluded Ismail had 'complete victory' and that

⁵¹ Lascelles to Currie, 30 March 1879, SP 6/16; Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 April 1879, FO 800/8.

⁵² Cromer, p. 100-103

⁵³ These included Sir Gerald Fitzgerald, a financial expert who was assisting Wilson in working out a new accounts system for Egypt. (See Sir C. Rivers Wilson, *Chapters from my official life* p.183-184), Blum Pasha, (the Secretary of the Finance Ministry), and Sir Auckland Colvin (Head of the Cadastral Survey).

⁵⁴ Vivian to Lascelles, 18 April 1879, FO 800/8.

⁵⁵ Salisbury to Lascelles, 25 April 1879, reproduced in Cromer, p.132-133

⁵⁶ Currie to Lascelles, 25 April 1879, FO 800/8.

‘the enemies of Reform’ were ‘triumphant’, but still maintained the tide would turn against Ismail if the Porte could be induced to act.⁵⁷

However, Lascelles wanted Ismail to be induced to abdicate, in order that his son Tewfik might succeed. Lascelles thought Tewfik, whom he termed ‘a nice boy’, was personally inclined ‘to run straight & act honestly’ and would be an acceptable ruler, if only surrounded by ‘decent men’ whom he deemed to be ‘well intentioned’, rather than having to accept the Ottoman Sultan’s son Halim, who Lascelles thought would ‘not be a great improvement’ on Ismail and who would again place Egypt ‘under the thumb of the Porte’.⁵⁸ By mid-May the German Consul General had taken the lead in urging Ismail’s abdication⁵⁹, but Salisbury was characteristically more reserved and risked a rift with the other Powers through hesitating to act.⁶⁰ By late May Vivian was again recalled, leaving Lascelles in sole charge, Salisbury not deeming it ‘worth while...under present circumstances to send Englishmen of high position,’ to Egypt while Ismail remained in power and English authority ebbed so low. Vivian thought Salisbury was inclined to ‘let the Viceroy stew in his own juice,’ and to ‘let things slide.’ However, a deciding factor was Salisbury’s desire to keep in step with France who was demanding ‘more drastic remedies.’⁶¹

On 19 June Lascelles and his French colleague, M. Tricou, officially appealed to Ismail to abdicate in Tewfik’s favour to secure the succession in exchange for a

⁵⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 April 1879, FO 800/8. He also reported heavy-handedness in the implementation of Ismail’s plans for tax collection by the Minister of War Shahin Pasha, who had a notorious reputation in his former role as Inspector-General in Lower Egypt ‘as one of the harshest and most successful tax-gatherers in the country’ and noted the discontent was such that even anti-European Army officers held Ismail ‘responsible for the disasters that have fallen upon the country.’ Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 April 1879 in Cromer, p. 126; same to same, 26 April 1879, *ibid.*, pp.133-34.

⁵⁸ For these reflections see Lascelles to Currie, 30 March 1879, SP 6/16; Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 April and 23 June 1879, FO 800/8.

⁵⁹ Hunter, p.224.

⁶⁰ Wilson to Lascelles, 23 May 1879 FO/ 800/8.

⁶¹ Vivian to Lascelles, 30 May 1879, FO 800/8.

Civil List.⁶² Ismail however refused the offer. The events of the meeting were recounted by the future *Times* Foreign Editor, Charles Moberley Bell, who was present in Egypt at the time. Bell's reconstruction if true is revealing about Ismail's skill but also Lascelles' diplomatic technique, for it stresses his conciliatory qualities over the reportedly 'loud and noisy' French Agent, which had ambiguous results. Tricou began by accusing Ismail of having "acted twenty times in defiance of the Sultan." Ismail challenged his 'bully' to "name one instance!". Lascelles, more taciturn in his approach, encouraged Ismail to show "some independence of Constantinople, since the Porte may deceive you." Ismail having 'answered the bully after his kind,' apparently 'replied to Lascelles with the quiet humour that he knew would awaken a responsive echo, "Seeing, mon cher monsieur, that the first use you wish me to make of my independence is to abdicate all my power, I hardly see the advantage to be gained." Lascelles told Bell that this answer 'knocked [him] over,' and he could barely reply.⁶³ At the end of the meeting, Ismail only held out his hand to Lascelles, who himself noted that '2 or 3 people have since told me that the Khedive has remarked on the difference of manner between M. Tricou and me.' Yet Lascelles was keen, despite the Khedive's endeavours, that there should not be a perceived split in the Anglo-French *entente* over the 'great question,' and gave everyone to understand that the Khedive's fate was sealed and it was now 'merely a question -- between his abdication and deposition', and although Ismail's defiance temporarily frustrated the Powers, when on 25 June the representatives of Germany, Britain, and France again urged Ismail to abdicate and to nominate Tewfik in his

⁶² Hunter, pp. 224-225; Cromer, pp.135-136.

⁶³ Moberley Bell, *Khedives and Pashas*, p. 15-17. As Bell put it, Ismail acted 'to a bluff man bluff, to a gentleman gentlemanlike.' Ibid.

place, this time supported by Cherif who crucially had turned against his master, their entreaties were successful.⁶⁴

The official verdict suggests Lascelles pleased his superiors in executing a 'delicate and very difficult' task. Lord Salisbury sent him a telegram approving his conduct in the crisis, and Wilson, who had lobbied the leader of the Conservatives in the Commons, Stafford Northcote in favour of Lascelles's staying on at Cairo, commended him, and said 'everywhere I hear you well spoken of and it is generally understood that you did well when acting alone.'⁶⁵

III

Lascelles stayed in Egypt for a further five months, ensuring that Tewfik's administration was amenable to European interests and that he appointed those judged to be 'good and honest natives' from all parties, including Cherif and Riaz Pasha; the important thing for Britain was to see (in the blunt words of one diplomat) that Tewfik was not a 'chip of [f] the Ismail block' who would 'ruin the country'.⁶⁶ With Nubar pointedly excluded on Tewfik's wishes, Cherif was appointed Prime Minister, with the Powers somewhat reluctantly acquiescing. Lascelles personally thought him 'weak and vacillating,' and 'a vain indolent man' who would block reform, but with Nubar 'out of the question,' there seemed a lack of good candidates other than Riaz Pasha, who Tewfik initially distrusted.⁶⁷

Lascelles was pleased to find Tewfik receptive to European advice and that he seemed to show 'firmness' in shaking off his father's tutelage.⁶⁸ Lascelles and Tricou

⁶⁴ Hunter, p.226.

⁶⁵ Jervoise to Lascelles, 11 April 1879; Lascelles to Salisbury 28 June 1879 acknowledging receipt of telegram; Wilson to Lascelles, 20 June 1879 and 27 June 1879, FO 800/8.

⁶⁶ Vivian to Lascelles, 27 June 1879; J. Scott to Lascelles, 4 July 1879, FO 800/8.

⁶⁷ Baring to Lascelles, 2 July 1879; Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 July and 8 Aug 1879, FO 800/8.

⁶⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 July and 28 June 1879 FO 800/8.

successfully urged Tewfik to drop his father's financial plan and accept the appointment of a new Commission. To avoid further arguments however no European ministers were appointed. Britain insisted on appointing Controllers 'and nothing else', and beyond powers of inspection they abstained from official interference, although in the background hung the threat of increased control if European advice was rejected.⁶⁹

Lascelles was further pleased in September when the Khedive dismissed the unreliable Cherif Pasha, and summoned Riaz Pasha, who had fled after Ismail's coup, to replace him.⁷⁰ He lauded this as proof that Tewfik might turn out to be of 'much stronger character than is supposed', and 'work for the good of the country,' and for financial reforms.⁷¹ In Salisbury's view, Tewfik's attitude was more amenable to 'English interests'; he wanted to keep Egypt neutral, 'and for that perhaps some self-assertion and stubbornness are understandable in the native,' as 'a Native Gov[ernment] strong enough to hold its own' and a Khedive strong and sensible enough to govern for himself' suited Salisbury 'very well' if it prevented other Powers becoming ascendant.⁷²

A new Commission of Liquidation was devised, comprised principally of members of the old one, which it was hoped would restore European confidence. De Blignières returned, and Lascelles personally urged Baring's return based on his knowledge of Egyptian Finance, and the respect which was felt for him on account of his 'straightforwardness and firmness of character,' which made him 'invaluable'; Baring was reluctant, but also accepted Lascelles' invitation 'after a sufficient number of

⁶⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 July 1879; Wilson to Lascelles, 25 July 1879; Baring to Lascelles, 22 July 1879; Salisbury to Lascelles, 2 August 1879; Baring to Lascelles, 5 August 1879, FO 800/8.

⁷⁰ Cromer, *op cit*, p.151-154.

⁷¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 21 Aug 1879 FO 800/8; see also same to same, 31 Aug 1879, *ibid*.

⁷² Salisbury to Lascelles, 17 September 1879, FO 800/8.

grouse have fallen to my gun.’⁷³ Lascelles was ‘very firm and vigilant’ as to securing British places, and encouraged by Vivian and Wilson, and Baring advised Cherif and Tewfik to reappoint Fitzgerald and worked to allay opposition to Wilson’s return, as Controller General.⁷⁴

Lascelles also fought hard to uphold the other key tenet in the pre-1882 system, Anglo-French co-operation, which showed signs of breaking down after the Khedive’s deposition and manifested itself in battles over administrative posts.⁷⁵ What Salisbury termed bitter ‘violent personal antagonisms and prejudices’ were quick to resurface, despite the Consul-General’s efforts.⁷⁶ Lascelles found that the French Agent Tricou, whom he deemed to be ‘a man of....violent temper’ with much of ‘the character of a bully’, tested his patience in trying to secure French appointments.⁷⁷ He was determined to co-operate with his colleague, whose ‘ideas on the subject of Egypt’ he judged to be ‘sound’.⁷⁸ Concern arose among British officials that Tricou’s ‘intense dislike and distrust of Nubar’ was partially to blame for his extended exile, and there were fears that he would oppose the appointment of Fitzgerald as Director General of Accounts.⁷⁹ Lascelles, who attached ‘the greatest importance to the complete harmony of between the French and English Consuls General,’ did not press for Nubar’s appointment, and the two men agreed to bury their differences for the sake of their mutual interests and to ‘secure a good system of

⁷³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 June 1879 FO 800/8. Also Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 June 1879, *ibid.* Baring to Lascelles, 2 July 1879, *ibid.* Also Baring to Lascelles, 22 July 1879, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Salisbury to Lascelles, 2 Aug 1879, and Lascelles to Salisbury [acknowledging receipt], 2 Aug 1879; Fitzgerald to Lascelles, 4 July 1879; Wilson to Lascelles, 25 July 1879; Baring to Lascelles 10 July 1879; Lascelles to Salisbury 20 June 1879; Baring to Lascelles, 22 July 1879, Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 and 12 September 1879, FO 800/8.

⁷⁵ See for example Fitzgerald to Lascelles, 4 July 1879 FO 800/8. Cromer, p.149-150.

⁷⁶ Salisbury to Vivian, 19 August 1879, FO 800/8.

⁷⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 June 1879; Wilson to Lascelles, 20 June 1879, FO 800/8.

⁷⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 June 1879, FO 800/8.

⁷⁹ Cromer, p.163. Fitzgerald to Lascelles, 4 July 1879, FO/800/178. Baring and Wilson especially were incensed. Baring to Lascelles 10 July 1879, Wilson to Lascelles, 25 July 1879, Baring to Lascelles . 22 July 1879, FO 800/8.

Gov[ernmen]t in Egypt,' rather than getting 'exceptional advantages for any of their subjects.'⁸⁰ Lascelles told Tricou 'that I should look upon a rupture of the Franco-English "Entente" as a great calamity, but that our interests in Egypt were of such vital importance to us that we should have to protect them at any risk.' For this reason, while admitting Tricou's 'high-handed manner,' Lascelles was 'very careful' about believing the stories he heard, not wanting to gratify those who wished to see Britain and France 'at loggerheads,' and remained personally 'on the best possible terms' with his colleague. Some of Tricou's objections seemed well founded- he feared De Balignières' appointment as Inspector General and Wilson's return as a member of the Commission would excite suspicion due to their association with European interference, but Lascelles countered that 'entirely new men' would slow down the work.⁸¹ However Tricou continued to violate his side of the bargain, becoming involved in intrigues to replace a British member of the Customs House Commission, Mr Archer Shee, with a Frenchman and Salisbury, anxious for Britain to hold key positions of the Customs houses and harbours, remonstrated at Paris about Tricou's alleged activities, ultimately leading to Tricou's recall in mid-August, which was looked on as 'a triumph for the English.' Lascelles was ultimately 'not sorry' that he had gone.⁸²

Lascelles did not stay to see the final institution of the new Dual Control in 1880. It was never Salisbury's intention to leave him at Cairo indefinitely. His decision to replace him with Edward Malet, then Secretary of Embassy at Constantinople, was a sign the Foreign Office wanted to 'make a bigger place of it and send out someone higher in the service'; as early as July 1879, Baring gleaned

⁸⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury 6 July 1879, FO 800/8.

⁸¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 2 Aug 1879, FO 800/8.

⁸² Salisbury to Lascelles, 2 August 1879, FO 800/8; Lascelles to Salisbury, 21 Aug 1879, FO 800/8.

from Currie that this was the case but urged Lascelles ‘not [to] be disappointed or think it any reflection on you,’ as the Foreign Office were ‘much pleased’ with his work.⁸³ Lascelles was rewarded for his ‘judgement and tact’ by being offered a promotion, either to the Secretaryship at Rio, or to the new post of Agent in Bulgaria. Salisbury privately counselled him that the latter was ‘likely to be a field of active service during the next few years,’ and Lascelles, displaying the same astuteness with which he had accepted Cairo, wisely replied that he ‘infinitely prefer[ed]’ Sofia.⁸⁴

IV

The fullest verdict of Lascelles’ tenure at Cairo comes from Charles Moberly Bell, who wrote that he ‘did his official work thoroughly well without brag or bluster, quarrelled with nobody, got all he wanted, wrote short despatches, and, with all his sense of humour, was never wanting in dignity.’ Bell dubbed him the ‘gentlest and yet best of Consuls-General,’ a man so ‘cordial’ that ‘one lost all thought of the Consul-General.’⁸⁵

Undoubtedly Bell pinpointed Lascelles’ key virtues as a diplomat, namely an unassuming and consensual approach to diplomacy which would come to be seen as his hallmark, and which worked well for British diplomacy in the prevailing (if fragile) conditions of the Anglo-French *entente* in Egypt in 1878-79. Lascelles’ most advantageous traits seem to have been charm, tactfulness and honesty, which allowed him to get on well with everyone. A colleague at Berlin nearly thirty years later

⁸³ Malet to Lascelles, 13 September 1879, FO 800/8. (Malet consoled Lascelles on not obtaining the post himself); Baring to Lascelles, 10 July 1879, FO 800/8 (see also A. Ramm, ‘Great Britain and France in Egypt,’ p.85 – Ramm writes that Malet’s appointment provided recognition of ‘a new phase’ in the Egyptian question.)

⁸⁴ Salisbury to Lascelles, 17 September 1879, FO 800/8; Lascelles to Salisbury, 30 September 1879, FO 800/8; Lascelles to Salisbury 18 October 1879, FO 800/8. Rio (and South America generally) was notoriously a graveyard for diplomatic careers. See Raymond A. Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1815-1914*, p.189.

⁸⁵ Bell, *Khedives and Pashas*, p. 16 ; p.220-221

thought Lascelles 'must have owed his advancement at least as much to his charm of manner as to anything else',⁸⁶ while in 1879 the *Moniteur Égyptien*'s judgement was that the departing Consul-General had 'acquired the respect and esteem of all Colleagues' and a reputation for 'good faith and straightforwardness which must be of essential advantage to British interests in Egypt.'⁸⁷ His successor, Malet, also asserted that Lascelles was well liked, especially by Riaz Pasha, and that his departure was 'heartily and deservedly regretted'⁸⁸ His ability to co-operate with figures as diverse as Tewfik, Vivian and Wilson, Tricou and Nubar, in equal measure, counting all as 'friends' and even winning Ismail's respect where his French colleague had failed to, attest to the truth of these tributes.

More specifically, as Salisbury acknowledged, Lascelles endeavoured to promote 'cordial relations' between Britain and France.⁸⁹ The European concert remained uppermost in Lascelles' mind even when confronted with blustery colleagues, albeit this co-operation was ultimately designed to secure British interests. A study of Lascelles' tenure confirms the view that Britain, while seeking to increase her share of influence over Egyptian finances, shirked formal imperialism, with occupation as the least desirable outcome, and co-operation with France was the means to this end.

In Cairo, Lascelles worked to support Britain's imperial interests. He worked closely with Baring, (who would eventually succeed Lascelles as Agent and Consul-General and was as strongly identified as any Victorian diplomat with the emergent 'New Imperialism'), and his criticism of River Wilson's high-handed regime was

⁸⁶ Dumas diary, 16 August 1907.

⁸⁷ Malet to Salisbury, 13 Nov 1879 FO 800/8.

⁸⁸ Malet to Salisbury, 8 Nov 1879, SP 6/51.

⁸⁹ Salisbury to Tewfik, 27 Nov 1879 FO 800/8. de Balignières was also 'loud' in his praise of Lascelles. Baring to Lascelles, 10 July 1879, *ibid*.

more over the means than ends. He collaborated with elements within the Egyptian administration (Nubar, Tewfik, Riaz) who could be seen as ‘sound’ (i.e. amenable to European pressure), and ultimately pressed the case for the deposition of Egypt’s ruler and the tightening of European controls at the expense of that country’s independence.⁹⁰

However one is on less sure ground in defining the nature of Lascelles’ ‘imperialist’ mindset. With his aristocratic bearing and reserved manner Lascelles certainly uncannily projected what Earl Cromer later typified as the diplomatic ideal: ‘the undemonstrative, shy Englishman, with his social exclusiveness and insular habits’ as against the ‘vivacious and cosmopolitan Frenchman’. Part of Britain’s self-appointed task in Egypt was to ‘form [the Egyptian’s] character’. Ismail’s profligacy was said to show his weakness of character.⁹¹ Lascelles’ thinking on the Egyptian problem clearly echoed the Victorian equation of financial probity with moral rectitude, and as P.J. Cain has recently argued was the case for officials and diplomats in Egypt around this time, Lascelles used this language of ‘character’ to justify the increased intervention of Britain in Egypt.⁹² The weakness of this approach is that it led Lascelles, like the officials around him, to focus too narrowly on the Egyptian question as a strictly self-contained problem of securing reliable Government, with little regard to the nationalist element and the people below. This also reflected his aristocratic aloofness, for Lascelles was part of an international elite with common characteristics, and while often understanding individuals in the Egyptian ruling class, he perhaps misunderstood the groundswell of popular, anti-European opinion.

⁹⁰ He also struck up a friendship with such an emblem of Disraeli’s foreign policy as the Ambassador at Constantinople Sir Henry Austen Layard.

⁹¹ Quotes from Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (Harmondsworth, 1995) p.211; p.212.

⁹² P.J. Cain, ‘Character and Imperialism: The British Financial Administration of Egypt, 1878-1914,’ *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34 (2006).

However, as a diplomat Lascelles was more in tune with Salisbury's policy-of cautious reserve, which shunned formal occupation, which Lascelles greatly sympathised with, and without overemphasizing the role of Lascelles's individual contribution, it can be seen that his actions were motivated by a desire not to hasten on a territorial imperialism, but merely to safeguard Britain's financial interests.

From 1881 events in Egypt led rapidly to the nationalist revolt of Urabi Pasha and Britain's reluctant move towards occupation, which Salisbury and his Agents including Lascelles had worked to avoid. Evidence shows however that Lascelles by no means sympathised with the nationalists. At the time of Gladstone's decision to respond militarily to the Urabi revolt, he was in England on leave from Bulgaria,⁹³ and according to Wilfrid Blunt was still kept 'in the loop' over Egyptian affairs and consulted at the Foreign Office. As Lord Hartington's first cousin he now 'had his confidences about what was going on in the Whig section of the Cabinet.'⁹⁴ Blunt, as a pro-Egyptian nationalist, hoped to turn Lascelles' mind and was convinced he had 'more or less converted' him to his views over Egypt by summer 1882.⁹⁵ Another source tells differently. Blunt's friend Rosalind Howard, Lady Carlisle (whose husband George Howard was a cousin of Frank Lascelles and later became 9th Earl of Carlisle) was like him a strong pro- Egyptian nationalist. She encountered Lascelles at Naworth Castle in September 1882 and complained to Blunt that:

Frank Lascelles is here - & just as unsatisfactory as he can possibly be. Were he not such a pleasant good-natured fellow I should be in a rage with him for his talk must do infinite harm to the true cause. He says the Egyptians are utterly unfit to have Parliamentary Government & at the very best he damns them with faint praise. He has been vacillating throughout & it ruins

⁹³ W.S. Blunt, *A secret history of the occupation of Egypt*, p. 319 & .357.

⁹⁴ Lascelles also apparently told Blunt he had seen Malet's telegrams respecting affairs in Egypt. Ibid, pp. 296-7.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.320,& .335.

a man politically to be a diplomat. Of course Frank has greatly encouraged my husband in his anti-Egyptian beliefs.⁹⁶

Lascelles' faithful adherence to Lord Salisbury's emerging foreign policy both in Egypt, and elsewhere, in what can broadly be defined as the 'Eastern Question' at least partially accounts for his success in the years that followed.⁹⁷ Lascelles' reliability and willingness to execute Salisbury's policy, marked him out for promotion (although it is inaccurate to identify him with the High Imperialism of the late nineteenth century) and his role as a career diplomat made his support of Britain's Imperial policy implicit. How vigorously he would act to defend Salisbury's concept of Britain's interests in these areas, would be tested under the incoming administration of William Ewart Gladstone.

⁹⁶ Rosalind, Lady Carlisle to Blunt 24 Sept 1882, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 10.

⁹⁷ Lord Salisbury was foreign secretary for thirteen of the twenty-two years from 1878 until his resignation in 1900.

'Superintending the growth of liberty'? Lascelles, Bulgaria and Liberal foreign policy 1880-1885.

On leaving Egypt, Lascelles continued to be appointed to areas of key strategic concern for British interests. His posting to Bulgaria put him at the forefront of the great nineteenth-century Eastern Question, and the inexorable problem facing all the Great Powers (but especially Austria, Russia and Britain) of how to cope with the terminal decline of the Ottoman Empire and the power vacuum which would result in Eastern Europe. Bulgaria was a recently formed country which had emerged as a result of Russia's victory over Turkey in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78). This Balkan state, which stretched from the Danube in the North to the Aegean in the South, had swiftly been perceived by Salisbury as a threat, because of its status as a 'Russian province in an advanced stage of manufacture',¹ both to Turkey's remaining authority in Europe (which, as signatory to the Treaty of Paris of 1856 Britain was bound to defend) and, as importantly, to Britain's wider imperial interests and Mediterranean position.² Through the Salisbury-Shuvalov agreement and the subsequent Congress of Berlin (1878), Salisbury had sought to diminish Russia's share of the spoils of war, and had invested considerable time and energy in reducing Bulgaria's size by specifically banning Bulgaria's union with the province of Eastern Rumelia.³

¹ Quoted in T.G. Otte, 'Lord Salisbury and British Foreign Policy, 1878-1902,' p.109.

² See M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* (London, 1966), p. 199-200. The British Government would not tolerate a Russian descent on Constantinople, which would alarm public opinion. See the Queen to Salisbury, 6 Oct 1885 in G.E. Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, Second series, Vol. iii: 1879-1885 (London, 1928), p. 698.

³ C.J. Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, Vol. i (London, 1967), pp. 22-3; Michael Hurst (ed.) *Key Treaties for the Great Powers 1814-1914*, Vol. 2: 1871-1914 (London, 1972), No. 113, pp. 553-554.

Salisbury's willingness to see Balkan national aspirations sacrificed to Britain's perceived security interests had not been fully appreciated by Britain's first Agent to Sofia after the Berlin Congress, the Arabic scholar William Gifford Palgrave, who was suspected of aligning himself with Liberal and Pan-Slav groups in Balkan politics rather than working to maintain the status-quo, and who was transferred to Bangkok after only a year in the post.⁴ Lascelles, by contrast, had 'pleased his official superiors,' in Egypt, faithfully adhered to Salisbury's foreign policy there and distanced himself from indigenous Egyptian nationalism, and was perceived within the Foreign Office to be a safe pair of hands where British interests were concerned.⁵

Britain needed someone who would effectively act as their sole mouthpiece on the spot. Although Bulgaria was still nominally under Turkish suzerainty, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, Lord Dufferin (1881-1883), was soon distracted by troubles in Egypt, and not always up to the mark on Bulgarian affairs.⁶ The Agency also kept a minimal staff – Lascelles's sole colleague was Robert Wyndham Graves, a student interpreter employed to assist in routine consular and clerical duties, and when Graves was on leave his work was carried out by Frank's wife and eldest son.⁷ Lascelles thus had less assistance and a larger degree of independence than hitherto.

⁴ William Gifford Palgrave (1826-1888). Consul General at Sofia 1878-1879; see Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, i, p. 24.

⁵ Foreign Office, *Foreign Office, Consular and diplomatic sketches* (London, 1883), pp.177 - 178; Although Currie initially suggested Lascelles' candidature, this is less important than it appears, for Currie was Salisbury's private secretary and they thought alike; Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The permanent Under-Secretary for foreign affairs*, p.81, 79.

⁶ See Gladstone to Lord Granville, 13 Oct 1883, in Agatha Ramm, *The political correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-1886*, Vol. ii (Oxford, 1982), No. 1123, p. 100. (Hereafter Ramm, ii). Also see e.g. Lascelles to Dufferin, 22 Nov 1881, Dufferin to Lascelles 30 Nov 1881, and Lascelles back to Dufferin, 16 Dec 1881, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/7.

⁷ See Sir Robert Wyndham Graves, *Storm Centres of The Near East: Personal Memories 1879-1929* (London, 1933), p. 15 & 33. There were also two vice-consuls in Bulgaria: Alfred G Brophy at Varna and William H Dalziel at Rustchuk.

This independence also reflected Sofia's remoteness – it suffered from a poor reputation among diplomats, as a backwater where one would be socially 'buried'⁸, and in the words of Graves, was in 1880 only slowly transforming itself from 'a third-rate Turkish provincial town to the capital of a modern European minor State...the streets were ill kept, muddy in wet weather and dusty in dry, and lighted only by occasional oil lamps. There was no theatre nor concert hall, and the only place of public amusement was a very low class *café chantant*'.⁹ Lascelles' initial impressions seem to tally with this picture; he thought the place 'disagreeable' and 'exceedingly expensive', although he later admitted the climate was 'wonderful'.¹⁰ Yet Bulgaria's remoteness masked its status as an 'important and interesting post' where a diplomat could distinguish himself, and Lascelles himself later called Sofia a 'school for Ambassadors.'¹¹

In light of the ongoing political sensitivity of the region, it seems likely that Salisbury and Currie had selected a diplomat they felt could take a strong lead in defending British interests. However, barely had Lascelles arrived at his new post when, in May 1880, a Liberal administration took power in England with Gladstone as Prime Minister and the Earl of Granville as Foreign Secretary, which seemed to presage a change in the tone, and possible the direction, of British foreign policy. While in opposition, Gladstone had denounced other parts of Salisbury's 1878 settlement as 'insane' (in particular the Cyprus Convention), and had railed against Salisbury and Disraeli's expensive Near Eastern policy in his Midlothian campaign

⁸ Otte & Neilson, p.81.

⁹ Graves, *Storm Centres of The Near East* cp. 29 The description is corroborated in Duncan M. Perry *Stefan Stambolov and the emergence of Modern Bulgaria, 1870-1895* (London, 1993) p. 126.

¹⁰ Lascelles to Tenterden, 18 May 1880, FO 800/7; Meriel Buchanan, *Ambassador's daughter* (London, 1958), p.53.

¹¹ Such was the opinion of Vivian; see Vivian to Lascelles, 9 & 24 October 1879, FO 800/8; Buchanan, *Ambassador's daughter*, p.53.

(1879).¹² On coming to office he appeared to signal a break with ‘Beaconsfieldism’ by recalling the forthright Ambassador, Austen Henry Layard, from Constantinople (and, later, British military consuls from Turkey).¹³ The rhetoric employed by Gladstone prior to April 1880, suggested furthermore that this Government might be more sympathetic towards Bulgaria’s liberal nationalist aspirations, than its predecessor. Gladstone had famously protested against the ‘Bulgarian atrocities’ Turkey had committed when suppressing an uprising in the province in 1876;¹⁴ he had met the Bulgarian nationalist leader Zankov the same year, a fact which was not forgotten by the latter when Gladstone returned to power and which led him to form ‘great hopes from the change of Ministry’¹⁵; conveying Gladstone’s thanks to Zankov’s party for their congratulations on his return to office was a delicate matter for Lascelles, who worried about ‘exciting their hopes’ of British support in their aspiration of expanding Bulgaria’s borders. Having been appointed by a Conservative Government, Lascelles served for five years under a Liberal administration, and it became his task to decide whether these contradictory schools of thought in British foreign policy could be reconciled, and if they could not, to choose whether to continue prioritising the stability of Bulgaria’s ruler, Prince Alexander von Battenberg, in order to maintain British interests and restrain Russian influence, or whether, as an Agent serving under a Liberal Government, to safeguard the growth of political freedom in Bulgaria.

¹² W.N. Medlicott, *Bismack, Gladstone and the Concert of Europe*, (London, 1956), p.132; Lowe, *Reluctant Imperialists*, i, p. 21.

¹³ Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone’s Foreign Policy* (London, 1970), p.138, 152.

¹⁴ See for example Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, i, p. 2.

¹⁵ Lascelles to Granville, 4 May 1880, FO 800/7. See also Lascelles to Primrose, 21 May 1880, B. L., Add MSS 44464, f.188; Lascelles to Tenterden, 18 May 1880, FO 800/7.

I

The situation which confronted Lascelles on his arrival in Bulgaria was that of an unstable fledgling state, passing through a troublesome period of internal disorder. Having been administered from Constantinople for five hundred years, the country lacked a cohesive indigenous governing class and, freed of Turkish patronage, leaned heavily towards its Russian liberator for assistance in governance: Russia had designed the country's constitution, sent officers to train her army and supplied her with successive Ministers for War, and perhaps most importantly of all, had supported the nomination of her ruler, the twenty-two year old Prince Alexander von Battenberg, who was a nephew of the Tsar.¹⁶ The young Prince however was handicapped in his attempts at governing by his inexperience, and a desire to surround himself by a small reactionary clique.¹⁷ He resented Bulgaria's constitutional government, and only grudgingly co-operated with the predominant Liberal party grouping, which he suspected of harbouring Nihilist tendencies. Furthermore the Liberal leader and Prime Minister, Dragan Zankov, increasingly antagonised Alexander by pursuing independent and radical policies,¹⁸ and by open collusion with the Russian Agent in Bulgaria, Count Courmnyay, who like all Russian Agents in Bulgaria up until 1886, represented the Pan-Slavist rather than the official strand of Russian policy, and who encouraged Zankov to exclude Alexander from policy making. Concerned with monitoring Russian influence in the region, Lascelles was deeply worried by the growing predominance of 'revolutionary' rather than 'official' Russian policy; and the fact that the Russian Agent seemed to act as the 'real

¹⁶ M.S. Anderson, pp.127-128.

¹⁷ Lascelles to Granville, 18 Oct 1883, FO 78/3529, No. 102.

¹⁸ See Richard Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918* (New York, 1983), pp.45-47.

Governor of the country',¹⁹ while Russia continued 'making presents in the shape of arms and ships' to Bulgaria even in peacetime.²⁰

A second problem was the 'general state of insecurity' in the country, caused mainly by the chronic problem of brigandage.²¹ Lascelles quickly surmised that, faced with a disorganized administration, the Bulgarian Liberals might try to 'divert attention from their want of power at home' by agitating for the union with Eastern Rumelia denied them under the Treaty of Berlin – in 1880 the introduction of measures including a militia bill and a vote for funds for the Government of Eastern Rumelia seemed to support this theory.²² Lascelles hoped that Zankov would be shrewd enough not to alienate the Great Powers by pressing the Unionist issue, but took the precautionary step of warning him off counting on British support. He advised him to stick to the Berlin Treaty; and prove that Bulgaria was 'worthy of its independence & capable of Self Gov[ernment], instead of alienating the sympathies of Europe by creating fresh complications'.²³

Lascelles was able to understand the Prince's alarm and his fear that these developments might presage the establishment of a Bulgarian Republic,²⁴ and he sympathised with his wish to rid himself of Zankov. Lascelles quickly grew to like Alexander, whom he termed 'one of the most charming men I have met', and who confided in the British Agent about the 'insults' he had suffered at the hands of

¹⁹ Lascelles to Granville, 5 May 1881, and 1 June 1880, FO 800/7.

²⁰ Lascelles to Granville, 4 May 1880 FO 800/7.

²¹ Lascelles to Granville, 3 May 1880, FO 78/3118, No. 76. And see generally correspondence throughout 1880 on this issue, FO 78/3116-19.

²² Lascelles to Granville, 4 May 1880, FO 800/7. See also *PP (1880) Correspondence between Great Britain, Turkey, &c., respecting the Unionist Movement in Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia:- May-July 1880*, [C.2636], especially Lascelles to Granville, 14 June 1880, No. 5; and Crampton, pp.46-47.

²³ Quote from Lascelles to Tenterden, 18 May 1880 FO 800/7. See also Lascelles to Granville, 4 May & 1 June 1880, *ibid*.

²⁴ Lascelles to Granville, 31 May 1880, FO 78/3118, No. 89; Lascelles to Granville, 1 June 1880, FO 800/7.

Russian officials in the country.²⁵ This background was important in deciding Lascelles' attitude when in May 1881, Alexander, having decided he was unable any longer to co-operate with the Liberal party, decided on the radical step of attempting to seize full power by asking the Bulgarians to go to the polls to choose 'between their Prince and a modification of the Constitution,'²⁶ a move which was supported by the new Tsar, Alexander III, and also (in contrast to his predecessor's policy of backing the Liberals), by the new Russian Agent, Mikhail Aleksandrovich Khitrovo.

Lascelles' view of Alexander's decision was based on a pragmatic and unsentimental assessment of the situation in Bulgaria, which had much in common with the priorities of Conservative foreign policy. He doubted whether Battenberg was 'fit to be trusted with absolute Power,' but counselled Lord Granville that there was a stark choice 'between a temporary dictatorship', with all its faults, and the Prince's abdication,²⁷ for he recognised the Prince would refuse to 'occupy a secondary position' in the country.²⁸ In Lascelles' eyes, Battenberg's departure could lead to 'serious complications', for it might – and this was crucial – result in a 'foreign occupation' of Bulgaria.²⁹

While Lascelles' concern about external complications outweighed any concern for constitutional government in Bulgaria, he had also seen enough of the Prince's failed experiments at government to deem the constitution unworkable. His attitude was informed by a year's experience in the country, which had not impressed on his Whiggish, aristocratic mind that Bulgaria, with its large, ill-educated peasant population, was as yet deserving or capable of effectively exercising such a privilege.

²⁵ Lascelles to Granville, 2 June 1881 & 1 June 1880, FO 800/7

²⁶ Lascelles to Granville, 4 May 1881, FO 78/3308, No.'s 35 & 36.

²⁷ Lascelles to Granville, 2 June 1881, FO 800/7.

²⁸ Lascelles to Granville, 5 Oct 1881, *ibid.*

²⁹ Lascelles to Granville, 5 May 1881, *ibid.*

As he argued to Granville, the country lacked a sufficiently well-educated class of indigenous administrators. In 1880 he had advised Zankov to seek foreign assistance until such time as sufficient numbers of natives could be trained, and for these reasons also he favoured the Prince's proposal of appointing a Council of State composed of Slav-speaking foreigners, and a second chamber to counterbalance the legislature.³⁰

By contrast Gladstone, in line with his Liberal principles, privately disapproved of the Prince's action.³¹ Nor could he ignore the fact that Alexander's proposed constitutional amendments, accompanied by measures such as the appointment of military commissions to replace allegedly corrupt Liberal prefects, special military tribunals to investigate abuses by the previous administration and the tightening of scrutiny over the Press offended domestic public opinion.³² The Government faced demands from Parliament for satisfaction that Zankov's case had been heard over the 'arbitrary suppression' of the Constitution, and the fact that Lascelles was not ordered at once to cease communication with the Prince also garnered public criticism.³³ As the British Agent warned Alexander, the 'very unfavourable opinion' produced in England made it 'impossible' for the British Government to approve his measures and Granville was, he said, 'refraining from expressing an opinion in order not to cause embarrassment to His Highness.'³⁴

³⁰ Lascelles to Granville, 5 May 1881, FO 800/7; Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 April 1880, FO 78/3117, No.68; Lascelles to Granville, 19 May 1881, FO 78/3308, No. 50 and same to same, 30 June 1881, FO 78/3309, No. 100. Subsequently the idea of a Council of State composed of foreigners was dropped by the Prince.

³¹ Gladstone to Granville 16 June 1881, in Ramm, i, pp.280-1.

³² Lascelles to Granville 19 & 30 May, 7 & 9 June 1881, in *PP (1881), Bulgaria No. 1*, No.'s 20, 28, 29 & 57. Subsequently General Ehrenroth renounced some of the harsher measures – see Lascelles to Granville, 15 June 1881, *ibid*, No. 62. Lascelles informed Granville privately in June that 'the Military Commissioners seem inclined to exercise their Authority very freely for the purpose of influencing the elections.' Lascelles to Granville, 2 June 1881, FO 800/7.

³³ *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. CCLXI, Col. 269, 12 May 1881, & Col. 1653, 30 May 1881.

³⁴ Lascelles to Granville, 15 June 1881, FO 78/3309, No.82.

Yet more pragmatic considerations made the British Government circumspect about voicing their ideological disapproval of Battenberg's coup. In office, Gladstone's anxiety about upsetting the 'European Concert' had already led him to downplay his anti-Turkish and anti-Austrian rhetoric.³⁵ In June 1881, the inauguration of the Three Emperor's League between Germany, Austria and Russia, by which the former two states effectively abstained from interfering in Russia's Balkan policy,³⁶ meant that none of these Powers were prepared to condemn the Prince's action, and Britain risked appearing out of step by doing so.

Additionally, since 1880 Gladstone had pledged himself to the *status quo* of the Treaty of Berlin- his only concern was to maintain the 'freedom of Bulgaria against all foreign influence and subject only to its conditions of allegiance to the Porte,'³⁷ and also like his predecessor he was keen, in the words of one historian, 'to keep the Bulgarian Liberals and Roumelians quiet'³⁸ and avoid encouraging their wilder aspirations by appearing to sympathise with them.

In 1880, Granville had, like Lascelles, been worried about the Unionist movement; he also came to be of the opinion that the Liberal leader, Zankov, had a

³⁵ See William Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890* (New York, 1950), p. 202; Granville acted, in Langer's phrase, as a 'brake' on Gladstone (ibid). Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Granville George Leveson Gower, Second Earl Granville K.G. 1815-1891*, Vol. ii (London, 1905), pp.202-206. Granville told Gladstone that he thought the essential difference between them was: 'you are more afraid of Austria, and I of Russia.' Granville thought Austria wanted to keep things 'quiet', and lacked a 'concentrated national force' to push her forward. Granville to Gladstone, 5 October 1883, ibid, pp. 205-06.

³⁶ See F R Bridge & Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814-1914* (London, 2005), pp. 216 -217. The new system was really 'a practical agreement about the Near East.' A.J.P. Taylor *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford, 1954), p. 270. Italy's accession to the Triple Alliance in 1882 further shrank the number of Powers willing to oppose Russia in the Balkans.

³⁷ Gladstone to Granville, 4 Sept 1883, Ramm ii, p.82-83, No.1094.

³⁸ Medlicott, *Bismack, Gladstone and the Concert of Europe*, p. 111.

‘very indifferent character.’³⁹ These factors acted as a disincentive for Granville to express any ‘precipitate opinion’ on the Prince’s attitude;⁴⁰ and Gladstone, on receiving private solicitations for support over the constitution from Zankov, replied rather generally that Britain would ‘always be found on the side of legality and liberty.’⁴¹

Britain’s Foreign Secretary also concurred with much of Lascelles’ advice on the impracticality of the constitution, a position also shared by Britain’s Ambassador at Constantinople, the Marquess of Dufferin.⁴² As the constitution formed no part of the Berlin Treaty, he was spared the necessity of condemning its suspension. In a statement in the House of Lords, Granville expressed repugnance towards ‘*coups d’état*, and to any but constitutional and legal changes of established system’, but observed that the constitution was not part of international law and cited Lascelles’ opinion that it was ‘unfitted to a population unaccustomed to political life, and of whom only a small number were educated’.⁴³

However the tensions within Whitehall’s policy meant Lascelles had to walk a precarious tightrope at Sofia. Following heavily supervised elections, accompanied by

³⁹ Granville to Lascelles, 24 June 1880, in [C.2636] *Turkey. No. 12 (1880). Correspondence respecting the unionist movement in Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia.*, No. 7; Granville to Gladstone, 15 Oct 1883, in Ramm, ii, p. 103, No. 1128.

⁴⁰ Granville to Walsham, 26 May 1881, *PP (1881) Bulgaria No. 1*, No. 16.

⁴¹ Gladstone to Zankov, 26 May 1881, in H.C.G. Matthews (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries*, Vol. x: Jan 1881-June 1883 (Oxford, 1990), p. 71. Also see: Granville to Lascelles, 20 June 1881, *PP (1881) Bulgaria No. 1.*, No. 52, and enclosures. Lascelles’ private warning that Zankov might publish the letter (Lascelles to Granville [tel.], 2 June 1881, FO 800/7) led Gladstone to pre-empt him by communicating it to the Commons. See also Walsham to Granville 11 June 1881 & Granville to Walsham, 18 June 1881, *PP (1881) Bulgaria No.1*, No.’s 39 & 47.

⁴² Granville to the Queen, 28 June 1881, in G.E. Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, Second series, Vol iii, p.223. Granville later cautioned Gladstone that ‘Goschen & Dufferin were both of opinion that the Constitution was unworkable...’ Granville to Gladstone, 15 Oct 1883, in Ramm, ii, p. 103, No. 1128.

⁴³ Reported in *The Times*, Wednesday 22 June 1881, p. 8.

the arrest of Zankov, the Prince won a majority.⁴⁴ Attention focused on how the Great Powers would formally recognise the constitutional changes which the new Assembly, due to meet at Sistova on 13 July, was sure to vote through. Russia proposed issuing an identical note stating that the Powers respected the independence of the Prince and of the people of Bulgaria; however in a second draft, this was changed to a hope 'that the Bulgarian National Assembly will avoid any decision of a nature to interfere with the union between the Bulgarian people and Prince Alexander.'⁴⁵ The wording seemed to infer foreign comment on Bulgaria's internal affairs, and having consulted the Cabinet on 2 July,⁴⁶ Granville insisted on the original version being read out, despite Austrian and German efforts to induce him to change his mind.⁴⁷ Lascelles was instructed to join in the ceremonial with his diplomatic colleagues only if the first draft was used,⁴⁸ and alongside his French and Italian colleagues he successfully secured the exclusion of the insinuation of interference from the speech. However, when the German Agent, as doyen of the Diplomatic Corp, read a speech of congratulation to the Grand National Assembly once the constitutional amendments had passed, Lascelles was damned by his presence.⁴⁹ Gladstone, still angry at the Prince's arbitrary measures during the elections, was 'staggered' by Lascelles' appearance,⁵⁰ and Granville duly cautioned the British Agent that his German colleague's speech went 'further in some of its

⁴⁴ Lascelles to Granville 7, 14, 22 & 29 June 1881, *PP (1881) Bulgaria No. 1*, No.'s 48, 61 & 77, & 90.

⁴⁵ Lobanow to Granville, 1 July 1881, *ibid*, No. 74. Granville had thought the first draft vague enough, but acquiesced in its usage: Austrian and German pressure made Russia revert to using the second draft. See Granville to Wyndham, 27 & 29 June 1881, *ibid*, No.'s 68 & 72.

⁴⁶ Gladstone to the Queen, 2 July 1881, *Cabinet Reports by Prime Ministers to the Crown, 1868-1916* (Sussex, 1977), CAB 41/A53.

⁴⁷ Granville to Lobanow, 2 July 1881, *PP (1881) Bulgaria No. 1*, No. 76.

⁴⁸ Granville to Lascelles, 8 July 1881, *ibid*, No. 88.

⁴⁹ Lascelles to Granville 12 July 1881, 13 July 1881 and enclosure, *PP (1881) Bulgaria No. 1*, No.'s 112 & 115.

⁵⁰ Gladstone to Granville, 15 July 1881, in Ramm, i, p. 284, No. 513.

expressions' than could have been wished.⁵¹ The Agent's behaviour even drew the censure of the prominent radical parliamentarian Henry Labouchère who suggested he had displayed 'lively sympathy' with the Prince, and who in August attempted (unsuccessfully) to reduce the vote on the civil service estimates in the Commons by £1,600 (the amount of Lascelles' salary), because the diplomat had recognised Alexander's 'nefarious act.'⁵² Lascelles' own defence of his actions suggests however that his approach had been balanced and judicious - by successfully removing the inference of direct interference in Bulgaria's internal affairs from the speech, which he argued in itself was 'no easy matter', and by subsequently avoiding an act which 'would have been regarded as a proof of the break up of the European Concert so far as Bulgaria was concerned',⁵³ he had essentially satisfied both requirements of Granville's policy. The Foreign Office agreed with Lascelles. They thought his action had been 'quite right'⁵⁴ and in general his conduct in these delicate circumstances was warmly praised. Already, Granville had publicly lauded his 'excellent judgement and tact.' At this stage, Lascelles had avoided appearing as a partisan of either side in Bulgarian politics – in Granville's words, he had earned 'the respect and confidence of both parties' in Bulgaria through his urging of 'prudence and moderation to both', but the incident highlighted for the first time the tensions between the Agent's pragmatic approach and the Liberal sensibilities of his political masters.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Granville to Lascelles 30 July 1881, *PP (1881) Bulgaria No. 1*, No. 122.

⁵² Parliamentary Debates, Vol. CCLXIII, 18 July 1881, columns 1132-1133; *The Times*, 8 Aug 1881, p 4.

⁵³ Lascelles to Tenterden, 30 July 1881, FO 800/7.

⁵⁴ Granville to Gladstone, 18 July 1881, Ramm, i, p.285.

⁵⁵ *The Times*, Wednesday 22 June 1881, p. 8.

II

Lascelles' advice up to 1881 had been influenced by a desire to see Bulgaria's stability guaranteed, ultimately in order to prevent external interference in the country; to him, securing the Prince's position was the best means to do this. Thus he had not condemned Alexander's essentially illiberal act while recognising, however, that the coup d'état had lacked popular support, and hoping that it would prove a purely ad interim measure and that the Prince would soon by 'raising the state of siege, granting an amnesty, abolishing the military Commissioners and instituting a Council of State on a liberal basis,' thus disprove any 'gloomy predictions'.⁵⁶ The British Agent was therefore most alarmed when the measures of 1881 not only proved unsuccessful but ultimately brought increased Russian interference in Bulgaria.

Alexander's dictatorial stance and his ill-advised determination to govern through a Conservative clique quickly raised new questions about his governance and significantly alienated Russia's Agent, Khitrovo, who switched back to supporting the Liberals.⁵⁷ Lascelles deplored Alexander's decision to throw himself 'into the arms' of a faction, and when Alexander also had Khitrovo recalled after the latter showed personal interest in obtaining railway concessions, he deemed him to be playing a 'very dangerous game.' Wary that Alexander was too weak to rid himself of Russian influence altogether yet, and that the Tsar would not 'run the risk of destroying Russian influence,' by breaking with the Liberals,⁵⁸ he feared that Russia might 'desert the Prince' to maintain the loyalty of the Liberals.⁵⁹ When Alexander even

⁵⁶ Lascelles to Granville, 5 Oct 1881, FO 800/7.

⁵⁷ Lascelles to Granville, 12 Jan 1882, FO 78/3413, No.5; see also Lascelles to Dufferin, 22 Nov 1881, FO 800/7, Lascelles to Granville, 15 Jan 1882, FO 78/3413, No.8.

⁵⁸ Lascelles to Granville, 15 Dec 1881, FO 800/7.

⁵⁹ Lascelles to Granville, 13 Dec 1881, *ibid.*

alienated the Conservatives within his own clique, Lascelles formed a yet lower view of his statesmanship, leading him to lament Alexander's 'weak and vacillating' nature and lack of 'decision of character'. As early as December 1881, he warned Dufferin 'that the state of things here will very soon call for the serious attention of Europe.'⁶⁰

The patched-up resolution to this fresh crisis only came after a brief attempt to reconcile with the Liberals (probably on Russia's advice),⁶¹ and fell down after the Prince took fresh measures against Liberal constitutional agitation, including the arrest of Zankov,⁶² (which Lascelles thought to be another 'egregious blunder').⁶³

Thereafter, Alexander resigned himself to calling on the assistance of two Russian Generals; Sobolev (Minister President and Minister of the Interior) and President of the Council, and Kaulbars (Minister of War) to maintain himself in power, and Russian influence in Bulgaria reached its zenith.

The period following the coup d'état was thus a painful time for Lascelles. Inevitably the diplomat was conscious of Britain's (and thus his own) growing isolation in the region which, in the words of one historian, became 'obvious' after the constitutional crisis. With the *Dreikaiserbund* firmly established, both traditional Anglo-Austrian co-operation in the Balkans and the Concert were 'over';⁶⁴ and with the British Government's hands elsewhere tied by the occupation of Egypt, Graves' memoirs accurately summarize Lascelles' feelings at this time, for while holding a low estimate of Battenberg's suitability for his job, he deeply sympathised with the Prince's plight privately, but the lack of clear official support meant he was unable to

⁶⁰ Lascelles to Dufferin, 13 Dec 1881, FO 800/7.

⁶¹ Lascelles to Granville, 26 Feb 1882, FO 800/7; Khitrovo was accordingly ordered by the Tsar not to meddle in Bulgarian affairs. Crampton, p. 61.

⁶² See Crampton, p. 62.

⁶³ Lascelles to Granville, 26 Feb 1882, FO 800/7.

⁶⁴ Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone and the Concert*, p.311-312. Lowe emphasises that it was really Bismarck's dominance and not necessarily Gladstone's attitude which determined British isolation. Lowe, *Reluctant imperialists*, i, p. 21, 25.

challenge Russia's 'preponderating influence' in Bulgaria, and thus: 'Lascelles had to content himself for the present with keeping his Government fully informed...in the hopes that events would justify the adoption of a somewhat more spirited attitude.'⁶⁵

His exasperation was increased by other matters, specifically by his failure to obtain satisfaction for Britain's one significant business interest in Bulgaria in the prevailing political uncertainty. Under Article X of the Treaty of Berlin, the Bulgarian Government were forced to honour the Porte's outstanding financial obligations towards the British-built Varna-Rustchuk railway.⁶⁶ Lascelles, a middle man in the interminable talks between the railway company and the Bulgarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs,⁶⁷ was unsuccessful in inducing the short-lived, politically unstable, and impecunious Bulgarian administrations to honour Turkey's old financial obligations. The railway company were equally if not more at fault in artificially inflating the value of the stock which, Lascelles fully realised, made the Bulgarian Government, also facing pressure from Russia and Austria to build other railway lines, disinclined to honour their debts.⁶⁸ As Lascelles told one colleague, it was difficult to get Ministers to deal with other questions while they were 'so engrossed with the political state of the country.'⁶⁹ By mid-1883 Lascelles even suggested to Granville that he might be instructed to leave Sofia if the Government continued their delaying tactics.⁷⁰

In the first half of his period as Agent, Lascelles saw little chance of obtaining influence over Alexander which might enable him to advise a course which would

⁶⁵ Graves, p. 52.

⁶⁶ For a history of the negotiations from 1878 to 1884, see *PP (1884) Correspondence respecting Claims of Rustchuk and Varna Railway Company under Article X. of Treaty of Berlin*[C.3931], passim.

⁶⁷ Graves, p. 63.

⁶⁸ See memo by Lascelles, 17 Oct 1883, FO 800/7.

⁶⁹ Lascelles to Brophy, 19 Nov 1883, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Lascelles to Granville, 13 Oct 1883, *ibid.*

satisfy Gladstonian Liberalism. After the Prince's failed attempt to conciliate Zankov's party in February 1882, Granville telegraphed his Agent to enquire whether he was 'able to give [the Prince] advice in a suitable manner' and whether the Prince was 'willing to take it',⁷¹ Lascelles replied that Alexander Prince was 'not...likely to listen willingly to anything which did not agree with his personal opinions.'⁷²

However, Lascelles' status as Her Majesty's representative in Bulgaria afforded him some notable compensations. Alone of the monarchs of Europe, Queen Victoria had continually shown sympathy for Alexander during the time following his coup d'état, for which the Prince was highly grateful,⁷³ and this enabled Lascelles to build up a reserve of goodwill with the Prince who increasingly came to seek his advice.

III

In mid-1883, a sudden turn of events in Bulgarian politics reversed Lascelles' fortunes. The two Generals, whose assistance Alexander had sought in 1882, used their positions to assume a dictatorial style of governing and to advance Russian interests in Bulgaria,⁷⁴ while continuing the tradition of Russia's Agents by throwing their weight behind the Bulgarian Liberals, and supporting their demands for a return to constitutional Government.⁷⁵ Their behaviour became increasingly galling to Battenberg who at first sought to encourage them into engineering their own downfall, (a tactic Lascelles deemed to be 'very short sighted' in the face of Russia's

⁷¹ Granville to Lascelles [tel.], 10 Feb 1882, FO 800/7.

⁷² Lascelles to Granville, 26 Feb 1882, *ibid*.

⁷³ See Lascelles to Granville, 2 Nov 1880, *ibid*.

⁷⁴ Lascelles to Granville, 7 April 1883, *ibid*.

⁷⁵ Crampton, pp.66-67; see also Lascelles to Granville 16 May 1883, FO 78/3528, No. 40.

well-known influence over Bulgaria's army⁷⁶), and then, unsuccessfully, to request the Tsar to withdraw them, while he was on a visit to Moscow in May.⁷⁷ These tactics having failed, Alexander resolved that he 'might do better' to return to the old constitutional system, and in so doing ally with Liberals and Conservatives to overthrow the Generals and diminish Russia's influence.⁷⁸

In reality, the Prince faced little choice about returning to the constitution. Russia's new Agent at Sofia, Jonin, who arrived in late August and assumed a hectoring tone with the increasingly unreliable Prince, had demanded he relinquish his full Powers;⁷⁹ but Alexander was no longer willing to act at Russia's behest –since 1881, his relations with the new Tsar, Alexander III, had markedly deteriorated and, while in Moscow, he had openly criticised Russian policy. This added to the Tsar's existing personal antipathy towards Battenberg, and disapproval at his plans to marry a German princess and tighten his Hohenzollern affiliations.⁸⁰

Lascelles was aware that Alexander's dismissal of the Generals risked Russian retaliation, even an attempt to depose him.⁸¹ However, the Prince's volte face and his preparedness to adopt constitutional government while loosening Russian influence, was naturally to Britain's advantage. Thus Lascelles encouraged the Prince on his return to Sofia to acquiesce in a return to constitutional Government in exchange for support against the Generals⁸² and to proceed in his plan to reduce the size of Bulgaria's army and break Russia's influence by diminishing the authority of the

⁷⁶ Lascelles to Granville, 10 March 1883, FO 800/7. Lascelles also pointed out the Generals would only drag Alexander down with them and be replaced by other equally overbearing Ministers. *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Crampton, pp. 67-68 Although the Tsar refused to oblige the Generals with Alexander's abdication, he was persuaded that the 1881 system was ripe for change.

⁷⁸ Crampton, pp.62-64.

⁷⁹ Lascelles to Granville, 30 Aug 1883, FO 78/3528, No. 67.

⁸⁰ M.S. Anderson, p.229.

⁸¹ Lascelles to Granville, 7 April 1883, FO 800/7.

⁸² Lascelles to Granville, 2, 6 & 21 Aug 1883, FO 78/3528, No.'s 56, 58 & 63.

Minister for War. He also urged the leading Liberals to work for conciliation between Bulgaria's parties. His reasoning was simple: as he told all concerned, Bulgaria had to resist becoming a 'Russian Province'.⁸³

Yet, as in 1881, Lascelles' tone differed from that of his political masters. Naturally, given his past behaviour, a cloud hung over the sincerity of the Prince's intentions towards the constitution, especially after Alexander revealed his objections to a full return to universal suffrage and insisted on retaining powerful a second Chamber. Indeed Lascelles speculated that he might be planning to double-cross both sides, by ridding himself of the Generals on the pretext of a return to constitutional government, then make his own terms with the Generals over the constitution, which only led him to further urge Alexander to 'frankly accept' a return to the Constitution.⁸⁴ He personally disbelieved that the Prince intended to go so far as this,⁸⁵ but his words had an effect on Gladstone, who thought the Prince 'little better than a fool' for venturing to restore Bulgarian liberties merely 'under the pretext of opposing Russia'.⁸⁶ He was dissatisfied with Alexander's system of double election and limited suffrage and argued 'that he can only fight the Russians... by a frankly popular policy.'⁸⁷ For these reasons, Lascelles was instructed to say that Britain would only morally support Alexander if he had popular backing, and fostered 'freedom and justice' in Bulgaria.⁸⁸

Gladstone was especially disturbed that Lascelles's approach over Bulgaria did not appear to fully complement his own views.⁸⁹ Having for a long time failed to

⁸³ Lascelles to Granville, 1, 2 & 3 Sept 1883, FO 78/3529, No.'s 68-70.

⁸⁴ Lascelles to Granville, 23 August 1883, FO 800/7.

⁸⁵ Lascelles to Granville, 18 Oct 1883, FO 78/3529, No. 102.

⁸⁶ Gladstone to Granville, 8 Sept 1883, Ramm, ii, p. 85, No.1097.

⁸⁷ Gladstone to Granville, 12 Oct 1883, *ibid*, pp. 98- 99, No. 1120.

⁸⁸ Granville to Lascelles [tel.], 7 Sept 1883, FO 78/3527, No. 56, and Gladstone to Granville,

21 Sept 1883, *ibid*, No, 1104, pp.89-90.

⁸⁹ Gladstone to Granville, 12 Oct 1883, *ibid*, pp. 98- 99, No. 1120.

detect 'any overflowing sympathy with freedom' in Lascelles' concise despatches on the situation⁹⁰, he protested to Granville that he feared the agent miscomprehended the importance Britain attached to Alexander's sincerity,⁹¹ and went as far as saying that he apparently had 'no eyes except for the Prince & the Russians,' and did not see 'that there is a Bulgarian people,' but seemed 'mechanically' to transmit what Granville said on the subject 'without understanding it.' He privately questioned Lascelles' 'value' as an agent and wanted to learn more of his 'real mind' than was revealed in his writings⁹²

Gladstone's comment is instructive not only of the Agents' minimal reporting style, but also in highlighting the key difference between Lascelles' approach and that of the Liberal leader: the latter was preoccupied with attaining the principle of the restoration of constitutional Government as an end in itself, while Lascelles as a diplomat emphasised the stabilising effect the Prince's action would have on Bulgarian politics and its effect in reducing dependency on Russia, and its overall advantage for Britain in calming down the Balkans.

Gladstone's criticism of Lascelles certainly reflected a truth about this aristocratic diplomat's narrow focus on high political tactics, to the exclusion of the Bulgarian 'people', although in a sense both were concerned with freedom; the Prime Minister with personal political freedoms, Lascelles with freeing Bulgaria from excessive Russian interference. This latter point can be further demonstrated by the change which the Agent's opinions of the Liberal leader, Zankov, underwent in 1883. In the past he had seen Zankov as a trouble maker for colluding with Russian Agents, but now he recognised he was unwilling to exchange 'the domination of the Turk for

⁹⁰ Gladstone to Granville, 18 Oct 1881, Ramm, i, p. 304, No. 557.

⁹¹ Gladstone to Granville, 4 Sept 1883, Ramm, ii, pp. 82-83, No. 1094.

⁹² See Gladstone to Granville, 13 Oct 1883, Ramm, ii, p.100, No. 1123. Lascelles' leave was cancelled however. See Lascelles to Dufferin, 3 Nov 1883, FO 800/7.

the despotism of Russia', and told Dufferin: 'As far as I can judge he is really a patriot and he will not allow Bulgaria to become a Russian province if he can possibly avoid it'. He noted Zankov's preparedness to co-operate with Alexander to achieve this end, despite having suffered much at his hands.⁹³ Lascelles soon deemed Zankov to have shown 'much more statesmanlike qualities than I expected of him,' and gave him much of the credit,⁹⁴ for having 'played his cards very cleverly' in inducing Alexander to dismiss the Generals and return to the Constitution.⁹⁵

Whatever Gladstone's reservations, Lascelles' views were also more representative of those of the professional British foreign policy elite. Edmond Fitzmaurice, the Liberal Parliamentary Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, and who was something of an Eastern specialist, privately confessed to Lascelles that he and 'many others' in the Foreign Office had read his 'very able and interesting despatches' with 'great interest' and hoped that Zankov would 'succeed in outwitting the foreigners.'⁹⁶ At Constantinople, meanwhile, Dufferin hoped to support the Prince's efforts to diminish Russian influence by urging the Sultan that by winning the confidence of both Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia he could create 'a far stronger barrier against Russia than any number of fortresses in the Balkans,'⁹⁷ and together with Lascelles he also worked to foster more cordial personal relations between the Prince and the Sultan.⁹⁸

Lascelles also had a very distinguished ally in the person of Queen Victoria, who gave Alexander her unequivocal backing. Frustrated at the Liberal Government's insinuations that the Prince had not acted in accordance with his subjects' wishes, she argued to Granville that the Generals posed a far larger threat to Bulgaria's liberty

⁹³ Lascelles to Dufferin, 3 Nov 1883, FO 800/7.

⁹⁴ Lascelles to Fitzmaurice, 17 Oct 1883, *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Lascelles to Dufferin, 3 Nov 1883, *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 2 Oct 1883, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Dufferin to Lascelles, 7 Dec 1883, *ibid.*

⁹⁸ Lascelles to Dufferin, 21 Dec 1883, *ibid.*

than the Prince himself, and asserted that much of what Alexander had done accorded with Lascelles' advice.⁹⁹ She incensed Gladstone by sending a telegram directly from Balmoral urging the Government to give Alexander moral support against the Generals, and by warning the Prince to return to the constitution in whatever form to thwart Russia. Her intervention also resulted in the toning down of instructions to Lascelles which appeared to accuse the Prince of acting without due regard to popular feeling, but which were sent out merely expressing the hope he would act 'in a spirit of reliance on the confidence & attachment' to his subjects, and promising moral support.¹⁰⁰ Gladstone was unimpressed at the Queen conducting her 'own foreign policy',¹⁰¹ . However, her views reflected a strand of foreign policy thinking which, in spite of Gladstone's premiership, dominated at the time and which Lascelles himself still fundamentally adhered to. Even Granville could appreciate the force of the Queen's fear that the Russians wanted to depose Alexander.¹⁰²

Ultimately, the Prince's actions justified Lascelles' optimism that he could diminish Russian influence while restoring popular liberties. In September he reconciled with the Bulgarian political parties over the constitution in order to expel the Generals,¹⁰³ and after limited constitutional changes in December 1883 in line with Alexander's thinking,¹⁰⁴ the Prince eventually approved the re-establishment of

⁹⁹ Sir Henry Ponsonby to Granville, 25 Oct 1883, G.E. Buckle (ed.), *The letters of Queen Victoria*, Second series, vol. iii, pp. 447-448.

¹⁰⁰ The telegram read: 'We must help Prince of Bulgaria with moral support. Russian conduct outrageous.' Queen [tel.] to Granville, 1 Sept 1883; As a consequence Granville had agreed to despatch a telegram to Lascelles on 7 Sept, 'offering Alexander moral support'. All this is taken from Ramm, II, pp.82-83; For the toning down of instructions, see Granville to Gladstone, 31 Oct 1883, Ramm, ii, p.111, No. 1142, and *ibid*, p.111 for the further details of this dispute. For the Prince's grateful response to the Queen's support, see Lascelles to Granville, 13 Dec 1883, FO 800/7.

¹⁰¹ Gladstone to Granville, 26 Dec 1883, Ramm, ii, No. 1195, p.138.

¹⁰² Granville to the Queen, 13 Oct 1883, G.E. Buckle (ed.), *The letters of Queen Victoria*, Second series, vol. iii, p. 446.

¹⁰³ Lascelles to Granville, 18 and 19 Sept 1883, FO 78/3529, No.'s 77-81.

¹⁰⁴ Crampton, pp. 74-76.

the old constitution in early 1884.¹⁰⁵ Russian influence was not completely curbed, for Battenberg had to acquiesce in yet another Minister of War (Cantacuzene) being sent by Russia, but the new appointee proved co-operative.¹⁰⁶

IV

After seeing his old colleague on leave in mid-1884, Wilfrid Blunt wrote in his diary that Lascelles was currently 'superintending the growth of liberty' in Bulgaria.¹⁰⁷ As has been illustrated, this was in fact more a reflection of Gladstone's priorities than Lascelles's. As in Egypt, the latter focussed little on the Bulgarians as a nation in his first five years there, but rather on Great Power politics and British interests, hence Gladstone's negative criticism of him for an unduly narrow focus on the 'Prince and the Russians'. However other diplomats such as Dufferin, who perceived Battenberg to be central to solving the Bulgarian riddle, deemed Lascelles 'to have been most successful in your management of affairs and in the way you have dealt with the Prince.'¹⁰⁸ Central to this successful 'management' were two factors: the maintenance of a peaceful *status quo*, and the preservation of Britain's perceived interests. In the period 1881-1886, given the collapse of the European Concert, the *status quo* was largely maintained by the Conservative Powers, at the expense of Britain, but within this framework, Lascelles was successful in maintaining British interests in Bulgaria.

For while his traditional concentration on high politics and High Society might lend credence to the description of him as an adherent of an old style of personal diplomacy, given Britain's isolation in the Balkans there was something to be said for

¹⁰⁵ Lascelles to Granville, 7 Jan 1884, FO 78/3638, No. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Lascelles to Dufferin, 29 Feb 1884, FO 800/7.

¹⁰⁷ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *Gordon at Khartoum*, (London, 1911) diary entry 14 May 1884, p.243.

¹⁰⁸ Dufferin to Lascelles, 23 Oct 1883, FO 800/7.

cultivating influence with Bulgaria's ruler. The Prince remained hurt at Austria's and Germany's lack of support for him, and their complicity with Russia.¹⁰⁹ In October 1884 Bismarck personally reproached Alexander for quarrelling with Russia and told him he should accept that sooner or later Bulgaria would become a Russian province. Among those few people who sought to encourage the Prince to remain in Bulgaria were the Prince of Wales and Queen Victoria.¹¹⁰ Lascelles's aristocratic roots and upbringing, and his personable style, made him the natural instrument for this policy of dynastic solidarity. This contrasted with the personal stance of Gladstone, who maintained a lack of sympathy for the Prince. For even while acknowledging that Battenberg's isolation sprang from Great Power hostility, his conviction remained that Alexander had brought this on himself, and he continued to question whether he was really working "frankly for & with his people?"¹¹¹

However, while Lascelles' decision to conduct a form of personal diplomacy did not always command unanimous approval, he showed himself shrewd in the short term by helping to preserve British influence while shoring up the rickety concern of the Bulgarian *status quo*. While Gladstone's policy of maintaining the Concert, both in Bulgaria and elsewhere, led to no notable success, as Russo-Bulgarian relations deteriorated and Russia's *Dreikaiserbund* partners refused to counsel the Prince, Lascelles' standing with Alexander increased with the Prince's gratitude for Queen Victoria's support. In late 1883 Alexander thanked Lascelles for England's advice 'at a time when both Germany and Austria were treating him with the coldest indifference.'¹¹² In early 1884 the Prince even asked the Agent 'whether he could not

¹⁰⁹ Lascelles to Granville, 24 Sept & 9 Nov 1883, FO 78/ 3529, No.'s 85 & 113; also Lascelles to Granville, 3 Oct 1883, FO 800/7.

¹¹⁰ Lascelles to Granville, 29 Oct 1884, *ibid*.

¹¹¹ Gladstone to Granville, 10 Nov 1884, Ramm, ii, p.282, No. 1472.

¹¹² Dufferin to the Queen, 13 Dec 1883, G.E. Buckle (ed.), *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Second series, Vol. iii, p. 460.

become a naturalized Englishman.’¹¹³ In the face of Prime Ministerial antipathy, Lascelles continued to believe that supporting Battenberg was Britain’s best insurance in Bulgaria; this conviction, and a relish for the independent role he had built up as Alexander’s confidant, perhaps, explains why, in March 1885, he took the bold professional risk of turning down Granville’s offer of the Secretaryship at Constantinople. He informed his chief that, although the residence would be ‘much pleasanter’ and the work ‘interesting, and important’, after five years of independence he did ‘not quite like the idea of no longer being my own master,’ and also thought it ‘a step backwards’ financially.¹¹⁴ Significantly, the Prince was the first person whom Lascelles told of his decision to stay - without first gaining authorisation to do so. In his own reasoning, this tactic was designed to cheer Alexander up, but it won him the chastisement of Granville.¹¹⁵ It was ultimately royal support – specifically a protest from the Queen against Granville’s attempt to remove Alexander’s ‘only reliable friend’ - which determined that Lascelles remained in Bulgaria.¹¹⁶ While springing from a purely sentimental motive, this protest proved to be highly prescient in light of events which were to follow, and was ultimately propitious for Lascelles’ own career.

¹¹³ Lascelles to Dufferin, 4 Feb 1884, FO 800/7.

¹¹⁴ Lascelles to Granville [tel.], 7 March 1885, FO 800/7, in response to Granville to Lascelles [tel.], March 1885, *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Granville to Lascelles [tel.], 8 March 1885, *ibid.* Granville to the Queen, 10 Mar 1885, G.E. Buckle (ed.), *The letters of Queen Victoria*, Second series, Vol. iii, p. 621. Lascelles was upset at Granville’s disapproval (Lascelles to Granville, 9 March 1885, FO 800/7). Lascelles’ old chief Paget agreed with Lascelles’ reasoning though; Thornton, the new man at Constantinople, was likely to be ‘a fixture’ leaving Lascelles less opportunities of being chargé d’affaires, although he warned Lascelles might have hurt his chances of promotion. Paget to Lascelles, 2 April 1885, FO 800/7.

¹¹⁶ The Queen to Granville [tel.] 9 Mar 1885 in G.E. Buckle (ed.), *The letters of Queen Victoria*, p. 621.

'Perfectly devoted to Sandro': Lascelles and the Bulgarian crisis of 1885-1886

I

In the autumn of 1885 Bulgarian nationalists in Eastern Rumelia expelled their Governor General and proclaimed the province's union with Bulgaria, and Prince Alexander, anxious both to retain his own authority and to control the revolutionary movement from spreading elsewhere, placed himself at its head, and requested to be recognised as ruler of the two Bulgarias by the European Powers¹. Thus a localised crisis quickly became an international one which threatened to re-open the Eastern Question, and naturally led the occupant of the British Agency at Sofia to assume a heightened importance.

The event of unification came as no surprise to professional diplomats; Lascelles in particular had long viewed it as inevitable, and the Prince had long ago informed him of the action he would take when it arose in order to maintain his throne.² The timing however was a surprise; in the summer of 1885 most agents in Sofia and Philippopolis were on leave (including Lascelles, who was ordered back to Sofia as the news broke).³

Equally unpredicted was the manner in which union had been carried out.

Following Alexander's ejection of the Generals, Russia was no longer eager to see it

¹ M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question* (London, 1966), pp.230-1, E.D. Steele, *Lord Salisbury: a political biography* (London, 1999), p.181; Telegram from Prince Alexander to the British Government, 21 Sept 1885, in *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 1: Correspondence respecting Affairs of E. Roumelia and Bulgaria (1886) [C.4612]* (hereafter referred to as *Turkey No. 1 (1886)*), No.12.

² See e.g. Lascelles to Granville, 18 May 1880, FO 78/3118, No. 84; Lascelles to Tenterden, 18 May 1880, FO 800/7.

³ See Paget to Salisbury, 20 Sept 1885, *Turkey No. 1 (1886)*, No. 9; Graves, p. 63; Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 August 1885, FO 78/3769, No.59; Kennedy to Lascelles, 23 Oct 1885, Lascelles to Major Bigge 3 Oct 1885, and Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 Oct 1885, FO 800/7.

realised under his aegis.⁴ At Franzensbad in August 1885, Russia's Foreign Minister, Giers, had advised the Prince to maintain the territorial *status quo* in order to conciliate Russia.⁵ Consequently after the September revolution, the Tsar withdrew all Russian officials in Bulgaria's army.⁶ By contrast Lord Salisbury, who had returned to the British Foreign Office in the summer, decided to support Battenberg's coup. An understanding of Salisbury's policy is crucial in determining Lascelles's attitude and role in the unfolding crisis. Though diametrically opposed to his decision in 1878 to oppose the creation of a 'Big Bulgaria', in essence Salisbury's response was a continuation of his aim of blocking Russian influence in the Balkans. Since he had last been in office, Turkey had failed to garrison her Western border as she had pledged to do at the Congress of Berlin, and a big Bulgaria cleared of Russian influence would help plug the defensive gap.⁷ By condemning the union Salisbury would, conversely, only aid Russia in replacing Battenberg and re-asserting her influence in the Principality.⁸ Salisbury's policy priorities therefore differed dramatically from those of Gladstone, even if ultimately his language had a Gladstonian hue. When in October a Conference of Ambassadors assembled at Constantinople to debate the question of union, Salisbury was determined there

⁴ Queen Victoria to Salisbury, 6 Oct 1885, in George Earle Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, Vol. i, (London, 1930), p. 698.

⁵ Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan nationalism: Russian influence in the internal affairs of Bulgaria and Serbia, 1879-1886*, (University of California Press, 1958), p.160. Nicholas de Giers (1820-1895) was Russia's Foreign Minister from 1882 to 1895.

⁶ M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, p.231.

⁷ See Salisbury to Paget, 28 Sept 1885, *Turkey No. 1* (1886), No. 80; W.N. Medlicott, 'The Powers and the Unification of the Two Bulgarias, 1885,' *English Historical Review*, (1939), part i, p. 69 & idem, part ii, p.268; Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism, 1879-1886*, (London, 1958), p. 218.; Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, Vol. i, p.100.

Furthermore Alexander's annexation of Eastern Rumelia no longer threatened to repeat the nightmare of 1878, when the bloated Bulgaria of the San Stefano boundaries had stretched to shores of the Aegean, and directly threatened Britain's Mediterranean interests. Salisbury to Walsham, 28 Sept 1886, *Turkey No. 1* (1886), No. 79.

⁸ See Salisbury to Lyons, 16 October 1885, in Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life Of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, Vol iii, 1880-1886 (London, 1931), p. 245.

should be no attempt to return to the *status quo ante*, but instead insisted that the wishes of the populations of the two Bulgarias should be consulted.⁹

Salisbury's policy did, of course, match with Lascelles's opinions and his actions since the time of Alexander's coup d'état, and the 'man on the spot' became a willing executor of his new chief's Eastern policy. It was in a sense a vindication of his own decision to back the Prince from 1881 onwards. Appreciating Lascelles's influence with Alexander, Salisbury ordered his Agent to accompany him 'wherever His Highness may be'.¹⁰ Initially, Lascelles was 'astonished' at this order which amounted to 'something very like a recognition of the Union,' and was self-conscious that his position would be 'somewhat anomalous and rather delicate', but thought his presence would be an encouragement to Battenberg and a deterrent to Russia.¹¹

Yet while Battenberg's action looked set to guarantee Britain's interests in the region, it also held potential repercussions for peace. No diplomat could ignore the possibility that either Turkey might challenge Bulgaria's expansion, or that other Balkan states might seek compensatory territorial acquisitions;¹² as Lascelles put it to the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Tsanow, the Great Powers would 'scarcely...be grateful to the Bulgarians' if Serbia and Greece acted to reopen the whole Eastern

⁹ Salisbury to White, *Turkey No. 1 (1886)*, 25 Oct 1885. No. 340.

¹⁰ Salisbury to Lascelles, 30 Sept 1885 *Turkey No. 1 (1886)*, No. 102. & Lascelles to Salisbury [tel.] 1 Oct 1885, Salisbury to Lascelles [tel.] 2 October 1885, *ibid*, No.'s 110 & 113.

¹¹ The quotes are from Lascelles to White, 12 Oct 1885, and Lascelles to Salisbury 1 Oct 1885, FO 800/7; Austria would not send their Agent to Philippopolis as it would give implicit sanction to Alexander's proceedings. Enclosure in Paget to Lascelles, 30 Sept 1885, *ibid*. On the issue of Russian objections, see Grosvenor to Salisbury 13 Oct 1885, Salisbury to Grosvenor 13 Oct 1885, Grosvenor to Salisbury, 17 October 1885, and White to Salisbury 20 October 1885, *Turkey No. 1 (1886)*, No.'s 231, 240, 323 & 368; White to Lascelles, 13 Oct 1885, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/6. same to same, 27 Oct 1885, FO 800/7.

¹² See Lowe, p.101. On 5 October the Powers formally warned Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece to maintain peace. See Salisbury to Rumbold, 5 Oct 1885, *Turkey No. 1 (1886)*, No. 154.

Question.¹³ Salisbury did not, unlike Austria and Germany, go to the lengths of insisting the *status quo ante* being restored to placate the other Balkan nations,¹⁴ but he worried about a possible Turco-Bulgarian or Serbo-Bulgarian war, and the wider implications this might have for a future map of the Balkans in which Turkey disappeared and was replaced by unstable minor Balkan states. Mindful of this potential risk - for Salisbury held few illusions about Turkey's resilience,¹⁵ - he warned the Bulgarians not to be 'fastidious' in conciliating the Sultan,¹⁶ and through Lascelles, he advised Alexander to demonstrate his worthiness to govern the two Bulgarias by 'prevent[ing] the conflagration from spreading,' - through which he would also win the gratitude of Austria.¹⁷

The cohesion between Salisbury's actions and Lascelles's views during the crisis is easily explained. Salisbury's line of thinking in the early stages of the crisis was strengthened by the advice of two men; William White, the ad-interim, anti-Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, who counselled Salisbury on the advantages to Turkey of a Bulgarian buffer state and had a strong impact on his policy,¹⁸ and Augustus Paget, Britain's ambassador at Vienna and 'one of the few Tories in the higher ranks of the diplomatic service', who had met Salisbury in June 1885 and confirmed the latter the efficacy in his intention to align with Austria against Russia in the threat to the Berlin settlement in the Balkans.¹⁹ White and Paget also had an impact on Lascelles's views - especially the latter, who had been his chief at Rome, and who accommodated Lascelles in Vienna en route to Sofia in September.

¹³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 Oct, FO 78/3770, No. 71.

¹⁴ See Lowe, *Reluctant Imperialists*, p.100.

¹⁵ For Salisbury, the Berlin Treaty had been intended merely as a 'stay of execution'; Steele, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 108.

¹⁶ Salisbury to Lascelles, 16 Oct 1885, Turkey No. 1 (1886), No. 261.

¹⁷ Salisbury to Lascelles, 25 Sept 1885, FO 800/7. See e.g. Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 Oct 1885, FO 78/3770, No.77.

¹⁸ Lowe, *Reluctant Imperialists*, p 100; Otte, ' "Floating Downstream"?', p.110

¹⁹ E.D. Steele, *Salisbury*, p. 180.

Lascelles clearly understood and agreed with the line Salisbury had set out. His confidence in this policy was helped by a firm personal belief that Alexander, anxious to secure legitimacy for his act, constituted a force of order rather than instability in the Balkans. One key piece of evidence was the Prince's apparent ability to control the revolution. The bloodless way union had been carried out also gave Lascelles 'a very much more favourable opinion of the Bulgarians' than hitherto.²⁰

However, he knew less – and was consequently less confident – about Bulgaria's neighbours, especially Serbia.²¹ Like Salisbury, he wanted to assist Alexander in securing his gains while securing the delicate new *status quo*. In late September Alexander had sketched a potential Serbo-Bulgarian *entente*, whereby the two countries might patch up their differences by dividing Macedonia into agreed 'spheres of action'.²² No doubt he shared this idea with Lascelles, who on 5 October wrote privately to Salisbury proposing a very similar scheme. At its heart was the widespread fear that Turkey's 'weakness' provided 'an invitation' to Serbia and Greece to carve up Macedonia, and that the ensuing conflict could prompt Austria and Russia (still alliance partners) into a joint occupation of the Balkans. To prevent this eventuality, Lascelles thought Austria might, if persuaded to renounce her own designs on Salonika in exchange for compensation elsewhere, allow Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece to divide Macedonia between them, with the latter two countries taking 'the lion's share', and Bulgaria seeking territory further East.²³

Lascelles' willingness to envisage a division of the Balkans was contentious in light of Britain's Treaty obligations to Turkey- and in proposing it he confessed to

²⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 Oct 1885, FO 800/7. See also: Lascelles to Salisbury, 1, 3 & 5 Oct 1885, FO 78/3770, No's 70, 71 & 7;. Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 Oct 1885, FO 800/7.

²¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 Oct 1885, FO 800/7.

²² Egon Caesar Corti, *Alexander von Battenberg*, (London, 1954), p.172.

²³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 Oct 1885, FO 800/7.

sounding 'impertinent'.²⁴ However, he was responding to changes in the international situation, and to British policy. Lascelles' letter reflected Salisbury's and Paget's anxiety to use the Bulgarian upheaval to detach Austria from Russia and revive the Anglo-Austrian *entente* which had fallen into disuse during Gladstone's premiership. While a guest of Paget's at Vienna, Lascelles had talked with Austria's Foreign Minister, Kálnoky, who was anxious 'to prevent the contagion spreading to Macedonia' and who had not appeared completely to oppose the idea of recognising personal union when Lascelles proposed it to him. Both Paget and Lascelles hoped to gain Austrian support hereafter.²⁵ Although ultimately this was not forthcoming, Lascelles was obviously influenced by this encounter to espouse Alexander's Balkan *entente* as his own, which had the bonus of avoiding a possible Austro-Russian partition of the Balkans, no distant threat to Britain's interests.²⁶

However the pace of events rendered such schemes purely academic. Firstly, the *Dreikaiserbund* posed a united front in rejecting union at the conference of ambassadors, and then King Milan of Serbia rejected the peace negotiations, which Alexander attempted to open with him and on 14 November found a pretext to declare war on Bulgaria,²⁷ leaving diplomats like Lascelles little scope for action.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See enclosed extract of confidential despatch from Paget to Salisbury, 29 Sept 1885, in Paget to Lascelles, 30 Sept 1885, FO 800/7, and the aforementioned letter itself.

²⁶ The living example of the *Dreikaiserbund*, and the still-recent precedents of the Austro-Russian Reichstadt agreement (1876) and Budapest conventions (1877) were probably sufficient to merit concern about the two Powers coming to an agreement over mutual spheres of influence in the Balkans, and solving Eastern questions, to Britain's detriment.

²⁷ On the breakdown in negotiations see e.g. Lascelles to White, 12 Oct 1885, FO 800/7; Lascelles to Salisbury, 13 Oct 1885, FO 78/3770, No.90; Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 & 20 October 1885, FO 78/3770, No.'s 97, 99 & 103; Graves to Salisbury, 3 Nov 1885, and Wyndham to Salisbury, 10 Nov 1885, *Turkey No.1 (1886)*, No.'s 441 & 421; Lascelles to Salisbury 14 Nov 1885, FO 78/3770, No. 135, and tel 63 of same day, FO 78/3772.

II

Unexpectedly, war brought the gains for Bulgaria (and for Britain) which diplomacy had yet proved unable to deliver. On 19 November, Bulgaria dramatically defeated Serbia at Slivnitsa. The danger that Alexander might go too far was prevented by a threat from Austria to enter on the side of her protégé, Serbia, leading all Powers to urge an armistice on the Prince,²⁸ which he reluctantly accepted on 21 December 1885.

While Lascelles believed the peace terms, which were decided by an independent military commission (and which ultimately robbed Bulgaria of her gains), were ‘rather hard upon the Bulgarians’, his overall view of the outcome was positive: he told White in late December that, ‘we may congratulate ourselves upon the Prince’s victories’.²⁹ For without sacrifice of money or blood – but with a great deal of good fortune- Salisbury’s diplomatic capital was raised while Russia’s influence was diminished, and Lascelles believed she could only now regain it by force.³⁰ At the Constantinople Conference Russia abandoned attempts to return to the *status quo ante*,³¹ and her Agent, Koyander, disappeared back to St Petersburg on the pretext that all telegraphic correspondence had been stopped during the war, a move which the British Agent characterised as ‘another egregious blunder’ on Russia’s part.³² The Prince meanwhile was personally ‘very much disgusted’ with all Powers - excepting England.³³

²⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 Nov 1885, FO 78/3771, No. 56; Salisbury to Lascelles, 7 Dec 1885, FO 78/3772, Tel. 53; Lascelles to Salisbury 15 Dec, FO 78/3771, No. 197.

²⁹ Lascelles to White, 10 Dec 1885, FO 800/7. On the Prince’s acceptance of the military commission see also Lascelles to Salisbury 18 & 22 Dec 1885, FO 78/3772, draft tel’s No.’s 99 & 105, and Salisbury to Lascelles 19 Dec 1885, FO 78/3768, draft tel. No 105.

³⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury 29 Dec 1885, FO 78/3771, No. 215.

³¹ Morier to Salisbury [tel.], 24 Dec 1885, *Turkey No.1 (1886)*, No. 664.

³² Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 Dec 1885, FO 800/7.

³³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Dec 1885, *ibid.*

Bulgaria's success aided Salisbury in achieving his objective of getting Turkey to recognise Alexander as Governor General of Eastern Rumelia, by a direct agreement between the two Powers.³⁴ Both White at Constantinople and Lascelles at Sofia played their part in attaining this goal. During the war, Tsanow actively sought the latter's advice over diplomatic correspondence with the Porte, who held Bulgaria ultimately responsible for provoking the war,³⁵ and once the Conference abandoned attempts to undo the union and sanctioned direct negotiations between Turkey and Bulgaria, Lascelles continued unofficially to advise the Bulgarians on negotiating with Turkey through December and January, work he described as 'pretty hard and continuous'.³⁶ He was by now increasingly conspicuous through his association with Alexander, and suspicion gathered around his role. Rumours circulated that he had accompanied Battenberg on his military campaigns, and even attended a Council of Ministers at Philipopolis (the capital of Eastern Rumelia) which had decided to resist the Porte. In late December Gadban Effendi, Turkey's new (pro-Russian) Vakoufs Commissioner to Sofia, arriving to urge Alexander to assume direct negotiations with the Sultan, lectured the British Agent on the part he was supposedly playing, advising him that he should best attain a satisfactory arrangement by exerting his influence 'in a less ostentatious manner.'³⁷ The extent to which he played an active role was doubtless exaggerated by Gadban – whom Lascelles himself later dismissed as 'an infernal scoundrel & utterly unreliable'³⁸ - and for much of the autumn and winter

³⁴ Salisbury to Lascelles, 24 Dec 1885, FO 78/3772, Tel No. 63 secret.

³⁵ See Graves to Salisbury, 16 Nov 1885, and Lascelles to Salisbury 23 Nov 1885, FO 78/3771, No.'s 143 & 152; Lascelles to Salisbury, 17 Nov 1885, FO 800/7, and Lascelles to Salisbury, 17 Nov 1885, FO 78/3772, Tel. No. 66.

³⁶ Lascelles to Paget, 7 Jan 1886, FO 800/7; Lascelles was shown copies of the important correspondence between the Sultan and the Bulgarian Government. See e.g. Lascelles to Salisbury, 14 Jan 1886, FO 78/3892, No. 17.

³⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 Dec 1885, FO 78/3771, No. 212.

³⁸ Lascelles to Paget, 15 June 1886, FO 800/15.

Lascelles seems to have executed Salisbury's instructions rather than pull wires himself, but in a sense it was this perception of his role which counted more.

What Lascelles did hereafter was to provide informal counsel, urging the Bulgarians to 'show the greatest possible moderation' in peace, especially towards Austria. He 'strongly advised' Tsanow against imputing blame to Austria for goading Serbia on, and did his 'best to combat' the hostility felt towards her among Bulgarians, arguing to Tsanow and the Prince that it was in Austria's best interests to be on good terms with Bulgaria.³⁹ For while Serbia's defeat had disappointed her, he believed the 'destruction of Russian influence' in Bulgaria was such an 'enormous advantage' to her that she should support the Prince over union.⁴⁰ Lascelles clearly hoped to bring about a reconciliation between Austria and Bulgaria, and to this end, in January, he asked Paget for hints of Austrian policy. The reply was discouraging: Kálnoky was too wary of Gladstone's impending return to office in England to take a part against Russia in the Balkans 'openly', but he was keen that the Prince should negotiate directly with the Porte over Eastern Rumelia.⁴¹

The fruit of these negotiations, the Turco-Bulgarian agreement, was finally signed in Constantinople on 1 February 1886 by Tsanow, who had been sent to deal with the Sultan directly.⁴² It was again a triumph for Salisbury, who hoped that Turkey would recognise Alexander's administrative rights in Eastern Rumelia in exchange for a pledge on his part to contribute towards the defence of Turkey.⁴³ The Prince was to rule Eastern Rumelia for five years, a term which was automatically renewable at the end of that period. A Turco-Bulgarian Commission would determine

³⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Dec 1885, FO 800/7; same to same, 1 Dec 1885, *ibid.* See also Lascelles to Salisbury, 29 Dec 1885, FO 78/3771, No. 214), and same to same, 7 Jan 1886, FO 800/7.

⁴⁰ Lascelles to Paget, 7 Jan 1886, FO 800/7.

⁴¹ Paget to Lascelles, 19 Jan 1886, FO 800/6.

⁴² White to Salisbury, 1 Feb 1886, *Turkey No. 2* (1886), No. 118.

⁴³ Salisbury to Lascelles, 24 Dec 1885, FO 78/3772, Tel. No 63 secret.

the changes Alexander desired to Eastern Rumelia's Organic Statute. In return Alexander would pledge 100,000 men to Turkey's defence, and cede villages in the Rhodope district to the Sultan.⁴⁴ With his days in office coming to an end, Salisbury crowned his diplomatic success by moving, with German support, to make a naval demonstration to deter Greece from mimicking Serbia's action.

Lascelles greeted these developments with wholehearted approval⁴⁵ - for Lord Salisbury's 'splendid policy', as he termed it, had resulted in a peaceful outcome⁴⁶ - and one, of course, in Britain's interests. Moreover it was a policy which had been conducted against Russia - but not wholly in isolation this time. Lascelles was pleased that Germany, who had been very 'hostile' to England in recent years, (with Gladstone in charge) had joined Salisbury in taking action to prevent Greece breaching the peace,⁴⁷ which in the words of Lascelles left this Balkan state with 'a grievance which they may howl about to their heart's content without doing anybody any harm.'⁴⁸

Salisbury's success up to February 1886 in championing the Bulgarian cause stood in stark contrast to that of his Liberal predecessors. Thus when, following elections in late 1885, a Liberal majority was returned to the House of Commons, Lascelles, Paget and White shared their disappointment at the result. Lascelles confessed that he would have liked a Conservative majority in spite of his own Liberal convictions.⁴⁹ There was general relief in the diplomatic world, which

⁴⁴ White to Salisbury, 1 Feb 1886, *Turkey No. 2* (1886), No. 118.

⁴⁵ Lascelles to Paget, 26 Jan 1886, FO 800/7.

⁴⁶ Lascelles to White, 27 Jan 1886, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Lascelles to Paget, 26 Jan 1886, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Lascelles to White, 27 Jan 1886, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Lascelles to White, 10 Dec 1885, *ibid.*

anticipated a change of policy, that the Turco-Bulgarian agreement had been concluded before Salisbury left the Foreign Office.⁵⁰

Lascelles' diplomatic colleagues recognised the part he had played in facilitating this 'grand result',⁵¹ and Salisbury was determined formally to recognise the support his Agent had given him.⁵² In January, he received the award of Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St. George (K.C.M.G.), much to his own astonishment – the most he had expected was the lower Companion of the Order of Bath (C.B.), and the K.C.M.G. was more commonly reserved for Ambassadors. Salisbury telegraphed him to say that 'never was honour better earned.'⁵³

III

The Bulgarian situation remained critical as Salisbury left office, but in one sense Lascelles' and Paget's worst fears about his departure were not realised – for, (to the relief of Lascelles especially), he was replaced not by Lord Granville, but by Lord Rosebery, who announced his intention to continue his predecessor's line in the Balkans and whose appointment also satisfied Berlin.⁵⁴

However from early 1886 to the momentous events surrounding Prince Alexander's abdication in September of that year, Lascelles sensed a growing drift in

⁵⁰ Paget to Lascelles, 3 Feb 1886, *ibid.* The list of foreign policy failures notched up by Gladstone's second Government gave Paget in particular 'the most gloomy foreboding' for Britain's future – and to his Sofia colleague, he lamented the departure of 'one of the most able & successful Ministers we have had during the present century' and worried at the 'mischief' the Liberals would do in power. *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Sir John Lumley, the British ambassador to Rome (1883-1888), heard from Eric Barrington at the Foreign Office that such was Salisbury's intention. Lumley to Lascelles, 17 Jan 1886, Spring Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR II, 5/1.

⁵³ Lascelles to Paget, 26 Jan 1886, FO 800/7. Original telegram not traced.

⁵⁴ Paget to Lascelles, 3 Feb 1886, *ibid.*; Lascelles to Paget, 13 Feb 1886, *ibid.* Lascelles hoped the split in parties about the Irish and land questions would lead to a coalition government which would return Salisbury to the Foreign Office. *Ibid.*

Britain's Balkan policy which he was unable personally to arrest. Of initial concern to him was the upcoming replacement of the fervent Russophobe William White at Constantinople by Sir Frank's old Washington chief (and ex-Ambassador to St Petersburg), Edward Thornton, who had been appointed by Salisbury's predecessor Granville. Lascelles personally liked Thornton but could see that he was 'not the man' White was.⁵⁵ He regretted that Sir William might not be left to 'finish the business' of gaining Great Power ratification to the Turco-Bulgarian agreement, and he worried when news of Thornton's forthcoming arrival was greeted with 'jubilation' by the Russians.⁵⁶ Fortunately, the Foreign Office shared Lascelles' opinion. Salisbury also did not believe Thornton was strong enough for Constantinople, an opinion which his successor in office shared. Salisbury had already extended White's charge d'affaireship, to enable him to finish negotiations over the Turco Bulgarian agreement, and by the autumn of 1886 Thornton had been forcibly retired and White was officially appointed ambassador at Constantinople.⁵⁷

However, following the conclusion of peace between Serbia and Bulgaria in March, the securing of international assent to the Turco-Bulgarian agreement did indeed prove troublesome: naturally enough Russia enumerated many objections. Anxious of increasing Russian intrigue in both Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, and concerned that Russia might threaten to occupy Bulgaria to prevent the arrangement being carried out,⁵⁸ Lascelles suggested to Rosebery that it might be executed without international sanction 'as none of the other Powers seemed inclined to raise any objections'. Unsurprisingly, the Foreign Office thought Sir Frank's idea to be a

⁵⁵ Lascelles to Paget, 15 June 1886 FO 800/7; see also White to Lascelles, 16 June 1886, FO 800/6.

⁵⁶ Lascelles to Paget, 27 Feb 1886, FO 800/7; Chisolm to Lascelles, 18 Feb 1886, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ For this material, I am indebted to Dr. T.G. Otte for letting me see the relevant passages of manuscript from his forthcoming book, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵⁸ Lascelles to Rosebery, 20 Feb 1886 & Lascelles to Paget, 13 Feb 1886, FO 800/7.

'rather a rash one',⁵⁹ but his concerns were nonetheless borne out. Due to Russian objections, the military assistance clause was nullified, which fundamentally weakened the agreement.⁶⁰ Rosebery's expectation that Russia would drop her further objections⁶¹ was not wholly realised. For example, although Russia consented to let a Turco-Bulgarian Commission revise Eastern Rumelia's Organic Statute in line with Alexander's wishes, they stipulated that its deliberations must receive Great Power sanction.⁶² Lascelles cautioned that with Russia and the Prince at loggerheads over union, it would be 'almost impossible to revise the organic Statute' to give satisfaction to both – especially, he argued, because Russia wanted 'to get rid of Prince Alexander' and re-establish Russian supremacy. Again, he suggested the arrangement should be carried out without Great Power sanction;⁶³ again his advice went unheeded.

The Prince's term of appointment also involved a protracted argument. Increasingly frustrated by Russian objections and intrigues within Bulgaria, Alexander claimed not to have known that Tsanow, when signing the agreement, had pledged him to a five year limit,⁶⁴ and, disavowing him, refused to be bound to any fixed term, arguing this would 'open the door to every sort of intrigue' and challenge

⁵⁹ Lascelles to Rosebery, 13 Feb 1886, FO 78/3892, No. 56, and minute by Thomas Sanderson.

⁶⁰ Morier to Rosebery 11 Feb 1886; Rosebery to Malet 12 Feb 1886; Rosebery to White 12 Feb 1886; Said Pasha to Rustem Pasha 12 Feb 1886; Rosebery to White 15 Feb 1886; White to Rosebery 17 Feb; White to Rosebery 18 Feb 1886, *Turkey No.2* (1886), No.'s 163, 174, 177, 179, 193, 204 & 221.

⁶¹ Rosebery to Morier 19 Feb 1886, *ibid*, No. 222.

⁶² Rosebery to Morier 20 Feb 1886, & Morier to Rosebery 21 24, & 17 Feb 1886, *ibid*, No.'s 228, 233, 250 & .278.

⁶³ Lascelles to Thornton, 12 March 1886, FO 800/7.

⁶⁴ Tsanow at Constantinople had insisted that the Prince be appointed Governor General strictly under the terms of Article XVII of the Berlin Treaty, which stipulated a limited term of five years. (Rosebery to Malet, 4 March 1886 *Turkey No.2* (1886), No. 319). The Prince denied he had consented to this. (Lascelles to Rosebery, 12 March 1886. *ibid*, No.350), which led to some confusion and recrimination.; See the correspondence through March and April 1886 *ibid*, *passim*, and private correspondence between Rosebery and Lascelles in the same months in FO 800/7.

his legitimacy every five years.⁶⁵ After weeks of wrangling, however,⁶⁶ a firman was issued confirming Alexander's rule over Eastern Rumelia, but mentioning no time limit, to the satisfaction of the Prince.⁶⁷

Overall, the unravelling of the Turco-Bulgarian Agreement led Alexander to complain of the 'feeble support' that Rosebery had given him,⁶⁸ and he told Lascelles that his position was 'considerably damaged' by the concessions he had been forced to make to please the Powers.⁶⁹

IV

The concessions the Prince was forced to make sat uneasily alongside increasing evidence of Russian intrigues from February 1886.⁷⁰ Warnings of Russian-sponsored attempts on Alexander's life came from various quarters, including from Queen Victoria, and Lascelles did 'all in [his] power' to warn the Prince and his aide de Camps of the danger.⁷¹ Lascelles was also informed that Russia was gaining by the lack of a strong British Ambassador at Constantinople. The source of his information was Valentine Chirol, a journalist whom Lascelles first had come across as an occasional correspondent for the *Standard* in 1881, and who was highly critical of Thornton's ineffectiveness at Constantinople. Chirol would become a lifelong family friend of the Lascelles. In 1886, his advice made the Agent welcome a decision to

⁶⁵ Lascelles to Rosebery, 12 March 1886, FO 78/3898 tel No. 49.

⁶⁶ Lascelles had 'never seen him so firm on any point' (Lascelles to Rosebery, 4 April 1886, FO 800/7).

⁶⁷ Lascelles to Thornton, 6 May 1886, FO 800/7.

⁶⁸ Memo by Lascelles on meeting with Rosebery, 5 August 1886, *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Lascelles to Rosebery, 19 March 1886, FO 78/3892, No.84.

⁷⁰ Lascelles to Rosebery, 20 Feb 1886, FO 800/7; Lascelles to Rosebery, 17 April 1886, FO 78/3893, No. 123.

⁷¹ Lascelles to Rosebery 20 Feb 1886, FO 800/7. On these plots, see Lascelles to Rosebery, [tel.], 14 Feb 1886, to Rosebery, 4 April 1886, to Captain HM Jones, 1 June 1886, to Paget 15 June 1886, *ibid.*, and Lascelles to Rosebery, 19 May 1886, FO 78/3898, Tel No. 86.

send White back to Turkey permanently in the autumn.⁷² White himself criticised his successor for having done much ‘harm’ by not pursuing a sufficiently ‘energetic’ policy at Constantinople,⁷³ which had allowed Russian influence to take root there.⁷⁴ At the same time, Russia’s move to fortify Batum on the Black Sea, designated an open port under the Treaty of Berlin, also seemed to augur a more forthright policy in the Near East,⁷⁵ and the situation in Bulgaria was exacerbated by the fact that, as Sir Frank expressed it, the Bulgarian Government seemed ‘at sixes and sevens’⁷⁶; Alexander’s dispute with Tzanov over the five-year term led to the latter’s resignation.⁷⁷ This was an event which left Lascelles with mixed emotions, as he judged Tzanov to have been ‘certainly the best Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs] that I have known here’, but on the other hand, this was ‘not saying much’, and there was also speculation that Tzanov had been ‘bought’ by the Russians while at Constantinople.⁷⁸

Yet by June Lascelles’ optimism led him to believe that Russia’s best attempts to stir up a revolution against Alexander had failed. In that month, Government supporters were returned in fifty-nine of the eighty-nine new Eastern Rumeliate seats and Lascelles surmised that Russia, having lost her influence inside Bulgaria through ‘the blunders of her Agents,’ could only dominate Bulgaria through military occupation, which, with its attendant risk of ‘general war’, he surmised she would be wary of doing, although he confessed to not knowing ‘enough of what is going on in

⁷² Lascelles to Paget, 15 June 1886, FO 800/7.

⁷³ White to Lascelles, 6 Sept 1886, FO 800/16.

⁷⁴ Chirol to Lascelles, 12 May 1886, FO 800/7. Chirol informed Lascelles that the Embassy at Constantinople was ‘gradually relapsing into the slough of despond out of which White had so successfully pulled it. Ibid.

⁷⁵ See for example Paget to Lascelles, 8 July 1886, FO 800/16, in which the Ambassador called the Russian ‘blackguards.’

⁷⁶ The Prince had told Lascelles as early as March that Karaveloff (again in power) seemed to be losing influence in the country. Lascelles to Rosebery, 19 March 1886, FO 78/3892, No.84.

⁷⁷ Lascelles to Thornton, 6 May 1886, FO 800/7.

⁷⁸ Lascelles to Paget, 15 June, *ibid.*

other countries' to judge whether Russia would attempt such a move. However, when he went to London on leave in the summer, both Rosebery and the Queen seemed to share his optimism about the unlikelihood of an internal coup.⁷⁹

Central to Lascelles' optimistic assessment of the situation – generally recognised as 'dangerous and unstable' by all other Agents except him⁸⁰ – was his confidence in the Prince's martial qualities and capacity for political survival. There is evidence that Lascelles' admiration for the Prince had made him lose his objectivity and that – by his own admission – he may have been 'dazzled' by Battenberg's personal success.⁸¹ From late 1885 onwards he had been greatly impressed by the Prince's 'political wisdom' and his military 'genius'.⁸² Lady Walburga Paget, wife of the British Ambassador at Vienna, recorded that, in passing through Austria to England, Lascelles was 'much excited and spoke of nothing but Prince Alexander of Battenberg, calling him a second Frederic the Great.' Arthur Ellis, another guest of the Pagets, had told her 'that Lascelles had kept him up to the small hours drinking B. and S. in that terrific heat and singing praises of his hero, the future Emperor of Byzantium.'⁸³ To Rosebery he spoke of Battenberg 'the most remarkable man & not just a statesman – ...[but] a warrior.'⁸⁴ There was certainly a measure of personal affection after so long a sojourn in Bulgaria. After seeing Lascelles in August, the Queen noted in her journal: 'Frank is perfectly devoted to Sandro.'⁸⁵ However

⁷⁹ Lascelles to Thornton, 2 July 1886, *ibid*; Queen's journal entry for 9 Aug 1886, in G.E. Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria: Third Series*, Vol. i, p. 175; Lascelles' memo of meeting with Rosebery, 5 August 1886, and Lascelles to White, 11 August 1886, FO 800/7.

⁸⁰ Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, p.246.

⁸¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 Jan 1886, FO 800/7.

⁸² Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 Dec 1885 *ibid*. And see also Lascelles to Paget 7 Jan 1886, and to Salisbury same day, *ibid*.

⁸³ Walburga Ehrengarde Helena Paget, *Embassies of Other Days: And Further Recollections* (London, 1923) Vol. ii, pp. 412 -413.

⁸⁴ Lascelles' memo, 5 August 1886, FO 800/7.

⁸⁵ Queen's journal entry for 9 August, in Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria: Third Series*, Vol. i, p. 175.

Lascelles' high estimation of Alexander was also mirrored back in England.⁸⁶

Furthermore, up to August 1886 Alexander had successfully confounded all forecasts by successively challenging the party in power within his own country, expelling Russian influence, defying the Great Powers and Turkey and defeating Serbia, with minimal loss of blood.

It is against this backdrop that Lascelles' attitude towards Battenberg should therefore also be judged. In his view Alexander was the best guarantee for Britain's interests and for maintaining peace, and, in his own words 'an important factor in the solution of complicated questions in this part of the world.'⁸⁷ He trusted Alexander's moderation, and willed for him to succeed. When rumours surfaced that Alexander was fomenting agitation in Macedonia,⁸⁸ with the aim of proclaiming himself King and uniting Bulgaria with Macedonia as an act of desperation,⁸⁹ Lascelles dismissed this as uncharacteristic. The Prince's assertion that he could control agitation in Macedonia was enough to reassure him, and he credited him with too much 'political sagacity' to invade the country.⁹⁰

One person who disagreed with Sir Frank however was Lord Salisbury, once again in office from August 1886 as Prime Minister of a minority Conservative Government. When Lascelles met him that summer he struck the diplomat as 'very nervous as to the future.' Salisbury was not convinced that Alexander's 'moderation & wisdom,' would be sufficient to prevent the Macedonian issue being raised, and thought his act in Eastern Rumelia to have shown him to be amenable to popular pressure, and he worried that should the question be opened, England would be bound

⁸⁶ e.g. Iddesleigh to Lascelles, 28 Aug 1886, FO 800/16.

⁸⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 Dec 1885, FO 800/7, and Lascelles to White, in almost identical wording, 10 Dec 1885, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Lascelles to Rosebery, 2 April, FO 78/3893, No. 102 (Extending tel 66) and see the crossed out paragraph in Lascelles to Rosebery, 20 March 1886, FO 800/7.

⁸⁹ Lascelles to Rosebery, 10 July 1886, FO 78/3893, No. 173.

⁹⁰ Lascelles to Rosebery, 4 April 1886, FO 800/7.

'in honour' to support the Sultan of Turkey, who he was afraid might otherwise 'throw himself entirely' into Russia's arms.⁹¹ Salisbury's sobering corrective to Lascelles' view fittingly presaged the imminent crisis which brought Alexander's unbroken run of successes to an end.

V

On the night of 21 August 1886, Russian intrigues finally triumphed when Prince Alexander was kidnapped from his palace by a dozen disaffected officers in the pay of Russia, and escorted to Bulgaria's northern frontier. A Russophile provisional government was swiftly established, led by Alexander's old opponents Zankov and Metropolitan Kliment.⁹² The Government proved short-lived (it was replaced by a loyalist Council of Regency under the dynamic radical Stefan Stambuloff), the conspirators were rounded up and Alexander swiftly returned to Sofia. But on 3 September, the Prince announced to the Powers his intention of abdicating.⁹³ Naturally there was dismay and alarm within Britain's foreign policy elite. Condie Stephen, deputising for Lascelles at Sofia, warned that Russia might use any disturbance as a pretext for occupation,⁹⁴ and the Queen, typically, saw the plot as 'the first step' towards a 'Russian move on Constantinople'.⁹⁵ It was a sign of the importance attached to Lascelles' influence that both the Queen and Lord Cranbrook, (Lord President of the Council), thought his presence at Sofia might have averted the

⁹¹ Lascelles to White, 11 August 1886, *ibid.*

⁹² Lady Walburga Paget, Vol. ii, pp. 412-14; Stephen to Iddesleigh, 21 & 22 Aug 1886, FO 78/3894, No.'s 216 & 217; Stephen to Iddesleigh, 22 and 23 August 1886, FO 78/3898, Tel No.'s 131 & 132. Kliment Turnovski (c.1841- 1901) was a pro-Russian Bulgarian clergyman and politician.

⁹³ Stephen to Iddesleigh, 26 Aug 1886, FO 78/3894, No. 218; Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 3 Sept 1886, *ibid.*, No.'s 223 & 224.

⁹⁴ Stephen to Iddesleigh, 25 & 27 Aug 1886, FO 78/3898, Tel. No.'s 140 & 145 secret.

⁹⁵ Queen Victoria to Salisbury, 23 Aug 1886, in Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, Vol. i, p. 182.

kidnapping,⁹⁶ and he was again ordered to cut short his leave and return to accompany Alexander 'wherever he may be.'⁹⁷

The British Government optimistically urged Alexander to reconsider his decision and argued that, being elected by the Powers, he could only be deposed by them, and would 'incur serious responsibility' by yielding to Russia 'without a struggle.'⁹⁸ In this policy, however, Britain again stood isolated. Crucially, Bismarck remained indifferent, or rather fearful of rowing with Russia, and Salisbury could only reassure Alexander of a 'complete change in the policy of Germany as to Russia and Bulgaria' after the present Kaiser had died.⁹⁹ But for now Russia, Germany, Austria and Turkey seemed inclined to sacrifice the Prince.¹⁰⁰

Lascelles used 'all the arguments' he could think of with the Prince.¹⁰¹ When a deputation of Bulgarian officers warned they would resist his departure,¹⁰² he even speculated that this danger of complications might be an argument to use with Bismarck. Yet he also admitted that, by announcing his departure to the Powers, the Prince had already compromised himself, and anyway risked his life while he remained.¹⁰³ With other Powers hostile, Britain's efforts were futile. By 6 September,

⁹⁶ Queen Victoria to Salisbury, 23 Aug 1886, in Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, Vol. i, p. 182; Lord Cranbrook's diary entry for 24 Aug 1886, Nancy E. Johnson (ed.), *The Diary of Gathorne Hardy, Later Lord Cranbrook, 1866-1892: Political Selections* (London, 1981), p. 622.

⁹⁷ Iddesleigh to Lascelles [tel.], 30 Aug 1886, FO 800/7. Lascelles arrived at Sofia on 2 September. (Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 2 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No. 222).

⁹⁸ Iddesleigh to Lascelles 5 Sept 1886, FO 78/3891, No. 68 See also same to same, same date, bid, No. 69; Salisbury to Lascelles [tel.], 4 Sept 1886, FO 800/7.

⁹⁹ Salisbury to Lascelles [tel.], 4 Sept 1886, FO 800/7.

¹⁰⁰ Stephen to Iddesleigh, 28 Aug 1886, FO 78/3898, Tel No. 147 confidential.

¹⁰¹ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 3 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No. 224 most secret.

¹⁰² Lascelles to Iddesleigh 4 Sept, FO 78/3894, No.229 and, same to same, same date FO 78/3898 tel No. 173. These officers said they would execute the conspirators and oppose the Regency if it was not to their way of thinking.

¹⁰³ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 5 Sept 1886, FO 800/7.

the new Conservative Foreign Secretary, Lord Iddesleigh, had done what he could.¹⁰⁴ Further entreaties having failed, the Officers dropped their opposition, and the next afternoon Alexander left Sofia.¹⁰⁵

With Alexander's departure, Lascelles' days in Sofia were numbered – for as White, once again at Constantinople, told him, more than any other diplomat (perhaps besides himself) Sir Frank Lascelles had been identified with the 'cause' of the Prince as far as his 'official character' had allowed.¹⁰⁶ Significantly, on 12 September Zankov even visited Lascelles sarcastically to thank him for being 'instrumental' in 'driving away' Alexander by supporting him over Eastern Rumelia.¹⁰⁷ It was White's hope that Lascelles would not remain long in Sofia after the Prince's departure, and the Agent himself suggested to Iddesleigh that his 'intimate connection with His Highness' would probably necessitate his departure from Sofia.¹⁰⁸ The Queen agreed – no doubt to signal a protest against Alexander's deposition – but Iddesleigh wanted Lascelles to stay so long as matters were 'critical.'¹⁰⁹

The reason for the prolongation of Lascelles' tenure revealed itself in late September, when Russia again sent General Kaulbars to Bulgaria as special envoy, to try and reassert their influence. He began by demanding fresh elections and the postponement of the trial of the conspirators, and when the Regency refused to fully satisfy his demands he began agitating around the country, trying to influence

¹⁰⁴ Lord Cranbrook's diary entry for 5 Sept 1886, Nancy E. Johnson (ed.), *The Diary of Gathorne Hardy*, p. 626-627. Iddesleigh's last instructions to urge Alexander to stay are: Iddesleigh to Lascelles [tel.], 6 Sept, FO 78/3898, No 116. See Iddesleigh to Lascelles 7 Sept 1886, FO 800/7, admitting defeat. Stafford Henry Northcote, 1st Earl of Iddesleigh (1818 – 1887), was Foreign Secretary from August 1886.

¹⁰⁵ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 6 & 7 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No.'s 234 (extending tel 176) & 238.

¹⁰⁶ White to Lascelles, 16 June 1886, FO 800/16.

¹⁰⁷ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 12 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No. 242.

¹⁰⁸ White to Lascelles, 6 Sept 1886, FO 800/16; Lascelles to Iddesleigh [tel.], 7 Sept 1886, FO 800/7.

¹⁰⁹ See Cranbrook's entry for 8 September *The Diary of Gathorne Hardy*, p. 630; Iddesleigh to Lascelles, 20 Oct 1886, FO 800/16.

Bulgarians against their Government. Lascelles feared that Russia would 'stick at nothing to gain their ends' in Bulgaria,¹¹⁰ but endeavoured to counteract Kaulbars' influence. When Natchovitch, Bulgaria's new Foreign Minister, appealed for outside help, Lascelles reassured him that in the absence of 'material assistance' Britain would lend her 'moral support' in maintaining Bulgaria's independence.¹¹¹ He suggested to Iddesleigh that Britain should be the first Power to recognise the Regency Government;¹¹² he further suggested, following entreaties from leading Bulgarian Ministers, that Iddesleigh compose a statement to the Powers deprecating 'any foreign interference in the internal affairs of the Principality'¹¹³ and meanwhile he urged every Bulgarian he met to lay aside party differences and resist Russia,¹¹⁴ for Lascelles was convinced that the Regency would be 'unassailable', if they could successfully resist Kaulbars,¹¹⁵ who would learn like his predecessors that Bulgaria had 'no wish to become a Russian province'.¹¹⁶ In tandem with Iddesleigh, Lascelles also tried to give secret financial support to the Regency and in September Condie Stephen was despatched to London to try raise a loan for Bulgaria through the Rothschilds.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ Lascelles to Paget, 9 Oct 1886, FO 800/7.

¹¹¹ Quotes from Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 19 Sept 1886, *ibid.* See also Lascelles to Iddesleigh 25, 26 & 28 Sept 1886 FO 78/3894, No.'s 265, 266 & 270; same to same, 3 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No.'s 273 & 274.

¹¹² See Iddesleigh to Lascelles, 21 Sept 1886, FO 78/3898, Draft Tel No. 119, asking if any Power had recognised the Regency; and Lascelles' reply of 22 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No.263, saying they hadn't.

¹¹³ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 22 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No. 263. For the pressure placed on Lascelles by the Regency, see Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 5 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No.'s 230 & 232.

¹¹⁴ Lascelles to Iddesleigh 10, 12 & 14 Sept 1886 FO 78/3894, No.'s 241, 242 & 247.

¹¹⁵ Lascelles to Paget, 28 Sept 1886, FO 800/7.

¹¹⁶ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 4 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No. 277.

¹¹⁷ On this issue see Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 5 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No.231; Lascelles to Iddesleigh [tel.], 7 Sept 1886 & draft private letter of 10 Sept 1886, FO 800/7; Iddesleigh to Lascelles, 12 Sept 1886, FO 78/3898, Draft Tel No. 117; Stephen to Lascelles 18 Sept 1886, FO 800/16; Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 19 Sept 1886, FO 800/7. Lascelles' brother-in-law Tommy Olliffe was involved in a second (unsuccessful) attempt to raise a loan in London. See Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 1 December 1886, *ibid.* O'Connor to Lascelles, 14 Feb 1887,

Salisbury's second administration was however less united over its foreign policy than his first, and was vulnerable to criticism from within, specifically from Lord Randolph Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Salisbury's new Government, who could name his price for propping up a minority administration, and who dissented from what he viewed to be Salisbury and Iddesleigh's excessive concentration on Bulgaria at the expense of directly defending Egypt and India. Salisbury had already conceded his Chancellor's demand for a discussion of Iddesleigh's unilateral policy in Cabinet,¹¹⁸ when Churchill became aware, through conversations of his own and those of his friend Natty Rothschild with the German Ambassador in London, that Germany's Agent at Sofia had characterised Lascelles' behaviour as 'continually and continuously intriguing and manoeuvring against Russia'.¹¹⁹ He also became aware of the loan negotiations through Natty Rothschild, who, when approached by Stephen, had objected to funding an anti-Russian policy in Bulgaria, and told Churchill the details of the plan,¹²⁰ which was hitherto unknown to either Salisbury or to the Permanent Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, who had been on leave and was apparently 'horrified' at the negotiations.¹²¹ Having protested

Stephen to Lascelles, 9 March 1887, Chisolm to Lascelles 24 April and 6 May 1887, Tommy Olliffe to Lascelles, 14 May 1887, FO 800/16.

¹¹⁸ See C.L. Smith, *The Embassy of Sir William White at Constantinople, 1886-1891*, (Oxford, 1957) pp. 50-53. Churchill to Salisbury, 4 Sept 1886, and same to same, 6 Sept 1886, in Winston Churchill, *The Life of Randolph Churchill* (London, 1906), p. 155. He was backed by the Secretary for War (W.H. Smith) and First Lord of the Admiralty (Lord George Hamilton.) *The Diary of Gathorne Hardy*, p.630-631.

¹¹⁹ Churchill to Salisbury, 19 Sept 1886; Rothschild to Churchill, 27 Sept 1886; and Memorandum of interview between Rothschild and Hatzfeldt, the German Ambassador to London; dated 'October 1886.' Randolph Churchill MSS, viewed on microfilm at Churchill College Archive Centre (C.C.A.C.), RCHL Vol. 15, p.1809, p. 1844 & Vol. 16, p.1884 .

¹²⁰ Churchill to Salisbury, 14 Sept 1886, C.C.A.C., RCHL, Vol. 15, p.1794; Iddesleigh to Churchill [tel.], 30 Sept, C.C.A.C., RCHL Vol. 16, p.1862; Iddesleigh to Lascelles, [tel.], 29 Sept 1886, FO 800/7.

¹²¹ Rothschild to Churchill, 5 Oct 1886, C.C.A.C., RCHL, Vol. 16, p.1883.

to Salisbury about Iddesleigh's policy¹²², and receiving a promise that the Foreign Secretary's 'violent' methods would be curbed in the future,¹²³ Churchill also mistakenly thought that he had triggered Lascelles' removal as a peace offering, though in fact his departure had been determined long before this.¹²⁴ When on 29 September, Iddesleigh sent a telegram agreeing to help the Regency to resist Kaulbars,¹²⁵ it became clear to Churchill that Lascelles' removal was no signal of a 'modification of policy',¹²⁶ and with White's return to Constantinople in the autumn, it meant the continuance of what Churchill labelled as the 'old' and 'impracticable' anti-Russian policy.¹²⁷

In his last few months at Sofia, Lascelles was able to carry through this 'old' policy with a large degree of success, to the detriment of Kaulbars's mission. Lascelles sought to highlight evidence of the Russian envoy's complicity in plots against the Bulgarian Government.¹²⁸ Kaulbars hit back with evidence that Graves of the British Agency had attended a pro-Government meeting, forcing Sir Frank to

¹²² Churchill to Salisbury, 27 Sept 1886 enclosing Rothschild to Churchill 27 Sept 1886, *ibid*, Vol 15, p.1846.

¹²³ Churchill to Salisbury, 30 September 1886, and Salisbury to Churchill 1 October 1886, *ibid*, Vol. 15, p. 1854 & Vol. 16 p.1861 respectively. Iddesleigh took a belligerent tone which Salisbury had hitherto avoided, and expected a long covert battle for influence between Britain and Russia in Bulgaria. (entry for 21 Oct 1886, *The Diary of Gathorne Hardy*, p. 633). Iddesleigh was by 1886 very old, hard of hearing and 'plagued' by heart disease (CL Smith, *The Embassy of Sir William White*, p. 51). Rothschild characterised him as a 'cackling...old hen,' a 'nervous old gentleman and would not probably last very long' (Rothschild to Churchill, 5 Oct 1886, C.C.A.C., RCHL Vol. 16, p.1883). Churchill called for his removal. (Churchill to Salisbury, 14 Sept 1886, *ibid*, Vol. 15, p.1794)

¹²⁴ Randolph had been 'delighted' at Salisbury's decision to replace Lascelles. Churchill, p. 158; Salisbury's written reply in fact evaded the question. (Salisbury to Churchill, 28 Sept 1886, *ibid*, Vol. 15, pp.1847 -1848), but his departure was discussed before Churchill's protest: see White to Lascelles [tel.], 23 Sept 1886; Lascelles to White [tel.], Iddesleigh to Lascelles [tel.], 28 Sept 1886, and Lascelles to Iddesleigh [tel.], 29 Sept 1886, FO 800/7.

¹²⁵ Iddesleigh to Lascelles, 29 Sept 1886, FO 78/3898, draft tel No.125; and same to same 29 Sept 1886 FO 78/3891, Draft No. 85.

¹²⁶ Churchill to Salisbury, 30 Sept 1886, in Churchill, pp. 160-161.

¹²⁷ Churchill to Salisbury, 3 Oct 1886, RCHL., Vol. 16, p. 1869.

¹²⁸ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 5 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No.'s 278 & 279.

defend his Secretary's conduct.¹²⁹ There remained a veneer of cordiality. Lascelles confessed that the envoy had never been 'wanting in incivility in any way' when they personally met. But Lascelles refused to give ground to the tactics employed by Kaulbars and other Russian representatives,¹³⁰ such as the official Russian Agent Nekludoff to influence the elections.¹³¹

To Lascelles' great relief fresh elections turned out Government loyalists in seventy of eighty six districts despite considerable Russian pressure,¹³² and he thought the Bulgarians deserved the 'greatest credit for having resisted so well.'¹³³ Moreover, by mid-November Kaulbars had admitted defeat and left Bulgaria. This was due in no small part to a change in the attitude of Austria. Lascelles' annoyance at her continuing unwillingness to support Britain was evident as late as October when the Austrian Agent (along with all other Powers except England) insisted on sending a Secretary to attend the Grand National Assembly which was deliberating on Alexander's successor. Sir Frank feared this would send a discouraging signal to the increasingly despondent Bulgarian Regency.¹³⁴ When Britain too acceded to the practice to avoid isolation, Austria tried to trick Britain into sending Graves along first¹³⁵, leaving Lascelles understandably 'rather cross' at this bit of legerdemain.¹³⁶ However within a month Britain had extracted limited diplomatic support from

¹²⁹ Lascelles to Iddesleigh 5 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No.280.

¹³⁰ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 29 Sept 1886, FO 78/3894, No.272.

¹³¹ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 10 & 12 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No.'s 295 & 299, and same to same, 11 Oct 1886, FO 78/3898, Tel. No. 205. See also Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 11,13 14, 15 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No.'s 297, 298, 301, 302, 305, 306 & 308-310; and same to same 16 Oct 1886, FO 78/3898, Tel No. 214.

¹³² Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 10 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No. 296.

¹³³ Lascelles to Dalziel, 17 Oct 1886, FO 800/7.

¹³⁴ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 15, 16, 19, & 21 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No. 305, 315-317, 322 & 325; same to same,, 17 Oct 1886, FO 800/7.

¹³⁵ Lascelles to Iddesleigh 24 & 28 Oct 1886, FO 78/3895, No. 331 & 342; Same to same, 16, 22, 24, 28 Oct 1886, FO 78/3898, Tel no. 213 & 222 (plus minute by Sanderson), 331 & 342; Iddesleigh to Lascelles, 21, 23, 25 & 27 Oct 1886, *ibid*, draft tel. no. 148, 151, 153 & 157; Paget to Lascelles [tel.], 26 Oct 1886, FO 800/7.

¹³⁶ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 31 Oct 1886, *ibid*.

Austria¹³⁷ and both Kálnoky and Salisbury made strong speeches against Russian aggression.¹³⁸ Lascelles was delighted at this development and to see that these pronouncements rallied Bulgaria's courage.¹³⁹ When, on top of this, the Bulgarian parliament defiantly elected a successor to Alexander against Russian advice, Kaulbars was led to admit defeat and return to St Petersburg, and on 18 November Russia terminated diplomatic relations with Bulgaria.¹⁴⁰ Four days later Lascelles wrote to White: 'all's well that ends well. The Bulgarians have stood firm. Kaulbars is gone and as yet there is no occupation.' Bulgaria could breathe a sigh of relief,¹⁴¹ and by December Lascelles could finally make preparations to leave.¹⁴²

VI

Lascelles' activities at Sofia did not immediately mark the end of his association with Bulgaria. On reaching Bucharest, Lascelles naturally remained preoccupied with the continuing international uncertainty following Alexander's departure from Sofia. With the Bulgarians having refused Russia's preferred candidate, the question of Alexander's succession remained unsolved.¹⁴³ Although by early 1887 heightened Franco-German tensions had decreased the probability that Russia might 'lock up' her forces in a military occupation of Bulgaria,¹⁴⁴ the Powers' continued inability to

¹³⁷ Entry for 2 Nov 1886 *The Diary of Gathorne Hardy* p. 634; Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, Vol i, p. 220.

¹³⁸ Entry for 16 Nov 1886, *The Diary of Gathorne Hardy*, p. 636; Lowe, *Reluctant Imperialists*, p. 107, M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, p.234.

¹³⁹ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 17 Nov 1886, FO 800/7.

¹⁴⁰ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 28 Nov 1886, FO 78/3896, No. 397. See Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 6-18 Nov 1886, FO 78/3896, no. 363, 365, 366, 369, 372, 373, 375-380, 382-386.

¹⁴¹ Lascelles to White, 22 Nov 1886, FO 800/7.

¹⁴² Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 1 December 1886, *ibid*.

¹⁴³ A Bulgarian deputation was sent around the various Great Power capitals in an attempt to canvass opinion. See Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 10, 11 & 17 Nov 1886, FO 78/3896, No.'s 368, 370 & 381.

¹⁴⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 9 March 1887, FO 800/16. See also Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 April 1887, *ibid*; Paget to Lascelles 8 April 1887, FO 800/15.

advise the Regency on a successor to Alexander led Sir Frank and others to conclude that more should be done to reassure Bulgaria.¹⁴⁵ Salisbury was also keen that Bulgaria should be strengthened by all available diplomatic and financial means.¹⁴⁶ Having replaced Iddesleigh at the Foreign Office in January 1887, and with Randolph Churchill no longer in the Cabinet, he was able, in the words of Philip Currie, to pursue a foreign policy of ‘strengthening in the Bulgarians the power and habit of resistance to Russian demands’ without it being ‘diluted’ or ‘filtered’ through others.¹⁴⁷ He continued (increasingly successfully) to seek Austrian support to achieve this; meanwhile in the Balkans, Lascelles’ attentions were again turned to playing his part.

One way of strengthening Bulgaria seemed to lie in securing sympathy from her neighbours, among them Serbia and Romania especially. In July 1886 Alexander had tried to do just this – he had entertained the idea of a ‘Balkan league’, which was brushed off by the Romanians, or, failing this, Austrian protection.¹⁴⁸ With Alexander gone, Lascelles, newly appointed as Britain’s new representative at Bucharest, tried to revive the Prince’s idea. He was encouraged, as he told White, to find that the Romanian Government’s view on Bulgaria were ‘what you and I would consider sound’.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore in March 1887 the Romanian Prime Minister acted firmly in expelling a band of disaffected Bulgarian generals who had sought refuge in Romania after a failed military uprising at Silistria, and Lascelles was satisfied at this evidence

¹⁴⁵ Lascelles to White, 9 April 1887, FO 800/16.

¹⁴⁶ Salisbury to O’Conor, 9 Feb 1887, O’Conor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 5/5/2. Salisbury told O’Conor that ‘I think it might be well to have a site offered you. The Treasury will not build on it at present: but sites will not grow less valuable.’ *ibid.* See also O’Conor to Salisbury, 8 Jan 1887, FO 78/4030, No.8.

¹⁴⁷ Currie to O’Conor, 6 Jan 1887, O’Conor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 5/2/3.

¹⁴⁸ C. Jelavich, p. 246.

¹⁴⁹ Paget to Lascelles, 8 April 1887, FO 800/15.

that Romania was 'very well disposed' towards Bulgaria.¹⁵⁰ It was even hoped that this sympathy could be transformed into more formal support. While still at Sofia in December, Lascelles discussed with his successor and old friend, O'Connor, the feasibility of bolstering Bulgaria by inducing Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria to put aside their 'future aspirations for the moment' and unite 'against present dangers',¹⁵¹ a scheme identical to that first mooted by Battenberg.¹⁵² O'Connor thought the *entente* would 'give a considerable amount of conscious force to Bulgaria' in her struggle for independence. Serbia's representative at Belgrade, Danitsch, seemed agreeable to it,¹⁵³ and at an impromptu royal audience at Belgrade *en route* to London Lascelles found the idea of a Balkan 'confederation' received with equal enthusiasm by King Milan, though he wanted Greece included in the scheme.¹⁵⁴ Although O'Connor dismissed Milan's 'hobby' as 'impracticable for many reasons', his private soundings on the 'lesser' *entente*¹⁵⁵ were encouraged by Salisbury who told him 'unofficially' to use 'every means' in his power to encourage such an understanding, but to 'keep in the background.'¹⁵⁶ O'Connor put it to Lascelles that it fell to him to put the Romanians 'up to the scratch.'¹⁵⁷ However, when Lascelles broached the scheme at Bucharest in February 1887, he found both King Charles and Romania's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pherekyde, to be 'very much down' on the idea.¹⁵⁸ Pherekyde was ostensibly anxious that the scheme would mean being dragged on to the side of Austria against Russia and, alluding to Romania's disadvantageous geographical

¹⁵⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 9 March 1887, FO 800/16. White to Lascelles, 5 April 1887, FO 800/15. See also Paget to Lascelles, 8 April 1887, *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ O'Connor spoke to Lascelles privately of 'our entente.' O'Connor to Lascelles, 20 Feb 1887, *ibid.*

¹⁵² Lascelles to Rosebery 15, 22 and 25 July 1886, FO 78/3893, No. 177, 178 and 183.

¹⁵³ O'Connor to Salisbury, 24 Jan 1887, FO 78/4030, No. 25.

¹⁵⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Feb 1887, FO 104/62, No.15

¹⁵⁵ O'Connor to Lascelles, 20 Feb 1887 FO 800/15.

¹⁵⁶ Salisbury to O'Connor, 9 Feb 1887, OCON 5/5/2.

¹⁵⁷ O'Connor to Lascelles, 20 Feb 1887, FO 800/15.

¹⁵⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Feb 1887, FO 800/16.

position between Austria and Russia, held that Romania desired to maintain her neutrality,¹⁵⁹ and could not enter a scheme would place Rumania 'in a position of the greatest danger without obtaining any advantage.' Lascelles, unaware of the secret alliance Austria and Romania had concluded in 1882, surmised that the Romanians were afraid of effectively 'casting in their lot' with Austria and being 'swallowed up by Russia' if Austria came off worse in a contest with Russia.¹⁶⁰ Although O'Connor told Lascelles not to be 'discouraged' by Romania's objections,¹⁶¹ there is no evidence that Sir Frank took up the idea again. It is possible that more cautious counsels prevailed upon him. Neither Wyndham, the Minister at Belgrade, nor White at Constantinople, were as keen on the idea, with Wyndham especially cautioning that Milan's idea of including Greece would 'cause trouble' when matters looked like becoming 'more peaceful'.¹⁶² Furthermore, other developments, not least the election of a successor to Alexander by the Bulgarian parliament in July 1887, drew the abdication crisis to a makeshift conclusion, and Lascelles' association with Bulgaria gradually lessened hereafter.

Conclusion

Sir Frank Lascelles' approach to diplomacy in Bulgaria can be characterised as a pursuit of a traditional British policy of opposition to Russia in the Balkans. At bottom this attitude was determined by his judgement of how best to defend Britain's wider imperial interests, ultimately meaning protecting Britain's maritime strength

¹⁵⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Feb 1887, FO 104/62, No.15.

¹⁶⁰ Quotes from Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Feb 1887, FO 800/16; Lascelles to White, 15 Feb 1887, *ibid*.

¹⁶¹ O'Connor to Lascelles, 18 March 1887, FO 800/15.

¹⁶² Wyndham to Lascelles, 20 April 1887, *ibid*.

and the route to India, which he, like Salisbury, thought to require keeping Russian influence out of Constantinople and away from the Mediterranean. This much is clear from a statement Lascelles later made (under somewhat different circumstances) in which he described himself as personally being an 'old Englander' ('persönlich ein Altengländer') in terms of maintaining a traditional policy in the Eastern Question.¹⁶³ Sir Frank's concentration on maintaining Battenberg in power at Sofia seemed to fully serve these aims: in 1883, Alexander diminished Russian interference in Bulgaria and in 1885 he united Bulgaria in the face of Russian hostility, and set back Serbia's ambitions for territorial 'compensation.'

Lascelles' identification of Battenberg as the hub around which Bulgarian events turned, meant that the personal relationship between diplomat and ruler assumed a particular importance during his tenure, and while Queen Victoria's personal support of Alexander certainly contributed to Lascelles' success in winning the ear of the Prince. His own affable nature and aristocratic upbringing also doubtless played a part in what was a triumph of personal diplomacy.

Lascelles' pursuit of this policy ran against the grain of his own superiors for five full years. In upholding an independent line under these somewhat adverse circumstances he showed a shrewdness of judgement and a firmness which was to ultimately pay dividends under Salisbury. It was somewhat ironic that, in a sense, Salisbury achieved what Gladstone had failed to by supporting a united, anti-Russian Bulgaria, thus squaring the circle and satisfying both British interests and Liberal sensibilities.

Like Salisbury though, Lascelles chose to support union not for idealistic reasons but for pragmatic ones, primarily, to block Russia in the Balkans. Also like

¹⁶³ See Kaiser Wilhelm II to Baron von Marschall, 27 Aug 1896, in *Die Grösse Politik der europäischen Kabinette*, Band 12, part 1 (Berlin, 1924), p. 53, no. 2918.

Salisbury, he recognised this could not be done alone, and wished to break Britain's isolation in the Eastern Question and co-operate with other Powers, (above all Austria and Germany) to restore British influence in the region and to back up what was purely a 'moral' force. Thus when Salisbury came to office, determined to break the unfavourable Great Power alignments which Gladstone had assisted in building up, he found a willing Agent (as indeed, he had in Egypt).

Clear to both men's understanding of the Eastern Question was the extent to which the threads of power lay in Bismarck's hands.¹⁶⁴ That Lascelles recognised this can be gleaned from an exchange of private letters between Wilfrid Blunt and himself in January 1886. Writing to congratulate Lascelles on his K.C.M.G., Blunt closed by saying the only motto he knew in European politics was 'Stick to Bismarck!' and while Lascelles replied by professing to be somewhat 'astonished' and asked whether Blunt's 'sentiments with regard to the Germans [had] undergone a change?' since 1870-1,¹⁶⁵ his sardonic language masked an unspoken recognition that Britain's interests were, indeed, best served by 'sticking to' the Iron Chancellor. Lascelles welcomed the beginning of a new phase of British co-operation with the Triple Alliance which the Bulgarian crisis inaugurated, and the concomitant demise of the *Dreikaiserbund*, as the best means to ensure peace (a professional bias for any diplomat) in the Balkans while diminishing Russian influence, upholding the *status quo* (with the modification of an enlarged Bulgaria), and securing Britain's interests.

Perhaps inevitably, given the fraught atmosphere of 1885-6, Lascelles acquired a reputation as 'an enemy of Russia.' In some ways it was testament to his success – indeed, General Kaulbars credited his lack of success to Lascelles

¹⁶⁴ Otte, ' "Floating Downstream"?', p.108; John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation? Britain, the Balance of Power, and the origins of World War One* (London, 1999), p. 199; Steele, p. 180.

¹⁶⁵ Blunt to Lascelles, 5 Feb 1886, FO 800/7; Lascelles to Blunt, 23 Feb 1886, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

personally, which led the Russian Government to make 'preparations' for counteracting Lascelles when he was later appointed to Tehran.¹⁶⁶

It is certainly true that by 1886, Lascelles had lost some of his objectivity; his admiration for the Prince arguably led him to ultimately overestimate Battenberg's strength against Russia, and led him into one of the most partisan episodes of his career. Nicholas O'Connor, who arrived to relieve him in December, found him 'in a considerable state of excitement' and thought it would be best to have 'an unbiased Agent who has not been here so long.'¹⁶⁷ Others like Chirol regretted Lascelles' replacement by a 'rigidly impartial' successor for just that reason.¹⁶⁸ With Salisbury once more at the helm however, his expertise was not sidelined, but utilised by appointing him as a successor to William White at Bucharest – a sure sign of the continued confidence vested in him by the Foreign Office, and once again a reflection of Lascelles' status as an adherent of Salisbury's foreign policy.

¹⁶⁶ Lascelles to Rosebery, 30 Sept 1892, FO 248/541, No. 149 Confidential. And on being appointed Ambassador to Russia, Chirol reminded his friend that some of his old Panslavic friends had painted him "black upon black." to the Tsar. Chirol to Lascelles, 24 Aug 1894, FO 800/15.

¹⁶⁷ O'Connor to Minna Hope Scott, 10 December 1886, O'Connor papers, C.C.A.C., misfiled in OCON 3/1/4.

¹⁶⁸ Chirol to Lascelles, 27 Dec 1886, FO 800/16.

Making bricks without straw? Lascelles in Rumania, 1887-1891.

Lascelles' experience in Bulgaria marked him out as an ideal successor to the anti-Russian Minister at Bucharest, William White. Romania's problems in many ways mirrored those of her newer Balkan sister, with whom she shared an experience of recent Ottoman domination, of liberation with Russian assistance, and, in turn, a subsequent fear of domination by the latter Power.¹ Furthermore, the disorder in the Balkans which continued throughout Lascelles' tenure at Bucharest (1887-1891), gave Romanian affairs an enhanced importance for British foreign policy; although an outright Russian occupation of Bulgaria seemed less likely after Kaulbars' departure, the ongoing dynastic crisis within the country made Britain anxious to try and counteract instability in the region. Romania's geographical position between the Habsburg and Romanov Empires naturally gave rise to questions about her allegiance, and of whether King Charles would allow Russia to repeat her action in 1877-78 of allowing her troops to march through his territory, and into Bulgaria in a future war with Austria.² This concern – that a seemingly weak King might succumb to strong Russian influence – was a *leitmotif* of Lascelles' four years at Bucharest, and was exacerbated by the imperfect knowledge among Britain's foreign policy elite of

¹ Romania first emerged from Ottoman dominance after the Crimean war (1856). She had achieved full independence with Russian assistance in the Turco-Russian war of 1877-1878, but Russia had taken southern Bessarabia from Romania at the end of that conflict. Romania was anxious too not to be labelled as another 'Slav' state, and was strongly influenced in culture, literature, language and politics by the Western liberal model.

² King Charles believed, however, that Galicia and not Bulgaria would be the destination of any Russian troops in such a war. (See Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Feb 1887, FO 104/62, No. 16 confidential). In August 1887 Pherekyde asserted that Romania would resist Russian troops by land but was powerless to prevent them being sailed up the Danube to Bulgaria. (Lascelles to Salisbury 25 & 27 Aug 1887, FO 104/63, No.'s 89 & 90).

Romania's effective accession to the Triple Alliance in 1883 through an agreement with Austria.³ As Agent in Romania Lascelles was once again cast in an anti-Russian role as, with minimal resources, Britain looked to combat the pernicious influence of Russia's Agent, Khitrovo, and support the King, a task which Salisbury likened to 'making bricks without straw.' Yet at Bucharest, unlike at Sofia, Sir Frank used his judgement to arrive at different conclusions to those prescribed for him by White at Constantinople or Salisbury about the role he should play, which, while remaining focused on security of British interests and maintaining a peaceful *status quo*, did not always accept that these would be best advanced by an active policy of counter-intrigue against Russia. His time in the post thus marked a clear break from rather than a continuation with his methods in Bulgaria; as will be seen, this was ultimately more consistent with his consensual approach to diplomacy, by which he tried to maintain British interests without antagonising other Powers unduly, and also reflected wider diplomatic developments. However it was an approach which was also imperfectly understood, and which was put down to Lascelles' characteristic slothfulness and an attitude of indifference.

I

While, as Lascelles recognised, Bucharest was an equally good a vantage point for studying the Eastern Question as Sofia or Belgrade,⁴ Romania provided Sir Frank with a stark contrast to the excitement of Sofia. Like that city, it only kept a minimal

³ See Michael Hurst (ed), *Key Treaties for the Great Powers*, Vol 2: 1871-1914, (London, 1972), No. 128, pp. 630-33. By the Treaty Austria-Hungary were bound to protect Romania in case of attack. Ibid, p. 630-31 Romania were 'frightened into appealing for Austro-Hungarian protection' in the summer of 1883 following fears that Russia would invade Bulgaria after Alexander's defiance of the Generals. Germany also acceded to it. Bridge & Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System*, p. 224. The treaty was directed 'above all against Russia.' Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy, 1814-1914* (New York, 1992) p.230.

⁴ Lascelles to Iddesleigh, 13 Dec 1886, FO 78/3897, No.429.

diplomatic representation; the British Minister was again served by a single Secretary, and one other British consul, Percy Sanderson at Galatz.⁵ Unlike Bulgaria however, this mirrored Rumania's relatively low importance to Britain. The two countries shared no borders; trade between them was negligible, and the British 'colony' at Bucharest consisted of no more than sixty souls.⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, and perhaps partially symptomatic of his long association with Bulgaria, Sir Frank was reluctant to go to Bucharest and O'Connor, arriving to replace him, found him in 'no hurry to leave' Sofia.⁷ In 1887 Romania's politics were relatively stable compared to Bulgaria's, and thus correspondingly less interesting, which perhaps explains Sir Frank's first impressions of Romania. He soon confessed to finding it 'dull and uninteresting,' and told Wilfrid Blunt: 'I have very little to do which suits my laziness.'⁸ Within weeks of arriving, he took leave to go carpet shopping at Constantinople, which had the added advantage of enabling him to seek the seasoned White's advice on the country's political parties.⁹

Lascelles' first impressions neatly reflected an axiom of King Charles' that the affairs of his kingdom only attracted the attention of the Powers when foreign complications threatened.¹⁰ Romania's geographical position between 'the hammer and the anvil' of Russia and Austria, and thus the difficulty for her of 'steer[ing] a middle course' in her foreign policy naturally meant she attracted the attention of

⁵ The secretary, a man named Browne, described by White (Lascelles' predecessor) as 'an excellent fellow...devoted & useful.' White to Lascelles, 15 Feb 1887, FO 800/16.

⁶ A. Hardinge to White, 17 March 1890, FO 364/1.

⁷ Lascelles to White, 10 Dec 1886, FO 800/7; O'Connor to Currie, 15 Dec 1886, O'Connor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 5/2/4.

⁸ Lascelles to Blunt, 1 July 1887, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33. Lascelles' experience was matched by the German Agent. L. Cecil, *The German Diplomatic Service, 1871-1914* (Princeton, 1976), p.161.

⁹ Lascelles to White, 9 April 1887, FO 800/16; Lascelles to Barrington, 27 April 1887, FO 104/62. and minutes by Barrington & Salisbury.

¹⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 16 April 1889, FO 104/76, No. 56 secret.

British diplomats in the period of uncertainty after the Bulgarian crisis.¹¹ Later in Lascelles' tenure, in a turbulent domestic political atmosphere, he would draw the then-potent comparison between Romania's precarious geographical position and that 'shortly before the partition,' of Poland between Prussia, Austria and Russia, and point out the danger to Romania's survival should foreign complications occur.¹²

However, Paget for one reassured Lascelles early on that he disbelieved there was any 'real danger' to Romania whatever happened, and that Russia would not try 'to invade them or to crop their territory', a view which seemed to inform Sir Frank in his approach at Bucharest.¹³ Also, unlike Bulgaria, it was generally felt that Romania was 'too old and well established to be liable to "coup d'états" and "coup de mains" from within.'¹⁴

The key concern for Britain therefore was, as Paget pointed out, to ensure that whichever party attained power in Romania did not 'sell the country to Russia'.¹⁵ In 1887 the reigning party seemed disinclined to do this. Under the National Liberal Government, headed by Ion C. Brătianu, who governed for almost twelve unbroken years (1876-1888), Romania had, in 1883, established an alliance with Austria.¹⁶ Moreover, during Lascelles' tenure at Bucharest, King Charles (1881- 1918). 'skilfully initiated all the politicians in the country, one after another... the Liberals, the Conservatives and the Juminists' into Rumania's alliance treaty with the Central

¹¹ Quotes from Kennedy to Salisbury, 24 June 1888, FO 104/71, No. 89 confidential; Paget to Lascelles, 8 April 1887, FO 800/15.

¹² Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 May 1891, *ibid.* See also Lascelles to Ponsonby, 20 July 1891, *ibid.*

¹³ Paget to Lascelles, 8 April 1887, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Kennedy to Salisbury, 15 Sept, FO 104/71, No. 99 confidential.

¹⁵ Paget to Lascelles, 6 April 1888, FO 800/15.

¹⁶ Ion C. Brătianu (1821-1891) was a prominent Liberal leader from the overthrow of Alexander Cuza (1859-1866), which he had helped engineer. He governed from 1876 until 1888 with one brief interruption, had allied his country with Russia in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, but also oversaw the creation of the Austro-Bulgarian alliance.

Powers.’¹⁷ Yet in common with other British diplomats, Lascelles was unaware of the specific nature of this agreement - indeed successive Romanian Governments consistently denied its existence.¹⁸ To him, initially, Romania seemed ‘afraid of casting their lot in’ with Austria for fear she might be beaten in a war with Russia. He was also sceptical of the King and Pherekyde’s assertion that Romania could choose to remain neutral in the face of Russian pressure.¹⁹ This impression perhaps reflected something of Romania’s lingering nervousness about Russia, and fear also of upsetting the pro-Russian party in Romania, which stopped King Charles from publishing the agreement with Austria.²⁰

Lascelles was, however, ably assisted by the advice of William White, who assumed the role of a mentor over Romanian affairs and gave Sir Frank hints which enabled him to divine the anti-Russian direction in Romania’s foreign policy. White told Lascelles that he could rely Brătianu and the German Minister at Bucharest, Busch, for an accurate view of Romanian affairs.²¹ He also believed that Brătianu was ‘straightforward & patriotic’, and his colleague Dimitri Stourdza (who, incidentally, was co-signatory to the Austro-Romanian Treaty), and the King were both ‘strongly German’.²² Lascelles seemed to take this on board – he was pleased, for example, to find that Stourdza spoke to him ‘very openly and unreservedly’.²³

Yet Lascelles’ arrival at Bucharest also coincided with the worrying trend for Britain of renewed activity by Russia in the Balkans, and a fear that unstable elements

¹⁷ Bülow, *Memoirs*, iv, p. 620 & p. 624

¹⁸ See Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 Dec 1887, FO 104/63, No.119; Lascelles to Salisbury, 13 Feb 1888, FO 104/70, No.16.

¹⁹ Lascelles to White, 15 Feb 1887, FO 800/16; Lascelles to Salisbury, 21 Feb 1887, FO 104/62, No. 20.

²⁰ Fürst Bernhard von Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince Von Bülow*, Vol. iv: 1849-1897, Translated by Fritz August Voigt & Geoffrey Dunlop, (London, 1932), p. 621 & 624.

²¹ White to Lascelles, 26 Feb 1887, FO 800/15.

²² White to Lascelles, 15 Feb 1887, *ibid.*

²³ Lascelles to White, 15 Feb 1887, FO 800/16.

in Romania could be worked up to upset the Government. Although Romania contained only a small pro- or 'philo' Russian faction, mainly concentrated at Jassy in Moldavia,²⁴ the preconditions of political, social and dynastic stability deemed necessary to prevent the success of Russian intrigues similar to those in Bulgaria all, at some point between 1887 and 1891, appeared to falter, and this played into the hands of Russia's Agent at Bucharest, Khitrovo, the same man who had intrigued with Zankov against Prince Alexander in 1882, and whose 'great activity' in attempting to destabilise affairs in both Bulgaria and Romania transformed Bucharest from 1887 into a new 'focus of intrigue.'²⁵ In Romania he employed 'terrorist methods',²⁶ evidence of which first emerged in an anti-Regency uprising in Silistria which it was rumoured had been 'fomented and encouraged, if not actually concocted, at the Russian Legation' at Bucharest. He had unsuccessfully tried to shield Russians implicated in these plots, which drew him into a row with the Rumanian Government.²⁷

This was merely the beginning of Khitrovo's activities. When, in March 1888, Ion Brătianu resigned the Premiership, citing Russian intrigues as responsible for his departure,²⁸ concern grew about the ability of Romania's political parties to withstand Russian pressure. Uncertainty hung over the future direction of Romanian foreign policy. In opposition the Romanian Conservatives had accused Brătianu of

²⁴ Hardinge to White 13 May 1890, FO 364/1

²⁵ Quotes from: Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 Aug 1887 FO 104/63, No. 84 confidential; Wyndham to Lascelles 11 March 1887, FO 800/15. See also Lascelles to Salisbury, 23 March 1887, FO 800/16.

²⁶ Bülow, *Memoirs*, Vol. iv, p. 625.

²⁷ Quote from: Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 March 1887, FO 104/62, No. 26 confidential. For the Silistria episode generally, see also Lascelles to Salisbury 2 & 9 March, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 30 April 1887 in FO 104/62, No.'s 21 & 22 confidential, 30, 42, 43, 45-48 & 53. Wyndham to Lascelles, 11 March 1887, FO 800/15; Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 & 9 April 1887, FO 800/16.

²⁸ See Lascelles to Salisbury, 13 Feb, 4 March & 2 April 1888, FO 104/70, No's 17, 24 & 45 confidential.

moving the country too close to Austria and Germany.²⁹ Ominously there had in the past been an anti-dynastic side to the Opposition's tactics, as the Conservatives indulged on attacks on King Charles to unsettle their political rivals.³⁰ Lascelles privately observed to Salisbury that, 'whether Russian money was used or not' to unseat Brătianu, the Conservatives had been 'playing Russia's game by creating instability'.³¹

On the whole, however, the British Minister's response was not alarmist. Although Khitrovo reminded Sir Frank 'forcibly' of Kaulbars' relationship with the Bulgarian Government in 1886,³² he was cautious about blaming the Russian Agent for Brătianu's fall. Indeed he went so far as to label this explanation as 'utterly incredible', and enumerated other political factors, including a resurgence in the fortunes of the opposition, rows between the King and his Prime Minister over more than one issue, and improved relations between the King and the opposition as being more important causes than Russian intrigues.³³ Nor was Lascelles worried about the anti-dynastic element to the change of Ministry. He observed that Charles seemed 'perfectly indifferent to the abuse' which was showered on him, which he put down to party political opportunism.³⁴

Lascelles generally shared in the King's optimism. He confidently told Salisbury that 'all the sensible Roumanians' understood 'the necessity of supporting

²⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 April 1888, FO 104/70, No.41.

³⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 April 1887 FO 104/62, No. 50; Lascelles to Salisbury 28 Nov 1887, FO 104/63, No. 111.

³¹ Quote from Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 April 1888, FO 800/16.

³² Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Jan 1888, FO 104/70, No. 7.

³³ See Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 March 1888, FO 104/70, No's 25 & 26; Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 April 1888, FO 800/16. For example, there were rows over the release of the anti-dynastic George Panu from prison and his election to the Chamber (Lascelles to Salisbury, 13 Feb 1888, FO 104/70, No. 17) and over the misconduct of the Minister of War, General Angelesco (Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 & 28 Feb 1888, FO 104/70, No.'s 22 & 23).

³⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury 13 Feb 1888, FO 104/70, No. 17; same to same, 2 April 1888, *ibid*, No. 45 confidential. A picture corroborated by Bülow, *Memoirs*, iv, p. 619.

the present dynasty'³⁵ Moreover, he was supported in this opinion by White, who confidently told him that Charles would not sell his country to Russia, whatever the political pressure.³⁶ Lascelles was right to be sanguine about the King's chances of success. Appearances were, indeed, deceptive. Charles was a constitutional monarch, sympathetic to the liberal but short-reigning Kaiser Frederick, and his determination to govern in 'strictly parliamentary fashion', was often perceived, wrongly, as a sign of weakness. However, he was also in control of domestic and foreign policy to an extent which downgraded the importance of the party political battles which raged around him³⁷ – a King who, as Salisbury later expressed it, 'not only reigns, but governs'.³⁸

The minority Juminist (or 'Young Conservative') Government which came to power after Brătianu generally vindicated the calm assessments of the political situation made by Lascelles. The new foreign secretary, Peter Carp, continued Brătianu's foreign policy under the slogan of 'enlightened patriotism'.³⁹ Although personally, Lascelles judged Carp to be 'very vain' and 'more theoretical than practical' he was satisfied he was 'completely honest and very able' and importantly also a 'strong advocate of a German policy and very much opposed to the Russians', and tellingly, the Austrian Foreign Minister had great faith in him.⁴⁰ Meanwhile Carp refused to bow to Khitrovo's protests at attacks on him in the Romanian Press,

³⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 April 1888, FO 800/16.

³⁶ White to Lascelles, 15 May 1888, FO 800/15.

³⁷ Bülow, *Memoirs*, iv, p. 619-620, quote from p. 620.

³⁸ Salisbury to Lascelles, 16 April 1889, FO 800/16. Bülow also dubbed him a 'wise king' Bülow, *Memoirs*, iv, p.620.

³⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 13 Nov 1888, FO 104/71, No. 123.

⁴⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 April 1888, FO 800/16. Later on, Lascelles judged Carp to have 'perhaps more ability than any one else'. Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 May 1891, FO 800/15. See also Lascelles to Salisbury, 17 April 1888, FO 104/70, No.54 Bülow, the new German Minister, also (tellingly) became 'very thick' with Carp. Hardinge to White 17 March 1890, FO 364/1.

expelled a number of Russian conspirators from the country, and in a barely masked reference to Russia, warned foreign countries from violating Romania's 'neutrality'.⁴¹

Yet further evidence of Russian intrigues came in spring 1888, when a revolt of a 'very serious character' broke out among the peasantry, stimulated by a poor harvest and anger at the Government's failure to deliver on a promise to grant small lots of land.⁴² Further disturbances occurred in the autumn, and Lascelles warned that popular grievances had been stirred up by 'very busy' Russian Emissaries, who led the illiterate peasants to believe that the son of the old Prince of Romania, Cuza, had promised to deliver them. The riots thus took on an anti-dynastic character.⁴³ This point was further proved by an isolated assassination attempt on the King in May by a drunken Romanian who claimed he wanted to avenge the wrongs done to the Romanian peasantry.⁴⁴ Although there was ample force to suppress the riots, (and legislative measures were subsequently taken to secure the sale of state lands to the peasantry⁴⁵), this was a significant event – as Lascelles informed the Foreign Office, in a 'purely agricultural' country, the peasantry were an important part of the political nation.⁴⁶ Once again the King downplayed the peasant riots as purely a 'political' rather than 'popular' movement.⁴⁷ Worryingly for many, both he and Carp refused steadfastly to see Russia's hand in the agrarian riots. For Carp, unlike Brătianu, was

⁴¹ See respectively Lascelles to Salisbury, 25 April 1888, FO 104/70, No. 59; Lascelles to Salisbury 20 March 1889, FO 800/16 (and Lascelles to White, 20 March 1889, *ibid*); Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 Dec 1888, FO 104/71, No. 37.

⁴² Lascelles to Salisbury 17 April 1888, FO 104/70, No. 53.

⁴³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 Oct 1888, FO 800/16; see also e.g. Lascelles to Salisbury 14 May 1888, FO 104/71, No. 70 very confidential.

⁴⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 May 1888, FO 104/71, No. 68

⁴⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 Nov, 13 Nov and 23 Nov 1888, FO 104/71, No's 118, 123 & 127; same to same 5 March 1889, FO 104/76, No. 20.

⁴⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 Oct 1888, FO 800/16.

⁴⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 26 May 1888, FO 104/71, 82 confidential.

careful not to accuse Russia of anything not ‘susceptible of absolute proof’.⁴⁸ This attitude was enough to drive Beldiman, Romanian Agent at Sofia and a former close colleague of Lascelles, to resign, accusing the Government of ‘wilfully shut[ting] their eyes to the action of Russian Agents’ and the ‘open treason’ of the anti-dynastic party.⁴⁹ Again, though, Lascelles was generally reassured by White, who thought the King strong enough and Russian tactics to be well enough known, for Russia to ‘meet with a deception’ there, and also downplayed chances of their success in Serbia.⁵⁰

IV

The disagreeable trends in Romanian politics – Russia’s covert activity, popular unrest and the lack of vigorous action on the part of the king to put a stop to agitation or intrigues or to defend himself received little comment on the part of the British Foreign Office up to the spring of 1889. The unexpected abdication of Serbia’s King Milan⁵¹ on 6 March 1889 (amidst rumoured Russian intrigues), seemed to presage a disturbing pattern in Balkan politics, especially when added to Battenberg’s fate in Bulgaria, and lent importance to a rumour which reached London from the State Secretary of the German Foreign Office, Herbert Bismarck, that Charles, whom Germany felt to be ‘rather feeble’, might also be dethroned.⁵² This anxiety was also fed by the fact that, since Brătianu’s fall, Romania’s Government and Parliament had assumed a more solidly Conservative shape, with the latter containing an increased

⁴⁸ Quote from Lascelles to Salisbury 15 May 1888, FO 104/71, No. 74 confidential. See also Lascelles to Salisbury, 30 April, FO 104/70, No. 60; same to same, 15 May & 26 May 1888, FO 104/71, No’s 75 secret & 83 secret.

⁴⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 29 Oct 1888, FO 104/71, No. 113 Confidential.

⁵⁰ White to Lascelles, 15 May 1888, 27 Nov 1888, FO 800/15.

⁵¹ Milan Obrenović (1854-1901), Prince Milan IV of Serbia 1868-1882; King Milan I 1882-1889.

⁵² Currie to Lascelles [tel.], 12 March 1889, FO 800/16; From Sofia, O’Conor also gave Lascelles intelligence of a separate plot with the same aim. O’Conor to Lascelles, 11 April 1889, FO 800/15

number of pro-Russian and anti-dynastic members.⁵³ In April 1889 the Juminist Government headed by Rosetti which had, much to Lascelles' regret, 'not been a great answer' to the political problems in the country,⁵⁴ was replaced by a wholly Conservative ministry under the leadership of Lascăr Catargiu, (1823-1899), who was widely perceived to be a reactionary,⁵⁵ and whose accession was seen in Romania as 'a triumph for Russia and a corresponding check to Austria-Hungary' and re-awakened the old concern about continuity in Romania's foreign policy,⁵⁶ and of the safety of the pro-German Monarchy.

Suddenly, the British Foreign Office feared that Lascelles might have been asleep on the job. On 12 March, Philip Currie advised him that 'Roumanian affairs are rather more serious than they appear on the spot,' and asked him 'to find some excuse for seeing the King soon' to warn him of the anxiety abroad.⁵⁷ On 10 April 1889 Currie wired Lascelles again, instructing him to warn the King of the dangers of confiding in the 'Russian' party.⁵⁸ In a letter three days later he explained that Herbert Bismarck had 'got up a regular scare about Roumania,' and was 'pressing Lord Salisbury very urgently as to taking precautions against Russian influence.' Salisbury wanted Lascelles to show 'a little more vigour on the subject,' and Currie agreed that 'A little fussiness on this occasion would do no harm,' and while admitting that the Germans probably 'exaggerated the state of affairs' advised him that 'with all the

⁵³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 29 Oct, 5 Nov & 23 Nov 1888, FO 104/71, No's, 112, 113 confidential, 118, 126 & 127.

⁵⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury 20 March 1889, FO 800/16. Also see Lascelles to White, 20 March 1889, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 April 1889, FO 104/76, No. 43.

⁵⁶ Quote from Lascelles to Salisbury 13 April 1889, FO 104/76, No. 48 See also same to same, same date, *ibid.*, No. 47.

⁵⁷ Currie to Lascelles [tel.], 12 March 1889, FO 800/16; From Sofia, O'Connor also gave Lascelles intelligence of a separate plot with the same aim. O'Connor to Lascelles, 11 April 1889, FO 800/15

⁵⁸ The original has not been traced but the date and contents of the telegram are described in Lascelles to Currie, 14 April 1889, FO 800/16.

powder lying about, it is well to pay attention to the smallest spark. So wake up, my boy, & work the telegraph wires a bit.’⁵⁹

Anxious that Russian influence might be establishing itself ‘firmly’ in Romania against the background of increasing activity in Serbia and the completion of Russian warships at Sebastopol, Salisbury sent his own letter to Lascelles on 16 April. While admitting to be ‘well aware’ that the British Minister had ‘few opportunities of establishing the necessary influence’ and conscious Lascelles might think the Foreign Office to be ‘asking you to make bricks without straw’ he said that:

we are very anxious you should do all you can to establish some influence over King Charles. He not only reigns – but governs: & establishing influence over his Ministers is of very little use – they disappear too suddenly. The King himself is apparently a vain & wayward donkey – but he is quite convinced of his talent for government.⁶⁰

Lascelles duly executed his instructions; but he was also at pains to stress a point of view of the political situation generally, and of the character of the King in particular, at odds with that entertained in Berlin and London. He thought Bismarck had been ‘very hard’ on the King in thinking he lacked ‘ability’ and would share Milan’s fate, and argued that in twenty three years he had clung on to his throne, ‘under circumstances which were often of extreme difficulty’.⁶¹ Although he conceded that the anti-dynastic party in Romania had increased since Milan’s dethronement, he argued that the impression of the King’s unpopularity had been exacerbated by the King’s toleration of ‘extreme license’ in the Press and the population of ‘ignorant peasants,’ who naturally blamed King Charles for their ills.

⁵⁹ Currie to Lascelles, 13 April 1889, FO 800/15.

⁶⁰ Salisbury to Lascelles, 16 April 1889, FO 800/16.

⁶¹ Lascelles to Salisbury 20 March 1889, *ibid.* See also Lascelles to Salisbury, (18 March 1889, FO 104/76, No. 22 confidential.

Furthermore, King Charles' son and heir, Prince Ferdinand of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who had hitherto resided abroad, was shortly to arrive to take up residence in the country, which Sir Frank argued would buttress the succession.⁶² Lascelles' view was again largely supported (and to an extent influenced by) William White, who perhaps now more than before agreed with him that Salisbury's perception of the King as 'feeble' and a 'fool' (which had probably been coloured by Bismarck) was wrong,⁶³ that he would 'overcome his present difficulties' and that the Germans did not understand Charles as he was 'too constitutional for them'.⁶⁴ The King himself characteristically downplayed fears for his position at an audience Lascelles sought with him on 25 March.⁶⁵

Lascelles was also more sanguine about the political situation. Having been assured by the King, he was confident Catargiu's accession did not automatically signal a Russian triumph – indeed, Khitrovo had already begun speaking disparagingly of the former Opposition in order to foster instability.⁶⁶ Catargiu had promised to combat Panslavist agitations,⁶⁷ had also personally assured Lascelles of his loyalty to the King, and of Romania's 'absolute neutrality,' (continuing the fiction) and Sir Frank was confident under these circumstances that Catargiu would not 'sell his country to Russia'.⁶⁸ Certainly Sir Frank agreed that Catargiu's Government was a 'misfortune,' and privately hoped it would fall, but while recognising the danger and promising to take 'every opportunity that offers' to give

⁶² Lascelles to Salisbury, 18 March 1889, FO 104/76, No. 22 confidential.

⁶³ White to Lascelles, 5 Jan 1889, and Lascelles to White, 26 April 1889, FO 800/16. White thought Bülow felt that there might also be a 'grudge' at Berlin for Charles having shared the liberal sentiments of Emperor Frederick. (Chiról to Lascelles, 18 May 1889, FO 800/15)

⁶⁴ White to Lascelles, 14 April 1889, FO 800/15.

⁶⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 30 Mar 1889, FO 104/76, No. 30 confidential.

⁶⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 14 April 1889, FO 800/16.

⁶⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 16 April 1889, FO 104/76, No. 55 secret.

⁶⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 14 April 1889, FO 800/16; see also Lascelles to Salisbury, 15 April FO 104/76, No.52.

advice to the King, he warned the King was probably 'quite aware of the danger of the situation' but with Carp lacking in popularity,⁶⁹ and Carp and Brătianu unable to agree on a coalition, Lascelles informed Salisbury he had cautioned his Austrian and German colleagues against going 'to the length of becoming partisans of any particular party' and advised that the King 'thinks and probably rightly that he knows more about Roumanian affairs than they do; and rather resents their advice'.⁷⁰ He also sought to 'dispel the idea' that Lascar Catargiu or any statesman could influence the King.⁷¹

Lascelles' views were backed up by those with experience of Romanian affairs. White professed to being 'much less gloomy' about Romanian affairs in general than Salisbury,⁷² and from Galatz, Percy Sanderson wrote to Sir Frank that the Catargiu Government was 'not likely to do much' harm.⁷³ In the short term, events seemed to vindicate Lascelles' views. By mid-May even Currie admitted Britain's apprehensions had been 'rather needlessly exaggerated'.⁷⁴ Catargiu's government differed little from its predecessors in office and by June Lascelles reported that Lahovary was 'behaving well,' and was keeping an eye on Khitrovo.⁷⁵ To the disappointment of the Russian Legation, Lahovary pressed ahead in expelling Russian, Serbian and Montenegrin conspirators under Russian protection, and King Charles reassured Lascelles that the Government 'had become really as anti-Russian

⁶⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 26 April 1889, FO 800/16.

⁷⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 14 April 1889, *ibid.*

⁷¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 March 1889, *ibid.*; same to same 18 March 1889, FO 104/76, No. 22 confidential.

⁷² Chiról to Lascelles, 18 May 1889, FO 800/15.

⁷³ Percy Sanderson to Lascelles, 4 May 1889, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 14 May 1889, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Lascelles to White, 11 June 1889, FO 800/16.

as their predecessors.’⁷⁶ In October Lahovary travelled to Austria to negotiate a commercial treaty,⁷⁷ while at home the arrival of Prince Ferdinand in Romania in May did much to bolster dynastic stability. Lascelles deemed him to be a ‘pleasant youth’ who created a very favourable impression.⁷⁸ The King’s popularity also improved -- in the autumn he was warmly received on a visit to Moldavia.⁷⁹

Yet although Sir Frank’s calmer judgement was on this occasion vindicated, there remained a feeling that he was, in general, downplaying the Russian threat, allowing himself to ‘go to sleep on his laurels.’⁸⁰ Such were the thoughts of Lascelles’ predecessor, White, who had commended Lascelles’ anti-Russian activities in Sofia. For White, Bucharest had served as a stepping stone to Constantinople⁸¹; he still saw Lascelles as the ‘coming man’, and had even credited him with a good chance of getting the Embassy at Washington before Pauncefote did. But, partially worried by Austria’s apparently ‘ostrich like indifference’ to Russian activities in the Balkans, he fretted about Lascelles’ laid-back approach to his second Balkan posting, and his lack of interest in Romanian politics. Chirol told Lascelles:

to tell you frankly I think he would like to see you a little more active. [White has said to me:] “He has been very lucky so far, he has made capital use of the two great opportunities he has had in Egypt and in Bulgaria & now he has got just such another opportunity and he must make use of this too.”

⁷⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 31 Aug, 1889, FO 104, 77, No. 111 confidential. See also Lascelles to Salisbury 29 April 1889, FO 104/76, No. 63 confidential, same to same 1 October 1889, FO 104/77, No.’s 118 & 119 confidential.

⁷⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 Oct 1889, FO 104/77, No.123

⁷⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 May 1889, FO 104/77, No. 69; Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 May 1889, FO 800/16.

⁷⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 Oct 1889, FO 104/77, No.124

⁸⁰ Chirol to Lascelles, 18 May 1889, FO 800/15.

⁸¹ In the words of Lascelles’ French colleague, Cotouly, Rumania was a ‘spring-board’ for future Ambassadors: Bülow, *Memoirs*, Vol. iv, p.624.

White advised Lascelles to 'to work up the question of the Russian organisation in the Country & more especially in Moldavia,' to 'thoroughly expose' the 'means & Agencies & through whom Hitrovo works', and to seek the assistance of Carp, Beldimann & Sturdza to 'get a list of the people in the provinces to whom the anti Dynastic & Russian organs were distributed & get them sifted by somebody who knew the country thoroughly,' and to concentrate on the 'weak point' of Moldavia where the Russians were concentrating their efforts in the hope of provoking 'revolution' and a 'cry for independence under Russian protection.' White's prescription of what Lascelles should be doing was certainly daunting. Even as he relayed this information to Sir Frank, Chirol admitted that it was a 'difficult' task 'for a foreign representative,' to undertake. It was also, in Chirol's opinion, perhaps motivated by a tendency to 'pick holes' in one's successor.⁸² However, Lascelles was quite ready to defend his conduct in refusing actively to tackle Khitrovo, and told White very succinctly that the Russians were growing more unpopular in Romania, adding that: 'My own impression is that Hitrovo is the very man we ought to wish to see here for he is more likely than any one else to diminish Russian influence.'⁸³ There was indeed growing evidence that Russian influence was on the wane. Once in power, the Conservatives had sought to distance themselves from Khitrovo.⁸⁴ They also continued the Austrian alliance. Catargiu's Government was replaced by a much broader Conservative coalition, supported by Carp, in November 1889 and Lahovary, who remained Foreign Minister, continued to pursue Brătianu's and Carp's external

⁸² Chirol to Lascelles, 18 May 1889, FO 800/15.

⁸³ Lascelles to White, 6 Aug 1889, *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Hardinge to Salisbury 12 August 1890, FO 104/83, 93 confidential.

policy.⁸⁵ To British diplomats, Lahovary's language about foreign affairs was 'all that could be desired'.⁸⁶

Lascelles also clearly foresaw Khitrovo's downfall. The French Minister had pointed out as early as January 1888 that Russian secret service money destined for intrigues in Bulgaria 'no longer passe[d] through his hands',⁸⁷ and in 1890 Arthur Hardinge, deputising for Lascelles, noted his position had 'undergone a very decided alteration for the worse'.⁸⁸ As in Bulgaria, Russia's Foreign Minister, Giers, and the Tsar were keen to distance themselves from the 'unofficial' Panslavism of their Agent.⁸⁹ The Russian Government felt Khitrovo's activities were damaging their interests;⁹⁰ Hardinge, who unlike Lascelles did research Khitrovo's activities extensively, concluded that its effects had been 'very barren in Roumania.' Khitrovo's 'intimates', who visited his house every Tuesday evening to 'smoke his cigars, & drink his "vodka"' were none of them 'men of real position in the country,' and spies reported 'all that passes within his walls to the Palace.' There was nothing Russia could do 'in the way of getting a real Russian party' in Romania, and could only play one party off against another in the hope that Romania would collapse 'from her own anarchy' at a moment of national emergency.⁹¹ Khitrovo's continued activity, coupled with the fact he had run up bad debts, increasingly worked against him.⁹² Finally in 1891, following an allegation that he had sheltered a man named Bendereff, who had

⁸⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 Jan 1890, FO 104/83, No.3

⁸⁶ A. Hardinge to White, 17 March 1890, FO 364/1.

⁸⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Jan 1888, FO 104/70, No. 7.

⁸⁸ Hardinge to Salisbury, 12 August 1890, FO 104/83, No. 93 confidential.

⁸⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 Nov 1888, FO 104/71, No. 133 confidential.

⁹⁰ Hardinge to Salisbury, 12 August 1890, FO 104/83, No. 93 confidential.

⁹¹ A. Hardinge to White, 13 May 1890, FO 364/1

⁹² A. Hardinge to Bertie, 25 July 1890, FO 104/83; also Hardinge to Salisbury 19, 24, 30 July & 4 Aug 1890, FO 104/83, No's 82 confidential, 86, 88 secret & 91 confidential.

assassinated two Bulgarians, the Russian Agent was recalled, which Lascelles noted came as a relief to 'everybody except...his Panslavist friends.'⁹³

VI

In July 1891 Lascelles' time in Romania drew to a close when he was asked to replace the now aging and ill Minister at Teheran, Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff.⁹⁴ Unlike in Bulgaria, the plaudits for his time in Romania were less forthcoming. In writing to congratulate Lascelles on his new appointment, the best Chirol could say was that: 'It removes you from the stagnant atmosphere of Roumania and affords you once more a field worthy of those abilities which you will forgive me for saying so, you are by nature disinclined to exercise except under considerable pressure!'⁹⁵

This impression is certainly hard to dispute. In four and a half years Lascelles travelled little outside Bucharest or the Court's summer residence at Sinaia, and with one or two exceptions (notably the peasant unrest) remaining focused on high politics and customarily sent short weekly reports to the Foreign Office; more than once he had nothing to report at all. While the diplomats John Gordon Kennedy and Arthur Hardinge who both deputised for Lascelles in his absence sent in reviews of the state of Rumanian parties or of affairs in Moldavia, (which the latter visited), Lascelles relied heavily on Sanderson at Galatz for his view on affairs outside the capital.

What seemed to be a relatively lacklustre performance could partially be explained by an apparently prolonged health scare which saw Lascelles nearly lose his

⁹³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 May 1891, FO 800/15; see also Lascelles to Salisbury, 30 March & 8 May 1891, FO 104/87, No.'s 33 confidential & 46.

⁹⁴ Salisbury to Lascelles [tel.], 17 July 1891, FO 800/15.

⁹⁵ Chirol to Lascelles, 29 Nov 1891, Spring Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/14.

hearing, evidence of which is missing from the archives but was reported by papers on his promotion to Tehran,⁹⁶ and the effects of this on his work are hard to quantify. Ultimately, however, the answer to Lascelles' approach in Romania lies in the Great Power political situation and the gradual receding of regional complications throughout his tenure at Bucharest. In late 1886 Austria and Britain had drawn closer together in the Balkans; by early 1887, Churchill's resignation removed Austria's misgivings about Britain's Near Eastern policy, and Bismarck's reserved attitude had changed,⁹⁷ enabling the two Powers to conclude the so-called Mediterranean Agreements, by which (among other things) they mutually pledged to uphold the *status quo* in the Near East. For Britain this signalled the continuation of a drift towards '*de facto*' association with the Triple Alliance – albeit only loosely⁹⁸ and with Britain armed with a better guarantee of Austrian intentions, Lascelles could afford, while keeping a watchful eye on Rumanian affairs, to downplay fears of Russian intrigue. The tenor of Paget's advice to him, as early as, April 1887 was that Anglo-Austrian relations were more 'intimate' than ever.⁹⁹ Even in 1887, therefore, the Eastern Question was again becoming dormant; and the election of the 'spectacularly anti-Russian' Ferdinand of Coburg to the throne of Bulgaria in July 1887 further confirmed Russia's lack of success in that country.¹⁰⁰ By 1891 the Eastern Question was no longer the burning issue it had been in 1885-6. Partially therefore Lascelles' approach complemented the stabilising of the wider international situation. The break-up of the *Dreikaiserbund* after the Bulgarian crisis, the resolution of the Bulgarian

⁹⁶ *Glasgow Herald*, Thursday, August 6, 1891; Issue 187.

⁹⁷ C.J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean 1886-1896* (London, 1965), pp. 7-8.

⁹⁸ Otte, ' "Floating Downstream"?', pp. 110-111; Steele, p.245. For the texts of the Mediterranean Agreements (12 Feb & 12 Dec 1887, and accessions), see *Key Treaties for the Great Powers*, Vol. 2, No.'s 130 & 134, pp.'s pp. 635-639 & 648-651.

⁹⁹ See Paget to Lascelles, 8 April 1887, FO 800/15.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in F.R Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866-1914* (London,1972), p.169.

dynastic issue, and Britain's conclusion of a Mediterranean *entente* with Austria and Italy, all lowered the risk for British interests in the Balkans. They signified 'the effective containment of Russia in the Near East',¹⁰¹ and meant diplomats in Eastern Europe could afford to relax. By contrast, there seemed little for Lascelles to gain diplomatically or professionally by pursuing the kind of activities which had earned him a reputation as an intriguer in Sofia, and he even seemed increasingly eager to distance himself from his previous reputation; for example he denied vigorously an assertion by Brătianu (no friend to Russia), that he had converted the radical politician Take Ionesco to Russophobic views.¹⁰² Again, this ran in tandem with the policy conducted by Salisbury, who had intended through the Mediterranean Agreements to provide a 'buttress of peace, not a preparation for war; the last thing he wanted was to provoke any Russian activity.'¹⁰³ Keen not to personalise purely political disputes, Lascelles seemed to get on well with Madame Khitrovo (in spite of her husband), who was a niece of Tolstoy and with whom Lascelles shared a passion for literature. Bülow described her as a 'charming and cultured lady' and Sir Frank did the favour of procuring a copy of Wilfrid Blunt's 'Love Sonnets Protem' for her.¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, Lascelles' social circle in Bucharest was arguably representative of Britain's growing trend of 'leaning' towards the Triple Alliance. Among the other diplomats in Bucharest, he was closest to the Austrian Minister, Agenor Maria Gołuchowski (appointed in March 1887), later to become Austrian Foreign Minister,¹⁰⁵ and Bernhard von Bülow, the German Agent and future Reich Chancellor, who succeeded Dr. Klemens Busch in Spring 1888. Lascelles and

¹⁰¹ Otte, "Floating Downstream"?, p.112.

¹⁰² Lascelles to White, 20 March 1889, FO 800/16.

¹⁰³ Lowe, *Reluctant Imperialists*, i, p.109.

¹⁰⁴ Bülow, *Memoirs*, Vol. iv, p.625; Lascelles to Blunt, 1 July 1887, Blunt MSS, West Sussex Record Office, Box 33.

¹⁰⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 March FO 104/62, No. 32.

Gołuchowski became great friends,¹⁰⁶ playing billiards together almost daily.¹⁰⁷ Gołuchowski's Polish roots ensured his hostility to Russia and made him a 'very zealous partisan of the Triple Alliance',¹⁰⁸ while Bülow also became 'intimately acquainted' with the British Minister, whom in his memoirs he referred to as a 'friend.'¹⁰⁹

In spite of Romania's apparent lack of importance in his career, Lascelles' judgements about the situation there (his choice of downplaying Khitrovo's schemes and the King's weakness) were in the long run right. Romania remained connected to the Triple Alliance until 1916, much longer than Britain's dalliance with it, while King Charles stayed firmly on the throne until his death in 1916. Lascelles' shrewd judgement was however appreciated a few years later by a journalist in the *Pall Mall Gazette* who commented of Lascelles that: 'He was in a sense the pupil and successor of Sir William White, and could read the confused pages of the difficult book of the East with almost as much ease as his master.'¹¹⁰ And in spite of one short-lived dispute with the Foreign Office, their continued confidence in his diplomatic ability was ultimately demonstrated by promotion to an important outpost on Britain's imperial frontier.

¹⁰⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 23 Jan 1897, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/17.

¹⁰⁷ Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace, 16 Jan 1897. Saunders MSS, Archive of the Times.

¹⁰⁸ Bülow, *Memoirs*, Vol. iv, p.624.

¹⁰⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 July 1897, FO 64/1411, No. 181 Confidential; Bülow, *Memoirs*, Vol. iv, p. 624. Part of Bülow's mission in Bucharest was to renew and strengthen Romania's ties to the Triple Alliance. Ibid, p.623-4. Arthur Hardinge (when deputising for Lascelles) also found the 'soft tongued Bülow very 'ready to talk' Hardinge to White, 17 March 1890, FO 364/1.

¹¹⁰ Extract from the *New York Times* 24 September 1895, p.14.

Lascelles and the search for an Anglo-Russian understanding, 1891-1894.

Part a) Minister at Tehran, 1891-1893.

In stark contrast to Bucharest, Tehran again afforded Lascelles— in the words of his close friend Chirol- ‘both the opportunity and the necessity for work which are requisite to induce you to do justice to yourself,’ and also the opportunity for promotion.¹ The importance of the post as a stepping stone enabled Sir Frank to overcome initial reservations about the distance of the post and the difficulty of the journey for his family,² to once again serve in a post of heightened importance to British interests.

Persia’s importance in British foreign policy arose from its proximity to British India.³ Although her long naval presence in the Persian Gulf (since 1763) had enabled Britain to establish an influence in Southern Persia, to the North she was threatened by Russia’s presence. Since 1858 British policy had been directed towards seeing Persia as ‘a buffer against the moving force of Russia’,⁴ for notwithstanding the varying and incoherent nature of Russia’s Central Asian policy – often decided by the initiative of individual Agents and Generals on the spot,⁵ successive British Governments – especially Conservative ones –feared her seemingly relentless expansion⁶. Of all British Foreign Secretaries in the Victorian era, Lord Salisbury in particular was pessimistic about the capacity of Persia’s Government to resist foreign

¹ Chirol to Lascelles, 29 Nov 1891, CASR I 1/14.

² Lascelles to Ponsonby, 20 July 1891, FO 800/15.

³ A.P. Thornton, ‘British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890, i’ *English Historical Review*, (Oct. 1954), p.554. Rose L. Greaves, *Persia and the defence of India, 1884-1892: A study in the foreign policy of the Third Marquis of Salisbury* (London, 1959), p’s 11,22,24 &34.

⁴ A.P. Thornton, ‘British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890, i’, p.569.

⁵ Agatha Ramm, *Sir Robert Morier: envoy and ambassador in the age of imperialism, 1826-1893* (Oxford, 1973). p.334; see also Greaves, *Persia and the defence of India*, p.44.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.11, 15-16, 19-27, 33-4, 46-7.

encroachments; 'decay and inertia' seemed to dominate the impoverished and oppressed country⁷ presided over by a Shah⁸ who seemed indifferent to the fate of his country, who was surrounded by 'parasitic' advisors, and 'thoroughly cowed by Russian might'.⁹ Salisbury feared that Russia could occupy Persia as a staging post for an attack on India, and he was critical of the Government of India for neglecting this danger and concentrating too much on Afghanistan¹⁰, a fear borne out when Russia moved to occupy the Merv oasis on Persia's border in 1884.

In his third tenure as Foreign Secretary (1886-1892), Salisbury became more determined than ever to reverse the relative neglect of the Persian sphere by his Liberal predecessor in office, and attempted to arrest the country's seemingly terminal decline by an ambitious policy aimed at bolstering her as a strong, independence, 'buffer state' between Russia and India,¹¹ capable of self defence.¹² To achieve this, in 1888 he replaced the relatively despondent Arthur Nicolson as Minister at Tehran with Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff, a seasoned politician, who had twice been sent to Constantinople on special diplomatic missions and whom Salisbury deemed 'a great master in oriental diplomacy',¹³ to attempt to reform Persia by sponsoring schemes to improve the state of Persia's Government, army and the people's quality of life, through opening up Persia's trade, and by modernising her communications.¹⁴ Drummond-Wolff's 'dogged energy and obstinacy' and 'superhuman powers of push'¹⁵ created a congenial atmosphere for the extension of British influence in Persia. Due to his efforts, in 1888 the vast (177 mile long) Karun river was opened to

⁷ Ibid, p.158.

⁸ Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831 – 1896), Shah of Persia from 17 Sept 1848 to 1 May 1896.

⁹ Greaves, *Persia and the defence of India*, pp's.139-142. Quotes from p.139 & 140.

¹⁰ Salisbury to Lascelles, 6 Oct 1891, SP 71/94.

¹¹ Greaves, *Persia*, p. 5, 137.

¹² Ramm, *Morier*, pp. 330-31.

¹³ Greaves, *Persia*, p.121.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 20 & 34.

¹⁵ Ramm, *Morier*, p. 333.

trade under the aegis of the Tigris & Euphrates Steam Navigations Company, thereby rapidly expanding British business over the next decade.¹⁶ On his watch, in 1890 the Imperial Bank of Persia was incorporated in London by a royal charter, which proved an unqualified success for British financial and political influence.¹⁷ Most contentiously of all, a concession was won by a British entrepreneur, Major Gerald Talbot, to acquire a monopoly over the production, sale, and export of Persia's lucrative tobacco trade.¹⁸ Key to Drummond-Wolff's success was the support of the Amin es-Sultan, effectively the Persian Prime Minister, whose portfolios encapsulated Finance, the Interior, Customs, and Foreign Affairs. In the words of one member of the British Legation he was the 'only Persian Statesman who can be considered a factor in actual or future Persian politics,' and in contrast to his venal colleagues was 'young, energetic, and alive to the disgraceful state of the country.'¹⁹ He thought that co-operation with Britain to help reform the country was the best policy for Persia.²⁰ Due to ill-health, Drummond-Wolff left Teheran in 1891, but Salisbury saw little reason to alter the commercial policy he had initiated in principle, and when Lascelles succeeded him there, Salisbury re-iterated the importance of aiding Persia's 'internal development' and encouraging every enterprise which would 'do good, or at least not do harm, to Persia itself.'²¹

There had however been a second, less successful strand to Drummond-Wolff's policy at Tehran: an attempt to reach an Anglo-Russian understanding in Persia. While seeking to halt Persia's decline and curb Russian influence, Salisbury had also desired to alleviate Anglo-Russian antagonism in the country. Believing that

¹⁶ See Greaves, *Persia*, pp.161-167; Ramm, *Morier*, p. 337.

¹⁷ Greaves, *Persia*, pp. 175-177.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.182.

¹⁹ Memo by Cadogan, encl. in Henry Cadogan to Morier, Nov 4 1892, Morier MSS, Balliol College Oxford, Box 25B/1.

²⁰ Greaves, *Persia*, p.140.

²¹ Salisbury to Lascelles, 6 Oct 1891, SP 71/94.

Persia would not survive the death of the current Shah, but be carved up between his sons,²² he hoped by inviting Russia to commercial partnership in Persia that he could strengthen the country, invite foreign investment, and turn Persia into an international question instead of a purely Anglo-Russian one.²³ In February 1888 Salisbury broached this idea of economic development with Giers, but Britain's refusal to allow Russia a free hand in Bulgaria in exchange meant the suggestion was rejected.²⁴ Wolff took up the idea,²⁵ even engaging in talks with the Tsar at St Petersburg on the subject. However Russia's expansionist tendencies, her unwillingness to ameliorate the condition of Persia, and her determination to thwart British enterprise always stood in way of an understanding; in 1887 Russia's Minister at Teheran, Prince Dolgouroki had forced the Shah into a self-denying agreement prohibiting commercial agreements with foreign companies. This naturally led, on Russia's side, to anger at Drummond-Wolff's apparent legerdemain over the 1888 Karun river scheme, and in 1890 Dolgouroki procured a further promise from the Shah not to build railways for ten years without Russia's consent,²⁶ once more making Russian influence 'ascendant' at Tehran.²⁷ Despite the eventual replacement of Dolgouroki by the more conciliatory Butzow, confrontation over the Pamirs in Central Asia killed off the idea of Anglo-Russian co-operation and revived Anglo-Russian tension.

Drummond-Wolff's mission had other undesired side effects. The Shah had been rendered suspicious by his attempts to court the favour of the Zil es-Sultan, the Shah's second son and *de facto* ruler of Southern Persia, by conferring a decoration

²² Ramm, *Morier*, p. 339.

²³ Greaves, *Persia*, p.113.

²⁴ Ramm, *Morier*, pp.331-32).

²⁵ Greaves, *Persia*, p. 122

²⁶ Ramm, *Morier*, p.335, 340, & 343-344 Greaves, *Persia*, pp.172, 181. A.P. Thornton, 'British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890, ii' *English Historical Review*, (Jan., 1955), p.61 & .65.

²⁷ Thornton, 'British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890, ii', p. 70.

on him in exchange for telegraph concessions, and had responded by stripping him of his titles, his private army and much of his influence.²⁸

The growth of British influence had also bred resentment among the disaffected Persian population. The distinction between the policy Salisbury sought to pursue, which aimed to 'increase the well being of the Persian people & the strength of the Persian Gov[ernmen]t', and one of commercial adventurism- to which Salisbury was 'diametrically opposed', but to which Persians were 'more accustomed',²⁹ was arguably too fine for the impoverished, illiterate and oppressed populace who, from the latter half of 1891, found a channel for their grievances in opposition to the tobacco Régie, a resentment fanned by the Persian religious authorities (the Mullahs), by Russian Agents and by warring provincial governors.³⁰ These dangers for Britain – of suspicion and resentment from Russia, the Shah, and the Persian population, were all coalescing as Lascelles arrived in December 1891 and confronted the problem of how to deal with a major challenge to Britain's Persian policy.

II

In appointing Lascelles, Salisbury had the opportunity to replace the zealous Drummond-Wolff with a cool-headed career diplomat who could preserve the gains

²⁸ Greaves, *Persia*, p.150-155. This made Salisbury cautious about repeating the same mistake and although keen to acquire the good-will of the Veliahd, the only one of the Shah's sons 'not doing his best to destroy Persia,' (Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Dec 1891, SP 71/52) he wanted to avoid British support appearing 'too ostentatious' to prevent the Shah being suspicious of having his wings clipped. Salisbury to Lascelles, 6 Oct 1891, SP 71/94. When Lascelles proposed conferring a decoration on the Veliahd, Salisbury swiftly rejected the idea. Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 Jan 1892, SP 71/54; same to same, 17 Feb 1892, SP 71/56, and minutes.

²⁹ All the above is from Salisbury's lengthy private letter to Lascelles, 6 Oct 1891, SP 71/94. Salisbury wanted to avoid British commercial adventurers converting the Tehran Legation, 'into an agency for pushing British speculation in Persia'. Ibid.

³⁰ Greaves, *Persia*, pp. 182-85.

made for British influence and hopefully improve Britain's troubled relations with Persia.³¹ Sir Frank was as 'different as could be' from his predecessor,³² and his reputation as 'one of the most pleasant men in the diplomatic service,'³³ was no doubt a factor in his selection: as Salisbury explained to the new Minister, Britain had 'very few but moral weapons to use' in Persia and 'character' was of 'great importance.'³⁴ As with Cairo in 1878, and Sofia in 1880, the Foreign Office had seen the virtue of appointing a calming presence, who could execute a diligent policy of patient diplomacy and he was sent to Tehran 'with orders to keep fairly quiet'.³⁵ This was certainly more of a consideration than any previous expertise in Central Asian affairs -although Salisbury assumed Lascelles to be familiar with Persia's problems,³⁶ the Indian official world could rightly comment that Sir Frank was an outsider lacking 'Oriental experience'.³⁷ The deficiency was partially compensated for by Salisbury's lengthy private letter of instructions to Lascelles of 6 October 1891, and by Lascelles' Eastern service, which was certainly a valuable asset.³⁸

Lascelles was clearly instructed by Salisbury to continue Drummond-Wolff's line where possible, and initially, Lascelles appeared to agree that Britain's policy of regenerating Persia could work. He was sufficiently encouraged by the prospects of British commercial ventures in Persia, including the Régie, and in particular by the

³¹ Thornton, 'British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890, ii' p.59. The tenuous nature of Drummond-Wolff's victories had been clear to Salisbury as early as 1890 when he had speculated they might 'come to nothing'. Greaves, *Persia*, p.182. See also *ibid*, p.122. Apparently Drummond-Wolff had 'disgusted' Salisbury. Spring Rice to Chirol, 30 Aug 1902, Spring Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/19.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ *Glasgow Herald*, Thursday, 6 August, 1891.

³⁴ Salisbury to Lascelles, 6 Oct 1891, SP 71/94.

³⁵ George Curzon to General Schindler, 2 Nov 1891, Schindler papers, Duke University.

³⁶ Salisbury to Lascelles, 6 Oct 1891, SP 71/94.

³⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 20 November 1891. The Indian Government paid the wages of the Minister at Tehran.

³⁸ *The Derby Mercury*, 29 July 1891.

'great success' of the Oriental Bank to deem the outlook 'tolerably hopeful'.³⁹ He also believed that among ordinary Persians it was 'beginning to be understood now that England really desires the independence of Persia, and has no intention of annexing the Country.'⁴⁰

Yet Lascelles was soon made to realise the limitations of Britain's commercial policy in Persia. No sooner had he arrived than he was forced to deal with the seismic event of the tobacco revolts, which abruptly ended Major Talbot's monopoly of the trade in Persia and signalled the triumph of popular resistance to foreign interference. The result was nothing less than a catastrophic reversal for British foreign policy in Persia, for the occurrence 'vitaly and adversely affected Britain's position in Persia'.⁴¹ Anti-European opposition to Talbot's company, which had begun in summer 1891, rapidly escalated in the winter, when Persia's religious authorities placed a fatwah on all tobacco smoking, with the aim of getting the concession abolished. They found 'formidable allies' both in the oppressed populace, and in the sons of the Shah who found common cause in trying to upset the pro-British Amin,⁴² and who were apparently encouraged by the Russian Legation.⁴³ Lascelles urged the Shah to retain the Amin in power,⁴⁴ but, fearing the Shah might resent his advice as newcomer,⁴⁵ otherwise kept a low profile.

³⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 25 Nov 1891, SP 71/51.

⁴⁰ Ibid; Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Dec 1891, Lansdowne Papers, B.L., MSS Eur D 558/21.

⁴¹ Rose L. Greaves, 'British Policy in Persia, 1892-1903,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1965), p. 38.

⁴² Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Dec 1891, SP 71/52.

⁴³ See Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Dec 1891, MSS Eur. D558/21; Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Dec 1891 and 19 Jan 1892, SP 71/ 52 & 53. Lascelles to Rosebery, 9 Nov 1892, FO 258/541, No. 167 very confidential.

⁴⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Dec 1891, FO 64/1417, tel.243; Salisbury to Lascelles, 24 Dec 1891, FO 60/553, Tel. 63.

⁴⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury 24 Dec 1891, SP 71/52.

Within months of arriving, Lascelles realised he had been 'over-sanguine' over the Régie's prospects,⁴⁶ and, seeing little chance of saving it, began advising the cancellation of the concession. His chief reason for doing so was an awareness that its continuation could turn Persia completely against European influence. He was impressed by the popularity of the anti-European movement which manifested itself in the abstention from smoking on the part of the population. This was, as he termed it, 'an expression of public opinion such as has hitherto been unknown in Persia.'⁴⁷ He realised that the unwillingness or inability of the Shah, a man 'made up of equal parts of timidity and rapacity,'⁴⁸ to resist either the 'growing power of the Mollahs, or the intrigues in which his own sons are engaged,' posed a danger to Persia itself.⁴⁹ and by the second half of December began advising Salisbury that if the Régie continued nothing less than the fate of British influence, and Persia's internal stability, would be at stake; for it was 'evident that if the Mollahs succeed in asserting their power and introduce a fanatical and anti-European regime, we should have to give up all hope of seeing the regeneration of Persia by means of commercial enterprise.'⁵⁰

With Britain unwilling to cling on to the unpopular concession, the Persian Government were quick to cancel it, and British policy was confined to extracting compensation for the company.⁵¹ In executing this policy, Lascelles experienced the reality of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia, for Russia's Agent, Butzow who (in

⁴⁶ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Feb 1892, Lansdowne Papers, B.L., MSS Eur D 558/22.

⁴⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 Jan 1892, SP 71/53.

⁴⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Dec 1891, MSS Eur D 558/21.

⁴⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Dec 1891, SP 71/52. Lascelles went so far as to say that he saw no chance of improvement unless the whole system of administration was changed, and there would 'not the slightest chance' of this under the present Shah. Lascelles to Salisbury, 19 Jan 1892, SP 71/53.

⁵⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury (private), 24 Dec 1891, Salisbury Papers, SP 71/52. Lascelles further worried that Russia could turn any disturbances in Persia and outlying countries to their advantage. *Ibid.*

⁵¹ On this episode, see Greaves, *Persia*, pp. 182-6; Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and rebellion in Iran: the tobacco protest of 1891-1892* (London, 1966) *passim*.

Lascelles' words) saw the abolition of the Régie as 'a diplomatic triumph for Russia and an opportunity of consolidating Russian influence in Persia'⁵², took advantage of the Shah's impatience for the tobacco Company to "get their losses and go"⁵³, to tempt him with a loan with which to pay off compensation to Talbot's company,⁵⁴ although Lascelles was able to dissuade the Shah from accepting the Russian offer and accept a loan from the Imperial Bank of Persia instead.⁵⁵

The handling of the Régie cancellation revealed a key facet of Lascelles' approach to diplomatic problems. To contemporaries, there was a clear difference between him and his predecessor. One British paper criticised Britain's minister for not standing up the Shah, who needed a 'good shaking, and... [who]... would have got it from Sir Henry Drummond Wolff.'⁵⁶ The reason for this disparity was simple enough: Lascelles had seen his predecessor's forthright methods as responsible for the tobacco riots, and he was keen to distance himself from them.⁵⁷ He told his French colleague in no uncertain terms that the riots were 'the heritage of the baneful policy of Sir Drummond Wolff,' who had thought 'only of making a noise and fame for himself'.⁵⁸ Undoubtedly, as one historian of the tobacco agitation concluded, Lascelles was 'more realistic than Drummond Wolff about the dangers of too

⁵² Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Feb 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22.

⁵³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 31 Jan 1892, FO 248/540, No. 21.

⁵⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 15 May 1892, SP 71/58. See also Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 June 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22; Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 June 1892 SP 71/59. Lascelles to Sanderson [tel.], 20 April 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22.

⁵⁵ See Salisbury to Lascelles [tel.], 15 March 1892, SP 71/95 Lascelles to Salisbury 18 March 1892 Salisbury Papers (folder of unbound correspondence from Lascelles); Lascelles to Lansdowne [tel.], 30 April & 3 May, MSS Eur D 558/22. Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 June 1892, FO 248/541 No. 100 secret and confidential; Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 June 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22. Lansdowne wrote to congratulate Lascelles for his role in helping foil the Russian loan. Lansdowne to Lascelles, 4 July 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22.

⁵⁶ *Glasgow Herald*, 21 January 1892.

⁵⁷ Greaves, *Persia*, p. 125.

⁵⁸ N. Keddie, *Religion and rebellion in Iran*, pp. 100-101.

aggressive a British policy in Iran', ⁵⁹ and divined the revolutionary, anti-European forces, ⁶⁰ which would come to the fore in the Persian revolution of 1905-1911.

Instinct as much as insight may have influenced Lascelles' view, for his typically Victorian laissez-faire approach to commerce was certainly reinforced by the events of 1891-2; in 1893 he wrote to the British consul-general at Bushire, Major Sadler, that he was 'inclined to believe that the more people engaged in commerce settle questions without the interference of their own Authorities the better they are likely to get on.'⁶¹

Yet Lascelles' approach was not just predicated on an aversion to violent methods – it reflected recognition of the increasing impotence of Britain in Persia. The events of the winter of 1891-2 dramatically altered Britain's prospects in Persia, and correspondingly affected Lascelles' views on Britain's role in the country. Britain's Minister slowly became convinced of the impossibility of continuing to pursue Salisbury's commercial policy in the face of unfavourable circumstances. As English companies became increasingly reluctant to invest in Persia, and the Foreign Office became less willing to advocate commercial schemes,⁶² and as religious and popular hostility to foreign intervention continued to grow, Lascelles concluded that, even without official interference, British firms should prepare themselves for the worst, and 'should instruct their Agents to make all possible allowances for the perpetual conflict between religious and civil law in this country, for religious and anti-European prejudice, and for the un-business like way in which business is

⁵⁹ Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and rebellion in Iran*, p.93.

⁶⁰ Henry Savage Landor, *Across Coveted Lands – A Journey from Flushing (Holland) to Calcutta Overland* (London, 1903), Vol. i, p. 148.

⁶¹ Lascelles to Major Sadler, 12 July 1893, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/14.

⁶² Lascelles to Salisbury 29 Jan 1892, FO 248/540, No. 18 secret and confidential.

unfortunately conducted here.’⁶³ A memorandum drawn up by the Teheran Legation’s First Secretary Henry Cadogan⁶⁴ for the attention of the Ambassador at St Petersburg, Sir Robert Morier, in late 1892 shows how stark Britain’s commercial prospects became almost overnight. Listing English commercial schemes, Cadogan summarized that, with the exception of the Bank, the other ventures were floundering; the Regie was ‘abolished’, the Karun Navigation Company had been forced to apply for an English State subsidy, and suffered from inadequate road links. British Mining and Roads Companies fared equally badly, and reports from Merchants across Persia showed that ‘English credit and prestige were never at so low an ebb as they are now.’⁶⁵ Cadogan went on to spell out in no uncertain terms his bosses’ predicament by the autumn of 1892:

Sir Frank’s position is most difficult. Lord Salisbury, in his private letter of instructions, told him “to continue to counteract Russia’s political activity by the furtherance of English Commerce in Persia.” Here at once is an impasse.

With an impotent Shah, and a rebellious and fanatical priesthood, a corrupt Ministry and an unpopular Prime Minister, such commercial development is not possible.

The Bank is practically all that remains of Sir H. Wolff’s activity, and the failure of his “chef d’oeuvre,” the Regie, has thrown us infinitely farther back than we were before.⁶⁶

As Cadogan highlighted, Lascelles’ room for manoeuvre as British Minister was increasingly restricted after the tobacco strike. The loss of British influence

⁶³ Lascelles to Rosebery, 15 Feb 1893, FO 60/542 No.27.

⁶⁴ Henry Cadogan (1859-1893), grandson of the Third Earl Cadogan, was also briefly engaged to Sir Frank’s niece, the future archaeologist, writer and imperial administrator Gertrude Bell (1868-1926). Sadly, he died of cholera during a particular violent outbreak in 1893. Julia M. Asher-Greve, ‘Gertrude Bell, 1868-1926’ in Getzel M. Cohen and Martha Sharp Joukowsky (eds.), *Breaking Ground: Pioneering Women Archaeologists* (Michigan, 2006), p.151; Lascelles to Rosebery, 9 Sept 1893, FO 60/543, No. 130.

⁶⁵ Memo by Cadogan, encl. in Henry Cadogan to Morier, 4 Nov 1892, Morier MSS, Box 25B/1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

seriously affected the Legation's clout with the Amin es-Sultan,⁶⁷ while the Shah himself was disinclined to fight to save his country from decay,⁶⁸ or even to fight for his own authority which was 'greatly diminished' after the tobacco strike⁶⁹, whereas the Mullahs' influence only increased.⁷⁰ Lascelles saw out his first year at Tehran against a backdrop of continued popular discontent and anti-European outbursts, a situation exacerbated by an epidemic of cholera in the summer of 1892 which killed at least 12,000.⁷¹ He tried to persuade the Shah that judicial reform would decrease the legal power of the Mullahs, and 'would do more than anything else to calm the discontent which certainly existed among the people,'⁷² but found him unreceptive to the idea. The Shah's avarice meanwhile continued to be abused by 'all classes of the population,' and Lascelles was prescient enough to surmise that only the lack of a capable leader prevented his being displaced.⁷³ Indeed, he was led to conclude that only 'a complete change in the system of Government' could remedy the situation,⁷⁴ which, as he told Morier in October 1892, was 'as near a state of anarchy as may be.'⁷⁵ It was in this context that Lascelles confronted the question of what Britain's policy in Persia should now be.

⁶⁷ Greaves, *Persia*, pp.184-85.

⁶⁸ Illustrated when he set off on a tour of Iraq, accompanied by a huge retinue which would 'practically ruin the Country' through which he passed: Lascelles to Salisbury, 15 May 1892 SP 71/58.

⁶⁹ Lascelles to Morier, 14 Oct 1892, Morier Papers, Balliol College Oxford, Box 25 B/1.

⁷⁰ Lascelles to Rosebery, 1 Sept 1892, FO 248/541, No. 137.

⁷¹ Lascelles to Rosebery, 3 Sept 1892, FO 60/532, No. 139.

⁷² Lascelles to Rosebery, 4 Oct 1892, FO 248/541, No. 160.

⁷³ Lascelles to Morier, 14 Oct 1892, Morier Papers, Box 25 B/1.

⁷⁴ Lascelles to Rosebery, 28 Sept 1892, FO 248/541, No. 148.

⁷⁵ Lascelles to Morier, 14 Oct 1892, Morier MSS, Box 25 B/1.

III

By late 1892, with Britain 'powerless...to assert her interests in Persia',⁷⁶ and with Salisbury himself no longer at the Foreign Office, Lascelles seriously began to challenge the validity of Salisbury's 'buffer state' policy and to consider whether Persia could continue to be defended against Russia, and play a role in India's defence, and if not, whether an alternative policy could be formulated. This was a logical thought process: in 1888, Drummond Wolff's assurances of maintaining Persia's territorial integrity had been crucial in paving the way for concessions to English Companies.⁷⁷ Upon his arrival, Lascelles had re-iterated these assurances to the Shah and the Amin.⁷⁸ After the Régie incident however, Lascelles could only 'recognise his impotence, with the means at his disposal, to "counteract Russia's policy"' of preventing economic progress in Persia, and as Persia seemingly descended into anarchy, and anti-European agitations increased, the question of whether foreign powers might step in to assert their interests was one that crossed Lascelles' mind. And as Cadogan put it, 'If the intervention comes from Russia, will our "assurances" be acted on?'⁷⁹ In examining the question, it was clear to Lascelles that Persia had only a limited capacity for self-defence. The greater part of the Shah's army existed 'only on paper' as that which was real had largely become a fiefdom of the Persian Minister of War, the Naib-es Sultaneh.⁸⁰ Persia needed help to resist Russia; but Lascelles recognised that Britain would have to act 'with very considerable energy,' to prevent her reaching Southern Persia.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Memo by Cadogan, encl. in Henry Cadogan to Morier, Nov 4 1892, Morier MSS, Box 25B/1.

⁷⁷ Thornton, 'British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890, ii', pp.55-57, 60, 61.

⁷⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 December 1891, MSS Eur D 558/21; Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 Dec 1891, FO 60/254, No. 250.

⁷⁹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 7 Dec 1891, FO 60/254 No. 250.

⁸⁰ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 1 Dec 1892, Lansdowne Papers, B.L., MSS Eur D 558/23.

⁸¹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Feb 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22.

The evidence seemed to suggest that, militarily, Britain could do little. At the beginning of his tenure, Lascelles had received Salisbury's views of the enhanced role India should play in defending Persia, and had passed them on to India's Foreign Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand.⁸² But in early 1892 the then Viceroy of India, Lord Lansdowne, had effectively confirmed the Indian Government's continued policy of reserve in a private letter to Sir Frank. England had only 'unsubstantial' materials; Russia occupied 'infinitely superior ground' and condescended 'to methods from which we should shrink.'⁸³ The Indian Government could not spare the money to build railways in Southern Persia, nor did she have sufficient troops spare to justify the costs.⁸⁴ For Lansdowne the defence of Persia was an 'Imperial' and not an 'Indian' question,⁸⁵ and he was not prepared to take the responsibility for it. With Britain ill-equipped militarily, and seemingly unable to fulfil her 'assurances' to the Shah, Sir Frank's thoughts turned naturally to a diplomatic solution, and he began to ponder whether it was 'in any way possible, seeing Russia's preponderating influence in Persia, for England to come to some terms with her?'⁸⁶

As highlighted above, the idea of a *rapprochement* over Persia was not new. Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia had historically alternated with periods of *détente*. Drummond-Wolff had sought to win Russian collaboration in Persia, but misunderstandings and mutual suspicion had proved too great. Lascelles was in a sense only picking up the second strand of Britain's old 'dual' Persian policy. As in all his posts, Sir Frank's reasoning stemmed from practical points rather than a firmly held conviction. On his arrival, he had been confronted with the reality of British

⁸² Lascelles to Salisbury, 25 Nov 1891 SP 71/51.

⁸³ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 5 Jan 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Lansdowne to Kimberley, 11 Jan 1893, Lansdowne Papers, B.L., MSS Eur D 558/6.

⁸⁶ Henry Cadogan to Morier, Nov 4 1892, Morier MSS, Box 25B/1.

weakness – and thus the impracticality of a potentially explosive Anglo-Russian rivalry. At the same time, he recognised a conciliatory strand in Russian policy which he hoped to encourage. In early 1892, he interpreted reports that the Russian governor of the Transcaspia region, General Kuropatkin,⁸⁷ who had notoriously attempted to foment Turkoman unrest in the northern province of Khorassan in order to destabilise Persian rule, was being recalled from Persia,⁸⁸ and rumours that Butzow had been ordered ‘to keep things quiet in Persia’, as signals that the Russian threat to Northern Persia was ‘not immediate’. The Russians, he told Lansdowne, had ‘plenty to do at home’ and the Emperor was anxious to avoid ‘foreign complications.’⁸⁹ Thereafter he quite logically sought to remove pretexts for rivalry. In January 1892, he dissuaded the British authorities from sending the Legation’s Military attaché, General Gordon, on a visit to the northern border of Persia where the Russians were putting down disturbances among the Turcoman population,⁹⁰ noting that it was ‘useless to irritate the Russians’ by doing so.⁹¹ He also attempted to mend bridges between the two Legations in more tangible ways. According to Lascelles’ own account of events, after the Régie’s collapse, the wrangling over compensation for Talbot’s company caused the Amin to become disillusioned with Britain and to ‘drift’ towards Russia.⁹² Yet according to Cadogan of the British Legation, it was Lascelles himself that engineered a patch-up between the Amin and Butzow. He saw their strained relations as an obstacle in the way of improved Anglo-Russian relations, whereas he argued himself that reconciliation between the Amin and the Russian Legation, would give

⁸⁷ Alexei Nikolayevich Kuropatkin 1848 – 1925; later Russian Minister for War (1898–1904).

⁸⁸ Ramm, *Morier*, p.345.

⁸⁹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Feb 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22.

⁹⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 Jan 1892, SP 71/54 & 55.

⁹¹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Feb 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22; Lascelles to Salisbury, 16 April 1892, SP 71/57.

⁹² Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Feb 1892, MSS Eur D 558/22.

the Amin the support of both England and Russia and would 'strengthen his position and enable him to effect some real improvement in the state of affairs',⁹³ perhaps arresting decay in Persia. Having arrived in Persia to find the Russians 'at daggers drawn' with the Amin because of his role in facilitating Drummond Wolff's concessions, Lascelles encouraged the Amin to "have it out" with the Russians, and explain that 'the encouragement of English commerce on his part did not necessarily involve political hostility to Russia'. After the Amin acted on Lascelles's advice, Russian intrigue against him diminished, although the Amin's position itself never recovered from the tobacco incident.⁹⁴

Lascelles' conciliatory approach marked a personal turning point. On his appointment, he was still viewed at St Petersburg as a 'Russophobe' for his role in thwarting Kaulbars in Bulgaria. The Russian Legation apparently took measures to 'counteract' his 'influence'. But Lascelles had begun with a clean sheet in Tehran. On his arrival he had explained to Butzow his 'earnest desire' to maintain the most friendly relations with him and, notwithstanding disagreements on individual points, that he wanted the two countries to co-operate 'where we could.' Butzow having seen that Lascelles 'was inclined to be conciliatory', the Russians 'had not employed the tenth part of the means at their disposal' to oppose him.⁹⁵ By November 1892, Lascelles had 'enormously improved relations' with the Russian Legation.⁹⁶

The fruit of this policy was to elicit a response from the Russian side. In September 1892, the Russian chargé d'affaires at Tehran, de Speyer, approached the British Minister about his fear of an Anglo-Russian clash in Persia or Central Asia: a feud between the two Powers over the Pamirs on Afghanistan's border had recently

⁹³ Lascelles to Rosebery, 16 Jan 1893, FO 60/542, No. 7 confidential.

⁹⁴ Henry Cadogan to Morier, Nov 4 1892, Morier MSS, Box 25B/1.

⁹⁵ Lascelles to Rosebery, 30 Sept 1892, FO 248/541, No. 149 Confidential.

⁹⁶ Henry Cadogan to Morier, 4 Nov 1892, Box 25B/1.

been narrowly averted, and he feared that if Persia's 'critical' internal situation led both Powers to send forces into the country to protect their own interests it 'might bring about a collision'.⁹⁷ To avoid this eventuality, he proposed reaching a 'friendly understanding with England all along the line.'⁹⁸

Lascelles' response to de Speyer's surprising overture, was that he would be 'only too delighted' to assist him in his ambition.⁹⁹ His despatch reporting the following conversation is the most candid document to survive regarding Sir Frank's personal views on an Anglo-Russian *entente*. He told de Speyer: 'It had always been my private opinion that a cordial understanding between the two countries would be of inestimable advantage', and that both Governments 'seriously desired such an understanding' but strong mutual suspicion – often fostered by the two countries' Agents who were keen to exaggerate personal victories or setbacks- was an obstacle to this.¹⁰⁰

Most telling as far as Persia was concerned were Lascelles's specific observations on Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia, which signalled a change in direction from Salisbury's instructions. While he warned that England could never allow Russia 'to have an outlet on the Persian Gulf', he revealed that he 'was far from sharing the opinion which was widely entertained in England that Russia was not to be trusted because she had failed to observe the assurances she had given on her advance

⁹⁷ Lascelles to Rosebery, 30 Sept 1892, FO 248/541, No. 149 Confidential. De Speyer had recently acted on his own authority in summoning Russian troops to quell disorder whipped up by the Mllahs in the Northern town of Astrabad, the town's governor having fled on account of the cholera outbreak there. He remained open to the possibility of having to intervene in similar cases. See Lascelles to Rosebery, 18 and 26 Aug 1892, FO 65/1440, Tel No's 122 & 128; same to same 29 Aug 1892, FO 248/541, No. 134. Typically, far from raising the alarm at Russia's incursion Lascelles chose to underline the 'good effect' the incident might have in 'frightening the Mollahs' Lascelles to Lansdowne, 6 Sept 1892, MSS Eur D 558/23.)

⁹⁸ Lascelles to Morier, Box 14 Oct 1892 25B/1.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Lascelles to Rosebery, 30 Sept 1892, FO 248/541, No. 149 Confidential.

through Central Asia, that she would not go beyond certain points such as Khiva [occupied by Russia in 1873] or Merv.' Crucially, he concurred with de Speyer's observation 'that the existence of buffer states was a mistake' -as they were inclined to become 'a hotbed of intrigue'-and agreed that Britain and Russia 'ought to have a coterminous frontier' in Persia.¹⁰¹ This conclusion -amounting to a territorial partition of Persia - was not an entirely new one. However, it went further than Salisbury's proposal of an economic partition, and also went against the grain of his attempt to oppose Russian influence. It was however the logical conclusion to Lascelles's collapse of faith in the possibility of regenerating Persia. It was a logic shored up by the absence of military aid from India in the eventuality of a Russian advance -a line again confirmed to Lascelles by Lansdowne in autumn 1892.¹⁰²

Following his conversation with de Speyer, Lascelles received encouragement from an important source. From St Petersburg, Sir Robert Morier, who had long been a proponent of an Anglo-Russian *entente*, made a 'flattering comparison' between Lascelles and his predecessor (whom Morier had intensely disliked), and encouraged him in his endeavours for better Anglo-Russian relations.¹⁰³

For his part, Lascelles had watched Morier's handling of negotiations over the Pamirs with interest. He told Morier that 'if we can come to an understanding with Russia about the Pamirs it ought to be easy to do so about Persia,' and that he would be 'proud to help' in speeding up a general *rapprochement*.¹⁰⁴ It was with this in the background that Lascelles proceeded to sound out Whitehall on the idea. By the time de Speyer had approached Lascelles, Salisbury himself was no longer in power. For

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Lansdowne told Lascelles that India's troops were 'barely sufficient for our own requirements', and that Russia could dominate the Northern provinces of Persia 'at any moment' she chose, while Britain could only react slowly. Lascelles to Morier, 23 Nov 1892, Morier MSS Box 25B/1

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid; same to same 16 Feb 1893, Box 25A/2, *ibid*.

Lascelles this provided an opportunity for a fresh review of British policy in Persia, and to write privately to Lord Rosebery, who was again at the British Foreign Office and explain that, given the Shah's loss of authority, the bankruptcy of the Persian treasury and the 'absolutely rotten' state of the country, it was high time Her Majesty's Government came up with 'a decided policy in the event of the disappearance of Persia as a State.'¹⁰⁵

However, Rosebery, while equally pessimistic about Persia's situation, did not view affairs in that country to be as central to British interests as Salisbury had, and was unwilling to give Lascelles the clear instructions he wanted. He told him that England could not 'bear the burden of the whole world,' and that Persia was in the 'second rank' of British concerns. All Britain could do was to try and 'keep the rickety concern going.' This was hardly encouraging and, as Lascelles, noted, did not make his position any easier: he pledged to 'do my best', but held out little hope in reality of doing much good. ¹⁰⁶

Yet while neither London nor India was 'prepared with a policy' in the event of Persia's break up or the annexation by Russia of Persia's Northern Provinces, Lascelles continued in his remaining time in Persia to 'live on friendly terms' with Butzow and tried to 'work well' with Russia for as long as possible, ¹⁰⁷ even to the point of conceding Russian influence in the North of Persia.

¹⁰⁵ Lascelles to Lansdowne 1 Dec 1892 MSS Eur D558/23 ; also essentially same in Lascelles to Morier, 23 Nov 1892, Box 25B/1

¹⁰⁶ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 2 March 1893, Lansdowne Papers, B.L., MSS Eur D 558/24. The new Liberal Secretary of State for India, the Earl of Kimberley, essentially took Rosebery's line. After the collapse of the Régie and related concessions, he too came to the conclusion Persia was 'perfectly moribund, but moribund Eastern States are wonderfully slow in dying, and the final catastrophe may be yet distant'. Should Russia choose to control Persia's Northern Provinces, he couldn't see 'what we can do to avert it.' Kimberley to Lansdowne, 3 Feb 1893, MSS Eur D 558/6.

¹⁰⁷ Such was his advice to his successor. Lascelles to Durand, 30 Aug 1894, FO 800/17.

This line was most clearly demonstrated by an incident which took place in April 1893. That month Russia applied pressure on Persia to acquire a village called Firuzeh in Khorassan province, where they wanted to establish a sanatorium. The Shah was inclined to accept on condition that Russia did not press similar demands in the future. As far as Lascelles could judge, the arrangement seemed 'favourable to Persia',¹⁰⁸ and he failed to see how the possession of Firuzeh would give Russia 'any increased advantage' in respect of a Russian conquest of the whole of Khorassan.¹⁰⁹ (which he thought she could take possession of 'at any moment she liked' anyway).¹¹⁰ The Acting British Consul at the northern- Persian town of Meshed, Ringler Thomson, disagreed, and argued that the acquisition of Firuzeh would make a Russian encroachment on Khorassan much easier.¹¹¹ However, Thomson was a known alarmist, and Lascelles had had past cause to criticise his 'want of tact' and 'constant endeavours' to 'impute blame' to the Russian Consul-General at Meshed.¹¹² He chose to dismiss Thomson's apprehensions as 'exaggerated',¹¹³ and was backed up by Rosebery, who respected Lascelles' judgement and who merely advised that the Shah should not relinquish Firuzeh without considering its effect on the retention of his

¹⁰⁸ Lascelles to Rosebery, 17 April 1893, FO 248/562, No. 56; Lascelles to Lansdowne [tel.], 3 April 1893, MSS Eur D558/24.

¹⁰⁹ Lascelles to Thompson, 11 April 1893, FO 800/14.

¹¹⁰ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 12 April 1893, MSS Eur D 558/24.

¹¹¹ Thompson to Lascelles, 22 April 1893, FO 800/14.

¹¹² Lascelles to Col. Yate, 19 Sept 1893, *ibid.* See also Lascelles to Lansdowne, 12 April 1893, MSS Eur D558/24. Thomson had the reputation of being 'an awful fellow'. (Lascelles to Morier, 16 Feb 1893, Morier MSS, Box 25A/2). Earlier in April Thomson had sent Lascelles a memorandum detailing every single clash which had arisen at Meshed between Russia and England in the past few years. (Lascelles to Rosebery, enclosing memorandum by Thompson, 21 April 1893 FO 60/542, No. 57). Lascelles chose to disregard this information, on the grounds that although the Russians 'do and probably always will intrigue', and Russia could probably draw up an equally strong counter-indictment. Lascelles to Col. Yate, 19 Sept 1893, FO 800/14.

¹¹³ Lascelles to Lansdowne, tel.'s of 8 April 1893 and letter of 12 April 1893, MSS Eur D 558/24. Lascelles to Thompson, 11 April 1893, FO 800/14.

authority over the rest of Khorassan.¹¹⁴ Firuzeh was transferred to Russian control on 27 May 1893.¹¹⁵ However, this did not signal the beginning of an active Persian policy on Rosebery's part.

IV

If one reads purely anecdotal accounts of Lascelles' tenure at Tehran, one might gain the impression that Britain had sent an ineffective diplomat to serve in the Persian capital. In late 1892, the Persian Minister in London told Philip Currie that, 'Lascelles was liked but he was apathetic & desponding,' and complained of the influence of the Legations' chief interpreter, Harry Churchill, who allegedly 'misrepresented' matters to Lascelles.¹¹⁶ According to Sir Frank's German colleague at Tehran, Friedrich von Rosen, the British Minister 'never seemed to do any work at all,' and would get through his Chancery business during the short interval between breakfast and lunch, [and] spend the afternoon riding or playing tennis, and the evening at whist.'¹¹⁷

Yet, as Rosen goes on to say, the benefits of Lascelles' 'supreme' laziness were insufficiently appreciated, for 'nobody does more harm to international relations than the bustling diplomat... who tries to glean material for his reports from every conversation, and does not shrink from asking inopportune questions.'¹¹⁸ The internal situation in Persia after the collapse of the Régie severely constrained Lascelles' freedom of action in advancing British interests. His recognition of the impossibility

¹¹⁴ Lascelles to Lansdowne 12 April MSS Eur D 558/24, repeated in Lascelles to Thompson, 11 April 1893, FO 800/14.

¹¹⁵ Thornton, 'British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890, ii', p.70.

¹¹⁶ Minute by Currie marked 'Tehran Legation,' on Lascelles to Rosebery, 22 Nov 1892, FO 60/532, No. 179.

¹¹⁷ Friedrich von Rosen, *Oriental Memories of a German diplomatist* (New York, 1930), pp. 125-127.

¹¹⁸ Rosen, *Oriental Memories*, pp. 125-127.

of pursuing a 'forward' policy of economic advance in Persia, coupled with the realisation that Britain could not assist Persia in resisting Russia, drove him down the path of conciliation with Russia as he tried to do his 'best' with the hand he had been dealt. In these straitened circumstances Lascelles' conciliatory personality, his willingness to concede that Britain's Imperial interests were not always best served by a combative policy, were a strength rather than a weakness. The difficulties of his position can be further highlighted by the fact that his immediate successor, Sir Mortimer Durand, who tried to follow his line¹¹⁹ of Anglo-Russian 'rapprochement',¹²⁰ fared little better. As Foreign Secretary of India, Durand had more directly relevant experience than Sir Frank at the time of his appointment. But he confessed to feeling like a "jellyfish in a whirlpool"¹²¹ in the post¹²¹, and was unable to arrest the diminution of British influence. He also lacked Lascelles' personal touch; the Amin es-Sultan who had been 'so very friendly' with Sir Frank and his predecessors 'never "hit it off" with Sir Mortimer'¹²², who was unable to prevent the Amin from falling under Russian influence, and from removing Britain's key Oriental expert, Churchill, from Tehran.¹²³ Only under Arthur Hardinge (appointed in 1901) did Britain's position appear to retain the heights it had enjoyed in the early 1890s.¹²⁴

In personal terms, the Tehran Legation was an apprenticeship for Lascelles' Embassy at St Petersburg, and Lascelles' willingness to smoothen out Anglo-Russian relations impressed his predecessor to the point that, when Morier reluctantly resigned due to ill-health in 1893, he advised the Permanent Under Secretary, Philip Currie;-

¹¹⁹ Durand to Lascelles, 6 Sept 1894, FO 800/15. Durand told Lascelles his and de Butzow's sisters were personal friends.

¹²⁰ Durand to Lascelles, 22 Jan 1895, FO 800/16.

¹²¹ Quoted in Greaves, p. 101.

¹²² Schindler to Lascelles 12 Aug 1901, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/10.

¹²³ Spring-Rice to Lascelles, 15 Sept 1899, Spring Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/46; same to Chirol, 30 Aug 1902, CASR I 1/19 and Durand to Lascelles, 3 March 1896, FO 800/6.

¹²⁴ Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914*, p. 179.

'there is an ideal successor for me [:] Lascelles.'¹²⁵ This appointment gave Lascelles the scope he needed to continue to pursue better Anglo-Russian relations.

¹²⁵ Morier to Currie, 14 Dec 1893, Morier MSS, Box 25A/2.

b) Ambassador to Russia, 1894-95.

Lascelles' appointment as successor to Morier at St Petersburg was a logical progression for a diplomat whose career had been spent (in the words of one journalist) 'mainly in the East, where Russian interests are so often supposed to menace our own',¹ and a culmination of his encounters with Russian policy in Eastern Europe and in Central Asia. When Rosebery failed to persuade Lord Lansdowne to accept the embassy on his retirement from the Indian Viceroyalty, Lascelles, whose judgements as minister to Tehran Rosebery had deeply respected,² and who Morier had tipped to succeed him, was a natural second choice.

At St. Petersburg (as in previous postings) Lascelles learned to utilise the knowledge of the embassy staff, many of whom were Russian 'experts'. His appointment coincided with the transfer of the Counsellor of Embassy, Henry Howard, to Paris, and his replacement by Edward Goschen. Although Howard assured Lascelles that his replacement, Teddie Goschen was 'pleasant' and had an 'agreeable' wife,³ Goschen's inexperience led Lascelles to rely on more experienced Chancery staff, like Lancelot Carnegie and Hugh O'Beirne, who were both Russian speakers and who Lascelles recognised had 'a greater knowledge both of the place and the people.'⁴ In addition to being conscientious about Embassy work,⁵ these Chancery members were also on good terms with leading Russian officials and other diplomats. Lascelles particularly valued the services of O'Beirne, whom he dubbed 'one of the

¹ *The Daily News*, 10 March 1894.

² Gordon Martel, *Imperial diplomacy: Rosebery and the failure of foreign policy* (London, 1986), p.120

³ Howard to Lascelles, 14 Aug 1894, FO 800/15.

⁴ Lascelles to Sanderson, 22 May 1895, FO 800/17.

⁵ Lascelles to Kimberley, 31 Jan 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 33; see Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 March 1895, FO 800/17.

future lights of the diplomatic service'⁶, and in April 1894 Lascelles protested loudly against O'Beirne's transfer to another post, and pointed out that even his replacement by a Russian speaker would 'not be satisfactory, as the new man, however great his knowledge of the language might be, would be some time before he got to know the people at the different Ministries to whom I am in the habit of sending him when we want to get anything done.'⁷ Likewise, Lascelles highly valued the services of the Embassy's military attaché, Major W.H.H. Waters, whom he dubbed 'a most useful man,'⁸ who got 'on well with the Russians,'⁹ and who could periodically glean useful information. It was Waters' contacts in the Russian Intelligence Department, which confirmed to Lascelles the Russian Government's lack of control over their military in the Pamirs, leading him to downplay the seriousness of Russian intrigues against British interests in that area.¹⁰ Lascelles was reluctant to discourage the 'laudable zeal even of less able subordinates,'¹¹ and his attitude inspired loyalty in his staff. Waters, who came to serve under Lascelles again at Berlin (1900-1903), wrote of his Chief in glowing terms in three volumes of memoirs,¹² while O'Beirne later attempted to get transferred to Berlin during Lascelles' ambassadorship there.¹³

Lascelles's time at St Petersburg represented the continuation of Morier's attempt to reach a broad Anglo-Russian *rapprochement*, in the interest of peace¹⁴; and during his brief stay at St Petersburg, Lascelles confirmed expectations across the

⁶ Lascelles to Sanderson, 22 May 1895, FO 800/17.

⁷ Lascelles to Wodehouse, 24 April 1894, *ibid.* O'Beirne was replaced by Evelyn Grant-Duff. See also Lascelles to Sanderson, 8 Jan 1895, *ibid.*

⁸ Lascelles to Swaine, 30 Aug 1894, *ibid.*; Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 March 1895, *ibid.*

⁹ Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 March 1895, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Lascelles to Durand, 20 Aug 1894, *ibid.*

¹¹ Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 March 1894, FO 800/14.

¹² Waters felt the 'utmost confidence in, and the most sincere affection' for Lascelles. W.H.H. Waters, *Secret and Confidential: The Experiences of a Military Attaché* (London, 1926), p. 160.

¹³ O'Beirne to Lascelles, 28 Feb 1906, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/13.

¹⁴ See A. Ramm, *Sir Robert Morier*, *passim*.

British Press as 'a man who knows the last wile of the Muscovite,' who could aim to 'strengthen the very friendly relations which now fortunately exist between the two Governments', and help, with his practical knowledge of Russian foreign policy, to combat the 'Russophobia' of Britain public opinion, and contribute towards 'the maintenance of a happy understanding between the Muscovite and the Anglo-Indian Empire.'¹⁵

The reputation he had cultivated in Persia greatly eased Lascelles' transition: Russia's Foreign Minister, Giers, told Sir Frank at their first meeting that he was known to be 'very well disposed towards Russia'.¹⁶ Although Giers studiously avoided discussing Lascelles's past career in Bulgaria,¹⁷ Lascelles' initial reception by both the Russian Court and Foreign Office proved favourable.¹⁸ The new British Foreign Secretary Lord Kimberley greeted this 'favourable augury for the maintenance of good relations through your means'¹⁹ while Rosebery, now British Prime Minister, was 'indirectly vain' to hear of Lascelles's success.²⁰ While careful not to 'rely too much on civil speeches',²¹ Lascelles was gratified by his reception and impressed by Giers who appeared to be 'most friendly',²² and 'straight' with him,²³ in contrast to the late Sir William White's warning that Giers was 'as cunning a fox as they make them.'²⁴ Lascelles was also surprised by Alexander III. Expecting to find 'a shy man rather apt to be embarrassed by a new face,' Lascelles 'found him perfectly at his ease

¹⁵ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 March 1894; *ibid*, 10 March 1894; *The Daily News*, 10 March 1894; *The Leeds Mercury* 13 March 1894.

¹⁶ Lascelles to Kimberley, 23 July 1894, FO 65/1473, No. 163.

¹⁷ Lascelles to Rosebery, 23 July 1894, FO 65/1473, No. 163

¹⁸ *New York Times*, 25 Nov 1894, p.9.

¹⁹ Kimberley to Lascelles, 7 Aug 1894, FO 800/15.

²⁰ Rosebery to Lascelles, 6 Jan 1895, FO 800/16. See also Howard to Lascelles, 14 Aug 1894, FO 800/15.

²¹ Lascelles to Kimberley, 1 Aug 1894, FO 800/17.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ Lascelles to Durand, 30 Aug 1894, FO 800/17.

²⁴ Waters, *Secret and Confidential*, pp.115-116.

and willing to talk,' an impression which he hoped would be confirmed with experience.²⁵

Beneath the civil words, there were many reasons why in 1894 an Anglo-Russian understanding seemed increasingly propitious. Under Tsar Alexander III (1881-1894) and Giers, his Foreign Minister, Russia had been disinclined to pursue an adventurous foreign policy. The collapse of the Three Emperor's League, Russia's diplomatic defeats in Eastern Europe and the severing of the Russo-German Reinsurance Treaty by Berlin in 1890 had struck blows to Russian confidence, which was only slowly recovering with the advent of the Dual Alliance between Russia and France in 1894, and had made Russia more wary of her Western border than she had been for a generation. The country also held few funds with which to prosecute war; she had embarked on industrialization later than the other Powers and was heavily reliant on French loans.²⁶ Additionally, despite a series of economic reforms inaugurated by Alexander to try to ameliorate the plight of Russia's peasant population, Giers feared the revolutionary consequences of Russia's defeat in war.²⁷ He saw merit in working with Britain where possible, to reduce the ranks of Russia's potential enemies and deter Britain from adhering completely to the Triple Alliance to which she increasingly 'leaned'.²⁸ The Tsar thus encouraged Lascelles on his arrival to follow Morier's example of maintaining friendly relations with Russia.²⁹

From the British perspective, there was also much to be said for an understanding. As Foreign Secretary (1892-4) and then Prime Minister (1894-5), Lord Rosebery was painfully aware of the Indian Government's military deficiencies, in the face of

²⁵ Lascelles to Kimberley, 1 Aug 1894, FO 800/17.

²⁶ Marc Ferro, *Nicholas II: Last of the Tsars*, trans. Brian Pearce (London, 1992), p.46.

²⁷ Margaret Maxwell, 'A Re-examination of the Role of N.K. Giers as Russian Foreign Minister under Alexander III' *European Studies Review*, Vol. I, No. 4 (1971), p.358.

²⁸ C.J. Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, p.189.

²⁹ Lascelles to Kimberley, 29 July 1894, FO 65/1473, No. 164.

Russian strength in Central Asia. He was however reluctant to succumb to German pressure to align Britain more definitely with the Triple Alliance, reluctant even to confirm the Mediterranean agreements – fearing that Britain would be embroiled in European rivalries, - and he wished to demonstrate that equally good relations could be maintained with the newly forged Franco-Russian Alliance.³⁰ Russia had also, after 1887, abandoned a pro-active policy in Eastern Europe, leaving one less obstacle to harmonious relations.³¹ In Central Asia, Rosebery was in 1893 been able to reach an amicable settlement regarding encroachments by Russian military expeditions along the border of Afghanistan (the so-called ‘Pamirs crises’) by fixing a boundary between Russia and Afghanistan.³²

Thus when Lascelles arrived in St. Petersburg in August 1894, he found ‘no unpleasant question to deal with’.³³ On the contrary, the potential for closer Anglo-Russian ties soon showed itself in the accession of a new Tsar to the Imperial throne in late 1894. The general impression of Nicholas II, which Lascelles voiced, was that he was ‘a man of liberal ideas and very conscientious,’ although liable to ‘shrink’ from change which could be seen ‘as a reproach on his father.’³⁴ In Lascelles’ view, Nicholas’ apparent youth and inexperience were offset by his ‘amiable’ and ‘well intentioned,’ character, and his professed determination ‘to follow the pacific policy

³⁰ Gordon Martel, *Imperial diplomacy*, p.120; idem, ‘The Limits of Commitment: Rosebery and the Definition of the Anglo-German Understanding,’ in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jun., 1984), pp. 387-404.

³¹ Russia still refused to legally recognise Ferdinand as Prince Alexander’s successor, and Lascelles quickly learned that Giers was reluctant to discuss the painful topic of Bulgaria, who he held in ‘profound contempt’ for her ‘black ingratitude’; Lascelles to Rosebery, 23 July 1894, FO 65/1473, No. 163, and same to same, 28 July 1894, *ibid*, No. 166 confidential. Only under Lobanoff, did Bulgaria recognise Ferdinand, (March 1896), by which point Lascelles had left Russia. Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918*, pp.163-172.

³² See Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, pp. 187-190.

³³ Lascelles to Kimberley, 15 Aug 1894, FO 800/17. See Lowe, p. 187. The protracted negotiations over the Pamir question were being concluded in London, owing to Morier’s earlier ill-health. Ramm, *Morier*, p. 357; Lascelles to General Gordon, 20 Dec 1894, FO 800/17.

³⁴ Lascelles to Sanderson, 16 Jan 1895, FO 800/17.

of his lamented father'.³⁵ He seemed to begin his reign well, and Lascelles thought he had 'shown much more ability than he was generally credited with.'³⁶

Rosebery told Lascelles he wanted to 'begin a new and clean slate with Russia,' and 'to work loyally with her so long as she will let me,'³⁷ At a speech at the Guildhall in November 1894, he expressed a hope that the two countries would 'march with cordiality and without suspicion in Asiatic affairs.'³⁸ Lascelles was 'struck' by the friendly tone of Rosebery's speech,³⁹ and took evident encouragement from it. However, there were clear practical limits to Rosebery's concept of an 'understanding' No doubt bearing in mind recent Anglo-French confrontation over Siam (1893), Lascelles went as far as to tell the French Ambassador at St Petersburg, the Marquis de Montebello, that in his opinion a 'clear and frank understanding between England and Russia upon Asiatic questions' would secure the 'Peace of the world' for 'a very long period,' especially if France also joined in. Rosebery – ever cautious- approved Lascelles' language, but cautioned in his minutes that an Asiatic understanding 'could not be construed to imply a desire for an alliance antagonistic to that of Germany, Austria and Italy with whom H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernment] are and desire to remain on the most friendly terms.'⁴⁰

On specific questions, however, there proved to be less scope for an understanding. Once the Pamir agreement was signed in March 1895, after three years of wrangling, there was little appetite for further talks over Central Asia on

³⁵ Lascelles to Kimberley, 10 Oct 1894, FO 800/17; Lascelles to Gosselin, 25 Oct 1894, *ibid*; Lascelles to Kimberley, 15 Nov 1894, FO 65/1473, No.256; Lascelles to Kimberley, 22 Nov 1894, FO 800/17. See also Chirol to Lascelles, 31 Oct 1894, FO 800/15.

³⁶ Lascelles to General Gordon, 20 Dec 1894, FO 800/17.

³⁷ Rosebery to Lascelles, 6 Jan 1895, FO 800/16.

³⁸ T.G. Otte, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894-1905*, p.47.

³⁹ Lascelles to Kimberley, 22 Nov 1894, FO 800/17.

⁴⁰ Lascelles to Kimberley, 29 Nov 1894, FO 65/1473, No. 275 confidential, and minute thereon by Rosebery.

either side, while the focus of international affairs had shifted to events in the Far East.⁴¹ Lord Rosebery was unwilling to confront the ultimate question of the fate of either Persia or Afghanistan, especially as he had thought it improbable that the ailing Tsar Alexander would 'embark in an active forward policy in Asia.' In the winter of 1894-5 the ill health of the Amir of Afghanistan led Kimberley to worry about Russia's 'military party' and her Generals 'on the spot' taking advantage of the ensuing anarchy⁴², but he was not prepared to discuss a change of policy, as was shown by his horror at learning that the military attaché at St Petersburg, Colonel Waters, had suggested privately to the Russian Ambassador to London, de Staal, that Russia and Britain should discuss the possible partitioning of Afghanistan in the event. Kimberley cautioned there was 'no reason for hurrying on the conclusion', and warned Waters off discussing such a 'delicate topic' even academically.⁴³ A recovery in the Amir's health made the question less immediate, and led Lascelles to conclude that, while 'the question of a coterminous frontier between England and Russia' might (as some Russians hoped) be 'eventually inevitable and not altogether undesirable', meanwhile British policy in that area must remain one of 'let[ting] sleeping dogs lie.'⁴⁴ After leaving Tehran, Lascelles was equally reluctant to meddle in his old sphere of action,⁴⁵ and continued to recognise the Government's reluctance to pursue a new policy there.

Lascelles' activity was confined to giving Russia the benefit of the doubt in downplaying further incidents on the Afghan border. For example, when in the

⁴¹ Lascelles to Sanderson, 25 Oct 1894, FO 800/17. Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 March 1895, *ibid*; Sanderson to Lascelles, 20 March 1895, FO 800/16. Lascelles to Sanderson, 11 April 1895, FO 800/17.

⁴² Kimberley to Lascelles, 16 Oct 1894, FO 800/15.

⁴³ Sanderson to Lascelles, 9 Jan 1895, FO 800/16. Lascelles to Sanderson, 16 Jan 1895, FO 800/17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

⁴⁵ Lascelles to Colonel H.E. Wells, c. 30 Aug 1894 [undated], FO 800/17.

summer of 1894 a new Russian expedition under Colonel Yonoff (who had led the Pamirs expedition) appeared in Shignan, on the Afghan frontier, Lascelles defended Giers' statement that Yonoff's actions were 'completely unauthorized,' characterising the incident as the 'old story' of an enterprising officer acting on his own responsibility,⁴⁶ and even protested at instructions to take the question up with the Russian authorities, suggesting to Sanderson- the new Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office- that 'instead of making further remonstrance' he should be authorized to thank the Russians for the simultaneous withdrawal of older military expeditions from nearby areas, and should disregard the enthusiastic young officers egged on by the military party at St Petersburg. Kimberley took Lascelles' view, despite the entrenched scepticism of others within the Foreign Office.⁴⁷

Nor did agreement with Russia ultimately offer itself in the two other areas of immediate international concern in 1894-5, the Far East and Near East. In the summer of 1894, soon after Lascelles' arrival at St Petersburg, a Sino-Japanese feud erupted over the issue of economic dominance in Korea. Both Russia and Britain had cause for intervention. Russia saw her own interests threatened in Manchuria, through which her Trans-Siberian railway was to pass, while Great Britain's fear was economic – she accounted for seventy per cent of China's foreign trade.⁴⁸ Lascelles was greatly pleased to find Giers anxious to talk about mediation in the Far East, and was encouraged enough to hope Anglo-Russian counsels might avert war.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Lascelles to Durand, 30 Aug 1894, FO 800/17. He hoped the incident 'will not give much trouble although I am afraid it will irritate India considerably.' Lascelles to Col. Swaine, 30 Aug 1894, *ibid*.

⁴⁷ Lascelles to Sanderson, 12 Sept 1894, *ibid*. Both Barrington and Sanderson thought the Russians were shielding their officers, with the latter wryly observing to Lascelles that Russia had similarly disavowed involvement in Prince Alexander's abduction in 1886. Barrington to Lascelles, 3 Oct 1894, and Sanderson to Lascelles, 17 Oct 1894, FO 800/15.

⁴⁸ Lowe, *Reluctant Imperialists*, p. 192.

⁴⁹ Lascelles to Kimberley. 23 & 29 July 1894, FO 65/1473, No's 163 & 164. Lascelles to Durand, 30 Aug 1894, FO 800/17; see also Lascelles to Swaine, same date, *ibid*.

Kimberley too was pleased that, after the conclusion of the Pamirs incident, Russia's tone continued to be amicable.⁵⁰ However, the intervention failed, and further British attempts to discuss mediation with Russia were severely hampered by Giers's deteriorating health, and also the lack of executive approval from Alexander, who in the autumn of 1894 was taken ill.⁵¹ After Giers's demise, Lascelles found his successor, Lobanoff, agreeable to do business with and, receiving Lobanoff's assurances 'of his desire to walk hand in hand with England',⁵² Sir Frank remained convinced 'that if the two Governments came to a clear understanding on the... great questions we might squabble about smaller matters without doing much harm.'⁵³

By early 1895, it was clear to many, including Lascelles, that Japan's victory over China would overturn the *status quo* in the Far East. 'People do not quite realize,' Lascelles wrote to Durand in March 'that the appearance of a new Great Power in the East completely alters the state of things which has hitherto existed and may have very far reaching consequences.'⁵⁴ Initially Lascelles envisaged collaboration against the 'very onerous terms' of peace Japan was expected to impose.⁵⁵ Lascelles recognised that Russia strongly opposed Japanese acquisitions due to territorial aspirations of her own,⁵⁶ in particular her 'notorious desire...for a sea port in some part of the world which would remain open all the year round'. Sir Frank could thus easily understand her jealousy towards the 'energetic and well organized'

⁵⁰ Kimberley to Lascelles, 7 Aug 1894, FO 800/15.

⁵¹ Lascelles to Kimberley, 29 Aug, 7, 17 & 21 Oct 1894, FO 65/1473, No.'s 185 210 Confidential, 220 & 222 Confidential; Lascelles to Kimberley, 10 & 25 Oct 1894, and to Sanderson, 12 Sept 1894, FO 800/17.

⁵² Lascelles to Wodehouse, 28 Feb 1895, FO 800/17; Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 March 1895, *ibid.*

⁵³ Lascelles to Kimberley, 31 Jan 1895, *ibid.* He had earlier speculated that 'there would be every hope of a good understanding' between England and Russia if Lobanoff succeeded Giers. Lascelles to Kimberley, 22 Nov 1894, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Lascelles to Durand, 12 March 1895, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Lascelles to Kimberley, 26 Feb 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 45 Confidential.

⁵⁶ Lascelles to Sanderson, 11 April 1895, FO 800/17.

Japanese nation,⁵⁷ and was not without sympathy for Russia- he thought Britain would only have done the same in her position.⁵⁸

Yet while Japan's victory and her territorial demands on China, most notably the cession of the Liaotung peninsula, threatened Russia's Manchurian ambitions,⁵⁹ Britain deemed her own interests in China to have been secured by a Commercial Treaty concluded with Japan on the eve of the war (July 1894).⁶⁰ Furthermore, as Lascelles recognised, Britain deemed it 'unwise to make an enemy of a Power which was obtaining a preponderant position in the Far East.'⁶¹ On 8 April 1895, the Cabinet thus voted against intervening to roll back Japan's 'onerous' gains, with Kimberley and Rosebery unprepared to 'purchase [Anglo-Russian co-operation] at the price of a confrontation with Japan.'⁶²

While officially defending British policy,⁶³ Lascelles had to contend with the disappointment of Lobanoff, for whom 'no amount of compensation' could make up for the alteration of the Far Eastern *status quo* to Russia's detriment.⁶⁴ He was 'sore' and 'angry' at Britain, whose abstention was looked on as 'a positive support of Japan.' Despite personally believing that Britain was right in abstaining from intervention, privately Lascelles presciently worried about the implications of a fresh, Russo-Japanese feud if the latter 'held out' against Russian demands, which 'would

⁵⁷ Lascelles to Kimberley, 10 April 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 89 secret and confidential.

⁵⁸ Lascelles to Sanderson, April 1895, FO 800/17.

⁵⁹ Lowe, *Reluctant Imperialists*, p. 192.

⁶⁰ Kimberley told Lascelles that Britain's interests were insufficiently affected by Japan's terms to justify 'interfering.' Kimberley to Lascelles, 1 May 1895, FO 800/16.

⁶¹ Lascelles to Kimberley, 9 April 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 88; see also Lascelles to Sanderson, 11 April 1895, FO 800/17.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 61, p. 63. Partially to blame was the challenge to Rosebery and Kimberley's predominance in foreign policy making by Harcourt, the Chancellor, who advocated abstention from intervening.

⁶³ Lascelles to Kimberley, 24 April 1895, FO 800/17; same to same, 20 April 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 102 confidential.

⁶⁴ Lascelles to Kimberley, 10 April 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 91; same to same, 22 April 1895, *ibid.*, No. 107 confidential.

not suit us [Britain] at all',⁶⁵ as war in the Pacific would injur Britain's trade.⁶⁶ He therefore privately counselled the Japanese Minister at St Petersburg that Japan should be 'moderate in her demands',⁶⁷ and urged Kimberley to advocate a similar approach in Tokyo, and to 'approach Japan as our friend and point out that the Russian objections to her possession of the Liaotung peninsula are serious and reasonable,' and that her chances of successfully opposing Russia, Germany and France were low. Such advice 'could scarcely be resented by Japan, it might do something towards soothing the ruffled feelings of the Russians'.⁶⁸ Kimberley however declined Lascelles suggestion,⁶⁹ which amounted to 'pulling Russia's Chinese chestnuts out of the fire for her,' but did counsel the Japanese Minister in London to adhere to the suggestions of the other Great Powers. Despite keeping Russia informed of his action however, Kimberley's action counted for little in St Petersburg when on 4 May Japan eventually bowed to the pressure of Russia, France and Germany.⁷⁰ Britain's absence was conspicuous, and Kimberley recognised that Lascelles' relations with Lobanoff must necessarily 'suffer' because of Britain's lack of protest.⁷¹ Despite no lack of energy on his own part, Lascelles thus felt the effects of the deterioration in Anglo-Russian relations and admitted to Durand in late May that 'the Russians are general are very cross with us'. However he still found Lobanoff 'a delightful person to deal

⁶⁵ Lascelles to Sanderson, 11 April, 1895, FO 800/17; see also Lascelles to Kimberley, 10 April 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 89 secret and confidential.

⁶⁶ Lascelles to Kimberley, 24 April 1895, FO 800/17.

⁶⁷ Lascelles to Kimberley, 10 April 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 93.

⁶⁸ Lascelles to Kimberley, 24 April 1895, FO 800/17: Lascelles proposed that Wei-Hai-Wei could be given to Japan instead of the peninsula, which would discourage Japan's expansion in Russia's direction, and Russia might get compensation elsewhere. See Lascelles to Kimberley 25 April 1895, FO 65/1490, No. 116 confidential.

⁶⁹ Kimberley argued that Japan's possession of Wei-Hai-Wei would be 'more dangerous to China than of Port Arthur' and would put the Japanese 'in inconvenient proximity to Shanghai' (a British possession), and the 'great trade route of the Yangtze River.' Kimberley to Lascelles, 1 May 1895, FO 800/16.

⁷⁰ Otte, *The China Question*, pp. 69-70.

⁷¹ Kimberley to Lascelles, 1 May 1895, FO 800/16.

with,' and even hoped that 'now that that question has been settled....we may get on more friendly terms again.'⁷²

Yet after Britain's vacillation over the coercion of Japan, the Far Eastern triplique were determined on the 'exclusion of English capital' when China sought loans to pay off her war indemnity to Japan. Russia resented Britain's attempt to get a share in the loan to consolidate her influence in China,⁷³ and when Lascelles went to 'sound out' Lobanoff on a possible joint loan,⁷⁴ he was evasive and failed to reveal that Russia's Finance Minister, Witte, was already actively raising a loan.⁷⁵ Lascelles found it difficult to believe Lobanoff knew nothing about Witte's communications over the loan with the Rothschilds in Paris,⁷⁶ and could only 'come to the conclusion that he wilfully deceived me.'⁷⁷ By July 1895, while the Ambassador still thought Lobanoff to be 'very able and very agreeable,' he had lost some confidence in him although with a lack of competent alternative, he still maintained Lobanoff was 'far away the best Foreign Minister that could be found for Russia.'⁷⁸

Lascelles's opinion of the feasibility of a Russian understanding also suffered a blow in the Near East. In December 1894, evidence came to light of the Sultan's atrocities against his own Armenian subjects, calling for an international response.⁷⁹

The matter deeply stirred public opinion in Britain, where the Government were

⁷² Lascelles to Durand, 22 May 1895, FO 800/17.

⁷³ Dufferin to Kimberley, 25 May 1895, quoted in Otte, *The China Question*, p.77.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp.87-91.

⁷⁵ See Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917*, p. 180.

⁷⁶ Lascelles to Sanderson, 22 May 1895, FO 800/17.

⁷⁷ Lascelles to Kimberley, 19 June 1895, *ibid*. See also same to same 6 June 1895, *ibid*.

⁷⁸ Lascelles to Kimberley, 3 July 1895, *ibid*. On the possible alternatives to Lobanoff, see e.g. Lascelles to Kimberley, 15 Aug 1894, 31 Jan & 1 Aug 1895, *ibid*; Lascelles to O'Conor, 4 Sept 1896, OCON 6/1/7.

⁷⁹ There is a vast literature on this subject. See Roy Douglas, 'Britain and the Armenian Question, 1894-7' *Historical Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Mar., 1976), pp. 113-133; the relevant chapters of J.A.S. Grenville *Lord Salisbury and foreign policy: the close of the nineteenth century* (London, 1964), and of Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar*.

pressed to act on behalf of the Armenians.⁸⁰ It also affected Russia as she had a large number of Armenians within her own borders.⁸¹ At first, the Powers were agreed that their interests lay in calling for an enquiry into the alleged atrocities. Nicholas II told Lascelles in February 1895 that there was no difference of opinion between the two Countries,⁸² and the Ambassadors of France, Russia and Britain agreed to work towards reform proposals at Constantinople.

However, after the Sultan rejected the Reform proposals in June 1895, the two Powers were less united as to the next step. In May 1895, Russian Armenians, who were also, to a lesser degree, being oppressed by their Government, seemed ready to start up their own agitation, and Lascelles noted that Lobanoff went from being 'positively lukewarm' about the reforms to 'positively cold,' arousing fears that Britain would become isolated in the question, as France would follow the Russian lead.⁸³ Russia did not want the question of an independent Armenia raised, and looked with concern to the growing number of 'Armenian Committees' in England and their influence on Liberal foreign policy.⁸⁴ Lascelles explained that Lobanoff wanted to do 'something' on the subject but dwelt 'on the difficulty of obtaining a satisfactory solution.'⁸⁵ As Sanderson told Lascelles, Britain could not 'without dishonour allow the question to drop.'⁸⁶ Lobanoff was certainly against coercive measures to force the

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.161.

⁸¹ Lascelles to Kimberley, 18 Dec 1894, FO 65/1473, No. 293.

⁸² Lascelles to Kimberley, 26 Feb 1894, FO 65/1490, No. 45 confidential.

⁸³ Lascelles to Sanderson, 22 May 1895, FO 800/17. Lascelles thought if an insurrection broke out among Ottoman Armenians Russia might even help suppress it.

⁸⁴ Lascelles to Kimberley, 13 & 28 March 1895, FO 65/1490, No.'s 59 & 81. Kimberley to Lascelles, 25 June 1895, FO 800/16; Lascelles to Kimberley, 3 July 1895, FO 800/17.

⁸⁵ Lascelles to Kimberley, 28 March 1895, FO 800/17. Despite a personal antipathy to the Armenian reform scheme, Lobanoff was apparently willing not to 'interfere' with his Ambassador at Constantinople, Nelidoff, who was 'keen on the subject.' Lascelles to Sanderson, 9 May 1895, *ibid*.

⁸⁶ Sanderson to Lascelles, 20 March 1895, FO 800/16.

Sultan to accept reforms.⁸⁷ Indeed, Lascelles suspected the Russians of 'secretly helping the Sultan' in having blocked reform at Constantinople, and the German Ambassador, Prince Radolin, noted the British Ambassador's growing irritation against Russia and 'also against Prince Lobanoff, with whom he used to be rather friendly.'⁸⁸

This sentiment was shared by Lord Salisbury, who in May 1895 again returned to the Foreign Office.⁸⁹ Lobanoff looked anxiously towards Salisbury's return. Against Salisbury's 'constant support for the integrity of Turkey,' Lobanoff counterbalanced his 'personal friendship' for Sir Philip Currie, now British Ambassador at Constantinople, who was urging action to secure reform.⁹⁰ Salisbury's line did little to ease the growing Anglo-Russian tension. Although he told Lascelles that Britain had 'no intention whatever' of supporting Armenian autonomy, and wanted only 'moderate security and good government,' he wanted to know whether Russia would use coercion against the Sultan if he proved 'utterly obstinate'.⁹¹ Lobanoff gave Lascelles to understand very clearly that she would not.⁹² The Armenian question remained unsolved when, in autumn 1895, fresh massacres broke out at Constantinople.

By this time, however, Lascelles had once again moved posts. In August 1895, Lascelles was suddenly offered a transfer to the Embassy at Berlin due to the retirement of Sir Edward Malet, and wired back his acceptance.⁹³ His reason for doing so was clear: in offering him Berlin, Salisbury confessed to Lascelles that he

⁸⁷ Lascelles to Sanderson, 6 June 1895, FO 800/17. Lascelles to Kimberley, 6 June 1895, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Prince von Radolin to Prince von Hohenlohe, 10 June 1895, GP IX.232, in E.T.S. Dugdale [trans.] *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914*, Volume II: From Bismarck's fall to 1898 (London, 1929), p. 232.

⁸⁹ Salisbury to Lascelles, 17 Sept 1895, FO 800/16.

⁹⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 July 1895, FO 800/17.

⁹¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 July 1895, FO 800/16.

⁹² Lascelles to Salisbury, 14 Aug 1895, FO 800/17.

⁹³ Lascelles to Salisbury [tel.], 28 Aug 1895, *ibid.*

had 'tried for a long time to fill the place without moving you, for I knew how valuable you were in St Petersburg: but when it came to adjust the rival claims of the two [posts], there could be no doubt that Berlin was the most important of the two. We may, & I hope shall, retain the friendship of Germany: but I see very little hope of regaining the friendship of Russia.'⁹⁴

Lascelles confessed to his new Chief that the 'excellent impression' produced by England's sympathy for Alexander II's death had now 'worn off,'⁹⁵ and while sorry to say goodbye to his Russian counterparts, some of whom he had found 'very pleasant and agreeable', he confessed too, 'that my hope of seeing a really satisfactory understanding between the two countries seems as far as ever from realisation.' Despite the success of the Pamirs negotiations, and a temporarily more 'satisfactory' tone from Lobanoff, after the disagreements in the Far and Near East Lascelles noted the 'bitterly hostile' tone of the Press, which he was sure the Russian Government could alter if they wanted to be more friendly towards Britain.⁹⁶

An assessment of Lascelles' short career at St Petersburg has necessarily to be judged against the events he had to deal with. Despite establishing good personal relations with the Russian elite, the momentous implications of the Sino-Japanese war and Armenian atrocities afforded Lascelles little scope for action in Russia. As in Tehran however St Petersburg demonstrated Lascelles' willingness to accommodate and maintain amicable relations with those Powers seen as Britain's Imperial rivals, in order to reduce the strain of defending British interests.

Sir Frank's transfer to Berlin ended seventeen years of experience in Eastern posts, and he would not be called on to use his expertise again, but the realisation of

⁹⁴ Salisbury to Lascelles, 17 Sept 1895, FO 800/16.

⁹⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 July 1895, FO 800/17.

⁹⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 Aug 1895, *ibid.*

the potential scale of Anglo-Russian – and Anglo-French feuds remained a background influence, as too did the possibility of détente with Britain's Imperial rivals. It was with this experience in mind, as well as the background of Britain's continued association with the Triple Alliance Powers, that he entered his new post.

Lascelles and the search for an Anglo-German understanding, 1895-1908.

a) Persona grata, 1895-1902

In the context of the vast literature on Anglo-German relations in the pre-1914 period, the Berlin Embassy of Sir Frank Lascelles has naturally attracted attention before now.¹ Lascelles's tenure at Berlin (1895-1908) straddles the period of what Paul Kennedy has termed the 'flowering' period of Anglo-German 'antagonism'.

In contrast to Lascelles's earlier career, his embassy at Berlin has received treatment in two earlier D Phil theses: first by Cornelia Brooke,² and then by Willem-Alexander van't Padje.³ Cornelia Brooke's thesis dealt exclusively with the first five years Lascelles's Embassy, but W.A. Van't Padje's work has tackled Lascelles's thirteen years at Berlin in the context of the growing 'imperialist rivalry' between Great Britain and Germany. In deference to this fact, the following chapter will not attempt an exhaustive account of Lascelles's time at the Berlin embassy, but will rather seek to highlight key themes or episodes within his career which it is felt will throw light on Lascelles's views and diplomatic approach in Berlin.

In his thesis Dr. Van't Padje focussed on the private correspondence between Ambassador and successive Foreign Secretaries. This chapter will also incorporate Lascelles's extensive official correspondence with the British Foreign Office, private

¹ See, e.g., Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914*; idem, *Empire and Continent: studies in British foreign policy from the 1880s to the First World War* (London, 1987), Zara S. Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the origins of the First World War*; A.J.P. Taylor *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe 1848-1918*; William Leonard Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902* (New York, 1951) John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy, 1888-1900*, (Cambridge, 2004). G.W. Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900-1907*.

² Cornelia E. Brooke, 'The Queen's Ambassador to Her Grandson Sir Frank Lascelles: A Study of Anglo-German Relations from 1895-1900' (D Phil thesis Vassar College, New York, 1971).

³ Willem-Alexander Van't Padje, 'At the heart of the growing Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry: Two Ambassadors at Berlin 1884-1908' (D Phil thesis, St John's College, Oxford, 2001).

correspondence with his journalist friend Valentine Chirol,⁴ with family members and also with Permanent Undersecretaries and other Foreign Office officials, and also uses accounts of Lascelles' views and activities from *The Times*' Berlin correspondent George Saunders, plus extracts of a diary kept by the British naval attaché in Berlin (1906-08), Philip Wylie Dumas.⁵

Against the backdrop of the growing British estrangement from Germany after 1902, the Anglo-German Naval rivalry and, ultimately, the defining event of 1914 it is hard to resist the temptation of asking why Lascelles' mission ultimately 'failed', and to use his Embassy to depict warning signs of the diplomatic re-alignments and conflagration to come. It is Van't Padje's contention that during his time in Berlin,

Lascelles mainly pointed to one aspect of the Anglo-German antagonism which he mistakenly regarded as the one fundamental cause of the tension: the strained personal relationship between King and Kaiser. His Germanophile attitude and his close and personal acquaintance with the Emperor however, decisively influenced or rather blurred his views and opinions on Anglo-German relations. He regarded the Kaiser as a far more important figure in the process of political decision-making in Germany as[sic] he actually was. Thus, he neither understood the German political structure nor was able to give a clear analysis of the Anglo-German friction....'⁶

Van't Padje argues that Lascelles should have been more aware of the 'cultural, economic, military and naval elements' but instead 'had the wrong perception,

⁴ The bulk of this correspondence has also been used in Linda B. Fritzinger, *Diplomat without portfolio: Valentine Chirol, His Life and The Times*, (New York, 2006).

⁵ Valentine Chirol, George Saunders & Donald Mackenzie-Wallace MSS, News International Archive, London; Dumas diary, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds library Special Collections, RNMN/DUMAS.

⁶ Willem-Alexander Van't Padje, 'At the heart of the growing Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry: Two Ambassadors at Berlin 1884-1908' p.249. The 'Germanophile' tag is stressed again on pp's 93, 245, & 251.

intensely concentrating on the relationship between King and Kaiser and the latter's complaints about Anti-German feeling in England.'⁷

Rather than seeking to overturn Van't Padje's thesis, the following chapter will attempt to explain Lascelles' apparent 'Germanophile' tendencies and his focus on the Emperor's personality. It will contend that his two constant aims while at Berlin- to work for better Anglo-German relations and to retain the friendship of the German Emperor- were justified in the context of contemporary perceptions about Anglo-German relations; that the Kaiser's volatile nature and the difficult relationship he had with his English Royal relations meant that Lascelles' inclination to play up the Monarch's pro-British sentiments did not seem wholly unjustified or out of keeping with his role; Lascelles' social ease and aristocratic roots were the reason for his appointment, rather than a long experience of German affairs. But he was also more aware of the limits to Anglo-German co-operation and more wary of Germany's 'pin-prick' diplomacy than has been acknowledged. Lascelles was always conscious that Britain would seek co-operation with other Powers to secure solutions to her imperial burden. However, like other British foreign policy makers until at least 1902, he was keen to work with Germany out of a sense of shared interests, in the context of the uneasy challenge to Britain's supremacy by France and Russia up until 1895, and this also explains why, even after the Edwardian diplomatic revolution, this Victorian diplomat continued to believe an Anglo-German understanding was the best way to preserve peace, and the *status quo*.

⁷ Ibid, p.230.

I

It is Dr. Van't Padje's argument that Lascelles' appointment in 1895 signalled a 'lack of highly qualified British diplomats',⁸ but in many ways Lascelles was perfectly suited to the social and professional demands of Berlin. It is true that he was at best second choice owing to the fact that the Kaiser's first preference, Sir Garnet Wolseley, a soldier, was determined on the post of commander in chief of the army. Following Wolseley's refusal of the offer of Berlin, Salisbury thought that career diplomats should take priority over the Emperor's 'desire for a *grand seigneur*.' After having second thoughts about moving Edmund Monson⁹ from Vienna, and feeling unable to send O'Connor to a Protestant Court because of his Catholicism, Salisbury proposed Lascelles instead as ambassador.¹⁰ Importantly, the Queen justified the choice to Wilhelm II on the grounds of Sir Frank's ability, her confidence that he would 'do all he could' to maintain friendly relations between Britain and Germany, and his family connections: he was a nephew (by marriage) to the Duke of Sutherland who had been a great friend of Wilhelm I, and a great-uncle to Wilhelm II's father. The Kaiser's social demands were thus satisfied- even though Lascelles's wife was not a 'Grand dame'.¹¹

Lascelles' own decision to accept Berlin was partially a negative one. He had, by August 1895, despaired of any improvement in Anglo-Russian relations,¹² and indeed the tenor of Salisbury's advice in offering him the post was that he 'could do

⁸ Ibid, p.34.

⁹ Sir Edmund Monson (1834-1909), British diplomat, was ambassador to Vienna (1893-1896) and Paris (1896-1904).

¹⁰ Raymond A. Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1815-1914*, (Ontario, 1983), p. 190. See also John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy, 1888-1900*, p. 775.

¹¹ G.E. Buckle (ed.), *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, Vol. ii (London 1931), Victoria to Wilhelm II, 28 Aug 1895, p.561.

¹² Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 Aug 1895, FO 800/17.

much more good there than at St Petersburg.'¹³ Possibly, this prospect eased any pecuniary disadvantages. He had also fond memories of being in Berlin in the 1860s – admittedly a less fractious time for Anglo-German relations.

On offering Lascelles the post of Ambassador to Berlin, Salisbury had stressed the importance to Britain of retaining German friendship.¹⁴ Since 1887 Salisbury had two main aims in foreign policy, which up to 1895 proved complementary: to safeguard Constantinople and to align with Germany diplomatically.¹⁵ From 1887 Britain's adhesion to the Mediterranean Agreements had meant a loose affiliation with Germany's Triple Alliance partners, Austria and Italy. Germany's severing of the 'wire' to St Petersburg in 1890, and the conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance (1894) had formed a further common interest between the two Powers. Germany's fears of this new alignment for her European position were matched by Britain's concerns about its implications for her own Imperial position.¹⁶ Lascelles' suggestion at his pre-appointment briefing with Salisbury, which he took up in his first interview with the German Foreign Secretary, that Germany should be 'encouraged' to conciliate Russia, (and weaken her ties with France)¹⁷ reflected this concern.¹⁸

From the outset however, Salisbury left Lascelles in no doubt of the difficulty of his new mission.¹⁹ The German Government had hoped that Salisbury would continue his loose affinity to the Triple Alliance by re-affirming his commitment the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887, and thus end the uncertainty caused by his

¹³ Salisbury to Lascelles [tel.], 25 Aug 1895, FO 800/16.

¹⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 March 1896, FO 800/17.

¹⁵ See C.J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean 1886-1896* (London, 1965), p.108.

¹⁶ See J.A.S. Grenville, 'Gołuchowski, Salisbury, and the Mediterranean Agreements, 1895-7', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, xxxvi (1957-8), p.341.

¹⁷ Memo by Lascelles on conversation with Salisbury, 4 Dec 1895, FO 800/17; Lascelles to Salisbury, 9 Dec 1895, FO 64/1351, No.299.

¹⁸ See also Lascelles to Salisbury, 9 Dec 1895, FO 64/1351, No.299.

¹⁹ Hatzfeldt too warned Lascelles that his position would 'by no means' be easy. Memo by Lascelles on conversation with Hatzfeldt, 31 Oct 1895, FO 800/17.

Liberal predecessor's refusal to do so.²⁰ However, in the Near East, Salisbury admitted to Lascelles that 'it might become necessary to reconsider our Mediterranean Policy.'²¹ The British Admiralty's reluctance to send ships to the Mediterranean to force the Sultan into accepting Great Power reforms on the Armenian question in the summer of 1895, coupled with the British public's growing hostility to the Sultan, had been decisive for Salisbury in contemplating the abandonment of Britain's traditional policy of defending Constantinople against a Russian attack; his willingness to discuss a partition of Turkey had led to German fears that he would thus renege on his obligations to Austria in the Near East- leading the then Secretary of State of the German Foreign Office, Marschall,²² to warn that if Italy and Austria could no longer count on England, they might have to look to St Petersburg.²³ The German Government's anxiety to know what Britain was 'driving at' after five years of uncertainty and her attempts to 'cling to the possibility of a friendly understanding' with England,²⁴ led Lascelles to receive entreaties-often repeated during his first year at Berlin for proof of England's fidelity to the Triple Alliance-such as permitting Italian troops to land at Zeila in her campaign against Abyssinia.²⁵ It is with some justice that C.J. Lowe remarks that 'once England had lost interest in the Straits she had lost interest in the Triple Alliance' – and thus Germany's tactics reverted to hoping an Anglo-French or Anglo-Russian war would bring Britain closer to the

²⁰ See, Gordon Martel, 'The Limits of Commitment: Rosebery and the definition of the Anglo-German understanding.' *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 27 (1984), pp387-404; also idem, *Imperial Diplomacy: Rosebery and the Failure of Foreign Policy*, (Kingston, 1986).

²¹ Memo by Lascelles on conversation with Salisbury, 4 Dec 1895, FO 800/17.

²² Baron Adolf Freiherr Marschall von Bieberstein (1842-1912).

²³ Chirol to Lascelles, 9 Nov 1895, CASR I 1/14.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 14 Dec 1895, FO 64/1352, Tel No. 55; Lascelles to Salisbury, 14 Dec 1895; see also Lascelles to Sanderson, 28 Dec 1895, FO 800/17. See also Sanderson to Lascelles, 23 and 26 Dec 1895, FO 800/6.

Triple Alliance on the terms she wanted.²⁶ Lascelles was soon alive to Germany's repeated hectoring attempts, to 'frighten' England into joining the Triple Alliance, or at least to side with her exclusively.²⁷ Before Lascelles departed for Berlin, the German Ambassador in London, Paul von Hatzfeldt, warned him that Germany would seek agreement with France and Russia if Britain refused to clarify her Near Eastern policy.²⁸ When in December 1895 the Emperor accused Britain of collaborating with Russia to establish a condominium at Constantinople, based on purely academic discussions at St Petersburg, he sensed the Kaiser's resentment at Germany being treated as a *quantité négligeable* which he was keen to disprove.²⁹ In early 1896, he also became aware through Chirol's conversations with Friedrich von Holstein, the leading spirit of the German Foreign Office,³⁰ that Germany claimed to have attempted to forge an anti-English continental coalition in early 1896 though- erroneously- he regarded these threats as 'a bit of bluff'³¹

From Lascelles' despatches it is clear that he did not regard an Anglo-German alignment as the only possible solution to Britain's Imperial problems. A proposal from the French Ambassador, Herbette, in January 1896 at the height of Anglo-German tension over the Krüger telegram,³² that France would give a self-denying ordinance over Egypt if Britain evacuated the country, induced him to counsel Salisbury to consider an alternative, should German hostility over the Transvaal force

²⁶ C.J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, p.117.

²⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 29 Feb 1896, FO 64/ 1376, No. 49, encl copy of conversation between Col. Swaine and Friedrich von Holstein. See also Lascelles to Salisbury, 31 Dec 1895, FO 64/1359, No. 176 confidential.

²⁸ See also Memo by Lascelles on conversation with Hatzfeldt, 31 Oct 1895, FO 800/17.

²⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 Dec 1895 FO 800/17.

³⁰ Baron F. von Holstein, Berlin Foreign Office, 1880-1906.

³¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 Jan 1896, FO 800/17.

³² Jules Herbette, French Ambassador in Berlin, 1886-1896.

England into a 'change of policy.'³³ This advice complemented Salisbury's growing desire for greater freedom of movement in British policy and decreased dependency on Germany.³⁴ Germany's dependence on Anglo-French rivalry in Egypt was well-known- and when in February 1896 Marschall played up rumours that Russians were using their influence at Constantinople to settle the Egyptian question against England, Lascelles had shrewdly retorted that 'many influential people in England,' favoured evacuation and would not be sorry to see the question settled.³⁵ Lascelles took such warnings over Egypt as a sign of Germany's nervousness at a possible Anglo-French agreement.³⁶ Lascelles, and many diplomats, still felt Britain was strong enough to stand alone,³⁷ and he told Herbette that Germany's method of hitting Britain in the pit of the stomach to tame her, might instead 'hurt and make John Bull angry.'³⁸

However despite questioning Germany's hectoring methods, Lascelles was ultimately alive to the continued advantages of German friendship. This was in evidence when on 3 March 1896, the Emperor paid an impromptu visit to the Berlin Embassy, staying from ten in the evening until half past one in the morning,³⁹ partly 'to make it up and shake hands' after recent tension in South Africa.⁴⁰ The Kaiser warned Lascelles that, according to an anonymous source, France and Russia were planning to undermine Britain's position, Russia by acquiring territory in the Balkans and on the Red Sea, France by taking the Canary islands, thus cutting the Cape and

³³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 Jan 1896, FO 64/1376, No.7. See J.D. Hargreaves, 'Entente Manquée: Anglo-French relations 1895-1896,' *Cambridge Historical Journal* Vol. 11, No. 1 (1953), pp. 65-92, especially pp. 75-77, 84.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.69.

³⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 Feb 1896, FO 64/1376, No.47.

³⁶ See e.g. Lascelles to Salisbury 29 Feb 1896, FO 64/1376, No. 49.

³⁷ See Durand to Lascelles, 3 March 1896, FO 800/6.

³⁸ Lascelles to Sanderson, 1 Feb 1896, FO 800/17.

³⁹ Spring Rice to Villiers, 14 March 1896, in Stephen Gwynn (ed.), *The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring Rice: A Record* (London, 1929), Vol. I, p.200.

⁴⁰ Gosselin to Barrington, 9 March 1896, SP 120/30.

Suez routes to England's Eastern possessions, and that the Egyptian question would soon be raised again. He invited Britain to join the Triple Alliance, or to assist Italian troops who had just suffered a reverse at Adowa in Abyssinia, and he expressed anxiety that Britain seemed inclined to withdraw from the Mediterranean and entertain the evacuation of Egypt, suggesting Britain should renew her Mediterranean agreements with Austria.⁴¹

Even though Lascelles deemed that the Kaiser's 'information' about Russia and France was 'somewhat of the imaginative order,' (an impression confirmed by Marschall, and by the German Chancellor),⁴² and even though he also divined the Emperor's motives – partly (according to Lanza, the Italian Ambassador at Berlin) because of a rebuff by Russia, partly because Italy's recent military reverses reduced her value as an ally⁴³ – he nonetheless urged Salisbury to respond to the Kaiser's 'friendly overture.'⁴⁴

The key point of the meeting for Lascelles was that it 'converted into a certainty' his belief in the Kaiser's friendliness towards England,⁴⁵ something pressed on him by the Imperial Chancellor, and by his old Bucharest friend Gołuchowski – now Austrian Foreign Minister⁴⁶ when visiting Berlin the same month.⁴⁷ As he told Sanderson, the 'complicated state of things in all parts of the world,' made German

⁴¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 March 1896, FO 64/1376, No.59. J.A.S. Grenville, 'Gołuchowski, Salisbury, and the Mediterranean Agreements, 1895-7', pp. 340-69; see also K.M. Wilson, 'Constantinople or Cairo: Lord Salisbury and the Protection of the Ottoman Empire', in idem, (ed.), *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Middle East: The Anglo-Egyptian Experience 1882-1982* (London, 1983).

⁴² Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 March & 6 March 1896, FO 64/1376, No.'s 59 & 63; Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 March 1896, FO 800/17.

⁴³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 March 1896, FO 800/17.

⁴⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 March 1896, FO 64/1376, No.59.

⁴⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 & 7 March 1896, FO 64/1376, No.'s 63 & 65.

⁴⁶ Count A. Gołuchowski, Austrian Foreign Minister, 1895-1906.

⁴⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 & 13 March 1896, FO 64/1376, No.'s 71 & 72.

friendship very 'useful' to Britain,⁴⁸ regardless of Wilhelm's motives.⁴⁹ Salisbury however remained keen to 'lean to the Triple Alliance without belonging to it,' and, as in 1892, to 'cut free from any engagement to go to war in any contingency whatever'.⁵⁰

The meeting did indeed however have the effect of encouraging Britain to advance to Dongola to help the Italians, which Britain had a vested interest in doing anyway to shore up her position in Egypt.⁵¹ The Kaiser was delighted that the meeting had produced this outcome,⁵² and was glad of the candidness with which he could speak to Lascelles,⁵³ and arguably this reading of his early meeting with Lascelles influenced Wilhelm's conduct towards the British Ambassador from hereon in.

II

Quickly after his arrival in Berlin, Lascelles became *persona grata* with the German Emperor himself, who became 'exceedingly fond of him personally.'⁵⁴ This was no small consideration – and there was a reason why, at the time, it was thought

⁴⁸ Lascelles to Sanderson, 7 March 1896, FO 800/17.

⁴⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 March 1896, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Salisbury to Lascelles, 10 March 1896, FO 800/8.

⁵¹ See J.D. Hargreaves, 'Entente Manquée', pp. 84-86; Wilson, 'Constantinople or Cairo', p.48. See also Arthur Marsden, 'Salisbury and the Italians in 1896', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 40, No.1 (Mar 1968), pp. 91-117; T.G. Otte, "'Floating Downstream"? Lord Salisbury and British Foreign Policy, 1878-1902', p.117.

⁵² Hatzfeldt to Foreign Office, 12 March 1896, and minute by the Kaiser: GP XI.241, in E.T.S. Dugdale (ed.), *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914*, Vol. ii (London, 1929), pp.422-3. Also see Spring-Rice to Villiers, 21 March 1896, in Stephen Gwynn (ed.), *Letters and Friendships*, I, p.202.

⁵³ Kiderlen-Waechter to Holstein, 25 March 1896, in Rich & Fisher, *Holstein Papers*, iii, No. 537. The Kaiser said he had 'never said such rude things to an ambassador about his own country as he had to Lascelles...!' Lascelles also gained an impression that the British were primarily assisting the Italians. Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 March 1896, FO 64/1376, No. 85. For the Kaiser's attitude to the Dongola expedition see Roderick R. McLean, 'The Kaiser's Diplomacy and the Reconquest of the Sudan' in Edward M. Spiers (ed.) *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised* (Portland, Or., 1998), pp. 146-162.

⁵⁴ *New York Times*, 1 June 1902, p. 4

Lascelles' cultivation of a good personal relationship with the Kaiser was 'the greatest diplomatic achievement' of the day.⁵⁵ As head of the German Government, Wilhelm wielded ultimate executive power.⁵⁶ The period 1895-1900 marked the establishment of the Kaiser's 'personal monarchy';⁵⁷ a period which arguably only ended after unwanted publication of the Kaiser's private utterances in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1908- by which time Lascelles had retired.⁵⁸ The Imperial Chancellor Hohenlohe, was no Bismarck but merely a figurehead, and the Emperor was, in Lascelles' words 'his own Chancellor',⁵⁹ while his loathing of his Foreign Secretary, von Marschall, was also well-known to British diplomats.⁶⁰ Both Lascelles and Salisbury recognised that a void had been left by Bismarck's departure. As the Chancellor himself had been replaced by 'smaller men',⁶¹ the vacuum of authority had been filled by the Kaiser's personality, which was no small consideration for Britain's ambassador to Berlin.

Coupled with his apparent ascendancy in the period after 1896, the Kaiser had a well-known love-hate attitude towards England, which had its roots in his stormy family relations. He had rebelled against his English mother, to embrace Prussian militarism. He deeply resented his uncle Edward VII's lack of deference towards him and treatment of him as an errant nephew. On the other hand, the Kaiser was fond of

⁵⁵ Lady Susan Townley, *Indiscretions of Lady Susan* (London, 1922), p.43.

⁵⁶ See John C.G. Röhl on the Kaiser's 'kingship mechanism' in *The Kaiser and his court: Wilhelm II and the government of Germany* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.107-130.

⁵⁷ Idem, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy, 1888-1900*; idem, *Germany without Bismarck: The Crisis of Government in the Second Reich, 1890-1900* (London, 1967).

⁵⁸ For this episode see T.G. Otte, '“An Altogether Unfortunate Affair”: Great Britain and the Daily Telegraph Affair', in: *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. v. No. 2 (1994), pp. 296-333.

⁵⁹ Memo by Lascelles of conversation with Salisbury, 4 Dec 1895, FO 800/17. Arguably Hohenlohe's inability to control the Kaiser led to the sending of the Krüger telegram. N. Rich, *Friedrich von Holstein*, (Cambridge, 1965), Vol. ii, pp. 502-3.

⁶⁰ Richard Acton to Lord Acton, 28 Nov 1896, Acton papers, Cambridge University Library, Add. MS 8121 (9) III., No.344. On the Kaiser's relationship with Marschall and Hohenlohe, see John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, pp. 691-93, 843-45 & 873-9.

⁶¹ Memo by Lascelles of conversation with Salisbury, 4 Dec 1895, FO 800/17; Chirol to Lascelles, 9 Nov 1895, CASR I 1/14.

paying regular visits to Cowes on the Isle of Wight, had a lifelong devotion to his grandmother, Queen Victoria - who alone gave him the respect he craved as fellow ruler - and he identified a racial affinity between Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon peoples.⁶² The admission by John Röhl that sometimes the Kaiser's feelings towards England were 'well-nigh impossible to work out' show how the Kaiser's temperament has baffled even the most committed historian.⁶³ The centrality of the Kaiser's fractious relationship with his English relations informed some of the first advice Lascelles received - from Sir Frank's ex-chief, the former Ambassador at Berlin Lord Augustus Loftus.⁶⁴

These autocratic and occasionally Anglophobe tendencies were augmented by the Kaiser's parlous mental condition, which made his behaviour erratic and unpredictable and had the potential to cause political problems- a concern raised by Rosebery, and especially Salisbury, who was led to distrust Wilhelm's changeable nature.⁶⁵ Wilhelm's accession in 1888 was a new factor in Anglo-German relations and added a feeling of instability to a historically cordial relationship. In that year Malet had argued to Salisbury that to humour the Kaiser's personality would now be a central task of British diplomacy, as the Kaiser's personal sentiments would influence

⁶² The literature on the Kaiser's tempestuous relations with his family is vast. See e.g. L. Cecil 'History as Family Chronicle: Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Dynastic Roots of Anglo-German Antagonism' in: J.C.G. Röhl & Nicholas Sombart (eds.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II: new interpretations: The Corfu papers*, (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 91-108; D Cannadine, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II and the British Monarchy', in T.W.C. Blanning and D. Cannadine (eds.), *History and Biography: Essays in Honour of Derek Beales* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.191-196; John C.G. Röhl, 'The Kaiser and England', in A.M. Birke, M. Brechtken and A. Searle (eds.), *An Anglo-German dialogue: The Munich lectures on the history of international relations* (2000); pp. 97-100.

⁶³ John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, p.966.

⁶⁴ Lord Augustus Loftus to Lascelles, 28 Dec 1895, Sir Frank Lascelles MSS, C.C.A.C., LASC 3.

⁶⁵ P.M. Kennedy, 'German World Policy and the Alliance Negotiations with England, 1897-1900', *Journal of Modern History*, xlv, 4, (1973), p. 614; T.G. Otte, '“The Winston of Germany”: The British Foreign Policy Elite and the Last German Emperor', in *Canadian Journal of History*, 36, 3(2001):pp.471-504, passim.
passim; John Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, p. 539, 547, 549, 554, 794.

his policy towards Britain.⁶⁶ The tactlessness of the Emperor and his meddling in foreign affairs was much in evidence during Lascelles' first years at Berlin, as in 1895 when the Kaiser apparently spontaneously sent his congratulatory telegram to Krüger, as in the Greco-Turkish war of 1897, when the Kaiser's meddling in Foreign Affairs led Lascelles to state that it 'was no joke negotiating personally with the Emperor'⁶⁷ and Wilhelm's public tirade to Lascelles against British policy within earshot of other diplomats at an Opera the same year seemed to verge on insanity.⁶⁸ Lascelles – not one of those ambassadors given to 'antagonism' – and described as 'the very incarnation of geniality and tact'⁶⁹ must have seemed an ideal appointment to Berlin, and effectively his view of the impact of the Emperor reflected that of his predecessor Malet, who had also realised the efficacy of playing up whatever pro-British sentiments Wilhelm had. By March 1896, as has been seen, Lascelles was convinced the Kaiser's pro-British sentiments were real enough, and that it was in Britain's interests and the interests of peace to pay deference to them.

Importantly however, the Emperor deeply distrusted Salisbury, especially after his return to power in 1895 and his wavering over Britain's traditional Near Eastern policy; for by 1897, Salisbury refused to extend her 1887 Mediterranean agreements, effectively abandoning and alienating Austria, who instead turned towards Russia in 1898 to patch up a Near Eastern *entente*.⁷⁰ The result was a falling away of one important leg of Britain's association with the Triple Alliance – and small step in the

⁶⁶ Otte, 'The Winston of Germany', pp. 478-79; Röhl, 'The Kaiser and England,' p.100.

⁶⁷ Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace, 20 Feb 1897, Saunders MSS, News International Archive, London. See Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, pp.939-940.

⁶⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 16 Feb 1897, SP 120/52.

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, 5 June 1898, p. 19.

⁷⁰ See E. Walters, 'Austro-Russian relations under Gółuchowski, 1895-1906', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, xxxi (1950).

estrangement of Britain and Germany.⁷¹ Much as Lascelles, a self-styled ‘old Englander’, might regret the collapse of Salisbury’s Mediterranean policy,⁷² in practical terms his job was limited to trying to heal the breach between Wilhelm and Lord Salisbury.

The final reason for Lascelles’ cultivation of the Emperor was in some ways the most obvious one - events before his arrival in Berlin made the Ambassador acutely aware of the impact that the Emperor’s disfavour could have on his career personally. Just before Malet departed for England he had openly warned the German Foreign Secretary of the dangers of German support of the Transvaal Government in their hostility towards Great Britain, who had interests in the neighbouring Cape Colony. These comments, intended as a friendly warning, were taken by Wilhelm II to signal an ‘ultimatum’, leading to the Kaiser launching into a tirade over British policy (one of many) to the Embassy military attaché, Colonel Swaine, and to his non-appearance at the British Ambassador’s official departure.⁷³ Lascelles was made aware of the details of the incident- and the Kaiser’s personal grievance over Malet’s remarks- by Chirol, before he reached Berlin.⁷⁴ It was thus no coincidence that Lascelles came to tread carefully around the Emperor – and to view his ability to appease the Emperor’s moods as a barometer of his own success as Ambassador.

Lascelles’ aristocratic roots, his prior knowledge of Germany, his lifelong friendship with the British Royal Family (as a friend of King Edward VII, he was

⁷¹ Grenville, ‘Gołuchowski, Salisbury, and the Mediterranean Agreements, 1895-7’, passim; T.G. Otte ‘“floating downstream”?’, p.114.-5; CJ Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, p. 115.

⁷² Kaiser Wilhelm II to Marschall, 27 Aug 1896, G.P. Bd 12, Nr. 52.

⁷³ See Willem-Alexander Van’t Padje, ‘The “Malet Incident,” October 1895: A Prelude to the Kaiser’s “Krüger Telegram” in the Context of the Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry’, Geoff Eley and James Retallack (eds.), *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930, Essays for Hartmut Pogge Von Strandmann* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 145-149; Röhl, *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser’s Personal Monarchy*, pp.780-783.

⁷⁴ Memo by Lascelles of conversation with Hatzfeldt, 31 Oct 1895, FO 800/17.

regularly an invited guest at Royal Ascot throughout his ambassadorship⁷⁵) and with not only the Emperor but also 'his parents and grandparents' enabled him to talk freely with Wilhelm without fear of 'giving offence'.⁷⁶ Sir Frank modestly told Blunt that he had gained influence with the Kaiser 'by telling him rather stupid and coarse anecdotes' and making 'small jokes of the kind which royal personages like'.⁷⁷

From early on in Lascelles' time at Berlin, The Emperor would 'pop in for tea' with the ambassador,⁷⁸ or send for him at 'inconvenient hours'.⁷⁹ The Kaiser more than once paid the ambassador early morning visits, which subsequently entered diplomatic folklore.⁸⁰ On one occasion he burst into the Embassy and went up into Sir Frank's bedroom to catch the Ambassador in his pyjamas, whereupon the startled old man jumped out of bed, to be slapped on the back, and greeted as 'old fellow'.

One contemporary suggested that these visits were the Kaiser's 'way of showing what a fine, active, early-rising person he was in contrast to the lazy lie-in-bed

Englishman.'⁸¹ But crucially, Sir Frank took his visits as a sign of the Kaiser's friendliness, which, in the face of Britain's diplomatic isolation, was worth preserving.

⁷⁵ See Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign policy: The Close of the Nineteenth Century*, p.172; Duncan Stewart MacDiarmid, *The life of Lieut.-General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson* (London, 1923), p. 138.

⁷⁶ Dumas autobiography, Dumas MSS, Imperial War Museum, London, p.16.

⁷⁷ Lady Gregory's diary entry for 27 March 1920, Daniel J. Murphy (ed.), *Lady Gregory's Journals* (Gerrard's Cross, 1978), I, p. 134; W.S. Blunt, *My diaries*, Vol. ii, p. 10.

⁷⁸ See Rumbold to Lascelles, 23 March 1897, FO 800/8.

⁷⁹ Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace, 16 Jan 1897, Saunders MSS, News International Archive.

⁸⁰ One occurred in late 1896; see Spring-Rice to Lady Helen, 26 Dec 1896, in Gwynn (ed.), *Letters and Friendships*, I, pp. 213 -14, and another during the South African war. Sanderson to Lascelles, 19 Feb 1902, FO 800/10. See also Hill to Lascelles, 24 Feb 1902, FO 800/6; the *New York Times*, 1 June 1902; Lady Susan Townley, *Indiscretions*, pp. 66-67. In March 1900, The Kaiser's warning to Lascelles about France and Russia's possible intervention in the South African war was also delivered into Lascelles' hands 'with characteristic maliciousness' by the Emperor at 8.45am. Lascelles to Chirol, 3 March 1900, Spring Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/23.

⁸¹ George Leveson-Gower, *Mixed Grill*, (London, 1948), p.188.

III

Many years after he left Berlin, Sir Frank was criticised by an old colleague for having 'been brought up in the Victorian regime of giving way to Germany in everything, and literally [being unable to] convert himself to the growing habit in England of refusing them all that they asked'.⁸² It was however with some justice that Lascelles could later say that Britain's purported opposition to German colonial expansion in the 1880s and '90s was a myth born of ignorance and misunderstanding, when in fact each German gain had been made 'with the consent, and in more than one instance with the active assistance of the Government of Great Britain', and stated that 'there was no objection to further acquisitions by Germany, if they could be obtained without injury to other States.'⁸³

In the 1880s and 1890s Germany's overseas interests were negligible at best and furthermore did not clash with those of Britain, who thought it more worthwhile to buy German friendship.⁸⁴ An Anglo-German colonial trade-off had been overseen in Salisbury's last Government,⁸⁵ and in November 1895, Chirol (by now *The Times's* Berlin correspondent) wrote encouragingly to Lascelles that another 'general clean-up' in Africa 'on the lines of that of 1890' would 'pave the way ...for a real *rapprochement* with Germany,' and urged his friend to 'inaugurate the Neuer Kurs at

⁸² Dumas autobiography, p.16.

⁸³ Copy of *The Peacemaker* – vol No.4, May 1912. ED Morel MSS, Library of Social and Political Science, London, Morel F 13/7-1; see also Goschen to Grey, 18 Feb 1912, FO 371/1371/ 7289 encl. clipping of interview with Sir Frank Lascelles from *The Daily Chronicle*. In the Daily Chronicle interview Lascelles cited the cession of Heligoland to Germany in 1890, Britain's acquiescence over Samoa in 1899, the recognition of Germany's acquisition of Kiaochau in 1897 and commercial predominance in Shantung province in 1898 plus more latterly recognition of Germany's territorial acquisitions in the Belgian Congo, as proof of Britain's co-operation.

⁸⁴ Gordon Martel, 'The Limits of Commitment: Rosebery and the definition of the Anglo-German understanding.' If only understanding had been reached, 1914 might have been avoided (p.387)

⁸⁵ See G.N. Sanderson, 'The Anglo-German Agreement of 1890 and the Upper Nile', *English Historical Review* (1963).

the British Embassy by affecting another Anglo German agreement,' and thus 'render one of the greatest services of which England at the present moment stands in need.'⁸⁶

When Lascelles became ambassador, the influence of colonial pressures on official German policy was unclear. While there was a vocal (and anti-English) colonial party in Germany, comprised of intellectuals, financiers, and commercial interests,⁸⁷ Bismarck's first 'bid' for colonies had only been fleeting and opportunistic;⁸⁸ his successor Caprivi (1890-1894) and Caprivi's Foreign Minister, Marschall von Bieberstein (1890-97) had concentrated on Germany's European concerns and had been willing to trade German colonies for Heligoland; neither wanted an extensive African Empire, and both eschewed the idea of a large scale world or colonial policy, limiting their concerns to the protection of German commerce.⁸⁹ Germany's colonial acquisitions were negligible and sparsely settled in contrast to British possessions.⁹⁰ Furthermore, they had, as Lascelles later alluded to, been gained with Britain's acquiescence at a period in which Britain was chiefly concerned with shoring up her Mediterranean position.

Yet Salisbury did not hesitate to warn Lascelles on the eve of his departure for Berlin of Germany's 'most disagreeable' behaviour in colonial matters - in Africa, and also in the Far East, where Germany was 'up to every sort of intrigue asking for concessions and privileges of all sorts' with a view to 'cutting Britain out.'⁹¹

⁸⁶ Chirol to Lascelles, 9 Nov 1895, CASR I 1/14.

⁸⁷ See Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 Jan 1896, FO 64/1386, No. 13 [Africa], same to same 26 March 1897, FO 64/1409, No. 88; Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism* p. 168.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.171; see A.J.P. Taylor, *Germany's first bid for colonies 1884-85: a move in Bismarck's European diplomacy* (London, 1967).

⁸⁹ Peter Winzen, 'Prince Bülow's Weltmachtspolitik', *Australian Journal of History and Politics*, (1976). p.231, p. 239; Wm. Roger Louis, 'Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919', in Prosser Gifford & William Roger Louis (eds.) *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule* (New Haven, 1967) pp.17-19.

⁹⁰ Grierson to Stamfordham, 24 Nov 1896, in Macdiarmid, *Grierson*, p. 265.

⁹¹ Lascelles' memo of conversation with Salisbury, 4 Dec 1895, FO 800/17.

Salisbury wanted to continue collaboration but thought Germany, for example, had no rights interfering in the Transvaal and its 'gateway', Delagoa Bay.⁹² As Lascelles later told the Italian Ambassador, for some time before the Krüger telegram, Britain 'had found that German action was hostile to us, wherever she could make her influence felt.'⁹³ From Britain's point of view Germany's more forthright colonial policy, her co-operation in the Far Eastern triplce of 1895, the beginning of her incursions into the Dardanelles question and talk in Berlin of a continental league constituted an alarming turn of events.⁹⁴

Germany's emerging colonial aspirations were most immediately apparent in South Africa. In late December 1895, a long standing grievance at the ill-treatment of *Uitlanders* [foreigners] by the Boer administration in the Transvaal, led to an abortive British uprising followed by an equally abortive raid from Cape Colony, led by Dr. Jameson, with the connivance of Cape Colony's Prime Minister, Cecil Rhodes. The British Government disavowed complicity in the agitations or the raid. However, the Germans, who had commercial interests and a colony in South West Africa, feared a British attempt to annex the Transvaal would follow and insisted strongly on the maintenance of the *status quo*.⁹⁵ Upon the Boers' successful repulsion of Jameson, the Kaiser issued a congratulatory telegram to the Transvaal's President Paul Krüger. This communication, drafted in consultation with Marschall, Hohenlohe and the Naval Cabinet,⁹⁶ was a deliberately anti-British move, stemming partially from Wilhelm's frustration at Salisbury's loyalty to the Triple Alliance; and the ensuing

⁹² Wm. Roger Louis, 'Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919', p.24.

⁹³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 21 Jan 1898, FO 64/1437, No.28.

⁹⁴ Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, p.766.

⁹⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 Dec & 31 Dec 1895, FO 64/1359 No. 173 & No. 176 confidential; Memo by Marschall, 31 Dec 1895, GP XI.17, Dugdale, Vol. ii, p.371; Salisbury to Lascelles, 1 Jan 1895, FO 244/542, No.1; Sanderson to Lascelles, 1 Jan 1896, FO 800/6; Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 Jan 1896, FO 64/1386 No.2 confidential [Africa].

⁹⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 Jan 1896, FO 64/1386, No.3.

uproar in the British Press followed by retaliatory speeches by senior British Ministers touched off a deterioration in Anglo-German relations.⁹⁷

It is Dr. Van't Padjé's contention that this episode displayed Lascelles' tendency to be 'Germanophile' owing to his wish to conciliate Germany and prevent a serious breach which would have been galling to him personally and politically (although one must ask what the alternative would have been).⁹⁸ Certainly it is hard to refute that Lascelles was keen not to inaugurate his ambassadorship with an Anglo-German war, but while Van't Padjé recognises that the irascible temperament of Germany's ruler was a problem during this episode, he arguably under-rates the difficulties for Lascelles of trying to retain an effective presence as ambassador, while having to contend with a hostile public opinion, Germany's brusque diplomatic methods, and the Imperial temper.⁹⁹ Lascelles suspected that the Kaiser had wanted to teach England 'a lesson,'¹⁰⁰ and to revenge Salisbury's snubbing of him at Cowes.¹⁰¹ Here perhaps was fulfilment of Salisbury's warning to Lascelles that the erratic Kaiser might one day go 'completely off his head,'¹⁰² a theory supported by the ambassador's knowledge that the Kaiser's original, even more bellicose telegram had only been toned down on the advice of his Ministers;¹⁰³ by information from Chirol that the Kaiser was 'rabid' about the raid;¹⁰⁴ and by the Emperor's pronouncement to Lascelles personally on New Year's Day 1896 that he hoped the 'band of filibusters'

⁹⁷ See, for example, A.J.A. Morris, *The scaremongers: the advocacy of war and rearmament 1896-1914* (London, 1984), pp.16-19.

⁹⁸ Van't Padjé, 'At the heart of the growing Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry', p. 93.

⁹⁹ See Willem-Alexander Van't Padjé, 'The "Malet Incident," October 1895 - A Prelude to the Kaiser's "Krüger Telegram" in the Context of the Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry', op cit.

¹⁰⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 Jan 1896, FO 64/1386, No. 11 Africa.

¹⁰¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 Jan 1896, FO 800/17.

¹⁰² Memo by Lascelles on conversation with Salisbury, 4 Dec 1895, FO 800/17.

¹⁰³ Letter from Swaine to the Editor of *The Times*, 16 June 1924, p.8.

¹⁰⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 Jan 1896, FO 800/17.

[Jameson's men] would 'all get shot as they deserved to be.'¹⁰⁵ Lascelles acknowledged his fear that the Emperor might become actively hostile and warned Salisbury that he was 'so impassive and impetuous that this is a contingency which must be considered.'¹⁰⁶

While telling Marschall not to be surprised at the outburst in the British Press,¹⁰⁷ Lascelles soon saw that the Foreign Secretary was horrified by the violent tone of the British press and wanted to climb down, so Sir Frank urged a conciliatory line on Whitehall, pointing out that it seemed Marschall was purposely instructing the German Press not to retaliate.¹⁰⁸ Though slightly perturbed at the official *volte face*, and the speed with which Marschall's language changed to be diametrically opposite in tone, Lascelles proposed to act as if the incident 'had never arisen.'¹⁰⁹ The Ambassador also reasoned that, following Jameson's illegal raid, Britain could scarcely be justified in pushing the issue to war, telling Salisbury 'if such a horrible calamity' were to occur, 'I hope we might be able to make out a better case than...would be possible for us in the present instance.'¹¹⁰

Salisbury, too, was of a calmer disposition than British public opinion at large, and when the Kaiser wrote a letter to the Queen apologising for his outburst against the raiders (who had worn Her Majesty's uniforms), the incident was terminated (though not before Salisbury had despatched a flying squadron).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 2 Jan 1896, FO 64/1386, No.1 confidential [Africa].

¹⁰⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 Jan 1896, FO 800/17.

¹⁰⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 Jan 1896, FO 64/1386, No.7.

¹⁰⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 Jan 1896, FO 64/1386, No.7 & No.8; Lascelles to Salisbury, 8 Jan 1896, FO 800/17; Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 Jan 1896, FO 64/1380, Tel No.4.

¹⁰⁹ Lascelles to Sanderson and Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 Jan 1896, FO 800/17.

¹¹⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 8 Jan 1896. See also Spring Rice to his brother Stephen, 9 Jan 1896, in Gwynn, *Letters and Friendships*, I, p. 186.

¹¹¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 Jan 1896, FO 64/1386 No.10 & No. 11 Confidential [Africa].

Sir Frank's handling of the crisis won him praise on both sides. The Kaiser made 'flattering remarks' about the new Ambassador,¹¹² and Marschall apparently told a colleague that the crisis, 'had shown.... what an excellent man for the post' he was.¹¹³ The mutually agreed line between Salisbury and Lascelles was that Sir Frank should 'persuade the Emperor that the two nations are on good terms, and that he has never made a fool of himself'.¹¹⁴ However, it was clear the incident could have repercussions. In the aftermath, Salisbury cautioned that in England, politicians and officials would not hear a 'good word for the Germans.'¹¹⁵ The irritation produced in both countries against the other deeply impressed Lascelles.¹¹⁶ Eighteen years later he traced the 'misunderstanding' in Anglo-German relations from this point.¹¹⁷ While he could appreciate an outburst of anti-German opinion in the British press might prevent 'any further attempt to "teach" England a "lesson,"' he quickly understood the official German Press were bound to reply to attacks on the Emperor.¹¹⁸ This would inform his attitude on repeated occasions. In 1896, despite questioning Marschall's association with anti-British articles in the German Press,¹¹⁹ Lascelles studiously avoided raising the issue.¹²⁰ He wanted to 'give them a chance of climbing down' in the hope 'that, in time, public opinion might calm down, and matters resume their normal course.' The Foreign Office, at this stage, agreed with him.¹²¹

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Spring Rice to Villiers, 18 Jan 1896, in Gwynn, *Letters and Friendships I*, p.194.

¹¹⁴ Salisbury to Lascelles, 22 Jan 1896, FO 800/6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid; Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 Jan 1896, FO 800/17.

¹¹⁶ Chisolm told him he had feared a war from the state of public feeling. Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 Jan 1896, FO 800/17.

¹¹⁷ Michael Balfour, *The Kaiser and His Times* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p.195.

¹¹⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 25 Jan 1896, FO 800/17.

¹¹⁹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Jan 1896, FO 64/1376, No.20.

¹²⁰ He was tempted to respond after Marschall complained about anti-German speeches delivered by Lord Hamilton and Chamberlain. Lascelles to Salisbury, 31 Jan 1896, FO 64/1376, No. 25.

¹²¹ Lascelles to Sanderson, 1 Feb 1896, FO 800/17; Lascelles to Salisbury, 31 Jan 1896, FO 64/1376, No. 25; Salisbury to Lascelles, 10 Feb 1896, FO 64/1376 No. 31 Africa.

Lascelles remained of the opinion that Germany wished to stay on good terms with England, if only because they feared the consequences of a row, and he pointed to the Kaiser's renewed civility with Britain's military attaché at Berlin after a period of coolness as evidence of his desire to regain Britain's good graces.¹²² When the Kaiser visited the Embassy in March 1896, Lascelles took the opportunity of impressing on him the regrettable impression that he 'had taken advantage of our difficulties to strike a blow which was all the more painful as it came from one whom we had always considered as our friend.'¹²³

After this incident, Lascelles was keen once more to take up pending colonial questions between Berlin and London, but Salisbury advised him 'to keep clear of colonial negotiations' for the present.¹²⁴ After the Krüger telegram it remained to be seen, as Salisbury put it, whether Germany would 'become more mad with the colonial idea, and will commit some patent folly: or...drop it,' in which case Britain might talk about coming to 'arrangements' with her again.¹²⁵ In late 1896 the Emperor unexpectedly told Lascelles that Germany would henceforth 'concentrate her energies on a single Colony and give up the rest, as she was unable to develop all that she now possessed,' and hinted giving them to England in return for a coaling station.¹²⁶ While this spontaneous remark alarmed German Foreign Office officials,¹²⁷ Lascelles was keen to pursue this idea, but Salisbury's well-placed scepticism and

¹²² Lascelles to Salisbury, 15 Feb 1896, FO 800/17.

¹²³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 March 1896, FO 64/1376, No.59.

¹²⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 Jan 1896, FO 800/17; Salisbury to Lascelles, 22 Jan 1896, FO 800/6.

¹²⁵ Salisbury to Lascelles, 22 Jan 1896, FO 800/6.

¹²⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 22 Nov 1896, FO 64/1380, No.47 secret. See Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, pp. 968-9.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 927.

demand for more detailed proposals killed the idea.¹²⁸ Nonetheless, in August 1897 Sir Frank could write with conviction to the Duke of Cambridge that the two nations' interests were 'identical' in most parts of the World, 'and the differences of opinion in Africa will not at all events for very many years be sufficiently important to lead to a serious quarrel,' which made a 'good understanding....most desirable from every point of view.'¹²⁹

The same month that Lascelles extolled the virtues of a good understanding with Germany saw the accession of Bernhard von Bülow as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and also of Tirpitz as naval secretary and the inauguration of a policy of *Weltpolitik* by which Wilhelm II hoped Germany would play a great role in world affairs, and actively seek her 'place in the sun' by building a great battle fleet, attempting to gain colonial possessions like other Empires, and direct attention from Germany's internal problems. However, the policy brought Germany 'ineluctably into adopting an anti-British posture'. Although it was the task of the Foreign Ministry to keep on good terms with Britain until the fleet was completed,¹³⁰ this policy proved an important factor in the undermining of Anglo-German cordiality. Germany's conviction of the inevitable Anglo-Russian war in some part of Asia, her desire to maintain a studious neutrality, and pick her way between the great land and sea power, side stepping quarrels until she was able to speak with authority,¹³¹ and the importance *Weltpolitik* gave to Wilhelm's sudden, impulsive and unpredictable

¹²⁸ Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 10 Dec 1896, in Norman Rich, *Holstein Papers*, Volume iii: Correspondence 1861-1896 (Cambridge, 1961), No. 589; Sanderson to Lascelles, 2 Dec 1896, FO 800/8. See also Grierson to Stamfordham, 24 Nov 1896, Macdiarmid, *Grierson*, p. 265-6.

¹²⁹ Lascelles to the Duke of Cambridge, 12 Aug 1897, FO 800/17.

¹³⁰ See P.M. Kennedy, 'German World Policy and the Alliance Negotiations with England, 1897-1900', pp. 605-607, 609-10 – quote from p. 607).

¹³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 612-613; Peter Winzen, 'Prince Bülow's Weltmachtspolitik', pp. 232-234.

movements in foreign policy,¹³² all provided sources of Anglo-German tension in the following ten years.

Nevertheless because of the inauguration of a more forthright imperial policy by Germany, it was during 1898-1901 that the period of Anglo-German colonial 'bartering' reached its height; for Germany, the prestige of securing colonial gains often outstripped their material value, for a World Power *must* have colonies or naval bases even when they were of little economic or strategic worth.¹³³

Lascelles, as has been noted, had little experience in colonial affairs, and no direct experience of Anglo-German colonial rivalry.¹³⁴ Although he did receive a briefing from the Colonial Secretary before departing for Berlin,¹³⁵ and had indirect experience in Far Eastern affairs from his time in St Petersburg, the negotiations on colonial questions which occurred during his tenure at Berlin over the Portuguese colonies (1898), the Samoan islands (1899) and the Yangtze river (1900) were invariably negotiated by his opposite number in London,¹³⁶ but an examination of his attitude towards these agreements is crucial to explain his idea of an Anglo-German understanding.

For although Germany's exorbitant demands and harrying methods may have irked some of his less laid-back contemporaries, Lascelles' cool temperament meant

¹³² Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, p. 924-5, 959.

¹³³ Winzen, 'Prince Bülow's Weltmachtpolitik' p. 236.

¹³⁴ Lascelles mentioned Anglo-German commercial and colonial rivalry in 1893 in a letter to Morier, explaining that the Russian minister at Teheran had referred to Germany as 'the enemy of England, underselling her in every market, competing with her in Africa,' and had warned him of England's 'blind[ness]' of this fact. However the British diplomat offered no personal opinion on this analysis. Lascelles to Morier, 16 Feb 1893, Morier MSS, Box 25A/2.

¹³⁵ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 December 1895; Issue 9576.

¹³⁶ There are no apparent grounds for Padje's assertion that Salisbury preferred to negotiate these agreements in London 'as he either did not trust in Lascelles' negotiating skills or his competence in colonial and imperialist affairs.' Van't Padje, 'At the heart of the growing Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry', p.203. By the turn of the century it had become common practice to conduct 'a great deal of British diplomacy' in London, and only in remote posts were British diplomats given 'real freedom'. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914*, p.176.

that however much he found much at fault with Germany's approach, and was cautious about German attempts to best England or take advantage of her own colonial troubles, he remained convinced that England (because of the threats to her Empire from other Powers) should retain the friendship of Germany, and the sympathy of the Emperor, and his tolerance of Germany's colonial bartering was always judged from this standpoint – and from that of British interests. Compared to the threat posed by France and Russia, Lascelles also rarely saw Germany's colonial aspirations as a threat to Britain.

This was not the same as blind approval of German policy however. Despite Bülow's assurance in his first interview with Lascelles that he hoped Britain and Germany's vast 'common interests' could not admit of a 'lasting difference between them' and his promise to 'remove the pebbles from the path,' in any commercial or colonial dispute,¹³⁷ and the Ambassador's hope he could deal with Bülow frankly, Lascelles had deeply regretted the abrupt and brutal removal of the apparently pro-English and anti-colonial Marschall, to make way for Bülow, who he remembered from Bucharest chiefly for his 'exaggerated not to say ridiculous' opinion of himself, and whose 'gushing' cordiality on their first meeting made the naturally reserved ambassador uneasy.¹³⁸

Lascelles' response to Germany's first display of *Weltpolitik*, the sudden seizure of the Chinese port of Kiaochow in November 1897 on the pretext of the murder of two German missionaries in China, also displayed a basic wariness towards German overseas policy, and sensitivity to Britain's world position. Germany had

¹³⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury 20 Aug 1897, FO 64/1411, No. 226.

¹³⁸ Ibid; Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 Jan 1896, FO 800/17. Lascelles to Sanderson, 5 Dec 1896, ibid; Lascelles to Bertie, 19 March 1898, ibid. Lascelles to Chirol, 3 July 1897, CASR I 1/23; Lascelles to Sanderson, 21 Aug 1897, FO 800/17.

been known to desire a Far Eastern coaling station for some time¹³⁹ but her sudden move was contrary to repeated assurances that Germany would consult Britain closely in the Far East, where Britain had her own commercial interests and where it was felt Britain and Germany should make common cause against France and Russia.¹⁴⁰ For Germany, the murder of the missionaries was a convenient pretext to create the feeling for a stronger Navy for which the Kaiser longed, and the seizure of Kiaochow bolstered the Government's position while satisfying the colonial party and commercial classes.¹⁴¹ On an international level, it inaugurated a 'scramble' for China among the Powers – Russia was quick to respond to Germany's move by securing Port Arthur – and fears for Britain's own interests in China, which led to a questioning of Salisbury's handling of foreign affairs.¹⁴² Lascelles was on leave as news of the Far-Eastern *coup* was received, and thus had little direct involvement in the matter.¹⁴³ According to Bülow's recollection, Lascelles did not think Britain would raise objections to Germany's action at the time.¹⁴⁴ But, having been in St Petersburg at the time of the Sino-Japanese war, he was aware of the need to address the problem of Britain's declining influence in the Far East. His reaction certainly

¹³⁹ Memo by Lascelles on conversation with Hatzfeldt, 31 Oct 1895, FO 800/17; and with Salisbury, 4 Dec 1895, *ibid.* Chirol to Lascelles, 9 Nov 1895, CASR 1/14; Lascelles to Salisbury, 13 Dec 1895, FO 64/1351 No. 311; Chirol to Lascelles, 15 Nov 1896, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/9. Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 June 1897, FO 64/1410, No.168.

¹⁴⁰ On this issue see e.g. Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 & 13 Nov 1896 (plus minutes & enclosures), FO 64/1379, No.339 & 346; Lascelles to O'Connor, 13 Nov 1896, CON 6/1/7; O'Connor to Lascelles 19 Nov 1896, FO 800/9 and same to same 30 Nov 1896, FO 800/8; Lascelles to Salisbury, 23 Jan 1897, FO 64/1409, No. 22 confidential, Lascelles to Salisbury, 17 July 1897, FO 64/1411, No.201.

¹⁴¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 Jan 1898, FO 64/1437, No. 9.

¹⁴² See A.W. Palmer, 'Lord Salisbury's Approach to Russia, 1898' *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, (1955), pp. 102- 114.

¹⁴³ See Richard Acton to Lord Acton, 15 Nov 1897, Acton MSS, Add. MS 8121 (10) I, No. 68. This was the reason why Dr. Van't Padje was unable to find any private comment from Lascelles on the issue in his personal correspondence. (Van't Padje, 'At the heart of the growing Imperialist Rivalry', p.116.)

¹⁴⁴ Fürst von Bülow, (trans by F.A. Voigt) *Memoirs*, Vol. i, 1897-1903 (London, 1931), p. 181.

showed more irritation over German methods than over the act itself. He told Bülow, (who professed to have avoided encroaching on Britain's sphere of influence) that 'it was not so much what Germany had done in the Far East as the method which she had adopted in doing it'.¹⁴⁵ By not informing England first, Germany had shown little consideration for her feelings.¹⁴⁶ The fundamental determinant in Lascelles' view of the Far Eastern situation was – as with most British politicians and diplomats - an anxiety for Salisbury to shore up Britain's position, by an agreement with another Power. In some ways Lascelles's uncertain reaction mirrored the lack of a clear strategy in Whitehall; Britain was caught by surprise at Germany's move and its policy was mainly reactive.¹⁴⁷ However Lascelles privately seems to have shared sentiments of those wishing for compensation against Germany's acquisition. Following Germany's move in China, O'Connor (at St Petersburg) had initiated negotiations with her over spheres of influence in China,¹⁴⁸ and Lascelles, recalling his own abortive efforts in St Petersburg, voiced his hope to both O'Connor and Count Osten-Sacken (the Russian ambassador at Berlin) that a close Anglo-Russian understanding might be reached in the East.¹⁴⁹ When the overtures failed, Lascelles became privately keen that his government should get 'some definite advantage'¹⁵⁰ in return for Russian and German acquisitions, and was relieved when she obtained a lease of the port Wei-hai-Wei in March 1898, although he was disappointed it was not

¹⁴⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 Jan 1898, FO 64/1437, No. 32.

¹⁴⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 21 Jan 1898, FO 64/1437, No.28.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas G. Otte, 'Great Britain, Germany and the Far-Eastern Crisis of 1897-8,' *The English Historical Review*, cx, no. 439, (Nov 1995), pp. 1160-1179.

¹⁴⁸ See A.W. Palmer, 'Lord Salisbury's Approach to Russia, 1898.:'; T.G.Otte, *The China Question*, pp.103-111.

¹⁴⁹ Lascelles to O'Connor, 4 Feb 1898, O'Connor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 6/1/15; Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Feb 1898, FO 64/1437 No. 63 very confidential; Lascelles to Salisbury, 26 Feb 1898, SP 121/8.

¹⁵⁰ Lascelles to Chirol, 2 April 1898, CASR I 1/23.

a 'more valuable' acquisition.¹⁵¹ Lascelles was also sensitive to German attempts to consolidate her position by claiming a monopoly in Shantung province,¹⁵² and was as dismayed as his supposedly more anti-German contemporaries, Chirol of *The Times* and Bertie of the Foreign Office that the Germans had 'lied with their customary awkwardness' by denying reports to this effect.¹⁵³ Lascelles warned Germany's Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Baron von Richthofen that such action 'might give rise to some discussion,'¹⁵⁴ and that Britain would 'oppose the admission by China of any sort of preferential claim'.¹⁵⁵ He was equally annoyed at what he termed Bülow's 'very German and very petty' attempt to gain 'an indirect admission' of German commercial predominance in Shantung as a price for recognition of Wei-hai-Wei,¹⁵⁶ although on the other hand recognising Britain's acquisition struck a 'death blow' at German plans to dominate Shantung,¹⁵⁷ which Bülow talked of 'as the one sure lamb which Germany possessed in China,' and led to Richthofen complaining to Lascelles of Britain's habit of 'erecting Gibaltars against Germany'.¹⁵⁸ It was a testament to Lascelles' sympathetic nature that he was willing to listen to these German complaints impartially.

IV

Lascelles' appreciation of clear, practical limits of Anglo-German co-operation was demonstrated clearly in his attitude towards Chamberlain's famous alliance offer to

¹⁵¹ Lascelles to Sanderson, 9 April 1898, FO 800/17.

¹⁵² See T. G. Otte, *The China Question*, p.113.

¹⁵³ Lascelles to Bertie, 19 March 1898, FO 800/17; see Bertie to Lascelles, 16 March 1898, FO 64/1437; Chirol to Lascelles, same date, CASR I 1/14.

¹⁵⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 26 Feb 1898, FO 64/1437, No. 65, and Lascelles to Salisbury, *Ibid.*, 4 March, 1898 No. 71.

¹⁵⁵ Lascelles to Chirol, 5 March 1898, CASR I 1/23.

¹⁵⁶ Lascelles to Sanderson, 9 April 1898, FO 800/17.

¹⁵⁷ T.G. Otte, *The China Question*, p.114.

¹⁵⁸ Lascelles to Sanderson, 9 April 1898, FO 800/17.

Germany of Spring 1898. There is no reason to go into detail surrounding this offer here about events which have been tirelessly explored elsewhere.¹⁵⁹ To summarise, the revelation of Britain's exposed position demonstrated by the 'scramble' for concessions in China in 1897-8, and anxiety at the slow pace of British policy had led several members of the Cabinet to seek a change from Salisbury's 'isolationist' policy and an alignment with a Power in the Far East. In interviews with the German Ambassador in London, Paul von Hatzfeldt in March and April 1898, the Liberal Unionist Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, with the cognizance of Arthur Balfour, Salisbury's nephew and then -in the absence of his ailing uncle- acting Foreign Secretary proposed a defensive alliance aimed against Russia, primarily in China.¹⁶⁰

Lascelles was not informed of Chamberlain's unofficial forays into diplomatic territory until Chirol told him on 3 May that Chamberlain had proposed to give up Britain's 'old prejudices against entangling alliances,'¹⁶¹ and concert with Germany 'to oppose any successful resistance to a Russian advance, whether in Turkey, Persia or China.' Sir Frank confessed to being breathtaken by the news. But while he signalled his approval of an alliance from a personal and professional point of view, and stated his belief that the Emperor had 'always wished for' one, he could not follow where Chamberlain led.¹⁶² Lascelles' analysis contrasted with Chamberlain's naïve diplomacy, and is worth citing, especially as Dr Van't Padje neglected to do so in his thesis. In fine, Lascelles' diplomatic experience enabled him

¹⁵⁹ In, among other works, J.A.S. Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: The Close of the Nineteenth Century*: H.W., Koch, 'The Anglo-German Alliance Negotiations: Missed Opportunity or Myth?', *History*, liv (1969), pp. 378-92: P.M. Kennedy, 'German World Policy'; G.S. Papadopoulos, 'Lord Salisbury and the projected Anglo-German alliance of 1898', *BIHR* 26, 1953, pp.214-218.

¹⁶⁰ See Otte, *The China Question*, pp.133-161 for the most recent exploration of the alliance talks.

¹⁶¹ Chirol to Lascelles, 3 May 1898, CASR I 1/14.

¹⁶² Lascelles to Chirol, 6 May 1898, CASR I 1/23; copy in FO 800/17.

more accurately to read Salisbury's reserve over an alliance and anticipate the reluctance of Germany in the matter. While Lascelles sympathised with the general disillusionment caused by Salisbury's Far Eastern policy, he failed to see how Salisbury's critics proposed to replace him with a competent successor who would also gain parliamentary assent to an alliance, unless Rosebery joined the Conservative frontbench as Foreign Secretary.¹⁶³ More importantly, Lascelles was dubious that Chamberlain could ever win German help against Russian aggression towards Britain's Imperial interests, due to Germany's geographical position between France and Russia. Like Salisbury, he correctly believed that Germany's 'abject fear of Russia,' was an axiom of German policy and that Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia thus benefited Germany. The most that Lascelles thought that Germany would wish for was a 'good understanding' with Britain to aid her 'colonies and her commerce'. She would not readily assist Britain against Russia in Turkey, Persia or China, and thus risk war with Russia & France, in order to prevent an occupation of British India which Germany was 'convinced' Russia could easily take. Not even 'expansion beyond the seas' or 'possession of the Baltic Provinces' would be a big enough 'quid pro quo' for Germany.¹⁶⁴

The fate of Chamberlain's alliance proposals bore out Lascelles' private assessment. Bülow, alive to the dangers of provoking Russia and knowing the problems of parliamentary ratification and Salisbury's aversion to alliances was circumspect in his reception.¹⁶⁵ Salisbury, in addition to raising constitutional

¹⁶³ Ibid. See also, Lascelles to Chirol, 2 April 1898, CASR I 1/23.

¹⁶⁴ Lascelles to Chirol, 6 May 1898, CASR I 1/23; copy in FO 800/17. Lascelles had been told by Szögyény (the Austrian Ambassador to Berlin) of Bülow's belief that 'England and Russia must always be antagonistic.' Lascelles to Sanderson, 29 Jan 1898, FO 800/17. On the subject of Germany's fear of Russia see Kennedy, 'German World policy', p. 611; and for Bülow's pro Russian leanings, Peter Winzen, 'Prince Bülow's Weltmachtspolitik', p.231.

¹⁶⁵ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and foreign policy*, p.156; H.W., Koch, 'The Anglo-German Alliance Negotiations', p. 382. Kennedy, 'German World Policy', p. 613.

objections, already suspected the Emperor of wishing to embroil Britain in a war with France over the Sudan, and believed Britain would be 'blackmailed heavily' in any alliance.¹⁶⁶ On 9 May he told Hatzfeldt that Britain would not be able to support German interests in Europe, nor support Germany's partner Austria at Constantinople.¹⁶⁷ On 24 May 1898, following Chamberlain's public touting for an alliance in his 'long spoon' speech of the previous day, the Emperor told the British Ambassador that the idea of Germany driving Russia out of China was 'out of the question,' despite his long-standing wish for 'a good understanding with England...and even for an alliance on reasonable terms.' While putting a positive slant on the Kaiser's 'sincere' desire for a 'good understanding,' Lascelles stressed to Salisbury privately that the Emperor would not fight for Britain in China & risk invasion both by Russia and France.¹⁶⁸ On 1 June Wilhelm once again (in writing to his mother) denigrated Chamberlain's overtures as private and, lacking Salisbury's sanction, unofficial.¹⁶⁹

Lascelles' subsequently famous, and apparently spontaneous proposal to the Kaiser of an Anglo-German alliance in the summer of 1898 must be seen against this backdrop. Much scholarly attention has been diverted into investigating this curious episode due to the lack of documentary evidence but also due to misunderstanding the context in which the proposal was made.¹⁷⁰ Arguably, however, far from being an anomalous action based on a sudden conversion to an Anglo-German alliance, Lascelles was motivated by other more consistent considerations: his continued desire to cultivate the Kaiser's pro-English sensibilities and curb his unpredictable

¹⁶⁶ Otte, *The China Question*, p.156.

¹⁶⁷ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and foreign policy*, pp. 167–168.

¹⁶⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 27 May 1898, FO 800/17.

¹⁶⁹ See John Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, pp. 975–80.

¹⁷⁰ Notably J.A.S. Grenville, *op cit.*, pp.173–6 who dealt with the 1898 alliance negotiations and the simultaneous negotiations over the Portuguese colonies in separate chapters; See also N. Rich, *Holstein.*, ii, pp. 589–590; and Koch, 'The Anglo-German Alliance Negotiations'.

temperament, the possibility of the more limited colonial understanding he believed could be brought about, and the lack of need for formal alliance ties between two Powers with common interests. This argument is further reinforced by the account of events the Ambassador relayed to *The Times*' Berlin correspondent George Saunders, a close friend of Lascelles', which previous studies have not used.¹⁷¹

Before departing for London on leave in June 1898, Lascelles spoke to Bülow about Chamberlain's overture and, while emphasising that the Colonial Secretary's star was in the ascendant, pointed to parliamentary obstacles to an alliance and agreed thoroughly with the Foreign Minister's argument that an understanding could not come 'overnight' and could only be worked for 'patiently and carefully'.¹⁷²

On Saturday 18 June 1898, while on leave in London, Lascelles was invited to lunch by Joseph Chamberlain at his Prince's Gardens address, where he met other members of the 'pro-German' grouping within the British Cabinet (Goschen, Lord George Hamilton, Chaplin and Selborne).¹⁷³ Owing to the lack of documentation, the circumstances surrounding this meeting remain hazy. Lascelles did not apparently deem it worth a memorandum. Chamberlain wanted to canvass the Ambassador's opinion on the feasibility of an Anglo-German alliance¹⁷⁴ and Lascelles' contribution was, notably, to re-emphasise the Emperor's assertion that Germany would never fight Britain's battles in China for fear of Franco-Russian retaliation. Nonetheless, after lunch, Chamberlain proposed extending the alliance scheme from mutual assistance against Russia to mutual assistance against attack by a Second Power-

¹⁷¹ Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace, 15 Oct 1898, Mackenzie Wallace MSS, News International Archive.

¹⁷² Memo by Bülow, 11 June 1898, *G.P.*, Bd.13, Nr. 253

¹⁷³ James Louis Garvin, & Julian Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. iii (London, 1932), p. 290. Garvin & Amery could only rely on the Kaiser's paraphrase of what had taken place.

¹⁷⁴ Holstein to Chiról, 3 Jan 1902, BD ii. No. 96.

namely, by France.¹⁷⁵ Lascelles later recalled his failure to impress on those assembled the Emperor's reluctance to enter an alliance, and their unshaken conviction that an Anglo-German bloc could deter any Franco-Russian attack.¹⁷⁶

It is highly probable the significance of this meeting would have ended here had other considerations not given summer 1898 a particular significance for Anglo-German relations. In June, secret negotiations had been taking place between Britain and Portugal about providing a loan to the ailing Portuguese regime, threatened by revolution at home and the loss of her overseas possessions, which would have given Britain 'practical control' over Delagoa Bay, situated near South Africa, should Portugal default on the loan, and thus serve British interests in the Transvaal by ceasing the leak of arms to Krüger through Portuguese East Africa.¹⁷⁷ Germany, wanting 'something to show' in return for acquiescing in British hegemony,¹⁷⁸ decided to 'burst in' on the negotiations by demanding colonial concessions elsewhere (in the eventuality of Portugal's inability to repay the loan) as a price for Germany's silence, and of her abandonment of the cause of the Boers in the Transvaal.¹⁷⁹ Although Salisbury had reluctantly bowed to pressure from his Cabinet colleagues for joint Anglo-German negotiations,¹⁸⁰ the talks had made little progress by the time Lascelles returned to his post. Britain largely saw Germany's territorial demands and threats as extortionate - Germany warned of an agreement with France if

¹⁷⁵ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and foreign policy*, pp.173-175.

¹⁷⁶ Lascelles to Balfour, 23 Aug 1898, BD i, No. 122.

¹⁷⁷ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and foreign policy*, p.183. On the issue of the Portuguese colonies, see also Sir Raymond Beazley, 'Britain, Germany, and the Portuguese Colonies, 1898-99', *Berliner Monatshefte* 14 (1936): pp. 321-43; P. R. Warhurst *Anglo-Portuguese relations in south-central Africa, 1890-1900* (London, 1962).

¹⁷⁸ Wm. Roger Louis, 'Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919', p. 26.

¹⁷⁹ See Kennedy, *Antagonism*, pp. 235-6. Balfour to Lascelles, 18 & 19 Aug 1898, BD i, No.'s 83 & 85.

¹⁸⁰ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp.190-191.

she could not reach one with Britain.¹⁸¹ The negotiations made quicker progress with Balfour again temporarily in control at the Foreign Office, but by late August were again reaching an impasse. Chamberlain suggested empowering Lascelles to ask the Kaiser 'once and for all, how far the latter is in earnest in his desire for an understanding [over the Colonies] and how far he is reasonable as to the terms on which it may be brought about.'¹⁸² Once back in Germany, Lascelles literally went out of his way to seek an Imperial audience, coming from his holiday cottage in Potsdam to Berlin, on the understanding the Emperor would be there, only to be disappointed on hearing the Emperor had called on him at Potsdam on the day he left.¹⁸³ With Berlin deserted, Lascelles left for Homburg on 2 August to begin his regular summer 'cure,' following doctor's orders.¹⁸⁴ On 14 August, he saw the Kaiser's mother, the Empress Frederick, a long-standing sympathiser to the cause of an English alliance,¹⁸⁵ who, unknown to Lascelles, was attempting to re-launch negotiations.¹⁸⁶ She mentioned that the Emperor was coming to see her. Lascelles responded by expressing his keenness to 'waylay' Wilhelm in Homburg after his disappointment in Berlin. The Empress promised to 'do her best' for him, and a week later she duly invited him to lunch with the Emperor at Friedrichshof.¹⁸⁷

Circumstances thus far may lend weight to the idea that Lascelles had connived at a meeting purposely to propose Chamberlain's scheme, but as Lascelles later told *The*

¹⁸¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 23 July 1898, FO 800/17.

¹⁸² Grenville *Lord Salisbury*, p. 192.

¹⁸³ Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace, 15 Oct 1898, Mackenzie Wallace MSS, News International Archive.

¹⁸⁴ Lascelles to Sanderson, 2 Aug 1898 FO 800/17.

¹⁸⁵ See Lascelles to Sanderson 19 March 1898 and to Prince of Wales 26 March 1898, *ibid.*

Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, p.103.

¹⁸⁶ Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy* p. 983 .

¹⁸⁷ Much later, in 1901, Holstein informed Chirol that this form of the alliance scheme was 'first started by the Empress Frederick in July 1898.' (Lascelles claimed not to have known this.). Lascelles to Lansdowne, 28 Dec 1901, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/18.

Times' Berlin correspondent, George Saunders, he had various reasons for wishing to see the Emperor- including a purely social one. It was two months since their last meeting, and Lascelles wished to sympathise with the treatment recently meted out to his Imperial friend by Bismarck's former press secretary, who had posthumously published the Iron Chancellor's resignation letter to the Kaiser as a last act of revenge. But paramount in his mind seems to have been the fate of the negotiations over the Portuguese colonies.¹⁸⁸

When, at Friedrichshof, the Kaiser, to the 'great astonishment' of those present, took Lascelles aside for an hour after lunch to talk politics, it was these colonial negotiations which received the lengthiest treatment. While Lascelles advised that Balfour was more amenable to the *entente* than Salisbury, he relayed 'the universal impression' that Germany's terms were too high. The Emperor became excited, professed merely to be 'going about the world picking up the scraps which you have left!' - and said that 'Germany must have colonial expansion' either with British help or without, and against, Britain.¹⁸⁹ When Lascelles protested that Germany was asking Britain to give up 'territories that have been in British hands for years and have become profitable through our exertions', the Kaiser threatened to withdraw Hatzfeldt from London.¹⁹⁰ It was at this juncture, with the Kaiser highly agitated- that Lascelles sought to reassure him that a desire for a good understanding existed in England and 'in some influential quarters,' went as far as a defensive alliance, operable in the event of either party being attacked by two Powers at the

¹⁸⁸ Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace, 15 Oct 1898, Mackenzie Wallace MSS, News International Archive.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ See E.T.S. Dugdale (ed.), *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914*, Vol. iii (London, 1931), p.38. Lascelles was not alone in voicing this view of Germany's approach to colonialism even among those who were otherwise sympathetic to Germany. E.g. see Sanderson's minute on Hill, 11 Feb 1899, FO 2/223: 'to preserve German favour we are to pay to give way everywhere', quoted in: Wm. Roger Louis, 'Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919' p.27.

same time.¹⁹¹ There is no evidence that either party considered this scheme a definite one; the Kaiser said he must have 'some document to go on' before seriously considering Chamberlain's proposal and afterwards told Bülow the scheme had not reached a 'definite shape'.¹⁹²

Hence Lascelles was 'rather taken aback' when the next day the Empress Frederick visited him at Homburg with a telegram from the Kaiser, thanking him for his 'energetic intercession', which would ensure everything would 'come to a fully acceptable end agreeable to both sides.' Lascelles could only think he had persuaded the Emperor to moderate his demands over Portugal, or had convinced him 'that a real desire existed in England to come to terms with Germany,' and for days 'cudgelled his brains' trying to work out what impression the Emperor could have received, intensely worried that the Emperor - with his characteristic impulsiveness and imagination- had placed an 'exaggerated interpretation' on his reference to Chamberlain's alliance scheme.¹⁹³ The Emperor had, in fact, referred to the post-lunch meeting at Chamberlain's house as a 'Cabinet Council' in his report.¹⁹⁴ (this idea that the meeting had been such a formal one was later vigorously contested by Lascelles.)¹⁹⁵ But at the time Lascelles was reassured by Bülow that it was indeed Lascelles' role in conveying the German reasons for declining to enter an alliance which had gratified the Emperor, rather than anything that might have been said

¹⁹¹ Lascelles to Balfour, 23 Aug 1898, BD i, No. 122.

¹⁹² Lascelles to Queen Victoria, 9 Dec 1898, SP 121/ 18; Memo by Kaiser Wilhelm II, 22 Aug 1898, GP XIV.338, in E.T.S. Dugdale, *German diplomatic documents 1871-1914*, vol iii (London, 1930), p. 26.

¹⁹³ Lascelles to Balfour, 26 Aug, FO 800/17; Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace, 15 Oct 1898, Mackenzie Wallace MSS, News International Archive. According to Holstein's later account, the Emperor had realised the idea was impossible while Salisbury was still around. However he expressed surprise at Lascelles' instructions to drop the idea, and characterised this as a 'premeditated snub,' accusing England of awaiting a continental war. Holstein to Chirol, 3 Jan 1902, BD ii. No. 96.

¹⁹⁴ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p.175.

¹⁹⁵ Lascelles to Balfour, 23 Aug 1898, BD i, No. 122.

afterwards about Chamberlain's revised alliance scheme.¹⁹⁶ Of course, Bülow had his own reasons to downplay the episode: he wished Germany to remain a *tertius gaudens* between Russia and England and thus was keen to discourage ideas of binding Germany to a concrete alliance.¹⁹⁷ At the same time as he received these assurances, Lascelles learned that Germany had withdrawn her demands over Africa,¹⁹⁸ and on 30 August 1898, a joint Anglo-German understanding over the fate of Portugal's colonies was signed.¹⁹⁹

It seems probable that, as W.L. Langer concluded decades ago, Lascelles had raised the alliance proposition in order to 'assuage the Emperor's indignation' and – as Norman Rich later wrote – the Kaiser subsequently 'considerably exaggerated whatever was said on the subject.' This, as H.W. Koch argued, holds more water than J.A.S. Grenville's theory that Lascelles was sent to Berlin on a clandestine 'last effort' to secure an alliance;²⁰⁰ although Lascelles' anxiety to 'waylay' the Emperor could be interpreted this way, it is more likely that the raising of the alliance was incidental, and a tactic to appeal to the Kaiser's pro-English sentiments, and face off a *volte face* over a promising colonial *entente* which was threatened by the Kaiser's changeable moods. As Lascelles explained to the Queen in late 1898, he thought that the Kaiser 'was in fact very fond of England, and anxious to be on good terms with us, but... he

¹⁹⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 2 Sept 1898, BD i, No. 96.

¹⁹⁷ Kennedy, *Antagonism*, p.236.

¹⁹⁸ Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace, 15 Oct 1898, Mackenzie Wallace MSS, News International Archive.

¹⁹⁹ Mozambique, Angola and Timor were put up as guarantees for the loan – if the colonies couldn't be maintained, Germany and Britain were to divide them up. Salisbury was so piqued by the arrangement he harangued his nephew for the only time in his life and set about undoing the arrangement – the result was the Windsor Treaty of 14 October 1899 which negated the 1898 agreement. A.L. Kennedy, *Salisbury, 1830-1903: Portrait of a Statesman* (London, 1953), pp.318- 319.

²⁰⁰ See the summary of arguments in Koch, 'The Anglo-German Alliance Negotiations,' p.385.

was terribly imprudent in his words and actions'.²⁰¹ In a sense this feeling that the Kaiser was an unstable element was re-affirmed when he told the Tsar he had rejected an alliance offer and asked for more favourable terms from Russia.²⁰² It was demonstrated again when in December 1898, at the zenith of the Anglo-French contest for control of the Upper Nile, Wilhelm telegraphed to the Empress Frederick proposing that Germany should remain neutral in any Anglo-French war but, should Russia intervene, she should 'act according to our arrangement made with Sir Frank Lascelles'. This action owed more to Wilhelm's wish to egg on Britain over the rather than a sincere reflection of the August conversation,²⁰³ and probably explains why Lascelles' repeated attempts to correct the Kaiser's apparent misunderstanding of the academic nature of the discussions were wilfully ignored by the Emperor.²⁰⁴ None of the parties subsequently informed of the events of 1898- the Queen, Salisbury, Sanderson, Saunders and later Chirol, ever doubted Lascelles' version of events.²⁰⁵ The Emperor's version was on the other hand justifiably discounted as being characteristically exaggerated.²⁰⁶ Yet, while Lascelles' willingness to raise Chamberlain's overture showed the importance he attached to retaining the Emperor's friendship and ergo good relations with Germany, the Kaiser's wilful

²⁰¹ G.E. Buckle (ed.), *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, vol iii, p. 300.

²⁰² Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, p.102.

²⁰³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 Dec 1898, FO 800/17.

²⁰⁴ Lascelles to the Queen, 9 Dec 1898, SP 121/18.

²⁰⁵ Chirol to Lascelles, 4 Feb 1902, CASR I 1/14.

²⁰⁶ When, three years later, Friedrich von Holstein conveyed the Emperor's version of events to Chirol (Holstein to Chirol, 3 Jan 1902, BD ii. No. 96) the latter sought enlightenment from the Foreign Office and was ensured by Sanderson (at Salisbury's request) that the German interpretation was an 'ingenious and deliberate... perversion of the truth'. (Chirol to Lascelles, 4 Feb 1902, CASR I 1/14); Chirol accused the Emperor 'of gross misrepresentation of the facts as to the genesis of the alliance' and committing Lascelles 'unjustifiably in order to construe a private account of an academic discussion into official overtures'. (Chirol to Lascelles, 21 Jan 1902, *ibid*) See also; Lascelles to Chirol, 10 Jan 1902, CASR I 1/23; Lascelles to Lansdowne, 15 Jan 1902, FO 800/18.

misinterpretation only increased the suspicions of the Emperor held by British statesmen.²⁰⁷

The Portuguese colonies arrangement proved that such relations could be maintained without a formal alliance, which itself – as the Kaiser told Lascelles in December 1899 – could be made in twenty-four hours if necessary without need of a formal arrangement.²⁰⁸ Lascelles, whom Chirol saw in October, was ‘in high good spirits at the entente cordiale with Berlin,’ and ‘very fit & pleased with himself & the Teutonic world in general.’²⁰⁹ German friendship – even at the price of extortion – was valuable at a time of Anglo-French tension over Fashoda, and also diverted Germany’s aspirations from South Africa.²¹⁰ Moreover Germany was still a relatively weak colonial rival. In late 1898, Lascelles took the Kaiser’s remark that Germany had a lot to learn from England before she became a ‘good coloniser’ at face value, and hailed Bülow’s comment to him that Germany ‘could only succeed in colonising’ with English assistance,²¹¹ as ‘eminently satisfactory’ language, telling Salisbury privately that: ‘if they not only adopt English methods of Government but also stick to the Principles of free trade and the open door, the more colonies they get the better.’²¹² By late 1898 Lascelles could point to a significant improvement in Anglo-German relations since the seizure of Kiaochow,²¹³ and the Emperor’s ‘delight’ that Anglo-German relations were ‘on so satisfactory a footing,’²¹⁴ symbolised by a visit of the Kaiser to the British Embassy early in 1899, and Bülow’s assertion to Saunders,

²⁰⁷ John Röhl, ‘The Kaiser and England’, p.104.

²⁰⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, 21 Dec 1898, BD i, No. 124.

²⁰⁹ Chirol to Spring-Rice, 18 & 27 Oct 1898, CASR I 1/18.

²¹⁰ Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy, 1814-1914*, (New York, 1992) pp. 383-384.

²¹¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 23 Dec 1898, BD i, No. 127.

²¹² Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Dec 1898, SP 121/20.

²¹³ Lascelles to Chirol, 21 Jan 1899, CASR I 1/23.

²¹⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Dec 1898, SP 121/20.

'that it was to the interest of both Countries to act together all over the world'²¹⁵ stimulated the Ambassador into hopes of further collaboration.

V

A less palatable side of Anglo-German relations revealed itself in late 1898, when the Kaiser tried to encourage the Anglo-French war over Africa which he thought imminent.²¹⁶ In January 1899 he told Lascelles that he had rejected offers to join a continental coalition with France and Russia against England, but nevertheless insisted that England should settle her scores against France over Africa.²¹⁷ Lascelles was not taken in, and became affronted at the Emperor's 'remarkable' assumption that Britain should wish to go to war, especially after the German press had 'maintained for years that under no circumstances would England go to war, that you might affront her, kick her, spit in her face if you liked.'²¹⁸

However, the same year Lascelles saw further hopes of Anglo-German collaboration when in March Cecil Rhodes, hoping to procure an agreement from the German Government to pass the Cape to Cairo Telegraph and Railway line through German East Africa, paid a visit to the Kaiser in Berlin,²¹⁹ which helped allay the antagonism between Rhodes and the Kaiser dating from the Krüger telegram

²¹⁵ Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 Dec 1898, FO 800/17.

²¹⁶ See: Jamie Cockfield, 'Germany and the Fashoda Crisis, 1898-99,' *Central European History*, Vol. 16, No.3 (Sep., 1983); Roderick R. McLean, 'The Kaiser's Diplomacy and the Reconquest of the Sudan'; Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Dec 1898, SP 121/20; Lascelles to Scott, 20 Jan 1899, Scott MSS, B.L., Add MSS. 52301, f. 145; Scott to Lascelles, 12 Jan 1899, FO 800/9; Lascelles to Salisbury, 23 Dec 1898, FO 64/1439, No. 347 very confidential; same to same, 19 Jan 1899, FO 64/1469 No. 11 very confidential.

²¹⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, FO 64/1469, 20 Jan 1899, No. 13 secret.

²¹⁸ Saunders to Mackenzie-Wallace, 21 Jan 1899, Mackenzie Wallace MSS. At the Foreign Office, Sanderson also doubted the Emperor's claim to be like 'a man with a pail of water, trying to damp the explosives which were lying about.' Sanderson instead compared him to a man 'running about with a Lucifer match and scratching it against powder barrels.' Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 Jan 1899, FO 64/1469, No. 13 secret; Sanderson to Lascelles, 25 Jan 1899, FO 800/8.

²¹⁹ Bertie to Lascelles, 1 March 1899, FO 800/6.

episode.²²⁰ The Kaiser consented to letting the railway line pass through African territory,²²¹ and the meeting was a 'triumphal success'; Rhodes confessed to having been 'a naughty boy' over Krüger telegram, and the two men talked like people 'who had known each other for years' and 'mutually delighted in each other'.²²² But the most important outcome lay in Mesopotamia, where Rhodes (hoping to deter Germany from Africa) suggested Germany might develop her interests.²²³ Thus was born Germany's scheme to sponsor the building of a railway to the Persian Gulf.²²⁴ Mesopotamia was one field where Britain had no intention of going herself. Thus over the next few years Lascelles enthusiastically encouraged endeavours to collaborate with German railway building in the Middle East, believing that the 'enthusiastic young' German Emperor could help "“keep the fort”" against Russia in Asia Minor.²²⁵ Lascelles recognised the force in Salisbury's initial hesitation and objections that, with Britain increasingly embroiled in South Africa, the Germans were 'likely to be exacting' and would try to 'get the best' of Britain and play on her fear of Russia there, especially when the Germans gained a concession to expand their rail project down to the Persian gulf.²²⁶ But even Salisbury acquiesced in principle when he realised that Britain couldn't 'keep the Persian gulf all to ourselves,'²²⁷ and

²²⁰ Lascelles to Bertie, 4 March 1899, FO 800/17.

²²¹ Saunders to Mackenzie Wallace 11 March 1899, Mackenzie Wallace MSS.

²²² Saunders to Chirol, 18 March 1899, Saunders MSS; Lascelles to Bertie, 15 March 1899, Bertie MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/170.

²²³ Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, p. 987.

²²⁴ Memo by Lascelles on Rhodes' visit, March 1899, FO 800/17.

²²⁵ Lascelles to Bertie, 17 March 1899, FO 800/17; see also Memo by Lascelles, March 1899, FO 800/17; Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 6 Aug 1899, *Holstein Papers*, op cit., vol. iv, No. 703; O'Connor to Lascelles, 7 Nov 1899, FO 800/15.

²²⁶ Lascelles to Sanderson, 1 June 1900, FO 800/17; in response to Sanderson to Lascelles, 30 May 1900, FO 800/14. See also Sanderson to Lascelles, 23 Jan 1901, FO 800/16.

²²⁷ Sanderson to Lascelles, 30 May 1900, FO 800/14.

Germany's ambitions were after all financial as opposed to territorial; additionally, Russo-German conflict in the region would help divide Britain's rivals.²²⁸

The apparent merit of acquiescing in colonial bargains with Germany to secure her friendship was demonstrated once again when, in early 1899, Germany turned her sights on the Pacific islands of Samoa in her search for a colonial acquisition,²²⁹ Although Lascelles was not empowered to negotiate over Samoa at Berlin,²³⁰ he deemed the German friendship more important than the ignominy of a diplomatic concession.

Germany had first acquired a stake in the Samoan islands under Bismarck, when joint Anglo-American-German rule was established over the archipelago. Since 1889, Salisbury had rebuffed Germany's repeated attempts to replace the tripartite administration of Samoa with a division of the islands. However Germany had their chance when, following the death of the King of Samoa, Malietoa, a civil war ensued (1898-1899) in which the German and American representatives on the islands backed rival claimants for the throne and despite the victory of Germany's preferred candidate, U.S. and British marines concerted to depose his provisional government and bombarded the German consulate in Apia. This led to an American apology and an agreement, reluctantly agreed to by Salisbury, for a commission to examine all contested matters- including the division of the isles.²³¹

Lascelles clearly divined that the Imperial Government wished to make the dispute a test-case for British friendship, that it served Bülow's political purposes to

²²⁸ A.L. Kennedy, *Salisbury*, pp.319-320; see Wm. Roger Louis, 'Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919', pp. 28-29. Richard M. Francis, 'The British Withdrawal from the Baghdad Railway Project in April 1903' *The Historical Journal*, xvi, no.1 (1973) 168-78.

²²⁹ The whole subject of Germany's interests in Samoa has received thorough treatment by Paul Kennedy in : *The Samoan Tangle: A study in Anglo-German-American relations, 1878-1900* (Dublin, 1974).

²³⁰ Lascelles to Sanderson, 4 Aug 1899, FO 800/17.

²³¹ See Rich, *Holstein*, ii, pp. 590-593.

whip up an already agitated German opinion in order to justify an increased fleet,²³² and noted the suspicious anti-British tone of the Foreign Office and the inspired anti-British articles in the Cologne Gazette. By 1899 however he dismissed Germany's attempt to plead her case as a *quantité négligeable* as an 'old story'.²³³ When Germany began in late August 1899 to take advantage of Britain's increasing South African difficulties to demand the best island of the group, Upolu, for themselves, in the words of the now increasingly anti-German (and anti Salisbury) Chirol, 'even his optimistic X [Lascelles –short for 'His Excellency'] & our placid old Sarum [Salisbury]' deemed this 'monstrous'.²³⁴ Lascelles was apparently conscious of Imperial attempts to capture his judgement and to 'arrange the Samoa business' for Germany.²³⁵ Yet at bottom Lascelles was disappointed that the 'miserable business' threatened to derail the good done by Rhodes' visit,²³⁶ when there seemed to him the possibility 'of a general shake hands all round and clearing up of questions'.²³⁷ He was inclined to think the isles- which had little strategic significance to Britain- were 'not worth the telegraph bill',²³⁸ and agreed with Scott, (O'Conor's successor to St Petersburg), that it was worth letting Germany have them if she wanted especially if it

²³² W.F. Bullock to Glenesk Bathurst, 13 April 1899, Glenesk Bathurst Papers, MS Dep 1990/1/5075; Lascelles to Sanderson, 31 March 1899, FO 800/17. See Kennedy, 'German World Policy', p. 617.

²³³ Rich, *Holstein*, ii, pp. 593-94. Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 April 1899, FO 800/17. Saunders to Chirol, 8 April 1899, Chirol MSS, News International Archive.

²³⁴ Chirol to Spring Rice, 3 Oct 1899, Spring Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/9; see also Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 Oct 1899, FO 800/17; Bullock to Glenesk Bathurst, 13 April 1899, Glenesk Bathurst Papers, University of Leeds Special Collections, MS Dep 1990/1/5075.

²³⁵ Hearing that the Kaiser had praised him privately, Lascelles voiced his suspicion: 'that he is just now saying:- "Now we shall see what that fellow Lascelles is worth"'. Saunders to Chirol, 8 April 1899, Saunders MSS, News International Archive.

²³⁶ Lascelles to Chirol, 1 April 1899, CASR I 1/23; Chirol agreed. Chirol to O'Conor, 19 March 1899, O'Conor MSS, C.C.A.C., OCON 5/3. What Lascelles perhaps did not realise was that Rhodes' visit temporarily allayed tensions over Samoa, for German officials mistakenly thought Rhodes would influence London on the issue. Rich, *Holstein*, ii, pp. 592-93.

²³⁷ Scott to Lascelles, 20 April 1899, FO 800/8.

²³⁸ Lascelles to Chirol, 21 Jan 1899, CASR I 1/23.

enabled England and Germany to continue towards the ‘really good understanding’ which the ‘real interests of both Countries’ demanded.²³⁹

A paramount consideration for Lascelles over Samoa was that the Emperor had ‘fixed his heart’ on the issue.²⁴⁰ The Samoan negotiations were bound up with the Emperor’s apparent wish for proof of English friendship, and his feeling of being neglected by the British Royal Family.²⁴¹ Lascelles thought ‘that we should have heard less of the Samoan question if Her Majesty had been able to visit some place in Germany even for a few hours’ after having visited France in the spring,²⁴² especially as he had not been invited to her eightieth birthday celebrations in May. Additionally, in April 1899, the question of succession to the throne of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was settled, much to the Emperor’s chagrin, without his input.²⁴³ Indeed, the reason Lascelles allotted such an importance to the Kaiser’s temper in his letters and despatches to Salisbury on the Samoan issue²⁴⁴ was clearly that he viewed the Kaiser’s pro-English sentiments as a guarantee against an anti-British policy on Germany’s part, a belief brought into its clearest focus yet when, during the negotiations over the Coburg succession, Lascelles attempted, through his old Bulgarian associate, Condie Stephen, now Minister-resident in Saxony, to warn the Queen’s Private Secretary how ‘fatal’ to Anglo-German relations it would be if the impulsive Kaiser ‘took offence’, as ‘the whole German nation would hail with delight any anti-English policy especially if it were accompanied by a rapprochement with

²³⁹ Lascelles to Scott, 28 April 1899, Scott MSS, B.L., Add MS. 52301, No. 179.

²⁴⁰ Salisbury to Lascelles, 15 Sept 1899, BD i, No. 146; Lascelles to Chirol, 14 Oct 1899, CASR I 1/23.

²⁴¹ Saunders to Chirol, 21 April 1899, Chirol MSS. Salisbury to Lascelles, 10 May 1899, SP 122/15; Sanderson to Lascelles, 2 Aug 1899, FO 800/8. Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 April 1899, FO 800/17.

²⁴² Lascelles to Villiers, 8 April 1899, FO 800/17.

²⁴³ Saunders to Chirol, 21 April 1899, Chirol MSS. See Paul Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle*, p.180, 184.

²⁴⁴ Lascelles to Villiers, 8 April 1899, FO 800/17; Lascelles to Salisbury, 31 March 1899 BD i, No. 135; Lascelles to Salisbury, 31 March FO 800/17.

Russia.²⁴⁵ Lascelles repeated to Salisbury the dangers inherent in alienating the Kaiser²⁴⁶ after he threatened to cancel a planned visit to England so long as Samoa remained unsettled,²⁴⁷ and appeared in a 'vile temper' at a dinner to honour the Queen's birthday.²⁴⁸

Thus when on leave in July, Sir Frank aligned himself with the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, St John Brodrick, in arranging the Kaiser's visit to Windsor in November 1899.²⁴⁹ Back at Berlin in September, he continued to urge the solution of the Samoan negotiations from the 'personal' point of view of the Emperor.²⁵⁰ Even so, Salisbury's eventual agreement to grant Germany the island of Upolu owed more to Admiralty information showing its main harbour would be useless for Germany, rather than to the Emperor's personal grievance²⁵¹ and Germany's acceptance of Upolu was down to reasons of prestige rather than material gain.²⁵² Indeed, Lascelles' fear of the consequences of the Kaiser's feud with Queen Victoria complemented German foreign policy, which was not to impair relations with England before the fleet was ready.²⁵³

The Kaiser's November visit itself provided, in Lascelles' view, an opportunity to clear the air. In the run up to the visit, Lascelles had agreed with Brodrick, that Salisbury little understood the importance of 'personal converse with

²⁴⁵ A.C. Stephen to Lascelles, 12 April 1899, FO 800/9.

²⁴⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 26 May 1899, BD I, No. 141

²⁴⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 May 1899, FO 800/17.

²⁴⁸ Lascelles to Chisolm, 27 May 1899, CASR I 1/23.

²⁴⁹ Brodrick to Lascelles, 1 Sept 1899, FO 800/8; Lascelles to Salisbury, 26 July 1899, FO 800/17. Entry in Queen's Journal for 23 Nov 1899, Buckle (ed.), *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, Vol. iii, pp. 423-4.

²⁵⁰ Lascelles to Sanderson, 14 Oct 1899, FO 800/17; see also Lascelles to Brodrick, 16 Sept 1899, *ibid.* On the Kaiser's attitude towards Samoa and the efforts of Lascelles to save the negotiations, see Kennedy, *Samoa Tangle*, pp. 223-4, 234-6.

²⁵¹ Paul Kennedy, 'Anglo-German Relations in the Pacific and the Partition of Samoa: 1885-1899,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, (1971), pp. 66-69.

²⁵² Kennedy, 'Germany's World Policy', pp. 616-617.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 618.

the Emperor' – and he hoped a personal meeting would 'lead the Emperor to a better understanding of Lord Salisbury',²⁵⁴ especially important in the light of past disagreements. While the Emperor was unable to meet Lord Salisbury due to Lady Salisbury's illness, Lascelles proudly facilitated the Emperor's meeting with two 'pro-German' Ministers, Chamberlain and Balfour.²⁵⁵

Yet while Lascelles saw the visit as a chance to strengthen Anglo-German relations, he did not, unlike some, dare to hope that it was a fresh opportunity for an alliance. He was careful, in reading a letter from Salisbury to Bülow prior to their meeting, to emphasise that Chamberlain spoke only for himself,²⁵⁶ and he emphasised to the Kaiser after his visit; 'You have heard from two English ministers (Balfour and Chamberlain) what I have often told you – that, while we can conclude no alliance, we recognise that German & British interests must run parallel along the line'.²⁵⁷

While Lascelles had high hopes of an understanding, he had lower expectations than Chamberlain of what Britain could ask of Germany. The Secretary of State for the Colonies was bitterly disappointed when, in late 1899, encouraged by his private meeting with Bülow on the visit and the latter's apparent reference to a desire for an understanding with the U.K. and the U.S., he again publicly advocated an alliance in his famous Leicester speech.²⁵⁸ Bülow had wished to keep Chamberlain interested in the scheme in order to continue to extract concessions from him and curb England's hostility while Germany's fleet remained weak, but did not plan to respond in kind,

²⁵⁴ Lascelles to Brodrick, 16 Sept 1899, FO 800/17; Brodrick to Lascelles, 1 Sept 1899, FO 800/8.

²⁵⁵ Chirol to Spring Rice, 2 Oct 1906, Spring-Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/11; Lascelles to daughter, 22 Nov 1899, *ibid*, CASR II 1/2; Lascelles to Chamberlain, 9 Dec 1899, FO 800/17.

²⁵⁶ Bülow, *Memoirs*, Vol. i, p.312.

²⁵⁷ Saunders to Chirol, 8 Dec 1899, Chirol MSS, News International Archive.

²⁵⁸ See Lascelles to Lansdowne, 2 Jan 1903, Lansdowne MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/129; Chamberlain to Lascelles, 12 Dec 1899, FO 800/8.

wishing to maintain her 'free hand'.²⁵⁹ Lascelles evidently appreciated some of this. Chamberlain had unfortunately 'blurted out the very thing the Germans longed for and that they would chuckle over it,' he told Saunders,²⁶⁰ and he was not surprised that Bülow's response, in which he referred to the Triple Alliance in more friendly terms than to England, and did not mention any project for a general understanding - failed to 'correspond with his private utterances' to Chamberlain.²⁶¹ As Lanza, who was on good terms with Bülow and very keen on good Anglo-German relations, advised the ambassador in December, Germany wished to cooperate with England in the 'great commercial and colonial questions' but this did not mean that Germany would in any way alter her 'continental policy,' of sticking to the Triple Alliance while cultivating Russia.²⁶² The exact extent to which Lascelles realised the role played by Bülow's wish to pander to the growing pro-Boer sentiment in Germany, and garner votes for the passing of Germany's Second Naval Bill,²⁶³ remains doubtful. But while Chamberlain was disappointed in Bülow,²⁶⁴ and his expectations had further to fall, Lascelles' appreciation of the fixed limits to an Anglo-German alliance meant his beliefs in an understanding would take longer to shatter.

VI

A fresh testing ground for Anglo-German relations came with Britain's involvement in the South African war of 1899-1902. Britain's involvement in a major colonial war substantially weakened her diplomatically, militarily and financially. It enabled France and Russia to advance their interests elsewhere around the globe at Britain's

²⁵⁹ Kennedy, 'German World policy', p. 618.

²⁶⁰ Saunders to Chisolm, 8 Dec 1899, Chisolm MSS, News International Archive.

²⁶¹ Lascelles to Chamberlain, 9 Dec 1899, FO 800/17.

²⁶² Lascelles to Salisbury, 8 Dec 1899, *ibid.*

²⁶³ Koch, 'The Anglo-German alliance negotiations', p. 386; Kennedy, 'German world policy', p. 619.

²⁶⁴ Chamberlain to Lascelles, 12 Dec 1899, FO 800/8

expense, and put a premium on Germany's attitude.²⁶⁵ Germany was to show herself as an unknown quantity. On the one hand, the Boer War presented her with opportunities to extract fresh concessions, and Bülow was able to exploit the very real pro-Boer and anti-British feeling in Germany to justify an increased Navy and thus further the aims of German *Weltpolitik*. On the other hand too much antagonism could not be afforded while Germany's fleet was still under construction, and too close an alignment with Britain threatened Germany's desire to maintain a free hand. The ambivalent attitude assumed by Germany and the pro-Boer and anti-British sentiment of German public opinion surprised many in Britain however, ensuring that Anglo-German relations soured and alienating many erstwhile Germanophile British statesmen, like Chamberlain.²⁶⁶ In the words of one historian the conflict 'more than any other colonial event...poisoned the relations between the two countries'.²⁶⁷

Lascelles was slower to take offence at the German Government's sphinx-like attitude, and reluctant to believe the rumours of German intrigues against Britain's Imperial interests which came to his ears.²⁶⁸ Arguably, this showed the generational gap between the mid-Victorian diplomat and the late-Victorian New Imperialists. Although like many British aristocrats, Sir Frank had relatives fighting in South Africa – his son, Billy, and his nephew Claud Grenfell who was killed in action in early 1900- and loyally supported his country – he was proud when Ladysmith was relieved by British forces, and wished he could have seen the 'enthusiasm in London'

²⁶⁵ See G.W. Monger, *The End of Isolation*, pp.5, 12-13; K.M. Wilson, 'The Boer War in the Context of Britain's Imperial Problems', in idem (ed.) *The International Impact of the Boer War* (Chesham, 2001), pp. 158-167; Zara S. Steiner, 'Great Britain and the Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance', *Journal of Modern History*, xxxi, no.2 (1959) p. 27.

²⁶⁶ Kennedy, 'German world policy', pp. 619-20. Winzen, 'Prince Bülow's Weltmachtspolitik', pp. 235-40; E.L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy* (Oxford, 1935), pp. 55-60.

²⁶⁷ Wm. Roger Louis, 'Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919' p.29; See also Townley, *Indiscretions*, p.62.

²⁶⁸ Lascelles to Chirol, 27 Jan 1900, CASR I 1/23.

as the news was received.²⁶⁹ His views on the war were well to the left of many in the British elite. Lascelles was rumoured privately not to support the war, and he certainly disliked the idea of annexing the Boer republics in the event of a British victory which was preached by *The Times*.²⁷⁰

Lascelles did share some of the general misgivings about Germany's attitude over the Boer war, agreeing that there was little love lost between the two countries and that Britain should not forget Germany's attitude, but crucially his conviction that the two countries' interests demanded 'mutual cooperation,' meant he thought it unwise, as he told Chirol, to stir up 'hatred and malice between us.'²⁷¹ Crucially Lascelles remained confident of Germany's essentially benign intentions, grounded in a continued belief that while German public opinion was 'dead against' Britain, the interests of both countries required 'that they should live on friendly terms however much they may dislike each other'.²⁷² This conviction was reinforced by Bülow's and Wilhelm's private assertions to Lascelles that the weakening of Britain's power would affect the Balance of Power in Europe to Germany's detriment- true enough, in itself²⁷³ - by Bülow's stated hope that a decisive British victory would enable her to 'reacquire her former influence both in China and Turkey,'²⁷⁴ and by the Kaiser's

²⁶⁹ Lascelles to Queen Victoria, 3 Feb 1900, FO 800/17; Florence Lascelles to Maud Wyndham, 9 Feb 1900, Petworth House Archives, consulted at West Sussex Record Office, PHA 13847; Saunders to Chirol, 2 June 1900, Chirol MSS; Lascelles to Salisbury, 9 Feb 1900, BD i, p.249, No. 311.

²⁷⁰ Gerard to Delcassé, 13 Feb 1900, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 2e série; Lascelles to Chirol, 3 March 1900, CASR I 1/14.

²⁷¹ Chirol to Lascelles, 6 March 1900, *ibid*; Lascelles to Chirol, 15 March 1900, CASR I 1/23.

²⁷² Lascelles to Sanderson, 23 Feb 1900, FO 800/17.

²⁷³ Lascelles to Salisbury, FO 64/1492, 8 Feb 1900, No. 31 confidential; Lascelles to Scott, 2 March 1900, Scott MSS, B.L., Add MSS 52302, f.13; see also Lascelles to Salisbury, 10 March 1900, FO 800/17.

²⁷⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 March 1900, FO 800/9, encl Kaiser Wilhelm to Lascelles [tel.]; Lascelles to Sanderson, 9 March 1900, *ibid*.

statement that Germany's financial and commercial classes 'desired the success of England for their own interests'.²⁷⁵

Decisive for the ambassador's perception of German intentions was the Kaiser's apparently genuine pro-British stance during the conflict. Many English officers who died in South Africa were known to Wilhelm personally.²⁷⁶ When, on 3 March 1900, Wilhelm sent the ambassador a telegram claiming to have rejected an invitation from France and Russia to intervene in the conflict on behalf of the Boers,²⁷⁷ and eight days later, claimed to have declined an unexpected appeal for intervention from the Boers,²⁷⁸ Lascelles was profoundly impressed that despite having a golden opportunity to take advantage of Britain's ill-fortune, Wilhelm had not done so.²⁷⁹ Arguably, more than any other single act, this influenced Sir Frank's view of Wilhelm, and consequently of German intentions, up to 1914. Although others within the Foreign Office were more dubious of the Kaiser's professed non-intervention in the Boer war, Lascelles would maintain five years after the conflict that the Kaiser's attitude – his decision not to receive President Krüger during his tour of Europe, or the Boer Generals after their defeat – all pointed towards his pro-English sentiments. The Kaiser's visit to England and his grandmother's deathbed at the peak

²⁷⁵ Lascelles to the Prince of Wales, 10 March 1900, FO 800/17.

²⁷⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, FO 64/1492, 8 Feb 1900, No. 31 confidential. The Kaiser claimed to have fought anti-British sentiment even among his own entourage, and to have resisted French and Russian attempts to bribe the German Press – although Lascelles thought the Kaiser's claims on the latter point to be 'a good deal exaggerated'. Lascelles to Salisbury 2 March 1900, B.D. i, No. 313; Lascelles to Salisbury, 2 March 1900, FO 800/17.

²⁷⁷ Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 March 1900, FO 800/9, encl Kaiser Wilhelm to Lascelles [tel.]; Lascelles to Sanderson, 9 March 1900, *ibid*.

²⁷⁸ Wilhelm II to the Queen [tel.], 11 March 1900, FO 800/17.

²⁷⁹ On the subject of Wilhelm II's non-intervention, see Edward T. Corp, 'Charles Hardinge and the Question of Intervention in the Boer War: An Episode in the Rise of Anti German feeling in the British Foreign Office', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 51, No. 2, On Demand Supplement (Jun., 1979), pp. D1071-D1084, especially D1071-72; J.A.S. Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 270-74. As Florence Lascelles put it early on in the conflict: 'The feeling here is pretty strong against us except in the All Highest quarters,' Florence Lascelles to Maud Wyndham, 9 Feb 1900, PHA 13847.

of the conflict in early 1901 - risking pro-Boer feeling at home – added further evidence of the Kaiser's pro English sentiments.²⁸⁰

From the outset of the Boer war, Lascelles always strove to 'put the German point of view' before the British Foreign Office,²⁸¹ even when struggling to do so against his own personal irritation at German actions- as when Bülow purposely stirred up public opinion over the British seizure of two German mail steamers, the *Bundesrath* and *General*, on suspicion of their supplying contraband to the Boers in early 1900. He argued that Bülow had 'on the one hand...to consider his Imperial Master who certainly does not wish to quarrel with us,' on the other 'an indignant Reichstag,' and he recognised that the new Chancellor's public speeches 'had to adopt a tone in harmony' with German public opinion.²⁸² This approach may have been unpopular but, as Chirol recognised, it was Lascelles' job as Ambassador to conciliate Germany.²⁸³

This task became increasingly difficult as he struggled to manoeuvre amidst 'shoals and quicksands' of a mutually hostile public opinion.²⁸⁴ While aware of the anti-German feeling in his own home country, he refused steadfastly to use his position unduly to influence public opinion on either side. Lascelles' apparent 'helplessness' over the Press tone on this and other occasions has garnered some criticism by Dr Van't Padje, who argues that 'instead of demanding action by the British government to gain that influence over the press or encouraging the British press-correspondents at Berlin to appeal to their editors and colleagues in London, he

²⁸⁰ Cannadine, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II and the British Monarchy' pp.193- 194; C.D. Penner, 'The Buelow-Chamberlain Recriminations of 1901-1902', *The Historian* V (1943), p. 98-99; Monger, *The End of Isolation*, pp. 22-23; See extract from Lascelles' Annual Report on Germany for 1906, 24 May 1907, BD III, Appendix C.

²⁸¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 9 Feb 1900, FO 64/1492, No.34.

²⁸² Lascelles to Chirol, 27 Jan 1900, CASR I 1/23; Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Jan 1900, FO 800/17.

²⁸³ Chirol to Lascelles, 6 March 1900, CASR I 1/14.

²⁸⁴ Ethel Smyth, *Streaks of Life*, (London, 1921), p. 157.

simply lamented and capitulated.²⁸⁵ For Lascelles was well aware the *Auswärtiges Amt* could and did orchestrate the official and semi-official Press tone,²⁸⁶ while two of the main anti-German journalists on the British side, Chirol and Saunders of *The Times*, were known personal friends of Lascelles.²⁸⁷ The British ambassador was certainly riled at times by what he termed 'the vile and calumnious campaign[...]conducted by the German press against England'.²⁸⁸ But at the same time he could not endorse the British response: he thought that Saunders' tactics of making the Germans 'squirm' were useless 'unless we mean to go to war.'²⁸⁹

Professional aloofness, and a belief in not discouraging Germany's official appearances of friendliness, influenced Lascelles' decision not to unduly interfere in matters of public opinion. This partly explained his refusal for example- despite pressure from the highest quarters in Britain- to remonstrate with Bülow or the Kaiser when offensive depictions of the Queen started appearing in the Berlin popular Press.²⁹⁰ On the other hand, despite Lascelles' indignation when, in March 1900 *The Times* went off 'with a loud explosion,' about Germany's hostile attitude, at exactly the same time as the Emperor's friendly warning had been delivered to England,²⁹¹ he remained immune to the *Auswärtiges Amt's* attempts to use his conflicting loyalties to

²⁸⁵ Van't Padje, 'At the heart of the growing Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry', p.196.

²⁸⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 7 Jan 1898, FO 64/1437, No. 13. See also Lascelles to Salisbury, 8 & 22 Jan 1898, SP 121/2 & 3. On this subject see Chapter 18, 'The Impulse and Orchestration of Patriotism, p. 361-285 in Kennedy, *Antagonism*; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in Wilhelmian Germany, 1897-1914' in *Central European History* 24 (1991), pp. 381-401.

²⁸⁷ On Saunders in Berlin, see *History of the Times*, Vol. III: the twentieth century test, 1884-1912 (London, 1947), pp. 304-320; A.J.A. Morris, *The Scaremongers*, pp. 24-36.

²⁸⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 8 June 1902, FO 64/1551, No. 109 confidential.

²⁸⁹ Lascelles to Chirol, 15 March 1900, CASR I 1/23.

²⁹⁰ Bigge to Lascelles, 5 Feb 1900, FO 800/8; Lascelles to Chirol, 15 March 1900, CASR I/23. The most infamous example of these was a picture of the Queen decorating a Boer soldier for having raped more Boer girls than any soldier of his age. C.D. Penner, 'The Buelow-Chamberlain recriminations', pp. 103-04.

²⁹¹ Sanderson to Lascelles, 14 March 1900, FO 800/9; Chirol to Lascelles, 18 Feb 1900, CASR I 1/14.

the Kaiser and to his journalist friends to pressurise *The Times* into recalling Saunders,²⁹² arguing to Bülow that Saunders was ‘not so bad as the German press made him out to be’,²⁹³ and answering a personal complaint from the Emperor about a *Times* article in mid-March 1900,²⁹⁴ with the reply that the British Government had ‘no sort of control over the Press,’ and any attempt to intervene risked making them ‘even more violent.’²⁹⁵ Lascelles did privately warn Chirol that Saunders should moderate his tone because of the German Government’s attempts to replace him,²⁹⁶ and revealed this fact to the Kaiser in an attempt to calm Imperial nerves,²⁹⁷ but personal influence was a tool Lascelles used sparingly, and its effects were uncertain. In the event, Chirol steadfastly ignored even this private appeal from his friend, and attempts by the British Foreign Office to influence Chirol by hinting at the Kaiser’s friendly intervention and to Chirol and Lascelles’ longstanding friendship,²⁹⁸ were equally ineffective in affecting the tone of *The Times*.²⁹⁹ When, two years later, the German Government once again sought to use the ambassador’s resentment of Saunders’s tactics into leaving Berlin after attacks on Bülow’s economic policy,³⁰⁰ Lascelles refused to act at all to weaken his position in Berlin and warned the *Auswärtiges Amt*, at Chirol’s request, that any attempt to calm *The Times* would have

²⁹² Holstein’s minute on Metternich to Foreign Office, 7 March 1900, GP XV.521, in Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents*, Vol. iii, p.124.

²⁹³ Lascelles to Chirol, 3 March 1900, CASR I 1/14.

²⁹⁴ Wilhelm II to Lascelles, 16 March 1900, FO 800/9.

²⁹⁵ Lascelles to Wilhelm II, 16 March 1900, FO 800/8; Lascelles to Salisbury, 16 March 1900, BD i, No. 314; A line approved by Salisbury. Salisbury to Lascelles, 18 March 1900, BD i No. 316.

²⁹⁶ Lascelles to Chirol, 3 March 1900, CASR I 1/14.

²⁹⁷ Lascelles to Sanderson, 23 March 1900, FO 800/17.

²⁹⁸ Sanderson to Lascelles, and Gosselin to Lascelles, 21 March 1900, FO 800/9.

²⁹⁹ Z.A. Steiner, ‘The Last Years of the Old Foreign Office, 1898-1905’, *The Historical Journal*, vi (1963), p. 66.

³⁰⁰ Buchanan to Lansdowne, 19 June 1902, FO 64/1551, No. 119. See also Chirol to Lascelles, 18 April 1902, CASR I 1/14. On 30 May Richtofen had ‘inveighed against Saunders’. (Lascelles to Sanderson, 30 May 1902, FO 800/8) over some recent articles in which Saunders heavily criticised Bülow’s for increasing sugar duties to appease the Agrarian faction in the Reichstag, (see *The Times*, 19 May 1902, pg. 4, 20 May, 1902 & 30 May, 1902, pg 5).

the opposite result, with the result that the Germans eventually abandoned their attempts to remove him.³⁰¹

While the atmosphere of the Boer war proved uncongenial to Lascelles' quest for better Anglo-German relations, the sudden re-emergence of the China Question in June 1900 following the so called 'Boxer' uprising, an indigenous revolt against foreign influence in the country, and the subsequent sending of an international expedition by the Great Powers to quell dissent and secure their interests, provided Britain's Ambassador with a fresh opportunity for urging joint Anglo-German co-operation, and he tried to overcome some of Salisbury's reluctance to do so,³⁰² openly supporting the appointment of the German General Count Waldersee as Commander in Chief of the Western Powers' expedition.³⁰³ At the back of this new collaboration however was a fear that Russia might take advantage of the situation in China to Britain's detriment.³⁰⁴ For, having quelled the insurrection at Peking on 21 August 1900, Russia suddenly retreated north, to consolidate her sphere of influence in Manchuria.³⁰⁵ When at a meeting with Edward VII at Wilhelmslöhe in August 1900, the Kaiser unexpectedly proposed a joint Anglo-German guarantee of the open door in China, to head off Russian incursions in Manchuria,³⁰⁶ this was gladly seized on by the same section of the Cabinet which since 1898 had been anxious about pace of

³⁰¹ Chirol to Sanderson, 2 May 1902 (enclosed in Sanderson to Lascelles, 4 June 1902), Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/11; Chirol to Lascelles, 29 May & 26 June 1902, CASR I 1/14. Lascelles to Chirol, 31 May & 30 June 1902, CASR I 1/23; Buchanan to Lansdowne, 2 July 1902, FO 64/1552, No.127.

³⁰² Hatzfeldt to Foreign Office, 26 June 1900, GP XVI.20, in Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents*, Vol. iii, p.127.

³⁰³ See Florence Lascelles to Maud Wyndham, 21 Aug 1900, PHA 13847.

³⁰⁴ See John D. Hargreaves, 'Lord Salisbury, British Isolation and the Yangtze Valley, June-September 1900,' *B.I.H.R.*, xxx (1957), pp. 62-75, pp. 62-3.

³⁰⁵ Sanderson to Lascelles, 15 and 21 Aug 1900, FO 800/6.

³⁰⁶ Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 & 30 Aug 1900, BD ii, No. 8 & 9; Salisbury to Lascelles 31 Aug 1900 *ibid*, No.11, and Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 Sept 1900, FO 800/17.

Salisbury's China policy and now forced Salisbury and the Foreign Office into agreeing to negotiations with Germany.³⁰⁷

Lascelles responded warmly when informed by Brodrick of the plans to induce Salisbury into an Anglo-German understanding and 'to get some assurances in Yangtze',³⁰⁸ repeating his belief that the 'interests of the two countries' made an Anglo-German understanding logical.³⁰⁹ While again not charged with the negotiations,³¹⁰ he was enthused by Bülow's favourable attitude towards the scheme. Indeed, despite Anglo-German commercial rivalry, he hoped co-operation in China might lead to an understanding in 'other places besides China.'³¹¹ This was certainly a contrast to the scepticism at the Foreign Office which some like Bertie, and even Sanderson, showed.³¹² However Lascelles' enthusiasm was tempered by caution. On being informed of the proposals by Sanderson,³¹³ the ambassador realised Salisbury had excluded Germany's sphere of influence, Shantung, from the mutual guarantee, and warned him that Britain would 'get the worst of the bargain' if Germany could exclude her from the province while claiming equal trading rights elsewhere in China.³¹⁴

By November 1900, partly as a consequence of Cabinet disagreements over China, Salisbury had been ousted from the Foreign Office and replaced by Lord Lansdowne. At the back of Lansdowne's diplomatic thinking was a wariness of the

³⁰⁷ Chirol to Lascelles, 1 Oct 1900, CASR I 1/14. See John D. Hargreaves, 'Lord Salisbury, British Isolation and the Yangtze Valley, June-September 1900,' *B.I.H.R.*, xxx (1957), pp. 70-74. The Cabinet members were Hamilton, Lansdowne, Goschen, Brodrick, Curzon – and Chamberlain.

³⁰⁸ Brodrick to Lascelles, 4 Sept 1900, FO 800/6.

³⁰⁹ Lascelles to Brodrick, 8 Sept 1900, FO 800/17.

³¹⁰ Lascelles to Sanderson, 28 Sept 1900, *ibid.*

³¹¹ Lascelles to Salisbury, 15 June 1900, BD ii, No. 2.

³¹² Z.A. Steiner, 'The Last Years of The Old Foreign Office, 1898-1905', pp. 68-70.

³¹³ Sanderson to Lascelles, 3 Oct 1900, FO 800/6.

³¹⁴ Lascelles to Salisbury, 5 Oct 1900, FO 800/17.

threat of Russia to Britain's Empire³¹⁵ for, like Lascelles, he had experience of this from his time as Viceroy of India. As a member of the pro-German Cabinet group, Lansdowne's one 'preconceived idea' on coming to office was to strengthen Anglo-German relations, especially in the Far East.³¹⁶ Encouraged by the Kaiser's visit to England in 1901, he hoped that the two Powers could continue to combine to safeguard their mutual interests in China.³¹⁷

Lascelles welcomed his new Chief's approach and offered his assistance in seeking any good understanding which was 'guided rather by interests than by sentiment', but he warned his new Chief to be wary of Germany's bargaining methods in future, and of securing adequate compensation in any agreement; the Germans would 'always try to get... the better of us in a bargain,' but would 'always come to terms if they see we intend to hold our own,' he wrote.³¹⁸

However, it was not long before Lansdowne felt that Germany had already 'bested' Britain over China. The vague wording of the joint guarantee of the open door – concluded on 16 October 1900- made it easy for Germany to shrink from confronting Russia in China in the eventuality of further incursions into Manchuria.³¹⁹ Lascelles had warned Lansdowne in November 1900 that despite assurances 'on all sides' of the German Government's desire to co-operate in China, they would not

³¹⁵ Sneh Mahajan, 'The Defence of India and the End of Isolation. A Study in the Foreign Policy of the Conservative Government, 1900-1905', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, (1982) p.168 & 181.

³¹⁶ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 11 Nov 1900, FO 800/9.

³¹⁷ See J.A.S. Grenville, 'Lord Lansdowne's abortive project of 12 March 1901 for a secret agreement with Germany', *B.I.H.R.* xxvii (1954), pp. 201-13.

³¹⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 17 Nov 1900, Lansdowne MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/128.

³¹⁹ The treaty extended the guarantee of the open door to China as far as England and Germany could 'exercise influence' See Rich, *Holstein*, ii, p.624; Otte, *The China Question*, p. 212; Salisbury to Lascelles, 15 Oct 1900, BD ii, No.17. John Hay U.S. Secretary of State dubbed it 'a horrible practical joke on England.' William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism. 1890-1902*, p.702.

'dare to offend Russia',³²⁰ and Germany's response to evidence of Russian 'land grabbing' in Manchuria early in 1901 confirmed this to the British Foreign Office.³²¹ Bülow's public denial on 15 March 1901 that the Anglo-German Agreement applied to Manchuria³²² in the wake of the revelation that Russia had already reached an agreement with China over that area³²³ - rendered the Anglo-German *entente* in the Far East 'completely emasculated and valueless'.³²⁴

VII

For Lansdowne the Manchurian episode – and the inadequacy of the Manchurian agreement - showed the limits of Anglo-German co-operation in the Far East.³²⁵ Lansdowne's ultimately fruitless attempts to secure German assistance in supporting Japan in Northern China in the event of conflict, foiled by Germany's desire to cut and run in China as soon as feasible, ended his notion that England and Germany might 'keep a ring' for Russia and Japan in the Far East, and drove him increasingly to see the virtues of a purely Anglo-Japanese alignment which would assist with Britain's imperial burden.³²⁶ Lascelles meanwhile continued to recognise Germany's attempts to set Britain at loggerheads with her Imperial rivals. When in April the Emperor termed the British Cabinet 'unmitigated noodles' for not taking 'advantage' of their opportunities in the Far East, Lascelles saw through this fresh

³²⁰ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 5 Jan 1901, FO 800/129.

³²¹ Bertie to Lascelles, 15 Jan 1901, FO 800/6. See on this whole issue Grenville, 'Lord Lansdowne's abortive project of 12 March 1901 for a secret agreement with Germany' *passim*; also Monger, *The End of Isolation*, p.22.

³²² W. L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, p. 722.

³²³ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 10 March 1901, BD ii, No. 52.

³²⁴ Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, p. 722.

³²⁵ Zara S. Steiner, 'Great Britain and the Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance', pp. 28-29, 36.

³²⁶ See Lansdowne to Lascelles, 8 March 1901, Lascelles to Lansdowne, 10 March 1901, Lansdowne to Lascelles, 13 March 1901, BD ii, No.'s 50, 52 & 55; Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 March 1901, FO 800/10; Lascelles to Lansdowne, 16 March 1901, FO 800/128. Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 March 1901, BD ii No. 77

attempt to encourage Britain into war with Russia, or at least to ‘egg on Japan,’ and advised Lansdowne to effectively ignore his remarks as a “‘tale of little meaning, though the words be strong’”,³²⁷ and drew a parallel with the Kaiser’s language at the end of 1898, when he had tried to foment an Anglo-French war.³²⁸

Lascelles’ reaction to the last concrete German alliance overture during his time at Berlin demonstrates his continued scepticism towards the project. When in March 1901 Eckardstein of the German Embassy in London approached Lansdowne with the proposal of an Anglo-German defensive alliance against Russia and France,³²⁹ Lascelles, along with Sanderson, spotted the similarities with Chamberlain’s ‘scheme’ of August 1898, leading him to suspect that the Kaiser was at the back of the renewed proposals and to advise Lansdowne that Eckardstein be reminded of the Emperor’s assertion in December 1898 that ‘no formal alliance...was necessary’.³³⁰ Lansdowne was in actuality exceedingly reluctant to have to conduct an ‘Anglo-German’ foreign policy, but still keen to outwardly pay due deference to the wishes of the Emperor whom he, like Lascelles, thought to be a ‘very serious factor in all our calculations.’³³¹ Salisbury’s caution, his habitual reluctance to join the Triple Alliance and enter an obligation to defend Germany and Austria’s borders against Russian and French attack, and the difficulties of gaining parliamentary consent to an alliance especially in the heightened atmosphere of tension of the Boer war, killed the

³²⁷ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 11 April 1901, BD ii, No. 72; Lascelles to Lansdowne, 13 April 1901, FO 800/129.

³²⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 12 April 1901, BD ii, No. 74.

³²⁹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 March 1901, FO 800/10.

³³⁰ Sanderson to Lascelles, 27 Mar 1901, FO 800/10; Lascelles to Lansdowne [tel.], 23 Mar 1901, BD ii, No. 78; see also Richard Acton to Lord Acton, 22 March 1901, Acton MSS, Add. MS 8121 (9) III, No. 363, Lascelles to Lansdowne, 22 March 1901, FO 800/18.

³³¹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 March 1901, FO 800/10; see also same to same, 1 April 1901, *ibid.* See Koch, ‘The Anglo-German Alliance Negotiations’, p. 388.

alliance scheme.³³² By December 1901, Lansdowne had informed the new ambassador, Metternich, of Britain's inability to accept an alliance, although he remained committed to working towards a limited *entente* in areas of mutual interest.³³³

While the ambassador again took no role in the negotiations, and was requested by both Sanderson and Bülow not to mention the subject to the Emperor,³³⁴ he again appreciated the obstacles to an alliance. Lascelles' attitude to the renewed overtures can be gauged by Alfred Rothschild's comment to Eckardstein at the time that he laughed 'at the clumsiness with which Berlin handles the business.'³³⁵ In July 1901, while in London, Lascelles, knowing of Salisbury's objections to an alliance, told Eckardstein that he personally thought an accession to the Triple Alliance impossible; at most, a loose association was feasible. Meanwhile, according to Eckardstein, while in London he did 'his best' to help settle 'pending questions' between the two countries.³³⁶ This tone was repeated when he met the Kaiser in August 1901, at a meeting with the Prince of Wales.³³⁷ Bülow had also told Lascelles there was no haste, for German policy pivoted on the Triple Alliance, and improved relations with France and Russia.³³⁸ The Kaiser's claim in mid-1901 that a Franco-German *rapprochement* had been reached and England must choose which side they were on led Lascelles flippantly to tell Sanderson he had been 'strongly tempted to

³³² Sanderson to Lascelles, 10 April 1901, encl. Memo 29 March 1901, FO 800/10. Also see Lansdowne to Lascelles, 7 April 1901, Lansdowne to Salisbury, 24 May 1901, Memo by Sanderson, 27 May 1901, Memo by Salisbury, 29 May 1901, BD ii, No's 80, 82, 85 & 86; Koch, 'The Anglo-German Alliance Negotiations', pp.389-90.

³³³ Draft Lansdowne to Lascelles, secret 19 Dec 1901, FO 64/1519, No.393A, and King's minutes; Lascelles to Lansdowne, and same to King, both 27 Dec 1901, FO 800/18. See also Lascelles to Lansdowne, 27 Dec 1901, *ibid.*

³³⁴ Sanderson to Lascelles, 29 May 1901, FO 800/10.

³³⁵ Baron von Eckardstein, *Ten Years at the Court of St James*, (London, 1921), p. 221.

³³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 225.

³³⁷ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 24 Aug 1901, FO 800/17.

³³⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 25 Aug 1901, BD ii, No. 90.

reply that as he, and consequently the Triple Alliance, had joined the Dual Alliance, Europe had become a happy family, and there was 'no "other side" for us to join'³³⁹ For Lascelles, it was Germany's outward *intentions* and the *appearance* of Anglo-German cordiality which mattered more; thus when in December 1901 Bülow signalled his disinterest in immediate talks, the Ambassador noted it was 'satisfactory that he is still in favour of an eventual alliance' between Britain and the Triple Alliance.³⁴⁰

Yet the consequences of the recriminations which greeted the end of alliance negotiations were much greater for Lascelles. In a speech at Edinburgh on 25 October 1901, Joseph Chamberlain responded to German criticism of the barbarous treatment of Boer civilians by English troops in South Africa by arguing that their actions went no further than those of the German Army in 1870. This produced a backlash in Germany, but a demand from the German ambassador in London that Chamberlain withdraw his remarks was unsuccessful, and on 6 January 1902 Chamberlain publicly 'bade adieu' to an Anglo-German alliance by announcing that England would stick to 'splendid isolation'. Speaking in the Reichstag on 8 January 1902, Bülow reprimanded Chamberlain by telling him to leave foreign nations alone, and that he was 'biting on granite' in criticising the German Army.³⁴¹ In Chirol's view, these events, through which Chamberlain was 'cured of his pro-German sympathies,' and gained in popularity, had a 'more permanent' effect on Anglo-German relations, than the Krüger telegram.³⁴²

³³⁹ Lascelles to Sanderson, 1 June 1901, FO 800/18.

³⁴⁰ Lascelles to Lansdowne, PS 28 Dec 1901, *ibid*; See also Lascelles to Lansdowne, 3 Jan 1902, BD ii, No. 95, in which Lascelles reports Bülow of having said an alliance would secure peace for the next 25 years.

³⁴¹ See C.D. Penner, 'The Buelow-Chamberlain Recriminations'.

³⁴² Chirol to Lascelles, 4 Feb 1902, CASR I 1/14.

Lascelles was guilty of some inconsistency over the Chamberlain-Bülow affair. He had greeted Chamberlain's outburst with regret because of his belief in Bülow's friendly attitude in the Boer war, and apparently initially understood the Chancellor's point of view when he tried to get Chamberlain to retract his statement about the German Army in order to avoid having to make a public reply.³⁴³

Yet when Bülow warned of making an anti-English Reichstag statement, Lascelles told Chirol privately that such a retort would be 'a proof of his weakness and inability to resist popular clamour,' and contrary to Bülow's professed belief 'that the interests of our two countries require that we should not quarrel seriously.' If Bülow did speak out, he argued, 'he should be clearly given to understand that public abuse was no longer to be explained away by private assurances,' or even by the friendly gestures of the Emperor (such as his warning about Great Power intervention), as these could not be publicised. Meanwhile public irritation made 'a friendly understanding between the two Governments almost impossible', and Lascelles also warned Mühlberg that a German response risked inflaming it further.³⁴⁴

Yet when it came to it, Lascelles's despatch on the subject explained away Bülow's action on the grounds that the Chancellor had to 'conciliate public opinion' to maintain a precarious political position, and pose as champion of the German Army.³⁴⁵ Furthermore, Lascelles saw Bülow's second speech, rebuking a member of the Reichstag for an attack on Chamberlain and the British Army, as compensation for his first speech, and was astonished when *The Times* responded unfavourably to it.³⁴⁶

³⁴³ Bülow, *Memoirs*, Vol. i, 1897-1903, pp. 545-6.

³⁴⁴ Lascelles to Chirol, 24 Nov 1901, CASR I 1/23; Lascelles to Lansdowne, 27 Dec 1901, FO 800/18.

³⁴⁵ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 9 Jan 1902, *B.D.F.A.*, Series F, Vol 19, Doc. 97, p. 99.

³⁴⁶ Lascelles to Lansdowne [tel.], 11 Jan 1902, FO 800/129; same to same, 16 Jan 1902, BD i, No. 332.

The fallout from the affair led Lascelles into an unenviable predicament. Before the Reichstag speeches the German Chancellor had also been invited to dine at the Embassy in January 1902, the public announcement of which generated unpleasant comment.³⁴⁷ As Lascelles explained to Chirol, he could hardly withdraw the invitation ‘without at the same time asking for my passports’, but this created the misconception that Lascelles had ‘run after’ Bülow.³⁴⁸

More significantly, not for the first or last time Lascelles had to act as referee between the monarchs of both countries, who sought to defend their own statesmen’s positions. The King made an illustration of his annoyance by writing the Kaiser a stiff letter and postponing a scheduled visit of the Prince of Wales to Berlin in January 1902, an already unpopular engagement. Lascelles saw it as his ambassadorial duty to rescue the visit, but his efforts made him deeply unpopular.³⁴⁹ While arguing to the King that the outburst in the English press against Germany had certainly ‘done some good’ by showing Germans that there were ‘limits’ to British endurance which were ‘not safe to pass’, he argued that the Kaiser and Bülow really wanted ‘to be friends’ with England, pointed out that the German press ‘either from official pressure or from fear of offending England’ had not replied to Chamberlain’s last speech,³⁵⁰ and he explained how disappointed the Kaiser had been at the reception of Bülow’s second speech, which was intended to be friendly. Lascelles was also distressed that the King, whom he considered a personal friend, had been disappointed by his line over the Reichstag speeches. He pointed out the extraordinary difficulty of his position amidst

³⁴⁷ Chirol thought the public announcement of the visit in a German newspaper to be a ‘perfidious’ act. Chirol to Lascelles, 21 Jan 1902, CASR I 1/14.

³⁴⁸ Lascelles to Chirol, 25 Jan 1902, CASR I 1/23.

³⁴⁹ Knollys to Lansdowne, 11 Jan 1902, FO 800/129; Lascelles to Lansdowne [tel.], 11 Jan 1902, *ibid*; Lascelles to Knollys [tel.], 17 Jan 1902 *ibid*; Lansdowne to Lascelles, 17 Jan 1902, FO 800/10; Chirol to Lascelles, 14 Jan 1902, CASR I 1/14. Chirol told Sanderson he had suppressed angry letters to *The Times* on the subject. Sanderson to Lascelles, 22 Jan 1902, FO 800/10.

³⁵⁰ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 11 & 25 Jan 1902, FO 800/129.

the abnormally excited state of public opinion, but maintained that Bülow's second speech was satisfactory³⁵¹ and warned of 'a period of strained relations which will not be of advantage to either country.'³⁵²

The King eventually relented, and the Prince's visit did much to clear the air.³⁵³ The aversion of a major diplomatic incident caused relief at the embassy and at the Foreign Office, where there was sympathy for Lascelles's unenviable predicament.³⁵⁴ Yet it was clear by 1902 that British attitudes towards Germany had shifted significantly. Chirol noted a 'profound alteration' in Lansdowne's tone when, on 25 January, he apparently told the journalist that he could no longer trust the Emperor's friendly professions, 'if even they were genuine,' as a 'dominant factor in Anglo-German relations,' nor would he treat Germany differently to any other Power. The Chamberlain-Bülow recriminations had an undoubted effect on the position of Lascelles at Berlin. Chirol openly warned him that there was a growing feeling in the Foreign Office that he was coming to be regarded 'as the Ambassador of the Emperor rather than of the King,' and too 'disposed to lend exclusive weight to the soft words of the Emperor and the friendly private assurances of officials and to wave aside or minimize unpalatable facts which happen to be at variance with them'. Chirol feared lest Lascelles despite his great experience be successfully 'bamboozled' by the 'lavish efforts that would naturally be made to capture your judgement.'³⁵⁵ While Lascelles professed to be aware of this perception of him, he thought it 'a little hard upon me as

³⁵¹ Lascelles to Knollys, 17 Jan 1902, FO 800/17; Lascelles to Chirol, 25 Jan 1902, CASR 1/23. See also Lascelles to Lansdowne, 18 Jan 1902, FO 800/17.

³⁵² Lascelles to Knollys, 17 Jan 1902, FO 800/17.

³⁵³ Even after this, the visit nearly did not take place; the Kaiser claimed not to have received the King's letter authorising the visit to go ahead, and only after a successful last-minute search was the letter found -much to the Ambassador's relief. See Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy*, pp. 366-69

³⁵⁴ See G.W. Buchanan to Glenesk Bathurst, 1 Feb 1902, MS Dep 1990/1/1789; Villiers to Lascelles, 5 Feb 1902, FO 800/10.

³⁵⁵ Chirol to Lascelles, 4 Feb 1902, CASR I 1/14.

I believe that the Emperor has heard more home truths from me than he has from any one else.'³⁵⁶ However, as Chirol wrote to O'Connor, the incident led Lascelles's 'optimism' and 'to some extent' his credit suffer in 'high places' both in Germany and Britain.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Lascelles to Chirol, 8 Feb 1902, CASR I 1/23.

³⁵⁷ Chirol to O'Connor, 9 Feb 1902, OCON 5/3.

b) Lascelles and the turn against Germany, 1902-1908.

I

In mid-1902 the South African war ended with the annexation of the Boer republics by Britain. With Lord Salisbury's retirement from public life in late 1902 Holstein, for one, hoped that Lascelles would become less 'pessimistic' now that he no longer had to 'adapt himself to Salisbury's rudeness'.¹ Yet despite both Lascelles and Lansdowne hoping that the 'bitter' feeling against Germany would subside² and a superficially successful imperial visit to Sandringham in November 1902,³ 'small incidents' kept arising to bar the way to an understanding even though there was (in Lascelles's mind) no longer any important difference between England and Germany.⁴ Although Lascelles found his own position more comfortable,⁵ by 1903 opportunities for an *entente* lessened. Anglo-German attempts to settle their outstanding financial claims in Venezuela faltered due to an anti-German newspaper campaign in Britain,⁶ and hostile public opinion also deterred British financiers from participating in the Baghdad railway project.⁷ While Lascelles attempted to minimize the seriousness of these developments by reasoning it might do some good for the

¹ Holstein to Bülow, 29 July 1902, in Rich and Fisher (eds.) *Holstein Papers*, Vol. iv (Cambridge, 1963), No. 803.

² Lansdowne doubted the Germans would have contemplated an alliance if Anglophobia was 'inherent in the sentiments of the German people.' Lansdowne to Lascelles, 22 April 1902, FO 800/129.

³ The Kaiser enjoyed the visit; the King was glad when Wilhelm left! Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII: a biography*, v. 2 (London, 1927) p. 153.

⁴ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 4 Nov 1902, FO 64/1552, No.220 confidential.

⁵ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 2 Jan 1903, FO 800/129.

⁶ G.W. Monger, *The End of Isolation*, pp.104-7; Lascelles to Sanderson, 27 Dec 1902, FO 800/18.

⁷ Lascelles to Sanderson, 17 & 25 April 1903, FO 800/18; Sanderson to Lascelles, 5 Aug 1903, FO 800/15.

Germans to 'understand that we shall not go out of our way to please them',⁸ and brushed off a remark by the Kaiser that he was being badly treated in England with the comment 'only the newspapers, Sir',⁹ others felt the anti-German feeling was more permanent¹⁰ and Sir Frank recognised there was 'nothing to be done' until British public opinion calmed down.¹¹ He especially regretted the collapse of the railway negotiations from the standpoint of British interests: Britain would be the main customer of the railway and would have benefited from a controlling share in it.¹²

1903 also saw the resurgence of commercial tension between Germany and England, an aspect of the Anglo-German antagonism which had hitherto merited little attention from Britain's Ambassador. As early as 1895 Salisbury had warned Lascelles of Germany's awkwardness in commercial matters.¹³ As an ambassador still immersed in the traditions of Victorian diplomacy which was relatively ignorant of commercial matters, trade rivalry was not a subject upon which Lascelles felt he was 'called upon to express an opinion.'¹⁴ Furthermore, the Berlin Embassy had benefited from the services of its own commercial attaché, Harriss-Gastrell, since 1897. Nonetheless, when in 1903 the commercial debate turned political after Bülow's acceding to pressure for an increase in Germany's general tariff, which seemed to threaten Britain's economic supremacy and to extend a tariff war which had been raging between Germany and Canada since 1897, Lascelles was instructed to take a stiffer tone. German threats against Canada were seen as hugely unjust and prompted Chamberlain's to resign from the British Cabinet in order to embark on a

⁸ Lascelles to Knollys, 9 Jan 1903, FO 800/18.

⁹ Lascelles to Knollys, 30 Jan 1903, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Knollys to Lascelles, 3 Feb 1903, FO 800/15.

¹¹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 15 May 1903, FO 800/129.

¹² Lascelles to Chirol, 23 Oct 1903, CASR I 1/23.

¹³ Memo by Lascelles on interview with Salisbury, 4 Dec 1895, FO 800/17.

¹⁴ Lascelles to Sanderson, 19 Sept 1903, FO 800/18.

campaign for British Tariff Reform, which went ‘hand in hand’ with the increasing Germanophobia in Britain. Berlin, fearing the effects of a tariff war, did all in their power to deflect one by extending ‘most favoured nation status’ to the whole of the British Empire, and assembling statistics to demonstrate that the new German tariff did not damage British trade.¹⁵ Despite Bülow’s efforts to calm the press so as not to antagonise Britain on this issue,¹⁶ at Reichstag elections in 1900 ‘doctrinaire’ free traders failed to win a single seat.¹⁷

In addition to professional reasons for not wishing to antagonise Germany, Lascelles also had ideological reasons not to emphasise the trade rivalry between the two countries. Sir Frank was a fairly typical Victorian free trader, and as a ‘good Liberal,’ did not ‘share the enthusiasm of Society for J[oseph] C[hamberlain]’s schemes’.¹⁸ He reasoned that Britain should not force on a tariff war against Germany, which he thought Britain would lose.¹⁹ As he argued later in his life, the ‘enormous trade’ between the two countries, who were each others’ ‘best customers,’ made it highly desirable that the two sides should not fight, if only to ensure mutual prosperity.²⁰ Conversely, he was not convinced that ‘retaliation’ in the form of a British tariff would open fresh markets for British exports.²¹

¹⁵ Kennedy, *Antagonism*, pp. 261-64.

¹⁶ Lascelles to Kennedy, 29 May 1903, FO 800/18.

¹⁷ Buchanan to Lansdowne, 24 June 1903, FO 64/1573, No.147.

¹⁸ Almeric Fitzroy, *Memoirs*, Vol, I (London, 1925), entry for 23 Nov 1903, p. 170. Four years later, the Naval attaché at Berlin, Dumas, after playing golf with Lascelles, his son Bill, and daughter-in-law Sybil, noted that: ‘On the way Lady Sybil said she was a protectionist & so was Bill & then she asked Sir Frank what he was. He answered ‘Oh I’m a free trader but then you see I’ve had the advantage of two hours’ talk with Mr Chamberlain on the subject,’ which for cutting sarcasm it would be hard to beat.” Dumas diary, 25 Oct 1907.

¹⁹ Lascelles to Kennedy, 29 May 1903, FO 800/18.

²⁰ *The Daily News*, 5 Oct 1911, ED Morel MSS, F 15/3-1; copy of *The Peacemaker* – vol No.4, May 1912, ED Morel MSS, F 13/7-1.

²¹ Lascelles to Sanderson, 19 Sept 1903, FO 800/18.

Despite an apparent inability to arrest the deterioration in Anglo-German relations, however, Lascelles's good personal standing with the Emperor enabled him to survive successive shuffles of the diplomatic pack. In 1902 he was touted as a possible successor first to Pauncefote in Washington, and then to Currie at Rome. Yet, so long as he retained the Emperor's favour, Lascelles remained 'indispensable' at Berlin as he himself recognised.²² For this reason he was kept in Berlin despite being put up as the 'Foreign Office' candidate for Paris in December 1903 pending Edmund Monson's retirement. By this point, Lascelles' fate was sealed by the manoeuvres of two anti-German British diplomats – Francis Bertie and Charles Hardinge, who respectively coveted the Paris and St Petersburg Embassies, and were warmly supported by the King. Hardinge knew that the King wanted to keep Lascelles in Berlin,²³ and made full play of his position with the Emperor, reassuring Bertie that the French would not want an Ambassador who was "“persona gratissima”" with the Kaiser, and that there was 'nobody who can properly fill his place at Berlin.'²⁴ With his path to Paris blocked, Lascelles was, in the words of Chirol, condemned to Berlin 'in perpetuity.'²⁵

II

From 1904 onwards, Lascelles' continued wish to conciliate Germany became increasingly at odds with a more reserved attitude taking hold within the British Foreign Office and diplomatic service, which corresponded with Britain's realignment

²² Bertie to Lascelles, 31 Dec 1902, FO 800/11; see also Nicolson to Villiers, 30 Nov 1902, Villiers MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/22; W.F. Bullock to Oliver Andrew Borthwick, 12 Nov 1903, Glensk-Bathurst Papers, MS Dep 1990/1/1792.

²³ Hardinge to Bertie, 24 Dec 1903, Bertie MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/163.

²⁴ Hardinge to Bertie, 2 Jan 1904, *ibid*, FO 800/183. See also Hardinge to Bertie, 14 Feb 1904, *ibid*, FO 800/176.

²⁵ Chirol to O'Connor, 9 Feb 1904, OCON. Lascelles was again refused Paris in 1908 'for being too German in his sentiments' and for not being married. Blunt, *My diaries*, Vol ii, p.213.

towards France (and eventually Russia) culminating in the Anglo-French colonial agreement of 1904, whereby France recognised Britain's preponderant position in Egypt and Britain recognised France's claim on Morocco²⁶. Lascelles did not resent Britain's new policy and he did not see it as inimical to an Anglo-German *entente*, for the Anglo-French agreement was not primarily anti-German; Lansdowne had Britain's Mediterranean interests, better relations with France and (by implication) with Russia in mind²⁷ and told Lascelles Germany could earn Britain's 'lasting gratitude' by showing her 'good will' towards the Agreement.²⁸ Furthermore Sir Frank recognised the need for such an agreement in the context of the long-awaited Russo-Japanese war (1904-05), to prevent what he termed the 'calamity' of Britain or France being dragged into conflict on the side of their allies.²⁹ His congratulation to Lansdowne on having speedily concluded 'the very best bit of diplomatic work that has been accomplished for many a long year,' and thus having 'largely contributed towards the maintenance of the Peace of the world'³⁰ appears to have been heartfelt³¹ and was consistent with his favourable reaction to Herbetts's offer of an Anglo-French *entente* in 1896, and his attempts at working with France in Egypt in 1878-9.

However Lascelles knew Germany well enough to forewarn Lansdowne that she rarely gave anything up without asking for 'compensation' and to prepare himself

²⁶ Text communicated to Lascelles privately by Gorst, 11 May 1904, FO 800/12.

²⁷ See C. Andrew, 'The Entente Cordiale from its origins to 1914' in: Waites, Neville (ed.), *Troubled Neighbours: Franco-British Relations in the Twentieth Century* (1971), pp. 17-22.

²⁸ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 23 March 1904, FO 800/11.

²⁹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 8 April 1904, FO 64/1593, No. 98 conf. He was even reproved by Lansdowne for warning Bülow that Britain would not allow Japan to be 'crushed', and allow the diminution of Britain's Far Eastern position. Same to same, 8 Jan 1904, FO 64/1593, No.5, and minute by Lansdowne.

³⁰ Lascelles to Lansdowne 15 April 1904

³¹ Van't Padje gives no evidence to support his curious idea that, had Edward Monson signed the treaty in London instead of Paul Cambon in London, Lascelles wouldn't have been as keen to congratulate Lansdowne. Van't Padje, 'Imperialist Rivalry', p.240.

for 'a certain amount of bargaining.'³² Germany had reason to resent the *entente* in general, and the settlement in particular of Anglo-French differences in Morocco, where she had commercial interests, and in recent years had co-operated with Britain against France.³³ Bülow was attacked in the Reichstag for having allowed Germany to become isolated,³⁴ and Sir Frank incisively noted that many Germans lamented they could no longer 'play off one country against the other.'³⁵

When Britain sought Great Power consent to make changes to Egypt's administration through the so-called 'Khedival Decree', Germany made her approval dependent on a separate settlement on outstanding issues between the two countries.³⁶ Richthofen certainly played on Lascelles' hopes by openly hinting that such an arrangement might pave the way for a formal Anglo-German *entente* and, partially for these reasons, partly from personal sympathy for the criticism Richtofen had suffered since the Anglo-French *entente*, Sir Frank advocated that Lansdowne acquiesce in his demands.³⁷

Despite having been primed for a round of bartering, Lansdowne was surprised at this development.³⁸ He saw 'no particular object' in gratifying

³² Ibid.

³³ See Christopher Andrew, 'The Entente Cordiale from its Origins to 1914', in Neville Wates (ed.), *Troubled Neighbours: Franco-British Relations in the Twentieth Century* (1971), p.15; A.J.P. Taylor, 'British policy in Morocco, 1886-1902' *English Historical Review* (1951), p. 364, 374.

³⁴ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 16 April 1904, FO 64/1593, No. 108

³⁵ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 15 April 1904, FO 800/129. See also Lascelles to Lansdowne, 19 March 1904, *ibid.*

³⁶ Richtofen's demands ranged from settling financial claims for Germans who had suffered from the bombardment of Samoa and in the South African war, to the huge headache of regulating German commercial relations with British colonies, which stretched back to the long standing commercial dispute between Germany and Canada -Lascelles to Lansdowne, 26 April 1904, FO 64/1593, No.114 very confidential.

³⁷ See Lascelles to Lansdowne 22 April & 7 May 1904, FO 64/1593 – *idem*, 23 & 30 April 1904, FO 800/129; Metternich to FO, 9 June 1904, in Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents*, Vol. iii, p.195.

³⁸ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 April 1904, FO 800/129.

Richthofen,³⁹ and termed his conditions – especially the ‘immensely difficult’ ones like regulating commercial relations between Germany and the British colonies- a ‘great piece of effrontery’,⁴⁰ insisting on confining discussion to Germany’s Egyptian interests.⁴¹ Despite Richthofen’s lack of success Lascelles was criticised in private for having been ‘unnecessarily alarmed’ and falling under the Baron’s spell.⁴² Bertie, Louis Mallet (Lansdowne’s private secretary), and the King himself, all criticised him for landing the British Government ‘in a hole’ by being too anxious to please the Germans.⁴³

Such criticisms also surrounded Lascelles’ refusal to believe reports circulating in 1904 that against the backdrop of the continuing Russo-Japanese war in the Far East, Russia and Germany had entered into some form of secret agreement. These rumours were believed by many, including Valentine Chirol, George Saunders, Eric Barrington of the Foreign Office, Charles Hardinge (Scott’s successor at St Petersburg), and Cecil Spring Rice (Secretary at the St Petersburg Embassy) and Edward VII,⁴⁴ but Lascelles had faith in Bülow’s denial of any such arrangement.⁴⁵ He thought Germany would remain benevolently neutral in the war, albeit more so towards Russia ‘on account of her geographical position’.⁴⁶ His logic was sound enough. He could not see how Germany could help Russia in the Far East or the

³⁹ Lansdowne to Balfour, 11 May 1904, FO 800/129.

⁴⁰ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 6 May 1904, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 13 May 1904, FO 64/1593, No. 126 secret; Lansdowne to Lascelles, 24 May 1904, FO 64/1592, No. 114.

⁴² Lascelles to Lansdowne 22 April 1904, FO 64/1593.

⁴³ Quote from Bertie to Mallet, 11 June 1904, FO 800/170; see also Mallet to Bertie, 20 May & 2 June 1904, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 4 Aug 1904, FO 800/129; Barrington to Lascelles, 2 March 1904, Chirol to Lascelles, 7 Sept & 5 Oct 1904, and Spring-Rice to Lascelles, 27 Sept 1904, FO 800/12. See Roderick R. McLean, *Royalty and diplomacy in Europe, 1890-1914* (Cambridge, 2001), p.111.

⁴⁵ Lascelles to Lansdowne 8 Jan 1904, BD ii, No. 273; Lascelles to Lansdowne, 9 January 1904, Lascelles MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/19.

⁴⁶ Lascelles to Knollys, 25 Dec 1903, FO 800/129. On this subject see Jonathan Steinberg, ‘Germany and the Russo-Japanese War’, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 75, No. 7 (1970).

Persian Gulf or defend the Russo-German border, or what Germany could get in return.⁴⁷ The Reichstag was against a 'policy of adventure,' and Russia was of little 'value' to any other Power after her defeats in the Far East. He took especial issue with Saunders' suspicions of 'what Germany will or will not do' and the 'undignified fear of Germany' which *The Times*' 'constant attacks' on Germany betrayed.⁴⁸

Lascelles also lamented the 'profound distrust of Germany'⁴⁹ displayed after the Dogger Bank incident of October 1904, when the passing Russian Baltic Fleet fired on shipping vessels at Hull. On the British side, there were suspicions of German connivance, but the ambassador readily accepted German protestations of innocence.⁵⁰ His willingness to swallow the assurances of Bülow was disliked, among others, by Lansdowne's private secretary, who accused Lascelles of having forgotten Germany's attempts to set Russia and Britain 'at loggerheads' in the Far East in 1902.⁵¹

Evidence of Lascelles' apparent myopia was perhaps nowhere more pronounced than over German naval policy. While Lascelles had since 1896 worked to cultivate the Kaiser's pro-British sentiments, John Röhl has argued that British politicians remained unable successfully to do so because essentially he was the architect of the battleship programme designed to prise Britain out of her predominant international position, while in the meantime lulling Britain into a false sense of security.⁵² The Navy which Wilhelm had longed for since at least 1894 was being

⁴⁷ Lascelles to Barrington, 4 March 1904, FO 800/18.

⁴⁸ Lascelles to Chirol, 17 Sept 1904, CASR I 1/23. (Albeit by the time he sent his official despatch, further conversations with colleagues had persuaded him that Germany might have assured Russia against attacking her), Lascelles to Lansdowne, 22 Sept 1904, FO 64/1593, No. 219.

⁴⁹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 4 Nov 1904, FO 64/1593, No. 242 Conf.

⁵⁰ Chirol to Lascelles, 2 Nov 1904, FO 800/12. See McLean, *Royalty and diplomacy*, pp.111-12.

⁵¹ Mallet to Sandars, 11 Nov 1904, Balfour MSS, B.L., Add MSS 49747.

⁵² Röhl, 'The Kaiser and England', p.98, 102, 107.

built for use against Britain as a power political factor, a 'lever and deterrent'⁵³ as part of Wilhelm's desire to earn the respect of other Powers for Germany and solve Germany's domestic and international problems.⁵⁴

Although the relative calm⁵⁵ with which the Navy Bills of 1898 and 1900 were greeted in Britain meant the Navy played no obvious role in Britain's attitude towards Germany before 1902,⁵⁶ the atmosphere of suspicion produced by the Chamberlain-Bülow recriminations in turn produced a growing consciousness of Germany's potential as a naval threat among the British elite.⁵⁷ This concern, however, was apparently not reflected by the ambassador, who devoted disproportionately scant attention to the topic, lending weight to Van't Padje's assertion that he 'underestimated the significance of Germany's naval policy for Anglo-German relations'.⁵⁸

The ambassador's lack of interest in the topic is partly explained by professional self-interest, and partially by a factor which has received little attention hitherto. Naval reporting was a job delegated to a naval attaché rather than an ambassador – a position first held permanently by Commander Arthur Ewart from 1900 (from shortly after the passing of the second German Naval Law), then by Captain R.W. Allenby from 1903-05 (the years when the naval issue was coming to

⁵³ Jonathan Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent* (London, 1965), p.21; also *ibid*, pp. 18-22, 126-7 & 201-2; See also E.L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy*; Kennedy, 'Germany's world policy', pp.608 & 623; Winzen, 'Prince Bülow's Weltmachtspolitik', p. 234.

⁵⁴ Kennedy, 'Germany's world policy', pp. 614-15; Winzen, p.232.

⁵⁵ There were exceptions: Saunders, for example, wrote as early as early as 1899 that Germany sought, not permanent co-operation with England, but 'a breathing space until they can get their naval septenate carried out.' Saunders to Mackenzie-Wallace, 4 Feb 1899, Saunders MSS.

⁵⁶ Koch, 'The Anglo-German Alliance Negotiations' p. 390.

⁵⁷ Keith Wilson, 'Directions of Travel: The Earl of Selborne, the Cabinet, and the Threat from Germany, 1900-1904', in *The International History Review*, Vol. XXX Number 2 June 2008, pp. 259-272.

⁵⁸ Van't Padje, 'Imperialist Rivalry', p.234. See also *ibid*, pp.223-224.

the forefront of Anglo German relations), and by Captain Philip Wylie Dumas from 1906-1908, (years when the naval tension was reaching its zenith) – and thus was not an issue Lascelles was often called upon to deal with.⁵⁹

Yet Lascelles mainly denigrated the German naval threat due to his conviction of Germany's dependence on British friendship. When in 1902 the First Lord of the Admiralty, Selborne, requested the British ambassador's opinion on whether the German Fleet was aimed against Britain,⁶⁰ Lascelles reasoned that, while Anglophobe sentiments had been useful in gaining support for the Naval Bills in the Reichstag, it was not in Germany's interests (despite her jealousy of Britain's Imperial power and resentment of Britain's treatment of her as a *quantité négligeable*), for Germany to see England to go under, as she 'would have to fight for her very existence' against France and Russia and would probably instead wish to remain aloof in the hope of making an 'an excellent bargain for herself', by dictating terms to an exceptionally weakened (and by implication defeated) France and Russia. Secondly, Lascelles also argued that the Two-Power-Standard made the British fleet strong enough against any other Power. The strength of Lascelles's conviction is demonstrated by the fact that his opinions survived a corrective from his own naval attaché, Ewart, who asserted that the repeated statements in the Reichstag Naval debates, and the preamble to the Navy Bill which aimed at parity with the British fleet, were sufficient evidence of the Fleet's anti-British nature, and who sent his own information to the Naval Intelligence department, pointing out that by 1909 'the

⁵⁹ Van't Padje's assertion (ibid, p.224) that Lascelles was only assisted by a naval attaché from 1905 is factually wrong. Ewart had become the first 'permanent man on the spot' in Berlin in November 1900, himself replacing a system of 'roaming' attachés which had existed prior to this. Matthew S. Seligmann, *Spies in Uniform: British Military & Naval Intelligence on the Eve of the First World War*, p.16.

⁶⁰ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 22 April 1902, FO 800/129.

German Navy will be a formidable one which we must take into consideration'⁶¹. It was Ewart's opinion that Selborne decided to take on board, but it is worth pointing out that Lansdowne shared Lascelles's attitudes towards the German Navy.⁶²

From 1904, Lascelles was fully sensitive to the growing suspicion that a more powerful German Navy would attack England. When, following the British Admiralty's decision to reorganise her Home Fleet by late 1904 and concentrate more ships in the North Sea,⁶³ Germany took fright at a rumour that the British Fleet was planned to destroy the German Navy in port,⁶⁴ Lascelles (while downplaying the story) warned that Britain's reorganisation might have been unnecessary 'if the German fleet had not been built,' and that the anti-British tone of the Navy Bill and the concentration of the German fleet in home waters justified British fears.⁶⁵ However, as ambassador it was naturally to Lascelles' advantage to calm public opinion and thus, as during the Boer war, he admitted to conveying private hints to 'personal friends connected with the Press' to moderate their attacks on Germany.⁶⁶

In late 1904, Lascelles' failure to rise to Bülow's complaining tone about the naval question and his apparent indifference to the Chancellor's threat that Germany might reach a *rapprochement* with Russia⁶⁷ was greeted with grave concern by Austen Chamberlain, the new Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, who

⁶¹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 25 April 1902, *ibid.*

⁶² As recent research has shown, Selborne later deliberately misrepresented Lascelles' opinion in crediting him in a memorandum of late 1903 as having said the fleet was aimed at Britain, in order to justify *ad post hoc* his own conversion to the German Naval Threat and get the 1903-04 estimates approved by Cabinet. See Keith Wilson, 'Directions of Travel', *op cit.* See Lansdowne to Lascelles, 22 April 1902, FO 800/129.

⁶³ Chirol heralded the news by writing to Lascelles, 'The Admiralty have at last come to recognize that the German fleet is a potentially hostile factor.' Chirol to Lascelles, 26 Oct 1904, FO 800/12.

⁶⁴ On the German fear of a British attack, see: Jonathan Steinberg, 'The Copenhagen Complex', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (Jul., 1966), pp. 23-46.

⁶⁵ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 27 December 1904, FO 800/12.

⁶⁶ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 30 Dec 1904, *ibid.*, No.303.

⁶⁷ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 28 Dec 1904, FO 64/1594, No.299.

accused Lascelles of listening to Bülow's threats 'without serious remonstrance'. Sir Frank's 'patient humble attitude,' was not to his liking and he feared the German Government would see in it a sign of weakness.⁶⁸

Yet while Chamberlain's concerns mirrored those privately expressed by Bertie and Mallet,⁶⁹ and embodied the impatience of the new, 'Edwardian' generation, Lansdowne defended Lascelles, arguing that he was 'used to the querulous tone of the German Government' and 'more inclined to meet it with ridicule than with violent indignation,' an important differentiation. He argued that

He is never addicted to the use of strong language, and perhaps it would be better if he were sometimes a little more emphatic; but he has, I think upon the whole held his own well, and obtained a position of considerable influence with the extraordinary personage to whom he is accredited.

Lansdowne himself was 'less inclined than Austen to take "au grand sérieux"' Bülow's observation. He also had some residual tolerance for Germany: while admitting Germans had 'behaved shabbily' on a 'good many occasions,' he acknowledged their efforts to 'cultivate good relations' over Egypt and Venezuela.⁷⁰ The King also thought Lascelles' language, on this occasion, was 'admirable,'⁷¹ leading Lansdowne to commend his 'plain speaking'.⁷²

As Zara Steiner has argued, Lascelles was by now increasingly out of touch with those in the Foreign Office, like Francis Bertie, who felt that Anglo-German

⁶⁸ Memo by A. Chamberlain, 14 Jan 1905, Balfour MSS, B.L., Add. MSS 49729.

⁶⁹ See Monger, *The End of Isolation*, pp. 226-8.

⁷⁰ Lansdowne to Balfour, 18 Jan 1905, B.L., Add MSS 49729. Lansdowne had, indeed, been enraged at the opposition of British public opinion to Anglo-German co-operation in 1903. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 256; Monger, *The End of Isolation*, p.106.

⁷¹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 13 Jan 1905, Lansdowne MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/130.

⁷² Lansdowne to Lascelles, 5 Jan 1905, FO 800/12.

interests were not identical in China, Turkey, Morocco and Kuwait,⁷³ and who mistrusted Germany's naval plans and diplomatic methods. Lascelles was more representative of the 'old Salisbury persuasion',⁷⁴ like Sanderson who sympathised with Lascelles. Sanderson recognised Germany's need to cultivate Russia and her desire to strengthen her navy, as she proceeded from a position of naval inferiority and was confronted with a Russo-French Alliance, a weakened Triple Alliance and a burgeoning Anglo-French *entente*. In such circumstances, the 'possible antagonism of Great Britain' provided 'a very convenient pretext for the increase of the German fleet.' He realised that unless Germany could be 'sure' Britain would not suddenly ally with France, she must take the 'precaution' of keeping on good terms with Russia,⁷⁵ and bewailed the 'the lunatics... who denounce Germany in such unmeasured terms and howl for an agreement with Russia,' which might naturally 'drive Germany into the Russian camp' and thus prevent an Anglo-Russian *entente*.⁷⁶

III

Lascelles' hopes for an Anglo-German understanding were further undermined when, in April 1905, the Kaiser while on a visit to Tangier made a speech in which he upheld the Sultan's independence and said that he recognised no Anglo-French Agreement over Morocco, which was a transparent and fresh attempt to thwart the Anglo-French *entente*,⁷⁷ and a reversal of Germany's line in 1904.⁷⁸

⁷³ Z Steiner, 'The Last Years Of The Old Foreign Office', pp.75-6.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 85.

⁷⁵ Sanderson to Lansdowne, 20 Jan 1905, Lansdowne MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/145.

⁷⁶ Sanderson to Lascelles, 3 Jan 1905, FO 800/12.

⁷⁷ C. Andrew, 'The Entente Cordiale', p. 22.

⁷⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 22 April 1904, FO 64/1593; Lansdowne to Lascelles, 15 Aug 1904, FO 64/1592, No. 170.

Lascelles saw Germany's action as an apparent attempt to 'break up' the *entente*.⁷⁹ He saw the visit as further evidence of the Kaiser's attempts to 'sow distrust' between Britain and other nations,⁸⁰ rather than a sign that Germany wanted war or a coaling station,⁸¹ and that the Emperor's wished again to 'prove that Germany...was not to be treated as a "quantité négligeable."' Yet he also recognised that a key role in the crisis had been played by Bülow, who was on a personal crusade to remove Theophile Delcassé, co-architect of the Anglo-French *entente*, from office. Lascelles thought Germany's case a 'bad one' which would fail to win sympathy, and drew a parallel with the Krüger Telegam.⁸² He went so far as dubbing the Tangier visit 'the clumsiest bit of diplomacy I ever heard of and an egregious blunder which it will require all Bülow's cleverness to retrieve.'⁸³ By July 1905, Delcassé had been overthrown, with German connivance. Germany believed Delcassé's claim that England had promised to back France in a war with Germany,⁸⁴ and Lascelles found this suspicion 'very sad and very difficult to deal with.'⁸⁵

Lascelles saw the Moroccan crisis as a temporary more than permanent source of estrangement, eventually thinking the Germans had realised the error of their ways and wished 'to climb down, without having the appearance of doing so'. An international Conference on Morocco at Algeiras (held from January to April 1906) resulted in embarrassment for Germany and her Austrian ally and a victory for French

⁷⁹ Lascelles to Knollys, 28 Sept 1905, FO 800/18.

⁸⁰ Lascelles to Knollys, 24 Mar 1905, *ibid*.

⁸¹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 5 May 1905, FO 800/130.

⁸² Lascelles to Lansdowne, 7 April 1905, *ibid*.

⁸³ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 27 April 1905, *ibid*.

⁸⁴ Sanderson to Lascelles, 10 Oct 1905, FO 800/12. Luckily Sanderson seemed to have more success in a second interview with Metternich where he pointed to similar attacks by the German Press in the South Africa war. Sanderson to Lascelles, 24 Oct 1905, FO 800/12.

⁸⁵ Lascelles to Sanderson, 20 Oct 1905, FO 800/18.

and Spanish influence in Morocco'.⁸⁶ Hereafter, however, Lascelles remained highly critical of Germany diplomacy's 'blustering methods'.⁸⁷ Although he knew that Holstein had been partially to blame for the direction in German diplomacy, he chiefly pointed the finger at Bülow, whom he termed 'really a most stupid & clumsy man' who 'only shows cleverness when engaged in getting himself out of difficulties of his own making'⁸⁸ and privately he characterised Bülow's foreign policy since 1897 as 'a succession of clumsy blunders', from which Germany was only just waking up to the consequences.⁸⁹ In the event it was not Bülow but Holstein, who had survived three German Chancellors, who was made a scapegoat and who resigned on 3 April, much to the relief of even his own Foreign Office,⁹⁰ but Lascelles resented that Bülow had not gone instead. Holstein's 'undoubted ability and almost unrivalled knowledge,' made his loss 'great'⁹¹ and Lascelles despaired of obtaining any improvement in Anglo-German relations so long as Bülow remained as Chancellor. Bülow seemed increasingly pre-occupied with writing speeches for the Reichstag, and tended to leave important matters to subordinates. In the absence of Holstein, chaos reigned in the *Auswärtiges Amt*,⁹² leading Lascelles to draw analogies with the period after Bismarck's fall.⁹³ Lascelles's 'profound contempt' of Bülow

⁸⁶ Lascelles to O'Connor, 31 Dec 1906, OCON 6/2/32. See further Lascelles to Grey, 11 Jan 1906, BD iii, No. 237, Lascelles to Grey, 4 Jan 1906, FO 800/19.

⁸⁷ Lascelles to Hardinge, 30 March 1906, FO 800/19; see also Lascelles to Grey, 16 Aug 1906, BD iii, No. 424; Lascelles to Hardinge, 9 March 1906, FO 800/19.

⁸⁸ Dumas diary, 3 March 1906.

⁸⁹ Lascelles to Hardinge, 9 March 1906, FO 800/19.

⁹⁰ Lascelles to Grey, 6 April, *ibid.*

⁹¹ Lascelles to Hardinge, 30 March 1906, *ibid.*

⁹² Dumas diary, 7 April 1906; Lascelles to Hardinge; 4 & 31 May 1907, FO 800/19; Towers to Strachey 16 June 1907, John St Loe Strachey MSS, Parliamentary Archives, S/16/1/10.

⁹³ Lascelles to Tyrell, 31 Jan 1908, FO 800/19. Bülow found it hard to co-operate with either of the Foreign Ministers who succeeded Richtofen (d.1906). See Katherine Anne Lerman, *The Chancellor as Courtier: Bernhard von Bülow and the Governance of Germany 1900-1909*, (Cambridge, 1990), p. 188-195. Lascelles to Grey, 4 October 1907, FO 800/19; Lascelles to Grey, 7 Oct 1907, BD vi, No. 38, Hardinge to Lascelles, 8 Oct 1907, FO 800/13.

stemmed mainly from his lack of honesty;⁹⁴ as he complained to Tyrell, 'Bülow tries to please everyone with the inevitable result of satisfying nobody'.⁹⁵

Yet though he grudged Bülow his election victory in early 1907⁹⁶ he welcomed 'the soothing effect upon the all-highest nerves.' Indeed Chirol found it curious that Lascelles was now 'down on *die ganze Bande*' but 'always excepting William'.⁹⁷ Despite conceding criticism of Germany, Lascelles continued to believe in the Kaiser's good intentions.

IV

Lascelles continued to identify good Anglo-German relations with the friendly attitude of the Emperor. Evidence of how far he judged his own position to be dependent on the good graces of the latter came when in June 1905 the Ambassador was present at the station alongside the Kaiser to greet Prince Arthur of Connaught (Britain's royal representative) prior to the wedding of the German Crown Prince and asked if the Emperor had any orders for him to convey when he went on leave. The Kaiser's unexpected outburst of: "Orders for England? No I shall have nothing to say to you until you learn how to behave" mortified Lascelles, who viewed the Emperor's comments as a sign that his ten years attempting to mend Anglo-German relations had been a 'complete failure'.⁹⁸ Despite a personal apology from the Emperor, Sir Frank remained 'very much hurt' by the Emperor's remark and threatened his resignation. Although the Foreign Office did not meet his request to

⁹⁴ Dumas diary, 24 Oct 1906.

⁹⁵ Lascelles to Tyrell, 31 Jan 1908, FO 800/19.

⁹⁶ Dumas diary, 25 Feb 1907.

⁹⁷ Chirol to Florence Spring Rice, 10 Feb, & 2 July 1907, Spring-Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/15.

⁹⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 7 June 1905, FO 800/130.

transfer to another Embassy, he remained downcast for months afterwards. There were clear echoes of Malet's predicament ten years earlier.

By 1905, however, Lascelles' ability to convince others of the diplomatic worth of his remaining as a *persona grata* to the Court had visibly declined. There were clear reasons for this. By 1900, Bülow's increasing control over German policy had enabled him to realise his goal of limiting 'direct communication between the Emperors and the Ambassadors',⁹⁹ in order to limit the damage of 'the Emperor's growing irritation against England,' on Anglo-German relations,¹⁰⁰ and, crucially, to prevent the Kaiser making hasty foreign policy pronouncements, such as his invention of Lascelles' alliance proposal in 1898, his spontaneous proposal of an agreement over China in 1900, and his repeated overture in 1901 for an Anglo-German alliance.

The British foreign policy elite, too, had ceased to see the utility of the ambassador's chats with the Kaiser, which only brought abuse of England. In 1905 Lansdowne perhaps shrewdly declined Lascelles' suggestion that he should raise the topic of Morocco with the Emperor.¹⁰¹ Increasingly Lansdowne and his officials were averse to treating the Kaiser as a governing factor in Anglo-German relations. With the passing of the Boer War and the advent of new men at the Foreign Office, the image of the Kaiser as pro-English was no longer recognised. Much as Lascelles might wish for the Emperor to be 'judged rather by his acts than by his words,' for having 'kept the Peace,' since coming to the throne despite opportunities to disturb

⁹⁹ Lascelles to Bertie, 17 Dec 1898, FO 800/17.

¹⁰⁰ Lascelles noted Bülow's personal friendliness, and also that of Holstein, who partly attributed the Emperor's irritation to reports that 'important Personages in England' had been openly hostile to him and to Germany. Lascelles to Lansdowne, 12 June 1905, FO 800/130.

¹⁰¹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 23 April 1905, BD iii, p. 67. Lascelles to Lansdowne, 27 April 1905 FO 800/130; Lansdowne to Lascelles, 1 May 1905.

it,¹⁰² his colleagues tended to focus on more alarming indicators of Germany's intentions, such as Bülow's speeches during the Boer War, the anti-British tone of the Naval Bills, and the worrying Imperialist tendency among Germany's intellectuals,¹⁰³ rather than the Monarch who had declined to intervene in the Boer war.¹⁰⁴ T.G. Otte's argument that the British policy elite suffered 'Kaiser-fatigue' by the time of Grey's Foreign Secretaryship, and that Wilhelm's repeated 'bedside chats' took on the air of a tiresome joke, had its consequences for Lascelles, inevitably diminishing the seriousness with which Lascelles' reports were received- put bluntly, nobody was interested anymore.¹⁰⁵

Indicative of this was the derision with which Lascelles' annual report for 1906 was received at the Foreign Office. Lascelles' argument that the Kaiser was an impulsive, flamboyant individual who, much as he might be given to sabre rattling, nonetheless was also peaceable and merely had attracted attention for his actions because of his blustering methods, was summarily rejected in countless annotations by anti-German members of the Foreign Office.¹⁰⁶

Yet, amidst rising naval tensions and against the backdrop of emerging German hostility to Britain's burgeoning *entente*, Lascelles increasingly, and reluctantly, fell back on improving the notoriously difficult personal relations between

¹⁰² Lascelles to Lansdowne, 30 Dec 1904, FO 800/18.

¹⁰³ Balfour to Lascelles, Jan 1905, B.L., Add MSS. 49747.

¹⁰⁴ Hardinge- much to Lascelles' chagrin- challenged the idea of the Emperor's benevolence in the Boer war. See E.T. Corp, 'Charles Hardinge and the Question of Intervention in the Boer War' op cit.

¹⁰⁵ Otte, 'The Winston of Germany', p.496; see also hereon, Jonathan Steinberg, 'The Kaiser and the British: the state visit to Windsor, November 1907', in: J.C.G, Röhl & Nicholas Sombart (eds.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II: new interpretations: The Corfu papers*, pp.121 – 124, 129-130.

¹⁰⁶ See extract from Lascelles' Annual Report on Germany for 1906, 24 May 1907, BD III, Appendix C; see also Lascelles' argument to Fitzmaurice, 2 June 1906, FO 800/19.

the Kaiser and King Edward.¹⁰⁷ Even before King Edward's accession Lascelles had experienced the potentially explosive consequences of 'family matters' on Anglo-German diplomacy,¹⁰⁸ and Lansdowne had recognised the potential of this 'barely concealed antipathy' to be a diplomatic problem.¹⁰⁹ The row over the Prince of Wales's visit in early 1902 had been in a sense the inauguration of a period of intense bitterness between both monarchs, and after the Tangier episode in 1905 Edward saw Wilhelm as the bitterest enemy England had.¹¹⁰

However, while Lascelles' intimacy with both the Emperor and Kaiser put him in a unique position to intervene in Royal spats,¹¹¹ he was unable to exert much influence on the underlying antagonism. After the King's 1903 visit to Paris, during which Edward had encouraged the Anglo-French *entente*, Lascelles had tried unsuccessfully to secure a visit of Edward VII to Berlin.¹¹² Although both monarchs met in 1904 for the opening of the Kaiser Wilhelm canal at Kiel, Lascelles was reduced to what Chirol termed a 'lightning conductor to the two All Highests!'¹¹³ The visit did however demonstrate some need for an intermediary.¹¹⁴ A row took place regarding the action of Gleichen, Britain's military attaché at Berlin, in sending home a copy of a military textbook written by an Anglophobe German guards officer containing stories of British atrocities committed against Boer civilians in South Africa, which had enraged the King but led Wilhelm to threaten Gleichen's recall.

¹⁰⁷ Cannadine, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II and the British Monarchy' pp. 194-197; L. Cecil, 'History as Family Chronicle', pp. 102-108.

¹⁰⁸ Röhl, *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser's personal monarchy*, p.973.

¹⁰⁹ Otte, 'The Winston of Germany', p. 492.

¹¹⁰ Cecil, 'History as Family Chronicle', p.106 -09.

¹¹¹ Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII*, Vol. 2, p. 612.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.243.

¹¹³ Chirol to Florence Spring-Rice, 15 June 1904, CASR I 1/15.

¹¹⁴ For details of the incident see M. Seligmann, 'Military diplomacy in a military monarchy? Wilhelm II's relations with the British service attachés in Berlin, 1903-1914,' in A. Mombauer and W. Deist (eds.), *The Kaiser: New Research on Wilhelm II's role in Imperial Germany*, (Cambridge, 2003), p.182.

Inevitably, Lascelles was called in to make the peace, but resented the experience and its impact on the Royal meeting.¹¹⁵

This theme of deteriorating relations and Lascelles' inability to arrest them continued through 1905. In March the ambassador was unable to dissuade Edward from cancelling the visit of the Prince of Wales to Germany on the pretext that the King of Spain was in England, and in August he failed to convince the King, who (in the heightened tension over Morocco) had neglected to visit the Kaiser during his summer cure at Marienbad, to pay a visit to Homburg in early September, as the King was increasingly mindful of upsetting France.¹¹⁶ When the Kaiser retaliated by cancelling the German Crown Prince's scheduled November visit to Windsor on the pretext of a prior engagement to meet the King of Spain, Lascelles was put in the awkward position of intervening. The Kaiser let Edward know his grievance over Marienbad,¹¹⁷ and in an interview with Lascelles used language so violent that the Ambassador felt unable, in his 'very difficult and delicate position,' to report it, and only after the Emperor dissuaded Sir Frank from contemplating resignation did he agree, with much pain, to do so with the stipulation that Wilhelm acknowledge his personal regret at the sourness of dynastic relations.¹¹⁸ In replying the King (like his nephew) failed to accept responsibility for the rift, and his reference to the Kaiser's 'touchiness' and 'intrigues against England,'¹¹⁹ meant again Lascelles felt in an

¹¹⁵ Chirol to Florence Spring-Rice, 23 Aug 1904, CASR I 1/15; Chirol to O'Connor, 8 Aug 1904, OCON 5/3.

¹¹⁶ Lee, *King Edward VII*, 2, pp.335-6 & pp. 346-353. See Knollys to Lascelles, 8 Aug 1905, 14 Aug 1905, FO 800/12. Lascelles to Sanderson, 22 Aug 1905, and enclosed letter to Edward VII, FO 800/18, Lascelles to Knollys, 22 Aug 1905 FO 800/12; Knollys to Lascelles, 27 Aug 1905, *ibid*.

¹¹⁷ Lascelles to Sanderson, 22 Aug 1905, and enclosed letter to Edward VII, FO 800/18. Lascelles to Edward VII, 26 Aug 1905, *ibid*; Ponsonby to Lascelles, 27 Aug 1905, FO 800/12.

¹¹⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, 13 Sept 1905, FO 800/18.

¹¹⁹ Knollys to Lascelles, 23 Sept 1905, FO 800/12.

unenviable predicament¹²⁰; only the King's sympathy for Lascelles' position led him to state that he had no wish to quarrel with the Emperor, and would assent to meet the following year.¹²¹

The incident did, however, underline the importance of tact in handling the two Sovereigns, with Lansdowne admitting that the fault was not all on the Emperor's side.¹²² Chirol sympathised with the 'unpleasant passages' Lascelles had undergone in dealing with the 'irrelevant complication' of 'personal friction' between the two Monarchs.¹²³ Sanderson, for one, thought it underlined Lascelles' continued utility as ambassador,¹²⁴ and there is evidence that Lascelles believed this too. In January 1906, he told the British naval attaché the mutual monarchical antagonism was 'the only danger' to Anglo-German relations; both monarchs were 'too much like one another ever to get on really well'.¹²⁵ Yet despite Lascelles' pleasure at having overseen a cordial meeting between the two Sovereigns at Cronberg in August 1906, after the dust of the Moroccan crisis had settled¹²⁶ the meeting was purely non-political and thus rather superficial.¹²⁷ Indeed, according to one historian, increasingly these royal visits were used not to patch up differences, but to use periods of détente to cover up hostile policy manoeuvres elsewhere. In 1905, while Wilhelm enumerated the grievances against his Uncle's failure to visit him, he himself had just signed a secret mutual defence accord with the Russian Tsar at Björkö and in 1907, the meeting of monarchs at Windsor came against the backdrop of Tirpitz's increase in the rate of

¹²⁰ Lascelles to Knollys, 28 Sept 1905, FO 800/18.

¹²¹ Knollys to Lascelles, 2 Oct 1905, FO 800/12.

¹²² Lansdowne to Lascelles, 25 Sept 1905, FO 800/130; Knollys to Lascelles, 23 Sept 1905, FO 800/12.

¹²³ Chirol to Lascelles, 26 Sept 1905, CASR I 1/14.

¹²⁴ Sanderson to Lascelles, 19 Sept 1905, FO 800/12.

¹²⁵ Dumas diary, 5 Jan 1906.

¹²⁶ See Hardinge to Lascelles, 26 Feb & 8 May 1906, FO 800/13; Ponsonby to Lascelles 17 Aug 1906, & Oppenheimer to Lascelles, 28 June 1906, *ibid*; Dumas diary, 2, 15 & 16 Aug 1906;

¹²⁷ Lee, *King Edward VII*, 2, pp.528-529.

German shipbuilding, and Britain's conclusion of the Anglo-Russian convention.¹²⁸

While Lascelles was 'delighted' with the Kaiser's invitation to Windsor that year, his naval attaché (focussed as he was on Germany's quest for maritime power) noted that the visit could only 'improve matters outwardly,' and criticised Lascelles for living 'wholly in the present.'¹²⁹

V

The main reason Lascelles' job was rendered increasingly awkward after 1906 was because of the anti-German tendencies in Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy. This proved a rude awakening to Lascelles who initially had been confident that Grey and the Liberals would continue Lansdowne's policy of the *entente* without damaging Anglo-German relations,¹³⁰ Grey had shown misgivings about Germany in the past,¹³¹ but Lascelles, while regretting Lansdowne's departure was persuaded after talking with Grey in late 1905 that there would be 'no change in our Foreign Policy' and was 'delighted' at his appointment.¹³²

Lascelles was aware of German sensitivities to Grey's firm support of France at the Algeiras Conference.¹³³ However, in January 1906 Grey emphasised to Lascelles that England's engagements with France and Japan were not directed against other countries, that Britain did not resent German commercial rivalry, nor, importantly, did she resent Germany's shipbuilding, which stemmed from her

¹²⁸J. Steinberg, 'The Kaiser and the British: the state visit to Windsor, November 1907', and idem, 'The novelle of 1908: Necessities and choices in the Anglo-German Naval Arms Race' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, (Fifth Series) 21 (1971), pp. 25-43 See also Hardinge to Lascelles, 7 April 1907, BD vi, No. 33.

¹²⁹Dumas diary, 19 June 1907.

¹³⁰Lascelles to O'Connor, 31 Jan 1906, C.C.A.C. OCON 6/2/32.

¹³¹In 1902-following Bülow's Reichstag speech -Sanderson found Grey 'very sore against Germany.' Sanderson to Lascelles, 12 March 1902, FO 800/10.

¹³²Lascelles to O'Connor, 20 Dec 1905, C.C.A.C., OCON.

¹³³Lascelles to Grey, 4 Jan 1906, FO 800/19.

'natural...desire to protect an Empire'.¹³⁴ After the Algeciras conference, he professed his anxiety to give Germany 'practical proof' that Britain was not 'working against German interests' or wishing to 'treat them in a specially frigid or distant way',¹³⁵ and he was encouraged in this by Charles Hardinge, who had replaced Sanderson as Permanent Under Secretary in 1906.¹³⁶

Yet Grey and Hardinge's condition that better relations with Germany should not be at France's expense. Grey's anxiety 'that nothing should occur which would lend any colour to the idea that we are wavering by a hair's breadth from our loyalty to the Entente...' ¹³⁷ effectively constrained the potential scope for Anglo-German *rapprochement*. In 1906-07 trips to Germany by Liberal politicians like Haldane, and even perfectly innocuous exchange visits of civic dignitaries, were sufficient to make the Foreign Office jittery.¹³⁸ Lascelles' argument that the Foreign Office showed a tendency to be 'unnecessarily alarmed' on these occasions, further accentuated differences between the ambassador and the Foreign Office and, in Chirol's words, caused 'a certain amount of irritation and counter irritation.'¹³⁹ By September 1907 at the latest Lascelles had become convinced that Grey's dislike of Germany and fear of

¹³⁴ Grey to Lascelles, 1 & 8 Jan 1906, FO 800/11; also Grey to Lascelles [tel.], 13 Jan 1906, *ibid*.

¹³⁵ Grey to Lascelles, 1 May 1906, FO 800/11; see also Hardinge to Lascelles, 8 May 1906, FO 800/13.

¹³⁶ Lascelles to Hardinge, 11 May 1906, FO 800/19.

¹³⁷ Quote from Grey to Lascelles, 18 Sept 1907, Grey MSS, National Archives, Kew, FO 800/61. See Lascelles to Grey, 4 Jan 1906, FO 800/19; K.M. Wilson, *The policy of the entente*, p. 103.

¹³⁸ Lascelles to Grey, 24 May 1906, BD iii, No. 415; minute by Crowe, 26 June 1906, *ibid*, No. 419; Grey to Lascelles 30 Aug 1906, Granville to Grey, same date, and Lascelles to Grey 31 Aug & 1 Sept 1906, BD iii, No.'s 427, 429, 431, 433-5.; Ponsonby to Lascelles, 2 Sept 1906, FO 800/13; Granville to Lascelles, 5 Oct 1906, *ibid*; Gough to Lascelles, 3 June 1907, *ibid*; Hardinge to Lascelles, 14 & 15 May, 2 & 4 June 1907, *ibid*; J.A. Spender to Lascelles, 4 June 1907, *ibid*; Lascelles to Haldane, 27 Sept 1906, FO 800/19; Lascelles to Hardinge, 17, 29 & 31 May 1907, *ibid*. Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 23 May 1908, FO 800/15; Hardinge to Lascelles, 5 Sept 1906, FO 800/61; Dumas diary, 4 & 14 June 1907.

¹³⁹ Lascelles to Hardinge, 9 Sept 1906, FO 800/19; Chirol to Florence Spring-Rice, 17 Nov 1906, CASR I 1/15

'offending France' was a 'stumbling block' to an Anglo-German *entente*,¹⁴⁰ and he made no secret of his disagreement with this approach. When Hardinge and Grey attempted to block Bülow's attendance on the Kaiser's 1907 state visit to Windsor due to the bitter memory caused by the Chancellor's conduct in the Boer war, Lascelles would play no part in giving hints to him to stay away.¹⁴¹

For Hardinge especially, good relations with France and Russia implied hostility to Germany and a checking of the German fleet.¹⁴² In 1907, Britain's completion of an Anglo-Russian *entente*, and a Mediterranean *entente* with France and Spain, increased Germany's complaints that she was being encircled – and upset her calculations about an Anglo-Russian war being inevitable.¹⁴³ By contrast, Lascelles did not share the belief that better Anglo-German relations were necessarily inimical to the burgeoning Anglo-French *entente* but on the contrary thought that until Anglo-German relations improved, there could be no corresponding improvement in Franco-German relations.¹⁴⁴ By 1907 he was encouraged by what he termed the 'laudable' stance of the new French ambassador at Berlin, Jules Cambon, who hoped to bring about a Franco-German *rapprochement*, to believe that a *détente* was possible between all three countries.¹⁴⁵ Lascelles's inability to define the contents of an

¹⁴⁰ Selby to mother, 25 April 1907, Selby MSS, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Add. MSS 6615. p.277.

¹⁴¹ Hardinge to Lascelles, 9 Sept, 11 Sept [tel.] and 2 Oct 1907, FO 800/13; Grey to Lascelles, 18 Sept 1907, FO 800/61; Lascelles to Grey, 4 Oct 1907, FO 800/19; Lascelles to Hardinge, 4 Oct 1907, *ibid*.

¹⁴² Z. Steiner 'Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office 1906-10,' *The Historical Journal*, x (1967) pp. 417-22. Although, ironically, it was Hardinge himself who sanctioned the Cronberg meeting between the King and Emperor in 1906 (*ibid*, p 422 & p. 426).

¹⁴³ Winzen, 'Prince Bülow's Weltmachtspolitik', pp.240 -2

¹⁴⁴ Dumas diary, 31 Aug 1906; see also Lascelles to Grey, 2 Sept 1906, BD iii, No. 436. Barrington –another old Foreign Office hand –was apparently of the same opinion. Minute by Barrington, 26 June 1906, BD iii, No. 419.

¹⁴⁵ Lascelles to Grey, 20 Sept 1907, FO 800/19. Dumas confirms Lascelles was 'loud in his praise' of Cambon's 'schemes.' Dumas diary, 30 March 1908. On this subject, see John Keiger, 'Jules Cambon and Franco-German *Détente*, 1907-1914', *Historical Journal* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Sep., 1983), pp. 641-659. By contrast, Crowe at the Foreign Office was constantly

Anglo-German *détente*, however, were a weapon in the hands of his sharpest critics. Crowe argued that Lascelles's talk of an understanding had 'an air of unreality', for while with Russia and France there was 'a common ground of action or negotiation' there were 'no differences whatever' with Germany. Importantly, Grey agreed with him.¹⁴⁶

Lascelles did however find a natural ally in the Liberal Parliamentary Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord E. Fitzmaurice, whom he had known in the 1890s, and who also detested the 'anti-German current' in the Foreign Office and encouraged Lascelles' endeavours to cultivate better personal relationships between the political leaders of the two countries.¹⁴⁷ Both men thought Grey was too focused on improving Anglo-Russian relations, and disputed majority Foreign Office opinion that Russia's inability to prosecute her aims in Asia due to war with Japan and revolution at home meant Britain could afford to make concessions there in the interests of an understanding 'in Europe' without weakening her own Imperial position.¹⁴⁸ Although Lascelles had long believed in the utility of an Anglo-Russian *entente*, he disagreed with the timing.¹⁴⁹ He shared with Fitzmaurice a memory of the bad faith of the Russian Government and her agents during the Penjdeh crisis of 1885, of Russian intrigue in Asia,¹⁵⁰ and a feeling that any Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* would be impermanent and could undermine Anglo-German co-operation.¹⁵¹ Fitzmaurice's reason for being suspicious of Russia rather than Germany was summed up in a letter he sent to the journalist J.A. Spender in 1908. 'The fact

exaggerating the dangers of a Franco-German *rapprochement*. See Z. Steiner, 'Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office 1906-10,' p.435.

¹⁴⁶ Minute by Crowe (29 May) and Grey, on Lascelles to Grey, 24 May 1906, BD iii, No. 416.

¹⁴⁷ Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 21 Sept 1906, FO 800/13.

¹⁴⁸ See Steiner, 'Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office', p. 428 & 431.

¹⁴⁹ Lascelles to Grey, 29 Oct 1906, BD iv, No. 234.

¹⁵⁰ Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 21 Sept 1906, FO 800/13.

¹⁵¹ Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 31 May 1906, *ibid*.

remains,' he wrote, 'that I was born in 1846.' Lascelles, born five years prior to this, was part of this earlier generation which did not share the anti-German views of the Edwardian Foreign Office.¹⁵²

In 1906 the increasing animosity between Lascelles and Whitehall led to the appointment of Count De Salis as Counsellor at the Berlin Embassy, as successor to (James) Beetham Whitehead (1903-1906). Instead of having regard for the ambassador's 'idiosyncrasies', however,¹⁵³ de Salis was apparently sent to Berlin chiefly 'to supplement Sir Frank's despatches by his views expressed in private letters',¹⁵⁴ reinforcing the mutual mistrust between the ambassador and the Foreign Office. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that by mid 1906 there was a 'very general impression' (shared by Crowe among others¹⁵⁵) that Lascelles' work had 'ceased to interest him',¹⁵⁶

VI

Between 1906 and 1908, something little short of a cold war raged between the British ambassador at the Berlin Embassy, and his superiors about the intentions of German foreign policy, which revolved chiefly around the purpose of the German fleet. Despite growing naval tension, Lascelles professed to believe that the Kaiser viewed the fleet 'purely as an *appanage* of Imperialism'.¹⁵⁷ In August 1908, he responded to the Emperor's fresh complaint about Germanophobia in Britain, by expressing confidence in Wilhelm's pacific intentions, and complaining:

¹⁵² Z. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and foreign policy*, p. 108

¹⁵³ Chirol to O'Connor, 20 June & 7 June 1906, OCON 5/3.

¹⁵⁴ Dumas diary, 18 Jan 1907. This is difficult to verify as few of these private letters seem to have survived in either Hardinge or Grey's papers.

¹⁵⁵ Dumas diary, 7 June 1906.

¹⁵⁶ Chirol to O'Connor, 7 June 1906, OCON 5/3.

¹⁵⁷ Dumas diary, 8 March 1906.

that I had found it impossible to persuade many of my countrymen with whom I spoken that the German Fleet did not constitute a menace to England. When I argued that Germany having become a great commercial and colonial Power, naturally desired a Fleet to protect her commercial and colonial interests, I was met by the reply that her Fleet, which had now become a powerful one, was always kept in home waters, "ready to pounce."¹⁵⁸

Yet many in the Foreign Office and at the Berlin Embassy disagreed with this reading. Increasingly, younger members of the Embassy staff such as De Salis, the naval attaché Captain Dumas and Walford Selby (third Secretary 1907-08) became frustrated that their optimistic Chief would not listen to their own more critical views of German foreign policy and they could 'only state facts' without being 'supposed to deduce anything there from.'¹⁵⁹ De Salis wrung his hands over his chief's 'blindness',¹⁶⁰ Selby thought Lascelles had 'no very decided views on any subject',¹⁶¹ and Dumas became quietly exasperated by Sir Frank's reluctance officially to sanction his alarmist despatches on the German fleet. Instead Lascelles, 'the voice of the Old Diplomacy', would write covering letters saying 'let well alone'.¹⁶² Dumas identified in Lascelles an overriding conviction that Germany and England would 'never fight', which while serving as a 'tower of strength' in some ways, left his colleagues frustrated.¹⁶³

Lascelles was well aware that less attention was paid to his own reports than to those by men like the British minister at Munich, Fairfax Cartwright, who argued that the German shipbuilding programme was an obstacle to any Anglo-German *rapprochement*, and by Dumas, who was now sating the Foreign Office's demand for naval information, and meeting the desire among the anti-Germans for proof that

¹⁵⁸ Lascelles to Grey, 12 Aug 1908, BD Vi, No. 112.

¹⁵⁹ Dumas diary, 1 & 26 April 1907.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 26 April 1907.

¹⁶¹ Selby to mother, 11 March 1907, Selby MSS, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Add MSS 6615.

¹⁶² Dumas diary, 4 Mar 1907.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 24 Oct 1906.

Germany was building ships against Britain, much to Lascelles' chagrin.¹⁶⁴ The Foreign Office rejected Lascelles' attempts to rebut even the wilder fears about Germany's intentions, such as a German invasion, which even Dumas refused to believe.¹⁶⁵

Yet in fact, Lascelles' approach was more nuanced than has been credited. Although Dumas noted that it was an 'obsession' of Lascelles 'to preserve the peace between England & Germany' (a policy which, in his eyes, would only lead to complications ten years hence when Britain would have to 'fight' for her position),¹⁶⁶ privately, on at least one occasion, Lascelles admitted that Germany's naval policy might lead to war.¹⁶⁷ Where he differed was clearly in his attitude of 'wait and see'. As Dumas remarked years later: 'he fully realised the mad policy of the Emperor in the manufacture of armaments and duly deprecated it; but when one pointed it out, as I often used to do, the inevitable result of this, he would say, "oh, my dear Dumas, these matters can always be arranged when the time comes."' ¹⁶⁸ There was also a realistic chance that Germany's Naval Programme was too costly to sustain.¹⁶⁹ With his Liberal background Lascelles was 'scathing of the German method of spend[ing] everything desired & consider[ing the] means later' and by 1908 he thought the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 1 April 1907. Minutes on despatch 3, Cartwright to Grey, 8 Jan 1908, FO 371/457. 1308/08/18C, Ed note, .BD vi, p. 108. Walford Selby to mother, 24 March 1907, Selby MSS; Bodleian Library, Oxford, Add. MSS6615. pp.188-189; Lascelles to Florence Spring Rice, 15 Aug 1908 Spring Rice MSS, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/2. On Dumas' role see Matthew S. Seligmann, *Spies in Uniform*; idem: 'While I am in it I am not of it: A Naval Attaché's Reflections on the Conduct of British Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, 1906-1908,' in Markus Mosslang and Torsten Rlotte, *The Diplomats' World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 433-460.

¹⁶⁵ Minutes on Lascelles to Grey, Feb 1908, BD vi No. 80; Lascelles to Grey 1 May 1908, (Encl Trench to Lascelles, No. 95 secret), and minutes by Crowe & Langley, ibid, No. 94.

¹⁶⁶ Dumas diary, 29 Jan 1907, 10 Jan 1908.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 9 June 1908.

¹⁶⁸ Dumas autobiography, pp.16-17.

¹⁶⁹ Dumas diary, 27 April 1907. See also Hardinge to Lascelles, 7 May 1907, FO 800/13.

German Government were 'living from hand to mouth and merely go floundering on'.¹⁷⁰

Lascelles also deprecated the naval antagonism between the two Powers because of its effect on the Kaiser's nerves. When in January 1908 the Kaiser used a court ball as the occasion to protest that 'even Brazil' built ships and that the British Press focussed unfairly on Germany, Lascelles characteristically deflected the Emperor's wrath by alluding to his recent visit to England, which made the Emperor apparently 'forget his grievance,' and set him on 'a very long description of his life at Highcliff and the people he met whilst he was staying there'.¹⁷¹ The Foreign Office staff, who were less willing to let the Kaiser's exaggerated utterances go unanswered, drafted instructions for Lascelles to reply that the German press concentrated unnecessarily on France's army, whereas Brazil and Austria also had armies- a response which Lascelles (tactfully) refused to read out.¹⁷²

The ambassador sympathised with the German viewpoint, and thought it a tall order that Germany should accept British advice to curtail her Fleet programme simply to enable Britain to maintain maritime supremacy.¹⁷³ He was thus perturbed when on a visit to Cronberg in August 1908 Charles Hardinge 'rubbed [The Emperor] up the wrong way' by telling him 'to stop building ships',¹⁷⁴ and Lascelles cautioned Grey that 'No great Power would consent to interference on the part of a foreign country, and so sensitive a people as the Germans would certainly resent anything which could by any possibility be regarded as a semblance of dictation on the part of

¹⁷⁰ Dumas diary, 21 Feb 1908; Lascelles to Grey, 31 Jan 1908, FO 800/19. See also Lascelles to Florence Spring Rice, 14 Feb 1908, CASR II 1/2.

¹⁷¹ Lascelles to Grey, 30 Jan 1908, BD vi; Lascelles to Florence Spring-Rice, 31 Jan 1908, CASR II 1/2.

¹⁷² Lascelles to Grey, 30 Jan & 21 Feb 1908. BD vi; Grey to Lascelles, 19 Feb 1908 FO 371/458, No 49 conf; Hardinge to Lascelles, 25 Feb 1908, FO 800/11; Lascelles to Grey, 28 Feb 1908, FO 800/19; Dumas diary, 21 Feb 1908.

¹⁷³ Lascelles to Grey, 31 July 1908, BD vi, No. 99.

¹⁷⁴ Lascelles to Florence, 15 & 23 Aug 1908, CASR II 1/12.

England.’¹⁷⁵ When it emerged that Hardinge had read erroneous information over-exaggerating the growth rate of the German Fleet, Lascelles was thus privately ‘delighted’ to learn that Hardinge was ‘very ignorant of his work.’¹⁷⁶ This however was Lascelles’ last small victory. By late 1907 he had become firmly out of favour in England. For the first time since 1896, he was not invited to Ascot, which was a ‘very great’ blow to him,¹⁷⁷ as was his non-invitation to Wilhelmslöhe in August 1907 and to Windsor in November.¹⁷⁸ Dumas noted this was a sign that Hardinge was ‘working against Sir Frank’ and that sadly, ‘his day is finished.’¹⁷⁹ In December 1907, the King let it be known to Metternich that Lascelles’ tenure was at an end.¹⁸⁰ As Dumas noted: ‘there is so much feeling against him at the FO that it is really just as well.’¹⁸¹

VII

Despite the retirement of Lascelles from Berlin, the ‘long chorus of regrets’ at his departure, not least from his Italian, French and Austrian colleagues,¹⁸² was a testimony to his social success. The Emperor and Bülow were naturally regretful of his departure, with the Chancellor saying the principle of only appointing ambassadors for 5 years, while an ‘excellent’ rule, should be open to exceptions,¹⁸³ and the Kaiser, at his farewell audience with Lascelles, still seeking the ambassador’s

¹⁷⁵ Lascelles to Grey, 14 Aug 1908, BD vi, No. 115.

¹⁷⁶ Dumas diary, 13 Aug 1908.

¹⁷⁷ Dumas diary, 14 June 1907.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 2 June 1907.

¹⁷⁹ Dumas diary, 9 Aug 1907.

¹⁸⁰ Lee, *King Edward VII*, v. 2, pp. 612-613

¹⁸¹ Dumas diary, 26 Dec 1907.

¹⁸² Cecil Spring-Rice to Florence Spring-Rice, 6 Oct 1908, in Stephen Gwynn, (ed.), *The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil-Spring Rice: A Record*, (London, 1929), Vol. II, p.127.

¹⁸³ Lascelles to Florence Spring Rice, 10 Jan 1908, CASR II 1/2; Lascelles to Grey, 30 Jan 1908; FO 371/458, No. 40 conf; Lascelles to Tyrell, 24 Jan 1908, FO 800/19.

assistance in combating the popular fear of anti-Germanism in England, this time on the subject of rumoured German spies.¹⁸⁴ Even erstwhile critics of Sir Frank poured warm praise on him publicly and privately, most notably for maintaining a dignified lack of bias despite his personal feelings towards both the tide of events and towards certain individuals. Dumas, who felt his own reports of the naval threat had partially contributed to Lascelles' dismissal, noted that despite Sir Frank's opposition to his views, he was a 'truly noble man' who had never uttered an 'unkind word of anyone' and 'shows to the world every attribute which we generally attribute to the English gentleman.'¹⁸⁵ Cecil Spring-Rice hoped Lascelles would receive a peerage, for having 'sought peace' having 'never suffered an insult and never given one' and for his promotion of 'charity, kindness and peace,' whilst also noting that this was a good record given his 'personal dislike for Bülow', which he had 'never once was allowed to interfere in the dispassionate transaction of business.'¹⁸⁶

The difficulty with which the Foreign Office staff were confronted in finding a successor to Lascelles at Berlin, despite much glibness in ridding themselves of an ambassador whose views no longer chimed with theirs, also attested to Sir Frank's attributes as a diplomat who was well-liked in Germany and amenable to the German Government.¹⁸⁷ Gerald Lowther's lack of 'polish' and Arthur Nicolson's 'reputation [as] an "intriguer" and foe to Germany',¹⁸⁸ led to the appointment of Edward Goschen, who had been Secretary and chargé d'affaires at St Petersburg during Lascelles's brief embassy, and most recently ambassador to Vienna.

¹⁸⁴ Lascelles to Grey, 23 Oct 1908, BD vi, No. 102.

¹⁸⁵ Dumas diary, 31 Aug 1908. See also *ibid*, 24 Oct 1906.

¹⁸⁶ Cecil Spring-Rice to Florence Spring Rice, 26 Oct 1908, in Gwynn, *Letters and Friendships*, II, p.129.

¹⁸⁷ Dumas diary, 9 June 1908.

¹⁸⁸ Almeric Fitzroy, *Memoirs*, I, p. 337. On the succession question see also Lascelles to Tyrell, 31 Jan 1908, FO 800/19; Dumas diary, 22 Feb 1908.

Sir Frank's official connection with Germany ended in 1908, but such was his disagreement with the anti-German tone of Grey's policy, and his conviction that Britain and Germany should remain steadfast friends, that up to the outbreak of war in 1914 he publicly campaigned for a better understanding with Germany. After settling down into retirement in 1908 at 14 Chester Square, London with his son Billy and daughter-in-law, Lady Sybil,¹⁸⁹ Lascelles maintained his connection with the British and German foreign policy making elite. He became a regular guest of King Edward VII at Sandringham where he was often invited to dine and play bridge.¹⁹⁰ He mixed socially with such individuals as Lansdowne, Rosebery, Joseph Chamberlain, and Lord Cromer,¹⁹¹ kept up his connections with German diplomats like Count Metternich,¹⁹² stayed with Baron Eckardstein at his house in Woodhall Spa,¹⁹³ and resumed his personal acquaintance with Von Marschall during the latter's brief spell as Metternich's successor in London.¹⁹⁴

Although Lascelles had occasionally been engaged in Anglo-German relations after leaving Berlin, most notably campaigning in 1909 for the appointment of a Professor of German at the University of Cambridge,¹⁹⁵ it was in the wake of the Agadir crisis of 1911, when he feared that Britain and Germany were moving close to war over a colonial matter, that he determined to use his influence in the cause of peace.¹⁹⁶ In 1911 he became President of the Anglo-German Friendship Committee.

¹⁸⁹ Florence Spring-Rice to Maud Wyndham, 16 Mar 1909, PHA 13847.

¹⁹⁰ Blunt, *My diaries*, ii, p.243.

¹⁹¹ Fitzroy, i, p.375; Blunt, *My diaries*, ii, p.243 & 294.

¹⁹² Almeric Fitzroy, ii, pp. 413-14.

¹⁹³ Lascelles to Florence Spring-Rice, 16 Sept 1909, CASR II 1/2.

¹⁹⁴ Lascelles to Florence Spring-Rice, 17 July 1912, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁵ *The Economist*, 10 July 1909, p. 76.

¹⁹⁶ He was greatly influenced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George's famous Mansion House speech, which he thought had considerably irritated the Germans, as an unwanted intervention in what had been a Franco-German dispute. Goschen to Grey, 18 Feb 1912, FO 371/ 1371/ 7289, encl. clipping of interview with Sir Frank Lascelles from *The Daily Chronicle*.

The organisation was committed to encouraging more frequent opportunities for meeting between Germans and Englishmen, such as had been exchanged between municipal authorities, representatives of the churches and of the press, in the hope that this would lead to greater mutual understanding.¹⁹⁷ His work with the Committee entailed him making many public speeches in the course of 1911 and 1912 on the desirability of good Anglo-German relations. He was interviewed by C.P. Scott of the *Guardian* and by the *Daily Chronicle*, and succumbed to pressure from the editor of the *Contemporary Review* to pen an article, entitled 'Thoughts on the Anglo-German problem', in late 1911.¹⁹⁸ Lascelles greatly approved of Lord Haldane's trip to Germany in 1912 which he thought did much to clear the air and improve relations,¹⁹⁹ and also applauded and encouraged the efforts of Marschall, after his arrival as ambassador to London in 1912, to 'meet some of the Germanophobes, and convince them that they need not be afraid of Germany.'²⁰⁰

Sir Frank's decision to publicly air his long-held views on the desirability of an ongoing concern at Anglo-German estrangement reflected a growing concern at the drift of Liberal policy. Lascelles admitted to Blunt that he thought Grey had 'made a terrible hash of his policy abroad', from Constantinople to Cairo to the Persian Gulf, and that reiterated his disapproval of the partition of Persia, which the Russians would 'never leave.'²⁰¹ And importantly, whereas he had supported the original Anglo-French entente, he thought that Grey had gone too far in strengthening ties with France into a virtual alliance. He thought 'the first thing needful was to go back to the original meaning of the Entente,' and was fully aware that, after the Agadir crisis, an

¹⁹⁷ 'The Anglo-German Friendship Society, report of the inaugural meeting', 1 May 1911, ED Morel MSS, F 13/7; *The Times*, 29 June 1912, p. 4; *ibid*, 31 Oct 1912, p. 5.

¹⁹⁸ See Lascelles to Florence Spring Rice, 21 Nov 1911, CASR II 1/2.

¹⁹⁹ *The Times*, 23 Mar 1912, p.5; Goschen to Grey, 18 Feb 1912 FO 371/ 1371/ 7289 encl. clipping of interview with Sir Frank Lascelles from *The Daily Chronicle*.

²⁰⁰ Lascelles to Florence Spring-Rice, 17 July 1912, CASR II 1/2.

²⁰¹ Blunt, *My diaries*, ii, p.344.

increasing section of the Cabinet supported this idea.²⁰² Holding firm to Salisbury's characterization of Britain as a 'polygamous' nation and Germany as a 'jealous lover,' Lascelles still believed that friendship with France need not preclude friendship with Germany.²⁰³

Sir Frank's activism was a clear source of irritation to his ex-colleagues within the Foreign Office like the Russophile Arthur Nicolson (who succeeded Hardinge as Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office), and his successor as ambassador at Berlin. The ire of these men first showed itself when Sir Frank visited Berlin in spring 1911, although as it transpired he engaged in little political talk whilst there.²⁰⁴ After Lascelles broadened the scope of his activities, even his immediate family became anxious and wondered if he remembered he was in receipt of a Foreign Office pension.²⁰⁵

However, it is questionable whether, as the excitable Leo Maxse of the *National Review* thought, Lascelles became 'engaged in an active intrigue against British foreign policy,' and wanted to 'get his knife into the policy with which Grey is identified,' because of a 'personal grievance,' at not having his tenure at Berlin renewed over three years earlier.²⁰⁶ Sir Frank's analyses at this time simply reflected the views he had held whilst at Berlin. He deprecated British nervousness towards Germany as 'uncalled for and undignified,' especially where naval rivalry was

²⁰² Trevor Wilson (ed.) *The political diaries of C.P. Scott, 1911-1928* (London, 1970), 7 Nov 1911, p.55.

²⁰³ The Anglo-German Friendship Society, report of the inaugural meeting, 1 May 1911, ED Morel MSS, F 13/7.

²⁰⁴ Nicolson to Goschen, 14 March 1911, FO 800/347; Goschen to Nicolson, 17 March 1911, FO 371/1123/11855; Nicolson to Goschen, 3 April 1911, FO 800/348.

²⁰⁵ Gertrude Bell to mother, 7 Feb 1912, Gertrude Bell Archive, <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk>, accessed 23/03/09.

²⁰⁶ Leo Maxse to Bonar Law, 1 March 1912, Law MSS, Parliamentary Archives, 25/3/3.

concerned.²⁰⁷ There was, he said, no ground of quarrel between Britain and Germany, who had never fought each other and had indeed often fought on the same side as each other, which was not capable of peaceful resolution, and the atmosphere of suspicion had been artificially created, chiefly from a mistaken belief that one navy intended to attack the other.²⁰⁸ The interests of both countries were, he continued to maintain, identical in most parts of the world.²⁰⁹ Lascelles characteristically displayed sympathy with Germany, who he argued had not waged war since her creation despite opportunities to do so, and whose strong position in Europe entitled her to be treated with consideration in international affairs.²¹⁰

To Sir Frank, the invented Anglo-German menace also distracted attention from Italy's invasion of Tripoli in 1911 which seemed to him to be far more pregnant with possibilities of general war than the Moroccan debacle. As he put it to his audience, 'the peace of Europe is threatened, by other and, to my mind, far more serious dangers than those to which I have referred', namely, the re-opening of the Eastern Question, which he termed 'the bugbear of European statesmen for generations.'²¹¹

The Committee was ultimately a failure in terms of amassing public or official support. The most ambitious idea put forward, which was strongly advocated by Lascelles, to hold an Anglo-German exhibition which might give the two nations opportunities of meeting each other, fell through due to Government opposition and

²⁰⁷ Lascelles cited the example of the tone created by a scare in October 1911 of an imminent attack by Germany 'which had no better foundation than that the Admiralty had lost sight of two German gunboats...' Trevor Wilson (ed.) *The political diaries of C.P. Scott*, p.55.

²⁰⁸ 'The Anglo-German Friendship Society, report of the inaugural meeting', 1 May 1911, ED Morel MSS, F 13/7; *The Daily News*, 5 Oct 1911.

²⁰⁹ *The Times*, 29 June 1912, p.4.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Lascelles to Florence Spring-Rice, 6 Oct 1911, CASR I 1/2; *Daily News*, 5 Oct 1911.

hostile public opinion.²¹² Predictably the British Government scuppered the idea on the grounds of political sensitivities (that there had been no prior Anglo-Japanese or Anglo-French Exhibition),²¹³ and while the German press poured cold water on the idea that mutual exchange visits could foster political agreement, British papers waxed lyrical about the dangers to Britain of German expansion. By December 1911 the scheme, originally scheduled for 1913, was delayed by the Committee until at least 1914.²¹⁴

Politically, there was little sympathy for the ex-ambassador's arguments on the British side. Eyre Crowe of the Foreign Office was characteristically disparaging about Sir Frank's arguments, found the assumption that the ill-feeling had arisen 'from a mere misunderstanding between the two peoples' was 'difficult to take seriously', and also belittled Lascelles's continued enthusiasm over the Baghdad Railway project.²¹⁵ In December 1914, four months after the outbreak of war in Europe and the clash of German and British armies, the ill-starred British-German Friendship Society (as it was by then renamed) was finally wound up and its funds distributed for the relief of British subjects in Germany and German subjects in Britain.²¹⁶

The outbreak of the Great War had the effect that the previous nineteen years had failed to in altering Lascelles' views of the Kaiser and of Germany. Up until the war Sir Frank had continued to be sensitive to the attitude of the Emperor towards

²¹² Report of a meeting held at the Mansion House on November 2 1911, ED Morel MSS, F 13/7.

²¹³ Goschen to Grey, 3 Nov 1911, FO 371/1127/44081; same to same, 4 Nov 1911, and minutes thereon, FO 371/1128/44197.

²¹⁴ Trans. of *Lokal Anzeiger*, 16 Dec 1911, encl. in Granville to Grey, 18 Dec 1911, FO 371/1128/50938.

²¹⁵ Minute by Crowe, 2 Jan 1912, on Granville to Grey, 29 Dec 1911, FO 371/1370/66. Goschen, too, was 'rather astonished' that Lascelles, in speaking to him about the Railway, had thought 'that it didn't matter a scrap whether Germany had the control of the southern section and Koweit or not.' Goschen to Nicolson, 17 March 1911, FO 371/1123/11855.

²¹⁶ *Poverty Bay Herald*, 14 Dec 1914, p. 6.

England. Wilhelm II's anger about Britain's attempt to muscle in on the 1911 Agadir crisis (blame for which, incidentally, Lascelles threw squarely on the tradition of blundering German foreign policy inaugurated by Bülow) had arguably been a key factor in swaying the ex-ambassador into peace activism.²¹⁷ However at a dinner with Mary Belloc-Lowndes in the autumn of 1914 Sir Frank admitted 'he had liked the Germans, and had believed in their good intentions towards England,' but regarded the Kaiser as 'largely, if not entirely, responsible for the outbreak of the war.' Lascelles admitted that he had 'gradually become convinced that from boyhood, William the Second had been secretly and passionately anxious to repeat what he regarded as the glorious triumphs of 1870-1871,' against France, although not England. However, even in 1914 he would not accuse the Kaiser of harbouring anti-English intentions. The Kaiser, he argued, had been 'surrounded by men who only told him what he wished to be told,' had believed the situation in Ireland would keep Britain out of the war, that England would only fight to defend her own country, and that the British 'had become at once so soft and so over-civilized that they would have no stomach for fighting in Europe.'²¹⁸ As the war progressed, Lascelles became 'more and more keen about smashing the Kaiser.'²¹⁹

Sir Frank was apparently almost alone in thinking from early on that the war would be a long one.²²⁰ The conflict left him little to do,²²¹ although after having suffered with gout for much of his time at Berlin, he was 'all the better for having thinned out' with the war rations.²²² Especially after 1913, 'increasing age and

²¹⁷ Trevor Wilson, *The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott*, p.55.

²¹⁸ Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, *A Passing World*, (London, 1948), pp.28-9.

²¹⁹ Chirol to Florence Spring-Rice, 10 Dec 1914, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/16.

²²⁰ Belloc Lowndes, *A Passing World*, pp. 28-9.

²²¹ Chirol to Florence Spring-Rice, 29 Jan 1918, C.C.A.C., CASR I 1/17.

²²² Chirol to Florence Spring-Rice, 4 April 1918, *ibid*.

infirmity' had by his own admission caught up with Sir Frank,²²³ and he was increasingly housebound, no longer 'able to take things very much to heart,' but continuing to view life 'with his usual equanimity.'²²⁴ In January 1920, after a brief bout of pneumonia, Sir Frank Lascelles passed away. His funeral was attended by Philip Wylie Dumas, who had done so much to warn the Foreign Office of the threat from Germany,²²⁵ and he was buried in Brompton cemetery, London. Gertrude Bell lamented her uncle's passing, by saying that 'People like him are like the redoubts that fortify one's life and when one falls one feels that the enemy has made a significant advance.'²²⁶

Conclusion

One simple route to evaluating the success of Lascelles in Berlin is to look at how his successor fared. If Sir Frank's tenure, as Van't Padje has asserted, represents 'the vague success or rather the failure of British diplomacy' in halting the deterioration of Anglo-German relations²²⁷, the endeavours of Lascelles to reach an Anglo-German understanding nonetheless stand up well in contrast to the new British ambassador. T.G. Otte has written that the inability of Goschen 'to "read" Germany accurately' damaged the effectiveness of British foreign policy: 'by temperament and inclination, [Goschen] was neither willing nor capable to cultivate closer contacts within the ruling circles at Berlin. The quality of diplomatic reporting declined, and

²²³ Lascelles to Blunt, 13 Dec 1916, Blunt MSS, West Sussex R.O, Box 33.

²²⁴ Emma Cavendish to Maud Wyndham, 5 July 1918, Petworth House Archives, consulted at West Sussex Record Office, PHA 13853; Chirol to Florence Spring-Rice, 21 May 1915 & 21 Nov 1917. CCAC CASR I 1/17.

²²⁵ Dumas diary, 5 Jan 1920.

²²⁶ Gertrude Bell to mother, 4 Feb 1920, Gertrude Bell Archive, www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk, accessed 22/03/09.

²²⁷ Van't Padje, 'Imperialist Rivalry', p.299.

with that the quality of policy-making towards Germany'.²²⁸ Zara Steiner has emphasised that (by contrast with Lascelles), Goschen was 'convinced of the hostile intentions of the German Government', never saw an Anglo-German agreement as 'feasible or desirable', was not seen as able by his colleagues and worked to dampen any pro-German currents. He 'failed to make any real contact with the members of the German Government', with the Emperor only visiting the embassy once during his tenure, upon Edward VII's death. Goschen thought that Grey's later hopes for a détente with Berlin were 'illusory' and 'did not really attempt to guide his superiors through the labyrinth' of Anglo-German affairs.²²⁹

Goschen himself admitted that in one area Lascelles was able to operate far more effectively as a diplomat. This was in the latter's more cordial relations with the German court. On visiting Berlin in 1911 Sir Frank apparently 'ran things' with regard to Royal relations, without consulting Goschen much, slipping back into his old role.²³⁰ Wilfrid Blunt even ruminated that Lascelles' personal position with the Kaiser might make him an excellent candidate to carry on negotiations about the Baghdad Railway,²³¹ and on a visit of the Kaiser to England in May 1911, Sir Frank was greatly preoccupied with playing host to his august friend.²³²

The relative importance allotted by Lascelles to both royal relations in general and the royal personage of the Kaiser in particular has been justly questioned, with some suggesting that the ambassador became 'dazzled' by Wilhelm II during his time in Berlin.²³³ There is certainly evidence to support the theory that, just as in 1886 Lascelles had been swayed by the spectacle of Alexander von Battenberg's sudden

²²⁸ T.G. Otte, 'Old Diplomacy: Reflections on the Foreign Office before 1914,' p.46.

²²⁹ Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy*, p.182-83.

²³⁰ Diary entry for 13 Dec 1911, C.H.D. Howard (ed.) *The Diary of Sir Edward Goschen, 1900-1914* (London, 1980), p.253; entry for 12 Aug 1911, *ibid*, p. 242.

²³¹ Blunt's entry for 18 Mar 1911, *My diaries*, ii, p.358.

²³² Lascelles to Florence Spring-Rice, 10 May 1911, CASR II 1/2.

²³³ Van't Padje, 'Imperialist Rivalry', p.297.

reversal of his fortunes on the battlefield, a fact which blinded him to the Prince's political weaknesses, so his friendship with the Kaiser blinded Lascelles to his faults. From Chirol's warnings to his friend in 1902 it appears concern was even then becoming widespread in Foreign Office circles that Lascelles had lost his objectivity about Wilhelm II. Lascelles also believed that Kaiser Wilhelm II was a man of peace. To invert an expression by Walford Selby, who after a year in the Berlin Embassy had 'come to the conclusion that I am not Anti German, I am merely Anti-Emperor,' Sir Frank was less pro-German than he was pro-Emperor.²³⁴ His defensiveness over the Kaiser's behaviour during the Boer war, his willingness to exculpate the Kaiser from blame and allot responsibility for Germany's foreign policy blunders to Bülow, and his concentration on dynastic feuds all seem to indicate this.

However, this is both to oversimplify Lascelles's approach to Anglo-German relations and to take the ambassador's role out of context. In the eyes of Wilhelm II's courtier Philip Eulenberg, writing shortly after the Great War, two things had been to blame for the deterioration of Anglo-German relations: one was Wilhelm II's desire for a grand fleet, and the other was 'the unbridgeable conflict between the latter and his uncle, King Edward VII.'²³⁵ As one historian has recently argued, 'the often petty disputes between the Kaiser and King Edward cannot be dismissed as trivial or irrelevant. They contributed to an atmosphere of ill-feeling, which encouraged the two monarchs to support policies which fuelled the Anglo-German antagonism.'²³⁶ The dramatic change from the relatively cordial dynastic relations between Queen Victoria and the German Emperor would have challenged any ambassador. Sir Frank viewed his role of disentangling complex dynastic feuds as an unpleasant necessity, though he

²³⁴ Walford Selby to mother, 17 Feb 1907, Selby MSS, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Add. MSS 6615, pp.188-189.

²³⁵ Roderick R. McLean, *Royalty and diplomacy in Europe*, p.173.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

doubtless held a very high opinion both of the Kaiser and his Royal uncle, and perhaps exaggerated the importance of both.²³⁷ Yet as a *persona grata* to the British and German courts he was in a unique position to potentially influence the personal relationship, which may seem trivial to twenty-first century eyes, but was of greater importance in an age where European monarchs were ‘not decorative non-entities... but individuals who retained a prominent role in diplomacy.’²³⁸

Furthermore, Lascelles’s concentration on the ruling elite emphasised the Kaiser’s unique and potentially dangerous role. As the ultimate executive authority in the Kaiserreich he ultimately controlled all appointments and thus the direction of policy, but he was uniquely unfitted for the role of ruler. His brusque treatment of foreign diplomats, such as Malet, of his own Ministers (for example, von Marschall), and his sudden mood swings between Anglophilia and Anglophobia to Lascelles highlighted the importance of trying to dampen down his bellicose moods and accentuate the more positive, sentimental aspects of his personality, a task which Sir Frank was painfully aware of. In trying to convey conversations with the Emperor to his superiors, Lascelles was consciously attempting to bridge the gulf between the Kaiser’s verbal exaggerations and the necessities of diplomatic reporting. Lascelles’s appreciation of the Kaiser’s mental instability comes across strongly in the aftermath of the *Daily Telegraph* affair of 1908 when, now retired, he wrote of the Kaiser in almost childlike terms to Leo Maxse of the *National Review*, arguing that Bülow ‘ought to have protected the Emperor instead of saying as he practically did “The Emperor has been very naughty but was now promised to be a good boy.”’²³⁹

²³⁷ On Sir Frank’s view of the King’s role in foreign decision making, see Blunt’s entry for 5 March 1909, Blunt, *My diaries*, ii, p. 243.

²³⁸ McLean, *Royalty and diplomacy*, p.214.

²³⁹ Lascelles to Leo Maxse, 5 Jan 1909, Maxse MSS, West Sussex Record Office, MAXSE/445/f.248.

It has however been argued that Lascelles concentrated on royal relations to the detriment of other factors which were more important in the course of the deterioration of Anglo-German relations. Of these, the important issue of naval rivalry between the two Powers has already been highlighted. As has been seen, from 1906 onwards, authorities in Whitehall paid increasing attention to the reports of the Berlin naval attaché and less so to those of their diplomatic representative. But this does not mean Lascelles was necessarily wrong in his muted response. As Steiner and Neilson have written, there was a 'curious myopia' about the whole subject of naval rivalry on both sides of the North Sea.²⁴⁰ In meeting the perceived German challenge, Britain arguably over-exaggerated the threat of invasion from Germany, and Germany's ability to keep up with her in the naval race, which by 1914 had been won by Britain.²⁴¹ Despite the criticism of Lascelles for downplaying the naval question, there has been little attempt to comprehensively examine his views. A summary of the evidence would conclude that although he was less alarmed about the German threat than his colleagues, this stemmed from a confidence in British superiority and her ability to maintain the Two Power Standard, which is what Britain strove to do up to 1914. It is true that he ridiculed the idea that Germany would attempt to invade Britain, but this assessment proved sound. What dismayed him was that the world's chief maritime power should show an undignified fear of another Power, which was perfectly entitled (in his eyes) to build a strong Navy; in his own words it naturally became a 'great industrial, commercial, and colonial Power...to protect not only her own shores, but also those industrial, commercial, and colonial interests which

²⁴⁰ Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson (eds.), *Britain and the origins of the First World War*, p.53.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.52-54, 61, 105.

otherwise would be left to the tender mercies of any powerful maritime Power.'²⁴² As Britain was more than able to compete with Germany's building programme, which Lascelles realised Germany could ill afford, there was nothing to fear from it. This was why he so denigrated the political pressure on Germany, and British attempts to deprive another Power of the same benefits that Britain already enjoyed.

A more just criticism which can be levelled at Lascelles is that, given the importance subsequently attached by historians to domestic political pressures in the formulation of German foreign policy,²⁴³ he focussed surprisingly little on, for example, the electoral fortunes of the Social Democrat Party or political pressures from right wing groups in German society on the German Government. Indeed Lascelles shared in the flaws of his contemporaries in offering little comment on 'domestic political, economic or social factors, and their relevance to foreign policy' and lacking from the pen of Britain's ambassador in Berlin is any great sweeping analysis of Anglo-German affairs beyond his annual reports for 1906 and 1907.²⁴⁴ By the early years of the twentieth century, popular opinion and popular nationalism were becoming increasingly important forces in international relations. This was a tendency which Lascelles was uncertain how to report. Partially this was put down to disposition: Dumas, the naval attaché, reported that 'the universal hatred of England' common in many sections of society in Germany was 'quite incompatible with Sir

²⁴² Frank Lascelles, 'Thoughts on the Anglo-German Problem', *The Contemporary Review*, ci (1912), p.5.

²⁴³ The most prominent example being Fritz Fischer, *War of illusions: German policies from 1911 to 1914*, trans. Marian Jackson (London, 1975). For more recent historical literature on German political pressure groups see for example, R. Chickering, *We men who feel most German: a cultural study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston, 1984); Geoff Eley 'Reshaping the Right: Radical Nationalism and the German Navy League, 1898-1908', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Jun., 1978), pp. 327-354; idem, *Reshaping the German right: radical nationalism and political change after Bismarck* (New Haven, 1980).

²⁴⁴ Keith Hamilton, *Bertie of Thame, Edwardian Ambassador* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 388-9.

Frank's statements & views.²⁴⁵ Lascelles' young relative, Leveson-Gower, thought him to be a 'mediocre diplomatist' because he 'persistently declined to notice the repeated warnings of ...the far more astute' staff around him.²⁴⁶ At its most unkind, Lascelles was accused of taking no trouble 'to get in touch with Germans nor understand the trend of German policy, confining his energies to licking the boots of the German Emperor.'²⁴⁷ It is reasonable to conclude that Lascelles, a typical aristocratic diplomat, was too aloof from the currents of German public opinion to divine their impact on foreign policy. His social environment was extremely restricted. In Dumas' words, he moved in a 'small a circle of society' and had 'little chance...of obtaining any but the Court & official views.'²⁴⁸ Another explanation is that Lascelles simply did not view popular pressures as a threat to or influence upon the existing order in the Kaiserreich. He seemed to pay little attention to trends like popular navalism and Pan Germanism, and certainly downplayed the threat of the latter.²⁴⁹ This view is at least suggested by one piece of evidence never used before. Writing in an article for *The Sunday Times* in 1917, the ex-ambassador to Berlin discussed the possibility of a revolution breaking out in Germany, following the summer mutinies in the German navy, which he owned had 'greatly surprised' him. Lascelles asserted that until a short time ago he had thought that a revolution was 'next door to impossible in Germany'. He still believed that it would have 'little chance of success' as the revolutionaries would be 'overpowered by the army at once', unless the army joined in and the revolution was 'carefully prepared'. The

²⁴⁵ Dumas diary, 2 Aug 1908.

²⁴⁶ George Leveson Gower, *Mixed Grill*, p.187.

²⁴⁷ Leo Maxse to Bonar Law, 1 March 1912, Law papers, Parliamentary Archives, 25/3/3.

²⁴⁸ Dumas diary, 16 Aug 1908.

²⁴⁹ Dumas, for example, simply noted in 1906 that: 'Sir Frank does not seem to fear the Pan Germanic movement' Dumas diary, 8 March 1906. Moreover many of the forces, such as Socialism, which came to be increasingly dominant in the years immediately up to 1914, were still amassing during Lascelles's tenure at Berlin.

Prussians were 'proud of the Hohenzollerns', the Emperor would never 'compromise with any revolutionary leaders' and would probably move to suppress the movement. The discipline of the Germany army in the field meant that they would be disciplined enough to 'fire on their own people in the event of a rising'. Despite the undeniable strength of the Socialists in the Reichstag, he emphasised, Ministers were still ultimately responsible to the Kaiser, not to parliament. Sir Frank's emphasis on the executive authority of the Kaiser, on the weakness of the Reichstag, on the limited scope for the success of Socialism versus the forces of order and monarchism, certainly illustrates the limitations of an approach which concentrated overtly on the rulers rather than the ruled. It is also a reminder of some of the limitations of late nineteenth century diplomacy.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ Sir Frank Lascelles, 'Germany and revolution', *The Sunday Times*, 28 Oct 1917, p.6.

Conclusion: the voice of the Old Diplomacy?

It was suggested in the introduction that an approach concentrating overtly on the period 1895-1908 can only reveal so much about the attitudes of diplomats during this era, who were shaped by their environment and 'unspoken assumptions',¹ and that one must look further back into the formative experiences and earlier lives of individual actors to investigate, in essence, what angle these diplomats approached their senior postings from. This study has attempted to solve that problem by placing Lascelles, and with him British diplomacy in this era, within the context of longer term developments and to analyse his diplomatic career prior to 1895. The view of Sir Frank Lascelles as a relic of the old diplomacy, whose views were outmoded by 1908, has long dominated historiography,² but little attempt had hitherto been made to examine his career in the Victorian era which shaped his outlook. For, while Lascelles may have played out the final chapter of his professional life in what has been termed an 'insecure and fragile' Edwardian age,³ he himself was the product of a different era.

The impact of 'generational factors' in shaping outlooks among the British foreign-policy making elite has been greatly emphasised in recent works on British foreign policy before 1914.⁴ Lascelles himself can be seen as part of a "Victorian" or

¹ On this subject, see the defining work: Joll, James, *1914: the unspoken assumptions: an inaugural lecture delivered 25 April 1968*. (London : London School of Economics and Political Science; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968)

² See for example the character sketch in Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy*, pp.177-8.

³ Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton, 1968), p.6.

⁴ Zara Steiner, 'On Writing International History: Chaps, Maps and Much More', p.537. See also Otte, 'Old Diplomacy: Reflections on the Foreign Office before 1914,' pp. 40-1.

“Mid-Victorian” generation, or what one historian has termed ‘almost a psychological category’.⁵ Most recently Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte have distinguished between what they identify as two distinct generations among the British foreign policy elite in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: ‘the “Victorians”... born mainly in the 1830s and early 1840s’ and the “Edwardians”... born mainly in the 1850s and early 1860s’, who attained influence ‘roughly contemporaneously with Edward VII’s accession to power...’ According to Keith Neilson, the Victorian generation, which included Salisbury (born 1830), Charles Scott (b. 1838), Sanderson and Lascelles (both b.1841) and O’Conor (b. 1843), ‘reached their political maturity before the unifications of Italy and Germany, at a time when German unification was regarded favourably by Britain’, when it was hoped that Germany, a ‘natural ally’, would ‘balance the French and Russian threat to Europe’. By contrast, ‘Russia was the enemy for the “Victorians”. For them the Crimean War was a vivid memory, together with the mutiny, and the Russian expansion into Central Asia a fact of everyday political life.’ For men like Sanderson, Lascelles, Fitzmaurice and Salisbury, Russia’s strength was an important factor in weighing up the relative importance to be accorded to the new phenomenon of Anglo-German rivalry. Indeed many if not all Victorian diplomats were unified by their experience of India or Persia in the 1880s and 1890s.⁶ The Edwardians meanwhile, men like Nicolson (b.1849), Charles Hardinge (b.1858), Spring Rice and Grey (both b.1862), ‘had their formative political experiences much later’, observed the scramble for Africa and saw the Germany of the ‘erratic’ Wilhelm II as the new enemy, with Russia a potential partner of Britain. The Victorian attitude, argues Neilson, was typified by a ‘more detached, less interventionist attitude towards foreign policy,’ exemplified by Salisbury and

⁵ K.T. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, p. 2.

⁶ Neilson, *Last Tsar*, pp. 47-8.

Sanderson, who were sceptical that Britain could either attempt to pursue a consistent long term policy on the one hand, or react too violently against every change in international relations.⁷

Lascelles's career is a classic study of the diplomacy of the mid-Victorian mindset. Often, his approach reflected the foreign policy priorities enshrined by Lord Salisbury. Like Salisbury, Lascelles thought in the immediate term, and in terms of 'practical co-operation' with other Powers, rather than alliances.⁸

In Cairo, he served as an obedient agent of his political chief, executing orders faithfully, and working to maintain good relations with France, albeit having a modicum of influence on policy himself by joining with his diplomatic colleagues in pressing for the Khedive's departure.

Doubtless, self-interest, with an eye to advancement played an important role in his decision to work hard and say little in Cairo, but to a considerable extent Lascelles remained independent and in Bulgaria sought to continue Salisbury's Eastern policy under the far less sympathetic eye of Gladstone's Government, which brought considerable ire from Whitehall, although Granville respected Lascelles's views on the unfeasibility of Bulgaria's constitution, and the Queen was impressed by his support of Alexander von Battenberg. Lascelles's intransigence can be explained in terms of his value system. Like most of his generation, it was the Eastern Question which provided for Lascelles the benchmark against which all other foreign policy considerations had to be judged. The age at which he reached his political consciousness and maturity (c.1857-1862) was, as Neilson has alluded to, the age of the Indian mutiny (in which Sir Frank's brother served), of the post Crimean system

⁷ Ibid, pp. 48-9.

⁸ Lillian M. Penson, 'The New Course in British Foreign Policy, 1892-1902', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, Vol. 25, (1943), pp. 121-138, p. 125; see also H.W. Koch 'Missed opportunity or myth?', p.380.

by which Britain guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire against Russia, as well as an age of burgeoning nationalism in Italy and Germany.

In the Eastern crisis of 1885-6 Lascelles became useful again when Salisbury returned to office, and he displayed a typically Victorian anti-Russian bias, especially in his firm resistance to the mission of Kaulbars in the aftermath of Battenberg's abdication, which arguably played a not insignificant part in the thwarting of Russian plans for occupying Bulgaria. This was the period in which Lascelles's star was in its ascendant. He felt in harmony with men like William White at Constantinople and Augustus Paget at Vienna, and agreed with the British policy of alignment with the German powers in Europe against Russia, while the effective continuity (allowing for differences of style) of Salisbury's policy by Rosebery meant that he felt comfortable with offering advice to both freely.

Lascelles's effectiveness in Romania was limited by an unwillingness to play the part of intriguer against his Russian colleague but this reflected both the effective ending of the Eastern crisis after Salisbury's securing of the Mediterranean entente in 1887, and the flexibility of approach seen as the hallmark of Salisburian diplomacy. Lascelles's obstinacy in Romania reflected a growing independence which he had first exhibited in Bulgaria, and his Government came to agree with him about the Romanian political situation. His time at Teheran again exhibited what might with caution be termed 'masterly inactivity' and a basic pragmatism in approaching the question of alignment with other Powers, for with limited tools at his disposal for opposing Russia, and aware of the common interest of both Government in dampening down their rivalry, he was able in the aftermath of the partial collapse of Drummond-Wolff's policy to at least limit some of the damage done to British interests by the tobacco Régie's demise, if not actually pave the way for a

rapprochement. His time at St Petersburg was too brief to be effective, and arguably he was overwhelmed by the pace of events there, but he showed the same willingness to accommodate Russia which was beginning to increasingly find favour at the top of the British Government.

Thus for the first half of his career Lascelles was not a dogmatic imperialist, or an ardent partisan of one country or another, although he believed Britain's natural loyalties lay with the Triple Alliance because of the Franco-Russian challenge to Britain's Mediterranean, Asian and African interests. Yet his time in Egypt had been marked by collaboration with France and despite being hostile to Russia in Bulgaria because of his conviction that she threatened Britain's Mediterranean system, he had seen the efficacy of coming to terms with her in Asia, where there was nothing to be lost through *détente*— only everything risked through obstinacy.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Lascelles was able to increasingly sympathise with those, like Lansdowne, who sought to decrease the ranks of Britain's Imperial rivals. Those recorded at having been at the famous gathering at Chamberlain's house in June 1898 can all be classed as 'mid Victorians', conscious of the range of Britain's rivals; Lord George Hamilton (b.1845), Brodrick (b.1856), Henry Chaplin (b.1840), George Goschen (b.1831) Lord Lansdowne (b.1845) Chamberlain (b.1836) Arthur Balfour (b.1848) and Lascelles himself (b.1841). Incidentally, Lascelles, Hamilton and Lansdowne all had experience of Russian policy in Asia, and Goschen had experience of Russian intrigues at Constantinople and French rivalry at Cairo. Although Lascelles was in many senses similar to Salisbury, who one historian has described as 'essentially a mid-Victorian optimist, confident in Britain's strength and conscious of the weaknesses and disunity of her potential enemies', and did not share the outlook of Chamberlain and the *'fin de siècle*

pessimists' who accepted the coming of the next big war with a certainty creeping fatalism,⁹ he was convinced that an understanding with Germany was a good way to reduce the ranks of Britain's enemies, and tirelessly worked towards this cause.

Lascelles did not, contrary to myth, advocate an alliance, but an *entente* with Germany, and he also agreed with the conclusions of Eyre Crowe's famous memorandum on Anglo-German relations about not entering into one sided bargains with Germany (a point Lascelles had stressed himself before Crowe), while admitting there were 'one or two things to say on the other side' on some points.¹⁰

Why was Lascelles so willing to tolerate the apparent antagonism between England and Germany between 1895-1914, in its colonial, commercial and power-political aspects? Certainly there was an element of professional bias which Lascelles was aware of: as an ambassador, it was in his interest 'that his country should be on the best possible terms with the Court to which he was accredited.'¹¹ But mainly Lascelles's tolerance can again be attributed to generational factors.

As Keith Wilson concluded in a 1983 article, the difference between the newer set of personnel in the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service from 1906 and the diplomats of the Victorian era like Lascelles was the apparently willing acquiescence in the concessionary policy of the 1895-1900 period, of the former type, who could not see why Britain, in her paramount position, should 'complain about the desires of other Powers to emulate her career', who were 'able to see themselves as others saw them' to see German fears of 'insecurity', and even to see that if the 'fall from

⁹ T.G. Otte, 'A Question of Leadership: Lord Salisbury, the Unionist Cabinet and Foreign Policy Making, 1895-1900,' *Contemporary British History* 14, no. 4 (2000), pp. 1-26; p. 4.

¹⁰ Lascelles to Hardinge, 1 Feb 1907, FO 800/19; Mr Eyre Crowe, *Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany*, 1 Jan 1907, BD iii, Appendix A; Lascelles warning to Lansdowne in late 1900 had been on the same lines; see Lascelles to Lansdowne, 17 Nov 1900, FO 800/128.

¹¹ *The Times*, 21 Oct 1908, p. 13; see also 'The Anglo-German Friendship Society, report of the inaugural meeting', 1 May 1911, ED Morel MSS, Morel/F13/7.

greatness' came, they would exit gracefully and 'go gentle into that good night', whereas their successors 'did not like being spoken of as if they were dead', and instead 'utter[ed] screams at every approach to the gouty sprawling giant of the British Empire'.¹²

In terms of outlook, Lascelles closely resembled his colleague and non-political Foreign Office chief, the Permanent Under Secretary Thomas Sanderson, born just ten weeks before Sir Frank, and who entered the Foreign Office two years prior to him. According to his most recent biographers, Sanderson's 'outlook was representative of the mid-Victorian generation at large'. He 'acknowledged the importance of the Empire, but looked askance at the rising tide of popular imperialism' and in the 1880s had seen colonies as an "incubus". He held Liberal or Whiggish sympathies, and was a pragmatist and moderate who fought shy of unnecessary wars, was flexible in dealing with other Powers and 'accepted that there could be no gains without concessions' Like Salisbury, he saw British foreign policy as 'reactive', and also Russia as a central concern during his tenure.¹³

Germany had acquired her new colonies in the 1880s as a result of her sudden interest in Africa while Lascelles had been immersed in the Eastern Question and convinced of the need to 'stick to Bismarck' in European affairs, when Russia's apparent plans to dominate Bulgaria, or skirmishes by her generals on the Afghan border seemed to threaten an Anglo-Russian war. It is telling that the very period in which Lascelles was in Bulgaria was the period in which colonial fervour reached its height. Salisbury, who had been out of office from 1880-85, famously commented that when he left the Foreign Office 'nobody thought much about Africa' but that

¹² Keith M. Wilson, 'The Question of Anti-Germanism at the British Foreign Office before the First World War' *Canadian Journal of History*, xviii (1983), pp.40-42.

¹³ T.G. Otte & Keith Neilson, *The permanent Under-Secretary for foreign affairs*, pp. 104-05.

when he returned, European nations were 'almost quarrelling over the various portions' of sub-Saharan Africa which they could obtain.¹⁴ It is in this context that Dumas's criticism of Lascelles having 'been brought up in the Victorian regime of giving way to Germany in everything, and literally [being unable to] convert himself to the growing habit in England of refusing them all that they asked',¹⁵ needs to be seen. This is why, writing in 1912, Lascelles could argue that 'up to 1890 there had been no indication of any opposition on our part to colonial expansion on the part of Germany', and could argue that Germany's desire to have a profitable Colonial Empire was a 'not unnatural' one.¹⁶

For similar reasons of outlook, Lascelles was able to tolerate German commercial rivalry. Partially, his laissez faire economic views and social position meant that (as was typical at the time) the aristocratic ambassador couldn't interest himself in the 'details of finance or trade, or know people engaged in commerce', an attitude which was becoming increasingly criticized in England, especially under the Liberal Government in power.¹⁷ Lascelles's generation had been closer to the self-assurance of an 'age of equipoise' symbolised by the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the doctrines of Cobden and Bright, than to anxieties about economic decline and arguments for protectionism. In his 1912 article on Anglo-German relations, Lascelles dismissed commercial rivalry as a serious factor impeding good relations; in place of anxiety about the displacement of the 'monopoly' British traders had hitherto enjoyed in countries like China he espoused a Victorian free trade mantra. Consciously echoing the Salisburian dictum that in China there is 'room for all', Lascelles

¹⁴ Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, Vol iv (London, 1932), p.310.

¹⁵ Dumas autobiography, p.16.

¹⁶ Frank Lascelles, 'Thoughts on the Anglo-German problem', pp. 7-8.

¹⁷ Dumas autobiography, p.16.

advocated the maintenance of the open door, and healthy commercial competition between the two countries, who as he pointed out were each other's 'best, or nearly its best, customer', a factor which should 'tend to peace rather than war'.¹⁸

Unlike Grey, to Lascelles Germany's European dominance was also no overarching concern for Britain, primarily an imperial power herself. In 1912 he wrote that: 'I do not for a moment believe that anyone in this country, or indeed in any other, ever dreamt of questioning the preponderating position in Europe which her successes had secured for Germany'.¹⁹ This was a fundamental and dramatic difference between the diplomat and his Edwardian political masters. For Grey, European concerns were at least as important as imperial concerns, and he saw the European balance of power and the maintenance of British power as inextricably linked.²⁰ Lascelles, whatever his reservations towards Prussian militarism in 1870-1, had by 1895 probably come to share the view of his Victorian contemporaries that a strong Germany was a useful counterweight and deterrent to Russian and French ambitions, and would probably not have credited the architects of German unification with Napoleonic design²¹; his constant argument that Germany had not waged war since her creation is evidence of this.

There is also the not unimportant factor that for Lascelles Britain's historical and intellectual ties with Germany were within recent memory, whether it be Prince Eugene and Marlborough, Wellington and Blücher or the more recent examples of Ranke and Carlyle, Darwin and Helmholtz.²²

¹⁸ Lascelles, 'Thoughts on the Anglo German problem', p.2.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.5.

²⁰ See e.g. Keith Neilson, "'Control the Whirlwind": Sir Edward Grey as Foreign Secretary, 1906-16', in T.G. Otte (ed) *The Makers of British Foreign Policy from Pitt to Thatcher*, pp. 140-49.

²¹ See W.E. Mosse, *The European Powers and the German Question, 1848-71, with special reference to England and Russia* (Cambridge, 1958), p.359.

²² Lascelles, 'Thoughts on the Anglo German problem', p.6.

Lascelles's temperament – what could be termed amused detachment and optimism- also certainly complemented the need for tolerance in the face of German methods of diplomacy.²³ He was temperamentally suited by upbringing, wealth, education and social status and personal characteristics of patience, tact and charm to face the sometimes brusque methods of Wilhelmine Germany with equanimity. He was also able to shed any unhelpful ideological baggage: while essentially a mid-Victorian liberal, he amazed friends and contemporaries by his ability to put aside his convictions when dealing with the autocratic Kaiserreich.²⁴

It was suggested in the introduction that Lascelles was a useful 'prism' through which British foreign policy priorities could be glimpsed, especially with regard to the change in Britain's orientation towards other Powers which took place from 1900. In examining the changes around the turn of the century, this prism risks appearing like a kaleidoscope - one begins to glimpse different patterns depending on how the evidence has been manipulated by different historical actors and historians.

For the first half of his career and for the duration of the first half of Sir Frank's embassy at Berlin his views on the necessity of good Anglo-German relations generally reflected the analyses of successive Foreign Secretaries; Salisbury viewed the Kaiser as a minor irritant but begrudgingly accepted the need for co-operation with Germany in the face of Britain's imperial problems; Lansdowne was more enthusiastic initially about both the need to court Germany and the importance of Wilhelm II in this process, although he became increasingly disillusioned after the Manchurian crisis of 1901 both of the scale of British dependency on Germany and subsequently the importance of Wilhelm II. Yet that the Foreign Secretary generally

²³ Dumas credited Lascelles with possessing 'shrewd cynical sense of humour', Dumas diary, 24 Oct 1906. Ethel Smyth, the famous musician, and a personal friend of the ambassador's, termed him, 'the most absolutely *disinterested* of men,' Ethel Smyth, *Streaks of Life*, p.155.

²⁴ See Chirol to Florence Spring-Rice, 2 July 1907, CASR I 1/15.

regarded as bringing Britain out of isolation continued to defend his ambassador's essential approach to Cabinet colleagues even into 1905 is significant in terms of tackling the concept of an ambassador who was too 'pro-German' against more sceptical political masters, in indicating the essential unity of the mid-Victorian generation, and in delivering a corrective to views of the scale, pace and inevitability of Britain's abandonment of traditional policies.

Recent historical work has suggested that 'end' of Salisbury's policy of isolation was not really as pronounced as has been asserted previously. Common to Lascelles, Salisbury and Lansdowne was a flexibility in choosing partners to align with among the Powers, according to the needs of the situation. Salisbury himself attempted to reach a *modus Vivendi* with Russia over the Far East in 1898. In this respect, Lansdowne was carrying on his work and differed in degree rather than in direction in concluding an alliance with Japan in 1902 which had more in common with a regional pact like Salisbury's 1887 Mediterranean agreements than it did with any alliance in the formal sense of the word - it was meant, T.G. Otte has argued, to bolster Britain's position of 'isolation', not to radically alter it.²⁵ Lascelles's approach, which throughout his career was frequently alive to trends in Foreign Office thinking, reflected and in some senses anticipated Lansdowne's approach. For although a scion of Salisburian diplomacy, who recognised that Britain's 'polygamous' relations were necessary because of the extent of her Empire, he had much in common with Lansdowne and his counterparts. His search for an Anglo-German understanding was part of a broad ranging effort at securing safeguards for Britain's empire, and was not a sign of an anomalous pro-Germanism or a wish for an entrenched alliance which would bind Britain continentally, but a reflection of beliefs

²⁵ The thrust of T.G. Otte, *The China question*, passim but cf especially pp. 5-6, and pp. 326-337.

held among his Victorian colleagues. An examination of Lascelles's career supports Otte's ideas that the end of isolation, the march towards hard and binding alliances, and moreover the extent to which diplomats were carried along with this idea, has been over-determined.

However it is a fact that with the passing of a political generation, which had been marked by Lord Salisbury's tenure in power and lingered on through individuals like Lansdowne and Balfour who bridged the divide and saw through to conclusion an Anglo-French and Anglo-Russian entente, and with the advent of Grey's term as foreign secretary, a more aggressive approach to Empire and Imperialism started to dominate British foreign policy, symbolised by a more uncompromising and aggressive approach to Germany and the naval threat she apparently presented. Where Grey led, Lascelles could not follow.

Lascelles's career also serves as an interesting comment on how those in the late Victorian and Edwardian era saw the inevitability of war, and the inevitability of a collision between England and Germany especially, a subject which has received so much attention in historical literature. Recent historical work has disputed the notion that a general European war was seen as inevitable by military, diplomatic, political personnel and by shapers of public opinion. Holger Afflerbach has convincingly shown that far from being a 'topos' of inevitable war before 1914 there was a 'somnambulistic belief in progress' and that 'nobody seemed to believe in the possibility of a great war' which everyone agreed would be calamitous.²⁶ It can be asserted fully that Lascelles did join the ranks of those who disagreed with inevitable war. His confidence in the links rather than the divides between foreign Powers and in

²⁶ Holger Afflerbach, 'The topos of improbable war in Europe before 1914', in idem & David Stevenson, (eds.), *An improbable war? : the outbreak of World War I and European political culture before 1914* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 162-3.

the growing trends towards internationalism and economic co-dependence is evident during the three years prior to the Great War. To one audience he stated an 'optimistic' belief in the growing authority of international arbitration in disputes,²⁷ and to another, he publicly praised Norman Angell's groundbreaking book, *The Great Illusion*, which argued that economic interdependence made war increasingly less likely. While Sir Frank thought the book was 'not practical politics at present' he was 'convinced that it will change the thought of the world in the future.'²⁸

Arguably the most important formative experience for Lascelles in this respect had been that of the Franco-Prussian war and Paris Commune 1870-1, for the experience of bloodshed in this period reinforced Lascelles's revulsion against violence and strengthened his determination to contribute to the avoidance of conflict. During 1911-1914 Lascelles constantly warned his audiences that his own experience of war at close quarters had convinced him of the calamity that it entailed, and the Anglo-German tension made him aware of the danger of war. He argued that war would be a catastrophe to both countries, that each side would suffer 'incalculable loss,' and that even if Britain destroyed Germany's fleet and grabbed her colonies, she would only win a temporary advantage.²⁹ To Lascelles, a war over the Eastern Question always seemed more likely than one over colonial rivalry,³⁰ but such was his growing faith in the decreasing likelihood of a major conflagration that as late as April 1914 Lascelles, at a dinner of the now renamed British-German Friendship Society, while entertaining the idea that Britain and Germany could find themselves at loggerheads in a 'general war' from which British interests made it impossible to

²⁷ *The Daily News*, 5 Oct 1911, ED Morel MSS, F 15/3-1.

²⁸ Lucia True Ames Mead, *Swords and ploughshares: or, The supplanting of the system of war by the system of war* (London, 1912), p.143.

²⁹ *The Daily News*, 5 Oct 1911, ED Morel MSS, F 15/3-1.

³⁰ See above, p.268.

abstain, dismissed this as 'a very unlikely contingency' and moreover, one which was becoming 'more unlikely by the day'.³¹

The British military attaché at Berlin, Waters, once remarked that his chief's great services to peace had never been recognised,³² and Dumas, who also served with Lascelles under more strained circumstances, put this in similar terms: 'He had, happily and unhappily, so often seen troublesome affairs between nations arranged by diplomacy that he could not credit that affairs between Germany, France and England were approaching an impasse that could only be bridged by war.'³³ This was the outcome which Sir Frank Lascelles strove his entire career to avoid. Walford Selby, who could be a harsh critic of Lascelles, termed his chief 'an ardent friend of peace'³⁴ It was therefore a tragedy that Lascelles, who strove to conciliate Germany for thirteen years, lived to see the outbreak in 1914 of 'The Kaiser's war', and the death of the Victorian age he was at home in, on the fields of France.

³¹ *The Times*, 29 April 1914, p. 7.

³² W.H.H. Waters, *Potsdam and Doorn: Reminiscences of William II, as Emperor of Germany, and in exile*, (London, 1935) p.15.

³³ Dumas autobiography, p.16.

³⁴ This is how Walford Selby described Lascelles. Selby to mother, 13 April 1907, Selby MSS, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Add. MSS6615. p.268.

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