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Chapter Eleven

Crisis Mismanagement or Conflict of Interests? A Case Study of the Origins of the Crimean War

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It is often said that wars—or at least many wars—result from the misperceptions, miscalculations, and blunders of political leaders, not from the irreconcilable conflict of interests between states. The implication is that political leaders do not want war and do not seek war, but they fail to recognize and take advantage of opportunities to manage a crisis and reach a negotiated settlement that avoids war without sacrificing their vital interests. In this view wars are inadvertent, the result of a failure of crisis management.¹ For many years this was the leading interpretation of the origins of World War I, an interpretation that was popularized by Barbara Tuchman's study of *The Guns of August* (1962).²

The "inadvertent war" interpretation has also been applied to the Crimean War (1853–1856), which was the first great power war since the defeat of Napoleonic France in 1815 and which brought to a close the longest period of great power peace in over three centuries. By ending the Concert of Europe and creating the conditions that would facilitate the unification of Italy and then of Germany, the Crimean War had enormous consequences for the future evolution of European diplomacy and society.³ Despite these enormous consequences, and despite the tendency for analysts to explain "big" events in terms of comparably big causes, scholars generally explain the outbreak of the Crimean War in terms of the misunderstandings, misperceptions, overreactions, blunders, and mismanagement of the crisis by political leaders who preferred peace to war, not a more fundamental conflict of interests between states.

This "inadvertent war interpretation" is clear in much of the historiography of the Crimean War. Sir Robert Morier (quoted in Peterson 1993,107), for

example, stated that the Crimean War was "the only perfectly useless modern war that has been waged." M. S. Anderson (1966, 132) wrote that the Crimean War was "the outcome of a series of misjudgments, misunderstandings and blunders, of stupidity, pride, and obstinacy rather than of ill will," while Gavin Burns Henderson (1947, 98) wrote that the war was the result of "diplomatic drift and governmental incompetence among the great powers." Political scientists have made similar assessments. James Richardson (1994, 103) claimed that the Crimean War "did not come about because of basic incompatibilities between the values and interests of the powers." Richard Smoke (1977, 193) argued that in the sequence of actions and counteractions leading up to the war, "policy-makers in none of the major nations wanted events to develop into a major European War, but they lost full control of the cycle of action and reaction."

We were initially sympathetic to the argument that the Crimean War was inadvertent, in the sense that political leaders neither wanted nor expected war, but we were not convinced that the war was the result of misperceptions and blunders, of "stupidity, pride, and obstinacy." We were troubled by the common view that wars are driven *either* by irreconcilable conflicts of interests, which lead state decision makers to make deliberate decisions for war, *or* by gross misperceptions, blunders, and other forms of nonrational behavior that lead to crisis mismanagement and to inadvertent wars.⁴ Part of the problem with this view is that it focuses only on the interests of states, whereas a complete explanation of the actions and interactions of states must take into account both the interests of states and the structure of the environment (including the informational environment) in which political leaders make decisions (Lake and Powell 1999). Political leaders who prefer peace to war can nevertheless end up in war because the situation is structured in such a way as to provide incentives for rational actors to act in a way that leads to undesired outcomes. This dynamic is represented by the well-known "Prisoners' dilemma" model, in which the structure of the situation induces individually-rational actors to forego the benefits of mutual cooperation and engage in conflictual behavior.⁵

Wars are complex, and few if any fit a simple 2×2 , single play Prisoners' dilemma model. States usually have more than two strategic choices, and the "game" almost always involves a series of moves and countermoves that can rarely be usefully represented by a single play of the game. There are some wars, however, that fit a related but more complex pattern in which political leaders who prefer peace to war are faced with a sequence of difficult choices at a series of decision points, and at each of these decision nodes such leaders are induced by the structure of the situation and an ever-narrowing range of options to behave in ways that escalate the crisis rather than deescalate it.

until they find themselves in a situation in which they must choose between war or an alternative that puts their national security and other interests seriously at risk.

This scenario is illustrated by the processes leading to World War I—or at least by one recent interpretation of the origins of World War I, one developed by Fischer (1967) and modified by Levy (1990/1991). The basic argument is that while the Triple Entente preferred a peaceful settlement to the July Crisis, both Austria-Hungary and Germany wanted war as long as they believed that war could be confined to the European continent. They wanted a localized war in the Balkans in which Austria-Hungary would almost certainly crush Serbia and thereby avenge the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and eliminate the ongoing Slavic threat to the integrity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While expecting that Russia would stand aside, the Central Powers were willing to risk Russian intervention and the resulting continental war pitting Germany and Austria-Hungary against Russia, France, and Serbia. What Austria-Hungary and particularly Germany did not want was a world war triggered by British intervention in a continental war. Given these preferences and given the assumption that Britain would stay neutral in the early stages of a continental war—an assumption that was not unreasonable given the information available at the time—Germany encouraged Austria-Hungary to move against Serbia.⁶

The paradox of World War I, in this view, is that while each of the leading actors preferred a particular negotiated settlement to a world war, they ended up in a world war. The explanation is that at each of a series of key decision points political leaders were faced with choices that would involve either the escalation or deescalation of the crisis, and that given severe international and domestic politics constraints they preferred the escalatory alternative. Each decision narrowed the range of subsequent choices, and by the time that Britain clarified its intentions and Germany realized that Britain would probably intervene in a continental war, it was too late for the Central Powers to reverse course. The great powers ended up with the one outcome that nobody wanted, but this was the result of a series of basically rational choices under a difficult set of international and domestic circumstances rather than of crisis mismanagement (Levy 1990/1991).

It is useful to contrast this interpretation, which incorporates some element of inadvertence, with the interpretations advanced by Tuchman (1962), who assumes the war was entirely inadvertent, and by Trachtenberg (1990/1991), who incorporates no element of inadvertence or crisis mismanagement in the process leading to war. Trachtenberg (1990/1991) argues that German leaders wanted to achieve a dominant position in Europe and to challenge Britain for dominance on the seas, believed that war was the best strategy to achieve that

outcome, and deliberately initiated a war despite their expectation that Britain might join Russia, France, and others in a military coalition against Germany.⁷

Our initial hypothesis⁸ was that origins of the Crimean War followed the same general pattern of development as portrayed in Levy's (1990/1991) interpretation of World War I—state leaders acted rationally to maximize their interests in the face of severe domestic and international constraints and a structure of choice that progressively narrowed the available options. Each of these wars started as a regional conflict between a major and a minor power (Russia and Turkey in 1853, Austria-Hungary and Serbia in 1914), and each expanded to include other major powers. Saab's (1977, 155) claim that the origins of the Crimean War lay in a regional Russo-Turkish conflict and that "superimposed on this local war, there was also a European war" is, on the surface, similar to the view that World War I was essentially the "Third Balkan War" (Remak 1971), though the later argument underestimates the systemic underpinnings of the first world war (Schroeder 1972b).

Thus we begin with the conjecture that just as no leader in the July 1914 crisis wanted a world war, no leader in the Crimean crisis wanted a major power war. Each leader was faced, however, with a series of highly constrained choices that led to behavior that cumulated in an inadvertent war. Our conjecture assumes that key actors behaved rationally given the international and domestic constraints under which they operated. It thus differs from a nonrational interpretation based on gross misperceptions and blunders by key leaders. It also differs from an alternative rationalist view that because of a direct conflict of interests, one or more of the key political leaders preferred war to peace, anticipated and accepted the risks that war might escalate, and deliberately instigated a war to advance his state interests (as reflected in Trachtenberg's interpretation of World War I).

***Decision Point 1:** How do we use a case-study approach to test this hypothesis? What kind of aspects of the case need to be covered, and which aspects are not essential for the purpose of testing the hypothesis? What criteria may be invoked to determine if the hypothesis was supported or refuted by the historical evidence?*

To empirically explore this hypothesis we organize our case study of the origins of the Crimean War around the theoretical framework and methodology used by Levy (1990/1991) in his analysis of the July 1914 crisis. We attempt to identify the structure of the game, the identity of the key players, the critical decision points, the policy options available at each decision point, the international and domestic constraints and informational conditions af-

fecting policy decisions, the likely outcomes of the crisis resulting from the cumulation of all possible choices at all decision points, and the preferences of each of the key actors over these outcomes.⁹ For the sake of continuity in our analysis of the origins of the Crimean War, we organize our analysis around a historical narrative and embed within that narrative the data on the material and informational structure of the "game" and the preferences of each actor and the constraints they faced.¹⁰

Any theoretical proposition and any hypothesized historical interpretation must be open to the possibility of falsification by the evidence, whether that evidence comes from a large-N statistical study, an experimental study in the laboratory, or a historical case study.¹¹ If you do not admit that you might be wrong, concede that some real-world observations might lead you to abandon your hypothesis, and—before beginning the empirical analysis—be willing to identify the set of potentially disconfirmatory observations (and make this as explicit as possible), then you are not doing science.¹²

In our case, there are a number of things that might lead us to conclude that our initial conjecture about the origins of the Crimean War is incorrect. Among the most important of these are the following:

1. If we found that one or more key decision-makers preferred a great power war to a peaceful settlement, and that these individual preferences had a significant causal impact on the outbreak of war, such a finding would support the alternative interpretation that a direct conflict of interests between states led to a deliberate decision for war to advance state interests.
2. If we found that one or more key decision makers engaged in behavior that significantly deviated from what we would expect of a rational actor trying to maximize its interests under existing constraints (domestic as well as international), and that this behavior had a significant causal impact on the processes leading to war, such a finding would support the conventional interpretation of the Crimean War as the result of the gross misperceptions, blunders, and mismanagement of the crisis by political leaders.¹³

THE STRUCTURE OF CHOICE IN THE CRIMEAN CRISIS

***Decision Point 2:** Choosing a Temporal Domain for the Case Study. How do we determine when to start the survey of evidence in terms of the facts that bear directly on the hypothesis under study?*

Any case study analysis, just like any large-N analysis, is sensitive to the temporal domain of the investigation. If the "case" is defined too narrowly,

around a particular decision or closely connected series of decisions, there may be a tendency to overestimate the importance of decision-making variables and other "immediate causes" relative to system structures, cultural context, and other "underlying causes." If the case is defined too broadly, to encompass a long lead-up to the crisis, the bias may run in the opposite direction. This makes it essential that the analyst specify the temporal boundaries of his or her study in a way that does not unnecessarily bias the empirical analysis of the hypotheses being investigated, and to make those boundaries explicit at the beginning of the analysis.

Given that our analytical focus is on crisis decision making, and given that there was no sense of crisis among political leaders until after the failure of the tsar Nicholas's May 1853 "Menshikov mission" to Turkey—which aimed to increase Russian influence in Constantinople and which was initially rejected by the Turks—we begin the formal part of our analysis with the choices facing the tsar following that mission.¹⁴ At this point the tsar could either drop his demands or continue to press them. If Nicholas dropped his demands, the crisis would dissipate and the situation would return to the status quo ex ante. If Nicholas chose to press his demands, the Ottoman Empire could respond by either conceding those contested points or by forcefully bringing the situation to a head by initiating hostilities with Russia. If the Turks initiated hostilities with Russia, Britain and France had to decide whether or not to enter the conflict on the side of the Turks. For reasons mentioned below, we assume that Britain made this decision before France.

In focusing on the structure of choice after the failure of the Menshikov mission, we do not explicitly analyze Nicholas's decision to send Menshikov to Turkey, the demands Russia made on Turkey, or the initial Turkish decision to reject those demands. We are not implying that these decisions were unimportant or that the mission had no impact on subsequent events. Indeed, it was Nicholas's failure to anticipate the effects of the mission on Turkey and on the other great powers that precipitated the Crimean crisis to begin with, and it is quite plausible to argue that had Nicholas understood how provocative Menshikov's demands were in the eyes of the Western powers, he may not have set such a dangerous course of events in motion.¹⁵ Thus it is conceivable that the explanation for the *origins* of the Crimean crisis may differ from the explanation for the *escalation* of the crisis once it is underway, but given our analytic focus on crisis management or mismanagement after a crisis is underway we exclude these earlier decisions from our analysis. Still, it would be useful to put the Crimean crisis in historical perspective, and we now turn to the background of the crisis.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, relations between the European great powers were shaped in part by the norms of the "European Concert," which called for collective rather than unilateral solutions to conflicts that might arise in the European system.¹⁶ At this time France was relatively weak compared to Britain and Russia, and consequently the interests of French leaders were given little weight during various crises of the time, including the two Egyptian crises and the earlier Greek War of Independence. In addition, even though there was much reference to both the "liberal alliance" between Britain and France and the "Holy Alliance" among the eastern powers, these systems had greatly declined in influence over time. As a result, in the decade leading up to the Crimean crisis there was no clear pattern of European alignments (Richardson 1994, 70).

The revolutions of 1848 ushered in some important changes. Tsar Nicholas of Russia was emboldened by his successful intervention on the side of the Habsburg monarchy in the Hungarian revolution of that year. In France, Louis Napoleon seized power through revolution and in doing so raised fears that he might attempt to overthrow the 1815 territorial settlement, but this concern was not enough to bring together the former allies who defeated Napoleon Bonaparte.

The European political landscape of 1850 thus lacked any coherent form. Austria and Prussia each continued to suffer from domestic strife. Britain remained relatively aloof from continental affairs, though it gave symbolic support to countries beset by radical revolts. Nicholas increasingly believed that Russia was the dominant land power in the system. Louis Napoleon, fearful of both an appeal to "European radicalism" and of a direct challenge to the existing framework of treaties, was looking for a way to solidify his power both at home and abroad (Richardson 1994, 70).

From the beginning of the reign of Louis Napoleon, French foreign policy was driven by both popular and personal expectations that a new Bonaparte should rework the international order to restore France to its former glory as the preponderant power in Europe (Rich 1992, 104; Richardson 1992, 84). To achieve these goals, Louis Napoleon pursued three major strategies. He wanted to cultivate good relations with France's long-time adversary Great Britain, exploit nationalistic causes in order to reorganize Europe under the political and moral leadership of France, and to "disrupt the international order that had been established at the Congress of Vienna after the Napoleonic wars," which Louis Napoleon saw as the major obstacle to a renewed French predominance in Europe (Rich 1992, 104). The French leader believed that Russia was the leading defender of the present international order and that

any action that weakened Russia would undercut Nicholas's ability to support this international order. He believed that he would be supported in his efforts by others, especially Palmerston in Britain, who had begun to define Russia rather than France as the primary threat (Rich 1992, 104).

The new French leader found an opportunity to accomplish these goals in the Holy Lands of the Ottoman Empire. For centuries, Christian churches and other important buildings in the holy lands had been divided between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox church. Various treaties agreed to by the Ottoman authorities over time allowed for a certain degree of religious freedom among these two Christian branches. With approximately thirteen million Orthodox worshippers in the Ottoman Empire, Russia was commonly viewed as the "external patron" of these people (Richardson 1994, 70). A series of treaties and conventions between St. Petersburg and the Porte (as the center of the Turkish government was commonly called) that were based on the outcomes of the numerous wars fought intermittently between the two states further enhanced the Russian position in the region.

Despite these traditional areas of Russian influence, Louis Napoleon and his foreign minister, Drouyn de Lhuys, began in the spring of 1850 to press the claims of Catholic clergy on Turkish leaders in Constantinople. Foremost among these demands was the call for restoration of the rights of the Latin clergy over the holy places in the Ottoman Empire (Rich 1992, 107). These demands rested on both domestic and international concerns and were backed up by both military and diplomatic intimidation (Richardson 1994, 71; Rich 1992, 107). For example, Napoleon sent a French warship to Constantinople, in clear violation of an earlier Russo-Turkish treaty. Negotiations over specific French demands continued until December 1852 when the Sultan, either intimidated by France or attempting to "play off France and Russia," (Rich 1992, 107-108), agreed to nearly all the French claims

THE MENSHIKOV MISSION

This Franco-Turkish agreement greatly angered Nicholas. Although nominally a dispute over religious and quasi-nationalistic themes, the increasingly murky situation was embedded in a much broader geopolitical context. As Rich (1992, 107) writes, "the dispute over the holy places was no mere churchwarden's quarrel or empty issue of national prestige, as it has sometimes been described, but a question of power and influence in the Near East." Whatever state was considered the protector of the holy places and the large Christian population within the Ottoman Empire would see its influence greatly enhanced.

Nicholas had three primary interests. He wanted to protect, and if possible expand, Orthodox privileges within the Ottoman Empire and holy lands; maintain Russian influence in Constantinople; and achieve a favorable partition of the Ottoman Empire if it were to break up (Richardson 1994, 81). With these concerns in mind, Nicholas began to formulate his response. He was undecided as to whether negotiation, intimidation, or the use of force would be the best way to achieve these ends (Richardson 1994, 71). By February the tsar, somewhat grudgingly, decided to send Prince Menshikov, the chief of staff for the Russian navy, to negotiate a settlement with the Turks. Menshikov's orders were to get an agreement from Constantinople that would insure the present Russian position of influence in the Holy Lands and secure those rights in the future.¹⁷

Nicholas gave Menshikov a great deal of freedom in the negotiations but also gave him a written Convention that went well beyond the standard interpretation of past treaties. While the Kutchuk Kainardji agreement of 1774 authorized the Russian government to make representations only at "the new church at Constantinople . . . and its officiating ministers," the new proposal would authorize the Russian government to make representations on behalf of all Orthodox churches and clergy (Richardson 1994, 72). Far from being the relatively innocuous demands that Russian foreign minister Nesslerod portrayed them as to British and French diplomats, these demands represented an attempt (or at least were perceived as such) to broaden the interpretative scope of the preexisting international order (Richardson 1994, 72; Rich 1992, 108). If he could not get the Turks to agree to these points, Menshikov had the authority to sever diplomatic relations between the two states.¹⁸

Arriving in Constantinople at the very end of February, Menshikov immediately began to humiliate the Turks through numerous breaches in military and diplomatic protocol, which resulted in the resignation of the Turkish foreign minister.¹⁹ Despite these moves, both sides soon settled into a series of slow and intricate negotiations. The Turks impressed upon the British and French ambassadors, especially Stratford, the real nature of the Russian demands, and each ambassador called for his respective government to order their fleets to Constantinople.

Louis Napoleon responded by sending a fleet to the Greek island of Salamis, although there is no evidence that the movement was either intended as a direct threat to Russia or perceived as such at the time. He also tried to convince the British to take a comparable action, which would not only support the Ottomans in their rejection of the tsar's demands but also strengthen Anglo-French cooperation (Rich 1992, 108). As Richardson (1994, 92) surmises, "Napoleon's early decision to advance the fleet . . . was not so much

an attempt to ward off the perceived Russian threat as a bid to secure larger objectives." Aberdeen wanted to give more time for a diplomatic solution and thus refused to cooperate with the French, but the French action led to increasing calls by Palmerston and others for Britain to do more in support of the Ottomans.

British and French support encouraged strong Turkish resistance,²⁰ and in this context Nicholas informed Menshikov in mid-April that he should cut diplomatic ties with Turkey soon if an agreement was not reached, though the tsar did say that an agreement did not have to meet the original form of the Convention and did not have to be formalized in a treaty (Richardson 1994, 73). On May 5, Menshikov presented a proposed settlement that was somewhat less stringent than his original proposal and demanded that the Sultan agree to it in five days, though this deadline was soon extended by three days.

The Ottoman Grand Council rejected this settlement by a very large margin on May 17 and proposed their own series of counter-proposals. These were rejected by Menshikov, who was barely convinced by diplomats from the other European powers to remain for further negotiations, and he then offered a "diplomatic note" that sought to merely reaffirm traditional Russian rights and guarantee them in the future. Under no pressure from any of the European powers to agree to this settlement, the Ottomans quickly rejected it, offering instead a guarantee of only *spiritual* rights of the empire's Orthodox subjects. Menshikov, in turn, rejected this last offer on the grounds that it did not protect "the Church's other rights" that seemingly belied the widespread "suspicion that the Russian proposals would indeed threaten the Sultan's sovereignty and independence" (Richardson, 1994: 74). With negotiations at a standstill, Menshikov left Constantinople and severed Russo-Turkish relations at the end of May.

AFTERMATH OF THE MENSHIKOV MISSION

After the rejection of the Menshikov mission the tsar had the option of pressing his demands on Turkey, initiating military action, or withdrawing those demands. The tsar feared that the failure to take positive action would add diplomatic humiliation on top of a continuously worsening situation, while doing nothing to advance the aforementioned Russian interests. On a more personal level, Nicholas's arrogance and his perception of Russia as the leading power in Europe after 1848 surely worked against the possibility of this outcome (Wetzel 1985, 77). Acceptance of the status quo would therefore carry with prohibitively high, though intangible, costs.

Although the tsar recognized that unilateral military action against the Turks would have substantial diplomatic costs throughout the capitals of Eu-

rope, he nonetheless insisted on compliance with the Menshikov demands, and ordered Russian troops into the Ottoman principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in early July in hopes of obtaining a stronger bargaining position (Rich, 1992: 109). This action did not lead to a direct military confrontation, and Nicholas soon entered into a protracted series of negotiations in Vienna with Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Turkey over how to peacefully resolve the growing crisis.

By far the most pressing concern of the Turks after the Menshikov mission was that of the continued existence of the empire as a sovereign state. Beset for years by both foreign intrusions and domestic strife, the Porte found its position to be highly precarious. As discussed earlier, Turkish leaders believed that acceptance of excessively strict Russian demands would have the dual effect of inviting more unwanted foreign influence into domestic affairs while fomenting discord among the populace. As a result, the combination of external threats from Russia and increasing threats from within led to a major change in emphasis among Ottoman leaders, and they gave the assertion of their independence priority over the resolution of the dispute over the Holy Places" (Wetzel 1985, 55).

Although the Ottomans were willing to make nominal concessions to the Russians regarding the Holy Land question, as discussed below, they consistently objected to the specific language of any Russian proposed settlement, a point to which the Russians never seemed to have given too much thought (Goldfrank 1993, 213). The nature of Ottoman bargaining demands shows that they were resolute in their claims that any negotiated settlement involve as little "humiliation" as possible and that Russia return Moldavia and Wallachia to the Ottoman Empire.

For Nicholas, although a negotiated settlement that achieved his goals was certainly preferable to an all out war that served the same purposes, Nicholas was willing to consent to a negotiated solution *only if* the basic demands of the Menshikov mission were left intact by all parties involved. Thus a settlement offered by the Ottomans and supported by the British (the "Turkish ultimatum" of June 1853), which merely made reference to previous Ottoman concessions and promised the continuation of present Orthodox *spiritual* rights, was roundly rejected by Nesslerod with Nicholas's backing as being grossly insufficient in meeting Russia's interests (Wetzel 1985, 85-86; Rich 1985, 72).

THE VIENNA NOTE AND ITS MODIFICATIONS

A subsequent attempt to resolve the crisis through multilateral diplomacy, worked out in late July by all five European powers and spearheaded by

Austrian Chancellor Buol and the French minister Drouyn, resulted in the Vienna Note.²¹ This proposed settlement was based on the belief that the combined diplomatic efforts of Austria, Britain, France, and Prussia would lead to a negotiated outcome of the Russo-Turkish crisis (Rich 1992, 110–111).²² Specifically, the Vienna Note consisted of five major clauses (Goldfrank 1993, 196):

1. Professions of the Sultan's good will toward the tsar and affirmations of both sides' concern for the well being of the Ottoman Orthodox;
2. A promise that the "Sultan will remain faithful to the letter and the spirit of the stipulations of the treaties of Kuchuk-Kainarji and Andrianople relative to the protection of the Christian religion";
3. A promise "to cause the Greek rite to share in the advantages conceded to other Christian rites by convention or special disposition";
4. A reaffirmation of the recent settlement of the Holy Places with a promise to make no changes "without the prior understanding with the Governments of France and Russia and without any prejudice to the different Christian communities";
5. Grant to the Russians of the right to build the church and hospice in Jerusalem under protection of their consul-general.

Nicholas readily accepted the conditions of this negotiated settlement. As for the Ottomans, although the Porte was probably willing to agree to the final two points of the Vienna Note with some modifications, it found the rest of the stipulations too much to bear. The first point hinted at a merely bilateral agreement with Russia, the second was too close to the original demands of Menshikov, and the third lacked any reference to the Sultan's sovereignty over the subjects in question (Goldfrank 1993, 197). Ottoman leaders also objected to the fact that the Note did not make it explicit that "the privileges of the Orthodox church derived exclusively from voluntary concessions of the sultan and not from agreements with Russia" (Rich 1985, 77). More generally, they feared that the Russians would interpret the Note in a way that was strongly contrary to Ottoman interests and that would give Russia undue influence over the Ottoman affairs. Because of these concerns, and because they were confident that neither Britain nor France were willing to forcefully coerce Ottoman compliance, the Turks rejected the Vienna Note in late August.

The Ottoman position hardened further after a series of riots broke out in Constantinople, with popular demands for war with Russia. At the same time, many outlying European provinces that bordered Moldavia and Wallachia were in the initial stages of revolution with varying levels of Russian encour-

agement of the indigenous Orthodox population (Richardson 1994, 77; Schroeder 1972, 43). This only served to strengthen the Ottoman leadership's perception that unless the Russians made major concessions in their demands, including the immediate evacuation of the occupied principalities, there would be little, if any, grounds on which to compromise.

Although it had been agreed to beforehand that the Vienna Note could not be amended, the Porte sought to redress their complaints by sending the Russians a counterproposal, the "Modifications." The Porte was encouraged by the belief that even though France and Britain supported the Note, they would be unwilling to force it upon an unwilling Ottoman state and would not stand in the way of the offering of the Modifications (Rich 1985, 77; 1992, 111).

In his response, known as the *Examen*, Nicholas dismissed these "amendments" and basically proposed that all the powers in question reaffirm the Vienna Note. The tsar expected that the great powers would collectively pressure the Porte to accept the Vienna Note without modifications (Rich 1985, 79; 1992, 111). As Goldfrank (1993, 213) comments, "the Russians demanded 'pure and simple' adherence [to the Vienna Note] without any other conditions."

Given the continued Russian intransigence on certain key issues, the Ottomans came to the conclusion in late September that there was really nothing left to negotiate and found themselves in the position of either suffering what they perceived to be humiliating defeat at the hands of the Russian demands or initiating a war against a much larger, more powerful, and more modern state (Goldfrank 1993, 276). Although for Russia a negotiated settlement was in principle preferable to war, the realities of the fundamental differences between the Ottoman's demands and those of Russia rendered this outcome unacceptable to both. The Russians were wed to the Vienna Note and other certain demands while the Ottomans were not willing to budge from their concerns over issues of appearing to still hold complete independence over their own affairs. Even though each side made some concessions in hopes of reaching a peaceful solution to the crisis, neither was ultimately willing to compromise on certain key issues (Goldfrank 1993, 213). As Saab (1977, 92) argues, "One has the feeling that, by September 26, nothing less than the tsar's full acceptance of the amendments [to the Vienna Note]—and probably not even that—would have sufficed to preclude a Turkish declaration of war."

Given Nicholas' unwillingness to settle for an outcome that differed too greatly from his initial demands, and given the nature of the Porte's interests discussed below, further attempts at negotiations proved entirely ineffective. The "Olmütz Proposal" (or "Buol Project") of late September, which again asked for the maintenance of Russia's position of influence in the Holy

Lands, was dismissed by the Ottomans with the strong backing of the British (Rich 1985, 84–85). Finally, in early October the Sultan demanded the withdrawal of Russian forces from the Principalities within fifteen days. When Nicholas refused to reply to this demands, the Porte declared war on Russia on October 4 and began to attack Russian positions in the occupied Principalities and the Caucasus.

Saab (1977, 92) argues that there are two main immediate issues that led to the Turkish declaration of war. The first was Turkish leaders' growing fears of the domestic ramifications of what was popularly viewed as increasing Russian influence over the Ottomans' Orthodox Christian population. This concern about Russian encroachment fueled fears of domestic instability and revolution, which could lead to the collapse of the Ottoman regime. Secondly, Turkish leaders were hopeful that Britain would intervene against Russia in a Russo-Turkish war. Other contributing factors were the Porte's "serious overestimation" of their own military capabilities and a desire to obtain some benefits for having already mobilized its military. Whatever the precise mix of its causes, the Ottoman declaration of war against a far stronger Russia entailed considerable risk, because the Porte risked a devastating defeat that could ultimately lead to the collapse of the entire empire.

The important question in regard to Russian preferences becomes that of whether Nicholas would have continued to press his claims if he knew that they would result in war with the Ottomans and eventually also with Britain and France. There is little doubt that Nicholas preferred a settlement on his terms over the acceptance of the deteriorating Russian position in Constantinople and the Holy Lands. However, there is disagreement among historians as to whether or not he preferred the acceptance of the status quo over a dyadic or general war. If it came down to a question of acquiescing in the status quo or entering into a dyadic conflict with the Ottomans that was not expected to spread, most observers would probably agree that given Nicholas's view of Russian strength vis-à-vis the Ottomans, the tsar would rather fight a highly winnable war than give up their interests (Schroeder 1972, 42).²³

If the decision, though, was one between accepting the status quo (or anything too far short of the original Menshikov demands) or fighting a major war against Britain and France many scholars would claim that Nicholas preferred the status quo ex ante to a general war. Richardson (1994, 93–94) claims that the tsar greatly misperceived both Ottoman resolve and British and French support for this unwillingness to settle on Russian terms. As such, Nicholas found himself in an undesirable position in late 1853 when war with Britain and France seemed imminent. Peterson (1993) echoes this point in asserting that although Nicholas started with hard-line bargaining tactics, this was part of a strategy to demonstrate resolve before shifting—as he had

planned all along—to more conciliatory behavior to help secure a settlement.²⁴ The escalation of the crisis to a war with the Ottoman Empire allied with Britain and France was, in this view, unintended by Nicholas. Curtiss (1979, 174, 200) also claims that Nicholas did not want a wider war and offered up many concessions to prevent one once it became clear that a major war was on the horizon.

In these views, which often build heavily on Schroeder's (1972) work, Nicholas's actions lead to an unexpected and unwanted outcome. Even though Nicholas believed that his forces clearly dominated those of the Sultan and preferred war over giving up his demands as long as that war was thought to be only another Russo-Turkish conflict, Nicholas at first found a wider war with Britain and France to be "impossible" and, if it occurred, possibly unwinnable (Schroeder 1972, 42). The implication of this sort of argument would seemingly lead us to the conclusion that had Nicholas known that his uncompromising bargaining stance would lead to a major war he would have softened his demands and accepted an outcome similar to the status quo rather than that of a war against Britain and France.²⁵

Yet it is not enough to assert that "Nicholas did not want a war" (Curtiss 1979, 174). This statement may be true but only to the extent that most political leaders would rather not incur the costs of war if their interests could be satisfied some other way. By the last four months of 1853, Nicholas faced a situation where the only way that he could achieve his goals in the Ottoman Empire and Holy Lands was to risk the costs of war with the Ottomans and perhaps Britain and France. He may not have expected a major war throughout the fall and winter of 1853. Indeed, given the Ottomans' marked position of military inferiority, it is most likely that Nicholas would have agreed with Rich's (1992, 111) claim that "the four-power agreement on the Vienna Note and its acceptance by Russia should have ended the Near Eastern crisis, for it is inconceivable that the Turks, no matter how fanatic or bellicose, should have rejected the demands of the great powers and risked a war against a European coalition." However, neither the Russian diplomatic position, discussed earlier, nor its military actions seem all that geared to avoiding a conflict if it meant substantially surrendering Russian interests.

While the original Russian plan was to avoid serious engagements and hope to defeat the Porte diplomatically, the early Ottoman attacks forced the Russians to change their strategy (Saab 1977, 24), and Nicholas adopted a military strategy that was more geared toward a quick military victory than toward a more restrained military effort designed to facilitate a military settlement. As Goldfrank (1993, 228) writes, Nicholas was effectively faced with four military options. Russian forces could "remain completely on the defensive," "counterattack with great restraint," "counterattack vigorously on several fronts," or

attack on many fronts and support rebellions in the Ottoman's Balkan territories. If Nicholas had preferred another outcome to a major war (either the status quo or a negotiated settlement that entailed major concessions in the initial Russian demands), we would have expected the tsar to have chosen a strategy that would have minimized the possibility of British-French intervention, such as one of the first two options. Nicholas, though, decided on an extremely provocative strategy similar to the fourth one listed above. Thus by at least December, the Russians were hoping for quick military defeat of the Ottomans (Saab 1977, 117).

The tsar ordered a series of devastating counterattacks on the Ottoman army in Moldavia and Wallachia. He also issued a set of very belligerent orders to his Black Sea fleet commander, Admiral Menshikov. The orders, much to the admiral's dismay, were to attack any and all Ottoman ships, disrupt Ottoman communications along the coast, draw the Ottoman battle fleet out and destroy it, and "treat any British or French ships in the Black Sea as enemy vessels" (Goldfrank 1993, 229). A Russian leader who preferred the peaceful status quo to major war would not seemingly order the destruction of the entire Ottoman fleet and the opening of hostilities with British and French warships, especially when all evidence pointed to the high probability that this second action would lead to the expansion of the war (Goldfrank 1993, 220, 224, 272). These actions of Nicholas revealed his preference for war over the status quo.

The first months of the war went extremely poorly for the Turks, as they suffered a series of devastating setbacks. Their attacks into Wallachia and Moldavia were often quickly and painfully repulsed, many times by smaller Russian units. The Turks suffered a more serious defeat at sea, when their entire Turkish Black Sea fleet, save for the two and three deck flag ships, was destroyed by the Russians off the port city of Sinope on November 30, 1853. The annihilation of the Turkish fleet at Sinope virtually guaranteed Russian domination of the Black Sea. Its political impact was even more profound, however, as it inflamed British public opinion and in doing so significantly increased the probability of British intervention in the war.

There has been much speculation that the Porte did not necessarily view the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Sinope as contrary to its interests, and that the Porte may have actually lured the Russians into taking that action in order to inflame Western opinion and bring Britain and France into the war on its side. The Turkish fleet was in an extremely exposed position at Sinope, too close to the eager Russian fleet in the Crimea and too far away from their flag ships in Constantinople, which were left behind at the behest of the British (Goldfrank 1993, 241). In addition, although the fleet was nominally on a mission to resupply troops in the Caucasus that had just taken a Russian

fort, it in fact did little more than lie at the Sinope port, uninvolved in any major activity (Rich 1992, 112). Furthermore, once word of the advancing Russian fleet reached the Ottoman admiral, Osman Pasha, he sent an urgent request back to his superiors alerting them of the fleet's dire position (Wetzel 1985, 94). There was no reply to his warning. Although it is questionable whether any action could have been taken to save the fleet at that time, the point is that there is no indication that Ottoman leaders took any significant action upon receiving the warning.

This circumstantial evidence leads Goldfrank (1993, 241) to conclude that "the real Turkish aim was to acquire prestige [by having their foray go unchallenged] or provoke the Russians to force the hands of Britain and France [by meeting a disastrous defeat]." Similarly, Rich (1992, 112) concludes that the nature of the Ottoman actions here and elsewhere were strange enough to provoke the strong suspicion that "every sortie of the Turkish fleet was a deliberate provocative act to lure the Russians out of their defensive posture and provoke Anglo-French intervention." Saab (1977, 113) writes that "one is tempted to wonder whether the Porte deliberately provoked a catastrophe," and "perhaps the Porte was trying to force a decision, but not a disaster."

Though this is a plausible interpretation, the evidence is not strong enough to support it with absolute confidence, and there have been enough instances of military blunders by the Turks to make that interpretation a viable one in this case. Still, given the Western powers' earlier refusal to force a settlement on the Turks, and given the Porte's understanding of British and French interests, Turkish leaders had good reason to believe that Britain and France would intervene militarily on the side of the Ottomans if the situation began to deteriorate. British public opinion was already vehemently anti-Russian, and many important officials in and out of the Cabinet (e.g., Palmerston and Stratford) were calling for intervention before Sinope (Rich 1992, 108). Napoleon III, while not as desirous of a war as some of the British, was also growing very frustrated with the Russians and was increasingly willing to follow the British lead into war. These indications came on top of the aforementioned British and French unwillingness to force a negotiated settlement among the Ottomans.

Thus even without the devastating result at Sinope, there existed the strong possibility that the Turks would eventually be joined by the British and the French. The Porte's confidence in British and French support greatly strengthened its resolve in the standoff with Russia. British Prime Minister Aberdeen may have best summed up Turkish preferences in his statement that "it would be absurd to suppose that, with the hopes of active assistance from England and France, they [the Turks] should not be desirous of engaging in a conflict with their formidable neighbor. They never had such a favorable opportunity before and may never have again" (quoted in Rich 1992, 112).

In addition to these international concerns over the defeat at Sinope, Turkish leaders also faced enormous domestic pressures to take a harder line against Russia following the naval disaster. The eruption of severe rioting in Constantinople led to many calls for "revenge attacks" on Russian forces. The pressure for increased action was so great one of the leading "doves" within the Porte claimed that "public indignation has been so universally aroused by the manner in which the Russians behaved at Sinope that war has become inevitable" (quoted in Saab 1977, 127). However, most Turkish officials realized that continued unilateral action without the support of Britain and France "was a suicidal program" (Saab 1977, 119, 127–128). The Porte eventually decided on a strategy of nominally continuing negotiations with Russia while increasing diplomatic efforts to get Britain and France involved in the crisis.

Although formal negotiations continued into late 1853 and even though each side made some concessions in hopes of reaching a peaceful solution to the crisis on their own terms, given their respective interests and constraints, neither Nicholas nor the Porte was ultimately willing to compromise on certain key issues. A major war, while not the most preferred outcome of either, was seen as a favorable alternative by both sides to what other outcomes could be reached. As Curtiss (1979, 225) writes of the final rounds of 1853, "quite possibly the differences between the Russians and the Turkish proposals might have been compromised, if the desire had existed."

All of this reinforces the argument that the Porte preferred war with Russia, given a fairly high probability of British and French support and intervention, to the acceptance of a negotiated settlement on Russian terms that could only be humiliating to the Porte.

In France, Napoleon preferred, for domestic reasons, a negotiated settlement such as the Vienna Note over war as a way of resolving the crises. But the Ottoman rejection of the Note surprised him and left him in an extremely tenuous position, for he could not easily withdraw support from Constantinople (Richardson 1992, 75; Goldfrank 1993, 207). Such an action would gravely endanger Turkish security, undermine constraints on expanding Russian power, and anger many British leaders (Richardson 1994, 85). Although Louis Napoleon had up to this point been ahead of Britain in actions in support of the Turks, in Britain the rising tide of public indignation over Russian actions had led the Aberdeen government to take a much harder line in support of the Porte than Napoleon would have liked (Saab 1977, 133). Though the French ruler would have been willing to support the essence of the Vienna Note, even after the Modifications in the "Ulmus" proposal, he refused to break with British leaders for fear of offending his only ally (Richardson 1994, 92, 85).

Thus while realizing the possible domestic risks of war, Napoleon followed the provocative lead of Britain. As Goldfrank (1993, 272–73) argues, the "escalated Anglo-French goals were essentially British ones," and Napoleon was willing to engage in coercive diplomacy and, if necessary, join Turkey in war British support or cooperation. As Richardson (1994: 93) states, "France recognized and accepted some risk of war in its escalatory policies, preferring a settlement but tied to the alliance with Britain."

THE VIEW FROM LONDON

The Aberdeen cabinet, like the rest of the British government, was deeply divided over the Eastern Question following the Menshikov mission. Beyond a general interest in keeping Constantinople from falling under Russian control and in preserving the status quo, opinion was basically split between two groups (Richardson 1994, 83; Lambert 1990, xx).²⁶ Palmerston (the Home Secretary), Stratford (the British ambassador in Constantinople), and Russell (the foreign secretary and leader of the Commons) quickly jumped to the forefront of those who advocated an extremely belligerent policy toward Russia almost immediately following the initial Russian demands on the Porte.

Clarendon, who followed Russell as foreign secretary, initially took a conciliatory view of the Russian actions in the spring of 1853, but he soon began to swing over to Palmerston's position as domestic pressure started to demand action against Russia in support of the Ottoman Empire (Peterson 1993, 117). On the other side of the argument, Prime Minister Aberdeen, occasionally joined by Clarendon early on, led a coalition of Peelites and discontented Tories and Conservatives in the effort to accommodate Nicholas's interests in the Turkey and Palestine. Due to these differences, "the British government was unable to formulate a coherent objective" and "improvised from stage to stage" (Richardson 1994, 83, 84). As such, we examine the preference orders of each of the four most influential leaders in Britain, show how British policy reflected these differences, and describe how Aberdeen's position began to move toward that of Palmerston and his supporters.

Although Palmerston and other leaders were always vaguely concerned about possible Russian inroads into British interests and allies, there was little concern among these officials about the growing crisis until after the Menshikov mission. Palmerston was then quick to condemn the stringency of the Russian demands and its perceived devious designs on the Ottoman Empire and aligned himself on the side of a British public opinion that had grown fanatically anti-Russian in recent years (Rich 1992, 108). Russell likewise wa:

alarmed by Russia's highly coercive actions and concluded that Russia was a growing threat that had to be resisted (Peterson 1993, 120).

The question is to what extent were Palmerston and others willing to resist continued Russian pressure and coercive tactics. Palmerston and Russell interpreted early Russian demands as the first step of a strategy to destroy the Ottoman Empire, regarded Russian actions as a *casus belli*, and argued for a fleet to be sent to join French warships in the Aegean (Lambert 1990, 16–17; Peterson 1993, 119). Although this recommendation was voted down by the Cabinet, throughout the rest of the spring and summer Palmerston and Russell led the push to both embolden Ottoman resolve and to coordinate fleet maneuvers with the French. In late May they convinced Aberdeen to allow the fleet to sail to the Dardanelles with the French (Lambert 1990, 21). The invasion of Moldavia and Wallachia further disturbed Palmerston, leading him to propose sending a British fleet to the Black Sea to enforce the peace but was again outvoted at the time. Palmerston also advocated “open military aid to Turkey” and played on the growing discontent of British public opinion and press to support his vision of a Constantinople free of Russian influence (Goldfrank 1993, 236, 275).

While Palmerston supported a diplomatic resolution in principle and while there is no evidence that he took any action to deliberately spark a war, he actually had little interest in defusing the crisis. As Lambert (1990, 44) writes, Palmerston “spoke a different language from his colleagues, more concerned with the realities of power than the niceties of diplomacy.” Rich (1992, 112) quotes him as saying “our course is plain, simple and straight: we must help Turkey out of her difficulties by negotiation if possible; and that if negotiation fails, we must, by force of arms, carry her safely through her dangers.” Beginning with the Ottoman rejection of the Vienna Note, Palmerston—who perceived that Russian intentions rendered the status quo impossible, a negotiated settlement extremely unlikely, and war nearly inevitable—worked exclusively to push his plans for British and French military involvement in the crisis to forcefully resist Russian aggression rather than risk an Ottoman total defeat at the hands of the Russians.

Russell, being only slightly less bellicose than Palmerston, was willing to give negotiations a chance at success even after the invasion of the Principalities. Along with Clarendon, Russell worked throughout the summer to dissuade the Porte from declaring a potentially disastrous dyadic war (Lambert 1990, 43). Yet while both more or less supported the basic outline of the Vienna Note as a way to perhaps resolve the crises, neither was willing to force Ottoman compliance. For Russell and others, even though the Ottoman refusal to comply with the Note was frustrating, given their perception of Russian designs they could not easily withdrawal support from Constantinople.

“It was easy to talk of withdrawing Russian support” from the Ottomans, as Lambert (1990, 47) writes, “but that would not make Constantinople any less of a British interest. Having recognized the independence of Turkey as an issue to be defended, the Turks had to be supported once the Russians crossed the Danube.”

Russell thus quickly moved in line with Palmerston in believing that an acceptable negotiated settlement was impossible and that the choice was increasingly being reduced to that of either supporting or abandoning the Ottomans in a Russian war. As the battle off of Sinope made painfully clear, a Russo-Turkish war was almost certainly bound to end badly for the Porte, thereby leaving Constantinople and the rest of the region open to Russian influence. Faced with the choice between this likely outcome of a dyadic war and the potential benefits of a major war, Russell preferred the later.

Clarendon probably also had this ordering of preferences (from best to worst): the status quo, “acceptable” negotiated settlement, major war, and Russo-Turkish war. However, the process by which he arrived at this ordering differed from that of Palmerston and Russell, who were motivated by a mounting fear of Russian intentions for the Ottoman Empire, with Palmerston harboring a deep-seated loathing of anything Russian. Clarendon did not perceive that the Russian demands put forth by Menshikov directly threatened British interests. Indeed, Clarendon supported Aberdeen in opposing Palmerston's initial call for the Mediterranean fleet to join the French fleet at Greece immediately following the Menshikov demands in mid-March (Peterson 1993, 119).

By May, though, public opinion in Britain became even more increasingly anti-Russian as the Menshikov mission dragged on and Russian demands did not soften. Around this point, Clarendon began to shift his position from that of Aberdeen to one that was between the prime minister and Palmerston in recognition of this growing domestic pressure (Peterson, 1993, 119, 122). He continued to support various attempts at negotiation with Russia and constraint of the Ottomans. Yet as public opinion turned decidedly against conciliation with the tsar during the summer, Clarendon began to drift ever closer to Palmerston's calls for action and supported sending the fleet to the Aegean.

By the time of the Vienna Note, Clarendon, though willing in principle to support the settlement, was not willing to force Ottoman compliance. He argued that “we cannot press the Turks too hard about the Note because public opinion would be against it, and secondly, because they would fight it out single-handed” (quoted in Peterson 1993, 126). Additionally, he stated that “. . . if any Russian attack were made upon Turkey that our fleet might have prevented, we never should have heard the end of it” (quoted in Peterson

1993, 126–127). As Schroeder (1972, 65) claims, Clarendon was increasingly willing to acquiesce to Palmerston and public pressure, and he had begun to withdraw support for the Vienna Note even before the *Examen*, which the British as well as the Russians described as the “Violent Interpretation.”²⁷ However, the Russian rejection of the Modifications did have the effect of solidifying anti-Russian popular opinion and perhaps even altering Clarendon’s preference for a negotiated settlement (Goldfrank 1992, 211–212, 214).

While believing that a negotiated settlement with Russia was theoretically possible as late as October, Clarendon conceded that “the public thinks that there is nothing to do but to declare war on Russia” (quoted in Peterson 1993, 128). Thus while Clarendon did not fully believe that the Russian demands, no matter how they were construed, represented a dire threat to British interests he felt slowly pressured into adopting a position nearly as bellicose as Palmerston and Russell. Under domestic pressure, he joined with Palmerston and Russell in rejecting the Ulmus proposal, the last serious chance at peace. In the last week of September he wrote “All hope of negotiation appears now to be at an end. . . . The only real likelihood now is war” (quoted in Rich 1985, 84). He soon finally gave support to the sending of the entire British Mediterranean fleet, along with that of France, directly to Constantinople in early October. By the fall of 1853 Clarendon’s preferences matched those of Russell and Palmerston, even though Clarendon’s shifting position had its origins in domestic rather than international concerns.

Aberdeen’s position on British foreign interests vis-à-vis the Menshikov demands were nearly the exact opposite of those of Palmerston. Whereas, each day of the Menshikov mission convinced Palmerston of an ever-growing Russian threat and of the need to support France in providing aid to the Turks no matter what the consequences, the prime minister thought that the initial Russian demands on the Porte were somewhat reasonable and limited and was more concerned about good relations with Nicholas than with Napoleon (Lambert 1990, 17, 20). Even though Aberdeen thought the later demands lodged by Menshikov were “unreasonable and ought to be resisted,” he still did not think of them as a cause of war. With Clarendon’s initial support, Aberdeen was able to resist Palmerston and Russell’s calls for immediate naval action. Furthermore, while Palmerston viewed the occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia with alarm, Aberdeen felt that the invasion of these principalities was an act of war (Lambert 1990, 43). At this stage, Clarendon began to drift toward Palmerston and voted to send the fleet to Ottoman waters in the Aegean, a move that severely isolated Aberdeen and emboldened the Ottomans.

The prime minister still favored a negotiated settlement to the outbreak of war, either dyadic or major, although he felt that due to international and do-

mestic circumstances the crisis was “drifting fast towards war” (quoted in Palmerston 1993, 121). Yet while under increasing domestic pressure, again believing that Russian demands were reasonable and limited, Aberdeen felt that the Vienna Note brought the crises to a satisfying conclusion for all concerned (Lambert 1990, 45). Without the support of his own cabinet or domestic opinion, however, he could do little to enforce this on the Ottomans. Under attack from an increasingly belligerent public and press, and beset by mounting opposition and threats of resignation within the Cabinet, Aberdeen found himself virtually alone in his own policy preference (Peterson 1993, 124, 126–127). Unable to change the public, the press, or his ministers’ minds, Aberdeen was forced to order the British fleet up the Dardanelles to the Bosphorus even though he was not convinced that British interests demanded it.

The Russian victory at Sinope was the final straw that unalterably forced a change in Aberdeen’s preference ordering. Word of the battle, soon dubbed a “massacre” by the British press, arrived in London at the end of November and served to push public opinion into war frenzy. The press and public demanded, as Lord of the Admiralty Graham observed, “a desire to avenge what is regarded as a contempt and defiance of our flags” (quoted in Peterson 1993, 128). Palmerston resigned in protest and Russell threatened to do so himself.

Against this backdrop, continued support of a negotiated settlement that would not thoroughly humiliate the Russians would be political suicide. The British government, like all European powers, faced the choice of either lending military support to the Porte or acquiescing to total Russian victory (Saab, 1977, 117). British domestic politics made the latter position untenable. In contrast to France, where the Ottoman defeats caused little concern for the public and Napoleon, in Britain many ministers who privately were not all that troubled by Sinope were “overwhelmed” by public call for action (Saab 1977, 126). Thus, by December Aberdeen’s “soft-line” position was so discredited at home that he could no longer realistically pursue a feasible diplomatic compromise. Faced with the options of either slowly committing Britain to a war with Russia or of refusing to enter into a conflict in which he did not believe, Aberdeen choose the former because he “could not survive compromise” (Peterson 1993, 129).

By the end of 1853, Aberdeen ordered the British fleet in the Dardanelles to sail though the Bosphorus to join a French fleet in the Black Sea. The fleet’s orders were to “sweep Russian shipping from the Black Sea, protect Turkish vessels, and guard the coasts and seaboard of the Ottoman Empire from Russian attack” (Rich 1992, 112). The British informed Russia that if any of their ships were caught out of harbor, they would be seized and sunk. Nicholas

while not immediately viewing the mere introduction of the fleets as a *casus belli*, severed diplomatic relations in early February of 1854 after it became clear that the fleets' purpose was to hinder Russian movements (Saab 1977, 131–2). Aberdeen sent a joint ultimatum with Napoleon III to Nicholas in late February demanding Russian withdrawal of Moldavia and Wallachia by May that went unanswered. On March 28, 1854 Britain and France each declared war on Russia.

CONCLUSION

The preceding narrative demonstrates that there were numerous instances where state leaders could have settled their disputes short of war, if they had the desire to do so. Both the tsar and the Porte had the opportunity to reach an agreement during the lengthy negotiations leading up to the war, and both Britain and France could have left the Turks to their fate in a war with Russia. Yet given their states' interests and the climate of public opinion, all political leaders had incentives, whether international or domestic (in the case of Britain and the Ottoman Empire), to fight a major war rather than reach a negotiated settlement. There were misperceptions, true, but no more so than in many crises that are settled peacefully, and it would be misleading to conclude, as many historians have, that the primary cause of the war was the blunders and incompetence of political leaders.

Our interpretation is similar to that advanced by Rich (1992, 103), who argues that although the origins of the Crimean War were complicated,

the war was not an accident, the result of bungling incompetence or misunderstanding on the part of the statesmen involved, although all of them can be charged with serious miscalculations. Yet rarely in history has a war been preceded by so lengthy a period of diplomatic crisis which provided time for passions to cool and statesmen to settle their differences at the conference table; and rarely in history were so many sincere and vigorous efforts made by responsible leaders of the great powers to arrange a compromise settlement throughout the period of prewar crisis and the entire course of the war itself.

Efforts to preserve or restore peace through negotiation failed because there were statesmen in Europe who did not want them to succeed, who were dedicated to the breakup of the existing international order or who were not content to halt Russian expansion but who wanted to eliminate the Russian threat permanently.

Saab (1977, 156) makes a similar argument:

If things had gone according to pattern, the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire that broke out on Oct 4, 1853 should have run its course as a symbolic

bloodletting, after which the four great powers would have been able to step in and impose, or at least ratify, a negotiated solution. The fact that things went otherwise implies that these other European powers, although they did not plan war, nonetheless had reasons for wanting it.

How does this interpretation fit with our original hypothesis about the causes of the Crimean War? Recall that we began by contrasting a non-rationalist crisis mismanagement perspective with two rationalist perspectives, one involving a direct conflict of interests and a preference for war over peace by one or more state leaders, and the other involving a social dilemma in which leaders who preferred peace to war were nonetheless induced by the structure of the situation into a series of choices that led down the path to war. Our initial conjecture was that the Crimean War was not the result of the mismanagement of the crisis by blundering statesmen, but instead the consequence of rational political leaders attempting to maximize their interests under severe structural constraints, resulting in unwanted outcomes.

We have concluded that most state leaders in the Crimean crisis behaved reasonably rationally in pursuit of their interests but that their interests were fundamentally irreconcilable and that some leaders were consciously willing to take the risks of securing their interests through force. Unlike the July 1914 crisis, in which all of the major actors preferred a negotiated peace to a general war yet ended up in a general war, there was no comparable dilemma in the Crimean crisis. This conclusion is consistent with our general rationalist hypothesis but inconsistent with our hypothesis that the escalation to war was driven more by a structure of choice resembling a social dilemma than by a direct conflict of interests alone.

ANALYTICAL REFLECTIONS

Some might conclude that our study has been unsuccessful because our empirical analysis failed to confirm our specific rationalist hypothesis. Quite to the contrary, by rejecting one hypothesized interpretation and suggesting that the evidence is more consistent with an alternative hypothesis, we have taken a useful step toward a greater understanding of the outbreak of the Crimean War and its relevance for theories of crisis management. As the philosopher Karl Popper (1962) argues, all science proceeds through an iterative sequence of "conjectures and refutations," in which theory leads to empirical tests, which in turn lead to modifications of the theory, new tests, and so on. Popper also argued that there is a fundamental asymmetry between confirmation and falsification, and that we can be more confident in demonstrating that something is false than in demonstrating that something is true.

Scientists approach truth indirectly by establishing what is false and, through an iterative process of conjectures and refutations, continually narrowing the range of possibilities as to what might be true. This conception of science applies to the social world as well as to the physical and biological worlds.

Decision Point 3: *How do we determine whether the rejection of a given hypothesis makes for the support for another hypothesis that is different from the one rejected?*

We should also emphasize that while we have rejected the crisis mismanagement interpretation, we have not fully confirmed an alternative interpretation based on a direct conflict of interests between leaders who preferred war to a negotiated settlement. Part of the reason for this asymmetry in our case is that the confirmation or falsification of the alternative hypothesis requires some new information that did not emerge in the conduct of our original empirical analysis. Any empirical analysis, quantitative or case study, is guided, implicitly if not explicitly, by certain theoretical questions, which lead the analyst to look for certain kinds of data and not other kinds of data. In a second cut at this analysis we would focus on a slightly different set of theoretical questions, and that would lead us to collect new kinds of data that would better facilitate the confirmation or disconfirmation of our new hypothesis.

In guiding us to empirically rank order actors' preferences over a small number of possible outcomes, for example, our framework did not focus enough on bargaining between actors and whether there was some intermediate outcome that each might have preferred to war. The failure to identify these intermediate outcomes made it more difficult to rank order states' preferences over different conceivable outcomes of the crisis. Our discussion of the Vienna Note, the *Examen*, and the Ulmus Proposal highlighted the dynamic nature of the crisis bargaining that preceded the war. While each side wanted a negotiated settlement in principle, none was willing to make enough concessions to fully satisfy the other actors due to a variety of reasons. Modeling the situation as a simple binary choice for Russia and the Ottoman Empire (which would lead to one outcome *or* the other) fails to take into account these complications.²⁸ A more satisfactory test of our conflict of interests hypothesis would give much more attention to the bargaining process at key decision points and focus on the question of why the parties could not agree to some intermediate outcome at each of these points.

Decision Point 4: *We focused on the relationship between preferences and choices, but how do we deal with change? (You may want to look at chapters in the Maoz/Mor book on enduring rivalries that deals with preference change, and with the case studies).*

A much more serious limitation in the application of the model in this case was its inability to deal with the change in British preferences over strategies following the Turkish defeat at Sinope. In contrast to the World War I case, where leaders' preferences over outcomes were constant throughout the crisis, so that changes in behavior could be traced to changes in information about the likely behavior of others, the preferences of British leaders changed soon after the strong public response to the "massacre" at Sinope. Our simple model did not take this into account. The political consequences of Sinope basically served as an "exogenous" shock to the system.²⁹ Had Tsar Nicholas known that his decision to press his demands on the Porte would have resulted in the British and French entry into the war, it is questionable, as discussed earlier, whether he would have taken such actions. Additionally, had Aberdeen known that the regional Russo-Turkish war would draw in Britain, it is possible that he would have applied more pressure on the Porte to reach a settlement before the outbreak of hostilities. Failing to take this "shock" into account, our simple model cannot adequately illuminate the dynamics of the crisis leading to the Crimean War.

Knowledge about the social world has many different dimensions, and any given methodology contributes more to some dimensions of knowledge than to others. Our analytically-organized case study of the outbreak of the Crimean War has shed considerable light on the relative impact of crisis mismanagement in one particular historical episode. This is an important contribution in itself and one for which single case studies are particularly well suited. The organization of this case study around a particular set of theoretical concepts has helped to structure the questions we asked of the case and consequently sharpen the analysis, and for the purposes of understanding a particular episode a theoretically-organized case study is generally superior to a more inductive case study that begins with a minimum level of theoretical guidance and allows the facts to "speak for themselves."³⁰ With this advantage in explaining an individual historical episode comes a rather serious cost, however, and that is the inability to generalize from this particular case to the broader universe of phenomena that we want to explain—in this instance crisis management and mismanagement. This is an important limitation, because most social scientists believe that constructing and testing theoretical

generalizations valid across cases is their primary goal (Levy 2001). Large-N statistical studies are usually more advantageous for the purposes of generalizing, but that advantage usually comes at the cost of a less complete and nuanced explanation of behavior in any individual case.³¹

Although we have few grounds for arguing that the patterns we have identified in the Crimean War are typical of those in other international crises—and in fact our initial comparison with World War I suggests that the patterns in these two cases probably differ—it is important to point out that our selection of the Crimean War case does provide a limited amount of leverage on the broader theoretical question. As we emphasized earlier, the conventional historical wisdom suggests that the Crimean War was basically inadvertent, driven by misperceptions, blunders, and mismanagement of the crisis by political leaders. Given this backdrop, if we can show that the failure of political leaders to effectively manage the Crimean crisis derived primarily from a conflict of interests rather than blunders, and that given their interests and the likely outcome of negotiation one or more political leaders had no incentive to manage the crisis, we will have a limited basis for generalizing about other instances of conflict management. If a case that most analysts put in a “crisis mismanagement” category actually fits in a different category, the implication is that we should take a very serious look at other cases usually categorized as ones of crisis mismanagement.³²

Thus one broader implication of our analysis of the Crimean War is that an important task for future research is the analysis of other historical cases of conflict management, particularly those thought to involve crisis mismanagement. Moreover, it would be useful to organize such additional case studies around an analytic framework comparable to the one employed here, one that focuses on the preferences of state leaders, the internal and external constraints on their choices, and the information available to them (or potentially available with reasonable effort), and to ask whether these general factors are sufficient to explain state behavior and the outcome of the crisis.

NOTES

1. For the best conceptualization and application of the crisis mismanagement and inadvertent war model, see George (1991).

2. Recent research has challenged this interpretation (Fischer 1967; Levy 1990/1991; Trachtenberg 1990/1991).

3. Although Austria maintained its neutrality during the Crimean War, its vacillation angered the Western powers and its threats alienated Russia, so that Austria was left without major power allies in her coming struggles against revolutionary forces in Italy and against the growing power of Prussia.

4. Technically, misperceptions do not necessarily represent nonrational behavior. The social world is complex, there are inherent limits in our ability to make exact (or “point”) predictions, and usually the best we can do is to accurately estimate the probabilities of various outcomes. Low-probability outcomes do occasionally occur, and such an unlikely outcome does not make the decision in question a nonrational one. On the ambiguity of the concept of misperception see Jervis (1976, chap. 1) and Levy (1983).

5. In a prisoners’ dilemma game with two players, each of whom has the choice of either cooperating with its adversary or not cooperating (“defecting”), each player prefers the outcome of mutual cooperation to that of mutual noncooperation. (An outcome is the result of the decisions or strategies by both players.) The best outcome for each actor, however, involves “defecting” while its adversary plays the “sucker” and continues to cooperate, while the worst outcome is playing the sucker oneself. Thus no matter what one player expects the other will do, each is better off defecting rather than cooperating. As a result, individually rational behavior (defection) leads to an outcome (mutual noncooperation) that is socially nonrational—in that it is not optimal for the two players taken together, who would each prefer the mutual cooperation outcome. Hence the dilemma. Technically, in a prisoners’ dilemma game the conflictual outcome is unwanted but not unexpected and hence not inadvertent. Nonmyopic decision makers should be able to anticipate the kind of structurally induced noncooperation that emerges in Prisoners’ dilemma games, so that the outcome is not really unexpected.

A somewhat simpler formulation is the “security dilemma,” in which actions taken by states to increase their security (arms buildups, alliances, etc.) lead their adversaries to feel threatened and to respond in ways that are perceived to be threatening. The result is a “conflict spiral” or action-reaction process involving ever-higher levels of threat and response (Jervis 1976, chap. 3). This dynamic can be driven by purely rational responses to a threatening situation, though they can also be exacerbated by poor judgments and emotional responses. For a good treatment of Prisoners’ dilemma models and their relevance for international relations see Russett (1983). For surveys of the leading theories of the causes of war see Vasquez (1993) and Levy (2002a).

6. This is Levy’s (1990/1991) interpretation. Fischer (1967) argues that Germany preferred a continental war to a war in the Balkans, but the difference is inconsequential for our purposes.

7. A key difference between Levy (1990/1991) and Trachtenberg (1990/1991) is that Levy argues that German political leaders were quite uncertain as to British intentions while Trachtenberg argues that German leaders recognized the likelihood that Britain would enter the war.

8. Political scientists usually use the term “hypothesis” to refer to a theoretical generalization that is valid across cases, bound only by theoretically specified scope conditions. Here we use the term to refer to our initial conjecture as to the proper interpretation of a single historical case. On differences between political scientists and historians in their analysis of international relations see Levy (2001).

9. Note that preferences refer to preferences over the likely outcomes of the crisis, not preferences over particular strategies for achieving those outcomes or preferences over choices at a given decision point.

10. This approach is closely related to the more formalized methodology of "analytic narratives" (Bates et al. 1998). For useful discussions of case study methodology see Eckstein (1975), Lijphart (1975), Ragin (1987), Levy (2002b), Maoz (2002), Bennett and George (forthcoming).

11. This "verificationist" epistemology is widely accepted in social science. Some interpretivists make the distinction between explanation and understanding, reject a verificationist epistemology, and argue that the goal of "understanding" what happens in a particular case does not require the formal "testing" of an hypothesized interpretation (Hopf 2000). We reject that view and argue that any theoretical proposition or hypothesized interpretation must remain open to falsification, though we acknowledge the extensive debate over the proper criteria for falsification (Popper 1959; Lakatos 1970). We define falsification broadly to include Bayesian epistemology, in which evidence does not lead to the acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis but rather to an increase or decrease in the confidence that one has in the validity of the hypothesis (Jeffrey 1992).

12. This is not to say that all knowledge comes through science, but only that scientific knowledge is based on falsifiable theories, hypotheses, and interpretations.

13. We acknowledge that the line between rational and nonrational behavior is not always easy to establish in practice, in part because of different conceptions of rationality (March 1978).

14. An international crisis is usually defined to include a significant probability of war, which usually includes mutual military threats. Neither side made any such threats before the end of the Menshikov mission. The Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996) identifies 31 May 1853, the day the mission officially ended, as the beginning of the militarized interstate dispute (involving the threat of force or show of force by one party) between Russia and Turkey.

15. On possible explanations for Nicholas's misperceptions, see Richardson (1994, 93-94).

16. Scholars debate how much influence the Concert actually had on state behavior in the first three decades following the Congress of Vienna (Schroeder 1994; Kagan 1997/1998; Rendall 2000).

17. Schroeder (1972, 28-29) claims that Nicholas may have intended from the outset for the Menshikov mission to fail, while Richardson (1994, 72) emphasizes the tsar's belief that the Ottoman Empire would soon collapse under its own weight.

18. Richardson (1994) argues that Nicholas was probably unaware of the implications of Menshikov taking such a hard line. If so, then it is possible that Nicholas may have taken a softer stance that could have led to a more productive negotiation session. If this were the case, then an argument could be made that original genesis of the conflict was the result of gross misperceptions.

19. As Saab (1977, 154) implies, these diplomatic humiliations may not have been perceived as such by Menshikov but nonetheless ended up arousing "a wave of xenophobia" that severely hampered negotiations.

20. See Rich (1992, 108-9) on Stratford's influence on Turkish resolve.

21. See Rich (1992, 110-11) for a concise review of Austrian interests.

22. While Louis Napoleon wished to overturn the Russian-led European order and restore France to its previous position of power, he was extremely cautious when it came to using force that would result in war to achieve these ends, in part due to the probable domestic unpopularity of such an outcome (Richardson 1992, 84, 100). Although the French leader worked against the Menshikov mission in favor of maintaining his new-found influence within the Ottoman state, Nicholas's continued attempts at achieving his demands led Napoleon to support some type of great power settlement to the crisis. Indeed, French diplomats in Vienna during the summer of 1854 were among the leading drafters of the Vienna Note and other attempts to settle the crises in consultation with the other powers (Richardson 1994, 75; Goldfrank 1993, 196).

23. See Goldfrank (1993, 230) for a quantitative comparison of Ottoman and Russian military forces.

24. On the sequence and timing of hardline and conciliatory actions see Rogers (1991).

25. There is also the question of the "Orlov Mission" to Austria in January 1854 where Nicholas asked Francis Joseph for "armed neutrality" and for further cooperation in dealing with Constantinople. However, it is not at all clear whether or not the outcome of this proposal, had it been known in advance, would have significantly altered Nicholas's thinking. See Rich (1985, 101-4) for a quick overview of this proposal.

26. Richardson (1994, 83) lists three groups, but one, "liberal and radical opinion" had little voice in the government and will not be included here. This "opinion" was important later on in shaping public opinion, as discussed in the following sections.

27. The term "Violent Interpretation" was originally applied to the *Examen* by the anti-Russian press.

28. By way of contrast, it was easier to rank actors' preferences over a small and discrete set of outcomes in the July 1914 crisis because actors at the time actually expected one or another of these outcomes but little in between (Levy 1990/1991).

29. If one accepted the view that the Turks lured the Russians into attacking their fleet at Sinope, that attack would not be an exogenous shock, but rather endogenous to (i.e., fully explained by) existing state interests.

30. Thus our case study takes the form of a "interpretive" or "disciplined-configurative" case study rather than an "atheoretical" or "configurative-idiographic" case study (Eckstein 1975; Lijphart 1975).

31. The fact that different methods have different advantages and disadvantages provides a strong rationale for "multimethod" research that combines both large-N statistical analysis with small-N case study analysis.

32. The reasoning is as follows. From the perspective of a rationalist theory of crisis management, the Crimean War is in some respects a "least-likely" case (Eckstein 1975), where the logic follows what Levy (2002b) calls the "Sinatra inference"—if I can make it there I can make it anywhere. Since we find crisis management behavior that is basically rationalist in a case where we had good reasons not to expect it (based on the conventional wisdom of historians), we have some grounds for generalizing

our hypothesis to other cases. In fact, however, the Crimean War is only an approximation of a least-likely case, not a perfect fit. The main reason for this is that a least-likely case should be defined on the basis of theoretical criteria, not the consensus of historians. Consequently, our claims about other cases will have to be more modest—that our analysis provides good reasons to reexamine other historical cases that are commonly interpreted in terms of crisis mismanagement.

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