Spain’s status in the international order as envisioned by the Congress of Vienna remains elusive. It has not been the object of close scrutiny outside of Spanish historiography, which has nevertheless paid very limited attention to the period. Recent (re-)interpretations of the Congress System do not tackle some of the aspects raised by the particularities of the Spanish Restoration, although they have dedicated more attention to it than in the past.¹

The Spanish Restoration was primarily an ideological mechanism used by ultra-royalists and the king to conduct a reactionary political programme – not without inner tensions vis-à-vis a parallel modernising agenda – at the end of a convulsed period that was characterised by foreign occupation, dynastic confrontation, international warfare and civil war.² In Spain, the crisis of monarchic legitimacy began in 1808, with the French invasion taking the form of a double crisis: on the one hand, the installation of a Napoleonic monarchy with the emperor’s brother Joseph acting as king in the territory occupied by French troops; and on the other hand, a political revolution on the patriots’ side that led to an intense legislative transformation and the promulgation of the liberal Constitution of 1812. The Spanish Bonapartists (known as afrancesados or josefinos) trusted the capacity of Joseph Bonaparte to modernise and strengthen the monarchy through an authoritarian and enlightened government; the patriots, led by the liberales, sought to transform the monarchy through a programme of constitutional reforms that blended revolutionary principles such as national sovereignty with traditional legal customs, while safeguarding Ferdinand VII’s throne and waging war in his name.³ At the same time, many American territo-

ries of the monarchy vigorously claimed self-government, initiating several insurrections in 1810. Nonetheless, the combined efforts of the local royalist forces and the Spanish troops sent across the Atlantic from 1815 contributed to a Spanish-American restoration that not only thwarted the possibility of reconciliation, but also hindered the realisation of most projects of independence for some years.  

The dominating accounts of Spanish history for the period still centre on two intertwined narratives: first, the definitive displacement of Spain from the category of great power after decades of constant retreat, and secondly, the political involution of Ferdinand VII’s reactionary monarchy that obliterated the liberal initiatives, including the notorious 1812 Constitution, which had been proclaimed in his absence (he spent the years 1808–1814 under captivity in France). A combined corollary of both accounts describes a hopeless, decadent and archaic regime that was unable to rise from a deep political and economic crisis.

Without discarding these considerations – ones that have been acknowledged by contemporaries and historians –, a new appraisal seems useful to understand why, in 1820, Europeans turned their eyes to the Iberian Peninsula, a place that was suddenly transformed into the centre of the continental struggle between revolution and counterrevolution. This new approach should address whether the character of the Spanish Restoration differed from the processes that were taking place elsewhere in Europe and, if so, what the consequences of its peculiar situation were for Spain and the international order. In my opinion, some decisive connections remain absent from the grand narratives. A fresh approach should include a contextualised analysis of what could be considered to be the distinguishing factor of the Spanish Restoration: its early repressive nature. These considerations would, I believe, shed light on the development of European royalism and liberalism.

Certainly, many contemporaries expressed the idea that Spain’s approach to the post-revolutionary order departed from the principles dictated by the great powers – namely, the preservation of peace and the assertion of order through conciliatory instruments and a balance of power. A consideration of this perception might be relevant not only for locating Spain’s position in Restoration Europe, but also for understanding the general political evolution of the continent.

In viewing this, we should ask ourselves: Should the roughness of the Spanish Restoration in 1814 be interpreted as a foreword to later events in Europe and as a crucial contribution to the development of European ultra-royalism? Should the insurrectionary character of the Spanish liberal opposition, forced to act clandestinely, be included as an important factor when explaining why, of all places, the next European revolution started in Spain in 1820 (and soon spread to Naples, Portugal and Piedmont)? Yet, if that were the case, how should we interpret the generally assumed isolation, lack of diplomatic influence and political irrelevance of Spain in the years

of 1814–1820? This article does not aspire to give definitive answers to all these questions; instead, it would rather like to set the questions back on the historiographical agenda. This article is therefore a contribution to the emerging comparative, transnational and connected history of European Restorations.  

1. An Early and Repressive Restoration

In order to locate the Spanish Restoration in its wider context, some aspects need to be reconsidered. First, its early timing. On 11 December 1813, Napoleon acknowledged Ferdinand VII as the king of Spain in the Treaty of Valençay. In May 1808, Ferdinand and his father Charles IV abdicated their rights to the Spanish throne in favour of Napoleon, who transferred the rights to his brother, Joseph. Valençay was Napoleon’s attempt to put an end to the Peninsular War and to close his southern front following the victory of the allied armies, who proceeded to cross the Pyrenees. Napoleon’s parallel reverse at Leipzig in October 1813 convinced him to put an end to his presence in the Iberian Peninsula in order to focus on tackling the Austrian, Prussian and Russian armies.

In 1808–1814, Spain had undergone a political revolution that ran parallel to the Napoleonic occupation. A liberal-dominated patriotic Congress (Cortes) under siege in Cádiz drafted a constitution in 1812 and, at the same time, led the defence of the monarchy and preserved Ferdinand’s rights through a Regency. Although he had voluntarily abdicated the throne, during the war Ferdinand – nicknamed el Deseado (the desired one) – was considered by most of the Spanish population to be innocent, and the population longed for his return. All constitutional reforms were made in his name.

With victory approaching, the Cortes hoped that the returning king would sanction its efforts and recognise its merits. Yet neither the Cortes nor the Regency trusted Napoleon. In fact, the Treaty of Valençay was rejected by the Regency, which refused to ratify it under the terms of the decree approved by the Cortes on 1 January 1811 that annulled the decisions taken by the king during his captivity. On 2 February 1814, the Cortes confirmed this position: they would only recognise Ferdinand VII after he had sworn in the constitution. Officially, the distrust was directed at the possibility that Ferdinand would be still acting under Napoleon’s influence. Thus, the Spanish military authorities on the French border received instructions not to let Ferdinand enter the country – which he did on 24 March – if accompanied by troops, foreign escorts or Spanish Bonapartists. The Cortes also established that Ferdinand should go directly to Madrid in order to swear in the constitution and then assume the government that would be yielded to him by the Regency. However, not only was the uncertain disposition of the monarch present in the mind of the patriots; the Regency and


the Cortes also rejected the possibility of achieving peace on Napoleon’s terms, and they wanted to align themselves with the approach of the Allies on how to end the war, even if it was for the moment vague and hesitant. The patriotic authorities had been recognised by the major powers and wanted to pursue their diplomatic goals and fulfil their compromises, regardless of the private agreements of the captive king with Napoleon.7

Meanwhile, divisions were increasing among patriots, and a blatant conflict between liberals and royalists emerged. The ultra-royalist sections that dominated the Church and certain sections of the army had achieved an important presence in the Cortes in the elections of October 1813. On 12 April 1814, the so-called Manifest of the Persians – thus named due to a reference in its text to the practices of the ancient Persians – was presented to Ferdinand by a group of royalist deputies, accusing the Cortes of having installed anarchy in the kingdom through the adoption of French revolutionary principles. They solicited a renewal of the pact between king and realm through the summoning of a new Cortes. This Cortes was to follow traditional practices. This meant that the Cortes was to be formed by estates, so that a monarchy that respected the fundamental laws of the kingdom – and the privileges of the nobility, the Church, some territories, and other corporations – could be formed. A major constitutional historian has described this scheme as an «inane attempt» to reform the traditional monarchy without questioning its fundamentals.8 Ferdinand VII understood it as an invitation to reinstall absolutist rule.

The Persians communicated to the king that they would support him if he rejected the 1812 Constitution. Ferdinand fiercely opposed a constitution that severely curtailed his powers, which he now had to share with a strong unicameral parliament. With this support, and encouraged by the enthusiastic popular reception that he had encountered, Ferdinand decided to ignore the provisions of the Cortes and to act on his own instead. Rather than going to the capital, he diverted his route and arrived in Valencia. Counting on his immense popularity – enhanced by the heroic way the Cortes had portrayed him during the war – and with the support of the reactionary sections of the army and the Church, Ferdinand led a coup against the Regency and the Cortes. On 4 May, he annulled all the legislation that had been passed by the Cortes, including the Constitution, by using arguments similar to those advanced by the Persians, namely, that an illegitimate revolutionary Cortes had supplanted his sovereignty and a faction of its deputies imposed a democratic constitution through the use of violence. In doing this, he reinstalled all the institutions and legislation of the old regime. However, for a moment, a moderate restoration, including elements

7 C. Brennecke, ¿De ejemplo a «mancha» de Europa? La Guerra de Independencia española y sus efectos sobre la imagen oficial de España durante el Congreso de Viena (1814–1815), Madrid 2010, 23–7.
of reform, seemed plausible. In his decree, the king accepted the limiting of his power in order to avoid appearing as a «despot», something in line with eighteenth-century conceptions of absolutist monarchy. Hence, he promised to summon the Cortes by following traditional practices, and to respect some liberties, including a limited freedom of speech. He promised to install a «moderate government» as opposed to an «arbitrary and despotic government».

Ferdinand VII’s manifesto certainly bore some similarities to the Declaration of Saint-Ouen that had been issued by Louis XVIII of France two days before. Both monarchs appeared to reject a full restoration of the absolute monarchy. However, while the French king issued the Charte constitutionnelle in the following month, Ferdinand ignored his own pledge and installed a neo-absolutist monarchy instead. The promised Cortes never met to a forming session. He opted for a reactionary model that not only rejected any reformist prospects, but also aspired to install a regime that would differ from the monarchy that stood before 1808. Ferdinand’s neo-absolutist monarchy sought to give the king extensive control over society. Complete royal sovereignty was installed, the Councils and the Inquisition were restored, and all public liberties were suppressed.

These circumstances combined to give the Spanish Restoration an ultra-reactionary character, which was completed by a particularly gruesome repression directed at the afrancesados and the liberal patriots. These punitive policies came with international consequences, which were personified by the situation of the afrancesados and liberales who went into exile. On 10 May 1814, Ferdinand VII ordered the imprisonment of the main liberal leaders – 32 were captured that day – while dozens of them managed to escape into exile. For their part, thousands of afrancesados (12,000 families is the number normally cited) took refuge in France in the last months of the war. On 30 May 1814, a decree authorising the return of those who had been less involved in the Bonapartist regime resulted in the indirect confirmation of exile for most of them. Even many of those who could benefit from the decree distrusted Ferdinand’s benevolence and decided to stay in France. The retribution against the Spanish liberals and the Bonapartists departed from the general amnesty for partisans of the


10 Decretos del Rey don Fernando VII. Año primero de su restitución al Trono de las Españas, vol. 1, Madrid 1816, 6–7.


earlier regimes that had been proclaimed by the Allies in the Peace of Paris, which Spain refused to sign.\textsuperscript{14}

The number of Spanish exiles was unparalleled in comparison with any other restored monarchy in Europe. On the one hand, the majority of them were afrancesados who found it hard to attract solidarity in Europe because they were associated with Napoleon. On the other hand, the liberals, who were perceived as anti-Napoleonic fighters for freedom, better fit the spirit of the Restoration, especially in countries with prospects of constitutional reform such as France and Britain. Although most of the liberal exiles had not been on the battlefields, they were still heroes in the eyes of many European observers who admired the intrepidity of the guerrilleros. The truth was that the liberal leaders had spent the years of war in the besieged city of Cádiz, where they had benefited from unparalleled conditions for political action and discussion. This situation was completely reversed in May 1814. The Inquisition was re-established, but mainly as an instrument of political repression controlled by the king. It was now used for the persecution of liberals and freemasons rather than for the monitoring of deviations from the Catholic faith.\textsuperscript{15}

From a comparative point of view, the Spanish Restoration marked a particular moment in European history and followed a distinctive process. The return of Ferdinand VII to Spain in March 1814 and the dissolution of the Cortes in May predated the decisions and negotiations of the major powers in relation to the French Restoration, which established the guidelines for the continent’s pacification and the design of the European Congress System. However, from a strictly chronological point of view, the Spanish Restoration was not the first one to come about. Following the liberation of the Netherlands, a provisional government that was formed on 20 November 1813 invited William of Orange to become Sovereign Prince, which he did on 2 December. A constitution was approved on 29 March 1814 by an assembly of notables, thereby creating a monarchy with a strong sovereign that was limited by a representative chamber that kept most of the Napoleonic personnel in place.\textsuperscript{16} Significantly, the Dutch Restoration was known in Spain, as were the first steps of the Restoration in France. When Ferdinand entered Spain with seemingly suspicious intentions, the liberal press proposed him to follow William's example and to accept a constitution – the influential \textit{El Conciso} conveniently interpreted the Dutch text to be inspired by Spanish constitutionalism. The French \textit{Charte} had not yet been granted, although the Spanish liberal journalists were able to use the Senate constitution that had been offered to Louis XVIII to strengthen their arguments.\textsuperscript{17} In real-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Jarrett, \textit{The Congress of Vienna}, 65.
\item \textsuperscript{15} E. La Parra / M. Á. Casado Sánchez, \textit{La Inquisición española. Agonía y abolición}, Madrid 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{16} M. van der Burg / M. Lok, «The Dutch Case: The Kingdom of Holland and the Imperial Departments», in: M. Broers / P. Hicks / A. Guimerá (eds.), \textit{The Napoleonic Empire and the New European Political Culture}, Basingstoke 2012, 100–111.
\item \textsuperscript{17} G. Butrón Prida, «Redefinir rey y soberanía», 75–76; note especially the article «Las tres nuevas Constituciones» in \textit{El Conciso}, 1.5.1814.
\end{itemize}
ity, these were desperate attempts produced by some liberals on the eve of the 4 May coup that exerted no real influence. However, these attempts also point to the existence of compromising attitudes within the Spanish liberal camp, which included sections that were willing to accept a revision of the constitutional system in order to adapt it to the moderate European vogue. Nevertheless, Ferdinand discarded any chance of compromise.

Ferdinand was among the first European princes to be restored, at a time when there was no determined pattern as to how a king should manage the revolutionary legacy, and when there were no definitive models to emulate. He recovered his absolutist throne even before the European war had concluded. The Allied troops entered Paris on 31 March, the armistice was signed on 23 May, and the Peace of Paris on 30 May 1814. At this time, the decisions about the procedures that would be adopted in France were far from clear. The Sixth Coalition had not yet manifested plans for the post-Napoleonic order. There were no blueprints for the way in which a king should be restored after the upheavals of the revolutionary era, although prudence dominated the main European courts, as seen in the outcome in the Netherlands. The way the Restoration was to be achieved in each country was open to multiple alternatives. This did not, however, mean that all kinds of Restorations would be possible without the endorsement of the main powers, because the powers would weigh it against their general interests in the new European balance of power. Ferdinand VII decided to carry out an institutional return to the pre-1808 situation, which was only possible because it complied with the considerations of the main powers. Thus, a combination of international circumstances facilitated his reactionary restoration.

First, in the autumn of 1813, Napoleon had considered that a Bourbon king who had total control of Spain was a better option for the southern frontier of his empire than the patriot government against which he had waged a long war. Therefore, in the negotiations held in Valençay, he facilitated his return as an absolutist king. The instructions to his agent Count de La Forest were clear: «C’est une restauration entière et complète de ce qui existait avant la guerre d’Espagne que l’empereur se propose.» The decisive actor, however, was Britain, which at the end of the war controlled the Iberian Peninsula. The British government, which had reservations about supporting Louis XVIII in France, did not doubt that the Bourbons should be restored in Spain. British diplomacy towards Spain was mostly a family business of the Wellesley brothers. Arthur, who was made Duke of Wellington in May 1814, was the command-

er-in-chief of the British, Spanish and Portuguese armies, while Henry acted as Ambassador to Spain. Both brothers would eventually, if half-heartedly, back Ferdinand’s full restoration. Wellington heavily distrusted the *liberales*, who he believed to be similar to French revolutionaries. He thought Spain could not be «an [sic] useful ally (...) if the republican system [was] not put down». In September 1813, he even considered acting against the Cortes, and consulted with London to find out whether, «if [he] should find a fair opportunity of striking at the democracy, the Government would approve of [his] doing it». As his relationship with the Spanish authorities and press deteriorated in the last months of the war, Wellington became convinced of the necessity of taking action against the Cortes. In mid-October, he wrote to his brother: «[I]f we do not beat down the democracy at Cádiz, the cause is lost: how that is to be done, God knows!» Initially, Henry Wellesley had determined that the king should swear in the constitution, hoping that the Spanish regime would evolve towards a monarchy resembling that of Britain. Yet, in March 1814, he changed his mind, convinced that the popular enthusiasm received by Ferdinand VII was equal to wide-ranging support for his absolute power and a rejection of the Cortes, rather than being just an exalted celebration of the returning king. The reservations that Wellesley might have had vanished when the duke of San Carlos, Ferdinand’s envoy, assured him in late April that the king would summon a new Cortes to produce a new constitution. Likewise, Wellington, who was in Paris at the time of Ferdinand’s coup, went on a mission to Spain «in order to try whether [he could not] prevail upon all parties to be more moderate, and to adopt a constitution more likely to be practicable», as he put it. The British government was ready to accept the dissolution of the Cortes if that meant the beginning of a constitutional process in which, as described by Foreign Secretary Castlereagh, «a new Cortes [would] revise the Constitution upon certain liberal and moderate principles promulgated [by the king]». Wellesley supported this option, considering the constitution to be «generally unpopular» and that «it would have been dangerous for the King to have accepted it, even if he had been so disposed». He went as far as to suggest that «the revolution which [had] taken place [might] be considered more as an act of the nation itself than as one of arbitrary power on the part of the King».


24 Wellington to Liverpool, 9.5.1814, in: *Dispatches*, vol. 12, 4.

25 Castlereagh to Wellington, 9.5.1814; and Wellesley to Castlereagh, 15.5.1814; both in: Duke of Wellington, K.G. (ed.), *Supplementary Dispatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington*, vol. 9, London 1862, 758, 4; Brennecke, ¿De ejemplo a «mancha»?, 53; La Parra «Restauración», 219.
Hence, the British government acknowledged Ferdinand’s coup, trusting his promise to initiate a process of political renewal that would leave aside the most radical principles contained in the Cádiz Constitution, while installing a monarchy based on the British model. These prospects even made Wellesley accept the repression launched against the liberals, an unpleasant initiative that he nevertheless considered a «measure of precaution». Wellington held a similar view. From Madrid, he reported in May that «nothing can be more popular than the King and his measures, as far as they have gone to the overthrow of the Constitution. The imprisonment of the Liberales is thought by some, I believe with justice, unnecessary, and it is certainly highly impolitic; but it is liked by the people at large».27

Britain’s acquiescence with Ferdinand VII’s restoration proved essential. Had Britain opposed his reactionary programme, the Spanish king would not have been able to carry it out because he lacked the resources needed to oppose a British intervention. Once the restoration was complete, the British government soon began to have reservations, especially regarding Ferdinand’s entourage, which was considered to be formed by bigoted and ignorant counsellors. Wellington went to Spain in order to make sure that the constitutional process really began, but he was unable to find any success and reported back with a pessimistic account of the outlook of the kingdom. Nonetheless, among his preoccupations during the mission was first and foremost the liberal opposition to the king.28 In Britain, Wellington was widely accused of supporting Ferdinand VII’s coup. An article in The Times in November condemned him for accepting honours from the Spanish king while the deputies of the Cortes «had been carried from their homes to dungeons». Wellington was exposed to the unpopularity of Ferdinand VII in Britain when, at a Guildhall dinner in London in July in which Wellington was the guest of honour, the Lord Mayor warned him not to make a toast for the Spanish king, for it would be «received with so much disgust as to render it very disagreeable to me and to every well wisher to the Spanish government».29

Predictably, the British government had fully weighed its Spanish policy in view of European affairs. In the Treaty of Chaumont (1 March 1814), Britain publicly supported the Bourbon Restoration in Spain in front of the European powers as a way of maintaining its influence over its ally in the Peninsular War. In July 1814, a bilateral treaty secured British influence over the crucial issue of Spanish colonial affairs, and it guaranteed that the French Bourbons would not renew their traditional alliance with their Spanish cousins. The British support for Ferdinand VII thus came with a price for Spanish foreign policy.

26 Wellesley to Castlereagh, 15.4.1814, in: Supplementary Dispatches.
27 Wellington to Stuart, 25.5.1814; in: Dispatches, vol. 12, 27.
2. Diplomatic Miscalculations

The process of political transition from constitutionalism to absolutism carried damaging consequences for Spanish foreign interests. Its tumultuous track impeded the adoption of a clear international stance at the moment when important decisions were being negotiated in Europe. When Spain wished to re-enter the negotiation conversations, it was scorned and rejected by the big powers. Spain’s absence in the diplomatic arena due to its internal turmoil and its marginalisation by the great powers resulted in its refusal to adhere to the main international treaties of the Restoration: the Peace of Paris, the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna and the Holy Alliance. These conditions determined the peculiar position that Spain would occupy in the European context for the first years of the post-war period.

From the summer of 1813 to May 1814, an unstable Spanish constitutional government torn by internal struggles failed to design a coherent diplomatic policy. On 16 August 1813, the Regency appointed José Pizarro as Ambassador to Prussia, yet he ended up acting as a general representative to all the European powers. He accompanied the Allies in their campaign on the way to Paris, and was supposed to be the Spanish representative in the aborted Prague Conference. Nonetheless, he was present at the meeting of February 1814 in Châtillon where the Allies patently advanced their shared strategy, although he lacked the official powers to take part in these conversations. Oddly, he had been substituted by the ambassador in London, Fernán Núñez, who stayed in England for the next months under the influence of the British Prime Minister Lord Liverpool, hence making Pizarro’s presence in the negotiation centres completely ineffective. Until 7 May 1814, when Fernán Núñez arrived in Paris, Spain had no official representative in the negotiations that would decide the future of the continent. This diminished the chances of having any influence on them, which were already low. After the Treaty of Chaumont, the major powers decided to act independently from the secondary powers, and Spain was given a subordinate position without even the possibility of objection. For a moment, Britain had considered including its ally Spain among the major powers, because it «has always been considered as a power du premier ordre», yet, in the end, not even this auxiliary position to Britain gave Spain a ticket to the negotiation table.30

Fernán Núñez was powerless because the transition from the constitutional to the absolutist government in Spain was taking place precisely at that moment. He repeatedly demanded to be notified of the official position of the Spanish authorities, but he received no instructions from Madrid and was not fully informed of the transformations taking place. The Peace of Paris was ratified without his signature because he lacked plenipotentiary powers and rebuffed the pressure from Britain to adhere to a...

treaty in which he had no say. Furthermore, he did not know how the new Spanish government would react to the terms of the treaty.

When instructions finally arrived for Fernán Núñez, they merely informed him that he had been substituted by Pedro Gómez Labrador. Only then, on 20 July 1814, did Spain and France sign a separate peace treaty. Labrador thought it was a way to «erase the humiliation» that the great powers had imposed on Spain, which would not easily accept its demotion as a «satellite of the big planets».

Notably, in the course of the negotiations, the French minister Talleyrand demanded that Spain accept the return of the afrancesados, who had been exiled in France – a move that was in line with the amnesty offered to the Bonapartists in the Peace of Paris. The Spanish government boldly rejected this petition.

Labrador had been appointed as the plenipotentiary ambassador by Ferdinand VII to defend the king’s interests at the Congress of Vienna. Spain’s relevance in the Congress has rightly been considered as secondary. Spain failed to obtain any of its moderate goals – especially the apportionment of Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla to Ferdinand’s sister. Spain, feeling insulted, withdrew from the treaty, and Labrador refused to sign the Final Act, which was only ratified by Spain two years later on 7 June 1817 (three days after Spain entered the Holy Alliance, cementing the monarchy’s adherence to the European Restoration).

The relegation of Spain to a secondary position has generally been linked to its tendency towards geostrategic irrelevance that culminated at this moment with the loss of most of its American empire. Nevertheless, Spain did possess some military and symbolic capital, which it could have used in the Congress, but failed to do so.

The Spanish people’s heroic resistance against Napoleon had been a tale admired throughout Europe, yet international recognition for the victory in the Peninsular War ultimately went to Britain. Spain was not able to capitalise on this prestige, something that was of no interest to the great powers, especially Britain.

The poor abilities of the Spanish diplomats have also been considered a cause for Spain’s limited influence in Vienna, yet a more decisive factor was probably the lack of a clear policy in Madrid and the country’s general marginalisation from great power-decision centres, a condition for which the ambassadors themselves were not solely to blame. They continually complained about the deficiency of the information and instructions they received. Another recurrent complaint was their lack of the funds that they needed in order to participate in the diplomatic circles. Writing from Paris in July 1814, outraged by the delays in his pay, Labrador claimed that he could not be at the same time a «beggar» and an «ambassador».

As he spent weeks in

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32 Brennecke, ¿De ejemplo a «mancha»?, 31.

Paris negotiating the treaty with France, he arrived late in Vienna (20 September) and was unable to enter the already formed political and social centres where decisions were being made. Similarly, Pizarro complained for the duration of his mission in Berlin that the lack of funds had put him in a state of «shameful misery» and «complete begging». Under such a dishonourable condition – «a shameful scandal in a foreign court» –, he argued that it was impossible for him to fully participate in the diplomatic circles.\textsuperscript{34}

Spanish authorities believed that the country had genuine grounds for maintaining the status of great power, yet as already mentioned, Britain was alone in showing concern for the matter of Spain (and France) joining the inner circle of powers, not only because it had just signed an alliance treaty with Spain in July, but also because it considered Spain and France to be capable of channelling their support towards Britain's interests during general negotiations. However, Britain's interest soon vanished, and the opinion of the central-eastern powers – Russia, Prussia and Austria – of limiting the negotiation of key issues to the Four Powers, excluding the victorious Spain and the defeated France, was soon accepted. Nevertheless, Talleyrand was able to get France admitted to the group of big powers through his manoeuvres. Labrador could not achieve the same, although it would be unfair to blame him personally. He understood the situation and knew that it was only by entering the negotiation around the crucial Polish-Saxon question that Spain could play any role in the Congress. Spain had no direct interest in the region, so it could have taken the position of impartial mediator, which would have raised its presence overall. Labrador also grasped that there was an indirect concern on the issue, given that Austria would never abandon its interest in the Italian Peninsula – and therefore would not admit the Spanish Bourbons' candidature to Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla – if it did not obtain a satisfactory result in Poland. However, Labrador was instructed from Madrid not to become involved in the issue, given that there was concern not to antagonise Russia and Prussia. This passivity condemned Spain to a marginal position, especially if compared with Talleyrand's success in forming a strategic secret alliance with Austria and Britain that brought France back to diplomatic relevance.\textsuperscript{35}

Significantly, the Spanish representatives identified the appearance of Ferdinand's restoration as having a crucial role in the justifications used by the European powers for reducing Spain to irrelevance. Ferdinand VII's harsh restoration added to the discredit of its monarchy in the eyes of Europe, an argument used even by other reactionary powers. Spanish diplomats argued that Spain was the object of unjust criticism, but they fully grasped its harmful implications.

\textsuperscript{34} Pizarro to Cevallos, 8.9.1815, 16.9.1815; Archivo Histórico Nacional [AHN], Madrid: Estado 5937 ff. 591, 596. For the relevance of these social gatherings for diplomatic success, see Vick, The Congress of Vienna.

\textsuperscript{35} Brennecke, ¿De ejemplo a «mancha»?, 38–39; Jarrett, The Congress of Vienna, 119.
For its capacity to mobilise public opinion, repression played a major role in this process. It impacted the relationships of Spain with other European governments, helped to shape its image in the new international order, and impacted internal politics. With thousands of afrancesados and liberales imprisoned or in exile, many voices expressed the idea that Spain’s political situation confirmed the despotic nature of its bigoted monarchy.\textsuperscript{36} These arguments were expressed by different Spaniards residing in France and England who denounced the repressive and vengeful impulses of Ferdinand VII. They argued that the Spanish procedures contrasted with the appeasement proposed by the big powers in their defence of continental peace. A pamphlet published in Paris by a group of afrancesados asked: «Est-ce dans un moment où tous les souverains de l’Europe ferment les yeux sur le passé, que l’Espagne voudrait se signaler par des proscriptions?»\textsuperscript{37} The Spaniards were not wrong in assigning a «forgive and forget» policy to European princes. In France, forgetting had become the official guiding principle for dealing with the recent past. Silence was also the implicit position of other European restored monarchies such as the Dutch, where the Napoleonic administrative legacy was largely adopted, and where social forgetting of the recent past was assumed.\textsuperscript{38}

The Spaniards were soon accompanied in their denunciation by the press, especially the British, which openly censured Ferdinand. On 12 October 1814, \textit{The Times} of London, when informing its readers about the «re-establishment of the Inquisition» and the «90 arrests (...) said to have taken place in one night», considered «the present state of Spain» as «a disgrace to Europe».\textsuperscript{39} The Spanish liberals found wholehearted support from the Whig leader Lord Holland and other influential politicians, who brought the issue to the parliament.\textsuperscript{40} The press and the sympathisers of Spanish liberalism were partially successful in forming a public opinion that was strong enough to influence the cabinet. In 1814, the cabinet refused to turn over some liberal leaders who were residing in England to the Spanish authorities because – as was officially communicated to Fernán Núñez, now the Spanish ambassador in London –, «the public opinion and liberty of this country would claim against such a proceeding».\textsuperscript{41} In March 1815, Fernán Núñez presented a formal complaint to the British authorities regarding the degrading comments made about Spain in the parliament and the press. Castlereagh responded that nothing could be done because the parliament enjoyed «freedom of debate» and the press «freedom of discussion».\textsuperscript{42}
However, at no point did the British government consider applying real pressure on Spain through diplomatic means. In the summer of 1814, Wellington had communicated to Ferdinand that the British government would not assist him financially if he «should not at an early period carry into execution his gracious promises made to his subjects in his decree of the 4th of May; and if some steps should not be taken to prove to the world the necessity and justice of the numerous arrests which attended His Majesty’s restoration to his throne, or for the release of the innocent and the judicial trial of the guilty». However, months later, while negotiations were being carried out in Vienna, Lord Holland asked Wellington to «induce» the «Powers of Europe (...) to urge the Court of Spain to an act of amnesty at least», which Wellington refused by claiming the inefficacy – or even counter-productiveness – of such an initiative: «I do not think the King of Spain could allow of the interference of any foreign Power in favour of persons whom he supposes (rightfully or otherwise, is not now the question) guilty of political offences against himself (...) Then if the success of the interference is doubtful, the attempt would be important, as it probably would injure the persons in whose favour it should be made.»

In any case, news about the Spanish repression, loaded with negative clichés and continuous references to Inquisitionary practices, travelled to Europe and the Americas through the pages of the British press. Decisively, this opinion soon extended outside liberal circles and acquired tremendous political consequences. Several political actors, including many leaders of the restored monarchies and some ideologues of the reaction, came to believe that Spain's approach to the post-revolutionary order was departing from the main policy principles dictated by the great powers, namely, the preservation of peace and order through conciliatory instruments and the implementation of a robust but judicious approach towards the legacy of the revolution. Ferdinand's policies and his isolationist foreign policy played against the interests of Spain in the new balance of power, from which it was relegated to a second-class position by European diplomats and politicians that used its outmoded viciousness as a justification.

In the first conversation that Pizarro, as Spanish Ambassador to Prussia, had with King Frederick Wilhelm III in September 1814, the monarch interrogated him about the «turbulences» in Spain. As a Protestant, the king was especially concerned with the reinstallation of the Inquisition. Although the Austrian minister Klemens von

43 «Memorandum to His Catholic Majesty Ferdinand VII, King of Spain», no date, in: Dispatches, vol. 12, 44.
46 Pizarro to San Carlos, 17.9.1814, AHN, Estado 5936, f. 314.
Metternich and his main counsellor Friedrich von Gentz had initially supported Ferdinand's restoration, they soon started to express reservations about his methods. Since the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars, the Austrian government had considered Spain a secondary power and dedicated scant attention to it. Nevertheless, Gentz deemed Ferdinand's 4th of May decree to be «one of the most important documents of contemporary history» and he celebrated the fall of the Cortes, even if the Spanish king could have been a bit more «cautious and prudent» and acted with less «haste and rancour». However, during the Congress of Vienna, Austrian opinion was transformed. By the beginning of December 1814, Gentz believed that «a system of reaction and persecution only comparable to the one that reigned in France in the time of Robespierre» had been installed in Spain. «Detentions, banishments, death penalties, mass imprisonments, scaffolds and all types of horrors» could be seen in Madrid. Historian Christiana Brennecke attributes this change of opinion to Gentz’s intense reading of British journals – whose negative news about Spain were also disseminated in the Austrian press – and to Spain’s ambitions in Italy that threatened the Austrian position. As a result, Metternich and Gentz came to be convinced that the Spanish methods were at odds with their understanding of the orderly monarchical rule that Europe needed.⁴⁷ The architect of French foreign policy, Talleyrand, concurred with their opinion and considered Spain to be the counter-model of what should be done. In a report to Louis XVIII, he asserted: «Je n’ai vu aucun Souverain, aucun ministre, qui, effrayé des suites que doit avoir en Espagne le système de gouvernement suivi par Ferdinand VII, ne regrettât amèrement qu’il ait pu remonter sur son trône, sans que l’Europe lui eût imposé la condition de donner à ces États des institutions qui fussent en harmonie avec les idées du temps.»⁴⁸ In February 1816, British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh tried to persuade the Spanish government to put an end to the repression, arguing that it was «the general opinion not just of this Nation but of all Europe».⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Brennecke, ¿De ejemplo a «mancha»?, 79–83. Gentz’s opinions quoted by Brennecke are taken from the reports on the European events that Gentz periodically sent to the hospodar of Wallachia, Janko Karadja.

⁴⁸ Rapport fait au Roi pendant son voyage de Gand à Paris (June 1815), quoted by M. Prutsch, Making Sense of Constitutional Monarchism in Post-Napoleonic France and Germany, Basingstoke 2013, 222.

⁴⁹ Fernán Núñez to Ceballos, 16.2.1816; AGS, Estado 8177.
the ghastly procedures in Madrid to contest Spain’s diplomatic claims. On 18 August, he wrote to Secretary of State San Carlos, stating: «[T]he reestablishment of all that was most wrong with our system does not leave any hope other than being the scorn of Europe (...) I do not know of a more monstrous system than the one that has been just re-established; and Our Majesty with all his good wishes cannot take the nation out of its despair, out of the deep misery and barbaric ignorance to which it has been reduced by those strange means of governing. Sad Nation and unfortunate Sovereign.» Labrador argued that it was this severity that decisively disqualified Spain. In a letter written from Vienna in December 1814, he insisted that the harshness of the restoration in Spain had diminished the country’s prestige, and connected Spain’s marginal role to its bad reputation. This was not only a justification of his personal failure in the Congress but a realistic judgement of the international perception of Spain’s restored monarchy. In understanding this, Labrador had better information, held a more informed picture of European circumstances, and was able to produce a more judicious evaluation of the horizon of the Restoration than Ferdinand VII and his government from Madrid.

3. Varieties of Spanish Royalism and the Coming of the 1820 Revolution

How should Ferdinand’s sturdiness in the face of the negative implications of his reactionary policy for Spain’s international prestige be interpreted? Was there a deliberate will in Spain to implement a different kind of restoration than the one being designed by other European princes and ministers? In any case, it seems unlikely that this course of action was solely the product of Ferdinand’s decision. Moreover, there is evidence of opposition to this policy.

In the Congress of Vienna, Spain adopted the role of champion of legitimacy. Certainly, the lack of real influence over the matters of Realpolitik permitted the display of a righteous position, yet there were also deep ideological motives behind this rigid policy. The king and the Spanish ultra-royalists, who began in May 1814 to form the king’s closest circle of advisors, perceived the compromising attitude of the Allies with the remnants of the Napoleonic system not only as treachery but also as an ineffective way of dealing with the prospect of new revolutions appearing in Europe. This was the view of influential ministers, members of the councils, bishops, high officers of the army and noblemen. For the most ultramontane among them, the restoration was the opportunity not only to terminate the revolution; it was also the chance to reverse the reformist and regalist measures that had been undertaken in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Catholicism appeared as a central platform for the ultra-reactionaries, although the relationship between the Church and the monarchy

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52 Villaurrutia, España en el Congreso, 18.
was not entirely harmonious. Like other European counterrevolutionaries, the most exalted Spanish reactionaries considered the revolution to be an expiation sent by God to punish the deviant enlightened reformism that guided the monarchies of Ferdinand’s father and grandfather.\textsuperscript{53} Now, a full restoration ought to discard any shape of modernisation and should even adopt theocratic features. For Spanish ultra-reactionaries 1814 should thus not merely mark a «restoration» to the state of the monarchy in 1808, but rather a regression to an idealised past.\textsuperscript{54} The traditionalists had been marginalised from the patriotic establishment during the war, although the Cortes had always considered Ferdinand VII the legitimate king and used him to mobilise the population for the war effort. In addition, it was the war that became the birthplace of a modern reaction that extended to the masses.\textsuperscript{55} In 1814, the ultras appeared reinforced, and were successful in co-opting an eager Ferdinand, who before 1808 had already been utilised by the opponents of the «corrupted» monarchy of Charles IV. Now, in peacetime, the enemies of the rightful Catholic king were not only the French and the afrancesados but also the liberals. The most radical ultras, like F. J. Elío, captured the king’s attention and proved very influential in directing the first steps of the reaction.

However, this was not the only position present in the court, government and administration. The Persians had not simply asked for a return to absolutism but pointed instead to a renewed monarchy formed by a traditional Cortes. They considered the «absolute monarchy» to be a «work of reason and intelligence» because it was «subordinated to divine law, justice and the fundamental rules of the State».\textsuperscript{56} Ultimately, the influence of this manifesto for Ferdinand’s monarchy proved instrumental rather than programmatic, especially because he was not committed to maintaining the privileges of some sections of society – which was the purpose of the renewed pact proposed by the Persians – against the interests of the State.

Soon, some high officials and ministers contested the position of the ultras, and with the passing support of the king, opted for the introduction of measures in vogue with the policies adopted in other European contexts, which acknowledged the convenience of maintaining some of the administrative and fiscal novelties introduced during the revolution and the Napoleonic period.\textsuperscript{57} They were mostly bureaucrats and career professionals, including diplomats, who reached high government positions.

\textsuperscript{53} For the Bourbons’ reformism, see G. Paquette, Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and its Empire, 1759–1808, Basingstoke, New York, 2008.


\textsuperscript{56} Representación y Manifesto..., Madrid 1814.

\textsuperscript{57} For a comparative European analysis, see Laven / Riall (eds.), Napoleon’s Legacy.
After his return to Spain from Berlin in October 1816, José Pizarro became Secretary of State and head of Government. From this position, he confronted the ultras with the issue of the modernisation of the monarchy, but also defended the convenience of granting amnesty to political opponents. Pizarro and his allies in the government, especially Finance Minister Martín de Garay, insisted that the best way to keep Spain from returning to instability was to initiate a series of deep administrative and modernising reforms that were to be combined with a lenient policy, which would include measures of grace for convicts and exiles. Permanent pacification could not be achieved with inflexible repression, argued Pizarro and his allies. Their main goal was to reinforce the monarchy through the maintenance of «order» so that Spain could recover from its economic crisis and resume its role as a world power. It was primarily a strategy that aimed to reinforce the Spanish monarchy. The reforming ministers found a positive response in other authorities in the army and the Church, which recommended appeasement measures and reforms. More decisively, Ferdinand himself was eager to acquire a level of centralised power that his forebears had never enjoyed. The reforms, which were aimed at strengthening the State, resonated with the king’s aspiration to diminish the influence of the religious and military authorities. In any case, ultra-royalists ministers such as Juan Lozano de Torres and Francisco Eguía ultimately prevailed at the court with their insistence that the only effective approach left for European legitimacy was to act strongly to remove any possibility of the return of revolution. Accordingly, in September 1818, Ferdinand forced all reformist ministers to step down.

This confrontation, however, should not be interpreted as a well-defined struggle between moderate modernisers and reactionary ultras, even if the labels that originated from these disputes normally took the form of a dichotomist language. The political culture of Spanish royalism was diverse, and it received the double inheritance of absolutism and regalism together with a novel ultramontane traditionalism that rejected enlightened despotism. Moreover, Pizarro and Labrador were not without counterrevolutionary facets. They shared the opinion with many ultras that Spain should appear as the true continental defender of legitimacy, and they promoted in diplomatic circles the idea that Spain was a righteous kingdom that had been unjustly relegated. Labrador held a very negative view of the Congress of Vienna. For him, Russia, Prussia and Austria were only driven by the thirst of power, and not by higher goals such as legitimacy, the balance of power or the pacification of Europe. In his opinion, the big powers had decided in «the obscurity of their particular conferences» a series of compromises that would later be imposed on all the

58 Archivo General de Palacio (Madrid), Archivo Reservado de Fernando VII, t. 13; especially the report of 11.6.1817.
60 Luis, «Cultura política realista», 338–339.
attendees to the Congress, which thus reduced the Congress to nothing more than «pure ceremony».61 The hypocrisy and duplicity of the great powers were also a recurring theme in Pizarro’s dispatches. For instance, Napoleon’s return in March 1815 reinforced the inflexible position that he had held in the diplomatic circles of the Prussian court towards the Emperor, and provided him with arguments to defend the severe Spanish policy against the afrancesados (to whom he, nonetheless, was compassionate). Yet so much for words: the European powers that he had considered to be willing to compromise with Napoleon mobilised large armies during the Hundred Days, whereas Spain remained militarily inert, unable to take action.62

Ultimately, the positions of Labrador and Pizarro remain elusive. They share similar biographical trajectories. Both were experienced diplomats, who, after 1814, received the confidence of Ferdinand VII but did not adopt a submissive attitude. They showed strong royalist credentials but they had also participated in constitutional governance. Both had been Secretaries of State during the rule of the Cortes. After May 1814, Pizarro soon adapted to his new role, and Labrador acquired a royalist reputation that enabled him to represent the king in Vienna. They both distrusted the counsellors and courtiers that were influencing the king’s will. They remained faithful to Ferdinand VII and discharged him of any responsibility of carrying out bad governance. Their dispute was with the high clergy and judiciary, and with the king’s advisors. Labrador wished that «the excessive influence of the Magistrature and the Clergy did not render useless the good wishes of the King».63 However, the contours of these factions were porous and fluid. In December 1814, in a letter to Pedro Cevallos, the new Secretary of State, Labrador had maintained that the harshness of the restoration in Spain had diminished the country’s prestige, and he felt confident that Cevallos would not have «advised the King the renovation of all the monstrosities of the former reign, reinforced with two new ones, the excessive influence of the courtiers and the Grandees».64 From his new position, Cevallos made some timid attempts to offer amnesty, although it was never achieved. Hitherto, Cevallos had been Pizarro’s main rival in the Ministry of State, and their disagreements would never vanish, especially after Pizarro took Cevallos’ post in October 1816.

The conflicts among the ministers of the king reflected the tensions and contradictions inherent in Ferdinand VII’s restoration, which soon gave rise to the myth of a return to a pristine and harmonious past that had in fact never existed. Ferdinand VII himself took vigorous steps in that direction,65 but the king also aspired to

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61 Labrador to Cevallos, 3.11.1814, in: Ramírez de Villaurrutia, España en el Congreso, 61.
62 Spain only intervened after Waterloo and it was through a confictive and brief occupation of the Roussillon in southern France; M. Ramisa Verduguer, «La ocupación española del Rosellón en 1815», in: Hispania 251 (2015), 725–752.
64 Quoted by Villaurrutia, España en el Congreso, 18.
reinforce the monarchy, and in this arena he encountered the opposition of the ultra-reactionary sections. The ultras, members of the high nobility and other privileged sections of society such as the army and the Church, opposed any attempt to appease calls for modernity. The alliance of throne and Church was never complete, thereby revealing a tension between the anti-revolutionary state modernisers and the full-fledged counterrevolutionaries. The ultras did not accept the measures that reinforced the State. In the following years, they reacted against the overtures towards modernisation and centralisation that were decided by Ferdinand, especially after the second restoration of 1823. Their machinations eventually brought about Carlism, which immersed Spain in civil war in the 1830s.

In any case, the peace-keeping system designed for the continent failed in Spain earlier than in any other European country. Pizarro was right that repression would not solve the problems of the restoration; on the contrary, repression would intensify them. The repressive nature of the Spanish monarchy’s political approach to the challenges posed by the post-Napoleonic order forced the liberal opposition to act through clandestine violent insurrections. The liberals maintained a strong presence in certain sections of the army, carrying out continuous resistance with the collaboration of civil sectors. While the wars for independence in Spanish America were intensifying, several insurrections burst throughout the Iberian Peninsula in 1814–1819, until Riego’s pronunciamiento in January 1820 succeeded in imposing a weak king with the reinstallation of the 1812 Constitution. In fact, the opposition against Ferdinand VII had started immediately after his coup in May 1814. Back then, it was believed that two Spanish armies stationed in southern France were ready to defend the constitution. However, when Wellington learnt of their intentions, he intervened and received their allegiance to Ferdinand. Nonetheless, among their ranks figured the leaders of subsequent pronunciamientos like Espoz y Mina and Porlier.

1820 marked the return of revolution to Europe, but it was hardly just a Spanish affair. Similar uprisings in 1820/1821 in Naples, Portugal and Piedmont testify to the spread of the Spanish constitutional revolutionary spark to other regions of southern Europe. The fact that thousands of liberals from these countries had to leave their homelands after the reactionary foreign interventions of 1821 and 1823 gives evidence of the continuing significance of repression and exile in Restoration Europe.

67 La Parra, «Restauración», 219. Wellington’s account of his intervention, by which he promulgated the decree of 4 May to the troops, in: Dispatches vol. 12, 24–6.
4. The Spanish Restoration in European Perspective

Historians of the European Restoration tend to divide the period into two phases separated by the Hundred Days. Here, French chronology dominates. The first Restoration was presided by a sound rhetoric and practice of reconciliation. In fact, reconciliation was a requirement established by the Allies before placing the French Bourbons back on the throne. The Bourbon Restoration was mainly a pragmatic decision believed to be the best option to achieve tranquility in Europe. Concordant with this interpretation, some historians have argued that post-Napoleonic regimes initially implemented strategies marked by the rubric of *extrême centre*, that is, a pragmatic middle located between the perceived extremes of ultra-royalism and revolution. This policy was connected with the maintenance of most of the members of the previous administrations. The implementation of limited purges permitted many state servants and career professionals to maintain their posts. Moreover, in this institutional project, moderation acted as a new legitimacy closely related to the activities of administrators who were apparently ideologically neutral. The restored monarchies were to cement union, peace and prosperity, thereby offering ambiguous political instruments of national reconciliation such as the French *Charte* and the Dutch Constitution. Fundamentally, the governments of the Restoration were charged with the task of establishing the order and stability needed for recovering prosperity.\(^{70}\)

However, the Restoration mutated its character with the return of Napoleon in March 1815. The Hundred Days exposed the breakdown of the reconciliatory aspirations of the first Restoration. After Napoleon's definitive demise, reactionary impulses arose across the Continent, and the Spanish repression became less extravagant. In France, the White Terror was unleashed in the *Midi* by ultra-royalists who were disaffected with the monarchy's unwillingness to punish revolutionaries and Bonapartists. Their leaders, among them the duke of Angoulême (the king's nephew), had found refuge in Spain during the Hundred Days.\(^{71}\) The repression caused some 300 deaths and forced thousands to leave the region. Although they served a reactionary political programme, these actions were for the most part temporary, focussed on certain areas, favoured by social disorder, and disapproved by the authorities in Paris and by the foreign occupying forces. However, they were accompanied by a punitive official policy that included a massive purge of the administration and the army – with selective executions –, and a legislative offensive launched in the Chamber of Deputies between October 1815 and January 1816 by ultras gathered around influential members of the royal family. Special courts (*cours prévôtales*) condemned some 9000 people for political offenses, and the 153 surviving regicides were banished. Hundreds of Bonapartists went into exile, with many crossing the Atlantic.\(^{72}\) Others

\(^{70}\) For France, see P. Serna, *La république des girouettes. 1789–1815 et au-delà. Une anomalie politique: la France de l’extrême centre*, Seyssel 2005; and for the Netherlands, see Lok, «L’extrême centre».


\(^{72}\) R. Blaufarb, *Bonapartists in the Borderlands: French Exiles and Refugees on the Gulf Coast, 1815–1835*, Tus
settled in Belgium, as the new fundamental law of the Netherlands offered protection to foreigners, and the authorities decided not to comply with the clause of the Second Treaty of Paris that forbade expelled French nationals from residing in neighbouring countries.73 However, ultimately Louis XVIII and his ministers sought to monitor the process to ensure that repression was kept within reasonable limits, and they preferred to focus on reconciliation as a means to consolidate the Bourbons’ fragile rule, much to the anger of the ultras who continued a hard opposition against a government suspected of liberal sympathies.74

In the following years, the Concert of Europe evolved into an increasingly repressive system. In France, Austria, the Netherlands and most German and Italian states, ultra-royalism gained influence. European liberals were put under intensifying surveillance. Repressive instruments like the Carlsbad Decrees (1819) were activated. The reactionary drift was clear; by 1820, the revolution had broken out in the south of the continent, and the assassination of the duke of Berry in France paved the way to the reactionary government of Villele (1821).75 The European Restoration exhibited its repressive drift most clearly with the Austrian and French military interventions of 1821 and 1823 against the temperate constitutional regimes installed in Naples, Piedmont and Spain.

Hence: how does the Spanish Restoration fit into this European narrative? Due to its early virulence and absence of compromise with the past, Ferdinand’s restoration differs from the paradigm of the first European restoration, namely the French. However, both forms tended to converge after the second restoration. Initially, the Spanish king showed, just like Louis XVIII and William I did, a spirit of reconciliation, yet the reconciliation never materialised. In fact, repression became the official way of dealing with the revolutionary past. Unlike any other European country before the Hundred Days, thousands of afrancesados were banished and liberals were persecuted. This policy was condemned by the European powers, which even used it as an argument for the relegation of Spain from high-power politics. Significantly, the repression in France after the Hundred Days affected as many individuals and took considerably more lives than the Spanish, yet it was not perceived in Europe as so integral to Louis XVIII’s policy as it was to Ferdinand VII’s. Moreover, its diplomatic effects were not as damaging to France’s international position. Nonetheless, in 1816, the conference of ambassadors of the Allies that surveyed the French government demanded Louis XVIII to contain the ultras and to put an end to a «système de réaction...
aussi insensé», as the Russian representative put it in April. The hideous image acquired by Ferdinand VII and his government had less to do with the actual violence of the Spanish repression, and more to do with its early timing and its obstinacy with the liberals – anti-Napoleonic fighters for freedom admired across the continent –, a minority within the total of Spanish exiles. The disposition in Europe to revive the Spanish «black legend» – conveniently used by the big powers and public opinion to justify the country’s marginalisation from international affairs, and which was propagated by the Spanish exiles themselves in their opposition campaign against Ferdinand VII – did the rest.

Yet, there was also an effort to install a moderate policy in Spain, an extrême centre attempt, which was significant. Its proponents were officials and bureaucrats, many of whom had served the Cortes and the Regency. They acquired authority when Pizarro became Secretary of State in October 1816. Together with influential ministers, and the temporary backing of the king, Pizarro proposed a political programme in line with the European paradigm: Reconciliation and reform should go hand in hand to ensure the recovery of Spanish economic and political strength, yet their project was ultimately defeated by the ultras, who competed with them to set the direction of the government and to win the favour of the king. In many ways, the triumph of the Spanish reactionaries anticipated the evolution of the continent in the following years, when the European regimes realised that a more or less temperate policy was unable to placate the demands of an increasingly potent constitutional movement that would first surface in Spain. Nevertheless, the moderate alternative did not disappear, not even in Spain, where many afrancesados – whose state project coincided in many aspects with the programme of the extrême cêntre – were incorporated by Ferdinand VII to his administration during the last decade of his reign (1823–1833), which was thus marked by an ambiguous modernising effort.

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76 Quoted in Démier, La France de la Restauration, 237.
77 For the relationship between the liberals and the black legend, see J. Fernández-Sebastián, «Los desaciertos de nuestros padres. Los liberales y los orígenes del llamado ‹problema español›», in: M. J. Villaverde / F. Castilla (eds.), La sombra de la leyenda negra, Madrid 2016, 483–510.
«Strange Means of Governing»: The Spanish Restoration in European Perspective (1813–1820)

This article proposes a reassessment of the Spanish Restoration through a study of its connections with, and departures from, European post-war strategies. Dominating accounts focus on two intertwined narratives: the definitive displacement of Spain from the category of great power, and the political involution of King Ferdinand VII’s reactionary monarchy. These aspects were highlighted by numerous contemporaries and have been considered by most historians, yet they would benefit from a reappraisal that is comparative and considers transnational entanglements. This article addresses whether the character of the Spanish Restoration differed from the processes that were experimented in other parts of Europe and, if so, what the consequences of its particular situation were both for Spain and the international order.

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a reassessment of the Spanish Restoration through a study of its connections with, and departures from, European post-war strategies. Dominating accounts focus on two intertwined narratives: the definitive displacement of Spain from the category of great power, and the political involution of King Ferdinand VII’s reactionary monarchy. These aspects were highlighted by numerous contemporaries and have been considered by most historians, yet they would benefit from a reappraisal that is comparative and considers transnational entanglements. This article addresses whether the character of the Spanish Restoration differed from the processes that were experimented in other parts of Europe and, if so, what the consequences of its particular situation were both for Spain and the international order.

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