Queen Victoria and Germany

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to depict Queen Victoria's changing image of Germany from the beginning of her life until the end of her reign. The Queen's perception of Germany was divided between Prussia on the one hand and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha on the other, but only the first one underwent several significant changes. During her childhood, she was taught a positive, if nebulous impression of the smaller German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, but this area of interest had to take second place during the first years of the Queen's reign. Queen Victoria's marriage with Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha reinforced and eventually completed Queen Victoria's perception of Germany. From now on, the Queen felt a close emotional connection with Prussia, which she transferred to the German Confederation (and later the German Empire) in its entirety. After her husband's death in 1861, Queen Victoria continued to apply Prince Albert's political concepts of Germany to a nation that experienced considerable political and geographical changes, both of which did not find the Queen's approval, since they were no longer in accordance with Prince Albert's political beliefs. As a consequence, Queen Victoria watched the German Empire under the leadership of Prussia with ever growing scepticism. The reign of her grandson Emperor William II eliminated then any remaining emotional identification of the Queen with Germany, whose interest in the German Empire was therewith limited to a mere concern for family members.

The emphasis on Queen Victoria's image of Germany leads to a new evaluation of the British monarch. First of all, she emerges as a sovereign who saw herself as a vital part of the political process, especially in the field of foreign affairs; secondly, Queen Victoria had no monolithic image of Germany, since she clearly distinguished between smaller states and Prussia; and thirdly, the marriage associations of Queen Victoria's nine children provide a remarkable illustration of the Queen's own changing image of Germany.
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PREFACE

I wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement which numerous institutions and individuals have given me during the last three years.

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen for granting me permission to make use of material held at the Royal Archives relating to Queen Victoria and her correspondence. I also would like to thank Lady Sheila de Bellaigue, the Registrar of the Royal Archive, and her staff, for their assistance during my research at Windsor Castle.

In Germany, I owe particular thanks to H.R.H. Princess Margaret of Hesse, for granting me permission to consult the correspondence of Princess Alice of Hesse. I also would like to thank the staff of the Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv at Berlin and the Hessisches Familienarchiv at Darmstadt.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the staff of the following libraries and institutions in which I have worked: University College Library, British Library, Senate House Library, Institute of Historical Research, German Historical Institute, and Cambridge University Library.

Above all, I would like to thank Prof. Martin Daunton and Prof. Mary Fulbrook for their continuous support and useful advice.

Finally, on a more personal level, I wish to thank my family and friends for their encouragement - especially Holger, for being there. I would like to express my gratitude to my parents for their emotional and financial support over the past twenty-seven years. This dissertation is dedicated to them.
On 22 January 1901, the long life of Queen Victoria came to an end. Many of her children and grandchildren had assembled at her deathbed, amongst these the Queen's eldest son, the new English King Edward VII, and the Queen's eldest grandson, Emperor William II of Germany. It is certainly an astonishing historical fact that this occasion saw the peaceful gathering of two sovereigns who in subsequent years would develop into antagonists and lead their respective countries on the path towards the First World War.

The aim of this thesis is to depict the process that preceded this international constellation, since it is a remarkable historical phenomenon that the two countries of Great Britain and Germany, which developed into fierce enemies after the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, had been closely linked by religious and marriage alliances of their royal houses throughout the nineteenth century. This study will depict Queen Victoria's changing perception of Germany by characterizing distinct influences which gradually transformed the Queen's image from initially rather nebulous to subsequently sympathetic to finally indifferent.

Among the large amount of material published about Queen Victoria, no previous study has concentrated exclusively on the issue of Queen Victoria and her image of Germany, which is rather astonishing considering that the Queen's German background and her later links with Germany make this in fact a very interesting and significant topic.

The vast majority of biographies about Queen Victoria are romanticizing, non-scholarly descriptions of her personal life, and their rather anecdotal approach implies that they are of no great use to critical historical research.¹ A second group of studies concentrating on the life of Queen Victoria place the monarch into the historical framework of political developments, but eventually still overemphasize the individual destiny of the Queen, thus neglecting both her own political beliefs and the

indispensable historical background.\textsuperscript{2} The third and final set of publications about Queen Victoria consists of reliable works of reference which, however, do not put the focus on her relations with Germany.\textsuperscript{3} Thus, it is left to this thesis to add this important and hitherto neglected perspective to the historiographical evaluation.

It will be the aim of this thesis to add a new angle to the already existing range of historical studies. Considering that previous publications often chiefly focused on Queen Victoria's biography, it seems appropriate to clarify the interaction between the progress of Germany's domestic developments and Queen Victoria's perception of Germany. An important indication of this development is the gradual adjustment of the marriage associations of Queen Victoria's nine children: whereas the international marriage links of Victoria's three oldest children were politically highly significant, the marriage decisions of her younger children ceased to have this political importance but gained in their social relevance instead.

Furthermore, Queen Victoria's image of Germany as such will be analyzed, since the fact that the German Confederation was still in the process of finding its national unity resulted in a partition of the Queen's perception into the smaller German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha on the one hand and the powerful German state of Prussia on the other hand. Thus, the parallel adaptation of both images to the already mentioned process of Germany's political development will be depicted.

An additional field of interest of this study is the evaluation of Queen Victoria's own political understanding of her role as British monarch. Since the Queen saw the monarchy as a vital component in the formation of the political process, the nature of the British monarchy in the second half of the nineteenth century will be discussed, along with its evaluation by the politically interested part of the British public. The corresponding historiography can be divided into two main parts: one earlier group of historians who tend to depict Queen Victoria's importance mainly with a view to her influence on ministerial appointments, an approach which lacks in


appropriateness, and a second, more recent set of scholarly publications, which establish the role of the monarchy with regard to the historical context of political and social developments, and it is this second approach which the present thesis will apply to the specific aspect of the Queen’s perception of Germany.

Methodologically, this thesis concentrates on the use of both archive material and published primary sources, since Queen Victoria’s emotional approach to politics has to be reflected in the foundation of historical argument. What is more, although a vast amount of material has already been published, important sources are still only available in the various archives at Berlin/Germany, Darmstadt/Germany and at Windsor Castle. How successful the use of hitherto unpublished material can actually be has been shown by recent studies in related fields, which demonstrates that the incorporation of archive sources provides plenty of scope for fresh insight into such a topic. In combination with extracts from contemporary newspapers - mainly the Times-, this study will thus provide a description of Queen Victoria’s changing image of Germany.

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II: THE PLACE OF THE BRITISH MONARCHY
(1837-1901)

In 1837, at the time of Queen Victoria’s succession, the image of the British monarchy was flawed: madness, immorality and deficiency of the three previous Kings had rendered the service of the monarch obsolete in the eyes of the politically interested part of the British nation. Sixty-four years later, Britain mourned a Queen who had reshaped the monarchical tradition, who symbolized the British Empire, and who was seen as the glorification of Britain’s authority. Before starting to analyze the chronological development of this phenomenon, this section will depict Queen Victoria’s own understanding of her role as British monarch, her political education, her participation in the political process and her predominant interest in foreign affairs. The last point of this chapter will then describe the public perception of the monarchy, which will be specified throughout the subsequent chapters.

II-1: QUEEN VICTORIA’S POLITICAL BELIEFS

It is important to realize that Queen Victoria was convinced that she had in fact a political role to play, since she perceived the monarchy as a vital part in the political process. This opinion had been taught to the young Princess by her uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, and his trusted adviser, Baron Stockmar; these two Germans instructed Victoria about her role as the future Queen of England at a time when her uncle, King William IV, was still King of England. Thus, it was this vital German influence, together with the constant presence of her German mother, which shaped the young Princess’s decision to be “a working Queen rather than a show monarch.”¹ The Queen’s subsequent marriage with Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha deepened the Queen’s perception of the responsibility which the Crown had in British politics, and it also strengthened her interest in German affairs.

A second important insight into Queen Victoria’s political understanding is the fact that she always saw politics from a very personal perspective. Certainly not supplied with the talent to view political developments with an abstract mind, the Queen judged governmental proceedings both in Britain and abroad under a very

emotional aspect, and it was left to her advisers to balance this approach. The most striking example for this emotional approach of Queen Victoria to politics was her absolute dislike of Bismarck, a sentiment chiefly based on the negative personal impressions she received from the Princess Royal.

A third and final aspect of the basic understanding of Queen Victoria's approach to her role is her own statement that "a democratic monarchy (...) she will not consent to belong to." This observation was written when Gladstone was Prime Minister, a man with whom Queen Victoria never saw eye to eye whenever political considerations were concerned. Nevertheless, it is an interesting notion to deny democratic tendencies at a time when they made themselves increasingly felt, since the end of the nineteenth century undoubtedly had its democratic indications, such as the extended franchise, an increasing number of newspapers and the beginning rise of the trade unions. There can be no doubt that the Queen's reign was a representation of a constitutional monarchy, and it is unfortunate that Victoria herself never explained what she actually meant by a democratic monarchy; however, it is a safe assumption that the Queen's statement was an expression of her conservative tendencies during the last part of her life, since she then increasingly associated 'liberal' (and especially the Liberalism of Gladstone) with 'democratic', thus giving the term an abusive connotation. The correlation is certainly legitimate in an abstract sense, since most definitions of 'liberal' include a reference to 'democratic', but by denying the latest political development its genuine status, the Queen shut her eyes to the current social and political processes.

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4 See the definitions of 'liberal' in the OED, vol.8 (Oxford, 1989), p.882: "tending in the direction of freedom or democracy" and in Funk/Wagnall, New 'standard' dictionary of the English language (New York, 1952), p.1426: "tending toward that which is democratic or republican."
Queen Victoria's political beliefs remained Whiggish throughout her life; her mother and King Leopold of the Belgians were the first political influences the Princess experienced, and the Princess's political education started on a distinctly liberal connotation, since Victoria's father, the Duke of Kent (son of King George III) was known for his Whiggish opinions. After the Duke's premature death, his widow then continued to instruct Victoria according to the views of her late husband. This tendency was strengthened by the Duchess's brother, King Leopold of the Belgians and his already mentioned personal friend, Baron Stockmar, who both stressed the importance of a constitutionally based government for Britain. It was pure coincidence which combined the Queen after her succession with a Whig Prime Minister, and Melbourne soon became a trusted adviser of the young Queen. He continued the process of instructing Victoria with affairs of state, but before long, his influential position was replaced by the Queen's husband. From then on, Prince Albert provided the Queen with the effective services of a private secretary and he eventually completed Victoria's political education. During the Queen's marriage with Albert, the Prince counterbalanced Victoria's initial inclination towards the Whigs with a neutral perception of party politics, but after his death, Queen Victoria returned to the political opinions of her youth and applied them again. However, by that time the political spectrum in Britain had changed so fundamentally that what had seemed liberal in 1840 was in fact conservative by 1880; as a consequence Queen Victoria approved of Disraeli and in fact identified with his conservative outlook.

In order to be adequately informed, the Queen always read all the government despatches; as an additional source of information, she read newspaper articles as well. The last habit began under Prince Albert, who prepared selected articles for the Queen's inspection; in the following years, the Queen's two eldest daughters, married German Princes and living in Germany, recommended certain newspapers to their mother, while in later years the Queen read an extensive range of British and German

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5 D.Cannadine is certainly wrong in his assumption that Queen Victoria did not read newspapers. See: D Cannadine, The pleasures of the past (London, 1989), p.29.

6 For example: 17/06/1865 The Crown Princess of Prussia to Queen Victoria: "I wish you would take in the Volkszeitung, a Prussian paper you ought to have, and it is the only good, courageous and honest one, capitally written, of course hated by the reigning party; it is the
newspapers. A further source of information for Queen Victoria were the letters she received from her various relatives on the Continent; since she kept up a regular correspondence with all her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, this is indeed a reservoir of knowledge which should not be taken too lightly, for among the extensive gossip, important news was delivered as well.

II-2: QUEEN VICTORIA AS A CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCH

The reference to the Queen’s education leads to the question whether she was in fact able to influence the political process. Here, some basic observations about the constitutionally granted competencies of the British monarchy under Queen Victoria will help to make the following explanations more accessible. Within constitutional history, it must be kept in mind that in the middle of the nineteenth century, the era of administrative and parliamentary reform had been reached. Since 1867, England had formed a distinct constitutional monarchy, which stood in sharp contrast to both the monarchies of Queen Victoria’s predecessors and the ones prevalent on the continent. Queen Victoria’s constitutional rights can be divided into the fields of selecting ministers, participating in the shaping of politics, and facilitating or discouraging reforms.\(^7\) Theoretically speaking, the Crown also had the right to declare war, and it was the head of both army and navy, but in practice these claims had been replaced by ministerial or administrative bodies. The only niche in which the Crown still had considerable influence was indeed limited to the three areas described above, with the main concentration on ministerial matters. This constitutionalized, personalized function of the monarchy resulted in a mutual dependence of ministers and monarch, or, as Le May put it, the Queen “was there, and Ministers had to live with her. She, only one that has stuck to Fritz Holstein through thick and thin. You ought to leave off the Kölnische Zeitung. It has turned Bismarckite since three months, contains many untruths and is really not worth reading any longer.” In: R.Fulford (ed.), *Your dear letter, private correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1865-1871* (London, 1971), p.31.

for her part, had to live with them."^8

Hence, the ministers formed the actual authority, but the monarch was nonetheless a momentous voice to be reckoned with, as "the constitutional theory of the time was (...) that the Sovereign acted on the advice of the Minister but retained a right to ‘personal influence’".^9 An additional area of influence for the monarchy was the domain of British society, where the Crown was successful in establishing itself as a welfare monarchy, based on the active pursuit of charitable interests. Therefore, Cannadine’s opinion that Victoria and Albert entertained a "backward-looking conception of monarchy"^10 is highly dubious, since the emphasis they both put on the constitutional background of the British monarchy, combined with their accentuation of philanthropy, clearly contradicts the notion of an absolutistic model. This development was also realized by the Times, which stated that "it is not too much to say that constitutional Monarchy was never so strong in the approval of the civilized world. The Queen still remains the most conspicuous and illustrious example of all that a constitutional Monarch ought to be" (3 April 1879).

II-3: GERMANY AS THE FOCUS OF ROYAL INTEREST

The following explications about Queen Victoria’s influence on the political process will be limited to the field of foreign policy, since the limitations of the thesis do not allow to include the domestic sphere as well. Firstly, it is fundamental for the understanding of Queen Victoria’s political point of view to realize that she interpreted any ministerial advice as a mere counsel which had no restraining power whatsoever. The second important claim of Queen Victoria was her insistence to be consulted before any governmental resolutions were agreed upon; whenever she felt

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this was not the case, the Queen unfailingly reminded her ministers "that no ministerial decision could properly be taken without her prior knowledge."\(^{11}\)

This demand of Queen Victoria was particularly significant with respect to foreign affairs, since she regarded these as an area of highly personal interest. As she was increasingly related to most European royal houses, the Queen perceived foreign affairs as her special domain; this was certainly strengthened by the already explained tendency of Victoria to view politics in a very personal light. Thus, the Queen's interest was always awakened whenever foreign affairs were concerned, especially in relation to Germany, since her mother, her uncle King Leopold and her husband all originated from the small German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Later personal friendships and marriage connections with the courts of Prussia and Hesse strengthened this emotional bond of Queen Victoria with Germany. It is indeed important to understand that the image which Queen Victoria had of Germany throughout her life was always a very emotional one. The Queen's concept of Germany started on an immensely personal note, since it was the family tie of her mother and of King Leopold which made her initially interested in Saxe-Coburg and Gotha as a part of Germany, and this first bond was then strengthened by her marriage to Prince Albert.

However, her husband was the first one who also implemented a political idea regarding Germany in Victoria's frame of mind. Taking into account that Prince Albert emphasized the political importance of smaller German states, of which Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was one, his object for Germany was the equal status for all states. This notion excluded Austria, which Albert considered as a separate nation which should not be included in the political future of Germany. When Albert and Stockmar approached the Prussian King to be godfather for the Prince of Wales, the acceptance of King Frederick William IV formed the first close bond between the royal families of Britain and Germany. This development was seen as an honour by the Prussian side, since it was thus actively incorporated into the circle of European powers. Under King Frederick William IV's reign, Prince Albert formulated his hopeful policy for a liberal, united Germany, in which all states would have equal rights. The long-term aim of Albert was the unification of all German states, under the moral leadership of

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\(^{11}\) N.Wilding/P.Laundy (edd.), *An encyclopedia of parliament* (London\(^{4}\), 1971), p.763.
Prussia, which, after the dismissal of an Austrian incorporation, remained as the largest and most powerful state of the German Confederation. Another very important point for Albert was the adoption of a liberal course of policy within this process of unification, since Stockmar's influence had resulted in his fervent advocating of a constitutionally based political course.

Yet the process of the revolution of 1848 disappointed both the Prince Consort and his wife considerably, since Albert failed to convince either the Foreign Office or Prussian King of his constitutional ideas. Regarding the Foreign Office, Victoria and Albert claimed "the right to ultimate decisions" whenever British relations with Germany were concerned, and this made a collision inevitable sooner or later. The Foreign Office simply did not agree with Albert's emphasis on a closer association between Britain and a united Germany, since it saw European affairs in a much more balanced perspective: compared with France, Russia and Austria-Hungary, Prussia was not regarded as a nation of equal importance. Thus, the personal predilection of Victoria and Albert clashed with the large-scale political view of the Foreign Secretaries, who had to take an European perspective into account.

However, despite the fact that Queen Victoria, backed by Albert, came to see the domain of foreign policy as a specific field in which she felt entitled to make her opinion distinctly heard, this did not necessarily lead to a successful royal influence of the Foreign Office, since Victoria and Albert generally failed to convince the Foreign Secretaries of their German objectives. Instead, Albert chose the channel of family correspondence between the royal houses of Britain and Prussia as an alternative. His addressee after 1848 was mainly King Frederick William IV's younger brother, Prince William, whom Victoria and Albert regarded as their liberal hope for the future. Since they did not show their personal correspondence with the Prussian royal family to the Foreign Secretaries (even in cases when political affairs were discussed), the latter were apt to regard these dealings as entirely personal communications, without subscribing any deeper political significance to them. This exchange of letters between the royalty of Great Britain and Prussia was therefore not

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13 The other fields of the Queen's special interest were the Army, the Navy and the Church, but these will not be taken into account here.
put to use in the process of British diplomacy, and only in later years did Foreign Secretaries then specifically respond to the Queen’s personal approach to German sovereigns through her letters.

During Albert’s lifetime, however, the relations between the monarchy and the Foreign Office was characterized by frictions. The minister with whom Victoria and Albert had the most difficulties was certainly Palmerston. Their discord sprang from a discrepant appreciation of the role of the monarchy, since Palmerston’s conception of regal privileges differed fundamentally from that of the royal couple. He simply did not acknowledge the monarch’s claim to have the final decision in state affairs, as “to Victoria ministers were still her ministers; to Palmerston they were the servants of Parliament and through Parliament of the British people.” This attitude of Palmerston comprised not to submit all despatches for royal approval; once Queen Victoria was informed about this lack of knowledge, she insisted in a memorandum, drafted by Stockmar, on two basic royal rights: firstly, that he had to state his intentions to let the sovereign approve or alter them, and, secondly, that once the Queen’s sanction had been given, the measures would not be altered again. Palmerston agreed, only to continue in his original attitude some weeks later, and it took the monarch and her minister several years until they finally found a way to come to an agreeable co-operation.

However, it is a fact often overlooked that the political approach to the problems leading to 1848 was so similar in the schemes of Palmerston and Prince Albert that in theory they might well have combined forces: both men saw the British

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15 Stockmar drafted the memorandum on 12 March 1850: “The least the Queen has a right to require of her Minister is: 1. That he will distinctly state what he proposes in a given case, in order that the Queen may know as distinctly what she has to give her royal sanction. 2. Having given once her sanction to a measure, the Minister who, in the execution of such measure alters or modifies it arbitrarily, commits an act of dishonesty towards the Crown, which the Queen has an undoubted constitutional right to visit with the dismissal of that Minister.” In: A.C.Benson/V.Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria (London, 1907), first series, vol.2, p.282.
The place of the British monarchy

II: The place of the British monarchy

...constitutionalism as a model for other nations, they agreed that revolutionary upheavals should in no case threaten aristocratic rights, and they both favoured the exclusion of Austria from Germany. Yet any possibility for a co-operation between the foreign secretary and the court was destroyed by their opposite concept of the function of the crown and, respectively, of the foreign office. Hence, any potential for a productive teamwork was sabotaged by Victoria's and Albert's "claim to regard foreign politics as the Crown's special preserve." Palmerston, on the other hand, not only had to deal with his monarch's opinions, but also with those of the Prime Minister Russell, those of the other members of the cabinet and also those of the British parliament. Additionally, Palmerston viewed the progress of the British foreign policy with an impartial eye, judging all European states with equal importance, whereas Queen Victoria and Prince Albert estimated political developments from a much more personal perspective, since they were directly related to German states, and not to France, Russia or Austria.

The conservative turn of King William I immediately after his succession in 1861 frustrated Albert deeply, but the Prince's death soon afterwards ended the attempts of the British royal family to influence Prussian policy on the royal level. For Queen Victoria personally, the years of marriage to Albert shaped her opinion about Germany, and she upheld these views even after her husband's premature death. After that, the constellation between Queen Victoria and her ministers changed insofar as the Queen withdrew from public life and lived secluded at either Balmoral/Scotland or at Osborne/Isle of Wight. However, this seclusion from public life did not include a retirement from her duties as the British sovereign, as the Queen continued to have a vivid interest in the political affairs of Britain, especially with regard to German affairs. This period of privacy introduced a new mechanism in the relationship between Queen Victoria and her ministers, since she insisted on continually having a 'minister in attendance' at either of her residences or during her visits to the Continent. This arrangement enabled her to stay in close contact with the political

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16 G.J. Billy pointed out just recently: "Palmerston firmly believed that Britain's constitutional monarchy was the best form of government." In: G.J. Billy, Palmerston's foreign policy: 1848 (New York, 1993), p. 17.

17 Farrer, The monarchy in politics, p. 212.
development and it also made a direct influence of the Queen possible despite her withdrawn social life.

During the following years, Disraeli and Gladstone became the two most prominent Prime Ministers of Britain. Queen Victoria clearly favoured Disraeli, who had the personal advantage of being able to manipulate the Queen in a highly flattering manner, an attitude which perceived Queen Victoria much more in her gender-role than in her function as British monarch. At the same time, female stereotypes and socially codified gender-particularities found a fertile ground in the Queen's predominantly conservative partiality. Gladstone, on the other hand, saw no necessity to adopt Disraeli's complimentary approach for himself, since he perceived the Queen in her political role as a British institution, which was experienced by the Queen as very impersonal. This was not helped by Gladstone's emphasis on the domestic policy of Britain, while Queen Victoria heartily agreed with Disraeli's preference of foreign and especially imperial British policy.

After Prince Albert's death, Queen Victoria preserved her late husband's opinions at a time when immense alterations took place in Prussia, for Bismarck's appointment in 1862 added a political figure to the international constellation of which Albert had simply not been aware. Thus, in 1864, the Queen still represented Albert's point of view in the Schleswig-Holstein conflict, and her vehement appeal for neutrality contributed to the fact that Great Britain was not involved in this conflict any more than on the diplomatic side. By actively supporting the peace-wing of the divided cabinet, the Queen succeeded in preventing an active participation of Britain in the Schleswig-Holstein conflict, since without the royal support, the cabinet's decision might have been in favour of war. Here, her political conviction was still shaped by Albert's pre-1861 beliefs; as a consequence, she denied the Danish side the right to govern the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Yet however pro-Prussian her approach was at that time, the Queen did not sanction the annexation of the Duchies by Prussia after the Austro-Prussian war in 1866, a fight which was perceived by Victoria as her first disappointment about the political conduct of Prussia. Although Austria, according to Albert, should be excluded from the formation of a united German state, its inhabitants were still regarded as German in spirit and language by
him and his wife, and Queen Victoria thoroughly condemned what to her was a bloodshed between brother Germans.

From this point onwards, Queen Victoria’s opinion about Bismarck was utterly disapproving, not only because of the Princess Royal’s negative personal view of the German Chancellor, but also because of Bismarck’s immense influence on the Prussian King William I, which Queen Victoria saw as a diminution of royal prerogatives. What is more, when the German Empire became an equal European power after her unification in 1871, “the English ideal became superfluous,”18 and Germany began to develop political conceptions distinctly of her own making, a process which ultimately did not need the consent of any other country. This increase in self-confidence was not necessarily to the liking of Queen Victoria, who would have preferred a unification along the lines of Albert’s thinking; instead, Prussia became in fact the leading power of Germany, but not in the moral field, but in the political arena. Hence, Queen Victoria stopped to apply Albert’s opinions, and came to develop political ideas of her own. Simultaneously, she ceased to demand the last decision in foreign affairs with regard to Germany, but, based on her increasing conservative preference, the Queen was more willing to co-operate with the conservative than with liberal governments. Yet whatever ministers Britain had, Queen Victoria made her interest in the political development of Britain pointedly clear.

Considering that this period in British history saw the growing importance of parties, it is vital to realize that the possibility of a monarchical influence on politics decreased considerably; however, the same era witnessed the transformation of Queen Victoria from a British monarch into the symbol of the British Empire. Hence, while the former monarchical power of the British monarchy was diminished, its status was “strengthened, stabilized and modernized during Victoria’s reign.”19 However,

Cannadine's statement that "power was exchanged for popularity" has to be refuted in its severity, since his observation wrongly implies that Queen Victoria had no influence whatsoever, and although Queen Victoria's political power did decrease, her voice was in fact heard in the process of policy formation.

Towards the end of the Queen's reign, she no longer denied the Foreign Office its leading role in the representation of British foreign affairs, but Victoria did reserve an advisory role for herself in this domain. The year 1888 stands for the last decisive change in the Queen's perception of Germany. First, the death of Emperor William I raised her long-standing hopes for her son-in-law, Frederick William, who finally succeeded to the German throne, but his cancer ultimately prevented any decisive changes in the direction of Germany's policy. Accordingly, the influence of Bismarck remained unbroken into the next reign of William II, Queen Victoria's grandson. With his succession, the Queen lost any remaining interest in influencing German affairs, and her personal opinion of Germany deteriorated into indifference. Victoria did keep up an amiable relationship with William II, but she ceased to consider Anglo-German relations as her first priority. Any attempts to form a closer understanding between the two nations during the years following 1888 originated from individual ministers. Thus, the last decade of Queen Victoria's life saw a complete reversal of her original enthusiasm about Germany.

The Queen's political relationship with her last Prime Minister Salisbury was that of mutual regard and trust. Based on this reciprocal reliance, the Queen showed politically relevant sections of her correspondence to Salisbury, an attitude which was completely contrary to the Queen's earlier attitude. Although Queen Victoria left the development of domestic and foreign relations increasingly to Salisbury and the Foreign Office, Salisbury made frequent use of the Queen's long experience and family relationships on the continent by asking her opinion on selected matters. Hence, although Queen Victoria still believed that the monarchy had "some duty of

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direction in foreign policy," she did not insist on this approach with the same vehemence than in previous years.

In this context, it is important to distinguish between the different political levels associated with the subject of this study: Queen Victoria’s personal approach to politics, which responded to political changes in Germany, which then led to alterations in her perception of Germany.

II-4: ROYAL MARRIAGES I

Simultaneous with the Queen’s changing opinion about Germany, she also developed ideas about appropriate royal marriages, which differed decisively from Albert’s original plans. A very important element in the personal relationship of Queen Victoria with Germany were indeed the various marriage connections promoted by Albert and herself. Considering that Britain and several states of the German Confederation shared the same religion, the thought of forming marriage links between Victoria’s and Albert’s children and German Princes was certainly neither strange nor untraditional. During the reigns of the Hanoverian Kings, marriage links with Germany had been the rule. Hence, the marriage of the eldest daughter of Victoria and Albert to Prince Frederick William of Prussia, and of their second daughter Alice to Prince Louis of Hesse was seen as a strengthening of traditional links by Victoria and Albert. These first two marriage connections must still be seen as a preference to armed conflict, since they replaced the alternative of gaining territory by war; yet although neither country did actually reshape its geographical territory, these links certainly assisted in claiming additional channels of influence, thus forming an area of power which should not be underestimated.

However, any political significance with regard to the royal children’s marriages ceased to exist after 1861, when Queen Victoria did not pursue this area of her husband’s aims any longer. In 1863, she only insisted on the marriage of the Prince of Wales to the Princess of Denmark because it had been planned during Albert’s lifetime, but she failed to see that this link had gained enormous political complexity once the Schleswig-Holstein conflict became serious.

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After this union, the subsequent marriages of the Queen’s children failed to have any political relevance; this development was based on the changes the political spectrum of Britain underwent from the 1860s until the 1880s, since politicians and parties were gradually taking over political importance from the monarchy. Instead, royal marriages gained in social significance, since Princess Louise married a commoner in 1871, and Princess Beatrice married Prince Battenberg in 1885, the latter being regarded of inferior royal rank by the German side. Both links were certainly a sign of the times, since the transformation of the traditional marriage links were not restricted to the set of British royalty any longer. The same development took place in the aristocratic class, where the younger generation increasingly married outside its own social boundary, thus combining lineage with capital.22

The marriages of the nine children of Queen Victoria can certainly serve as a striking illustration of the political and social development of Britain: whereas the marriage of the Queen’s first child, Princess Victoria, to a Prussian Prince was generally hailed as a politically important demonstration of the friendship between Britain and Germany, the marriage of the Queen’s last child, Princess Beatrice, to a Prince of Battenberg was personally justified by Victoria as a means of avoiding a degeneration of the British royal family by replenishing it with ‘fresh blood’. Considering that Britain was a self-confident nation, there was no need to intensify the bond between ‘nation’ and ‘dynasty’, and Queen Victoria’s jubilees showed convincingly that the Queen was indeed the symbolic head of Britain. As a consequence, the marriage of Queen Victoria’s children ceased to have a political importance, but gained in their social significance instead.

Germany, on the other hand, was a rather young nation, in which the formation of the state had just been completed; as a consequence, “the articulation of ideas of the nation”23 was still in progress. Thus, under the guidance of Bismarck, Germany developed the idea of a nation finally unified under one royal house. This approach was based on the “need to accommodate the nationalist tendencies of the

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II: The place of the British monarchy

period while at the same time safeguarding monarchist rule, a development which stood in striking contrast to the simultaneous process in Great Britain, where the association between nation and monarchy was already established by tradition.

II-5: THE QUEEN AND THE NATION

Interestingly enough, the Queen’s decision to allow royal marriages with commoners was highly welcomed by the British public, since it was seen as a step to widen the acceptance of the monarchy to new classes. This leads to the broader question which image the politically interested part of the British public in fact had of Queen Victoria. In 1837, Victoria’s accession marked the inauguration of a new image of the British monarchy, since Queen Victoria, advised by King Leopold and Stockmar, censured her own undeniable German background and accentuated her British upbringing. This emphasis on the distinctly British background of the Queen contrasted favourably with the Hanoverian background of former British Kings. What is more, Queen Victoria succeeded in adding a female connotation to the image of the British monarchy, and the combination of this gender accentuation with the emphasis on the British upbringing of Queen Victoria facilitated a positive image of the British monarchy for the first time since the reign of George III. Croke’s pamphlet, *England as it is, or the state and prospects of society under the existing Government, to be remedied only by Queen Victoria, in the character of a patriot queen* of 1839 indeed illuminates how, after her succession, the Queen was connected with immense hopes of (as Croke put it) restoring England to her due share of global influence, emphasizing the monarchy as an essential part in the formation of government policy.

The Queen’s subsequent marriage to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha

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25 A. Croke, *England as it is, or the state and prospects of society under the existing government, to be remedied only by Queen Victoria, in the character of a patriot queen* (London, 1839), p.76.
The place of the British monarchy

signified a momentous turning-point for the role of the British monarchy. The Prince Consort made the monarchy acceptable to the middle-classes by adding respectable family values to its image, and he expanded the British philanthropic tradition of a welfare monarchy by widening them “to ameliorate the condition of the British working classes.” The resulting gain of respectability helped Britain in the long run to avoid the possibility of experiencing a revolutionary uprising, resulting in a republic, as it occurred in France only a few years later. By disengaged the monarchy from its former exclusive link with the aristocracy and making it respectable for the middle-classes and the working-classes, Albert tremendously widening the spectrum of its acceptance. This modification was recognized by Victoria herself, who observed that her beloved husband had raised the “monarchy to the highest pinnacle of respect, and rendered it popular beyond what it ever was in this country.”

The disconnection of the monarchy from the exclusive rank of the aristocracy found another outlet in the division between public and domestic life, and the importance which was attached to the “privacy for upper- and middle-class family and social life.” Thus, the Queen and her husband became “models of marital propriety and parental strictness,” representing evangelical middle-class values such as “family, domesticity and respectability.” Due to the rise of the pictorial press in the 1840s, the middle-class had an “idealised version of royal family life,” or, as an ‘American resident’ described it, “Buckingham Palace had been the Hollywood of the

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28 9 February 1858 Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, first series, vol.3, p.335.
31 J.Richards, De-traditionalization and the monarchy (Lancaster, 1994), p.16.
II: The place of the British monarchy

British middle class." Rossendale’s poem, “The Scepter now, Victoria’s sways/Fair Queen of Britain’s Isle!/May Heaven grant her length of days/With peace and joy the while!” is indeed a clear indication for the Queen’s widespread acceptance in the 1840s; this feeling developed into true respect in the 1850s, when the *Times* observed that “it is long (...) since there was a Royal family in England that was the object of so much domestic interest as that of Queen Victoria. It is of the number and of the age that everywhere awakens sympathy (...). Nowhere else, we believe, does the mother so well know her vocation, or is the father so true to his post; nowhere else are children so dutiful, or the spell of home so sweet and so strong” (20 January 1858).

In the long run, the death of Prince Albert in 1861 caused grave unpopularity for the Queen’s public image. Considering that the majority of the British people had no opportunity of appreciating the Queen’s continual involvement in the political development, her lengthy social withdrawal was repeatedly reprimanded by the press, and while the *Times*’s persistent editorials will be discussed in the appropriate chapter, the *Punch* cartoon “Descend: be stone no more,” published in 1865, can serve as an example here, since it associated public displeasure about the Queen’s seclusion with the persistent desire of her re-entry into public life. The nation’s discontent culminated in a short-lived outbreak of republican feeling; although this proved to be only a temporary dissatisfaction with the public role of the monarchy, it still demonstrated the significance of public appearances of the Crown, as “monarchy may or may not be the best form of Government; but, if it is to exist at all, it must be visible.” Thus, the Queen had certainly violated her social duties as a sovereign, but she gained her former popularity once she re-established her active participation in the public sphere.

Simultaneously, a process of abstraction took place within the image of the monarchy: the Queen (who added ‘Empress of India’ to her title in 1876) was seen as a symbol for national prominence, imperialism, wealth and unity. Her two jubilees of

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1887 and of 1897 were highly celebrated events which stylized Queen Victoria an archetypal 'mother' of the nation, and the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 "established the Queen in her great rôle as Mother of the Empire and the symbol of imperial unity." Vanity Fair even called the event "the triumph of monarchy" (24 June 1897), and the festivity was celebrated in London by a pageantry - the first royal ceremony preserved on celluloid.

Considering these circumstances, one can agree with Shawcross's observation that Queen Victoria "began to define the limits, and establish the success, of constitutional monarchy," a statement which the Times had already made in 1897: "It is impossible to measure the debt which is owing (...) from the country to the Queen, but there can be no doubt that it is a very large one" (21 June 1897).

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36 Wilding/Laundy (edd.), An encyclopedia of parliament, p.772.
IIII: FORMATION DURING CHILDHOOD
(1819-1837)

Despite the madness of King George III, the future of the British monarchy looked rather promising in 1819: eight sons of the King alive, several of them married and all of them potential fathers of many children - the direct succession seemed secure. The same year witnessed the birth of Princess Victoria, daughter of the Duke of Kent, and nobody would have thought it possible that this child of King George III’s fourth son would inherit the throne one day. Yet eighteen years later, deaths and childless marriages did in fact lead to the succession of Queen Victoria, and the epoch from 1837 until 1901 is still known by her name.

The aim of this chapter is to look at the Princess’s preparation for her future role as British Queen. Not only will the crucial influence of German relatives and confidants on Victoria’s education be determined, but the establishment of the Princess’s household, providing Victoria with a youth completely detached from the official British Court, will also be shown. Additional attention will be given to first contacts of the young Princess to her future subjects.

III-1: ROYAL MARRIAGES I: TRADITIONAL MODELS

One important emphasis of this thesis will be to show the significance of Queen Victoria’s German background for her personal and political development. For that reason, the exclusive traditional link of the British royal family with states of the German Confederation will be explained, which stands in sharp contrast to the more diverse marriage pattern of other European nations.

In fact, Queen Victoria was not the first British monarch who established closer relations with Germany; on the contrary, this connection existed long before her birth. King George II, his son, Frederick Prince of Wales and King George III had all been wed to German spouses,¹ reasonable choices indeed, considering their Hanoverian background. Therefore it came as no surprise when King George III’s fourth son, the Duke of Kent, chose Victoria of Saxe and Coburg, the widow of the Duke of Leiningen, as his bride, since he simply followed the habit of the British royal

¹ George III was married to Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the Prince of Wales was married to Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, and George II was married to Caroline of Brandenburg-Anspach.
family. What is more, he was not the only one of King George III’s children to make the selection of a German partner, as eight out of fifteen of his descendants married German royal successors. As a consequence, the Duke of Kent’s choice was in complete harmony with the royal marriage paradigm of the first half of the nineteenth century, since indeed any other selection but a German spouse would have been quite astonishing in the royal circles.

It is important to realize that throughout the nineteenth century, international marriage associations for descendants of royal houses were the customary rule. Protestant states of the German Confederation were closely linked to Britain, while Catholic ones had equally strong marriage bonds with France, Austria-Hungary and the Netherlands. Britain formed an exception to this international rule of royal connections, insofar as her royal house was exclusively linked with German states, the exception being marriages which were either on a domestic level or which had not been sanctioned due to the Royal Marriages Act. This restricted pool of marriages which formed the choice for descendants of the British royal family was a consequence of the Hanoverian background on the one hand and of the requirement to find a Protestant partner on the other hand. All the other European monarchies preferred to keep their options open by establishing a variety of international marriage links; the royal family of France, for example, was connected to the royal families of Spain, Austria-Hungary, and Belgium.

Within the traditionally restrained British marriage pattern, the Duke of Kent certainly made a good choice with his bride. The Duchess’s son, Charles, proved her ability to conceive children, while her brother, Prince Leopold, was highly “popular in

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2 George, Prince of Wales, later George IV, married Princess Caroline of Brunswick; the Duke of York married Princess Frederica of Prussia; the Duke of Clarence, later William IV, married Princess Amelie of Saxe-Meiningen; the Duke of Kent married the Duchess of Saxe and Coburg; the Duke of Cumberland married Princess Frederica of Mecklenburg-Strelitz; the Duke of Cambridge married Princess Augusta of Hesse-Cassel; Princess Charlotte married the later King of Wurtemberg and Princess Elizabeth married the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg. Only Princess Mary married an Englishman, the Duke of Gloucester.

3 Four out of King Louis Philippe’s eight children married German partners, coming from Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Wurtemberg and (interestingly enough) Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Austria-Hungary had traditionally strong marriage links with Bavaria and Saxony, and all three children of King William II of the Netherlands married German Princes/Princesses, coming from Wurtemberg, Saxony and Saxe-Weimar.
England.\textsuperscript{4} This approval of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was based on his former marriage to Princess Charlotte, the only daughter of the subsequent King George IV, since their union secured the direct continuation of the reigning royal family of Britain. Although Charlotte had died in 1817, her widowed husband maintained the acceptance he had gained during his short marriage. Considering this good reputation of Leopold in Britain even after Charlotte’s death, “there was no doubt that the Duke of Kent had made himself popular by marrying a descendant of the Coburgs.”\textsuperscript{5}

III-2: PRINCESS VICTORIA AND HER FATHER

Although Queen Victoria could not remember her father properly, his influence on her later life was considerable. The Duke’s decision to designate his wife as sole guardian for Princess Victoria excluded any potential interference from the Court, and it also laid the basis for the Duchess’s unrestricted control over her child’s education.

The birth of the Duke’s first child, Princess Victoria, on 24 May 1819 was certainly an event of personal happiness for him and his wife; the infant’s political prospects, however, did not look too favourably, since after her grandfather, her father and three uncles, Princess Victoria ranged only sixth in the line of royal succession. The deaths of George III and of the Duke of Kent in January 1820 changed the situation considerably, but whereas the King’s demise had been expected, Victoria’s father died rather suddenly of an inflammation of the lungs. Thus, the infant Princess advanced to the fourth place in the royal lineage.

During his short illness, the Duke of Kent set up his will, in which he chose to “nominate, constitute and appoint my beloved wife, Victoire, Duchess of Kent, to be sole guardian to our dear child.”\textsuperscript{6} With this decision, he purposely did not appoint the reigning King as custodian for Princess Victoria, despite the fact that this would have been most appropriate, for George IV had been one of the Princess’s sponsors at her christening in June 1819. The reason for this momentous resolution of the Duke was a

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\textsuperscript{4} E.F. Benson, Queen Victoria (New York, 1992; reprint of 1935), p.5.

\textsuperscript{5} M. Charlot, Victoria, the young queen (Oxford, 1991), p.24.

III: Formation during childhood

difference in political opinion, since the "advanced Whig"\(^7\) obviously relied on his wife to bring up their daughter in accordance with "the 'Liberal' side,"\(^8\) whereas he did not believe his conservative-minded brother to be a suitable guardian for Princess Victoria.

There is no evidence of an explicit comment at the time regarding the Duke’s decision; as he was possibly the only son of King George III who had managed to build up a positive reputation, his death was mourned honestly. The *Times* pointed out the Duke’s service to the country by stressing that "there was no public charity to which his time, his presence, his eloquence, were not willingly devoted" (25 January 1820), although it has to be said that he "did good work because he had exhausted the alternatives"\(^9\) of pursuing a successful military career. The Duke’s subsequent marriage with the Duchess of Leiningen had then contributed to an even further increase of his popularity. The *Times* was not the only contemporary newspaper which pointed out the value of "a woman fitted to make a good man happy, and to educate children not unworthy of the British Crown" (25 January 1820).

The will of the Duke of Kent in fact put the German mother of Princess Victoria in the centre of her education, thus creating a noteworthy constellation, as the Duchess of Kent’s own German background was the only thing she could rely on after having lived in England for a very short period of time only. However, she did in fact try to balance her own German descent by providing her daughter with an aristocratic education which emphasized the Princess’s British heritage.

III-3: PRINCESS VICTORIA’S EDUCATION BY HER MOTHER

Supported by her brother Leopold, the Duchess decided to stay in Britain after her husband’s death, thus stressing her daughter’s right to the succession to the throne. She followed her late husband’s political conviction by separating Princess Victoria from the British Court, while at the same time providing her daughter with an aristocratic education.

After the death of her husband, the Duchess of Kent had two possibilities: she could either return to the German Duchy of Leiningen, and personally supervise the

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\(^7\) R.Fulford, Royal dukes, the father and uncles of Queen Victoria (London, 1933), p.184.

\(^8\) T.Archer/A.H.Stirling, Queen Victoria, her life and reign (London, 1901), vol.1, p.53.

education of her son Charles until he succeeded as the next Duke, thus losing the English throne for her daughter; or she could stay in Britain, therefore securing Victoria’s succession, but bestowing a guardianship for her German son. In the end, it was Leopold’s promise to help his sister financially which made the Duchess decide to stay in Britain. She could not have managed without his help, since King George IV deliberately withheld any financial support for the widowed Duchess in the hope of forcing her back to Germany. Although his intentions remain somewhat unclear, his sole motive was probably wounded pride, since his brother had not appointed him as guardian for Princess Victoria.

Having her late husband’s testimonial arrangement and Leopold’s financial support, the Duchess decided to pursue her daughter’s claims to the British throne by providing her with an impeccable aristocratic education. Her more immediate plans included a complete disassociation of Princess Victoria from the British Court, which was certainly an understandable step since King George IV had shown no signs of accepting the Duchess and her daughter as part of the royal family. What is more, Victoria’s mother considered the Court of George IV to be a place of immorality and decadence, a judgement that was not entirely wrong. With the help of Leopold, she chose Kensington Palace as her official residence, which showed her preference for a rural location sufficiently detached from the metropolitan ‘evils’ of central London.

The Duchess’s decision not to let her daughter be identified with the Court of King George IV was crucial, since it made the later identification of the British nation with Queen Victoria possible - only a distinctly ‘new’ sovereign was able to symbolize a fresh beginning for the British Monarchy. By slowly establishing a virtuous alternative to the existing (and disrespected) Court, the Duchess of Kent followed the guidance outlined by her husband’s will and thus paved the way for the succession of a Queen who came from a royal collateral line.

As a consequence of the Duchess’s determination to educate her daughter independent from the official court life, Victoria grew up in a domestic atmosphere which was much more aristocratic than royal, since her experience of ceremonial court functions was restricted to the few occasions on which she participated in them. This separation of Princess Victoria’s household from the official court was vital in establishing the predominant German influence on her education; had she lived at Court, her training would certainly have been both organized and carried out by British advisers.

Only after King George IV’s death in 1830 did parliament finally recognize
Princess Victoria as heir presumptive. The Regency Bill, sanctioned by the new King William IV, designated the Duchess as Regent for her daughter in case Victoria’s succession would take place before the Princess’s eighteenth birthday; thus, from now on, Victoria was the acknowledged heir to the British throne. As a side-effect, this led to additional financial support for the Princess’s education.\(^{10}\)

The Duchess of Kent’s intention to give her daughter an undoubtedly *English* education\(^{11}\) can be traced in the choice of Princess Victoria’s teachers. With the assistance of Reverend George Davis (later Bishop of Peterborough), Victoria’s mother selected three French instructors (for singing, dancing and French) and three British tutors (for Latin, arithmetic and drawing), a choice which could certainly not be criticised for being ‘too German’. This structure of Princess Victoria’s education bore a striking resemblance to the characteristic British aristocratic schooling of that time, aiming at a “intellectual education for the fulfillment of a particular role in society (...) supplemented with training in the social graces.”\(^{12}\) Considering that Princess Victoria’s education had to form an exception from the traditional training of a royal Prince - namely a career in the army -, it certainly made sense that the Duchess relied on the aristocratic model as an educational pattern for her daughter.\(^{13}\) Hence, the emphasis of the Princess’s education was to make her suitable for the aristocratic marriage market, an objective that can be traced in the teaching of French and social skills.

However, the Duchess’s emphasis on “a religious outlook, decent manners and morals, and a predisposition to social pity”\(^{14}\) neglected the fact that Victoria was second in line of succession and did not provide her with any instructions about British history, constitutional practice or international affairs. On the other hand, it has to be acknowledged that this objection is written from the point of view of the twentieth century, since the Princess’s treatment as ‘a girl’ rather than as ‘a monarch’

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\(^{10}\) Already in 1825, Parliament voted for an annual sum of £ 6,000 for the Princess’s education; in 1831, the payment was increased by £ 10,000.


\(^{13}\) Interestingly enough, even Queen Elizabeth II was “educated at home, (...) to acquire good manners and perfect deportment and to cultivate the feminine graces.” In: G.Hindley, *The Guinness book of British royalty* (Enfield, 1989), p.60. However, Princess Elizabeth did also receive “tutorials in the constitutional history of Britain from Sir Henry Monten.” In: Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Prochaska, *Royal bounty*, p.62.
III: Formation during childhood

was completely in accordance with the contemporary aristocratic tradition, as is indicated by a remark of Mrs. Arbuthnot, the wife of the Joint Secretary to the Treasury. She was the first one to make an observation about Princess Victoria’s training, and her statement that the Duchess of Kent “educates her remarkably well” is indeed evidence of Victoria’s traditional aristocratic upbringing. Yet however insufficiently the Princess might have been prepared for her future role as British Queen, it has to be said that the education chosen by the Duchess of Kent left her “better educated, more prudent, and better advised” than her two previous royal uncles, King George IV and King William IV, had been.

III-4: Lehzen and Germany

The Duchess’s appointment of Luise Lehzen as her daughter’s governess provided Victoria with a second important person of influence, thus adding a vital German authority to the already established British education. However, Victoria’s actual image of Germany remained vague during these first years, since her emotional bonds to that country were mainly based on her German language skills.

In addition to the appointment of the Princess’s tutors, the Duchess decided to select a governess for her daughter as well. She chose her own Lady-in-Waiting, Luise Lehzen, for this position and thus introduced a vital German influence in her daughter’s upbringing. Before long, the Hanoverian Baroness developed a confidential friendship with her pupil, becoming “her closest companion, friend and supporter.”

15 6 May 1828 Extract from the journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot. In: F. Bamford/The Duke of Wellington (edd.), The journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot, 1820-1832 (London, 1950), vol.2, p.186. She repeated her estimation one year later, when rumours about the Duchess of Kent becoming Regent were openly discussed. In: Ibid., p.269. Considering that Mrs. Arbuthnot “was a Tory through and through, loving stability and hating change and experiment” (In: Ibid., p.xii), her positive comment weighs even more when the well-known liberal disposition of the Duchess of Kent is taken into account.


17 The title was given to her by King George IV shortly before his death. In 1830, Lehzen was replaced as governess for Princess Victoria by the Duchess of Northumberland; Lehzen herself then became Victoria’s lady-in-waiting.

deep affinity between the German governess and her British disciple, who subsequently described Lehzen as “most kind, she was very firm and I had a proper respect for her.”

This crucial supervision of Victoria’s early years did, however, counteract the British atmosphere created by the Duchess’s appointment of British tutors, since the two persons exerting a profound influence on the Princess were both German: her mother and her governess. As a consequence, the educational environment of French and British tutors receded and allowed Lehzen’s predominance to become supreme.

Yet despite this enormous German influence, Victoria was not instructed with a specific image of Germany. She obviously realized that her mother and Lehzen came from Saxe-Coburg and Hanover respectively, but there is no evidence in her journal revealing a more concrete notion about the country from where a high percentage of her ancestors came from. The Princess’s education included a bilingual instruction in English and German (soon followed by French), but historians differ which language she spoke predominantly during her childhood; considering that in later years, Victoria always felt slightly insecure when talking German, it seems certain that she communicated mainly in English. Besides, the Duchess of Kent made sure that her daughter talked English when meeting visitors at Kensington Palace, as any other custom would in fact have caused a very bad reputation.

It is certainly interesting that Princess Victoria’s ignorance about the social and political situation in Germany mirrored the contemporary British approach to German affairs. While Britain established close links with France in the Treaty of London in 1827, which were later reinforced by the London Protocol of 1828 and the

21 Thompson argues that Victoria spoke English only after her third year, which is certainly wrong; Lee comes to the contrary conclusion by saying that German was the earliest language the Princess knew; Strachey also stresses that German was the first language with which the Princess was familiar, while English and French soon followed; indeed, one can only conclude that Princess Victoria spoke English, German, French and Italian when she was eleven years old. A very odd idea can be found in three studies (Benson, Charlot and Richardson): that Princess Victoria spoke English with a German accent, which had to be eliminated later, but in the contemporary sources there is no evidence of this rather remarkable feature.
III: Formation during childhood

Quadruple Alliance of 1834, the German Confederation was not an association that sprang immediately to mind when the British Foreign Office considered a possible combination of foreign interests.

III-5: FIRST PERCEPTIONS

Under King William IV, the Duchess of Kent inaugurated a combination of moral values, British education and liberal political tendencies in the person of her daughter. She then presented Victoria to the nation by visiting aristocratic houses in the countryside and by appointing charities for her daughter, thus emphasizing the charitable interest of the Princess.

The beginning of the reign of King William IV saw the development of an alternative image of the British monarchy by the Duchess of Kent. The lifestyle of the previous King George IV, also called the “Prince of Pleasure,” was denominated by the *Times* as “little higher than that of animal indulgence” (28 June 1830); this characterization clearly indicates the deep disrespect British royalty was associated with. Therefore, both the femininity and the youth of Princess Victoria were obvious alternatives, as was the British education of the Princess, since it ended the hitherto Hanoverian tradition of British Kings.

What is more, Princess Victoria symbolized the opportunity of having a liberally minded sovereign on the British throne, since her father had been renowned for his Whiggish outlook. The Court of William IV and his wife Adelaide, on the other hand, had a distinct conservative disposition, inasmuch as the King’s initial refusal to appoint enough Whig Peers to pass the Third Reform Bill in 1832 is a fact that speaks for itself. Due to this combination of the immorality of King George IV and the hostility towards the Whigs of King William IV, “the monarchy had lost both the affection and the respect of the nation.”

It was therefore an understandable aim of the Duchess of Kent to separate her daughter from the world of the Court and to create a distinctly alternative image of the Princess. By limiting the occasions on which Princess Victoria was actually seen at the side of King William IV during essential state ceremonies, the heir to the throne distanced herself from the contemporary monarchy and established her female,

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virtuous, liberal and, most important of all, British image for the nation.

One important aspect of this distinctly different perception of Princess Victoria was her visibility. From 1830 onwards, the Duchess and Victoria visited the houses of aristocratic families in the countryside in order “to see the country and the homes of her future subjects.”\(^\text{24}\) Although the official reason the Duchess gave for these so-called ‘progresses’ was to “show her daughter historic English sites,”\(^\text{25}\) her real intention was certainly to present the Princess to these aristocratic families and to spectators who wanted to see them during their travels through the countryside. During the following years, the Duchess and her daughter visited Wales, the Midlands, the West, the North and the South. Taking into account the acceptance Princess Victoria caused among these observers, it was not surprising that what had started as simple journeys increasingly developed into royal salutations. Since the royal status of Victoria allowed only visits to aristocratic families, it is certainly questionable whether she gained any in-depth knowledge of the life of the bystanders on her journeys; however, she did certainly acquire a basic understanding of Britain’s geography, apart from being introduced into the leading aristocratic families of her time. By 1833, the King regarded these progresses as so annoying and possibly threatening that he protested during a meeting of the Privy Council against the Duchess of Kent’s activities,\(^\text{26}\) but Victoria’s mother continued her journeys undeterred.

In the same year, the Duchess decided to assign her late husband’s charitable interests to her daughter, thus strengthening Victoria’s popular link to the country. As a consequence, she encouraged Victoria to accept her own first patronage, the Kent Dispensary, which had once been on her father’s patronage list.\(^\text{27}\) In the following years, the Princess gradually accepted an increasing number of charitable institutions, and in 1836 she proudly noted in her journal that she “went with Lehzen and Lady Flora to Chiswick, to the Victoria Asylum or Children’s Friend Society. It is a most interesting and delightful establishment, (...) for poor vagrant girls, who are received

\(^{24}\) Benson, Queen Victoria, p.27.

\(^{25}\) Charlotte, Victoria, p.61.


\(^{27}\) See: Prochaska, Royal bounty, p.61.
under the age of 15."^28 At this point in her life, she only appreciated the charitable side of her philanthropic interest, and only during her marriage with Albert did she later realize its beneficial effect on royal popularity.

Although the Duchess of Kent was therefore successful in projecting this new and positive image of the future British monarch, she also decided to permit first personal contacts between her daughter and her numerous relatives from Germany. In 1833, Prince Alexander and Prince Ernest of Wurtemberg visited their royal cousin in Britain, and Victoria found them "extremely amiable."^29 This first positive impression of Germany was very important for the Princess, since it replaced her former indifferent perception with a sympathetic connotation about a country in which most of her close relatives were living.

III-6: LEOPOLD

One of the closest relatives of Queen Victoria certainly was her uncle Leopold. The Prince of Saxe and Coburg accepted the Belgian throne in 1831 and from then on acted as the political adviser for the young Princess, recommending books for her and sending her specific explanations about the structure of the state. Although his supervision was limited to a rather abstract area of political guidance, the Whiggish inclination of King Leopold formed an important influence on Princess Victoria's adolescent years.

After 1830, when Victoria's succession to the throne was certain, Leopold became increasingly involved in his niece's education, gradually supplying the young Princess with the father-figure she needed. When Leopold accepted the responsibility of Belgian King in 1831, his personal supervision of Victoria's education was exchanged with weekly reports sent to Belgium and back. In one of these communications Leopold mentioned her future destiny to the Princess, reminding her that "by the dispensation of Providence you are destined to fill a most eminent station; to fill it well must now become your study. A good heart and a trusty and honourable character are amongst the most indispensable qualifications for that position. You will always find in your Uncle that faithful friend which he has proved to you from your

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earliest infancy.\textsuperscript{30} The last sentence clearly implies how the Duchess and her brother had divided Victoria's educational development between them: whereas Victoria's mother arranged her tutorial education and prepared her social acceptance by traveling the country, Victoria's uncle reserved the position of patriarchal mentor for himself.

Considering the lack of any other trusted counsellor, it was certainly understandable that the Princess came to rely completely on her uncle whenever her political future was concerned; she observed in her diary that Leopold was "indeed like my real father, as I have none! (...) he alone can give me good advice on everything."\textsuperscript{31} As a consequence, those persons in the Princess's life who had the most influential positions all came from a German background: her mother, her uncle and her governess. But this constellation did not necessarily imply the accentuating of a detailed image of Germany for the young Princess; quite on the contrary, Germany remained a vague generalization for a confederation of states. Among these, the Princess perceived Saxe-Coburg and Gotha as the country from where her closest relatives and friends were coming, and so it was left to Albert to fill this vacuum with a much more emotional disposition.

Far from communicating a positive image of Germany to his niece, King Leopold did in fact promote a rather negative representation of Britain when he explained that "I am sorry to say, with all my affection for old England, the very state of its Society and politics renders many in that country essentially humbugs and deceivers; the appearance of the thing is generally more considered than the reality; provided matters go off well, and opinion may be gained, the real good is matter of the most perfect indifference. Defend yourself, my dear love, against this system; let your dear character always be true and loyal."\textsuperscript{32} Leopold's comment was certainly intended to encourage Victoria's integrity, but it also reveals an interesting insight in the current debate on the state of British society in general. Because of its immorality, the Court could no longer fulfil its traditional function of a model for society, which in aristocratic circles had led to the interesting tendency in favour of a remedy of the

\textsuperscript{30} 22 May 1832 The King of the Belgians to Princess Victoria. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.1, pp.43-4.

\textsuperscript{31} 16 September 1836 Extract from the journal of Princess Victoria. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals, p.19.

\textsuperscript{32} 3 August 1835 The King of the Belgians to Princess Victoria. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.1, p.53.
common conduct. This scheme of a reformation of manners was still in progress, and since the tolerant convictions of Leopold were well-known, it is more than likely that he was a supporter of this current movement.

Only some years after he had accepted the responsibility of Belgian King, Leopold won the respect of other European nations for his participation in establishing a form of government generally regarded as a model of a constitutional monarchy. Leopold firmly believed that only a state which was first of all based on a constitutional representation and which was furthermore open to justifiable changes could flourish and become a bulwark immune against revolutionary upheaval. Considering his exclusive status as Victoria's political mentor, his influence on the development of the Princess should not be underestimated. Victoria, for her part, not only took her uncle's explanations into account, but regarded them as law; this became rather important when Leopold clarified contemporary party politics to his niece by pointing out that "if the Tory part of Parliament could have brought themselves to act without passion, much in the reform of Parliament might have been settled much more in conformity with their best interests." This statement certainly mirrors the Whiggish view which was the common belief of all royal descendants of the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and which the Duchess of Kent had shared with her husband as well.

Leopold upheld the political instruction of Victoria by writing her letters on a regular basis, urging her to "study a little; history is what I think the most important study for you." Victoria followed this advice and began to read those books about British and French history which her uncle specifically recommended to her. In 1836, Leopold went one step further and sent Victoria a more detailed guidance, entitled 'Directions and Advices.' Initially, Leopold had written this guiding advice for another inexperienced relative of his, the young Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, who had recently married the Queen of Portugal. Princess Victoria mentions in her diary only one of the three parts of these 'Directions and Advices', namely the 'Affaires Politique'. She carefully read this section, which was divided into headings

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33 3 February 1837 The King of the Belgians to Princess Victoria. In: Ibid., p.78.
34 18 October 1834 The King of the Belgians to Princess Victoria. In: Ibid., p.48. Victoria responded enthusiastically to this advice and answered only four days later: “Reading history is one of my greatest delights. (...) the history of my own country is one of my first duties.” (22 October 1834 Princess Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Ibid, pp.49-50.).
of all the departments of the government, and summed up her feeling by stating that
she found them “most cleverly and beautifully done.” Leopold’s decision to send
this political instruction to his niece represents the first vital step towards a more
specific political education for the future Queen of Britain; after he had laid the
groundwork by recommending general books on French and British history for his
niece, Leopold now enlarged the picture by bringing descriptions of the current state
of affairs to her attention.

Victoria recognized the pedagogical benefit she gained through her uncle’s
support and thanked him by emphasizing that “I shall profit by your excellent advice
respecting Politics.” She even asked her uncle explicitly “as you have sent me to
show what a Queen ought not to be, that you will send me what a Queen ought to
be.” Unfortunately, Leopold’s answer is neither published nor traceable in archives;
his might in fact have discussed this important subject with his niece during one of his
frequent visits to Britain.

Yet it has to be emphasized that although Leopold did provide Princess
Victoria with an understanding of her future role as British Queen, he did not inform
her about contemporary political developments, and he also did not encourage her to
read the leading newspapers of the day. As a consequence, Victoria’s knowledge
about the domestic and foreign affairs of Great Britain was rather limited. As far as
domestic political questions were concerned, Princess Victoria did not mention such
momentous developments such as the Corn Law of 1828, the Reform Bill of 1832,
the Poor Law of 1834 or the beginning of the Chartist Movement of 1836 in her
diary. Similarly, she did not have any precise knowledge about the Treaty of London
of 1827 (with which Britain, France and Russia aimed at protecting Greece from
Turkey), about the abolition of slavery in the British colonies in 1833 or about the
Quadruple Alliance between Britain, France, Spain and Portugal in 1834. All these
political developments were bound to have such a deep impact on the daily routine of
the political affairs of Britain that it is quite surprising that King Leopold failed to
familiarize the prospective sovereign with them.

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35 10 April 1836 Extract from the journal of Princess Victoria. In: V.Esher (ed.), The girlhood
of Queen Victoria. A selection from Her Majesty’s diaries between the years 1832 and 1840
(London 1912), vol.1, p.154.
36 2 May 1837 Princess Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The
letters of Queen Victoria, vol 1, p.85.
37 19 November 1834 Princess Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Ibid., p.50.
III-7. THE IMAGE OF THE PRINCESS

By the year 1837, King William IV’s severe illness made Princess Victoria’s succession clearly imminent. The celebrations of her eighteenth birthday are an interesting illustration of the high level of acceptance and expectancy linked to her succession.

Victoria’s eighteenth birthday in 1837 was the occasion of widespread celebrations in London. Although only an unofficial “sort of public holiday,” handbills were distributed which urged Londoners to commemorate the Princess’s birthday: “The inhabitants of London and Westminster are requested to close their warehouses and shops on Wednesday, the 24th inst. on occasion of Her Royal Highness the Princess Victoria attaining Her Majority. In order that all classes may enjoy a General Holiday on that happy occasion. God save the King!” The citizens of London evidently followed this recommendation, as an “immense body of spectators” gathered around Kensington Palace in order to celebrate Victoria’s birthday “with every demonstration of regard and attachment.” Accordingly, the *Times* pointed out that the Princess “was rapturously cheered” when she left the Palace for a short walk (25 May 1837). Considering that this open display of acceptance was surely an illustration for the popularity the Princess had gained in the social sphere outside the aristocratic circle, Victoria was certainly right in assessing that “the demonstrations of loyalty and affection from all the people were highly gratifying.”

Yet it was the aristocratic part of society which had in fact the highest hopes for Victoria’s succession, since, under the previous two Kings, “the British Court was characterized by the failures and weaknesses of its monarchs,” the Princess’s

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39 The handbill can be found in: A. Langley, *Queen Victoria* (London, 1995), p.5. The contemporary majority was evidently eighteen, and not twenty-one, as one might think.
40 *The Times*, 25 May 1837.
41 Ibid.
approaching reign was associated with a reevaluation of the significance of the Court. This aristocratic expectancy regarding a restoration of the traditional focal point of the royal household was illustrated by the fact that “hundreds of the nobility and gentry called and left cards of congratulations” at Kensington Palace for the occasion of Princess Victoria’s birthday, clearly with the intention of reminding the future monarch of their existence. Lady Wharncliffe’s observation about the Princess, “it is impossible she should not be popular when she is older and more seen,” was a clear indication that the Duchess had evidently succeeded in beginning to establish her daughter’s popular image within aristocratic circles.

III-8: STOCKMAR

King William’s serious illness made a more concentrated preparation of Princess Victoria necessary, and her uncle Leopold decided to send his trusted adviser Baron Stockmar to Britain to fulfil this task. Although the details of Stockmar’s instructions remain vague, there can be no doubt that he provided the future Queen of Britain with her first concrete notion of her imminent responsibilities.

In 1837, Princess Victoria’s own reflections on her future role were still scarce; she knew that she would succeed the current King William IV, and she appreciated that she had trusted advisers both at hand and in Belgium, but her political understanding was still rather limited. Neither the Tory nor the Whig Party are referred to in her diary, and apart from Victoria’s basic awareness about her imminent destiny she had not contemplated the responsibilities attached to her role as Queen of Great Britain. Leopold must have realized this deficiency, since he decided to send his trusted adviser, Baron Stockmar, to Britain immediately after the Princess’s eighteenth birthday. Victoria was clearly thankful for this assistance, and she remarked that she “did not yet know the Baron, but we sat together like good friends.” Stockmar immediately improved her domestic situation by ending household intrigues which had been going on for the previous years, and subsequently

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44 The Times, 25 May 1837.
he spent all his time and effort to instruct Princess Victoria precisely about her future role.

Although Baron Christian Friedrich von Stockmar is mentioned in practically every study about Queen Victoria, his concrete influence on her early political development has not yet been clarified. Baron Stockmar himself considered his role as being an adviser in the shadow, and he never aimed at gaining an official post or public recognition. He was born in Coburg in 1787 as "the second son of a small and inconsequential lawyer," and he subsequently studied medicine at the universities of Jena, Erlangen and Wurzburg. In 1812, Stockmar became a close personal friend of Prince Leopold, and he remained at Leopold's side even after the Prince's marriage to Princess Charlotte, the only daughter of Prince Regent George (later King George IV) in 1816; this first experience with British life certainly helped the Baron's later guidance of Princess Victoria.

Whatever directions Leopold's life took in the subsequent years, Stockmar's life took them as well; yet, interestingly enough, while on the one hand he was part of the international diplomatic scene first in Britain and then in Belgium, Stockmar also managed to maintain an ordinary middle-class existence in Coburg, with a wife and several children, to whom he returned whenever politics allowed him to. By 1831, Stockmar was renowned "for a sincerity and integrity which was never known to fail" to those who were closely enough acquainted with contemporary politics to actually know his participation in the political process. Since this applied only to a very limited number of people, Stockmar's share in the shaping of the Belgian constitution, and also in its subsequent application, certainly took place 'behind the scenes'. However, it is safe to assume that the political convictions of Leopold and Stockmar were the same: liberal minded in a sense that a state had to be governed by a transparent constitution, open to constitutional changes and certainly opposed to absolutist tendencies. With regard to Germany's future, Leopold's and Stockmar's political ambition "was to unite Germany under the domination of Prussia and to ally that united Germany with England."

Princess Victoria reacted most gratefully to Stockmar's arrival in 1837, since he had been sent with Leopold's assurance that his "judgment, heart, and character

III: Formation during childhood

offer all the guarantees we can wish for."\textsuperscript{50} The Princess declared "how happy and thankful I am to have Stockmar here; he has been, and is, of the greatest possible use."\textsuperscript{51} During the following weeks, he apparently prepared her thoroughly for her tasks as British Queen, but this guidance was solely based on oral instructions and hence no evidence has survived. There can be no doubt that he explained the working of the British Constitution to his pupil, forming a direct line to the Queen's later understanding of her role as British Monarch. For example, Stockmar postulated a very high involvement of the sovereign in the political process, but he also acquainted the Princess with his belief that "the balance of power between the three estates of Crown, Lords and Commons depended on the Lords as the centre of gravity,"\textsuperscript{52} which was a conviction Queen Victoria in later years advocated herself fiercely, as she was adamantly against any reform of the House of Lords.

King Leopold's decision to send his German friend to Britain in order to tutor the future Queen of Britain about her constitutional responsibilities seems a rather bizarre constellation, since there must have been an experienced British statesman at hand to do the same thing with much more appropriate credibility. Yet, as explained earlier, Victoria's household was separated from the official Court, and as a consequence, its attention with regard to the Princess's appointments was rather limited; what is more, Princess Victoria had come of age by now, and thus it was her decision whom she selected as her counsellors. Additionally, contemporary politicians had no interest in the development of the Princess yet, despite her certain succession, and there is also no evidence whatsoever about a negative comment in the press as to Stockmar's presence at Kensington Palace. As a consequence of King Leopold's and Baron Stockmar's exclusive political guidance, Princess Victoria received her entire knowledge about British history, constitution and parliament from German mentors, and there was not a single significant British person of influence during the Princess's childhood, youth and years prior to her succession.

Yet however unusual Princess Victoria's preparations for her future role might have been, it was certainly due to Stockmar's short yet intense period of preparation that she had in fact an idea of her future obligations. Therefore, Victoria was better

\begin{footnotes}
\item[50] 15 June 1837 The King of the Belgians to Princess Victoria. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), \textit{The letters of Queen Victoria}, vol.1, p.91.
\item[51] 19 June 1837 Princess Victoria to King Leopold. In: Ibid., p.95.
\item[52] Auchinloss, \textit{Persons of consequence}, p.54.
\end{footnotes}
equipped for her role as British sovereign than her earlier education would have suggested. This became an essential provision in June 1837, when the *Times* had reason to announce that “the state of the King’s health causes great anxiety” (15 June 1837).

This chapter has demonstrated the intensity of Princess Victoria’s German family background; although the decision by her father, the Duke of Kent, to marry a German Duchess was completely in line with the tradition of the British royal family, his death transferred the responsibility for the Princess’s exclusively to the Duchess and her German brother. Due to both personal dislike and political disagreements, Victoria’s mother decided to separate her daughter’s household from the official court and settled down at Kensington Palace. The Duchess prepared an aristocratic education for her daughter, and she arranged visits to aristocratic houses in the countryside, which, in the long run, familiarized the leading aristocratic families with the prospective monarch. The appointment of Luise Lehzen as Victoria’s governess provided the Princess with a second influential person of German origin who soon developed into Victoria’s confidante. Yet her actual image of Germany was still unspecified during these years, since her remarkable German language skills were her only emotional connection to Germany. In addition to Victoria’s aristocratic education, the Duchess of Kent and Lehzen began to instruct the Princess with the liberal convictions of her late father, a tendency which was strengthened by King Leopold in subsequent years. Victoria’s uncle continued the Princess’s education by sending her regular memoranda from his residences in Belgium, thus adding a political note to the hitherto social training of Victoria. When the illness of King William IV made her succession imminent, King Leopold sent his personal adviser Stockmar to Britain, which added an experienced mentor to the household of Princess Victoria; based on Stockmar’s oral instructions, the Princess was better prepared for her role as British monarch than her descent from a royal collateral line would have suggested.
IV: INTERLUDE AFTER THE SUCCESSION
(1837-1840)

Queen Victoria succeeded to the British throne at a time when the nature of the state was under considerable discussion. The question of Britain’s national identity had a direct link to the contemporary debate about patriotism, a point which would later develop into the controversy about imperialism. Keeping these wider issues in mind, it has to be asked whether Victoria’s succession marked a new beginning for the British monarchy with regard to Britain’s national identity, or whether her reign was characterized by a continuity of the Hanoverian tradition.

The second question of this chapter focuses on the German background of the new British Queen, and it remains to be seen how Victoria was perceived by the nation: as British or German. This point is of course linked to the first one, since any contemporary debate about nationalism and patriotism had to take the German ancestors of the British royalty into account.

Thirdly, the various influences on Queen Victoria’s education will be discussed, since these would build the framework for her later development.

IV-1: LAST PREPARATIONS

Shortly before King William IV’s death, King Leopold of the Belgians prepared his niece with more detailed guidelines for her immediate task as British Queen; one of his instructions was to support Melbourne’s government.

Three days prior to King William IV’s death, King Leopold sent preparatory instructions to Princess Victoria. With respect to her appropriate response to the King’s impending fate, Victoria’s uncle recommended to support the existing Whig government by keeping Prime Minister Melbourne in office, and he also suggested: “Great measures of state I hope you will be able to avoid first.”¹ Since his aim was to secure a continuity for the existing government despite the exchange of the monarchical head of state, Leopold’s instructions are clearly sensible and they provided the Princess with the practical help she needed in order to deal appropriately

¹ 17 June 1837 The King of the Belgians to Princess Victoria. In: A.C.Benson/ V.Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria (London, 1907), vol.1, p.93.
with her approaching succession. Leopold’s guidance was obviously based on his own experiences as Belgian King for the previous six years. During that time he had succeeded in balancing the different religious and ethnic groups in his kingdom. Yet although Victoria would soon hold the same regal rank as King Leopold himself, their relationship still had its traditional uncle-niece character; however, the eighteen-year-old Victoria was succeeding to the throne autonomously, which made an unfolding of her own opinion only a matter of time.

As a result of the lengthy illness of King William IV, his death on 20 June 1837 came as no surprise, either to Victoria or to the politically interested part of the British public, since newspapers informed the latter on a daily basis about the King's deteriorating health.\(^2\)

On the day the King died, the new Queen Victoria stated in her journal her determination to “do my utmost to fulfill my duty towards my country; I am very young and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure, that very few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have.”\(^3\) Contemporary sources differ about the way in which the new Queen reacted to her succession; while one witness recalled that she faced her duties “perfectly collected and dignified,”\(^4\) the Times observed that she was “nearly overwhelmed” (22 June 1837) and informed its readers that the new Queen “burst into tears, which continued, notwithstanding an evident attempt on the part of Her Majesty to restrain her feelings, to flow in torrents down her pallid cheeks” (22 June 1837). This last observation certainly aimed at presenting a gender-coded image of the new

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\(^2\) For example, the Times wrote on 19 June 1837: “We have just heard that the most alarming rumours as to the desperate state of the King’s health are in circulation. The most fatal results are anticipated.”

\(^3\) 20 June 1837 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria (on the day the King died). In: V.Esher (ed.), The girlhood of Queen Victoria. A selection from Her Majesty’s diaries between the years 1832 and 1840 (London, 1912), vol.1, p.196.

Queen to the readers, since one of the most striking features of the new British monarch was in fact her femininity.

IV-2: GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Yet femininity was only one of the four characteristics which marked the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign; it was complemented by her youth, her education and, not least, by Britain’s separation from the German Kingdom of Hanover.

At the time of Queen Victoria’s succession, the British monarchy was “at the low point of its repute.” This decline of the image of the monarchy was due to the madness, immorality and deficiency of its previous three kings; yet already during the reign of William IV, the Duchess of Kent had established in the person of her daughter an alternative monarchical concept by visiting aristocratic houses in the countryside, as pointed out in the previous chapter.

The Times’s distinctly positive comment about the new British Queen stated that “youth, sex, and what relates to early promise of character considered, has caused among many of Her Majesty’s affectionate subjects the full share of exultation natural to such a moment. Credit is freely given, and ought within the bounds of reason, and to the utmost limit of a generous and noble confidence, to be reposed in the intentions and deliberate actions of our rightful Sovereign” (21 June 1837). This article summarized the contemporary expectations with regard to the new sovereign: her youth was seen as a confirmation of innocence, her gender was considered the reverse of the patriarchal reign of previous kings, and her character was looked upon as being pure; the latter judgement was certainly based on the separation of the Princess’s household from the official Court.

However, a fourth element contributing to this widespread anticipation was the fact that with Queen Victoria’s succession, Great Britain was disassociated from

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IV: Interlude after the succession

the German Kingdom of Hanover. This legacy derived from the year 1714, when George, Elector of Hanover, had become King George I of England. Since then, the links between Great Britain and Hanover had been multifold, and the clearest manifestation of the continuing connection of these two countries were the exclusive marriage associations between Great Britain and states of the German confederation. Yet whereas these close relations were not seen as displeasing in the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century witnessed a change in this British perception. On the one hand, the already mentioned character deficiencies of the previous three Hanoverian Kings had not improved the image of a monarchy traditionally linked with Hanover; on the other hand, the development of a distinctly national British identity from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards signified that this traditional link was in fact getting obsolete.

In 1837, exactly this opportunity arose with Queen Victoria’s succession, since the Salic Law forbade the possibility of a female lineage in states of the German Confederation. As a consequence, George III’s fifth son, Ernest Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, became the next legal heir to Hanover, and Victoria, daughter of George III’s fourth son, the Duke of Kent, succeeded to the British throne. Hence, “the dissolution of the union was readily agreed in both countries,” and while Queen Victoria’s succession was seen in Britain as an important step in the development of Britain’s national identity, the Duke of Cumberland’s determination to “take possession of his dominions” did not find any opposition in Hanover either, since in Germany the process of forming a national identity had not yet begun. This was certainly due to the partition of the German Confederation into thirty-six separate states, and only the political process leading to unity would then later produce the search for a distinctive identity of this eventually united nation.

As a consequence, Queen Victoria was “received by the British people with delight.” Since the Princess had not engaged herself substantially in domestic or

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international politics before, her "character was yet a mystery to her subjects,"
which in most cases had a positive connotation. This optimism can also be found in
the Times's commentary that "the accession of a youthful Sovereign to his Crown is
wont to fill the hearts of nations with eager faith and sanguine assurance of
prosperity" (21 June 1837). Accordingly, the first public appearances of the new
Queen were met with "warm and heartfelt outpourings of a willing and devoted
people," and Victoria's accession was mainly regarded as a new beginning for the
British monarchy.

A striking illustration for this hope is Croke's pamphlet England as it is, or
the state and prospects of society under the existing Government, to be remedied
only by Queen Victoria, in the character of a patriot queen, which was published in
1839. According to Croke, the duty of a 'patriot sovereign' "consists in promoting
the happiness of the country over which he presides, without any selfish or interested
views (...), and uninfluenced by prejudice or personal affection." Croke's
association of the female sovereign with a male connotation is interesting, since it was
based on the traditional patriarchal thinking in the lines of British kings. This is
understandable as, in 1837, it was one hundred and twenty-three years since the last
female sovereign, Queen Anne, had ended her short reign. What is more, Croke's
emphasis on a patriotic sovereign mirrors the contemporary debate about Britain's
national greatness and her established identity; a sign of this controversy can be found
in Croke's expectancy that Great Britain under her new monarch would enjoy "a state
of perfect prosperity and happiness."

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10 D.M.Ashdown, Queen Victoria's mother (London, 1974), p.108. The same view is held by:
C.Jerrold, The early court of Queen Victoria (London, 1912), p.113. Based on the enthusiastic
daily reports in British newspapers, it is certainly wrong to assume that Queen Victoria's
accession "met with a certain amount of apathy," as observed by: J.M.Golby/A.W.Purdue,
11 The Times, 21 June 1837.
12 A.Croke, England as it is, or the state and prospects of society under the existing
government, to be remedied only by Queen Victoria, in the character of a patriot queen
13 Ibid., p.82.
However, in addition to this positive attitude towards Queen Victoria's succession, there was also the more critical disposition of the Chartist movement, which Victoria inherited from her predecessors. Chartism depicted the monarchy "as part of the 'Old Corruption' of aristocracy, landlords and Church taxing people to the hilt," a point of view that would in fact change profoundly in the following years. In 1837, this criticism still mirrored the contemporary debate about the nature of the state, since large parts of both the radical movement and the middle-class reproved of "a parasitic state system that taxed the wealth of the nation and diverted it into the pockets of a narrow political clique." 

IV-3: THE OUTSET

In general, however, the new reign of Queen Victoria started on a benevolent note, since her inaugural declaration paved the way towards a distinctly new public image of the British monarch, which attached great importance to the British characteristics of the new sovereign.

Queen Victoria began her reign with the declaration that "it will be my unceasing study to maintain the reformed religion as by law established, securing at the same time to all the full enjoyment of religious liberty; and I shall steadily protect the rights, and promote to the utmost of my power the happiness and welfare of all classes of my subjects." This open declaration of the sovereign's aims "had been drafted by Melbourne," who read the speech to Victoria during his first audience. This address was an important step for the improvement of the monarchical image; stressing the religious foundation of the British state, the Queen then guaranteed her

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16 Queen Victoria's speech can be found in: W.J. Thoms, The book of the court. Exhibiting the origin, peculiar duties and privileges of the several ranks of the nobility and gentry more particularly of the great officers of state, and members of the Royal household (London, 1844), p.52.
British subjects peace and prosperity, while the last assurance was a reference to Victoria's already established philanthropic interests.

British statesmen commended this speech; Disraeli, Creevey and Greville made explicitly positive comments, and Greville observed that the Queen "appears to act with every sort of good taste and good feeling, as well as good sense (...). No contrast can be greater than that between the personal demeanour of the present and the late Sovereigns at their representative accessions."^18 Although remarks of politicians as a source to evaluate the reaction to the Queen's first speech can not be taken as an expression for the whole nation, they are certainly implying the notion of a new beginning, not least in the relation between monarch and nation.

An additional interesting aspect of the Queen's first speech is her emphasis on the fact that she had been educated in England.^19 With this decision, Victoria had evidently accepted King Leopold's recommendation to "say as often as possible that you are born in England,"^20 a statement which aimed at promoting a British image of the Queen. In this context, the term British proposed a clear distinction from the former bond to Germany, since the union of Britain and Hanover had come to an end by 1837; simultaneously, it embraced all different parts of Great Britain. Hence, it was the intention of the Queen's advisers to create a symbol which was applicable to Scotland, Ireland and Wales as well as to England, which was an important step for the exploration of Britain's national identity. As a consequence, Queen Victoria stressed her English education and her continuous presence in Britain whenever possible. Additionally, she dressed exclusively in clothes made by London manufacturers, a characteristic that was noticed in Society.^21 As a consequence, the

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^19 See: W.J.Thoms, The book of the court. Exhibiting the origin, peculiar duties and privileges of the several ranks of the nobility and gentry more particularly of the great officers of state, and members of the Royal household (London, 1844), p.52, where the Queen's speech is reprinted.

^20 23 June 1837 The King of the Belgians to Queen Victoria. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.1, p.102.

IV: Interlude after the succession

judgement of Lord Grey, "after seeing and hearing three Sovereigns of England, the present one surpasses them all - easy - in every respect," can be seen as an illustration of both contemporary aristocratic and general thinking, as already indicated by the *Times*.

Only because Queen Victoria's German background was not emphasized during these first weeks of reign was it possible to convey this distinct British image of the new Queen. The German origin of the Queen's mother was counterbalanced by her marriage to the Duke of Kent and her subsequent preparation of the Princess with an aristocratic education; the influential positions of King Leopold and Baroness Lehzen were only known to the circle of the Court, and Stockmar's presence was never explicitly mentioned in the Court Circular. As a consequence, the predominant German constellation with which Queen Victoria began her reign was simply not known to that part of the British nation which was interested in the latest political development. In the case of Stockmar, the Queen's new British advisers even thought his presence to be entirely beneficial; hence, immediately after her succession, the German surrounding of Queen Victoria did not cause any problems, and only several months later, Melbourne thought it appropriate to recommend Stockmar's departure from Britain, a development which will be discussed in further detail later.

The chiefly positive perception of the Queen remained unchanged for the first months of her reign, and Victoria's coronation at Westminster Abbey on 28 June 1838 caused a "great display of popular enthusiasm." Hence, the coronation was the "symbolic reaffirmation of national greatness," a status which was mirrored in the

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Times's meticulous account of the day's celebrations, its detailed portraits of representatives of foreign countries and the vivid depiction of the church service at Westminster Abbey.  

Lord Ashley (later Lord Shaftesbury) transferred the general affection for the Queen to the country itself when he stated: "What a nation this is! What materials for happiness and power! What seeds of honour to God and service to man!"  

The emphasis on nation reflects the contemporary debate regarding Britain's national identity, and judging from newspaper articles, Lord Ashley's declaration voiced in fact the opinion of the majority of the politically interested public. Therefore, Lord Fitzwilliam's statement in the House of Lords, in which "the uselessness of this grand alliance between Sovereign and people was insisted on, while it was stigmatized as only fit for a barbarous age" did not find any contemporary support, and the Chartist criticism came from a very different angle indeed.  

Thus, for the first time since the reign of King George III, the British nation was again able to identify herself with this virgin Queen, who in turn symbolised the greatness of Britain. However, David Cannadine's argument that a "collective longing for past glories" was the main reason for the coronation's magnificence must be refuted, since Queen Victoria's reign was most certainly perceived as a new beginning. Her youth, her gender, her education and the separation from Hanover which accompanied her accession were such strong indications for a fresh start that there were no contemporary allusions to the past at all; on the contrary, all signs pointed to the future.

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25 *The Times*, 29 June 1838.


27 See for example: *The Times*, 29 June 1838.


The political responsibility of Queen Victoria began with a close cooperation between the monarch and her Whig Prime Minister Melbourne. Before long, the Whiggish inclinations Victoria had been taught by her mother as an inheritance from the Duke of Kent bore fruit and the Queen came to trust Melbourne completely. As a consequence, Victoria increasingly excluded her uncle whenever important political decisions had to be made, a development certainly not appreciated by King Leopold. By the time of her coronation, Queen Victoria had already established herself as a “working queen,” thus illustrating her intention to participate in the affairs of state. However, before she could do so, she still needed additional political instruction. While the Foreign Secretary Palmerston provided the Queen with a “gentle introduction in the protocol of royal duties,” Melbourne became Victoria’s personal tutor. Hence, it was certainly understandable that “in the conduct of all business relating to the State,” Queen Victoria instantly came to rely on her experienced Prime Minister. Before long, Melbourne’s position developed into that of a “third father,” and his political guidance matured into a rather “excessive reliance, due to inexperience” on the Queen’s side.

Taking practical considerations into account, Melbourne assumed the responsibility of private secretary to Queen Victoria, a duty which put him literally into the centre of the young sovereign’s daily life. His social and political instructions during the following months complemented King Leopold’s written and Stockmar’s oral preparations, and proved in fact “entirely beneficial, for with his sincere


compliments, his patience, understanding and sympathy (...), he gave her the confidence that any young girl in her position badly needed. Queen Victoria herself was grateful for the support she gained through Melbourne's assistance, as is illustrated by her remark that "there is no end to the amusing anecdotes and stories Lord Melbourne tells." This development did not go unnoticed by leading politicians, and Greville's comment that "in all political concerns She has put herself implicitly in Melbourne's hands" mirrored this perception, which, for the moment, was seen as entirely advantageous, since it guaranteed the smooth continuation of political affairs.

As a consequence, Melbourne maintained his political authority, but with the vital difference that "there was an end to the hostility on the part of the Sovereign which had been encountered throughout the previous reign." Queen Victoria's actual participation in affairs of state was however limited to a minimum, since she was still too inexperienced to play a decisive role in the contemporary political development. Hence, with regard to the foreign affairs of Britain, the Queen's succession did not make any difference for either Palmerston or the Foreign Office, as they simply continued with the established line of policy.

Melbourne's political instructions led to the Queen's gradual emancipation from her uncle's guidance. She even came to reject King Leopold's advice, an attitude which would have been inconceivable only one year earlier. When Leopold wrote to his niece in 1837, "before you decide on anything important I should be glad if you would consult me," he could be certain that Victoria followed his instructions faithfully; yet only one year later, their relationship had changed drastically. By 1838,

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36 8 December 1837 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals. p.29.
Leopold complained that he had "been put aside as one does with a piece of furniture which is no longer wanted." His protest was based on the fact that Queen Victoria did not consult him any longer whenever political decisions had to be made; instead, she completely relied on Melbourne by now. Once she trusted her Prime Minister, Queen Victoria stated that "dear Uncle is given to believe that he must rule the roost everywhere. However, that it not a necessity." Hence, by 1839, Melbourne's influence had completely replaced King Leopold's guidance. It is important to realize that with this development, Victoria's exclusive German instruction was for the first time supplemented by a British person of influence, who was in fact able to instruct the Queen with first-hand knowledge about current political affairs. As a consequence, Melbourne became "the most important person in Victoria's life," and although there can be no doubt that their personal and official relationship was completely platonic, it was yet so confidential that it resulted in an exaggerated gossip "of Lord Mel being likely to marry the Queen." Even though this statement lacked any foundation, it still accurately shows how quickly and how completely Queen Victoria relied on the experienced guidance of her Prime Minister.

By September 1839, Victoria began to feel exhausted, and she noted in her journal that it was "unnatural for a young woman to like business." Shortly afterwards, she asked Palmerston for the first time for an explanation with regard to the course of British foreign policy, since "the Queen regrets that she does not quite comprehend them." It was certainly a sensible decision that she chose the appropriate responsible person to ask for additional guidance, and not her uncle in

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40 June 1838 The King of the Belgians to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid., p.149.
41 8 December 1839 Queen Victoria to Prince Albert. In: Ibid., p.254.
42 Marshall, The life and times of Victoria, p.45.
44 30 September 1839 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.1, p.55.
Belgium, which is a clear sign for her complete rejection of Leopold’s former influence.

IV-5: STOCKMAR’S DEPARTURE

Yet for the first period of her reign, there was a German person who still exercised considerable influence on Queen Victoria. While Melbourne managed the affairs of state, Baron Stockmar arranged Queen Victoria’s private matters; however, after some months, Melbourne thought it best to suggest Stockmar’s departure, which, in the long run, avoided a possible conflict: Queen Victoria was perceived as a British Queen, and any German influence might have been a threat to this image.

Baron Stockmar remained at the side of Victoria even after she had become Queen. In the days following her succession, Stockmar acted as a confidential messenger between the monarch and Melbourne, arranging tasks such as financial questions. The British Prime Minister soon agreed with the Queen’s opinion that Stockmar’s knowledge was “of the greatest possible use,” what is more, since the Baron made no attempt whatsoever to influence British (foreign) policy, Melbourne even granted him a co-operation in the post of the Queen’s private secretary.

However, had Stockmar’s presence been known outside the Court circle, “there might have been a storm;” as a consequence, Melbourne recommended that Stockmar should leave Britain for a while. This advice was certainly not to the liking of the Queen, who was determined not to “tolerate being refused the Baron’s advice,” but when rumours began to spread which referred to Stockmar as a

46 24 June 1837 Baron Stockmar to Queen Victoria: “In case Her Majesty may be in want of some money, Lord Melbourne thinks Her Majesty might speak of it to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who he understands, will have an audience of Her Majesty tomorrow at 12 o’clock.” Found in: RA Y152/1.

47 19 June 1837 Princess Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.1, p.95.

48 Dunckley, Lord Melbourne, p.209.

“resident spy” for King Leopold, she hesitated no longer and agreed to Melbourne’s suggestion. Hence, on 12 August 1838, Queen Victoria bade farewell to Stockmar, whom she called her “good and kind friend;” Stockmar subsequently met Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha and travelled with him through Italy in order to widen the Prince’s horizon.

The Queen’s decision to part from her trusted German adviser is a clear indication that she was willing to bow to public opinion rather than to keep an experienced tutor. Although Melbourne, Palmerston and the Queen herself were convinced of the beneficial effects of Stockmar’s guidance, they obviously preferred to avoid a potential conflict which might harm Victoria’s popularity in the long run. As a consequence, the constellation of the body of Queen Victoria’s advisers changed considerably: Stockmar had left Britain, and Melbourne had replaced the influence of King Leopold; as a consequence, the British Prime Minister was the Queen’s exclusive political tutor from now on. Although Baroness Lehzen and Victoria’s mother maintained their authority, their influence was restricted to the Queen’s private life. Considering that Queen Victoria was generally perceived as a British Queen, Melbourne had recognized the necessity to send away the valuable adviser Stockmar rather than to risk a damage to the positive image of Queen Victoria.

IV-6: ALBERT

This increasing influence of Melbourne was accompanied by a brief interlude in the maturation of the Queen’s image of Germany. Since her obligations as British Queen demanded all her attention, it was only natural that Germany was reduced to secondary importance for the time being; even the first novel Queen Victoria read in January 1838 was an example of English literature: Scott’s *Bride of Lammermoor.*

51 12 August 1838 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Esher (ed.), *The girlhood of Queen Victoria, vol.1,* p.380. Emden even claims that Melbourne publicly denounced Stockmar’s involvement in the duties of the Queen’s private secretary (See: P.H. Emden, *Behind the throne* (London, 1934), p.39); however, Emden does not state his source, and there is no contemporary evidence of this step.
52 Eight months later (4 September 1839), Queen Victoria explained to Melbourne that she
As a consequence, the Queen’s perception of Germany continued to be indistinct, since her view of ‘Germany’ was still limited to her notion of ‘Saxe-Coburg and Gotha’, the smaller German country most of her closest relatives were coming from. This nebulous personal image of the Queen with regard to Germany corresponded with the general British perception of the German Confederation, since the attention of the Foreign Office was chiefly focused on the European powers of France and Russia. Although the political importance of the German Confederation was not underrated by Great Britain, Germany had in fact not yet reached the equal status in comparison with the international constellation of European states, but the revolution of 1848 would eventually change this notion profoundly.

Despite the Queen’s stationary image of Germany, the already established custom of visits from German princes was continued after Victoria’s succession, and accordingly in 1839, the Queen received Prince Peter of Oldenburg and a Prince of Nassau at her court. With these visits, she showed a clear preference for German royalty in favour of any other European sovereignty. Moreover, although King Leopold’s direct influence was receding in the years following the Queen’s succession, he did successfully suggest a visit of his nephew Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to Britain in October 1839. Both Victoria and Albert knew that their uncle’s ultimate plan was to arrange a marriage for them; fortunate for their subsequent union, they did indeed fall in love, and it was Queen Victoria’s royal task to ask her cousin to marry her, to which he happily agreed. But despite this final equanimity, Prince Albert’s future at the side of the British Queen had not been undisputed. Prior to Albert’s arrival in Britain, Melbourne and Queen Victoria discussed three German Princes as a possible future husband for the Queen: Prince George of Hanover, the Duke of Brunswick and Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg. As already explained in the previous chapter, these

“couldn’t understand the German books” due to their (presumably linguistic) complexity. (In: Esher (ed.), The girlhood of Queen Victoria, vol.2, p.9.) This is rather remarkable considering the Queen’s bilingual education; on the other hand, it proves the point that Princess Victoria spoke more English than German during her childhood.

33 See: The Times, 3 August 1839 and 4 August 1839.

54 It was Prince Albert’s second visit; the first one had taken place in May 1836.
exclusive marriage links of Britain with states of the German Confederation were based on the shared Protestant religion and the Hanoverian heritage of the previous British Kings. Although the second motive had been rendered superfluous by Queen Victoria's succession, it is highly interesting to find the son of the Duke of Cumberland on the list of possible marriage partners for Queen Victoria. Thus, the pool of marriage choices for the British Queen was rather restricted; in the end, she fell in love with her cousin from Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, the German state her mother and her uncle came from.

On the one hand, King Leopold's plan to arrange a marriage between his niece and his nephew was certainly motivated by his personal interest in his country of origin; on the other hand, by encouraging this match, he likewise provided the British Queen with a permanent adviser, whom she urgently needed in the long-term perspective due to her inexperience, but also because of an increasing lack of enthusiasm. What is more, Leopold certainly expected to influence British politics by placing his young nephew at the side of his young niece.

King Leopold had selected Albert as the fitting suitor for Victoria from early on, and he also supervised Albert's subsequent education. The reason for Prince Albert as the potential man at the side of the British Queen was probably due to their almost identical age (Albert was born on 26 August 1819, three months after Victoria) and their common origin from Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. After a meticulous education, including English and French, by a German tutor, Prince Albert went in 1836 to the universities of Bonn and Brussels, where he studied international law and philosophy; the selection of the second university town indicates King Leopold's high involvement in his nephew's education, since it gave him the possibility to supervise Albert's development personally. When Stockmar left Britain in 1838, he took over the Prince's education; at the end of 1838, Stockmar and Albert started an extensive tour of the Italian states, which completed the Prince's years of study. Stockmar's actual instructions with regard to Prince Albert's political guidance remain as unclear as his earlier preparation of Princess Victoria; the detailed reports he sent Queen Victoria during the Italian journey cover only geographical changes and describe official meetings.  

55 Baron Stockmar's reports about "our crusades" are in: RA Y152/9.
According to a contemporary source, a marriage of Queen Victoria “had for some time being anxiously desired by her faithful subjects.”\(^{56}\) This general enthusiasm was certainly an improvement of Victoria’s image, since her original popularity had decreased notably within the first three years of her reign.

**IV-7: Initial Discontent**

Although the Queen’s reign started with a wave of enthusiasm, the subsequent behaviour of Queen Victoria soon changed this positive outset. Both her personal conduct in the Flora Hastings affair and her political course of action in the Bedchamber Plot “seriously impaired the reputation of the monarchy.”\(^{57}\)

The reason for this decline in the Queen’s image were the events of May 1839, which historians refer to as the ‘Bedchamber Plot’.\(^{58}\) By May 1839, Melbourne’s resignation from his post as Prime Minister of a Whig government was generally anticipated; Queen Victoria reacted deeply appalled to this possibility, betraying her Whiggish bias when stating that “we had only a majority of 5!”\(^{59}\) On the occasion of Melbourne’s actual resignation over the Jamaica Bill on 7 May, Queen Victoria faced the prospect of having to accept the Tory politician Peel as new Prime Minister. Peel requested that those ladies-of-the-bedchamber whose Whiggish inclination was known were to be replaced by Tory ladies, since he feared a disparaging disposition towards a Tory government from these members of the Queen’s royal household. However,


\(^{58}\) The Queen’s popularity was further diminished by the so-called Flora Hastings affair. Queen Victoria had suspected her lady-in-waiting of being pregnant with an illegitimate child; however, Lady Flora’s seeming pregnancy turned out to be terminal cancer. Her death on 6 July 1839 did not improve the Queen’s image in British Society, even though the *Times* expected that “no occasion will be taken from that melancholy but natural event to weaken the respect due to Royalty by false imputations and calumnies that can have no other origin than malicious invention.” (7 July 1839) On the other hand, Greville observed on 25 March 1839, at a time when Lady Flora was still alive, that the Queen’s “popularity has sunk to zero.” In: Strachey/Fulford (edd.), *The Greville memoirs*, vol.4, p.138.

\(^{59}\) 7 May 1839 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Esher (ed.), *The girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol.2, p.159.
Queen Victoria adamantly refused to agree to such a change of her domestic arrangements, which Peel rightly interpreted as having not obtained the monarch's confidence. In his eyes, this was an adequate justification for not taking office, and he therefore abandoned his attempt to form a Tory Government; instead, Melbourne continued in his responsibilities as British Prime Minister.  

Although this incident proved to be "the last occasion on which a sovereign was able to frustrate the formation of a government to which she was politically opposed," the contemporary reaction was utterly disapproving, notwithstanding Russell's explanation in the House of Commons that Queen Victoria thought that Peel's request "would destroy her personal comfort." Not only was "the royal toast (...) received in silence at Tory banquets," but the politically interested part of the British public threatened to return to their hostile disposition towards the monarchy. As a result, what had once been perceived as a hopeful opportunity for a new beginning was now, only two years after Queen Victoria's succession, regarded with scepticism, considering that the court showed once more "a certain tendency to follow the tradition of its predecessors: moral decline, incapability to include the whole range of aristocratic society, [and] political partiality."  

At this difficult moment, the Queen's decision to marry Prince Albert was a clear opportunity to reconcile the British people once again with the British monarch. It would be the vocation of Prince Albert, a major German influence on Queen Victoria.  

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60 Interestingly enough, the incident of 1839 was the last problem of this kind. Due to the diplomatic influence of Prince Albert, matters went much smoother after the general election and the subsequent change in British government in 1841, and on later occasions Queen Victoria had to change just one member of her household: the Mistress of the Robes. In the present monarchy, "the Queen is not expected to make any changes at all." In: Longford, Victoria R.I., p.114.

61 Bogdanor, The monarchy and the constitution, p.20.

62 The Times, 14 May 1839.

63 Marshall, The life and times of Victoria, p.57.

Victoria, to create an entirely new image of the British monarchy, one which would be acceptable to all classes of society.

As has been shown above, Queen Victoria’s succession was inaugurated by distinct new characteristics regarding the British monarch. Her gender, her youth, her education and the separation from Hanover which accompanied Victoria’s commencing reign, were signs for a new beginning, not least in the process of defining Britain’s national identity.

However, there is no evidence that the Queen’s succession made any difference to the contemporary debate about the parasitical state system; as a consequence, the development that “urban radicals and country gentlemen alike repeatedly damned the British central government as little more than a broker of ‘corrupt’ privileges to a caste of insiders” was not over by 1837. Moreover, although Queen Victoria’s accession was widely welcomed, the critical voice of Chartism linked the debate about this ‘old corruption’ to the new reign.

Backed by her German advisers, Queen Victoria promoted a distinct image of a British Queen; her birth in Great Britain, her education in Great Britain and her use of British manufacturers were emphasised during the weeks following the Queen’s succession. The Queen herself found in her first Prime Minister Melbourne a loyal tutor who soon replaced the former paramount influence of King Leopold. As a consequence, only the political guidance of Baron Stockmar remained as a substantial German authority, in addition to Baroness Lehzen. However, the projection of Queen Victoria’s British image had worked so well that once rumours about Stockmar’s position at Court started, Melbourne thought it advisable to recommend his departure, thus preferring to keep the Queen’s perception flawless rather than keeping an additional experienced mentor for the Queen. But before long, the scandals connected with Lady Flora Hastings and the refusal of the Queen to change her ladies-of-the-bedchamber under a Tory Prime Minister added a sceptical connotation to her initial impeccable image; however, the Queen Victoria’s decision to marry changed this perception.

Queen Victoria married Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in an era in which the political future of Great Britain was intensely discussed. The radical movement played an important role in defining the responsibility of the state and the government, and it has to be seen how this process would develop until the late 1850s. At the same time, the debate about the re-definition of the state had not yet come to an end, and Peel’s belief that “only an alliance with Protestantism (...) could provide the state with the ‘new source of strength’ which it needed”\(^1\) was an important groundwork for the future definition of the (not least religious) foundation of the British nation.

This chapter will illustrate the significance of the Queen’s marriage with Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha with regard to her own political beliefs, including a deep interest in a closer association of Great Britain with a united and liberal\(^2\) Germany. It remains to be seen if this focus of royal interest had any repercussions for the relations of the monarchy with the Foreign Office. What is more, the political significance of royal marriage associations will be discussed, in order to explain their subsequently altering character in later chapters.

V-1: ROYAL MARRIAGES II: VICTORIA AND ALBERT

The marriage of Queen Victoria with Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha took place at a time when on the one hand the nature of the British state was discussed, while on the other hand the existence of the Evangelical movement was an important characteristic of mid-nineteenth century. These factors have to be considered when the reaction of British society to the Queen’s bridegroom will be discussed; yet Chartism was the only contemporary movement which voiced an open criticism of the monarchy (but not of Albert) at the time of the wedding.

Queen Victoria’s decision to marry met with a positive reaction, since most


\(^2\) From now on, the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of ‘liberal’ will be implied: “favourable to constitutional changes and legal or administrative reforms tending in the direction of freedom or democracy” In: OED (Oxford\(^2\), 1989), vol.8, p.882. The term will be explained in more detail later in this chapter.
parts of society welcomed the prospect of seeing a continuation of the royal line. Although historians tend to argue that a domestic alliance would have been preferred by society, a closer reading of the contemporary sources reveals that the Queen’s choice of a German husband did not lead to extensive criticism. Some sporadic reproach was focused on the close relation of the Queen and of Prince Albert to King Leopold of the Belgians, and the Times voiced this concern by stating that “all parties agree in rejecting a member of the same family as Prince Leopold as consort to the Princess” (12 November 1836). This negative opinion was based on the fact that King Leopold continued to receive British revenues even at a time when he was already King of the Belgians, a practice that Stockmar eventually convinced him to end. It is interesting to notice the complete reversal British perception of King Leopold underwent: whereas his sister, the Duchess of Kent, had benefited from the close relationship at the time of her marriage twenty-two years ago, it now proved disadvantageous for his nephew.

The only other appearance of criticism was again restricted to the Chartist movement. The leading Chartist newspaper The Northern Star warned in 1840 “that the Crown would be in jeopardy if it continued to identify with an oppressive governing class.” However, this reproach was not directed against the person of Prince Albert, but towards the fact that he was to receive an annuity which could have supported several working-class families. As a consequence, there was no direct connection between the criticism by the Chartist movement and Prince Albert’s German background. Instead, the attack focused on the monarchy itself, since this institution “was never seen to serve the interests of the people but rather to be part of

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4 P.R.Williams, Public discussion of the British monarchy, 1837-87 (PhD, University of Cambridge, 1989), p.23. Williams paraphrases an article from The Northern Star, 15 February 1840.
V: Completion through marriage

an aristocratic and middle-class constitution’s obstruction of these interests.”\(^5\) This approach was part of the contemporary attack on the ‘old corruption’ of the state, of which the monarchy was perceived as being an essential element, a development which has already been mentioned in the previous chapter.

However, as soon as the British citizens had a chance to get to know Prince Albert as an individual rather than as a close relative of King Leopold only, he became much more acceptable. Albert’s first official portrait, painted by Ross in January 1840,\(^6\) was the occasion of favourable remarks, and the *Times* observed that “the Prince appears to be about 25 years old, which in fact he is not. He has blueish eyes and brown hair; the features are regular, and the forehead is good: he wears small mustachios. The character of the face is reflective and sedate” (13 January 1840).

Albert’s German origin was in fact not perceived as being at odds with Queen Victoria’s firmly established British nature. On the one hand, as explained earlier, the Anglo-German link was in accordance with the traditional marriage pattern of the British royal family, and on the other hand, the preparations for the wedding even intensified the Queen’s favour of British companies. Hence, the *Glasgow Courier* pointed out that the wedding ceremony produced “a seasonable impulse from the determination of Her Majesty to be dressed in her approaching nuptials in articles exclusively of British fabrication - an example which will of course be followed generally by the ladies of her Court”\(^7\) (14 January 1840). As a consequence, Queen Victoria’s decision to marry her German cousin was not only welcomed by most parts of Britain’s society, but it even intensified the importance the Queen attached to her hereditary and emotional attachment to Britain. This was in fact an important aspect, since it put Queen Victoria at the centre of Britain’s emphasis of her national identity.

The *Glasgow Courier* mirrored this development when it suggested that “immediately after the Queen’s marriage Lord Melbourne will retire, and leave the Government to Lord J. Russell, who will then dissolve Parliament under an anti-Com-law cry.”\(^8\) This point of view interpreted Queen Victoria’s marriage as a new beginning and thus as an end to the Whig government of Lord Melbourne; Peel’s

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\(^6\) W.C. Ross’s miniature painting, *Prince Albert*, is in the collection of the National Gallery (NG 6537); although the painting is presently not on show, it can be seen in the computer-supported Microgallery, situated in the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery.

\(^7\) *Glasgow Courier*, reprinted in *The Times*, 14 January 1840.

\(^8\) Ibid.
contemporary shaping of an altered and refined country was obviously seen as an alternative to the present system of the state. Although this conception of a possible effect of the Queen’s marriage did not reflect the whole spectrum of British society, its existence was certainly an important sign of the times.

The only actual impediments Prince Albert had to experience were related to practical questions of his future life in Britain. The joint radical and Tory fractions of the House of Commons denied him the title of Peer, and they reduced the suggested annual allowance from £50,000 to £30,000; however, it would be wrong to assume that these decisions were taken because of Albert’s German background. Their real objective was to show Melbourne’s government that he did not necessarily control the governing of the state.

However, a more serious controversy was associated with Albert’s religious background. The Earl of Winchilsea mentioned in the House of Lords Prince Albert’s Protestant religion “with a view to assuring and tranquillizing the public mind on the subject,” and he was not the only one concerned with this question. Considering that a cousin of Prince Albert, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, had married the Queen of Portugal after having converted from Protestantism to Catholicism, it was certainly understandable that British statesmen voiced their concern about Albert’s religion. This issue was particularly relevant to British Parliament and in fact to the entire nation, since the contemporary movement of Evangelicalism, “undoubtedly an important element in the mentality of the haute bourgeoisie,” made the faith of the prospective husband of the Queen an essential question. This debate is reflected in a statement of Lord Ashley, the later seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, who expressed the Evangelical concern that “the only Conservative principle is the Protestant religion as embodied in the doctrines and framework of the Church of England. As a nation we have rejected it; and as individuals we neglect it.” In the end, the topic of Albert’s religion was settled by the official verification in the Standard that the Queen’s future husband is “no more to be suspected of Popery (...)

9 The Earl of Winchilsea’s speech was published in The Times, 14 January 1840.
than is Her Majesty.”

All these specific discussions about Prince Albert were, however, not related to the fact that Queen Victoria was about to marry a German prince, who was, after all, welcomed by the Lord Chancellor, who was delighted “that Her Majesty had selected for her consort a descendant of the House of Saxony.” Instead, it has to be realized that Prince Albert became Queen Victoria’s husband at a time when Melbourne’s government was under serious attack from both radical and conservative groups. The nature of the British state was discussed controversially, and the mid-nineteenth century phenomenon that “Britons felt more distinct from foreigners than at any other time in their history” was reflected in Lord Melbourne’s observation that “the English are certainly very jealous of foreigners.” This emotion was ultimately echoed in the controversy about Prince Albert’s Protestantism, since religion was an important component in both the debate about the nature of the state and the simultaneous existence of Evangelicalism.

In addition to the mentioned financial cuts, Albert’s position was further limited by the Treaty of Marriage, concluded on 7 May 1840; the signers included Melbourne, Palmerston, Russell, Lansdowne and Stockmar (!). This document restricted the consent with regard to potential marriages of children of the royal couple to the authorization of “Her Majesty the Queen” only, an arrangement which made any influence of Albert virtually impossible - despite the fact that already at this

12 *Standard*, reprinted in *The Times*, 26 November 1839. Nevertheless, an anonymous ‘friend to truth’ inquired one week later “in which faith Prince Albert was baptized - the Protestant or Roman Catholic.” (In: *The Times*, 3 December 1839), and the matter was officially settled by Prince Albert’s Naturalization Bill on 22 January 1840.


15 5 October 1841 Melbourne to Queen Victoria. In: A.C.Benson/V.Esher (edd.), *The letters of Queen Victoria* (London, 1907), vol.1, p.424. A confirmation of Melbourne’s assumption can be found sixteen years later, when the *Times* stated that “England (...) has ever been jealous of foreign influence.” (25 January 1857).

16 7 February 1840 Treaty for the marriage of Her Majesty with the Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. In: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.89 (Merseburg), nr.2288, documents 77-78.
stage, the possibility of a second son of Victoria and Albert inheriting the Dukedom of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was discussed. This is a clear indication that the role British politicians originally envisaged for Albert was that of a rather inactive spouse at the side of the Queen. However, Stockmar's signature is an indication that the Treaty of Marriage was not overestimated by the German advisers of Albert; in fact, in the near future, the Prince showed that he had both the adequate character and the practical education to fulfil his position as husband of the British Queen satisfactorily. Thus, the personal status of Prince Albert was eventually much more than being only the German cousin of Queen Victoria, since he succeeded in carving a distinct niche for himself. The role which Stockmar played in the shaping of the marriage contract is, again, obscure; since he signed the treaty, he might have played a part in drafting it, but the main responsibility for the document certainly lay with Melbourne.

The initial involvement of Prince Albert in affairs of the state was virtually nonexistent. He concentrated on the private domain instead, where he eventually succeeded in replacing Baroness Lehzen's predominant status. Only slowly did he begin to have a personal influence on Queen Victoria, and it took several years until he took on official responsibilities. This brief period of Albert's life, in which he did not participate in the political development of Britain, corresponded with the attitude of the British Foreign Office, which did not consider German affairs to be of equal importance compared to those of France or Russia. Only by coincidence did German affairs begin to be of more interest to the Foreign Office when Prince Albert simultaneously began to develop distinct ideas of his own about Germany's future, and this constellation ultimately led to a new definition of the role of the monarchy with regard to foreign affairs. However, it has to be said that this political indifference was not in accordance with the cultural perception that Great Britain had of Germany; as Newsome has rightly pointed out, the "national pecking order for European countries" did in fact see Germany at the top, mainly because "of the kinship of a common stock."\footnote{D. Newsome, \textit{The Victorian world picture, perceptions and introspections in an age of change} (London, 1997), p.94.}

Yet whereas the German Confederation played only a minor role in the political affairs of Britain, the technological advancement of Great Britain was certainly of significant importance for Germany. It is an interesting development that while continental nations were watched sceptically in Britain, some states of the
German Confederation considered Britain as an exemplar of pioneering technology. Especially South-Western German states such as Baden and Wurttemberg looked to Great Britain for scientific expertise, as the country was perceived as the "Mecca of technological innovations and technical progress."\(^{18}\) Baden went even so far as to launch her railway network based on the British system of traveling on the left side, which caused considerable disorder with neighbouring states up to 1888, when it was changed to the German standard of traveling on the right side.\(^{19}\)

Thus, Queen Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert took place at a time when Great Britain was not interested in forming a closer political association with Germany; however, the royal couple soon developed plans of their own to create connections with certain states of the German Confederation on the family level.

**V-2: ASSOCIATION WITH PRUSSIA**

The christening of the Prince of Wales provided the ideal opportunity to form a first bond between the royal families of Great Britain and Prussia. Since Queen Victoria always regarded political affairs from a very personal and highly emotional point of view, it was vital that her first impression of King Frederick William IV of Prussia was positive. This step reflected Prince Albert's long-term objectives with regard to the political development of Germany, an aim which he pursued intensely in subsequent years.

During this first phase of his married life, Prince Albert concentrated on the private domain. One of his main objectives was to implement German traditions at Court; for example, the widespread use of Christmas trees dates back to that time.\(^{20}\) Apart from these practical considerations, Prince Albert aimed at widening the Queen's perception of Germany, since Hanover and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha were the

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\(^{19}\) See: Ibid. Steam navigation on the Rhine and on the Lake of Constance was also initiated with both British expertise and British staff.

\(^{20}\) However, it would be wrong to assume that Prince Albert introduced the habit of Christmas trees: Princess Victoria had Christmas trees as a child at Kensington Palace and well before that, Queen Charlotte (wife of King George III) had Christmas trees as well. I am indebted to Lady de Bellaigue, Registrar of the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle, for this information.
only states of the German Confederation of which the Queen had any image, and she had not even visited Germany once. Hanover was the country traditionally linked to the British royal family, but Queen Victoria had an additional emotional bond to this country through her trusted governess Baroness Lehzen, who came from Hanover. Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, on the other hand, was the German state where her mother, her uncle King Leopold and now even her husband had been born. The aim of Prince Albert was therefore to create a new bond between the British royal family and the most important state of the German Confederation, Prussia.

An ideal opportunity for producing a first bond between the royal families of Great Britain and Prussia came to pass when godparents for Victoria’s and Albert’s children had to be chosen. Their first four children had both British and German sponsors, a fact that stressed the great importance the royal couple was attaching to new and improved relations to states of the German Confederation. The choice of King Leopold of the Belgians, Duke Ernest I of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha and the Duchess of Kent as godparents for Victoria’s and Albert’s first child Victoria, the Princess Royal, were rather obvious solutions, as they merely underlined already existing links. However, the selection of sponsors for the heir to the throne had a much deeper significance. The birth of Prince Albert Edward, the later King Edward VII, on 9 November 1841 was seen by the Times as “an event to which millions of Her Majesty’s loyal subjects have been looking with the greatest anxiety” (10 November 1841). As the Prince of Wales was the first male inheritor born to a British sovereign since King George IV in 1762, this event was of vital importance. Victoria and Albert saw the christening of the Prince of Wales as an ideal opportunity to create a first link between the royal families of Great Britain and Prussia. Although the idea originated from Stockmar, it was the official duty of the royal couple to invite King Frederick William IV, who had succeeded to the Prussian throne in the previous year.

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21 Prince Albert informed the Prussian King about the birth of the Prince of Wales on 11 November 1841 and asked him to be one of the sponsors on 19 November 1841. Contrary to the assumption of P. Colson, Victorian Portraits (London, 1932), p.49, the Prince of Wales also had a British godfather, the Duke of Cambridge, a fact Prince Albert mentioned in his second letter to the Prussian King. See: K. Jagow (ed.), Prinzgemahl Albert, ein Leben am Throne, Eigenhändige Briefe und Aufzeichungen, 1831-1861 (Berlin, 1937), p.95 (I), p.96 (II). One of the sponsors for Princess Alice was the King of Hanover, and one of Prince Alfred’s godfathers was Prince William of Prussia, the King’s younger brother.
Contrary to the general view of historiography, however, the Prussian King did not accept this honour immediately, but hesitated for three weeks before he finally complied with Albert’s request. His indecisive attitude led to a highly significant letter Lord Ashley, later seventh Lord Shaftesbury, wrote to his friend Bunsen, in which he urged the Prussian Ambassador in Britain to persuade the Prussian King to accept Albert’s offer: “This act of Prince Albert will sink deep (...) into the hearts of this Kingdom; let the Sovereign of Prussia aid our course and his own by seizing the occasion that God has given him, of rooting immovably a political and religious confederacy (...). Let him come; in God’s name, pray him to come - he must not, he dares not throw away such an opportunity.”

The first motivation behind these sentiments was certainly Evangelicalism, since Lord Ashley personified an important authority of this religious movement, which “in mid-nineteenth century (...) set the tone of British society.” Apart from these distinct Evangelical desires, there was also an economic point of view which indicated that Prince Albert’s decision to approach the Prussian King was approved at least by part of British society. The Times for instance hoped that “one result of the approaching visit of the King of Prussia in London may be a better understanding with the German powers on commercial matters” (3 January 1842), an attitude which showed that Britain was indeed inquiring into a possible alternative to the existing dominating trade links with France. Despite the fact that the powers of the Prussian King were severely limited by the German Zollverein, it is very interesting that the Times thought of Prussia as a potential trading partner, a choice which possibly also reflected the contemporary Evangelical background.

Charlot’s assumption that Queen Victoria “tended to see foreign affairs in terms of personalities she knew and the friends she cherished” is most certainly right, and therefore it was very important that Victoria would form a positive image of the royal family of Prussia. Once King Frederick William IV had agreed to become

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22 As late as 29 November 1841, King Frederick William IV had not yet resolved whether he should accept the invitation. In: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, III HA I (England), nr.5386, document 6.


one of the godfathers of the Prince of Wales, the Queen wrote a grateful letter, assuring him "how delighted I should be at this opportunity of making the personal acquaintance of Your Majesty and of the Queen." In Melbourne's own words, the Prussian King was "very popular with many in this country," and this sympathy was mirrored in the Queen's decision to bestow the Order of the Garter on the Prussian King.

When King Frederick William IV arrived in Britain on 22 January 1842, the event did not go unnoticed in those parts of Society which were interested in the latest political developments, since both contemporary diaries and the press mentioned the visit extensively - and positively. A main source of the contemporary aristocratic British opinion are journals and letters of female members of the aristocracy, and in addition to the general observation that Frederick William IV "has pleased everybody, (...) has very gracious manners, and is full of intelligence," one of the earliest verdicts about the King's personality concluded that he behaved "like a plain English gentleman." This judgement showed the willingness of the British aristocracy to accept the Prussian King as a friend of Great Britain, an attitude which is also reflected in Greville's opinion that the King "has made a very favourable impression here." Lady Lyttelton, the governess of the Princess Royal, likewise remarked that Frederick William IV was "most brilliantly and affectingly received by the people, and magnificently indeed by the Queen." Her verdict corresponded with Prince Albert's

28 January 1842 The Marchioness of Lansdowne to Lady H.Frampton. (Both were ladies of Society) In: H.G.Mundy (ed.), The journal of Mary Frampton, from the year 1779 until the year 1846 (London, 1885), p.415.
own opinion that the King’s visit had met with “general satisfaction.”^32 The identical disposition of the Prussian press can be deduced from the leading newspaper, the \textit{Allgemeine Preußische Staatszeitung}, for instance, printed two detailed, positive reports about the King’s visit to Britain, thus covering both the christening of the Prince of Wales and the King’s subsequent activities in Britain.\textsuperscript{33}

On the more personal level of the royal family relations between Britain and Prussia, Queen Victoria’s first impression of the Prussian King was in fact favourable, since she described him as “a most amiable man, so kind and well-meaning.”\textsuperscript{34} On this occasion, Albert certainly succeeded in giving Queen Victoria a positive perception of Frederick William IV, which was an important prerequisite for further contacts. This first link soon developed into a closer friendship, as is illustrated by the regular correspondence between the two royal houses. In subsequent years, Albert added his political objectives to this personal friendship, but Queen Victoria did so only in exceptional circumstances, such as the revolution of 1848. She only started to give explicit guidance in political matters after her husband had died in 1861, when she emerged as a political figure in her own right.

During his stay in Britain, Frederick William IV’s inclination towards subsequent amiable relations between Prussia and Britain was certainly sincere, and he assured the Corporation of the City of London that “it will be to me a source of high gratification to find that my visit to this country may contribute to increase and perpetuate the friendly relations so happily existing between the two countries, relations so important for the maintenance and development of all the blessings of peace, and for the furthering of the civilization which is founded upon Christian piety and virtue.”\textsuperscript{35} The King’s disposition was reflected in the personal opinion of Greville, who stated his hope that Frederick William IV would learn from his stay in Britain “to entertain with more complacency the idea of a free constitution for his own


\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Allgemeine Preußische Staatszeitung}, 1 February 1842 and 2 February 1842.

\textsuperscript{34} 1 February 1842 Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), \textit{The letters of Queen Victoria}, vol.1, p.475.

\textsuperscript{35} The King’s answer to the address of the Corporation of the City of London, \textit{The Times}, 18 January 1842.
V: Completion through marriage

This remark could have been made by Prince Albert himself, since in 1842, the character of King Frederick William IV seemed promising enough.

Yet no matter how interested Victoria and Albert were in forming closer bonds to the royal family of Prussia, they did not neglect their monarchical duties. As a consequence, the royal couple visited France in 1844, a decision that affirmed the official relations between Great Britain and France. In addition, Queen Victoria received several European sovereigns at Court, culminating in the official state visit of Tsar Nicholas I in June 1844. After her initial reservation, the Queen eventually came to accept Nicholas I’s different style of government, observing that “he is sincere, I am certain, sincere even in his most despotic acts, from a sense that that is the only way to govern.” By attending to every individual sovereign, Queen Victoria conscientiously fulfilled her duties as British monarch, without giving any undue preference to Germany, which, however, had begun to be of special emotional significance for her.

V-3: Increasing influence of Albert

Backed first by Melbourne and then increasingly by Peel, Prince Albert soon began to play a much more significant role, and his position as husband of Queen Victoria was supplemented by the status of adviser to the monarch. Due to his influence, the Queen replaced her former biased political disposition in favour of the Whig party with a more neutral approach to party politics; this step was enhanced by her decision to pay income tax, which ultimately paved the way towards a more accessible image of the British monarchy.

Before long, Melbourne realized the advantage of Prince Albert’s thorough education, and he eventually suggested to Queen Victoria that her husband should see “all the despatches relating to Foreign Affairs.” Although his recommendation did not find a positive response immediately, Victoria eventually agreed, and Prince Albert was introduced to the political affairs of Britain. What is more, Parliament officially created Prince Albert Regent in case the (by now pregnant) Queen would die

37 11 June 1844 Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.2, p.18.
after the birth of the infant; this step became necessary after a (failed) attempt on the lives of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in June 1840. Thus, the Prince’s importance increased considerably, a development that was enhanced by his appointment to the Privy Council in September 1840. This terminated the short phase of the Prince’s political irrelevance and began a second stage, in which Albert’s attempts to influence British (foreign) policy were still rather restricted, but in which he simultaneously concentrated on creating strong bonds between Britain and certain states of the German Confederation. These states were particularly Saxe-Coburg and Gotha as the country of his (and indirectly also of Victoria’s) origin, and Prussia as the country for Prince Albert’s personal and political hopes.

A clear indication for the general approval of the fact that, for the first time since King George III, the monarch lived up to the demands of sovereignty can be found in the praising words of the *Times*, which saw the state visits of various European monarchs to Britain as “splendid proof that the position of this country in relation to the other states and sovereigns of Europe is raised to so high a pitch of greatness and dignity that of the Powers of the world the strongest seek our friendship, the most distant visit our shores” (1 June 1844).

This acknowledgement of the Queen’s official duties coincided with a first increase of Prince Albert’s influence on his wife. His inaugural public engagement, a speech delivered at the first anniversary meeting of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade in June 1840, was greeted with a “truly English and enthusiastic reception,” and after that, Albert began to accept an increasing number of responsibilities. He also took the precautionary step of contacting Peel through his Private Secretary in order to avoid a second Bedchamber disaster, as soon as early indications for the general election suggested that a Tory ministry under Peel would succeed Melbourne’s Whig government in 1841. As a result of Albert’s intervention, Queen Victoria was willing to adjust her personal household, and there were no obstacles to Peel’s coming into office in August 1841. Although the Queen admitted that “it would be needless to attempt to deny that I feel the change” from Melbourne to the Tory politician Peel, she quickly followed Albert’s example of

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39 *The Times*, 2 June 1840. It is interesting to note that for the first time the German Prince was linked with the characteristic *English*.

openly accepting Peel as leader of the new government.

Personally, however, Queen Victoria was rather reluctant to appreciate Peel as her Prime Minister, since, as Bogdanor has pointed out, the year 1841 marked "the first election which failed to return a government enjoying the favour of the sovereign."

This modified relationship between monarch and voters meant that "the confidence of the sovereign was of little use if a Prime Minister did not also enjoy the confidence of the electorate." Prince Albert realized this new situation and due to his guidance, Queen Victoria gradually began to assume a more neutral position with regard to parties, and this unbiased approach would be strengthened in the years to come.

In addition to Prince Albert's neutral monarchical concept as far as parties were concerned, Peel and Albert also convinced Queen Victoria of the necessity to pay income tax after 1842, just as every other British citizen did. This decision represented much more than an addition to the Chancellor's budget; rather, it was "a sign that the Court was to become more closely identified with the lives of the people," as the British sovereign was sharing a (financial) burden with the electorate. Whereas the Queen's early popularity had mainly been achieved by emphasizing her British nature, Albert and Peel now linked the domain of the monarchy directly to spheres outside aristocratic circle, thus connecting for the first time in British history the monarch directly with the middle and working classes.

Peel soon recognised Prince Albert's abilities and decided to use them to a much higher degree than Melbourne had been prepared to do. As a result, Queen Victoria agreed that from now on, Albert would be present at royal audiences with ministers, a step which increased his influence on British politics considerably, since he was part of the discussions between the Crown and the ministers. With Prime Minister Melbourne out of office, Prince Albert now obtained a supreme influential status upon Queen Victoria. This development was made easier by Peel's willingness to let the Prince play this role, and it was further supported by Lehzen's retirement to Hanover in October 1842.

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42 Ibid., p.22.
44 See The Times, 3 October 1842. The stated "visit to her friends" was only an euphemism for the end of her career as governess and private secretary to the Queen, since she settled down in Germany.
German adviser at the side of the Queen, as King Leopold had long lost his former influence, Stockmar was not always present at the British Court, Lehzen had returned to Germany, and the Duchess of Kent was leading a quiet life by this time.

This process did not go unnoticed, even though this time only in Court Society and among aristocratic circles. Greville was the first to note that Albert "is as much King as she can make him," this notion was likewise advocated by the governess of Victoria's and Albert's children, who remarked: "How glad she would be to leave the throne for him." Thus, the initial limitation of Prince Albert's personal and political influence on Queen Victoria was a characteristic of the past by 1844; from now on, he played a vital role as the Queen's main adviser.

**V-4: Germany I**

Prince Albert's personal interest in the future of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was soon shared by the Queen. Their second son, Prince Alfred, was designated by the royal couple and Duke Ernest II of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha as next heir to the German Dukedom. In addition to the association with this smaller German state, Prince Alfred aimed at encouraging a positive image of Prussia as the most powerful state of the German Confederation. This development was stimulated by Queen Victoria's first visit to Germany in 1845, which left the British monarch with a distinctly positive impression of Prussia and the Prussian royal family.

When, in January 1844, Duke Ernest I of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha died, his eldest son succeeded as Ernest II to the throne of the German Dukedom; from now on, Prince Albert became increasingly involved in the affairs of this state, as "his brother had neither the character nor the mind to rule (...) wisely." Due to an extended, even though not fatal illness of Ernest II and several miscarriages of his wife Louise, Prince Albert now seriously considered the possibility of creating his and

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47 Bolitho, The reign of Queen Victoria, p.84. Prince Albert even decided to visit his brother in March 1844 "for the arrangement of some important business" (in: The Times, 29 March 1844), but he was not accompanied by the Queen because of her fourth pregnancy.
Victoria's second son the heir to the Dukedom. With the consent of Duke Ernest II, Prince Alfred, born in August 1844, was chosen as heir apparent, a decision that was however not made public. As a consequence, the *Times*'s comment on Prince Alfred's birth contained no allusion to his future in Germany, and he was merely described "as a senator of the United Kingdom" (7 August 1844), while the *Spectator* welcomed the birth of Prince Alfred by observing that "the race of George the Third’s family is gradually disappearing from the scene" (10 August 1844).

The German plans of Victoria and Albert represented a remarkable constellation, since Prince Alfred, second son of the British Queen, was to succeed to a country of the German Confederation. Apart from personal consequences for Prince Alfred, this decision made by Prince Albert and his brother provided an example of how detached the world of the royal circles both in Britain and in the German Confederation was, since both monarchs reached this settlement without consulting their respective parliaments. However, a contemporary commentary in the *Times* located the "traditional idea of a despotic Monarch" not inside the institution of the monarchy itself, but indeed in "the old Palace of Westminster" (15 March 1844). This commentary certainly mirrored the debate about the 'old corruption' and the process of the refinement of the state, since the routine of British parliament was seen as being out of touch with the real concerns of the British electorate.

Queen Victoria was increasingly sharing her husband’s interest in German affairs. Prince Albert’s aim to widen the Queen’s horizon with regard to Germany by attaching Prussia to the already established notions about Hanover and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha took a more concrete shape in August 1845, when Victoria, together with her husband, visited Germany for the first time. They stayed at Bruhl, Cologne, Stolzenfels and Coburg, thus covering the states of Prussia and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. The significance of this first direct contact of Queen Victoria with the land of her mother and her husband can not be overestimated. Her first reaction after her

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48 Prince Albert mentioned this possibility already in a letter to the Queen on 7 December 1839, stressing that it lay in the interest of both Britain and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha that their first son, as the future King of England, should renounce his claim for the German Dukedom in favour of a younger brother. In: K. Jagow (ed.), *Prinzgemahl Albert* (Berlin, 1937), p.46.

49 The first reference to Prince Alfred’s future in Saxe-Coburg and Gotha can be found in the *Times* of 8 June 1854: Prince Albert had visited his brother and had "signed the document by which he makes over his hereditary rights to the Duchy of Coburg to his second son." However, the *Times* merely mentioned this brotherly agreement without making any comment.
arrival at Bruhl and her meeting with Frederick William IV was favourable, since she described the evening's celebration as "the finest of the kind I ever witnessed." The longer her stay lasted, the more enthusiastic her descriptions and emotions became, and she summarized her own feelings by stating that the whole visit seemed "like a beautiful dream."51

Shortly before the departure to Britain, the Queen declared, after having seen Coburg: "I have a feeling here which I cannot describe - a feeling as if my childhood also had been spent here."52 The visit certainly enabled the Queen to establish her individual image of Germany, since she was now able to visualize her German childhood influences. From now on, Queen Victoria's image was no longer restricted to smaller German states only, since she began to form a distinctly positive concept of Prussia as well; as a consequence, the visit ended, in Albert's words, "with perfect satisfaction."53 The Queen's own remark that she had not felt "in any way a stranger"54 mirrored her deeply personal and emotional approach, which for the moment did not include any political abstractions. Thus, the visit to Prussia intensified the already established friendship between the royal families of Great Britain and Prussia, which was an important foundation for the exchange of both personal and political information in subsequent years. The political area, however, was completely restricted to Prince Albert, whereas Queen Victoria focused on family news, which she wrote to and received from Crown Princess Augusta of Prussia.

The Times reported regularly about the royal visit to Germany and described the enthusiastic reception of Victoria and Albert as being "the tribute of a nation" (20 August 1845). The newspaper also stressed the current development that "our Sovereign is the most august representative of constitutional monarchy" (13 August 1845), a clear sign that Albert's initial hope of impressing Prussia with the British
model of monarchical constitutionalism was by now adopted by part of the British press. The *Times* in fact commended this effort, since it hoped that it would “improve those amicable relations with Germany which have taken deep root in our cognate origin, our congenial character, and our common interests in the affairs of the world” (9 August 1845). This statement is highly significant, since it stressed the mutual bonds between Great Britain and Germany in a time of Britain’s official alliance with France. What is more, the prevalent perception of Prussia was positive, since Prussians “were Germans (and Protestants as well).”

The official link between Great Britain and France, on the other hand, was mirrored in the comment of the *Times* that “England and France touch each other in two tender points - foreign politics and the navy” (20 March 1847). As Queen Victoria and Prince Albert never neglected their official royal duties, they did visit France and they received the French King Louis Philippe at the British Court. During the following years, their relationship even developed into a closer friendship, but Victoria and Albert always preferred their associations with certain German states, which they regarded as part of the family, to attachments to other European nations, which were looked upon as foreign countries.

The personal friendship between the royal families of Great Britain and Prussia was further strengthened by a visit of the wife of Prince William, the King’s younger brother, to Britain in August 1846. Princess Augusta of Saxe-Weimar, whose “liberal views were no secret on the continent,” was received cordially by Victoria and Albert. The British Queen was confident that Augusta “is a friend to us and our family, and I do believe that I have a friend in her, who may be most useful to us.” This additional positive personal impression was certainly vital for the process of establishing a positive connotation of Prussia within Queen Victoria’s perception of Germany.

In the following years, Prince Albert chose the political part in the constant exchange of letters with the Prussian King, Prince William and Princess Augusta. In one of his letters to the Prussian Court, he defined the working relationship between the Queen and himself by remarking that “Victoria and I without exception agree on

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57 29 September 1846 Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), *The letters of Queen Victoria*, vol.2, p.126.
every opinion and judgment on English politics and on European and global politics connected with it, as it befits faithful spouses.\textsuperscript{58} Nevertheless, whereas Prince Albert concentrated on the political development in both countries, Queen Victoria communicated mainly personal descriptions to Princess Augusta and wrote but rarely directly to the Prussian King. One of these exceptions was a letter written to Frederick William IV in 1847, in which the Queen emphasized the importance of the Prussian Ambassador for the friendship between Great Britain and Prussia; she stated that Bunsen worked "with assiduity and sincerity aiming at the acceptance of the principle of moderation and fairness as a guideline for the solution of political complications."\textsuperscript{59} The Queen's concern for the Prussian Ambassador was certainly an exception from her general attitude towards representatives from foreign courts, since she mainly mentioned diplomats of the German Confederation in her diary and letters.

It is important to realize that the correspondence between the royal courts of Britain and Prussia remained a private matter, which excluded the parliamentary representatives, a fact which the royalty of both countries appreciated.\textsuperscript{60} As a consequence, the exchange of news about personal and political affairs was on a much more intimate level than would have been possible had it been shown to the Foreign Secretaries of either nation. Thus, this correspondence soon became a second major source of information for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, in addition to the official reports they received from the Foreign Office. As the constitutional authority of the Prussian parliament was still very restricted in the 1840s, it never even occurred to the Prussian King to reveal his correspondence with the British royal couple to the Prussian government. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, on the other hand, decided to make concessions to the political situation during the Crimean War and presented the letters of the Prussian King to the British cabinet, since by that time both Victoria and Albert were utterly disappointed by the political tendencies of the Prussian King.

\textsuperscript{58} 2 April 1847 Prince Albert to the King of Prussia. In: Jagow (ed.), Prinzgemahl Albert, pp.139-46. Translation by the author.

\textsuperscript{59} November 1847 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia. In: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.50, J/E, (Merseburg), nr.359, documents 40-1.

\textsuperscript{60} Prince Albert emphasized in a letter to the Prussian King (2 April 1847) the privacy of their correspondence. In: Jagow (ed.), Prinzgemahl Albert, p.146. See also: R.Fulford, The Prince Consort (London, 1949), p.115.
V-5: 1848: Prince Albert’s Plans

However, this insight took several years to develop, and the political events connected with the year 1848 certainly contributed to it. Prince Albert passionately tried to influence the political development of Prussia in the revolutionary disturbances of 1848, but his method of sending detailed memoranda to the Prussian King ultimately failed due to the reluctance of Frederick William IV to consider any proposals which originated outside of Prussia. However, Prince Albert did succeed in suggesting schemes for improving the living conditions of the working classes, which would pave the way for later projects. What is more, by 1848, Queen Victoria had completely accepted the opinions of her husband as the basis of her own personal and political beliefs.

By the year 1846, Albert was “truly King of England,” thus establishing himself as an authority at the side of the Queen with whom British politicians had to learn to deal with. This process was encouraged by the Queen herself, who remarked to Baron Stockmar that she was “ready to submit to his wishes as I love him so dearly.” As a consequence, Prince Albert’s “influence became paramount,” and he regularly drafted the Queen’s official letters and memoranda, which she then only signed. Another important impetus of Prince Albert was the fact that Queen Victoria increasingly came to “regard foreign politics as the Crown’s special preserve.” For Queen Victoria, “foreign affairs had something of the flavour of a family business,” which was understandable from the monarch’s point of view, but it was certainly not accepted by Palmerston, who returned into office in July 1846. The Queen’s frequent inquiries about details of despatches of the Foreign Office caused indignation in a section of the British government which had never before been the focus of royal


62 20 January 1842 Queen Victoria to Baron Stockmar. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals, p.94.


attention. The Queen’s communication with Prime Minister Russell reveals that she followed “the German affairs with the greatest anxiety,” and this explanation was followed by her request “to let her know what passed upon the subject as soon as possible.” This is only one illustration of the deep interest Queen Victoria had in the political development of Germany, a concern which caused considerable disapproval among the Queen’s ministers. Clarendon, for example, complained that Victoria and Albert “interfere and meddle in a very inconvenient manner with everything they can,” a constellation that was not exactly an ideal basis for dealing jointly with the international crisis of 1848.

The outbreak of the French revolution in February 1848 was only the first example of insurrections in several states of the German Confederation (including Austria), an unrest which spread to Italy and Hungary. Ever since his and Victoria’s visit to Germany in 1845, Prince Albert paid increasing attention to the political development of Germany, focused both on Prussia and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and at the beginning of 1848, his interest in German affairs even intensified. Queen Victoria herself saw the political developments of this revolutionary period solely from her husband’s perspective, which makes a short examination of Prince Albert’s views necessary, since they were the framework of Queen Victoria’s beliefs. As Albert’s commitment to the German cause has already been documented quite extensively in historical research, the main purpose of this section will not be to provide a detailed depiction of the Prince’s interest in Germany’s political and constitutional development; instead, this section will concentrate on his main ideas regarding the future of Germany.

It has to be realized that Prince Albert’s own conception of Germany was

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66 29 November 1849 Queen Victoria to Russell. Found in: RA (M) 117/63.
based on a formation of a united nation which first of all excluded Austria-Hungary, and which secondly saw in Prussia the moral leader of this small-scale Germany. It seemed appropriate to leave out Austria-Hungary, since her long-term aims were seen as focused on territories outside the range of central Europe; at the same time, the moral supremacy of Prussia was expected to lead to a constellation of German states with both equal interests and equal rights. The selection of Prussia was furthermore based on the mutual Protestant religion, a motive that should not be underestimated considering the important contemporary Evangelical movement. What Prince Albert clearly did not want was a Prussia that would one day assume the authoritarian leadership of an united Germany, and his reservation about Prussia’s role was clearly based on the point of view of the smaller German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, which, after all, would then be under the threat of serious legal and judicial limitations.

Interestingly enough, Prince Albert differed from his former mentor Stockmar in this notion, since Baron Stockmar favoured a much stronger role of Prussia than Prince Albert approved of, and in fact he supported an elimination of the constitutional authority of the smaller German states in favour of a powerful, united Germany under the strong leadership of Prussia. This discrepancy in opinion between Prince Albert (and thus Queen Victoria) and Baron Stockmar illustrates the fact that their relationship had no longer its traditional mentor-pupil touch; yet notwithstanding these differences in political opinion, the royal couple continued to write regularly to Stockmar, who, in turn, visited them frequently.

Prince Albert’s political vision, on the other hand, envisaged a close alliance between Great Britain and the prospective united and liberal Germany under the moral guidance of Prussia. The term ‘liberal’ suggests a strict observation of the constitutional foundation of the state, a distribution of the political responsibilities between monarch and parliament, and the willingness of the monarchical head of state to agree to constitutional changes whenever it seems appropriate. Upholding these principles, Prince Albert was certainly in accordance with the contemporary liberal movement, since “liberals saw government as a matter of integrating and harmonizing different classes and interest groups within the political nation.”

Parry, *The rise and fall of liberal government in Victorian Britain*, p.3.
directly from God. In this expectation, Albert not only misjudged King Frederick William IV, but also his younger brother, the later King (and Emperor) William I.

Once the revolutionary outbreak had started on the Continent, Prince Albert wrote extensive memoranda to his brother Ernest II. However, whereas the exchange of information between Britain and Coburg was intense and sympathetic, Albert’s communication with the Prussian King never had the slightest chance of succeeding to convince Frederick William IV to alter his political approach. The reason for this failure was the personality of the Prussian King, who on the one hand was more than pleased with the friendship that had developed with the British royal couple, but on the other hand refused to be influenced by anyone who was not coming from a Prussian background. He did therefore read Albert’s memoranda, but he merely added some personal notes to each of them, thus modifying the entire composition of these documents.

The agreement of Olmütz eventually restored pre-revolutionary conditions, which put an end to Prince Albert’s failing attempts to convince King Frederick William IV of Prussia of his liberal political opinions. The only illustration of a political success of Prince Albert in the year 1848 can be found in his relationship with the Queen, since he completely shaped Victoria’s opinion. Not only did the British Queen accept Albert’s convictions regarding contemporary political and constitutional developments, she also repeated them in her own letters, thus indicating that they were her own views as well.

The similarity between Albert’s and Victoria’s opinions is striking indeed; the following three examples show the extent to which the Queen adopted her husband’s

70 Prince Albert wrote two memoranda to Duke Ernest II: 1 October 1847 (“Is Gotha to have a new constitution?”) and 14 March 1848 (the new constitution should consist of two chambers, and liberal laws for the election should be brought about). In: Bolitho (ed.), The Prince and his brother, p.97 (I), pp.101-2 (II).

71 Prince Albert’s three memoranda, sent to King Frederick William IV, are: I.11 September 1847 - 2 aims (development of a popular form of government and creation of a united Germany) and 2 impediments for Germany (jealousy of the individual governments and Austria); II.28 March 1848 - detailed plans for the new Germany (a federal state instead of a federation of several states, formation of a “Fürstentag” which should represent the Dukes and elect the Emperor; formation of a parliament and of a cabinet); III.13 December 1848 - the constitution of Germany must be accepted and a definitive executive power must be created. In: Jagow (ed.), Prinzgemahl Albert, p.163 (I), pp.179-82 (II), pp.189-90 (III).
beliefs. When, in July 1848, Prince Albert argued against a suggestion of the Prince of Leiningen, he pointed out “that the Dukes cannot sustain their position and counsels themselves to abdicate quickly” and came to the conclusion: “But that is a low estimation of high concerns!” Queen Victoria repeated only one month later: “I do not think the fate of the Minor Princes in Germany is so completely decided as Charles is so anxious to make one believe.” Similarly, Albert’s urging words that “Prussia must not hesitate in taking possession of the territory by forming a closer federation which state after state can join by contract,” found their way into a later letter of the Queen, in which she stated that “Prussia must protect the poor Princes and put herself at the head, else there is no hope.” Albert’s notion that “with the Prussian constitution, it will be difficult to rule” was likewise later echoed in Victoria’s conviction that “that constitution never will work well.” These examples moreover illustrate the spectrum of Prince Albert’s addressees, whereas Queen Victoria mainly wrote to King Leopold of the Belgians and to Crown Princess Augusta of Prussia. What is more, she usually limited her political comments to a minimum, voicing her individual emotions in entirely subjective terms, such as “Germany makes me so sad.” It is certainly interesting that Victoria’s and Albert’s close personal and working partnership mirrored the contemporary development of the British middle-class, where at the same time “women contributed to family welfare by acting as part of a team.” Quite the contrary was the case for the German Confederation, where “the impression was that work (...) was performed only by the man in his job.”


73 4 April 1848 Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.2, p.197.


In fact, the only success Prince Albert had in 1848 was in the domain of social politics, since he strengthened the bond between the monarchy and the working classes by publicly stressing the necessity to improve the condition of the ‘labouring classes’, as they were officially called. His main suggestion was that houses should be built particularly for the purpose of easing the characteristic hardships of working class families; this proposal was highly acclaimed, and the *Times* praised it as “the most necessary, the most practicable, and the most vigorous” plan, applauding Albert’s efforts as “thoroughly English in feeling, English in language, and English in sense” (19 May 1848). Prince Albert’s accomplishments were therefore commended by the newspaper in a terminology which indicates a clear tendency for the contemporary movement of national identity, of which the monarchy was seen as a vital part.

**V-6: 1848: ALBERT VS. PALMERSTON**

In 1849, Greville observed about Prince Albert that his “views were generally sound and wise, with one exception, which was his violent and incorrigible German unionism. He goes all length with Prussia; (...) and insists upon a new German Empire, with the King of Prussia for its Head.”[^1] This statement explains how the relationship between the monarch and the Foreign Office could deteriorate in the months following the outbreak of the revolution in continental Europe. Whereas Victoria and Albert regarded foreign affairs as the special preserve of the Crown and considered German affairs of particular importance, the Foreign Secretary Palmerston had to consider the contemporary development from a much broader perspective. For him, foreign affairs were the responsibility of the Foreign Office, and he could not consent to a special treatment of any country. As a consequence, the revolutionary outbreak of 1848 certainly was a trying time for the co-operation between the monarchy and the Foreign Office.

The *Times* covered the political development of German affairs meticulously. Despite its initial optimism that the experience of the French revolutionary movement “will not be repeated in Germany” (23 March 1848), and that German affairs would lead to the “reconstruction of one of the greatest Powers of Europe” (17 March 1848), the *Times* soon came to describe the unrest as a “fatal course unchecked by

any decisive effort on the part of the Government" (9 November 1848); within eight months, the public mood had changed from initial approval to considerable condemnation. When the Prussian King decided to refuse the Imperial Crown of Germany, the *Times* finally concluded that the upheaval ended in "the phantom of the Germanic Empire" (7 April 1849), thus signaling its disapproval of any further revolutionary agitation. This changing opinion of the *Times* was mirrored by the official attitude of the British Foreign Office, which shifted from initial acceptance to a clear rejection, a disposition which was reflected in Britain’s neutral approach towards these continental problems.

Apart from the fact that the Prussian King was more than reluctant to let Prince Albert direct the policy of Prussia, another reason why Albert failed to implement his political beliefs in the restructuring process of Germany was Palmerston’s refusal to co-operate with the Prince in this question. Chamberlain’s argument that Palmerston “showed very little either understanding of, or interest in events in Germany in 1848” is certainly misleading; on the contrary, Palmerston was constantly informed about the latest political development on the Continent, but it is important to understand that he always had to consider the international situation before defining the British position. Besides, the Foreign Office was anything but opposed to the possibility of forming a closer association between Britain and the German Confederation, but Palmerston vehemently objected to the constant interference of the royal couple regarding this subject. The pre-revolutionary concept of a possible Anglo-Prussian alliance was based on the shared religion, the non-aggressive approach of German foreign policy, and a predominantly conservative outlook of both countries. Whereas the German *Zollverein* was the main obstacle to such an alliance before 1848, the revolutionary development of that year threatened to change the European balance of power in such a grave way that the Foreign Office revised its predisposition to consider a closer Anglo-German association.

Fischer-Aue’s assumption that the development of the German political affairs of 1848 were regarded as a private matter of Prince Albert in Britain is in fact

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Palmerston left no doubt that "he, as Foreign Minister, was responsible for the relations of England with other countries," which created an immense potential for a conflict with the monarch. The official position of the British Foreign Office was alert if cautious, since the outcome of the revolutionary upheavals was anything but certain. Once the threat to existing governments became evident, the Foreign Office decided to uphold a neutral approach, which included the acceptance of any political refugees, but which excluded any closer commitment to any continental nation.

Queen Victoria and Albert, on the other hand, did indeed maintain close contacts with the royal family of Prussia, an approach that was not welcomed by Palmerston. He tried to balance the Court's biased view by "submitting only select dispatches for royal view," which before long was discovered by Victoria and Albert. They in turn decided to show Palmerston only Victoria's (rather unpolitical) correspondence with the Prussian Court, but excluded Albert's (certainly political) share in the communication. The relationship between the British Court and the Foreign Office was therefore not a pleasant one, and the possibilities for a closer cooperation were rather restricted during these years. However, this did not restrain the process of policy formation, since the official British position of neutrality was ultimately not disputed by the royal couple.

This has to be kept in mind when considering the remark of the insider Greville, who observed in 1850 that although Victoria and Albert "were quite powerless in such matters as the Greek or the Sicilian questions, they could do a great deal of mischief in Germany, for being in constant communication with their relations and connexions [sic] there." Greville was certainly right in pointing out the unique interest which the royal couple had in the political development of Germany, but by this time, Prince Albert had already decided to end his political correspondence with the Prussian King. The Queen's husband had evidently realized that "the responsibility for giving advice from a distance is too great." As observed earlier, any cooperation between the royalty of Great Britain and Prussia depended in fact on the

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80 Benson, Queen Victoria, p.159.
81 Billy, Palmerston's foreign policy: 1848, p.21.
83 10 November 1850 Prince Albert to Duke Ernest II. In: Jagow (ed.), Prinzgemahl Albert, p.220. Translation by the author
willingness of the Prussian monarchy to actually accept Prince Albert’s suggestions, but King Frederick William IV was not inclined at all to approve of any outside influence.

As a consequence, the efficiency of the Foreign Office was not obstructed by the opposing position of the royal couple, and Victoria and Albert ultimately accepted the British neutral approach to continental affairs both in 1848 and in subsequent years. It has to be said that they had in fact no other alternative, since by 1849, the revolutionary development had rendered Prince Albert’s concept regarding a closer association between Great Britain and a liberal, united Germany clearly superfluous.

By 1850, the close link between the royal families of Great Britain and Prussia had become publicly known, and the Times observed that “we are not ignorant that an improper use has sometimes been made abroad of the family connexions [sic] which exist between the Consort of Queen Victoria and certain adherents of the Prussian Union” (29 November 1850). The occasion for these critical words was Radowitz’s secret mission to Britain, since the Prussian King tried to form an alliance with Britain by sending his confidante Radowitz to Victoria and Albert. The suspicion of the Times, however, proved to be unfounded in this case, for the royal couple realized the absurdity of such a suggestion and informed the foreign secretary, thus supporting the British cabinet in its decision to remain neutral. The agreement of Olmütz put an end to these considerations once and for all. Significantly, both Greville and the Times saw the royal correspondence with German states exclusively as a political disadvantage, whereas Victoria and Albert regarded their close connection with some German courts as an additional source of information beneficial to the shaping of the foreign policy of Britain. It was indeed left to later ministers such as Disraeli and Salisbury to utilize the channel of royal correspondence in a manner that was rewarding for the Foreign Office as well.

The end of the revolution on the continent was commended by the Times as a re-establishment of “that harmony between Austria and Prussia which is the basis of the Confederation” (18 December 1850). Finally, even Prince Albert had to acknowledge that no change within the German Confederation would be possible under Frederick William IV, but he might have reached this insight as early as November 1847, had he taken the King’s statement that “Governments are weakened by modern Liberalism (the precursor of Radicalism, as the dying chickens precede the
Cholera) more seriously.

From now on, the hopes of Victoria and Albert rested on the King's younger brother, Prince William, and his wife, Princess Augusta. Their contact was intensified during the early months of 1848, when Prince William decided to avoid the politically hazardous situation in Berlin by coming to Britain; on this occasion, Queen Victoria formed a favourable opinion about him, since she considered him to be "straightforward, conciliatory, and yet firm of purpose." The family ties between the royalty of Great Britain and Prussia were further strengthened in 1851, when Prince William, his wife and their son Prince Frederick William visited the Great Exhibition, which intensified the Queen's friendship with Princess Augusta. The British Queen confided to the Prussian Crown Princess that "with all my heart I reciprocate the feelings of love, friendship and attachment (...). A true and lasting friendship demands not only similarity of character, but also a sympathetic agreement upon the serious aspects of life, particularly in regard to politics and religion." Augusta was in fact the first to suggest a marriage of their eldest children, but any decision was postponed until the Princess Royal and Prince Frederick William would be able to choose for themselves; however, Queen Victoria's and Augusta's correspondence certainly mirrored the mutual interest in a potential daughter- or son-in-law.

V-7: THE CRIMEAN WAR

However, the friendship between the royal houses of Great Britain and Prussia was put to a severe test during the Crimean War, which broke out in March 1854. As

87 Queen Victoria and Prince Albert received detailed information about Prince Frederick William's course of study at Bonn (18 November 1849. In: Bolitho (ed.), Further letters of Queen Victoria, p.18), and about his visit to Russia in 1852 (31 March 1852. Found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.51 (Dahlem), nr.353). Crown Prince William and Crown Princess Augusta on the other hand were kept informed about the Princess Royal's development (3 December 1852. Found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.51 (Dahlem), nr.344; and 28 March 1853. In: Bolitho (ed.), Further letters of Queen Victoria, p.39).
with the revolution of 1848, neither reasons nor proceedings of the Crimean War will be discussed; instead, its implications for Victoria and Albert and their association with the Prussian Court will be observed. The Crimean War saw Great Britain and Prussia on different sides: whereas Great Britain formed an alliance with France in order to fight Russia, Prussia decided to remain neutral. The Prussian resolve was not appreciated by either the royal couple or the Foreign Office, and Prince Albert tried in vain to convince the Prussian King to change his mind. In contrast to the political development of 1848, however, the co-operation between the monarch and the Foreign Office was this time close and not marred by any disagreement.

Before the actual outbreak of the Crimean War, in which Britain and France fought for the Turkish cause against Russia, bellicose sentiments were so prevalent in Britain that the situation escalated in London, where Prince Albert was anonymously attacked in pamphlets on the basis of the widespread belief that he had, as the *Times* put it, “meddled in the most outrageous manner with affairs of State” (18 January 1854). Although the politically interested part of the public was right in assuming that Prince Albert tried to influence the course of foreign policy by communicating with Prussia, it is important to realize that he tried to do so in a pro-British way, since he and Victoria attempted to convince Prussia of the necessity to join Britain and France in the coming Crimean War in order to restrain Russia’s expansionist tendencies.

However, once these accusations were cleared by declarations in both Houses of Parliament, a letter to the editor of the *Times* adequately remarked that “nothing has occurred in my time (...) to my apprehension more disgraceful to England than the ready acceptance of these calumnies by the less affluent and educated classes throughout the length and breadth of the land” (25 January 1854). Interestingly enough, all these public attacks were solely aimed at Prince Albert, but not a single accusation was directed against Queen Victoria, whose image of a British monarch did apparently not allow such a treacherous thought. Only after her husband’s death did Queen Victoria herself experience personal accusations because of her pro-Prussian bias in 1864 and 1871.

Before the Crimean War actually broke out, Prince Albert tried to convince Prussia not to remain neutral in the expected conflict. He tried to convince Crown Prince William that “Prussia and Germany cannot remain neutral, no matter what

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Kings and Ministers might wish," but Albert forced an open door, as William was in favour of a Prussian alliance with Britain and France anyway. He tried to follow Prince Albert’s advice and attempted to persuade the King, a constellation which resulted in a serious conflict with his brother. Since Frederick William IV had by that time decided to keep Prussia on a neutral course, their discord was only ended by Prince William’s political exile to Coblentz.  

Having failed completely in this respect, Prince Albert abandoned his efforts and explained to his brother that “Prussia’s behaviour is wrong. Neutrality is absurd,” whereas Queen Victoria kept up the correspondence with Crown Prince William and Augusta, promising that “of our friendship, love and sympathy you can always be assured!” She even took the diplomatic step of pointing out towards the Prussian King that “whatever these troubulous times may bring us, I harbour the firm confidence that the warmth of our friendly relations cannot be troubled by anything.” However, this expression of honest friendship seems to have been written only as an attribute to the long-standing association between the royal houses of Britain and Prussia, since it was clearly no longer based on a political agreement.

Accordingly, in another letter, Queen Victoria openly expressed her disappointment about the King’s decision to keep Prussia on a neutral course, and emphasized “how deep my pain is, after our going so far, faithfully, hand in hand, to see you, at this weighty moment, separating yourself from us. My pain is still further increased by the fact that I cannot even conceive the grounds which move your Majesty to take this step.” The only reason Victoria and Albert were able to see for

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91 23 March 1854 Prince Albert to Duke Ernest II. In: Bolitho (ed.), The Prince Consort and his brother, p.143.
92 4 April 1854 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. In: Bolitho (ed.), Further letters of Queen Victoria, p.45.
93 June 1854 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.3, p.91.
94 17 March 1854 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia; in: Ibid., vol.3, p.21.
this development was the family connection between the Prussian King with the Russian Tsar, the husband of the King’s sister. Victoria’s hint “but everything failed because of the obstinacy of your brother-in-law”\(^{95}\) certainly hit upon the truth, and the \textit{Times} similarly stated that Prussia’s neutrality was “clearly a result of Russian influence over the King of Prussia” (11 March 1854). Interestingly enough, the Prussian King gave preference to his close family connections with the Russian Court over the friendship with the British royal couple,\(^{96}\) his decision might well have been understood by both Victoria and Albert if it had not been directed so distinctly against Britain’s interests. Another indication for the “triumph of the reactionary party which is identified with Russia” (16 March 1854) in Prussia was Bunsen’s replacement as Prussian Ambassador to Britain by Bernstorff, whose Russian inclinations were well known.

Despite the vehement accusations against Prince Albert, he continued his regular correspondence with the Prussian court, if only with the exiled Crown Prince William. He even went so far as to inform William about confidential aspects of the Crimean War when he communicated details about the British army and navy, although he clearly realized that “we do not sit in a conference and you as a Prussian should not know anything about it at all.”\(^{97}\) Although the use William could have made of this classified information during his time in exile was quite limited, Albert’s

\(^{95}\) This essential passage is in the letter of 17 March 1854, but it has been left out by Benson and Esher. The paragraph is in the original letter Queen Victoria wrote to Crown Prince William of Prussia, found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.51, J, (Merseburg), nr.142, document 41. Translation by the author. Such a case demonstrates how unreliable the editions of Queen Victoria’s letters actually are, and thus it illustrates the need to refer to primary sources.

\(^{96}\) Even the \textit{Times} realized that “the King of Prussia has all his life been more influenced by his personal predilections and friendships than by any fixed principles or deliberate opinions.” (In: \textit{The Times}, 13 May 1854). The same words could have been written by Prince Albert.

trust in the Prince was still astonishing. It is important to realize that Albert’s, and, correspondingly, Victoria’s interest in German affairs had continued virtually uninterrupted since their first visit to Germany in 1845. Even at a time when the Times declared that “after the experience we have had of the policy of Prussia (...), the less we have to do with her the better” (22 March 1855), Albert did not abandon the close contact with Prussia, but simply adjusted his correspondence to the political circumstances by choosing the Prussian Crown Prince as his confidant from now on. The participation of Prince Albert in the actual process of foreign policy, on the other hand, remained limited throughout the war, since the dominating role of the Foreign Office with relation to the formation of foreign affairs was not disputed by the royal couple.

What is more, Victoria and Albert did not ignore the fact that Britain was officially allied with France, and in order to illustrate this mutual bond between Britain and France, the royal families of both countries agreed on an exchange of visits. As a result, Napoleon III and his wife paid Britain a state visit in 1855, an event which was welcomed by the Times “on the grounds of practical experience and national interest” (29 March 1855); this experience was repeated by a visit of Victoria and Albert to France in the same year. Both were momentous occasions, as it was for the first time since the Hundred Years’ War that a British sovereign officially visited France. Therefore, the Foreign Office and the monarch agreed in condemning the neutral position of Prussia, and this time, there was no discord with regard to the official course of policy between these two vital British institutions. What is more, Victoria’s and Albert’s relationship with Palmerston improved after the latter had succeeded Aberdeen as Prime Minister in January 1855, and the Crimean War formed a common bond which superseded earlier differences of opinion. Queen Victoria’s decision to bestow the Order of the Garter on Palmerston in April 1857 was certainly an official sign that “the old soreness between the prime minister and the monarchy seemed to be healing over.”

This improvement in the relations between the Queen and her ministers was further supported by Albert’s willingness to show the Foreign Secretary Clarendon the letters he received from Prince William. This meant that a source of information formerly only available to the British court became now accessible to the Cabinet as well.

Interestingly enough, Queen Victoria labeled Napoleon III “much more

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German than French in character\textsuperscript{99} after their first personal meeting, a description which uniquely shows the Queen's predilection for everything German, even in the French Emperor, and even at a time when public opinion in Britain was heavily averse to the course of the political development in Germany. Victoria and Albert obviously disregarded the public resentment against Germany prevalent in Britain, as they continued to treat Prussia with special attention, not least with regard to their daughter's envisaged engagement to Prince Frederick William of Prussia. As a consequence, Queen Victoria remarked to the Foreign Secretary Clarendon that "it is quite natural and excusable that our patience should at last be worn out by the miserable policy which Prussia is pursuing, but it can never be our interest openly to quarrel with her. This would be simply playing the game of Russia."\textsuperscript{100} This statement showed that although the Queen was disappointed by the latest conduct of Prussia, she shared her husband's hope that William and Augusta would shape the future of Prussia in a more liberal way once the Crown Prince succeeded to the throne.

\textbf{V-8: ROYAL MARRIAGES III: VICTORIA AND FREDERICK WILLIAM}

During the Crimean War, the royal families of Great Britain and Prussia agreed on the marriage of their eldest children, a decision that was not appreciated by the politically interested parts of either nation, but these sentiments changed once the war was over. When Victoria and Albert visited the Princess Royal and her husband in 1858, both the Queen's emotional bonds to Prussia were strengthened, and the ties of friendship between the royal couple and the Prussian Crown Prince and Princess were intensified. This constellation gained in importance when Crown Prince William was appointed Regent in 1858, as his decision to nominate a liberal government certainly raised the hopes for a different course of the Prussian policy. However, before long, he began to express conservative convictions as well, a development that put an end to Prince Albert's renewed efforts to influence the Prussian policy in a more liberal way.

Paradoxically, it was the Crimean War which paved the way for the first family bond between the royal families of Great Britain and Prussia. Crown Prince William and his wife feared that the increasingly benevolent relationship between Britain and


\textsuperscript{100} 11 January 1856 Queen Victoria to Clarendon. In: Ibid., vol.3, p.205.
France might constitute a hindrance for the pending match of their son Prince Frederick William with the Princess Royal. As a consequence, they suggested a visit of their son to Britain in September 1855, the very time when the Crimean War was at its peak. Before long, the “bond, which has formed because of a heartfelt affection”\textsuperscript{101}, was solidified by an engagement; but because of the ongoing war, this development was restricted to the knowledge to the royal families only.

However, the *Times* found out about the engagement and criticized it harshly: “A union with the perfidious Court of Prussia would at the present moment be a national degradation; it would be a crime, and, what is worse in the eyes of statesmen, it would be a great mistake” (13 October 1855). When the engagement was subsequently announced in May 1857, and ceremoniously described as an “event which is so delightful for the Royal Houses and the whole monarchy,”\textsuperscript{102} it caused criticism from the Prussian side as well. Princess Augusta’s remark, “I had not thought it possible that the choice of an English Princess would cause offence,”\textsuperscript{103} mirrored the divided public opinion in Prussia, where on the one hand “the liberal world (...) cheered because of the English-German link,” while on the other hand “the marriage remained a thorn in the side of the conservative party.”\textsuperscript{104} Interestingly enough, in 1857, Princess Augusta was not aware of the anti-British disposition in Prussia, a fact about which Stockmar had informed Queen Victoria already in 1854, when he had stated that, as a consequence of the Crimean War, “the Majority of the People in Germany are irritated against England.”\textsuperscript{105}

This considerable amount of criticism raises the question why Victoria, Albert


\textsuperscript{102} The citation is taken from the official statement announcing the engagement of Prince Frederick William of Prussia to the Princess Royal of Great Britain. See: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.100, nr.2286, document 19. Translation by the author.


\textsuperscript{104} C. Niederhommert, *Queen Victoria und der deutsche Kronprinz Frederick William* (Münster, 1934), p.24. H. Pakula was the latest historian to point out that “in Prussia, the reaction to the engagement was predictably mixed - liberals delighted, reactionaries infuriated.” In: Pakula, *An uncommon woman*, p.69.

\textsuperscript{105} 21 September 1854 Baron Stockmar to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA Y152/59.
and Augusta contemplated the possibility of a marriage link between Britain and Prussia at all, especially at a time when the recollection of the Crimean War was an obvious obstacle to any understanding between the two nations. One explanation certainly is that the royal families put their personal objective above the existing feeling in both countries, since they were evidently interested in promoting a closer association between Great Britain and Prussia. Besides, marriage alliances were still regarded as an alternative to warfare during the middle of the nineteenth-century, which naturally brought them to the attention of politicians and the politically interested public. This contemporary perception is illustrated by a comment in the *Times* that “we see promise, as well as danger, in those domestic unions which Providence has made the means of conciliating States and associating them in new paths of progress” (25 January 1857); it was certainly this political importance which caused such extreme reactions to the announcement of the engagement.

A very personal reason why Victoria and Albert insisted on the marriage link between Great Britain and Prussia was their sympathy for Prince Frederick William. Queen Victoria considered him “a member of our own family,” a high esteem that existed until the end of her life. By the time the wedding of the Princess Royal and Prince Frederick William took place in London in January 1858, public opinion in Britain had generally changed in favour of the match, not least because “the inconclusive ending of the Crimean war (...) provoked widespread dissatisfaction with British intervention in Europe, and with the French alliance in particular.” Accordingly, the *Times* expressed the nation’s hope that there would soon be “a greater cordiality and better acquaintance than there has hitherto been between the two countries” of Great Britain and Prussia, and “the English people welcomed the Prussian Prince honestly and heartily” (25 January 1858). Only the *People’s Paper*, a newspaper connected with the Chartist movement, depicted Britain “as a savage, tyrannical state like Prussia, whither the Princess Royal was bound;” however, this radical voice was fading in the years following 1858, since, as Finn has rightly pointed out, “the significance of the decade after 1858 lay in a gradual expansion of the

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middle-class radical vision, in a reintegration of the political and social spheres earlier
dissociated in bourgeois radical conviction.\textsuperscript{109}

For Prince Albert personally, the wedding of the Princess Royal and Prince
Frederick William meant a painful parting from his eldest child, with whom he had
established a particularly close understanding. Immediately after the Princess Royal’s
departure to Prussia, Victoria and Albert began a regular correspondence that was
once again divided between the political domain on Albert’s side and personal aspects
on the Queen’s. The latter urged the Princess Royal to send her details about “the
different relationships in the family of which we have often talked,”\textsuperscript{110} clearly using
her as an excellent source for first-hand gossip. As a consequence, the Queen’s
opinion of Prussia’s court life was solely based on her daughter’s communication,
resulting in rather biased, simplistic views, such as “life at Berlin seems too dreadful
and senseless”\textsuperscript{111}, “German princesses never do get enough air or quiet”\textsuperscript{112}, or
“England is the country of family life and good ménages.”\textsuperscript{113} Only after Albert’s death
in 1861 would the correspondence between Queen Victoria and Princess Frederick
William of Prussia cover political questions as well.

The Princess Royal’s new life at Berlin was made easier by her trustworthy
company, since Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made sure that the body of her
advisers consisted of reliable friends of the family. Princess Frederick William’s main
counsellor at the Prussian Court was Ernst Stockmar, Baron Stockmar’s son,\textsuperscript{114} and
an additional confidential link with Britain was arranged by Albert, whose influence
was responsible for the appointment of Robert Morier as the new British Ambassador

\begin{footnotes}
\item[109] M. Finn, \textit{After Chartistism, class and nation in English radical politics, 1848-1874}
(Cambridge, 1993), p. 188.
\item[110] 17 February 1858 Queen Victoria to Princess Frederick William of Prussia. In: R. Fulford
(ed.), \textit{Dearest child. Letters between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858-1861}
\item[111] 28 April 1858 Queen Victoria to Princess Frederick William of Prussia. In: Ibid., p. 97.
\item[112] 13 April 1859 Queen Victoria to Princess Frederick William of Prussia. In: Ibid., p. 175.
\item[113] 27 April 1859 Queen Victoria to Princess Frederick William of Prussia. In: Hibbert (ed.),
\textit{Queen Victoria in her letters and journals}, p. 112.
\item[114] Baron Stockmar himself assured Queen Victoria on 20 May 1857 that “whatever is in the
Baron’s power to assist in making the future separation of the Princess Royal from home
gradual and less painful will be considered by him as a matter of duty.” Found in: RA
Y 152/66.
\end{footnotes}
V: Completion through marriage

to Prussia; Morier was a personal friend of both Ernest II and of Baron Stockmar, who even called Morier his "adopted son." The common interest of Ernst Stockmar and Robert Morier, who arrived in Berlin one month after Princess Frederick William, was "to bring about a political and intellectual union between England and Germany," an aim that did not seem too unrealistic in 1858.

The composition of the Princess's household can certainly be called remarkable, since Baron Stockmar's influence on the British royal couple continued in the presence of his son even in the second generation. What is more, Albert's suggestion of Morier for the post of British Ambassador to Prussia was made in accordance with the foreign secretary, and although this remained a singular incident during Albert's lifetime, it nevertheless represented a considerable intrusion on the side of the monarchy into the supremacy of the Foreign Office. Two circumstances of this constellation have to be realized: firstly, only Germany was the focus of the royal couple's intense interest, whereas any other European country did certainly not attract a similar attention of Victoria and Albert; and secondly, the Foreign Office generally co-operated with the monarch when the latter suggested a candidate for the office of British Ambassador to Germany. The reasons for the joint action could have been multifarious - the person suggested might already have been considered by the Foreign Office anyway, the Foreign Office might acknowledge the inside knowledge of Victoria and Albert, the Foreign Office might have preferred to give way in this point in order to insist all the more on other matters related to the foreign affairs of Britain, or this incident might have been an example for Hollenberg's assumption that "in England, there was little interest in Prussia in terms of foreign policy." Whatever did finally play the most important role, it is not possible to define the ulterior motive behind the Foreign Office's willingness to co-operate in this point, since the existing documents cover only the discussions about the procedure of designating the appropriate man and do not explain the concrete considerations

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116 Ibid., p. 163.
117 Correspondingly, Queen Victoria suggested Wolseley as Ambassador to Germany in 1895, but after he declined, Lascelles was eventually appointed to the post.
leading to the decision.

In order to consolidate his close contact with both his daughter and the Prussian Crown Prince and Crown Princess, Prince Albert visited Berlin first in May and then in August 1858, the second time accompanied by his wife and the cabinet representative Malmesbury. According to the latter, "immense crowds (...) evinced by every kind of demonstration their sincere respect for the Queen of Great Britain," which shows the high level of popularity the British Queen had by that time reached in Prussia. For Queen Victoria, this second visit to Germany substantiated her sentiments of 1845, since her personal impressions made her realize how close her emotional bond to Germany actually was. She asserted William that her "greatest wish will be to return as soon as possible, and I cannot express to you how touched and glad we feel over our warmhearted and friendly reception everywhere in Prussia." Thus, the emotional bond of Queen Victoria with Prussia was certainly strengthened during this second visit, and her positive impression remained unimpaired. Besides, it must be remembered that France was the only other country Queen Victoria honoured with state visits at all, but her regard for France was in no way comparable to her interest in German affairs. However, this empathy of Queen Victoria was not in harmony with the feelings of the English nation in general, since the German Confederation was still not considered to be of equal importance on the international level. The opposite development is true for the German Confederation, as those states which had traditionally a liberal tendency (such as Baden and Württemberg) were seized by a feeling of 'Anglomania' during this post-revolutionary period, which was mainly based on an intense interest in British parliamentary history.

However, the indifference of Britain towards German affairs shifted gradually during the subsequent years. This growing attention was rooted in the promising first phase of William's regency. In consideration of King Frederick William IV's increasing dementia, his younger brother had to be declared Regent in October 1858; the *Times* applauded this event, since "we think that he is likely to govern more sensibly, liberally, and constitutionally than the present Monarch" (11 October 1858).

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120 20 August 1858 Queen Victoria to the Prussian Crown Prince; in: Bolitho (ed.), *Further letters of Queen Victoria*, p.103.

This sentiment certainly corresponded with the expectations of Prince Albert, who hoped that Prince William would implement exactly these characteristics in his new control of state. Prince William’s first measures of state did indeed include the dismissal of the conservative government under Manteuffel and the establishment of a liberal government under the Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. The historical evaluation of this decision varies enormously; Sinclair argues that it was a demonstration of William’s ability to act without Albert’s constant instructions, therefore proving that Prussia was able to reform herself without any British influence. However, Van der Kiste’s explanation that the new Chancellor had been chosen partly to please Victoria and Albert seems more convincing, since the royal couple knew the Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen personally and trusted him completely. Prince Albert himself certainly believed that the change of ministry was both a personal favour and a highly political decision, aimed at strengthening the liberal tendencies in Prussia. As a consequence, he praised this step highly, since he was convinced that “what has been reached seems quite significant for the development of Prussia.”

This development was also noticed by the British Foreign Office, as is illustrated by a memorandum about the state of foreign relations in January 1859, which included an evaluation of the latest Prussian state of affairs: “In Prussia, the inauguration of a new order of things, under the administration of the Prince Regent (...) bids fair for the promotion of more friendly and cordial relations with ourselves than have of late existed. The assurances of goodwill which the Prince Regent and his Ministers have conveyed to us, have already produced their fruit, in a manifest disposition to co-operate with this country in regard to matters of general European policy.” This memorandum clearly indicates the increasing attention the Foreign Office paid to the political development of the German Confederation, and especially to the political affairs of its most important state, Prussia.

On a more personal level, the royal families of Britain and Prussia were attached even closer by the birth of the first child of the Princess Royal and Prince

122 As suggested by: Sinclair, The other Victoria, p.44.
123 Van der Kiste, Frederick III, p.48.
125 1 January 1859 Memorandum of the Foreign Office. Found in: RA (M) 131/37.
Frederick William, Queen Victoria’s first grandson William, in January 1859. This event was perceived by the Queen as a crowning achievement, and she wrote to Augusta: “Our mutual grandson binds us and our countries even closer together! (...) we feel proud and happy that it is our child who has presented this son to your country.”

That she was not the only one to make this observation can be deduced from the *Times*’s statement that “if the birth of a Prince tends to strengthen the bonds which unite the two countries, then we may speak of it truly as an auspicious event” (28 January 1859); what is more, the delighted reaction was not limited to Britain, as the *Times* reported that even “the Berlinese, so cold by nature, are giving way to the most ardent enthusiasm.”

During the following months, Prince Albert embarked on a second attempt to influence the Prussian political development in a liberal way - and failed, just as in 1848. Crown Prince William already showed signs of a serious conservative tendency, but even despite this development, Prince Albert pointed out the “reform of the constitution of the army” as the most important question Prussia had to address in 1859. This was certainly a right assessment of the political circumstances, but eventually it was Bismarck’s appointment in 1862, after Albert’s death, which solved this difficulty in an utterly illiberal way. In a letter to his daughter Victoria, Prince Albert declared his two main objectives for Prussia’s future; although he clearly realized that “Prussia’s position is a weak one and will remain so as long as she does not rule Germany in a moral way”, he nevertheless thought that “Germany [is] the highest and most significant; Prussia as such comes second.” Considering that after Prince Albert’s death the Crown Princess of Prussia sent her father’s correspondence back to her mother, it seems safe to assume that Queen Victoria read these lines and used them as reference points for the future.

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127 Account of the German newspaper *Nord*. Translated and published in: *The Times*, 1 February 1859


Prince Albert’s last years were characterized by a deep disappointment about the conservative drift of King William I. Yet notwithstanding this personal failure of the Prince Consort, his achievements with regard to the changing perception of the monarchy and the social development of Great Britain were substantial. When he died, he left his wife his political convictions as his legacy, a bequest that was to form the foundation for Queen Victoria’s own beliefs later on.

During the last two years of Prince Albert’s life, the next two royal marriages were arranged. Princess Alice agreed to marry Prince Louis of Hesse, a small German state, and the Prince of Wales consented to a marriage with Princess Alexandra of Denmark. The first engagement was clearly a sign for a further enforcement of the royal British relations with Germany, while the second match had been brought about by Princess Frederick William of Prussia, after the remarkable selection of six German Princesses she had suggested to her brother had been refused by the Prince of Wales on grounds of lacking beauty of the prospective brides.

The explanation of Kutsch and Jagow, who argue that Prince Albert’s long-term political strategy was to form a pangermanic alliance of the German Confederation, Britain, Belgium and Denmark, certainly testifies to the wishful thinking of two historians writing in a nationalistic era; nevertheless, the engagements of Princess Alice and the Prince of Wales should not simply be dismissed out of hand as insignificant. The link between Britain and Hesse was seen by the royal couple as a tremendously political match, since it connected Britain with another smaller German state; however, the *Times* regarded it as a marriage born out of inclination, and pointed out that “happily the days are past when dynastic alliances were thought necessary to secure a nation’s greatness” (4 May 1861). What is more, the choice of a Danish Princess by the Prince of Wales was made only after every possibility of another German marriage alliance had failed, which speaks against the idea of a

130 Queen Victoria’s and Prince Albert’s wish for a close link between Britain and Hesse is illustrated by the Queen’s correspondence with both the reigning Grand Duke Louis III of Hesse and with his nephew, Prince Louis, who became engaged to Princess Alice at the end of 1860; Queen Victoria wrote in December 1860 that she was sure that her daughter would find happiness in the marriage with Prince Louis. See: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 4, nr.765/9.

cunning pangermanic scheme; the Queen's anti-Danish attitude during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis in the following years is likewise a clear indication that she was not aware of any such plans by her late husband. Instead, the royal couple simply followed the traditional pattern of British royal marriages with its Protestant requirement, as outlined above. Although this disposition was already out of touch with political realities, it took the Queen another ten years before she consented to an adaptation of the royal marriage pattern to the social development by agreeing to a marriage of her daughter Princess Louise to a commoner.

The Queen's third visit to Germany in October 1860 confirmed her emotional ties to both Saxe-Coburg and Gotha and to Prussia, and she observed towards her eldest daughter that Coburg "is indeed our second home, and a beloved and happy one which I wish you all to cling to with love and affection." During this visit, Victoria and Albert for the first time saw their grandson, Prince William of Prussia, whom they regarded as one of their "own children." Queen Victoria's wish for Prince William's second birthday, written to her daughter, turned out to be rather prophetic, considering Prince William's subsequent stormy relations with his mother: "May he be a blessing and comfort to you and to his country! He may be born for great deeds and great times - be that as it may, but do you both bring him up to be fitted for his position, to be wise, sensible, courageous - liberal-minded - good and pure."

In the following months, any amicable relations between the royal families of Britain and Prussia were seriously damaged by King William I's gradual transformation into a conservative sovereign, a development which became evident after his brother's death in January 1861. Already at the end of 1860, the Times realized the increasingly conservative outlook of Prussia's sovereign and declared "that the ways of Prussia are not our ways, and that we will not follow an inch on the road of Despotism" (23 October 1860); another indication for the reluctance of British statesmen to form closer links to Germany was the Anglo-French treaty of commerce of 1860, which connected Britain closer with France.

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133 20 October 1860 Queen Victoria to Princess Frederick William of Prussia. In: Ibid., p.274. It was on this occasion that the Princess Royal told her parents for the first time about the deformation of Prince William's left arm.

134 27 October 1861 Queen Victoria to Princess Frederick William of Prussia. In: Ibid., p.305.
When the newly crowned William I mentioned in his coronation speech that "the Crown comes from God," both Prince Albert and the Times seriously criticized such a reactionary attitude. Albert's reproof was mainly directed against the King's expression of the Divine Right of Kings, which, according to the Prince, "(is not only absurd and in this country has been overcome for over 200 years), but also does not fit the position and the tasks of Prussia or the King at all." With this statement, he clearly distanced himself from the King, since he did not approve of William's anachronistic and absolutistic attitudes. The Times commented rather harshly as well and stated that "we are astonished that a man can be found at this period of the world's history foolish enough to put forth claims so shallow, so offensive, and so utterly unsupported by reason or religion" (22 October 1861).

After this article had been published in the Times, Queen Victoria was so anxious to avoid a serious loss of respect for Prussia in Britain that she decided, certainly advised by Prince Albert, to ask Palmerston to contact the Times directly. She wrote her Prime Minister: "The Queen has long seen with deep regret the persevering efforts made by the Times, which leads the rest of our Press, in attacking, vilifying, and abusing everything German, and particularly everything Prussian." Since Palmerston agreed with this opinion of the monarch, he asked "the editor to moderate his language," to which Delane replied that he "would not have intruded anything so unwelcome during the splendid solemnities of the Coronation had not the King uttered those surprising anachronisms upon Divine Right." This incident is a striking example of Victoria's and Albert's intense involvement in British politics as far as German affairs were concerned, since there was no other case in which the royal couple - directly or implicitly - demanded that the Times should alter its language and attitude towards any other European nation. However, this was not the last occasion on which Victoria tried to suggest to the Times a modification of its

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135 Address of the Prussian King. Published in: The Times, 19 October 1861.
139 28 October 1861 Delane to Palmerston. In: Benson/Esher (edd.), The letters of Queen Victoria, vol.3, p.588.
expressions about Germany; in fact, the Queen approached the *Times* up to the time of 1898 in order to achieve a more positive coverage of German affairs.

Prince Albert, on the other hand, had to accept the negative opinion of the politically interested part of the British nation towards Prussia, as he realized that “the difficulties in restoring an alliance of Prussia and England have been infinitely augmented again by this royal agenda!” The Queen’s husband realized that any possibility for a liberal reform of Prussia would not happen under King William I, which caused a rearrangement in his expectations, and he came to rely on his son-in-law, Prince Frederick William of Prussia, as his political hope for Germany’s future. Prince Albert left this vision as his political heritage to Queen Victoria when he unexpectedly died of typhoid fever in December 1861.

By the time of his death, Prince Albert’s indifferent reception when he had married the Queen had changed notably into general appreciation by the English people. Having been created ‘Prince Consort’ by Queen Victoria in 1857, he supplied the government with highly important information regarding the constitutional development of Prussia. Even a voice as critical as Greville came to accept Prince Albert as a “constitutional Sovereign,” thus acknowledging the patriotic credibility of a role which, as it should be remembered, does not even exist in the British constitution.

Albert’s death put an abrupt end to the shared royal responsibilities, which had characterized Queen Victoria’s rule up to that time. Whereas during the years of her marriage, Queen Victoria had been the ‘acting body’ assisting the ‘thinking head’ of Albert, she now had to find the means of performing the duties of the crown entirely on her own; for this task, she relied on Albert’s fundamental beliefs, which she came

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141 S. Weintraub claims in his latest study that Prince Albert died of stomach cancer, thus contradicting the traditional diagnosis of Albert’s illness. See: Weintraub, *Albert*, p.438.

142 7 February 1861 Prince Albert to Gladstone. He forwarded the Princess Royal’s memorandum about ministerial responsibilities in Prussia, which had been translated into English by the Prince of Wales. Gladstone thanked Prince Albert for the opportunity to read the document on 9 February 1861. In: P. Guedalla (ed.), *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone* (London, 1933), vol.I, nr.50-51, p.122.

to apply to both domestic and foreign affairs.

The event Prince Albert is mostly remembered for in Britain up to this day was the Great Exhibition of 1851, praised by the Times as "an act of peace, of love, and of religion" (1 May 1851). However, his achievements are far more extensive: he created the first efficient houses for the working classes, he planned a home for the progress of science (still existent in the South Kensington area, with the V&A and the Science Museum as the most important institutions), and he succeeded in making the British monarchy respectable for the middle-classes. His important position in society was in fact described by the Times as "the very centre of our social system, the pillar of our State," a statement which ultimately acknowledged his "inestimable value to this nation" (16 December 1861).

However, all of Prince Albert's achievements remained limited to Britain, since he never reached his biggest aim of implementing his concept for a liberalized Germany. Notwithstanding this failure of Albert's foreign policy objectives, Queen Victoria chose them as a guideline for her own political visions in the years to come.

Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha provided the Queen with a trained adviser at her side. The Prince's German origin gradually influenced the Queen to consider the political events in the German Confederation to be worthy of more attention than those of any other European country; this political concern was even more strengthened by the marriages of the couple's two eldest daughters to the German courts of Prussia and Hesse. Although Prince Albert ultimately failed to influence the political development in Germany in a more liberal direction, he still remains a remarkable figure of the nineteenth century, not least because of his accomplishment to expand the integrity of the monarchy by bringing it closer to middle-class values. Additionally, Albert's endeavours to improve the living conditions of the working-class by promoting specially built houses increased the popularity of the monarchy and ultimately gained the respect of the nation. When Prince Albert died prematurely in 1861, the Times expressed the grief of the whole nation by stating that "in the Prince, notwithstanding his German education, we have had as true an Englishman as the most patriotic native of these islands" (16 December). It is certainly interesting that twenty-one years after his marriage to Queen Victoria, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was thus described as a 'true Englishman', which illustrates how closely he had in fact identified himself with the country of his wife.
On a more general note, "the immediate impetus of the Reform movement had waned, [and] middle-class sentiment was beginning to mobilize behind a moderate liberalism."\textsuperscript{144} This liberalism was increasingly centring around the unifying figure of Palmerston, and by the late 1850s, "the Liberal party had become the natural, respectable ruling force in Britain."\textsuperscript{145} As a consequence, Prince Albert died at a time which found Great Britain under a "moderate, stable government."\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{144} P. Mandler, \textit{Aristocratic government in the age of reform, Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852} (Oxford, 1990), p. 199.

\textsuperscript{145} Parry, \textit{The rise and fall of liberal government in Victorian Britain}, p. 167.

\textsuperscript{146} Taylor, \textit{The decline of British radicalism}, p. 309.
VI: Continuity in grief

VI: CONTINUITY IN GRIEF
(1861-1876)

The years between 1861 and 1876 witnessed a distinct change in British party politics. After Palmerston’s death in 1865, Gladstone became the leader of the Labour party, and he put his main focus on the areas of finance and administration. During the following years, the antagonism between Gladstone’s Liberal Party and Disraeli’s Conservative Party began to develop, a constellation which saw the Queen firmly on Disraeli’s side.

Whereas the main domestic concern of these decades was the question of reform, this chapter will be concerned with the foreign affairs of Britain, with an emphasis on the political events of 1864, 1866 and 1870/71. On the one hand, the transformation of Queen Victoria’s personal opinion about Germany due to the political development of Prussia will be discussed, while on the other hand the changing view of the politically interested part of British society regarding Germany will be compared with the first process.

VI-1: VICTORIA AFTER ALBERT

Prince Albert’s death left his widow heart-broken, but not indifferent to politics. Although the Queen decided to withdraw from society, her interest in German affairs remained as intense as it had been during Albert’s lifetime, since she saw in the political development of Germany the main inheritance of her late husband. Simultaneously, she completely abandoned Prince Albert’s concern with the domestic area of Britain’s social progress. After Prince Albert’s death, the Queen insisted on being regularly informed by her ministers, a demand she requested with especial firmness from the Foreign Secretary.

From an early time on, the Times voiced the nation’s concern that the Queen “might sink under her irreparable bereavement.” Victoria’s initial reaction to Albert’s death indeed was that of utter grief, as expressed in her words “What is to become of us all? Of the unhappy country, of Europe, of all?” In the days following Albert’s

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1 The Times, 16 December 1861. On 8 February 1862, the Times repeated the hope of the Parliament “that Her Majesty’s health (...) will not be impaired by overwhelming grief.”
demise, Duke Ernest II of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, King Leopold of the Belgians and Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia (whose wife was pregnant and thus could not come) arrived in Britain, in order to offer Queen Victoria their help. This net of close relatives, together with the Queen’s assembled children, gave her the support she desperately needed during these first weeks of intense sorrow.

Considering that from now on, the permanent guidance of Prince Albert was missing in the life of Queen Victoria, it would have been understandable had she simply relied on her pre-Albertian advisers King Leopold and Stockmar. However, Stockmar had retired to his home-town Coburg and as he only wrote once a month, Queen Victoria stated “how impossible it is any longer to rely on his advice, how seldom he answers any questions.”

King Leopold, on the other hand, fell ill immediately after his arrival, and during the two months he stayed in Britain he saw the Queen “at the most five or six times,” which did not make him a dependable adviser either. At the same time, Queen Victoria, in the tradition of her husband, did not think Ernest II to be trustworthy, and neither did she confide in her eldest son, since she believed that a love-affair of the Prince of Wales had added to the worries of Prince Albert and thus contributed to his premature death. As a consequence, Queen Victoria relied on her second daughter, Princess Alice, who was already engaged to Prince Louis of Hesse, and on the husband of her eldest daughter, Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia; these two trusted relatives assisted her in arranging Albert’s funeral and in continuing to fulfil her monarchical duties.

As soon as 17 December, Queen Victoria signed her first documents of state; three weeks after Albert’s death, she held her first council, and soon afterwards, she received ministers again. Considering that the Queen was coping with her husband’s death in a remarkably composed way, the Times’s initial fear that the bereavement “might prove too much for the strength of Her Majesty” (17 December 1861) was unjustified, and “the country hoped that Her Majesty would soon be able to resume

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5 Contrary to the opinion of some historians, there are no primary sources suggesting that Queen Victoria had a nervous breakdown some days after Prince Albert’s death. This is erroneously suggested in: S.A. Tooley, The personal life of Queen Victoria (London, 1896), p.198, and H. Bolitho, The reign of Queen Victoria (London, 1949), p.187.
her official life." Only several years later did Britain realize that, although Queen Victoria was determined to fulfil her duties as a British monarch, she was not inclined to re-establish her former routine of state ceremonials and public functions; instead, she decided to mourn Albert’s death for the rest of her life and to withdraw for a lengthy period of time from the public sphere.

On a more practical note, Victoria decided to nominate Prince Frederick William of Prussia as the administrator of Prince Albert’s possessions in Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. The Queen's principal aim was to encourage “Fritz to act as beloved Albert would have done,” since she saw in him the political heir of her husband. The Queen’s conviction, “Papa has left us a legacy,” provided her with the necessary energy to continue with her duties as British monarch. She was in fact determined to continue her own life according to the convictions of her late husband, since, in her own words, he had been “the life and soul of everything.” As a consequence, the Queen was resolved to “do all I can to follow out all his wishes - to live for you all and for my duties.” The Crown Princess of Prussia strengthened her mother’s intention to preserve Albert’s principles by agreeing: “Who can know his feelings and opinions on all things as well as you do, beloved Mama! Who could carry out his plans better?” Similar guidance came from Princess Alice, who stressed: “You have

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8 19 May 1863 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 21/1, nr.179.
9 30 January 1862 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 21/1, nr.16-7.
the privilege (...) of carrying out his plans, his wishes into fulfillment, and as you go on doing your duty, this must, I feel sure, bring you peace and comfort.”

Interestingly enough, Queen Victoria focused exclusively on Prince Albert’s objectives concerning the foreign policy of Britain during the following years, while she simultaneously completely abandoned Albert’s intentions associated with the domestic development of Britain. The Queen’s statement, “He has left to us all to continue His work in Europe and above all in dear Germany!” indicates clearly the focus of her attention, and subsequently, Queen Victoria’s political interest with regard to foreign affairs predominantly concentrated on the development of Germany, which she hoped would take the direction her late husband had wished for. However, the expectation of a liberal Germany, united under the moral guidance of a constitutionally modeled Prussia was soon completely out of touch with the political reality of the Prussia created by Bismarck.

At the same time, Queen Victoria did not pursue Prince Albert’s schemes with regard to the domestic development of Britain; as a consequence, it was left to others to continue the Prince’s concern both for the living condition of the working-class, and for the regular promotion of science and industry, as begun in the Great Exhibition of 1851. The reasons for this declining interest of Queen Victoria have never been explained satisfactorily; one might argue that the issue of the political development of Germany was so dominant that any other topic seemed insignificant. Whatever the Queen’s motives for concentrating so exclusively on the affairs of Germany were, her decision is certainly significant for the context of this thesis.

The relationship between Queen Victoria and her ministers remained close during the months following Albert’s death, and Palmerston reminded the Queen that “your Majesty’s grief may not lead your Majesty to neglect your health (...), which is so essentially necessary to enable your Majesty to perform those duties which it will be the object of your Majesty’s life to fulfill.” The Queen, on her part, was

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14 1 July 1863 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 21/1, nr. 226-8.

determined to carry out her political obligations, and only one month after her husband’s death, she remarked to the Foreign Secretary that “the rule should not be departed from, viz. that no drafts should be sent without the Queen having first seen them.” This unambiguous statement showed the continuing concern of the British monarch to obtain the latest political information, especially in the field of foreign affairs.

On a more specific level, Queen Victoria asked Russell for “more assistance (...) in forming her opinion on the various important questions affecting the foreign policy of this country,” which is a clear indication that Victoria felt the urgent need for political information complementary to Albert’s elaborate files on British foreign policy. This constant flow of reports was certainly vital, since Queen Victoria had to be meticulously informed if she wanted to continue Prince Albert’s political beliefs. As a consequence, the Queen had to establish new methods of interchanging information with the cabinet, since she decided to spend her period of mourning mainly in the reclusive residences of Balmoral/Scotland and Osborne/Isle of Wight, both of which had been designed by Albert. Accordingly, she suggested “periodical visits from her Ministers,” a practice which indeed resulted in the continuous presence of at least one cabinet member at Queen Victoria’s court, and this arrangement became the monarchical routine of the post-Albertian era. The ministers might not always have appreciated these rather isolated sojourns, but the monarchy was after all a traditional institution of Great Britain, and the Queen’s participation in the affairs of state was firmly establish with this new routine.

As a consequence, Prince Albert’s death changed the hitherto joint style of monarchical government into a method of exclusive sovereignty of Queen Victoria only. Despite her seclusion from the public sphere, the Queen retained her high interest in the political affairs of state, especially with regard to Germany. A close cooperation between the Queen and her ministers secured the monarch’s constant knowledge about the latest political news.


17 5 March 1862 Queen Victoria to Russell. In: Ibid., p.21. Russell complied with the Queen’s wish and explained three weeks later that the Emperor of France was pursuing a detestable policy; he underpinned his view by mentioning Prince Albert’s similar opinion on the same subject: 1 April 1862 Russell to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid., p.28.

VI-2: Germany II

The emotional attachment of Queen Victoria to the smaller German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha on the one hand and the most important state of the German Confederation, Prussia, on the other, continued during the years following her husband’s death. A visit to Coburg strengthened the Queen’s affinity to the country from where most of her closest relatives came from. In order to uphold Albert’s plans, Queen Victoria agreed with the Foreign Office in declining the election of Prince Alfred as King of Greece, which preserved her second son for his intended future as Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. At the same time, the political development of Prussia changed in such an autocratic way that the personal hope of Queen Victoria was from now on exclusively focused on Crown Prince Frederick William.

In rememberance of her late husband, Queen Victoria visited Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in September 1862, and her close attachment to Germany becomes evident in her statement “Oh! beloved Coburg! how I long for it!” Since Queen Victoria stayed exclusively at Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, the Prussian King decided to pay his respect to the widowed British Queen by coming to Coburg. The meeting of the European monarchs did, however, not touch the subject of politics but stayed on a strictly personal level. Thus, Queen Victoria decided not to discuss the latest political developments in Prussia, including the appointment of Bismarck as Chancellor; her motive behind this omission was certainly an emotional one, since she saw this visit as a recollection of earlier visits she had made together with her husband, and she did not want this reminiscence flawed by any political discussion. As a consequence, the Queen’s stay at Saxe-Coburg and Gotha strengthened her emotional bond with this state of Germany even more, especially since she met Baron Stockmar, who died only ten months later. After she returned to Britain, Queen Victoria expressed her feelings of affection for the country of her late husband when she stated: “I felt it like the home of my childhood (...), the dear German language, all which I feel necessary to my very existence.”

19 October 1862 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 21/1, nr. 139-43.

20 Queen Victoria wrote to the Crown Princess of Prussia on 8 October 1862: “Being here is in many, many ways a great satisfaction.” In: Fulford (ed.). Dearest Mama, p.108.

This emotional approach of Queen Victoria towards Germany was restricted to Saxe-Coburg and Gotha on the one hand and Prussia on the other, since not even Prince Albert’s guidance had established a more balanced image of the German Confederation. From these two states, Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was certainly the one with which Queen Victoria associated fonder memories, since her mother, her uncle and her husband all had originated from there. Prussia held also a high affection in the Queen’s perception, not least because of Prince Albert’s attention towards this state, yet only the Princess Royal and her family formed a closer family relationship. It is therefore vital to distinguish between the deeply emotional affection Queen Victoria felt for the smaller German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and the positive predisposition she had towards the country in which the oldest of her children was living. The marriage of the Queen’s second daughter Alice to Prince Louis of Hesse in July 1862 added another smaller German state to this group of selected countries of the German Confederation. The regular correspondence with Princess Alice provided the Queen in the following years with a valuable second opinion on all matters of personal and political interest.

The election of Prince Alfred as successor to the Greek throne in December 1862 was not welcomed by either Queen Victoria or the British government, but only the monarch’s negative opinion was connected with the future of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. In December 1862, the Constituent Assembly of Greece elected Prince Alfred of Britain as successor for King Otto I, who had been dethroned after a revolutionary movement. The Times reacted pleasantly surprised and pointed out that “as Englishmen, we cannot help being flattered at so high a compliment paid to the personal character of our Sovereign, to the moderation and permanence of our institutions” (16 December 1862). Russell, however, disapproved of the Greek choice, since any closer political involvement of Britain with Greece was seen as undesirable by the Foreign Office. Queen Victoria reacted similarly negative, but only because she remembered that her late husband had designated Prince Alfred as the heir to Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. As a consequence, monarch and Foreign Office agreed in declining Prince Alfred’s election, despite the fact that “public opinion in Greece persist[ed] in this choice, believing that the national sovereignty must

Prince Alfred received 230016 votes, the Emperor of Russia got 1841 votes, and Prince William of Denmark (the later King) obtained six votes; even the former King Otto I could secure one vote. See: The Times, 16 February 1863.
surmount all obstacles." In the end, Prince William of Denmark accepted the Greek throne; thus, the brother of Princess Alexandra, later wife of the Prince of Wales, became King George I of Greece. This Greek episode illustrates Queen Victoria's interest in the latest political development only one year after Albert's death; even more important, this incident was closely connected with the future of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, since Queen Victoria preferred to follow her late husband's guidelines regarding Prince Alfred's future, rather than to opt for a more immediate prospect for her second son.

Notwithstanding the increasing criticism about Prussia's political conduct in the opinion of the politically interested part of the British public, Queen Victoria strengthened her close contact with Prussia by regularly inviting her oldest grandson Prince William. His visit of 1863 was a success, and the Queen found "the little one (...) so dear and good, but also full of fun and mischief, and actually very insolent, although he is very fond at the same time. He calls everyone 'a pickle' and me 'a duck'." While the British Queen was certainly interested in the personal development of her grandson, she was even more concerned about the future of Prussia. Considering that in 1861, Prince Albert had come to the conclusion that the only liberal hope for Germany was resting on King William I's son, Crown Prince Frederick William, Queen Victoria perpetuated her late husband's opinion when she expressed her anxiety that "so much depends on Fritz's position not being compromised;" the reason for this statement of the Queen was her wish that Great Britain and Germany should form a closer association. However, the *Times* had already come to the contrary conclusion that "the marriage of the Princess Royal with the Crown Prince of Prussia has not made the foreign policy of this country the least subservient to the vacillating and uncertain policy of Prussia" (5 September 1862).

Crown Prince Frederick William's position was in fact in danger of being compromised in June 1863, when he openly voiced his disapproval of the newly established Prussian Press Ordinance, which was designed to suppress any undesired

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23 *The Times*, 25 December 1862. On the 1st of January 1863, the *Times* reported that "a great popular manifestation" for Prince Alfred took place, and on 13 January 1863, "Alfred demonstrations" took place in Greece, according to the reporter of the *Times*.


opinions of the press. The Prince notified the Prussian public during a speech at Dantzig that "I know nothing of the ordinances (...). I took no part in the deliberations." When the King responded furiously to this disagreement with his style of governing, Frederick William offered to resign from both his position in the army and from his responsibilities in the Prussian Crown Council, but the combined influence of Queen Augusta and Queen Victoria helped to modify the proposed resignation into a voluntary absence from both posts.

Queen Victoria made her opinion towards William I clear when she stated that "I do not want to discuss whether your son’s opinions are right or wrong. (...) The deciding factor seems to me that your son believed it to be his duty to express that opinion, and that cost him a hard battle to do so: moreover, he is not the only one to hold these particular views." The Times approved in fact immensely of Frederick William’s determination, since it “separated himself from the Court, and in spite of a strong display of Royal anger [he] persists in his repudiation of the Bismark [sic] dictatorship” (16 June 1863). In order “to avoid all further identification with the policies of the government,” Prince Frederick William and his family came to Britain from September until December 1863. Although the Prussian King had agreed to this temporary absence of his son from the Prussian Court, he “made it plain that the English influence was to blame for the Crown Prince’s public indiscretions.” This constellation suggests Great Britain as a haven of undisputed liberalism, in contrast to the autocratic style of government in Prussia. Whereas this is true for the second part of this assumption, the first component is not so certain. As Vernon has shown, the contemporary debate centred around the “competing definitions of the category of the virtuous people and their role in the battle to include or exclude various groups from

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26 Crown Prince Frederick William’s speech which he made at Dantzig was published in the Times on 11 June 1863.
27 13 September 1863 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia. In: Bolitho (ed.), Further letters of Queen Victoria, p.143-4.
This debate about the nature of the state contradicts the notion of a settled character of Britain's social and political circumstances.

Notwithstanding his disapproval of the British interference in his family affairs, William I consented to have a meeting with Queen Victoria when the British Sovereign visited Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in August 1863. Although the official reason for the Queen's second visit in two years was her intention to meet Baron Stockmar's widow, Victoria also added a political aspect to her journey by meeting both the Prussian King and the Austrian Emperor. However, her honest attempt to bring about an amiable understanding between the monarchs of the two main antagonistic nations of the German Confederation did not succeed. The Prussian King remarked to Queen Victoria “that there was a pre-determination on the part of Austria to ruin Prussia,” and this statement did not correspond with the Emperor’s assurance that there was “no disposition to lower Prussia,” in the end, the Queen's undertaking did not lead to any result.

Nevertheless, Victoria's endeavour to pave the way for a mutual and peaceful understanding shows how deeply involved she felt in German affairs, and also how accepted she was by the two German monarchs, who both agreed to discuss the latest political development with her. Interestingly enough, the Queen felt anything but confident before she actually met these two important European Sovereigns, since, as she explained to Ernst Stockmar, “though I speak and write German fluently, I have never been able to keep up a political conversation in that language, altogether never discussed such subjects with mighty personages.” This suggests a rather restricted practice of German during the married years of the Queen’s life, who obviously preferred to speak English whenever possible. However, as the Queen said herself, she did write German letters to some of her German relatives.

At the same time, it was certainly a crucial move forward for the Queen to step out of the shadow of her husband, who had usually arranged these meetings. With this step, the process of becoming a sovereign who acted independent from her late husband’s advice began, a development which would take several years to come.

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33 31 July 1863 Queen Victoria to Ernst Stockmar. Found in: RA (M) I40/101.
VI: Continuity in grief

to its completion. An important component in this process was the Queen's regular correspondence with her daughters living in Prussia and in Hesse, who supplied her with the political information she needed to form her own opinion about German affairs. Especially the Princess Royal's knowledge about the latest political developments in Prussia was profound, and although Princess Alice was less involved in the political affairs of Hesse, she added the perspective of a smaller German state to the Queen's knowledge and therefore rounded off Victoria's picture of Germany. This flow of letters was actively encouraged by Queen Victoria, who urged the Prussian Crown Princess to "write to me anything you hear and are anxious about, just as you did to dear Papa - for it is very useful."^34

Occasional scruples of the Princess Royal with regard to the communication of highly political intelligence from Prussia to Britain were counterbalanced by the Queen's assurance that the correspondence "never left the house nor indeed any of the Ministers even see it. Only one of your letters written to me (...) was read to Lord Russell and Sir G.Grey but it never left our hands."^35 However, Queen Victoria did occasionally show her daughter's letters to ministers, as is evident in messages such as "the Queen thinks it right to communicate to Lord Russell the contents of a letter which the Crown Princess received from Berlin;"^36 thus, the decision to show her daughter's letters to selected ministers rested solely with the Queen, who did not ask her daughter for an authorization.

The Queen's personal and political hopes for the future were clearly focused on Crown Prince Frederick William, a judgement shared by the Times, which remarked that "there are few personages of the day even among Royal Families who hold so high a position and have played so great a part" (6 July 1871).

VI-3: BISMARCK

The appointment of Bismarck as Prussian Minister President in 1862 did not lead to any noteworthy reaction from the British Foreign Office. Queen Victoria, on

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35 5 August 1863 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. Found in: RA 141/2. The correspondence referred to, however, was not the Queen's exchange of letters with her daughter, but certain messages between the Prussian Crown Prince and his father.
the other hand, received ample warning from her oldest daughter and she followed the development attentively. Before long, the deeply disapproving attitude of the Princess Royal with regard to Bismarck’s conservative vision convinced Queen Victoria, who regarded him as a negative influence on the Prussian King from now on; in her eyes, Bismarck reinforced William I’s already prevalent conservative beliefs, without keeping him constantly informed about the latest political development.

It was the Princess Royal’s trusted adviser, Ernst Stockmar, who in April 1862, informed Queen Victoria about the possibility “that some reckless person, like v.Bismarck-Schönhausen should become Minister and entangle the country in a war in order to put an end to our internal difficulties.” By that time, Queen Victoria was so used to receive essential information through her Prussian daughter’s channels that she reprimanded the Crown Princess when she learnt about Bismarck’s appointment as Prussian Ambassador to France in June 1862 by an official notification from the British Foreign Secretary Russell: “You never told me of Bismarck’s appointment at Paris.” Quite remarkably, the Queen obviously expected her eldest daughter to communicate the latest political developments of Prussia quicker than the Foreign Office.

Considering that the political outlook of the Prussian Crown Princess was as liberal as her late father’s, her personal opinion of Bismarck was utterly disapproving. She told her mother that she “deplores M.de Bismarck’s nomination and fears he might do mischief, where he is.” As early as July 1862, Queen Victoria received warnings from her daughter in Prussia, that “the King leans very much towards that wretch Bismarck Schönhausen and will probably take him as prime minister;” however, she did not immediately comment on Bismarck’s actual appointment as Prussian Minister President in September 1862, and in this instance silence certainly spoke for itself. Although Queen Victoria came to agree with her eldest daughter’s negative notion about Bismarck, she kept her opinion restricted to her private correspondence. The Prussian Crown Princess, on the other hand, openly expressed her animosity towards Bismarck in a letter she sent to the Prussian Minister President,

37 26 April 1862 Ernst Stockmar to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA 139/20.
38 11 June 1862 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. In: Fulford (ed.), Dearest Mama, p.34.
39 14 June 1862 Ernst Stockmar to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA 139/45.
in which she stated: “I will tell you what results I anticipate from your policy. You will go on quibbling with the Constitution until it loses all value in the eyes of the people.”\footnote{30 June 1863 The Crown Princess of Prussia to Bismarck. In: F. Ponsonby (ed.), Letters of the Empress Frederick (London, 1928), p.46.} This honesty is rather astonishing, since it prevented even the slightest possibility of a co-operation between the Princess (and thus her husband) and the new Minister President. As a consequence, a more diplomatic approach to Bismarck’s appointment might have been more appropriate.

In his correspondence with Queen Victoria, Ernst Stockmar tried to diminish Bismarck’s power by explaining that, to judge “from the difficulties by which he is surrounded, [he] will be more the man to bark than to bite.”\footnote{9 January 1863 Baron Stockmar to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA 140/13.} The feelings of Crown Princess Victoria were much more pessimistic, since she observed: “Knowing (...) that the safety and peace of Germany and Europe depend on Britain and Prussia going cordially together, advocating the same principles - constitutional liberty and Protestantism, I cannot but be alarmed when I see how every thing that is done now - tends to estrange them!”\footnote{8 November 1862 The Crown Princess of Prussia to Queen Victoria. In: Fulford (ed.), Dearest Mama, p.129.} The *Times*, on the other hand, reacted rather indifferently to Bismarck’s appointment and pointed out that he “was wanted for a special turn, and now that he has served it he is not unlikely to be replaced - possibly by one more reactionary than himself” (29 November 1862), and this observation was shared by the Foreign Office, which followed the developments in Prussia attentively, yet without ascribing too much importance to them.

Queen Victoria herself trusted her oldest daughter enough to accept the Princess Royal’s negative opinion about Bismarck, which from now on formed part of her own political belief. The negative experience of 1866, and the unification of Germany in 1871 was so completely different from Prince Albert’s political beliefs that both incidents changed the Queen’s initial alertness to profound concern, since she assessed the character of Bismarck as “so overbearing, violent, grasping and unprincipled that no one can stand it.”\footnote{8 June 1875 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Germany. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.2, p.405. The British Queen called Bismarck also “unmanageable” (1 November 1876 Queen Victoria to Disraeli. In: Ibid., p.494.), and “unreliable” (14 November 1876 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Germany. In:}
daughter's (confidential) message that William I "knows hardly anything of what Bismarck does," she even forwarded this information directly to the Emperor by pointing out to him that "I have no doubt that you have not been fully informed." By that time, however, Bismarck had already completely gained the Emperor's trust, and the Queen's attempt to illustrate to William I how completely his political convictions were shaped by Bismarck had therefore no effect whatsoever.

On the other hand, the Queen's remark is certainly interesting when transferred to the political constellation in Great Britain: Queen Victoria herself evidently expected from her ministers that she was always informed about the latest political developments, a concept which she had expressed towards Russell immediately after Prince Albert's death. Thus, the German Emperor was in Victoria's opinion not a 'proper' monarch, since he did not play the suitable part in shaping the political affairs of Germany. However, Queen Victoria evidently restricted monarchical responsibilities to the political area only, since she neglected her social duties herself by withdrawing from British society after Prince Albert's death.

Queen Victoria disapproved of Bismarck's conduct of the war of 1866 so deeply that she referred to him as "that monster" from now on. In her eyes, Bismarck was "the evil spirit who is all-powerful with the King," and he was in the Queen's opinion personally responsible for a war in which "so much happened in such an unjust way!" The Times, on the other hand, from now on granted Bismarck the responsible role as the leading Prussian statesman, whose "object is the unity of


20 June 1875 Queen Victoria to the Emperor of Germany. Found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.52, E I (Merseburg), nr.24, documents 60-1. Translation by the author. The Queen alluded to the war-in-sight-crisis of 1875.
29 December 1866 Queen Victoria to the Queen of Prussia. Found in: RA 147/115. Translation by the author.
Germany" (17 February 1868), in fact, Bismarck’s assessment by the British press changed drastically: by the year 1869, the Times came to appreciate Bismarck’s personality, as the newspaper stressed his “wisdom and moderation” and wrote that he “is the man of his age. There never was any doubt as to his clear perception of what was necessary, or of his readiness to concede it at the right moment” (27 August 1869).

By 1875, the Conservative Prime Minister Disraeli had then acquired such a strong influence on the political judgement of Queen Victoria that she no longer quoted her late husband’s opinions, but Disraeli’s instead. As a striking example, Queen Victoria repeated her initial diary entry, “Mr.Disraeli said, Bismarck is becoming like the first Napoleon,” in a letter to her eldest daughter, in which she observed about Bismarck that “all agreed that he was becoming like the first Napoleon.” The Queen’s negative perception of Bismarck thus remained disapproving throughout the decades.

VI-4: SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

The problem of Schleswig-Holstein found Queen Victoria in the middle of both a family dispute and an international crisis. Based on the political beliefs of her late husband, the Queen decided to advocate British neutrality in the approaching conflict, an object for which she sided with the peace-party in the Cabinet. However, Palmerston and Russell only gave way to this point of view once the Queen’s convictions were supported by political circumstances as well. The outcome of the Schleswig-Holstein war caused Queen Victoria’s first criticism of Prussia’s political conduct, since in her eyes the increasing authority of Prussia threatened the sovereignty of smaller German states (such as Saxe-Coburg and Gotha) in the future.

By 1863, the international situation increasingly centred around the problem of Schleswig-Holstein, a constellation which included Denmark, Prussia and Austria.52

51 8 June 1875 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Germany. In: Ibid., p.405.
52 The political difficulty regarding Schleswig-Holstein will be discussed later in this chapter; however, these studies discuss the international complication in more detail: W.N.Medlicott, Bismarck and modern Germany (London, 1965), K.A.P.Sandiford, Great Britain and the Schleswig-Holstein question 1848-64, a study in diplomacy, politics, and public opinion (Toronto, 1975) and D.Hargreaves, Bismarck and German unification (London, 1991).
Already in February 1862, Russell sent his sovereign the first warning with regard to the deteriorating relations between Prussia and the Duchies, and Queen Victoria answered this approach with her request to “learn the grounds on which Lord Russell assumes that Prussia ‘evidently wishes to renew the old connection of Schleswig with Holstein’, and that she contemplates a war with Denmark for that object.” Russell’s answer, written four months later, pointed out that “the strongest spirit of distrust and rivalry” existed between Austria and Prussia, the two leading countries of the German Confederation; yet the fact that it took him four months to reply is a sign that the Foreign Secretary himself was not too upset by the problematic constellation.

Despite this explanation, the Queen was still not convinced of the urgency of the international situation, and as a consequence, her correspondence with the Foreign Office did not elaborate on this point. Queen Victoria only started to worry when the Crown Princess notified her that in Prussia, “the reactionary party get stronger every day and have the King now completely on their side,” and from that time onwards, the British Queen paid the highest attention to the latest political developments.

However, it is important to realize that the problem of Schleswig-Holstein was not only discussed behind the closed doors of the Foreign Office and the royal residences; on the contrary, the British press informed its readers on a regular basis about the latest political developments regarding the Duchies. In this context, it is important to understand the contemporary British opinion, which was thoroughly pro-Danish. The reasons for this pro-Danish approach were manifold. Firstly, Prussia was perceived as an absolutist nation, based on the already mentioned notions of the Prussian King that his monarchical powers originated in God. When he exchanged his liberal ministers with a conservative cabinet, the Times commented that “the King of Prussia has evidently not yet learnt the difference between the position with which he has sworn to be content and the position of an absolute Monarch. (...) He cannot possibly have both the security and popularity of a Constitutional King and the full powers of an Autocrat” (21 March 1862). Secondly, on a more personal note, the Prince of Wales was engaged to a Danish Princess, and since Alexandra increasingly

54 1 June 1862 Russell to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid., p.31.
accepted the official monarchical duties which Queen Victoria herself refused to fulfill, she was already highly popular among those parts of society which looked to the monarchy for social guidance. As a consequence, the *Times* formulated the notion of the politically interested parts of the British nation when stating that “the sympathies of both rulers and peoples have been on the side of a small and gallant nation struggling to maintain its independence against forty millions of Germans” (18 April 1862).

Queen Victoria, on the other hand, still upheld her pro-Prussian convictions, which were certainly an inheritance of her late husband. As a consequence, the approaching conflict related to the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein found the Queen and the politically interested parts of the nation on different sides. The Princess Royal informed her mother at the beginning of the Schleswig-Holstein crisis about Bismarck’s habit to “irritate the King against Britain and Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell,” an attitude clearly motivated by the divergence between Bismarck’s conservative outlook and Palmerston’s and Russell’s political liberalism.

Because the Princess Royal’s correspondence was so consistent and of such high quality, the Queen even began to ask her specific questions, such as “how is the King really?” or “I am curious to hear what you think of your state in the Chambers?” These inquiries suggest that the Queen received better information from her daughter directly from Berlin (and, additionally, from her second daughter from Darmstadt) than she did from the Foreign Office. As a consequence, she was able to combine both sources of intelligence when forming her own opinion, which became important once the Schleswig-Holstein problem became acute.

Considering that the international development centring around Schleswig-Holstein will be of the utmost importance in the following years, the political background of this problem will be explained shortly; however, it is important to keep in mind Palmerston’s later statement that “it was so complicated that only three people had ever understood it: Prince Albert, who was dead; a German professor, who had gone mad; and Palmerston himself, who had since forgotten what it was all about.”

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In November 1863, the Danish King Frederick VII issued a sole constitution for Denmark and Schleswig, which violated the traditional link of Schleswig to the other Elbe Duchy Holstein, whose inseparable bond with the German Confederation had been established for centuries. The death of King Frederick VII in the same month brought the Treaty of London of 1852 into effect, thus securing "the integrity of Denmark by settling the order of succession to the throne"\textsuperscript{560} in favour of the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Glücksburg, who came to the Danish throne as King Christian IX. His rival, the politically liberal minded Duke Frederick of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, however, did not accept the renunciation to which his father, Duke Christian, had given his assent in the Treaty of London, and he now claimed the right to his inheritance as well.

Queen Victoria was kept informed about the latest development by her two eldest daughters, and the Prussian Crown Princess told the Queen about the decision of the Prussian Liberal Party to support the Duke of Augustenburg's claim, while Princess Alice warned her mother that "the Holstein question (...) will lead to war."\textsuperscript{61} Since the Queen considered this subject to be of the highest importance, she communicated this information to the cabinet,\textsuperscript{62} clearly hoping that a productive cooperation between herself and her ministers would be possible. Her own opinion regarding the Schleswig-Holstein question was based on her firm conviction that "a war between Prussia and Denmark should be avoided,"\textsuperscript{63} and this approach was certainly a result of Queen Victoria's determination to fulfil her late husband's intentions. In a letter to King Leopold, Queen Victoria explained Albert's view, who "felt very strongly the injustice of the Protocol of '52, which was a Russian intrigue; but he also felt that, if the Danes fulfilled the stipulations, there was nothing for it but abiding by it."\textsuperscript{64} Hence, this was an occasion which witnessed an active participation of Queen Victoria: she considered this to be part of her late husband's political

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{560} J.A.Farrer, \textit{The monarchy in politics} (London, 1917), p.271.
\item \textsuperscript{61} 21 November 1863 Princess Alice of Hesse to Queen Victoria. In: Alice, \textit{Letters to Her Majesty the Queen}, vol.1, p.136.
\item \textsuperscript{62} 18 November 1863 Grey informed Russell on behalf of the Queen about Princess Victoria's letter. In: Buckle (ed.), \textit{The letters of Queen Victoria}, second series, vol.1, p.115.
\item \textsuperscript{63} 8 March 1862 Queen Victoria to Russell. In: Ibid., p.23.
\item \textsuperscript{64} 19 November 1863 Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Ibid., second series, vol.1, p.116.
\end{itemize}
inheritance and as a consequence, she was determined to fulfil Prince Albert’s opinions — without realizing that they were already outdated.

At this point, it is important to realize how deeply Queen Victoria was personally involved in the crisis evolving around the Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein. Princess Alexandra, the wife of the Prince of Wales, was the daughter of the inheriting Danish King Christian IX, a connection of which Queen Victoria disapproved, as illustrated in her statement: “I do dislike Alix’s relation so much!”65 In the following months, the Prince of Wales, whose “sympathies were naturally with his father-in-law,”66 took the Danish side in the conflict, an attitude which the Queen reprimanded heavily by remarking: “Bertie is so stupid it really is terrible.”67 Queen Victoria’s oldest daughter was living at the Court of Prussia, which naturally took the Prussian side in the conflict, and the Queen’s personal sympathies lay with Duke Frederick of Augustenburg, a close friend of the Prussian Crown Prince Frederick William. What is more, Duke Frederick was married to Princess Ada, a daughter of Queen Victoria’s half-sister Feodora, which made him, in the eyes of the Queen, practically a part of the family. This personal dilemma of Queen Victoria was acknowledged by the British press, and, once Prussian troops had advanced into Danish territory, the Times informed its readers that “her Majesty’s brother-in-law and her daughter’s father-in-law have at this moment just occupied with their forces two provinces claimed by the father of the Prince of Wales” (28 December 1863). Since there was no possibility for the Queen to solve these highly complex family entanglements, she chose the alternative of either avoiding a war altogether, or, if this would prove impossible, at least to keep Britain out of the conflict. Queen Victoria was certainly motivated in this decision by her traditional view of politics; as already explained in previous chapters, she never ceased to see political developments with a highly personal perspective, and since various parts of her family were directly involved in this conflict, she chose to advocate Britain’s neutrality.

Already in October 1863, the Queen openly stated her “determination not to consent to any measures which may involve her in the threatened rupture between

65 10 June 1863 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 21/1, nr.201-6.
67 24 June 1863 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 21/1, nr.273-4.
Denmark and Germany, and she must ask that no step may be taken which may commit her Government, without the mature consideration of the Government.\cite{68}

Thus, by informing the Foreign Office of her personal conviction that Great Britain should not agree to a war between Denmark and Prussia, Queen Victoria made her opinion distinctly heard. Russell, on the other hand, had to consider other elements as well when he decided the course of Britain's foreign policy, and he observed to Queen Victoria that "any surrender of the integrity of Denmark would be very unpopular in this country."\cite{69}

However, he failed to point out the general approval of the British press in regard with the Queen's determination to remain neutral, since the policy of non-intervention was in fact praised as "a real matter of congratulation."\cite{70}

When the new Danish King Christian IX agreed to the constitution of his predecessor, Austria and Prussia demanded the revocation of this step, since it violated the traditional link of Schleswig and Holstein; in order to emphasize this request, their troops entered Schleswig, which was an independent decision by Prussia and Austria only, since these two states acted separately from the German Confederation. Even before this belligerent step of the two main powers of the German Confederation had occurred, Queen Victoria stated towards Russell that "her Government should adopt the course best calculated to prevent war. She asks for no 'favour' for Germany, (...) but merely that justice should be done on all sides."\cite{71}

When Russell reminded his sovereign of the Treaty of 1852 as the reason for the international crisis, the Queen declined to see this as the final answer to the British approach, since, in her opinion, it was "no longer a question of maintaining the Treaty of '52 at all hazards, it is whether War is to be averted or not, and both parties, whether they are in the right or in the wrong, ought to give way and come to a compromise."\cite{72}

This exchange of letters illustrates both the intense concern of Queen Victoria relating to the problem of Schleswig-Holstein, and the divergence in opinion between the monarch and the Foreign Office.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \cite{68} 4 October 1863 Queen Victoria to Russell. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.1, p.111.
  \item \cite{69} 23 November 1863 Russell to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid., p.120.
  \item \cite{70} The Times, 6 February 1864.
  \item \cite{71} 24 November 1863 Queen Victoria to Russell. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.1, p.121.
  \item \cite{72} 24 December 1863 Queen Victoria to Russell. In: Ibid., p.132.
\end{itemize}
Once war broke out in 1864, Queen Victoria stated her pacific view in a memorandum to the Prime Minister; in this document, she explained her conviction that the people of the Duchies had a right to refuse the succession agreed upon in 1852, and if the people would decide in favour of the Duke of Augustenburg, the Queen declared that she could "never consent to become party to a war undertaken for the purpose of imposing upon those people a Sovereign" which the nation had not elected. At the same time, she expressed her determination never to give "her consent to any course which may tend to involve Britain in a war on this question."

When the Queen had therefore signaled her resolution not to agree with any decision of the British cabinet which would indicate a British involvement in the war, Palmerston reminded his monarch that "your Majesty will never forget that you are sovereign of Great Britain." Queen Victoria answered to this reproach that "it is because she feels strongly the responsibility as Queen of these realms that she is anxious to avoid their being hurried into an unnecessary war." This constellation of the British monarchy, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office was certainly unique during Queen Victoria’s life, since never before and never afterwards was she so adamant in refusing to give her consent to a decision which would involve a participation of Britain in the Danish-German war. The controversy what would actually have happened had Queen Victoria refused to give her signature to a resolution of the Foreign Office did not arise, as the monarch, the Cabinet and the Foreign Office eventually agreed to a mutual approach; however, this was certainly an occasion at which these institutions came very close to letting a disagreement of opinion develop into an open conflict.

By January 1864, the differences in the approach of Queen Victoria on one side and Palmerston and Russell on the other side had become distinctly visible. Whereas the Queen tried to reconcile her pro-German disposition with her position as British monarch by asking the cabinet for a neutral position, Palmerston and Russell were clearly in favour of Denmark, since, as the Prime Minister put it, "the Germans

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73 1 January 1864 Queen Victoria to Palmerston. In: Ibid., p.139. In Buckle’s edition, the letter is wrongly addressed to "Russell", but in Connell’s edition it becomes clear that the real addressee was the Prime Minister: Connell (ed.), Regina v. Palmerston, p.341.

74 1 January 1864 Queen Victoria to Palmerston. In: Ibid.

75 4 January 1864 Palmerston to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid.

are acting like a strong man who thinks he has got a weak man in a corner, and that he can bully and beat him to his heart’s content.” Russell went one step further in this British sympathy with the ‘underdog’ by confirming to the British Ambassadors in Prussia and Austria that Britain would come to the assistance of Denmark once Schleswig would be occupied by them, even if this conduct would mean the danger of international war. Queen Victoria reacted angrily to Russell’s action and declared that she had “never given her sanction to any such threat.” It is important to realize that the Queen saw it indeed in her prerogative as British monarch to give her consent to the cabinet’s decisions, an authorization without which the cabinet would not be able to operate. However, this assumption was based on a theoretical hypothesis only, since this traditional right of the sovereign had not been applied during the previous decades. Whenever practical solutions of immediate problems had to be found, the monarch and the cabinet (or/and the Foreign Office) were able to eventually ascertain a compromise.

Stressing her family connections, the Queen insisted that she was able to “speak with more thorough impartiality than any one” with regard to the Schleswig-Holstein conflict, and she wrote to Granville, who agreed with the Queen’s neutral position, that “the Cabinet must also insist on no violent declaration in the Speech.” Consistent with that claim, the Queen emphasized towards Palmerston that the Cabinet should alter a paragraph “about Germany, which she thought too bellicose.” In more detail, she suggested to eradicate the words ‘attempts are being made in some parts of Germany to object to the Treaty of 1852’ from the Speech, since the Queen argued that ‘some parts of Germany’ never assented to that treaty, and have a perfect right to object to it now. And this objection gives cause for serious apprehension of war.” In the end, the Queen merely impartially referred to the Treaty of 1852 in her opening speech for Parliament, in connection with her

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77 8 January 1864 Palmerston to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid., p.145.
79 27 January 1864 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D24, 21/2, nr.63-6.
81 Farrer, The monarchy in politics, p.276.
82 1 February 1864 Queen Victoria to Palmerston. Found in: RA (M) I94/7.
endeavour "to bring about a peaceful settlement of the differences which on this matter have arisen between Germany and Denmark." Interestingly enough, the reference to Schleswig-Holstein featured prominently enough to be heard even in Vienna, where the British Ambassador remarked to his wife that "the mention of the Treaty of 1852, with the details, shows that we are resolved to maintain it if possible."

However, in February 1864, Prussian troops advanced into Denmark, a step which caused Queen Victoria to write to the Queen of Prussia: "Unfortunately the war has begun. Hopefully it will be very short;" at the same time, she reassured her daughter in Hesse that "my feelings can be but with one side." In spite of the outbreak of the war between Denmark on one side and Prussia and Austria on the other, Queen Victoria did not change her determination to maintain British neutrality. She remarked towards Granville - of whose pro-German disposition she could be sure - that "Denmark is after all of less vital importance than the peace of Europe, and it would be madness to set the whole Continent on fire for the imaginary advantages of maintaining the integrity of Denmark." This sentiment was certainly not in accordance with the British opinion, since especially Britain's middle-class perceived Denmark as a complete state, which had to be defended against attacks of aggressive countries. For that reason, "the nation occupied a central position in the bourgeois worldview," whereas Queen Victoria's understanding of contemporary political developments were still rooted in the traditional vision of monarchies linked by family connections. As a consequence, the example of the Schleswig-Holstein incident is an

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83 *The Times*, 5 January 1864.


86 3 February 1864 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 21/2, nr. 68-9.


illustration for the divergence between the backward looking concept of the British monarchy and the contemporary outlook of the British middle-class.

Although Queen Victoria's German sympathies were well-known to the cabinet, she insisted that "no feeling for Germany could ever make her view an international question otherwise than as it might affect the interests of the people of Britain." However, her letters to the Prussian Crown Princess were written in a more candid manner, and in this correspondence the Queen openly stated that "my feelings and sympathies in the war can only be with them," namely with the German troops. Hence, the Queen found it more and more difficult to deal with Palmerston and Russell; as an alternative, Victoria formed close links with those ministers in the Cabinet who promoted a peaceful approach themselves: Wood and Granville. It was the latter whom she impatiently asked "What passed at the Cabinet yesterday?" when the usual routine of informing the sovereign had been interrupted for just one day. By siding with the peace-party of the Cabinet, the Queen was able to put much more pressure on the more belligerent ministers such as Palmerston and Russell.

In June 1864, the Queen suggested once more that "this country would do best were she to declare that, after repeated efforts of one kind or another which were first refused by one side and then by the other, she has no other course but to withdraw and to refuse to take any further part in this lamentable contest." This time, Russell finally agreed with the Queen and stated that "the Government do not propose to engage in a war for the settlement of the present dispute, as far as the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein are concerned," however, this ultimate triumph of Queen Victoria's demands for British neutrality has to be seen in an international perspective, since in June 1864, Denmark decided not to accept the armistice and instead opted for a continuation of the war, which led to a Danish surrender and a cession of the Duchies to Prussia (Schleswig) and Austria (Holstein), as laid down in

89. 5 January 1864 Queen Victoria to Palmerston. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.1, p.142.
90. 3 February 1864 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals, p.181.
the Peace Treaty of Vienna of October 1864. As a consequence, by June 1864, any British involvement was out of the question anyway, since her army would not have been able to stand against the Austrian and the Prussian troops, and Russell’s final yielding to his monarch’s request was based on the fact that “Britain was pacifist because it was in her material interest to be.”^94 Hence, Queen Victoria did influence policy at this point, but other motives contributed to Britain’s ultimately neutral position as well. In the end, the Queen’s restraining authority contributed to the prevention of an active British involvement in the Dano-German conflict. Her “vigorous and persistent intervention,”^95 together with her refusal “to sanction despatches which gave any hint of Anglo-German antipathy,”^96 certainly assisted Britain towards her path of ‘splendid isolation’.

However, parts of British society disagreed with the official government policy, as indicated by the formation of a voluntary organization, “a brigade of Irish gentlemen, to take service under the King of Denmark in the present war,”^97 yet the Danish King politely declined to accept these ‘Alexandra Cent Gardes’ for his forces. Another evidence for this disposition of certain parts of the British society is the sum of £ 9,066, which the ‘Central Committee for the relief of sufferers by the war in Denmark’ received at Copenhagen in May 1864, thus being able to assist invalids and families of the dead.^98 At the same time, the *Times* insisted that the decision of the British government to uphold neutrality had been right, considering that “if we too had plunged into it we should have found even less to rejoice at than any of the actual belligerents” (26 August 1864).

Any evaluation of the Queen’s intense involvement in the Schleswig-Holstein conflict of 1864 must be based on the remarkable fact that she did so as *British Queen*, since no other European monarch not directly involved in the conflict did play an even marginal role in attempting to bring about a peaceful solution. As long as Queen Victoria had no knowledge of the Prussian desire to annex the Duchies, “her

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^96 Ibid., p.148.
^97 *The Times*, 6 February 1864.
^98 *The Times* informed its readers about this development on 26 May 1864.
sympathies were on the German side," since she felt it to be Albert’s legacy to continue in his political objectives; however, she did not consider that these had been built upon a European state system in which the Treaty of 1852 had not actually come into existence and which did not embody Bismarck’s involvement in the Prussian affairs of state either. Thus, the Queen’s political intentions of 1864 were based on a view prior to 1861, which further substantiates the observation that Queen Victoria followed Prince Albert’s beliefs without taking into account that the political realities had changed.

At the same time, the Schleswig-Holstein conflict revealed Queen Victoria’s intense interest in British foreign affairs, which for the Queen consisted mostly of German matters. Since she had no trusted adviser at her side, she reached her conclusions completely by herself, mainly based on the information she received from her daughters living in Germany. Although the Queen’s sympathies prior to and during the war had undoubtedly been with the Prussian side of the conflict, the final outcome of the war led to first hints of a criticism. The Convention of Gastein of August 1865 divided the responsibility for the Duchies between Prussia (for Schleswig) and Austria (for Holstein), which “signified the total exclusion of the Duke of Augustenborg.” Queen Victoria did not approve of this settlement, since she would have favoured an agreement which not included a Prussian administration for either Duchy; this was based on her fear that Prussia might, as the next step, annex both Duchies.

What is more, Queen Victoria was alarmed that the precedent created by the Convention might in the future threaten the sovereignty of smaller German states such as Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, a possibility which clearly not harmonized with the Queen’s emotional bond to this country. As a consequence, Queen Victoria voiced a sceptical notion about Prussia for the first time, which, in her opinion, “seems inclined to behave as atrociously as possible, and as she always has done! Odious people the Prussians are, that I must say.” The same hint of disapproval can be found in her birthday wish for Prince William of Prussia, since she recommended to the Prussian

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99 C. Niederhommert, Queen Viktoria und der deutsche Kronprinz Friedrich Wilhelm (Münster, 1934), p.45. Translation by the author.
101 3 August 1865 Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.1, p.271.
Crown Princess to “bring him up simply, plainly, not with that terrible Prussian pride and ambition,” which is certainly a remarkable deviation from the Queen’s earlier, pro-Prussian statements. It is important to realize that her fear was based on the danger that a strong Prussia might endanger the sovereignty of the smaller German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha - and not of Great Britain or any other European power.

Interestingly enough, the Queen’s anxiety that Prussia might become too powerful conflicted with Palmerston’s notion that “it is better that they should go to increase the power of Prussia than they should form another little state to be added to the cluster of small bodies which encumber Germany, [since] it is desirable that Germany, in the aggregate, should be strong, in order to control those two ambitious and aggressive powers, France and Russia.” Whereas the view of the British Prime Minister had remained unchanged ever since 1848, Queen Victoria now started to feel uncomfortable with the conception of a Prussia which would be too mighty to be trustworthy; however, Palmerston’s death only one month later put an end to this difference of opinions.

The vital difference between Queen Victoria and Palmerston’s opinions was their divergent perceptions of the German nation: whereas Palmerston saw the German Confederation as one single unit, which would play one united role in the process of international politics, Queen Victoria considered different states of the German Confederations individually. As a consequence, Palmerston’s concept of the process of foreign policy was based on an international foundation, in contrast to Queen Victoria’s view of a natural association between Great Britain and certain states of the German Confederation.

VI-5: 1866

The war of 1866 found the Queen’s two eldest daughters on different sides of the belligerent conflict: the Princess Royal lived in Prussia, whereas Hesse was allied with Austria-Hungary. Queen Victoria herself disapproved strongly of Prussia’s behaviour, which resulted in a war between brother Germans. From now on, her

hitherto positive image of Prussia was marred with the first signs of a serious dissatisfaction with King William I’s conduct. Victoria no longer saw the political future of Prussia in the development of a liberal nation, since she never forgave the annexation of smaller German states (such as Hanover) by Prussia.

During the Queen’s stay in Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in August 1865, her sympathy towards Prussia had cooled down so much that she even declined to see the Prussian King, since she held him personally responsible for the Convention of Gastein, a treaty that was also heavily condemned by the Times. The latter commented that “the cynical indifference to European opinion shown by the great Powers of Germany in their partition of the territories wrested from the King of Denmark could not be suffered to pass in silence” (7 September 1865). The Prussian Queen Augusta tried to calm matters down by suggesting that “your Majesty should keep up a good personal Verhältnis with the King, for the sake of the children.”

Queen Victoria, however, still tried to avoid the visit; she assured the Prussian King that she would like to meet him, but pointed out: “I can not force you to undertake this long journey to see me. (...) thus we avoid the danger of touching a subject embarrassing to us both - namely the affair of Schleswig-Holstein.” When William I insisted on a meeting, the British and the Prussian sovereigns did come together for half an hour, but both avoided the topic of Schleswig-Holstein and they only talked about the past.

In February 1866, the Prussian Crown Princess sent a first serious warning to her mother with regard to the deteriorating relations between Prussia and Austria-Hungary when she wrote that she was “sadly afraid the bad man B. will succeed in his plan of driving us into a war with Austria!” Queen Victoria understood her daughter’s concern and assured her that she was also “greatly distressed and perturbed about your state of affairs. Louise suggested that Lenchen like Herodias

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104 27 August 1865 Countess Blücher to Queen Victoria (Countess Blücher wrote in the name of the Prussian Queen). In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.1, p.273. Interestingly enough, the Countess used the German word Verhältnis, meaning relationship, in her otherwise English written letter.

105 28 August 1865 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia. Found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.51, J Britain III a, fasc.2 (Merseburg), documents 10-2. Translation by the author.

should ask for B’s head! I think it a clever idea of hers.” 107 From her two daughters living in two separate German states, Queen Victoria obtained the latest information directly from the centres of events. As a consequence, she was notified by the Foreign Office about the official policy of Germany, the Princess Royal informed her about the unofficial plans of the Prussian Government, and Princess Alice acquainted her mother with the problems of and the threats to the smaller German states, which were siding with Austria in the looming conflict. Whereas the Prussian Crown Princess familiarized the Queen with every move Bismarck - whom she only called the “wicked man”108 - made, Princess Alice expressed her deep anxiety, as “war would be too fearful a thing to contemplate - brother against brother, friend against friend, as it will be in this case!”109 Due to these three sources of knowledge, Queen Victoria was certainly able to judge the following conflict from a more thoroughly informed point of view than most of her contemporary sovereigns, or, indeed, politicians.

As had already been the case during the Schleswig-Holstein conflict, Queen Victoria was alerted by her two eldest daughters to the dangers of a war between Prussia and Austria-Hungary; she therefore endeavoured to avert hostilities by informing the Prime Minister of “the absolute necessity of our attempting to do something, in conjunction with France, to arrest the misfortunes a war would entail.”110 Queen Victoria saw the emerging crisis between Prussia and Austria as a dangerous struggle, which, in her opinion, should be solved peacefully. However, the British Foreign Secretary rightly pointed out to the Queen that “the case is one in which neither British honour nor British interests are involved (...). We cannot actively interfere with those who are quarreling over the spoils.”111 Clarendon’s opinion was shared by the *Times*, who commented that “the determination to enter

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107 5 March 1866 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. In: Ibid., p.59. Princess Louise meant Bismarck’s head as a wedding-gift for Princess Helene, who was getting married soon.


into no controversy which does not touch our own honour or interest, and in which, consequently, we cannot put forth our whole strength, had become fixed" (20 March 1866).

Clarendon moreover explained to the Queen that Great Britain was thoroughly preoccupied with Irish affairs and the preparation of a Reform Bill, but Victoria did not agree with this argument. She failed to realize that the attention of the British Government was indeed focused on Irish affairs, and that therefore German matters took second place. However, Queen Victoria continued in her efforts to avoid a war, which, in her opinion, would “entirely [be] the fault of Prussia.” Before the actual outbreak of the war, Queen Victoria’s attempt to suggest an allied action of Britain and France was unsuccessful because the French were attracted to the idea of a possible expansion into Italy, which prevented an alliance. Once the Queen realized her failure, she urged Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia to “submit this question to the German Confederation” or, alternatively, to “make this concession to a Congress,” since up till the beginning of the Prusso-Austrian war, Queen Victoria asserted that she “could not believe in a war.”

Considering that Prince Frederick William was the Prussian Crown Prince, he was not able to pursue either of these suggestions officially; he did, however, suggest to his father that the King should ask the British Queen for mediation. Since Frederick William failed to inform Bismarck about this suggestion, the Prussian Crown Princess informed Queen Victoria that “the wicked man is frantic that the K should have desired F to write to you - said that would not do - that crossed his plans.” Notwithstanding her sincere endeavour to avoid the war, Queen Victoria was not able to pursue this path, as Prussia did not accept the fact that any mediation of Britain had to address the Austrian side as well; as a consequence, the Queen concluded that “it is


evident that all hope of interference of Britain must be abandoned." She even decided to cancel a planned visit of the Prussian Queen to Britain, as a result of "the mood of extreme irritation against Prussia which prevails at the present critical time." This consideration of the British Queen reveals the negative disposition of the politically interested parts of the British public, since Prussia was perceived to be utterly belligerent.

In a last desperate attempt to influence German affairs, Queen Victoria used her traditional method of writing directly to the Prussian King. She pointed out to William I that "at this fearful moment I cannot be silent, without raising my voice, earnestly, and in the name of all that is most holy and sacred, against the threatened probability of war. It is in your power to avert the calamities of a war, the results of which are too fearful to be even thought of, and in which thousands of innocent lives will be lost, and brother will be arrayed against brother." Although Loftus, the British Ambassador at Berlin, assured the Queen that her letter had "made an impression" on the addressee, the King’s response contained stereotypical accusations against Austria, which, however, was based on the fact that Bismarck had written this "deluded answer;" as a consequence, Clarendon advised Queen Victoria against another attempt to write directly to the Prussian King.

The co-operation between the British sovereign and the British Foreign Secretary was unremittingly close during the months before and after the outbreak of the Prusso-Austrian war of 1866. Whereas Queen Victoria was the driving force, attempting to avoid a war, Clarendon was the voice of caution and of practical considerations. This is certainly understandable, since Clarendon had to consider the international situation before he could try any joint action, a situation that Palmerston

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117 28 March 1866 Queen Victoria to the Queen of Prussia. In: Bolitho (ed.), Further letters of Queen Victoria, p.159. Queen Augusta eventually came to Britain in June 1867.
118 10 April 1866 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.1, pp.317-8. The letter was drafted by Queen Victoria in English and then sent in a German copy. Both letters are in: RA 144/5.
120 Longford, Victoria R.I., p.350.
had already encountered in 1848. Queen Victoria, on the other hand, viewed the conflict with a perspective restricted to the states of the German Confederation, and she only included France in her point of view when any other possibilities had proven unsuitable. As a consequence, she came to accept Clarendon’s belief that Britain should not interfere in the domestic affairs of the German confederation when she had no longer any other choice. Clarendon, in turn, appreciated the Queen’s personal approach to the Prussian King as long as it had a chance of being successful, but he strongly advised against a second attempt when the situation had changed in a way which made any peaceful settlement no longer likely.

The actual outbreak of the war in June 1866 was regarded by the *Times* as “one of the least just and least necessary wars of modern times.” Queen Victoria herself judged the war to be “terrible, unforgivable,” and she observed: “I only wish it was all in a better cause and against real enemies and not against brother Germans.” This last statement showed the Queen’s difficulty in understanding how two states of the German Confederation could be fighting against each other in a war which saw her daughter in Prussia on the Prussian and her daughter in Hesse on the Austrian side. The war of 1866 was certainly the crucial turning-point in Queen Victoria’s image of Prussia, since it changed her hitherto positive perception of Prussia into a sceptical and increasingly negative one. However, this crucial modification in the Queen’s image of Germany did not correspond with the general opinion in Britain, where “not a ripple of anxiety was felt. (...) the enormous military strength which Bismarck was amassing in Prussia was hardly noticed, nor the fact that Prussia was now the leader of the German-speaking people.”

Yet although Queen Victoria began to see Prussia’s political conduct with decreasing enthusiasm, she nevertheless expressed her hope towards Clarendon that

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122 A detailed account of the war can be found in: Medlicott, *Bismarck and modern Germany*, pp.53 ff.
123 *The Times*, 30 March 1866. *The Times* anticipated the outbreak of the war already in March.
125 14 July 1866 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. In: Fulford (ed.), *Your dear letter*, p.79.
the result of the war would be a Germany that resembled Prince Albert’s notion, since, according to the Queen, “a strong, united, liberal Germany would be a most useful ally to Britain,” however, the Queen certainly put the emphasis on ‘liberal’, which was a notion that was no longer compatible with the actual development in Prussia. There can be no doubt that Queen Victoria and Clarendon agreed in condemning the war, for both “strongly disapproved of Prussia’s conduct,” and also the *Times* regarded Prussia’s conduct as “absolutely unscrupulous, but perfectly consistent” (20 June 1866).

However, the rapport between Queen Victoria and Clarendon was brought to an abrupt end in June 1866, when Russell decided to resign after Gladstone’s moderate Reform Bill had failed to convince the House of Commons; despite Queen Victoria’s attempt to persuade the Prime Minister to stay in office until the German affairs were clarified, Russell opted for an immediate resignation, which the Queen “bitterly resented (...) as desertion.” As a consequence, from now on she had to discuss the war with the new Foreign Secretary Stanley, who took office under Derby in June 1866.

Notwithstanding the fact that Queen Victoria held a council which declared Britain’s neutrality in June 1866, she saw a certain danger in the possibility that the new Germany might become “merely a large Prussia with annexations.” This attitude reflected her altering perception of Prussia’s conduct, which she considered to have an increasingly authoritarian style. It is vital to realize that although her image of Prussia had changed, her notion of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha remained the same. As a consequence, Queen Victoria’s perception of Germany was henceforth irrevocably divided into Prussia and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha: whereas Prussia developed into a powerful, autocratic nation, Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (and also Hesse) remained states to which the Queen continued to feel a very emotional bond until the end of her life. One possible consequence of this shift of Germany’s power distribution was the danger that Prussia might annex these smaller states in the long run. Princess Alice

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130 12 August 1866 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. In: Fulford (ed.), *Your dear letter*, p.89.
description of the ongoing war as "a dreadful time"\textsuperscript{131} was written from this perspective of a smaller German state, threatened with extinction; furthermore, she informed her mother about the latest troop movements, the condition of the Hessian people and the most recent battles. On the other hand, the Crown Princess’s letters, written at the same time, were formulated from a victorious point of view, stating that "the Prussians are a superior race as regards intelligence and humanity, education and kind-heartedness."\textsuperscript{132}

Queen Victoria perceived the danger of Prussia becoming a powerful and authoritarian nation so strongly in 1866, that she decided to address the Prussian royal family directly. Her letter to Queen Augusta was therefore written in the hope that its message would eventually reach the King himself, since Queen Victoria observed that her "beloved Albert used always to say, (...) 'May Prussia become merged in Germany, not Germany in Prussia!' Now is the moment once more to create a great, united Germany with Prussia at her head!"\textsuperscript{133} The last sentence certainly summed up her feelings adequately, since the Queen realized that this future Germany might not correspond with her late husband’s convictions, and, what is more, the existence of smaller German states was in fact under threat. Interestingly enough, these emotions of Queen Victoria were completely restricted to the political affairs of Germany only, and she never considered similar thoughts for Ireland, Wales or Scotland. On the contrary, the idea of an Irish home rule was thoroughly opposed by the Queen.

For Princess Alice and her family, the Peace of Prague came certainly as a relief in August 1866, even if it signified that Hesse-Homburg and other parts of the Dukedom were lost to Prussia. Once the hostilities had ended, Bismarck signaled a new beginning by successfully introducing the Indemnity Bill in the Prussian Parliament, which legally reimbursed the government’s expenditure for the years since 1862. As a next step, Prussia created the North German Confederation, an association of states excluding Austria and her allies, the South German states - the latter, however, were linked to the North German Confederation through special treaties.

\textsuperscript{131} 15 June 1866 Princess Alice of Hesse to Queen Victoria. In: Alice, Letters to Her Majesty the Queen, vol.1, p.215. Prince Louis and Princess Alice sent their children to Britain for the duration of the war, in order to secure their well-being.


\textsuperscript{133} 8 August 1866 Queen Victoria to the Queen of Prussia. In: Bolitho (ed.), Further letters of Queen Victoria, p.162.
Apart from the incorporation of Schleswig and Holstein, Prussia also annexed Hanover, the Electorate of Hesse, the Duchy of Nassau and the municipality of Frankfurt, while Saxony kept its sovereignty and was merely included in the new Confederation. This arrangement indicated a tremendous modification in the Prussian perception of Bismarck, since the formerly disliked protégé of King William I was regarded as a national hero from now on. Even the Prussian Crown Princess had to take the public opinion in Prussia into account, and she decided not to come to a visit to Britain for the next three years, thus proving “her new commitment to Prussia.”

However, Victoria and Alice were not the only relatives of Queen Victoria who had been involved in the war of 1866. The Queen’s brother-in-law caused the least excitement, since Duke Ernest II had decided to side with Prussia from the beginning; as a consequence, Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was not annexed once the war was over, but simply incorporated in the North German Confederation.

The King of Saxony, however, had opted for the Austrian side during the war, a choice which saw him on the losing side after the war. Immediately after the battle of Königgrätz, the regal friend of Queen Victoria wrote a pleading letter to the Queen, stressing that “in the negotiations for peace, the voice of your Majesty will have great weight. I know your Saxon heart. I leave my cause and that of my sorely tried country in your hands, with the fullest confidence that your Government will support the cause of right and justice with its accustomed energy.” Queen Victoria certainly sympathized with the plea of the Saxon King, but she was not able to promise anything, considering that Britain was “abstaining from such interference.” As a consequence, the Queen’s voice was not heard during the peace negotiations, as was only fitting for the solution of a domestic German conflict, thus, once the war was over, the Queen accepted its outcome as a settlement which was no longer under international discussion.

King George V of Hanover, who had decided to take the Austrian side as well, did however involve the Queen’s immediate family. In addition to the King’s “protest to the Cabinets of Europe,” he wrote a letter to Queen Victoria,

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134 See: Niederhommert, Queen Victoria und der deutsche Kronprinz Friedrich Wilhelm, p.53.
135 Sinclair, The other Victoria, p.132.
137 28 July 1866 Queen Victoria to the King of Saxony. In: Ibid., p.362.
138 The Times, 3 October 1866.
expressing his hope "that you will use every endeavour to save my family and the Hanoverian country the disgrace of being thus entirely without right or reason swallowed up."\textsuperscript{139} Despite this urgent petition, Queen Victoria answered: "I fear I can do but little respecting Hanover, beyond expressing my deep interest in its integrity and well-doing,"\textsuperscript{140} and she passed on his entreaty to the British Foreign Secretary who, in turn, emphasised British neutrality.

But this official attitude of the Queen was only her monarchical facade, since she never ceased to consider the subsequent annexation of Hanover as deeply unjust, an opinion she shared with the \textit{Times}, which observed that "even those who are most persuaded that the recent changes in Germany are for the benefit of the German people and of all Europe may feel something like regret that the general interests of mankind have called for the humiliation of a family so old and famous as that which lately ruled in Hanover" (4 October 1866). Even seven years later, Queen Victoria still observed that "dethroning other Princes, and taking their private property and palaces - no, that was, and is, a grave mistake."\textsuperscript{141} Not only was she convinced that "the dignity of her family [should] be preserved,"\textsuperscript{142} but the dethronement of King George V of Hanover naturally conflicted with the Queen's most heartfelt royal beliefs.

It is here that the explanation for Queen Victoria's final disapproval of the settlement of 1866 can be found: she deeply resented the war between 'brother Germans', and she also never approved of the annexations of certain smaller German states once the war had been over. However, this ideological perception of the Queen stood in contrast to the more pragmatic attitude of the \textit{Times}, which pointed out that "at this rate the Prussianizing of all Germany, South as well as North, will be a work more rapid than Bismark [sic] himself anticipated. (...) War has already done for Prussia all that she could hope to achieve by conquest. Her remaining mission is pacific" (10 October 1866). The newspaper even went one step further and

\textsuperscript{140} 8 July 1866 Queen Victoria to the Duke of Cambridge. In: Ibid.
emphasized Germany’s need to come to terms with the new political situation on her own, since “it is evident that at Berlin neither Sovereign nor people dream that German national unity is a matter with which foreign Powers have any business to concern themselves” (19 April 1867).

Britain herself was indeed preoccupied with the domestic problem of reform after 1866. The significance of the Reform Act of 1867, which doubled the electorate by granting suffrage to urban workers, must be emphasized, since it “increased the political weight of the electorate,” and the “power to select and dismiss ministries moved from Westminster to the constituencies.” On this occasion, Queen Victoria and Disraeli worked together for the first time, and the Queen soon changed her initial ambivalent statement - “He was amiable and clever, but is a strange man,” into a more sympathetic notion, as she “found Mr. Disraeli most zealous in her service, and most ready to meet her wishes.” A personal explanation why the Queen so quickly found a common understanding with the Chancellor of the Exchequer can be found in her remark that “he is full of poetry, romance and chivalry,” however, apart from this particular impression, shared principles formed the basis for the friendship between Queen Victoria and Disraeli. Both were interested in the preservation of the British Empire and in the maintenance of traditional British institutions, the latter being symbolized in the monarchy, the aristocracy and the church. As a consequence, it was very much in accordance with Queen Victoria’s own opinions that Disraeli favoured a strong foreign policy, which he later expanded to an imperial formula. When Disraeli became Prime Minister in February 1868, Queen Victoria even explained to the Prussian Queen that Disraeli had “achieved his present high position

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144 Ibid.
146 26 February 1868 Queen Victoria to Disraeli. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals, p. 203.
entirely by his ability, his wonderful, happy disposition and the astounding way in
which he carried through the Reform Bill, and I have nothing but praise for him.”148

The end of 1866, however, saw both Queen Victoria and her daughters
focused on the consequences of the Austro-Prussian war; despite the fact that Prussia
and Hesse had fought on different sides during the war, the Princess Royal and
Princess Alice tried to reconcile the two countries once the war was over, and
Princess Alice decided to name her daughter, who had been born at the end of the
war, Irene, as “a sort of recollection of the peace so longed for.”149 What is more,
Crown Prince Frederick William visited Karlsruhe (in Hesse) as early as in January
1867, and soon afterwards Prince Louis and Princess Alice called upon Frederick and
Victoria at Berlin, a decision which, accordingly to Queen Victoria, did “a great deal
towards smoothing down matters between the governments and princes.”150

VI-6: 1870/71

The war of 1870/71 was considered by the Foreign Office as a conflict
restricted to Germany and France only. Queen Victoria eventually agreed with this
view, but she followed the developments carefully. She was disheartened when parts
of the British public changed their initial support for the German cause to sympathy
towards France after the French defeat of Sedan and the siege of Paris had altered
circumstances considerably; as a consequence, Anglo-German relations deteriorated
during the war. Queen Victoria herself saw the war completely from a humanitarian
point of view, which was the occasion for irritated comments from the Prussian royal
family. The creation of the German Empire in January 1871 was welcomed by Queen
Victoria, but she realized that this united Germany was not constituted in a political
way her late husband would have approved of. As a consequence, she abandoned
Prince Albert’s guidelines and formed opinions of her own instead.

Several months before the outbreak of the war, the Prussian Crown Princess
asked her mother for the British point of view regarding the problem of the Spanish

148 26 February 1868 Queen Victoria to the Queen of Prussia. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen
Victoria in her letters and journals, p.203.
149 16 September 1866 Princess Alice of Hesse to Queen Victoria. In: Alice, Letters to Her
Majesty the Queen, vol.1, p.240.
succession, but Queen Victoria thought it appropriate to show this correspondence to Clarendon, who advised that “it would not be expedient for your Majesty to give any advice upon a matter in which no British interest in concerned.” This recommendation was in accordance with the relationship established between Queen Victoria and Clarendon already four years earlier. As a consequence, the co-operation between the monarch and the Foreign Office was close and harmonious.

Once the crisis became alarmingly intense, Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia wrote a memorandum that was clearly aimed at the British Foreign Office; in this memo, he stated that “in the interest of peace it would certainly be most desirable if the British Government would endeavour calmly to influence the Emperor Napoleon and his Government.” Britain, on the other hand, was resolved to remain neutral in a conflict which was restricted to the nations of Germany and France; as a consequence, there was no official response from the Foreign Office, an attitude the Queen agreed with.

The Queen herself was deeply shocked at the actual outbreak of the war: “I cannot say what my feelings of horror and indignation are, or how frightful iniquitous I think this declaration of war! My heart boils and bleeds at the thought of what misery and suffering will be caused by this act of mad folly!” The Queen’s distress at the beginning of the hostilities was in keeping with the British public opinion, as “national sympathy had been with Germany when the war broke out.” Queen Victoria was in no doubt about the culprit of this war, as she explained to Gladstone: “It is not a question of Prussia against France but of United Germany most unjustifiably attacked, fighting for one hearth and Home - and no one can help feeling

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152 14 March 1870 Clarendon to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid., p.11.
warmly for them."\(^{156}\) Gladstone, however, regarded a potential British intervention as ineffective and was resolved to maintain British neutrality,\(^{157}\) despite the fact that this determination was "bitterly condemned by the French, who held that Britain stood aloof while Germany seized the mastery of Europe."\(^{158}\) The determination of the Foreign Office to uphold British neutrality continued until the end of the Franco-Prussian war, and not even the developing pro-French attitude of the majority of the British people could induce the Foreign Office to alter its course, even though "this reticence seemed increasingly incomprehensible to the public."\(^{159}\)

It is important to realize that "until the German victory at Sedan, France was still regarded as the leading power in Europe,"\(^{160}\) which might explain Gladstone's reluctance to adopt Queen Victoria's position. What is more, "Foreign Affairs had attracted little attention in the cabinet or the House since Gladstone took office"\(^{161}\) in December 1868, and it was certainly in line with the tradition of Liberal British politics that Gladstone showed only limited interest in German affairs. Instead, he had started his program of constructive legislation made possible subsequent to Palmerston's death in 1865; as a consequence, the main focus of Gladstone's government was clearly on domestic progress.

Queen Victoria, on the other hand, saw the hostilities between Prussia and France less from a political than from a humanitarian point of view, and her statement that she "is very proud of the Germans though she is very sorry for the poor French

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\(^{157}\) Accordingly, Queen Victoria declared the British neutrality on 20 July 1870. See: The Times of that date.


people" showed her unbiased approach. Amazingly enough, she expressed this compassionate opinion even to Queen Augusta, who, as Prussian Queen, might in fact have been quite irritated by Victoria’s impartial notion that her “thoughts are occupied with this dreadfully bloody yet for you victorious war. This horrible shed of blood is too terrible for the nineteenth century in Europe.” At the same time, Queen Victoria expressed towards the Prussian King “what a great importance I attach to an untroubled friendship between England and Germany, and I do not fail to appreciate the close relationship of many interests of these two countries!” Even at a time when the Prussian army was so victorious that any thought about the French side came very close to treachery, Queen Victoria remarked “when will there be peace - and when will this horrible bloodshed be stopped!” Although the Prussian Queen was sufficiently acquainted with Queen Victoria to recognize these observations as an articulation of the Queen’s personal anxiety, Augusta’s stoicism eventually gave way when Queen Victoria referred to Germany and France as the “two great and brave nations” in her speech at the opening of Parliament; this expression finally led to criticism from Augusta, who thought that the speech “flattered the French unnecessarily and expressed unconcealed sympathy with their cause;” only after some time did the correspondence between Queen Victoria and Empress Augusta return to its usual friendly tone.

The Anglo-German relations as such were changing considerably during the war. In Germany, anti-British feelings were breaking out as early as in July 1870, based on the fact that Britain held up her traditional principle of free trade, and as a consequence, delivered cartridges, coal and horses to France, a procedure which was

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164 7 August 1870 Queen Victoria to the Prussian King. Found in: RA (M) I64/66.
166 Pakula, An uncommon woman, p.288; she is citing the Queen’s Speech.
justified by the *Times* as "a condition preceding the war itself" (19 September 1870). This anti-British feeling in Germany remained unchanged during the whole war.

In Great Britain, on the other hand, the *Times* expressed the sympathy felt by most parts of society when stating that "there is an indignation beyond parallel at her [France's] present act" (18 July 1870). This anger was based on the "middle-class liberal and radical opinion, sympathetic to German aspirations for unity and sharply hostile to Louis Napoleon for his role in opposing republicanism in France and Italy." The German victory at Sedan, and the subsequent siege of Paris, however, "shattered this liberal interpretation of the war." The *Times* criticized Prussia's conduct by stating that she "may yet have to learn that a more merciful use of her astounding success would have been the safer as well as the nobler policy" (3 December 1870).

The subsequent declaration of the Third Republic "fostered radical efforts to persuade the English government to intervene in the Franco-Prussian War on behalf of France," an endeavour supported by the 'Anglo-French Intervention Committee' of October 1870. However, it is important to realize that although "sympathy for the under-dog rallied nearly all England to the French side," the Foreign Office did not change its neutral attitude, since "there seemed no reason why England should quarrel with a fellow Protestant state still dedicated to Free Trade." As a consequence, the majority of the politically interested part of the British public considered a British intervention in the Franco-German War as inappropriate. The eventual brutal suppression of the French revolutionary movement "lent an added impulse to the new liberal convictions cherished by a growing sector of the middle-class."

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169 Finn, *After chartism*, p.274.

170 Ibid., p.277.


In a private letter, Queen Victoria already warned the Prussian Queen about the deterioration of Anglo-German relations at a time when the war was still at its height: "I consider the danger great and serious that the two great nations should become so far irritated against one another as to be unable to bring it right again and hostility grow out of estrangement. Please warn the dear King and Fritz and everyone."174 Only one month later, she wrote directly to the Prussian King that it was "necessary for the happiness and peace of Europe that United Germany should come to a friendly understanding with Britain."175 However, the siege of Paris and the resulting pro-French sympathies of parts of the politically interested British nation convinced Queen Victoria that "the two nations really do not understand each other at all,"176 and she expressed her despair that "the feeling here towards Prussia is as bitter as it can be. It is a great grief to me."177 Despite this public notion, the Queen insisted in a letter to William I that "our two nations will step nearer again; and that soon the temporary discord, created through misunderstandings and lack of a right judgment of the two nations, and some unlucky circumstances, will vanish!"178 Once the war was over, the new German Empire was indeed welcomed by the Times, which labeled this new nation a "great and novel a State" (31 December 1870).

Taking into account that the process of creating the German Empire was exactly what Prince Albert had envisaged ten years earlier, it would have been understandable had Queen Victoria now remembered the observations of her late

174 17 November 1870 Queen Victoria to the Queen of Prussia. Found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.51, Lit.E (Merseburg), nr.3, documents 404-9. The letter can also be found in: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals, p.222, but he must have used a different source as his wording of the letter is different from the one held at Berlin. The last sentence of the quotation was in German; translation by the author.

175 18 December 1870 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia. In: Bolitho (ed.), Further letters of Queen Victoria, p.182.


VI: Continuity in grief

husband. However, it was in fact the Prussian Crown Prince Frederick William who stated that "I cannot help (...) thinking a great deal of the plans of my late father-in-law (...). the notion of a free German Imperial State, that in the true sense of the world, so that through German influence the rest of the world should be humanized, manners ennobled."\textsuperscript{179} Queen Victoria, on the other hand, realized that, had Albert lived, "he would have suffered cruelly from many inevitable things which have taken place and which he never would have approved."\textsuperscript{180} As a consequence, she abandoned the perpetuation of Prince Albert's views with regard to Britain's foreign policy and formed her own beliefs, based on the actual political development, from now on; however, this process of intellectual independence from her late husband's thoughts did not include the emotional side, since the Queen's personal grief about Albert's loss continued until the end of her life.

\textbf{VI-7: ROYAL MARRIAGES IV}

The 1860s and 1870s saw a decisive change in the significance of royal marriages from being politically important decisions to reflecting the social development of the nation. The marriages of Princess Alice to Prince Louis of Hesse and of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark had been arranged by Prince Albert, and Queen Victoria followed these decisions meticulously. However, she did not approve of Princess Alexandra's Danish background, an attitude which stood in sharp contrast to the view of the politically interested parts of British society, since the Princess of Wales was very popular in Britain. One reason for this acceptance was certainly the sympathy many Britons felt for Denmark during the war of 1864. This political motivation was also an explanation for the general approval of Princess Helena's marriage to Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, since his brother had lost his possessions after the Convention of Gastein, which was regarded as an unjust settlement in Britain. As a consequence, from this marriage connection onwards, the Queen's perception corresponded with Britain's public opinion. This was certainly the case with Princess Louise's marriage, since Queen

\textsuperscript{180} 3 September 1872 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Germany. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals, p.229.
Victoria agreed to her betrothal with a British commoner, a development that was not understood in Prussia but welcomed in Britain.

Immediately after Prince Albert’s death, however, Queen Victoria was in fact determined to follow her late husband’s wishes, not only in the political field, but also in the domain of private arrangements. As a consequence, in July 1862, the marriage of Princess Alice to Prince Louis of Hesse went ahead as planned. The following marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark was approved of by the *Times*, which pointed out that “the Marriage was one dictated by no cold maxims of State policy, but springing from the purest mutual affection” (11 March 1863). What is more, Princess Alexandra was described as “of a good stock and a kindred race” (4 September 1862); this was a clear indication that the new marriage alliance with Denmark was accepted as an alternative to the previous German links of Queen Victoria’s children. This was a first sign that Queen Victoria began to be out of touch with the social and political beliefs of British society, since her determination to insist on the Prince of Wales’s marriage was not based on an anti-German outlook, but because of her remembrance of Prince Albert’s arrangements.

However, this motive never became publicly known, and as a consequence, the betrothal “was interpreted by the Prussians as a declaration of British sympathy for the Danes.”

This was certainly not the case, as Queen Victoria simply followed the marriage plans outlined by her late husband, but eventually she had to acknowledge “the outcry there is in Germany about this marriage.” Yet notwithstanding the controversy about the Prince of Wales’s bride in Prussia, the Queen was determined not to change any arrangements made by Prince Albert, and she certainly did not see the necessity to alter marriage settlements because the international political situation was changing.

This determination was based on the circumstance that the Queen refused to see Princess Alexandra’s Danish heritage as relevant, and she openly declared that “the German element is the one I wish to be cherished and kept up in our beloved home.” Considering the contemporary political situation, this statement seems rather bizarre, and the isolated point of view of Queen Victoria becomes even more

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evident when bearing in mind her observation that "the very thing dear Papa and I disliked so much in the connexion is the Danish element."\(^{184}\) This remark clearly contradicted the contemporary satisfaction with the marriage's Anglo-Danish background, for the *Times* observed that "the most valuable portion of the English character (...) is derived from the Scandinavian element" (5 September 1862).

Queen Victoria did evidently not come to the conclusion that, considering the changing political circumstances in 1863, Albert himself might have thought of an alternative to the Danish marriage of the Prince of Wales. Instead, her remark towards the Prussian Crown Princess, "I hope you have Germanised Bertie as much as possible, for it is most necessary,"\(^{185}\) shows her resolution to strengthen the German component in a marriage which was Anglo-Danish from the beginning; what is more, she was not aware of the prevalent feeling in Britain, as formulated by the *Times*, that "we do not wish to be brought nearer the great Continental Powers, to be overshadowed by their despotism and infected with their popular discontent" (4 September 1862).

Once the war had started, the Queen came to judge the marriage of her eldest son to a Danish Princess as "a misfortune,"\(^{186}\) and she remarked "Oh! if Bertie's wife was only a good German and not a Dane! (...) It is terrible to have the poor boy on the wrong side."\(^{187}\) Her opinionated approach towards her daughter-in-law did, however, not take into account the immense popularity of the Princess of Wales. Thus, the Queen's personal opinion was completely out of touch with the contemporary perception of certain members of the royal family.

The political development of the years 1864 and 1865, which saw a first declining enthusiasm of Queen Victoria towards Prussia, decided the future of her third daughter. The initial plan of marrying Princess Helena to a Prussian Prince was soon abandoned by Queen Victoria, who wanted to keep this daughter at her side; instead, she chose Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, the younger son of the Duke of Augustenburg, as Helena's future husband. Both brothers had lost their claims to the Duchies with the Convention of Gastein, and as a result, the Queen

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\(^{184}\) 6 November 1862 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. In: Ibid.

\(^{185}\) 28 November 1862 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia. In: Ibid., p.142.

\(^{186}\) 27 April 1864 Queen Victoria to Princess Alice of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 21/2, nr.131-4.

could be sure that Helena and Christian would stay with her in Britain, as indeed they did. Queen Victoria’s remark that “there is a prospect of Lenchen’s marrying Christian Holstein” came only one month after the Treaty of Gastein had been ratified, which lets her personal choice emerge as a momentous political decision, since she openly demonstrated her disapproval with the result of the Schleswig-Holstein conflict by allowing Princess Helena (who incidentally was in love with the Prince) to marry the dispossessed brother of the Duke of Augustenburg.

As a consequence, the match was “a personal offence” for Bismarck, who “objected on political grounds, and saw in this match an English intrigue in favour of the dispossessed House of Augustenburg.” Although political considerations did play a certain role in the Queen’s decision, her main reason was surely personal, since she wanted to keep this daughter at her side. The Times approved of Princess Helena’s choice as well and emphasized the unpolitical approach to this match by stating that the marriage “does not threaten to complicate our foreign policy or to engage our arms” (2 December 1865). This observation characterized this marriage as a match based on personal affection with certain political implications.

The outcome of the war of 1866, which marked the turning-point for Queen Victoria’s personal opinion about the political conduct of Prussia, then strengthened her resolve not to let another daughter marry into the Prussian royal family. Although the Prussian Court showed its interest in a marriage between Princess Louise and Prince Albert of Prussia, Queen Victoria dismissed this possibility and explained to Queen Augusta that “in the opinion of my beloved Albert the reasons against such a marriage (...) consisted in marrying a second sister into the same family.” The real reason for her decision, however, is revealed in a letter to the Prince of Wales; the Queen argued that “great foreign alliances are looked on as causes of trouble and

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anxiety, and are no good (...), and in beloved Papa's lifetime this was totally different, and besides Prussia had not swallowed everything up."\(^{192}\) The last part of the Queen's justification was certainly the most important motivation for her decision, as she could neither forget nor forgive Prussia's behaviour towards the smaller German states after the war. With this open statement, Queen Victoria's changed image of Germany becomes apparent, since she openly blamed Prussia for behaving wrongly after the war of 1866. By now, the Queen had realized that the political circumstances under which Prince Albert had made his arrangements had changed so much that her own judgements had to be adapted accordingly. However, in order not to make life for the Princess Royal any harder at Berlin, she personally informed the Prussian King of her decision and asked him "to kindly accept this as my final decision."\(^{193}\) At the same time, the Queen assured William I that he was "the head of a family I value myself lucky to be connected with by one bond."\(^{194}\)

Instead of arranging a foreign alliance with a German Court, Queen Victoria decided to change her matrimonial policy in a remarkable way; she suggested to Princess Louise the possibility of marrying a domestic commoner, and Louise eventually chose John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, Marquess of Lorne, as her future husband. Although it is obvious that the term 'commoner' was limited to "the upper crust of the peerage,"\(^{195}\) the Queen's decision was nevertheless courageous, since it indicated her repudiation of the previously popular German option in favour of a domestic choice. Queen Victoria herself saw this as "the most popular act of my reign,"\(^{196}\) a judgement shared by the *Times*, which pointed out that "the Queen has preferred the happiness of her daughter to a pedantic adherence to traditional

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\(^{193}\) 7 December 1869 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia. Found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.51, J Britain III a, fasc 2 (Merseburg), documents 54-8. Translation by the author.

\(^{194}\) 7 December 1869 Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia. Found in: Ibid. Translation by the author.


principles of State policy which were always at variance with popular feeling, and have now ceased to be supported by any weight of reason” (14 October 1870).

This statement of the *Times* was certainly right, since by the year 1870, marriage alliances were no longer characterized by the political importance they once had in the middle of the century. Whereas the Queen’s own marriage, and undoubtedly the marriage of her oldest daughter to the Prussian Court, had been regarded as highly political matches, this approach had in the meantime been replaced by a more pragmatic view. The fact that Princess Louise’s marriage to a commoner was widely accepted in British society (and, indeed, welcomed) was a sign that the monarchy decreased in its political significance; instead, its representatives gained in social importance. However, this increase of the monarchy’s social characteristics with a simultaneous loss in political power can not be transferred to Germany, since the German monarchy preserved its authority until the beginning of the First World War.

The conservation taking place in Germany went hand in hand with a defence of marriage links as politically significant decisions; as a consequence, the Prussian Court did not approve of the Queen’s decision to allow Princess Louise’s marriage with a commoner. Although Queen Victoria took the effort to inform the King and Queen of Prussia herself, William I was “most displeased that the Princess should prefer to lead a quiet, domestic life with a commoner rather than hold a position at the Berlin Court.” The outbreak of the Franco-German War in July 1870, after Louise’s engagement but before her actual wedding, only confirmed Queen Victoria’s resolve, as she came to realize that “the British do not like the Prussians, and instead of its bringing the two nations nearer together it would have the contrary effect.”

This conclusion of Queen Victoria was undoubtedly right, and it is highly significant that by now, she actually took public opinion into consideration.Already in October 1870, the *Times* had stressed the fact that “whatever the result in our time,
the actual condition of Germany (...) precludes the idea of a sort of Royal caste, from which British Royalty might perpetually recruit itself without compromising either its rank, or its policy, or its creed” (17 October 1870). This judgement illustrates that the time in which marriage links had any political significance for the British royal family was clearly over; instead of looking to the Protestant possibilities of international royalty, British Princes and Princesses were considering alliances of affection from now on.

Princess Louise’s marriage to the Marquess of Lorne in March 1871 was received with enthusiasm by London’s Society, and Queen Victoria noted the “very great” loyalty of the spectators; however, the public was saluting the newly wed Princess, but not the Queen, whose popularity had decreased constantly since Prince Albert’s death, and by 1871 a republican movement came to its zenith. It seems appropriate at this point to address the effect Queen Victoria’s extended period of mourning had on her perception by the public, before the implications of her extended withdrawal for the progress of British republicanism will be discussed.

VI-8: CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM

Although Queen Victoria was determined to uphold Prince Albert’s political beliefs, she retired from public life and lived a secluded, withdrawn life for several years. Notwithstanding the initial sympathy and understanding of British society, Queen Victoria was the monarchical head of state and as such was expected to fulfil certain public duties. However, she adamantly refused to consider these social responsibilities, which were increasingly accepted by the Prince of Wales and his wife instead. In the following years, criticism regarding this prolonged seclusion of the Queen increased. The declaration of a French republic in 1870 showed an alternative to the existing monarchy in Britain, resulting in a republican movement which gained an additional impetus through Queen Victoria’s regular demands for annuities for her children. However, a serious illness of the Prince of Wales put an end to this republican outbreak; but it has to be stressed that the prospect of a successful republican movement was very limited from the start, considering the social structure and political constellation of Great Britain.

200 28 March 1871 Extract from the Queen’s Journal. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.2, p.120.
By the year 1864, the immense popularity Queen Victoria had enjoyed during her marriage was beginning to fade, when, three years after Albert’s death, Britain began to feel impatient with the duration of the Queen’s mourning. As “close relatives were expected to withdraw from Society for a year,”\(^{201}\) and even a generous evaluation of the Queen’s grief was based on the experience that “the majority of bereaved members of the Victorian families (...) seem to have worked through their grief in the first two years of bereavement,”\(^{202}\) three years of seclusion seemed long enough. Although contemporary voices still judged the previous twenty-five years as “the quarter of a century which was blessed with a female sovereign,”\(^{203}\) the majority of British citizens were becoming used to the Prince and Princess of Wales taking over the public functions of the Crown, which Queen Victoria refused to accept.

Already in March 1863, the social responsibilities of the Prince of Wales and his wife were fulfilled so efficiently that Lord Stanley mentioned the rumour that “the Queen will abdicate when her son and daughter-in-law have shown themselves fit to take her place.”\(^{204}\) Although this was far from the truth, it still illustrates the high esteem the Prince of Wales and his Danish wife had acquired, and this notion was simply based on the fact that they were present in public.

The year 1864 added a further aspect to the public disapproval of the sovereign’s behaviour, since the majority of British citizens agreed with Palmerston’s notion of Prussia as a bullying nation which was threatening the political balance of Europe. The British press became increasingly vehement in its attacks against Prussia’s conduct, which, transferred to Victoria’s seclusion, even led to rumours about the “Queen’s intrigues with the German powers.”\(^{205}\) However, this statement was exaggerated, since Queen Victoria did everything in her power to convince the Cabinet of a neutral approach towards the conflict, but it was certainly true that the Queen’s emotional inclinations were biased towards Prussia at the beginning of the war.


Matters deteriorated when the British press took up the case of Prince Alfred, Queen Victoria’s second son, who had accepted the Prussian Order of the Black Eagle while visiting the Prussian King in May 1865. The *Times* called this “a very questionable honour,” based on the fact that the acceptance of the Order was certainly not in accordance with British public opinion, since King William I was anything but liked in Britain after the war of 1864; as the war had been fought against Denmark, the home country of the Princess of Wales, Lord Torrington certainly spoke for the majority of the British people when he stated that “it appeared to me the people at Osborne were unacquainted with public opinion and feeling. (...) Her Majesty should reflect and consider a little the feelings of her son’s wife.” Lord Torrington was able to express his opinion to the Queen personally during an audience, and he explained “that public feeling in England was very strong, and (...) against the King of Prussia anything but satisfactory.” As a result of this rather unconventional reminder, Queen Victoria was finally able to come to the judgement: “I am grieved and distressed to say that the feeling against Prussia has become most violent in Britain, and quite ungovernable.”

Torrington’s open words made Queen Victoria for the first time “fully aware of all the attacks directed against her.” Simultaneously, Lord Ellenborough observed in the House of Lords that “the war is altogether an unjust war,” and he went on to comment that “on all public questions relating to Germany Her Majesty’s Ministers have as much difficulty in carrying out a purely English policy as was experienced in former times, as history teaches, by the Ministers of our first two Sovereigns of the House of Hanover.” This accusation was certainly “one of the

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206 6 May 1864 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Prussia (she was mentioning the incident). In: Fulford (ed.), *Dearest Mama*, p.328.
211 The speech of Lord Ellenborough was printed in the *Times* on 14 May 1864.
212 This speech of Lord Ellenborough was also printed in the *Times*, on 27 May 1864.
Queen’s worst experiences,” and she thought the Lord’s allegations of being “malignant and unmanly insinuations.” The episode was even more displeasing considering that the criticism of Lord Ellenborough was by no means an exception; Lord Stanley remarked at the same time that “the Queen’s intrigues with the German powers [are] openly talked of ... The reasonable cause of complaint against our Court is, that being necessarily acquainted with the secrets of its own foreign office, it divulges those secrets in confidence to the Prussian Cabinet, which is negotiating in an opposite sense.” Although this did not represent the truth of the matter, the concern is very understandable; considering that the Queen was no longer publicly visible, her actions had indeed a tinge of treason.

Queen Victoria herself was so shocked by this occurrence of a public criticism that she decided to take the rather unconventional step of writing an anonymous letter to the *Times*, in which she appreciated “the desire of her subjects to see her, and whatever she can do to gratify them in this loyal and affectionate wish, she will do. Whenever any real object is to be attained by her appearing on public occasions, any national interest to be promoted, or anything to be encouraged which is for the good of her people, Her Majesty will not shrink from any personal sacrifice or exertion, however painful. But there are other and higher duties than those of mere representation which are now thrown upon the Queen, alone and unassisted - duties which she cannot neglect without injury to the public service.” Only two months later, the Queen appeared in public for the first time since 1861 when she drove through London in an open carriage. Understandably, the British public wanted to see the sovereign, as without her visibility, the Queen’s claim to be a hard-working monarch was hardly believable. From the outside, the government was seen as a thoroughly functional institution, while the Queen was not perceived to be an important power of state, since her participation in the debate of the political process was not noticed by the public.

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214 28 May 1864 Queen Victoria to Derby. Found in: RA 197/138.


216 Article written by Queen Victoria, published in the *Times* on 6 April 1864. In: R.Garrett, *Queen Victoria* (London, 1974), pp.59-60. Although the article was written anonymously, the author was generally known.
The fact that Queen Victoria did indeed open Parliament in person at the beginning of 1866 improved her image for the moment; however, the complete lack of any subsequent public appearances brought the existing lament about the Queen's seclusion soon to a new height; mirroring the public feeling, the *Times* remarked that "the mechanism of Constitutional Government would be nearly complete without a Sovereign (...). Yet who is not conscious that without a personal Monarch the spirit of our Constitution would be gone, and that no abstraction could ever fill the void in the heart of the nation?" At the same time, the newspaper expressed the sincere hope that "Her Majesty will soon resume the place which not even the Heir Apparent can hold for her" (11 June 1867). Four months later, the *Observer* stated that "there is reason to believe that Her Majesty has resolved to emerge from the comparative seclusion in which she has lived for so long a period," but this remained in fact a rumour.

By the year 1870, the general feeling of dissatisfaction with the monarch's prolonged seclusion had become strong, since the Queen's "great unwillingness to perform her duties of a Sovereign" resulted in an "absence of ceremony and colour." Considering that in the general election of 1868, the force of public opinion had resulted in Disraeli's resignation, a new authority was emerging, one that "lay beyond the power of the sovereign to influence." This became important in 1870, when the Queen's sympathy sided with Prussia side in the Franco-German war, while public opinion increasingly favoured the French; in this context, the declaration of a French Republic in September 1870 was only the last event it took to cause a startling outbreak of British republicanism, resulting in demonstrations in Hyde Park in September 1870 and in Trafalgar Square in December 1870.

In 1871, the *National Reformer* voiced the nation's opinion when observing that "Her Majesty, by doing nothing except receiving her Civil List, is teaching the country that it can get on quite well without a monarch." This public feeling...

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217 The article of the *Observer* was published in the *Times* on 28 October 1867, and the *Times* observed on 4 February 1868 as well that "The British public will be rejoiced to hear that the Queen trusts she may be equal to still further efforts in the discharge of her Royal duties."

218 Benson, *Queen Victoria*, p.254.


220 Ibid., p.27.

221 The quote from the *National Reformer* can be found in: P.Vansittart (ed.), *Happy and glorious! A n anthology of royalty* (London, 1988), p.238.
alarmed Prime Minister Gladstone to such an extent that he warned the Queen about the danger of her "discharge of the great duties and functions of the Throne;" however, Victoria did not take the hint and answered invariably that she "has seen from long experience that the more she yields to pressure and clamour where it is not for an important political purpose, that it only encourages further demands. (...) It is really abominable that a woman, a Queen, loaded with care and anxieties, public and domestic which are daily increasing should be unable to make people understand that there are limits to her power." At the same time Queen Victoria made this exasperated statement, a Republican Committee was founded in London, which subsequently called upon the British Government to acknowledge the French Republic.

Although the existence of a republican movement in Britain was an astonishing experience, it is important to realize that the main significance lay in its mere presence, since the actual impact of the movement was negligible. When the first wave of a British republicanism made itself manifest, the Times rightly pointed out that "it is difficult to understand what practical object is to be attained by continued Demonstrations in favour of the French Republic" (27 September 1870). This assertion continued to remain unchanged and accordingly, the Times asserted its readers that "the stability of our throne under Queen Victoria is greater than under any of her predecessors within living memory" (27 March 1871).

At the same time, Queen Victoria did face severe criticism because of the royal tradition to ask Parliament for annuities for Queen Victoria's children. Significantly, Col. Barttelot pointed out in the House of Commons that any reproof of the sovereign's practice would cease immediately "if the Queen could exert a little more frequently the magic of her presence among us." It was indeed the requested annuity for Princess Louise which gave the republican movement an "additional stimulus."

224 The Times, 4 August 1871. Col. Barttelot expressed his opinion during the second reading of Prince Arthur's Annuity Bill.
225 P.R. Williams, Public discussion of the British monarchy, 1837-87 (PhD, University of Cambridge, 1989), p.80.
However, the monarchical position of Queen Victoria was profoundly strengthened as a result of a serious typhoid illness of the Prince of Wales in December 1871. Once the British nation realized that the heir to the throne was in the severe danger of losing his life, “popular sympathy for the monarchy (...) acted to erode metropolitan republicanism in the ensuing months,” and the atrocious behaviour of the Paris commune convinced Britain additionally that a monarchy was indeed preferable to a republic. Moreover, the Queen’s attendance at the Thanksgiving Service in February 1872, which celebrated the Prince of Wales’s convalescence, was rightly seen as a sign that the sovereign was finally about to end her seclusion. As a consequence, the Queen was received most enthusiastically, and she observed “that yesterday was a day of triumph - really most marvellous! Such touching affection and loyalty cannot be seen anywhere I think.” It is furthermore important to stress that in Europe, “monarchy still remained overwhelmingly the most common mode of governing states,” which prevented the French model from prevailing. What is more, it was not possible for the republican movement in Britain to become as powerful as it had been in the Continental states, for “in Britain the Crown did not surmount an ‘ancient régime’ but a liberal constitution.”

During the following years, the already explained political friendship between Queen Victoria and Disraeli intensified, and an impressive illustration of their close co-operation was the Queen’s wish to acquire the title ‘Empress’ in 1876. As the Prussian King William I had obtained the title Emperor in 1871, the Queen inquired already in 1873 why she had “never (...) officially adopted” the same title. Three years later, Queen Victoria suggested the Royal Titles Bill to Disraeli, which, by Act of Parliament, would add the title ‘Empress of India’ to her name. Although Disraeli was not too enthusiastic about this idea, he remained loyal towards his monarch and

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229 Williams, Public discussion of the British monarchy, p.80.

carried the Bill through two very reluctant Houses of Parliament; the Duke of Somerset for instance observed that the only aim of the Bill was to provide the Queen's children with a higher standing at the Courts of Germany.\textsuperscript{231} Queen Victoria fervently denied this ulterior motive, which had been brought to her attention through her daughter Princess Louise, who pointed out: "The people will not understand it. They think you wish always to be so called in future, instead of Queen;"\textsuperscript{232} nevertheless, there can be no doubt that her prime object was in fact to obtain an obvious verbal symbol of her status. Although the British press praised the idea of an Imperial title for Queen Victoria as "admirably appropriate,"\textsuperscript{233} the \textit{Times} would have preferred "Queen of India," as 'Empress' was no genuine British title.\textsuperscript{234} Disraeli eventually succeeded in convincing Parliament in favour of the Bill, mainly by promising that the title of Empress would be used exclusively for affairs relating to India; as a consequence, the excitement about the Queen's new title soon calmed down after 1877.

It is a remarkable circumstance, which has been neglected by historiography so far, that from the time her husband died in 1861 until Disraeli came for the second time into office in 1874, Queen Victoria had to make her political decisions without the assistance of an experienced adviser at her side. Contrary to the traditional view that the Queen "had an innate need for some one person in her life, preferably male, on whom she could lean,"\textsuperscript{235} the foregoing account has shown that she had undoubtedly been able to form her own judgements. These views of the Queen were not always in accordance with the Foreign Office, but in the end, the monarch and the Foreign Secretary were always able to find a course that was acceptable to both. The only point which caused increasing criticism from representatives of the Foreign Office was the Queen's concentration on German affairs only, as expressed by Derby in 1875: "I don't in the least doubt the importance of German politics; but, after all,

\textsuperscript{231} 22 March 1876 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Germany, reporting this incident. In: Fulford (ed.), \textit{Darling child}, p.208.
\textsuperscript{233} \textit{The Times}, 9 February 1876.
\textsuperscript{234} See: \textit{The Times}, 18 February 1876.
are they more intricate than those of Italy, Spain, France, or the East? Queen Victoria’s answer, “it cannot be denied that Germany is one of the greatest Powers in Europe,” was certainly true, but it began to lack its usual certitude, since the Queen herself was no longer a staunch advocator of German affairs.

The years from 1861 to 1876 witnessed the polarization of British politics into the antithetical groups of Gladstone’s Liberal Party, which “removed the moral centre of Liberalism away from parliament” to the people, and Disraeli’s Conservative Party, which retained its aristocratic outlook. Queen Victoria herself developed into a supporter of Disraeli, because she agreed with his political views and - a reason which should not be underestimated - was charmed by his personality.

The years immediately following Prince Albert’s death, however, saw the Queen facing her monarchical duties on her own. Although she withdrew from society, she was adamant in her will to uphold her late husband’s political principles, especially with regard to Germany. Her own image of Germany was divided into a strong emotional bond to the smaller German states of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha and (after Alice’s marriage) Hesse on the one hand, and a high esteem for the powerful state of Prussia on the other. Bismarck’s appointment in 1862 did not alter this perception yet, but Prussia’s conduct towards Denmark in 1864 was for the first time seen by the Queen as a threat towards smaller German states, such as Saxe-Coburg and Gotha or Hesse.

The course of events of 1866 were then certainly a highly important watershed, since they marked the turning-point for Queen Victoria’s image of Germany. The Queen could neither understand a war between ‘brother Germans’ nor accept the annexation of certain German states, such as Hanover, by Prussia. As a result, she watched the political development of Prussia sceptically from now on; her positive sentiments for the smaller German states, however, remained unchanged until the end of her life. The war of 1870/71 was then observed by Queen Victoria from an humanitarian point of view, and although she welcomed the unification of Germany,

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238 Parry, The rise and fall of liberal government in Victorian Britain, p.252.
she eventually realized that the political process of Germany had resulted in a nation which was utterly different from the country her late husband had hoped for.

Queen Victoria faced these years without a trusted adviser at her side, but this was no impediment to the Queen constantly expressing her opinion towards both the Cabinet and the Foreign Office. Despite specific differences in opinion, the monarch and the other institutions of the realm were always able to find a course which was acceptable for all. Only in 1864 did Queen Victoria differ so completely from the notions of Palmerston and Russell that she openly sided with the peace-party in the Cabinet, a move which, together with altered circumstances, resulted in the Queen’s success in this matter. During the following years, the co-operation between the monarch and the Foreign Secretaries was close and productive, and even when the Queen suggested a certain course of action, she was willing to agree to a different perspective.

However, Queen Victoria’s involvement in the political affairs of state was not seen by British society, which became increasingly impatient with the monarch’s long seclusion. The Queen did not fulfil her public duties, but she did regularly ask for annuities for her children, a constellation that caused criticism and proved disadvantageous for subsequent years. In 1870, the existing republican feeling gained in support when the declaration of a French Republic showed an alternative to the existing monarchical head of government. However, there was never any concrete danger for the British monarchy, and a life-threatening illness of the Prince of Wales both induced a new popularity for Queen Victoria and ended the phenomenon of British republicanism.
VII: READJUSTMENT AS EMPRESS
(1877-1887)

The period between 1877 and 1887 was characterized by an intense domestic discussion about the issues of reform and the re-definition of the relationship between England and Ireland. At the same time, the interpretation of patriotism underwent a substantial transformation, since its traditional meaning was no longer associated with the liberal side of the political spectrum. Instead, ‘patriotism’ was increasingly identified with the conservative perspective, and it remains to be seen how this shift in perception caused also a modification in Queen Victoria’s political belief.

The aim of this chapter is to depict how Queen Victoria’s image of Germany deteriorated during the years from 1877 until 1887. Not only will the crucial background of the Eastern crisis be determined, but the significance of the beginning German colonial interest will also be demonstrated. Additional interest will be given to alliance considerations and to the changing importance of royal marriage associations.

VII-1: Congress of Berlin

Queen Victoria’s traditional anti-Russian view was an important component of the political debate about the Eastern crisis during the 1870s. When the British willingness to go to war over this question became manifest, Russia finally agreed to a peaceful settlement. The Congress of Berlin saw Disraeli at the height of his political career, and his close rapport with Queen Victoria caused a slight alteration in the monarch’s perception of Germany. Since Disraeli was convinced of Germany’s reliability, the Queen herself was inclined to consider the united Germany, which was dominated by Prussia, with more sympathizing feelings; however, this was only a contemporary alteration in the Queen’s image of Germany.

The first year in which Queen Victoria held the title of ‘Empress of India’ saw an exacerbation of the international situation with regard to the Balkans states. Since the Congress of Vienna of 1815 had not addressed the Eastern question, the Treaty of Paris, which had ended the Crimean War, had been the first serious attempt to come a continental agreement. However, by 1877, hostilities between Russia and Turkey broke out again, and in May, Russia officially declared war on Turkey. Although Britain was not directly involved in this conflict, Queen Victoria condemned Russia’s resolution; she pointed out to the German Emperor (of whose pro-Russian feelings
she was quite aware¹): “I regret the war as deeply as you do. However, it is not only
the Turkish stubbornness, but also the Russian ambition which caused the present
crisis. We will try to keep neutrality as long as possible.”² Notwithstanding the
Queen’s cautious formulations towards the German Emperor, her firm anti-Russian
sentiments were no secret to the Cabinet; as a consequence, when the Queen stated
about the Afghanistan problem in 1881 that “there must be no verbal or even written
understanding, for we should keep it and the Russians would not,”³ these feelings
were in line with Queen Victoria’s traditional political convictions. These were
generally taken into account by the Foreign Secretary whenever important decisions
regarding Britain’s foreign policy had to be taken, and the voice of the Queen was an
important part in the political debate. However, in pointed contrast to her conduct
with relation to German affairs, the Queen did not interfere whenever the Foreign
Office reached a pro-Russian settlement, but accepted it as a decision of a British
institution. Despite the Queen’s official attitude regarding Russian affairs, she made
her personal opinion more than clear in a letter to her granddaughter: “Russians are so
unscrupulous. (...) Politics or no politics the Russians are totally antagonistic to
England.”⁴

The subsequent Eastern conflict of 1877 is an example of how the Queen’s
anti-Russian sentiments eventually corresponded with the British Cabinet. When the
Foreign Secretary Derby advocated British neutrality in the conflict, the Queen
reacted furiously and urged her Prime Minister, Disraeli, to “insist on action, or the
Russians will crow over us, and our uncertain and weak policy;”⁵ again, the Queen’s
words were a striking disclosure when one compares them with the more considerate

¹ The Crown Princess of Germany informed her mother that the German Emperor was “more
Russian than can be described.” 25 January 1878 The Crown Princess of Germany to Queen
² 24 May 1877 Queen Victoria to the Emperor of Germany. Found in; Preußisches
Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.51, J Britain III a, fasc.2 (Merseburg), document 96.
³ 14 January 1881 Queen Victoria to Granville. In: G.E.Buckle (ed.). The letters of Queen
⁴ 21 September 1883 Queen Victoria to Princess Victoria of Hesse. In: R.Hough (ed.), Advice
to a grand-daughter, letters from Queen Victoria to Princess Victoria of Hesse (London,
⁵ 13 November 1877 Queen Victoria to Disraeli. In: C Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her
expression she had used in a letter to the German Emperor only six months earlier. When Russia won the war in January 1878, any further activity of Britain came to a standstill, and in March 1878 Russia concluded the Treaty of San Stefano with Turkey.

The British position changed slightly when Derby decided rather to resign than to insist on his neutral approach to the conflict. Queen Victoria welcomed this step immensely, as she had already been warned by Princess Alice of Hesse, who had asked her mother: "Is Lord Derby really going to remain? He it is who shakes the confidence of all the world in Britain’s policy. He is so vacillating and undecided, and must surely remain the same hindrance to the Cabinet he has been hitherto." Queen Victoria had been so alarmed by this message that she had urged Disraeli: "Derby must go, for he is believed abroad to be the person who acts and no one trusts him!" Her conclusion, "what use is there in keeping him," did not bring about Derby’s resignation, which was entirely the Foreign Secretary’s own option, but the Queen was delighted nevertheless and admitted to Disraeli that she assessed "Lord Derby’s resignation as an unmixed blessing." This satisfaction was completely shared by her daughter, the Crown Princess of Germany, who declared that "one can hold up one’s head again (...). Now we know that England has a policy, and that it is a clear and right one."

The background of Derby’s resignation is a notable illustration of the confidential exchange of political ideas between Queen Victoria and her two daughters living in Germany. Had the British sovereign not had this continual knowledge of the German evaluation of British policy, she might not have been able to display such a firm opinion towards her ministers. As a consequence, the information Queen Victoria received from Victoria and Alice enabled her to form a complex opinion on matters where she normally only had the boxes of the Foreign Office as a foundation for her political view. However, this occasion was one of the rare exceptions when the Queen’s two eldest daughters influenced the British

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7 5 March 1878 Queen Victoria to Disraeli. In: Ibid., p.607.
8 27 March 1878 Queen Victoria to Disraeli. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals, p.251.
sovereign in an area where Britain's policy was concerned, since the Queen's daughters usually restricted their comments to German politics.

After Derby's resignation, the joint hopes of Queen Victoria and her daughters were focused on the new British Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, who "believed Britain now had to undertake an active, positive role in European affairs," sent the British fleet towards Constantinople, thus indicating to Russia that Britain did not accept the Treaty of San Stefano, since it violated the Treaty of Paris, which had ended the Crimean War in 1856. Russia eventually agreed to hold a Conference, in order to find a peaceful solution to the Eastern problem; the dilemma of the location was solved by Bismarck, who, in a new role of an 'honest broker', successfully suggested Berlin. As a consequence, the seven signers of the Treaty of Paris, i.e. Britain, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Turkey and Italy, met at Berlin in June 1878 in order to discuss a solution to the Eastern crisis. Britain was represented by Disraeli and Salisbury, while Bismarck, Bülow and Hohenlohe were the German delegates; interestingly enough, it was not a congress of noblemen "but of the responsible statesmen," which documents an important change in the handling of international relations.

Disraeli informed Queen Victoria about the developments of the Congress on a daily basis, and his letters gave lively reports about the conference routine as well as his meetings with both politicians and relatives of Queen Victoria. How close the understanding between the British Queen and her Prime Minister actually was can be deduced from Disraeli's assertion that "distant from Your Majesty, in a foreign land, and with so awful a responsibility, he feels more keenly than ever, how entirely his happiness depends on his doing his duty to Your Majesty and on Your Majesty's kind appreciation of his efforts." For the first time, the Queen therefore received comments regarding German affairs also from her Prime Minister, which was an interesting addition to her usual source of information.

The first personal meeting between Disraeli and Bismarck went well, and the British Prime Minister came to the conclusion that "the Prince was anxious for a

12 12 June 1878 Disraeli to Queen Victoria, referring to himself. Found in: RA B58/3.
peaceful settlement;" based on this information, Queen Victoria realized for the first time that it might indeed be possible to reach an amicable understanding with the German Empire. The co-operation between Queen Victoria and her Prime Minister - who emerged from the Congress "as the embodiment (...) of British capacity in foreign affairs" - was remarkably close; in fact, Disraeli had completely replaced Prince Albert's influence by 1877, for "never, since the days of Prince Albert (...) had she been in such close personal and political rapport with anyone." As a consequence, the Queen adopted for the time being Disraeli's confidence in Germany's reliability, thus slightly modifying her disapproving image of Germany. The Queen was certainly assisted in this new conclusion by the Foreign Secretary, since Salisbury actively supported Disraeli's attempt to stress Britain's "active, positive role in European affairs," which, compared with Derby's rather hesitant attitude, was a spirit much more to the Queen's liking. As a consequence, Queen Victoria's relationship with Salisbury, which would deepen in the years to come, was marked by a feeling of mutual trust, and the Queen always kept him informed about the news she received through her private channels; this inclination of the Queen to share confidential information stood in sharp contrast to the course of action Victoria and Albert had taken when Palmerston had been Foreign Secretary in the 1840s, since they had not been willing to show him the letters they had received from the Prussian royal family.

VII-2: BULGARIA

Astonishingly enough, it was the political development of Bulgaria which ultimately shaped Queen Victoria's image of Germany into its final negative view. After the Bulgarian National Assembly had chosen Alexander of Battenberg as their Prince, it was the influence of Bismarck which eventually persuaded him to accept this responsibility. Queen Victoria had developed a very favourable impression of the young Prince, and she followed Bulgaria's political development attentively. The Queen therefore utterly condemned Russia's move to dethrone Prince Alexander in

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14 A.Cecil, Queen Victoria and her prime ministers (London, 1953), p.211.
1886, but she inevitably agreed with the Foreign Office that no real British interest was involved in this matter. However, she did put the ultimate blame on Bismarck, since Germany preferred her association with Russia rather than to interfere in Bulgaria. In Queen Victoria's eyes, this personal conduct of Bismarck was unforgivable, and as the Queen always viewed political developments with a highly personal perspective, she directly transferred this perception to the whole of Germany, which, as long as her politics would continue to be dominated by Bismarck, had lost the remaining sympathy of Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria's only hope for the future was focused on her son-in-law, Crown Prince Frederick William, who one day would begin a new and more liberal era of German policy.

The Congress of Berlin certainly fulfilled the political hopes Europe had put into it, since its main aim, a compromise between the Turkish and the Russian claims in the Balkans, was successfully achieved. By dividing Bulgaria, one part of which came to Turkey, the great powers hoped to avoid the creation of a Russian satellite state; however, the choice for a new Bulgarian Prince by the Bulgarian National Assembly showed how close the link to Russia still was, since Prince Alexander of Battenberg's father was the brother of the Russian Empress.

The *Times* welcomed the election of Prince Alexander, for "he is simply the most available member for the present purpose of that Royal caste to which the great majority of the rulers of Europe belong" (30 April 1879). Once Prince Alexander had accepted his new responsibility, he began a tour to the capitals of those European nations that had been represented at the Congress of Berlin in order to gather "the opinions of the leading statesmen in each country;" a decision which was certainly reasonable, considering the complicated political situation in the Balkans.

During his stay in Britain, Prince Alexander also had an audience with Queen Victoria; her journal reveals that on this occasion, the Prince described Bismarck's way of making him agree to the offer, although he himself had "thought someone older would be better, upon which Bismarck shut the door, and told him he would not let him out before he promised to accept. Sandro asked what would happen should he fail, as his whole future would be ruined, and he answered, 'You will at all events take

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17 *The Times*, 23 May 1879.
away a pleasant recollection with you." 18 Prince Alexander’s presence at the British Court “made a very favourable impression on the Queen, who from this time on was one of his most faithful champions;” 19 and it was this empathy which made the Queen ultimately change her mind about the lacking reliability of Germany.

However, this conversation with Queen Victoria had more the quality of a pleasant chat than a practical political tutoring, and Prince Alexander was intelligent enough to ask the experienced statesman Disraeli for further guidance with regard to the complicated situation on the Balkans. After this political consultation, the Prime Minister informed Queen Victoria that he had advised Alexander to “confine his efforts to making himself esteemed and beloved by his subjects (...) to take the late King of the Belgians for his Model and study his career.” 20 Disraeli’s clear allusion to Belgium was anything but a coincidence, since the Bulgarian National Assembly had at that time already voted for a liberal constitution clearly modeled after the Belgian one. With the Belgian law forming the background of the Bulgarian constitution, and British statesmen instructing the new Bulgarian Prince, the future of the Balkan state looked in fact rather promising in 1879. It is astonishing what a deep influence the Belgian model had on the course of European politics, and the nation formed by King Leopold I remains an interesting topic, which unquestionably deserves more specialized research.

The hopes regarding Bulgaria were fulfilled during the Prince’s first year of reign, as Alexander turned out to be a capable ruler, who was soon internationally accepted. Nevertheless, the Russian influence on Bulgaria was seen as a threatening force by the European powers and, interestingly enough, it was the German Crown Prince Frederick William who took the initiative and suggested that “England, Austria, Italy and Germany could combine to help and support Bulgaria and watch that she be the real barrier to the Russian progress towards Constantinople.” 21 Queen

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18 8 June 1879 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.2, pp.26-7. Sandro was the family name for Prince Alexander.


20 13 June 1879 Disraeli to Queen Victoria. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 13/6, documents 530-1.

Victoria agreed with this concept based on the potentially promising geographical situation of Bulgaria, and she forwarded her son-in-law’s suggestion to her new Prime Minister Gladstone, stating that “Her Majesty agrees with the writer in thinking we should make Bulgaria the Barrier against Russian advances on Constantinople.”\(^{22}\) The Queen’s recommendation certainly mirrored her traditional distrust of Russia, and her suspicions about Russia’s intentions increased considerably once the Russian intimidation of Bulgaria had become genuinely threatening. What is more, it is deeply interesting that she simply copied Frederick William’s opinion when forwarding it to the Prime Minister, which illustrates that in her eyes, her Prussian son-in-law was still the true political heir of Prince Albert. Accordingly, she proposed to the Foreign Secretary that Prince Alexander should “appeal to the Powers,”\(^{23}\) however, Granville argued in favour of a non-interference of Britain, and Gladstone “tended to consult the cabinet rarely”\(^{24}\) about foreign affairs, which shows the prominence given to domestic developments, as for instance the preparation of the Reform Bill in 1884.

Since the antipathy between Bulgaria and Russia did not lead to an open conflict in 1883, there was no necessity for Britain to determine her precise position, but Queen Victoria’s emphatical interest in the affairs of Bulgaria remained invariably high during the following years. When Prince Alexander succeeded in becoming popular in Bulgaria, the Queen welcomed this development warmly and insisted on receiving regular reports about the political situation in Bulgaria; for example, she was informed that Prince Alexander’s “position is a very strong one.”\(^{25}\)

Interestingly enough, these accounts were the basis for the deterioration of Germany’s image in Queen Victoria’s eyes during the following years, since she severely condemned Bismarck’s pro-Russian attitude and rightly pointed out that it had been Bismarck who “forced Prince Alexander to go there and shut the door


\(^{23}\) 5 October 1883 Granville to Gladstone. In: A.Ramm (ed.), The political correspondence of Mr.Gladstone and Lord Granville (Oxford, 1962), vol.2, no.1112, p.94. Granville reported Queen Victoria’s suggestion to the Prime Minister.


\(^{25}\) 3 October 1885 F.Lascelles to Major Bigge. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.3, p.697. Bigge was Queen Victoria’s private secretary, and he passed this information on to the Queen.
behind him, saying “You do not leave this room till you have promised you will go to Bulgaria!” and now he has deserted him ever since!”\(^{26}\) Contrasting the foreign policy of Britain and Germany, the Queen stated to Salisbury, who had become both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, that “we are defending the cause of liberty as well as that of Europe against Russian aggression and tyranny.”\(^{27}\) With this justification, the Queen added a political reason to her personal approach to the crisis, and although she did not clarify what she actually meant with this ‘cause of liberty’, her opinion certainly implied a strict condemnation of any Russian plans to dethrone the Bulgarian Prince, but the Foreign Office and Salisbury agreed with the general notion that “with Prince Alexander personally the English people have nothing whatever to do.”\(^{28}\) As a consequence, the personal sympathy of Queen Victoria for a fellow sovereign collided with the official foreign policy of Britain, and since the Foreign Office had rightly considered the international situation before coming to its decision, Queen Victoria eventually agreed to this approach and expressed her anti-Russian feelings to close relatives only. Accordingly, she wrote to the German Crown Princess that “the stupid Tsar cannot depose Sandro who I am sure will never and ought never to desert his people.”\(^{29}\)

Notwithstanding Queen Victoria’s personal and political predilections, Russia did dethrone Prince Alexander of Bulgaria in August 1886, and the British Queen reacted with utter disdain “at these news from Bulgaria. On what grounds can this have been done?”\(^{30}\) Towards Salisbury, Queen Victoria stated that “Russia is intriguing right and left, and we must not tamely swallow everything with a mere protest! Russia sets us at defiance!”\(^{31}\) She expressed her opinion, “Russia must be unmasked,”\(^{32}\) even more openly to a member of the family when she stated that “I have such a dislike to the fat Czar. I think him a violent Paul-like Asiatic full of hate.

\(^{26}\) 6 October 1885 Queen Victoria to Salisbury. In: Ibid., p.699.

\(^{27}\) 22 October 1885 Queen Victoria to Salisbury. In: Ibid., p.705.

\(^{28}\) The Times, 7 November 1885.


\(^{30}\) 22 August 1886 Queen Victoria to Salisbury. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, third series, vol.1, p.179.

\(^{31}\) 22 August 1886 Queen Victoria to Salisbury. In: Ibid., pp.180-1.

\(^{32}\) 24 August 1886 Queen Victoria to the Earl of Iddlesleigh. In: Ibid., p.186.
The Queen’s statement was on the one hand based on her personal dislike of the Tsar, but on the other hand she did in fact despise the autocratic state system of Russia. Yet despite this lucid observation, the Queen eventually agreed with the view of the Foreign Office, which did not perceive the Bulgarian problem to be of immediate interest for Great Britain. As a consequence, the Foreign Secretary accepted Prince Alexander’s declaration that, in his words, he had decided “to abdicate of my free will,” and this attestation fulfilled its purpose of preventing any international steps against Russia.

Again, the viewpoint of the Foreign Office corresponded with *Times*, which pointed out that “while it would be affectation to pretend that England is not affected, (...) it is not this country whose material interests are most nearly affected by what has happened at Sofia. (...) The key of the situation is not London, but Vienna or rather Berlin” (23 August 1886). As a result, the former Prince Alexander of Bulgaria “never got much more than moral support from London,” a situation which enraged Queen Victoria, and she pointed out to the Foreign Secretary that “a firm front and declaration of disapproval of Russia’s pretensions would [have] done great good.” Salisbury explained the opinion of the Foreign Office to his sovereign by justifying that “Bulgarian matter requires cautious handling. Russia as yet has done nothing, and said nothing publicly, at variance with [the] Treaty of Berlin. If we step forward in a perfectly isolated condition, and use defiant language, it may make us ultimately ridiculous.” Moreover, he notified Queen Victoria that “Germany had made it more and more clear that we are to expect no help from her in resisting the pretensions of Russia,” and it was indeed this German policy which formed the basis for Queen Victoria’s negative opinion about Germany in the following years.

Thus, the Bulgarian development was responsible for a significant alteration in Queen Victoria’s perception about Germany. The Queen held Bismarck personally

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33 3 September 1886 Queen Victoria to Princess Victoria of Hesse. In: Hough (ed.), *Advice to a grand-daughter*, p.82.
accountable for the fate of Prince Alexander, since it had been the German Chancellor who had persuaded Alexander to accept the responsibility of Prince of Bulgaria in the first place. In the eyes of the Queen, he now abandoned the Prince in order to ensure Germany’s friendship with Russia. Considering that Queen Victoria adopted her traditionally personal perspective when judging the Bulgarian incident, her lack of strategic understanding was ultimately controlled by the more balanced approach of the Foreign Office.

VII-3: ALLIANCE I

The Congress of Berlin resulted in a close co-operation between Disraeli and Bismarck, and this agreeable climate led to a German suggestion of an Anglo-German alliance in 1879. However, the negotiations did not lead to any joint association, an outcome that was accepted by both sides. Germany formed an alliance with Austria-Hungary instead, and Great Britain chose the option of isolation. Queen Victoria herself abstained from an active participation in the alliance discussions, which indicated her altered position in the executive constellation of Great Britain, since her decreasing interest in German affairs caused a decline in her general attention towards foreign affairs. Six years later, Germany approached Britain once again with an offer for an alliance, but this time Queen Victoria openly expressed her doubts about such an association. Evidently, her image of Germany had changed so fundamentally that instead of opting for an Anglo-German association, the Queen preferred to give her assent to an Anglo-Italian alliance.

For Disraeli, the Congress of Berlin indicated “his very peak of power,” as it made the British politician the “first statesman of Europe.” After his return from Berlin, Disraeli was “welcomed in London (...) as the chief actor in one of the most honourable triumphs in the modern diplomacy of England.” Disraeli’s co-operation with Bismarck resulted in a political climate in which a closer association of Britain with Germany seemed possible for the first time since the creation of the German

40 L.Auchincloss, Persons of consequence, Queen Victoria and her circle (London, 1979), p.98.
41 The Times, 16 June 1878.
Empire, for Bismarck “won high approval in Britain as the guarantor of peace and the existing European order.”

As a consequence, when Bismarck approached Britain with the idea for an alliance in 1879, Disraeli and Salisbury reacted favourably, even though they waited for more detailed clarifications of such an association. This co-operation, however, never took place; Disraeli explained to Queen Victoria that “it was arranged that, with the consent of Prince Bismarck, the ambassador should see Lord Salisbury - but no authority to that effect ever arrived from the Prince,” and it was this disregard which was the occasion for Britain’s eventual scepticism with regard to the alliance offer. This disposition was certainly based on the altered economic circumstances, as Germany had shifted considerably towards protectionism since 1877, when Bismarck had introduced new tariffs, and this new financial landscape differed notably from the British principle of free trade. The Times remarked that “another impediment to commerce and industry consists in the tendency of several European States to revert to the obsolete doctrine of Protection” (31 December 1877), which implied a rather irritated reaction to the development on the Continent. Only one year later, the judgement of the Times had already become much harsher; the newspaper stated that “few things are more disheartening, and at first sight more puzzling, than the wave of Protectionism which is at present passing over the world” (26 December 1878). Commenting on the rise of protectionism in Germany, the Times pointed out that “there the enemies of free trade are led by Prince Bismarck himself, and he is apt to get whatever he insists on having” (26 December 1878).

At the same time, it is a remarkable development that Queen Victoria decided to abstain from any personal interference in this matter; she did not even ask her daughters living in Germany for the latest news. Instead, she left the development of these alliance talks entirely to the responsible statesmen, since in the Queen’s opinion, Disraeli and Salisbury had proven themselves more than capable during the Congress of Berlin. This decision of the Queen signalizes an important change in her political conduct. Whereas in previous years, she would have bombarded ministers with memoranda and notes mirroring her daughter’s opinions, she now simply regarded the

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42 K. Hildebrand, *German foreign policy from Bismarck to Adenauer, the limits of statecraft* (London, Boston, Sydney, Wellington, 1989), p.27.
43 20 January 1880 Disraeli to Queen Victoria, explaining the recent development of affairs after his own discussions with Count Münster. Found in: RA B63/16.
matter of a British alliance as the political responsibility of the Foreign Office, while
reserving for herself the right of being informed and consulted.

This modified attitude of Queen Victoria was characteristic of the last twenty
years of her reign: while she remained an important voice in the political debate, she
simultaneously acknowledged the authority of the Foreign Office, which resulted in an
amicable co-operation between the institutions of monarchy and Foreign Office. An
explanation for this alteration can be found in the modified image Queen Victoria had
by that time of Germany; whereas her strong support for the liberal course in
Germany had been the main motivation for the Queen’s earlier intervention in the
foreign policy of Britain, her perception of the unified Germany had become more
indifferent during the last years. As a consequence, the Queen’s earlier predominant
interest in foreign affairs was becoming more impartial after 1870.

In the end, the negotiations about an alliance of Germany and Britain reached
a deadlock, and Germany decided to form a Dual Alliance with Austria-Hungary
instead. The subsequent end of the negotiations in November 1879 was undeniably in
harmony with Britain’s policy; while an alliance with Germany would have been a
satisfactory result of the Congress of Berlin, the subsequent British isolation was not
seen as disadvantageous either, since Britain in fact preferred to stand aloof from
close associations with European countries. Similarly, Queen Victoria herself was not
disappointed about the conclusion of the Dual Alliance, since she was, in her own
words, “naturally pleased at the prospect which a cordial defensive alliance between
Germany and Austria offers in the interests of peace.”44 Thus, while the great powers
of Europe were closely connected through alliances,45 Britain headed towards her
‘splendid isolation’.

It is important to realize that Queen Victoria’s satisfaction with the situation
mirrored the general British feeling, and a leading article in the Times pointed out that
“no nations in Europe are so closely allied to one another in blood, traditions, history,
and interest as the British and the German. (...) The extraordinary phenomenon is that
they yet love each other so coldly, and care so little to become acquainted with their
respective idiosyncrasies” (2 April 1880). Interestingly enough, the German side took

44 3 November 1879 Queen Victoria to the Crown Prince of Germany. In: Buckle (ed.), The
letters of Queen Victoria, second series, vol.3, p.53.
45 In 1881, the Dual Alliance was enlarged to the second Three Emperors’ League with
Russia.
the initiative to improve this situation by setting up an Anglo-German Society at Berlin, a decision which was highly praised by the *Times*; the commentator pointed out that "there can be no more useful manifestation of patriotism than (...) piercing the barrier of useless prejudice which, it cannot be denied, had been recently clouding the good understanding of the two great branches of the Teutonic race" (2 April 1880). However, although the foundation of an Anglo-German Society was certainly welcomed by Britain, the lack of success of the alliance talks was likewise accepted, since isolation was seen as a more appropriate alternative.

Six years later, at a time when the international situation regarding Bulgaria was still unresolved, Germany made a second attempt to form an alliance with Britain. Again, these efforts took place when Salisbury was Prime Minister, which gives a clear indication that the existence of a Conservative British Cabinet was the prerequisite for a German proposition. Salisbury explained to Queen Victoria that "Count Münster brought a message from Prince Bismarck which he read in German. It was expressed with great friendliness, alluding in terms of satisfaction to the Conservative traditions of friendliness with the German people, and also to the policy of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury as to Britain."  

As the next appropriate step, Salisbury asked Queen Victoria for her opinion, but, interestingly enough, her reaction was anything but pleased. The Queen pointed out that "it is doubtless very desirable that we should cultivate the most friendly relations with Germany, but Prince Bismarck's views are peculiar and will frequently not accord with ours." This cautious view of Queen Victoria was based on a combination of reasons: the current Bulgarian problem, Queen Victoria's established negative perception of Bismarck, and, most important of all, the Queen's altered image of Germany. Whereas in previous years, either during or shortly after Albert's lifetime, Queen Victoria would have greeted any German suggestions concerning a close alliance between Britain and Germany with enthusiasm, she now viewed the united Germany under the leadership of Prussia no longer as an appropriate alliance partner for Britain. The main motive for this modified image of Germany was the differentiation the Queen made between the powerful, authoritarian state of Prussia, and smaller German states such as Saxe-Coburg and Gotha or Hesse. As it happened,

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the Queen’s personal scepticism corresponded with Salisbury’s confidence in Britain’s policy of isolation. This joint opinion resulted in a refusal of the alliance offer, which restricted the foreign policy of Britain to a friendly, but non-committal diplomacy with regard to Germany.

However, although Queen Victoria and Salisbury decided against the option of an Anglo-German alliance, the British Prime Minister did subsequently re-evaluate his views concerning Britain’s isolation and, after giving the matter considerable thought, he suggested to his sovereign the possibility of a British alliance with Italy. According to Salisbury, this idea was based on the assumption that “if, in the present groupings of nations, which Prince Bismarck tells us is now taking place, England was left out in isolation, it might well happen that the adversaries, who are coming against each other on the Continent, might treat the English Empire as divisible booty.”

Salisbury’s specific choice of Italy can be explained by the fact that Britain had been approached by Italy with a sincere request for an alliance, and what is more, Britain had a traditional interest in Italian affairs. Queen Victoria agreed with the proposal of the Foreign Office to bind Britain into the First Mediterranean Agreement with Italy, and she therefore preferred a British alliance with a country with which she had no personal connections at all to a closer association with Germany. The close cooperation between Queen Victoria and her Conservative Prime Minister Salisbury illustrates that after Disraeli’s death in 1881, Salisbury had become Queen Victoria’s most trusted political adviser; considering that Salisbury frequently combined the duty of Prime Minister with that of Foreign Secretary, it was certainly this emphasis on foreign policy which made him such a valuable asset in the eyes of the Queen, who in 1886 described this minister “doubtless the brightest light I think in the country.”

VII-4: GERMANY III

Queen Victoria’s personal thoughts about Gladstone’s political conduct disclose a highly revealing indirect perception of Germany - by characterizing Gladstone, she indeed identified her viewpoint with regard to Prussia. Her comparison

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49 2 February 1887 Salisbury mentioned the alliance offer to Queen Victoria; he described Count Corti as the “bearer of propositions from the Italian Government for a closer understanding between Italy and England.” In: Ibid., p.269.
of Gladstone with the ‘dictator Bismarck’ implies a distinctly negative opinion about her monarchical understanding of Prussia’s monarchy. An additional point of disagreement between the Queen and the Liberal Prime Minister was Gladstone’s emphasis on domestic affairs, whereas Queen Victoria’s own interest in Ireland was too limited to serve as a basis for a mutual concern.

In comparison with Queen Victoria’s amiable co-operation with Salisbury, her relationship with Gladstone was much more incompatible. Although there had been no difficulties during Gladstone’s first administration from 1868 until 1874, the situation changed drastically when Gladstone, after his Midlothian campaign, returned to office in 1880. By that time, Queen Victoria had become accustomed to the close rapport she had been sharing with Disraeli, the details of which have been explained earlier. When the Queen, who, with considerable help from Disraeli, had added the title ‘Empress’ to her designation in 1876, found out that Gladstone had called her Imperial Title a “theatrical bombast and folly,” she was deeply offended. An additional reason for the Queen’s distrust of Gladstone the fact that he gave Russia the preference over several other (European) powers.

What is more, Queen Victoria’s personal perception of Gladstone reveals a highly interesting indirect image of Germany. When the elections of 1880 brought the Liberals back into government, Queen Victoria stated that she would “sooner abdicate than send for or have any communication with that half-mad firebrand who would soon ruin everything and be a Dictator.” Seen on its own, this observation does not bear any significance for her perception of Germany, but in combination with the Queen’s next objection it becomes more revealing, since she remarked one year later, when she and Gladstone disagreed about a paragraph in the opening speech of parliament: “Mr. Gladstone tries to be a Bismarck - but the Queen will not be an Emperor William to do any thing he orders.”

These candid expressions of Queen Victoria illustrate the profound change the Queen’s image of Germany had suffered during previous years. Quite clearly, Germany under the authoritarian leadership of Prussia had no longer any positive connotation for the Queen. Her concept of monarchy evidently included a mutual

52 4 April 1880 Queen Victoria to H. Ponsonby. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her letters and journals, p.260.
partnership between monarch and Prime Minister, a constellation which did not apply
to the highly subservient attitude of Emperor William I towards Bismarck. Hence,
Queen Victoria strongly objected to receive a similar manipulation from Gladstone,
but it has to be said that the danger of this actually happening was minimal, since
Gladstone revered the institution of monarchy. It is therefore safe to assume that
Queen Victoria’s comparison of Bismarck with Gladstone originated from a
disagreement over political beliefs, which then developed into these more general
remarks.

Another vital point of disagreement between Queen Victoria and Gladstone
was the fact that Gladstone did not attach the same importance to German affairs as
his sovereign, since the Prime Minister mentioned Germany only rarely, with the
exception of colonialism, which will be discussed below. Queen Victoria’s assumption
that Gladstone “trusts Russia, hates Austria and don’t [sic] like Germany”54 was
exaggerated in its simplicity, but it was true that the Queen discussed German affairs
only infrequently with Gladstone. This contrasting focus of priority annoyed the
sovereign deeply, since although her former sympathy for Germany had decreased,
she still regarded German affairs as a vital part of British foreign policy. Gladstone on
the other hand did not follow the tradition of Disraeli, who in his responsibility as
Prime Minister, frequently had taken charge of foreign affairs; instead, Gladstone left
this field to his Foreign Secretary and concentrated his (considerable) energy on
Ireland. This development was also perceived by the Times, whose commentator
stated towards the end of 1881 that “the claims of external policy have been
overshadowed by the Irish question” (31 December 1881). Since the Queen “did not
understand the Irish and was inclined not to like them,”55 her interest in Irish affairs
was only minor, and as a consequence, she could not accept the supremacy of Irish
affairs postulated by Gladstone. She therefore stated that he did “not possess her
confidence,”56 based on her belief that she was “always kept in the dark.”57 Here, the
contrast between the Queen’s confidence in Disraeli and her utter distrust of
Gladstone’s behaviour could not have been more evident, since Gladstone’s

54 2 October 1883 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Germany. In: Fulford (ed.),
Beloved mama, pp.147-8.
56 31 May 1882 Queen Victoria to H.Ponsonby. In: Hibbert (ed.), Queen Victoria in her
letters and journals, p.275.
preference of domestic matters caused in the Queen's eyes "such incalculable harm."\^58

Interestingly enough, Bismarck was as alarmed as Queen Victoria when the Liberal politician Gladstone became British Prime Minister, and he even capitalized on Gladstone's difficulties in establishing a new policy for Ireland by exploiting them "for propaganda purposes,"\^59 thus strengthening conservative tendencies in Germany in return. It is an interesting development that both Queen Victoria and Bismarck favoured Conservative Governments in their respective states in the 1880s, a perspective which could have been the foundation for a closer understanding between the British monarch and the German politician. However, two circumstances prevented an understanding of Queen Victoria and Bismarck: the Queen's negative personal opinion about Bismarck, and Bismarck's strategy of excluding Crown Prince Frederick William from affairs of state. The Queen's disapproving personal view of Bismarck has already been explained, and his scheming attitude towards the German Crown Prince and his wife was also deeply resented by Victoria. As Bismarck's strong position was ultimately based on Emperor William I's complete reliance on his Chancellor, Bismarck rightly assumed that his days would be numbered once Frederick William succeeded to the German throne. As a consequence, he completely excluded the Crown Prince from Germany's political affairs and successfully influenced Frederick William's eldest son, Prince William, in a conservative manner instead. Although Queen Victoria disapproved strongly of this conduct, it has to be said that she did not introduce the Prince of Wales to the affairs of state either. Thus, as a consequence of Bismarck's behaviour towards her son-in-law, the Queen's personal cool attitude towards Germany was in accordance with both parties in Great Britain, where the option of isolation had become the accepted political position.

\textbf{VII-5: COLONIES I}

One of the most significant issues of British foreign policy of the late 1880s was certainly Germany's increasing interest in colonies, and for the first time, this area

\^58 12 July 1885 Queen Victoria to Alfred Tennyson. In: H.Dyson/C.Tennyson (edd.), \textit{Dear and honoured lady: the correspondence between Queen Victoria and Alfred Tennyson} (London, 1969), p.120.

made a collision of interests imaginable, as Germany was beginning to compete in a sphere of influence in which Britain considered herself the superior. Yet interestingly enough, this conflict of interests was initially restricted to an antagonism of Queen Victoria, who disapproved of the colonial aspirations of Germany. This monarchical attitude was based on a notion that Great Britain had an exclusive right to acquire colonial status. The British government, on the other hand, accepted this new development and did not perceive any threat to the foreign affairs of Britain. However, by condemning the colonial interest of Germany, Queen Victoria was in harmony with the majority of the politically interested part of the British nation, which increasingly saw in Germany a danger to British supremacy.

Although Bismarck still "refuse[d] all talk of colonies"\(^{60}\) in 1882, it was only two years later that the attention of both Bismarck and the whole of Germany was drawn to colonial affairs, and not least as a "consequence of his newly adopted protectionist system,"\(^{61}\) the "scramble for Africa"\(^ {62}\) began. Bismarck’s words of 1884, "we are of the opinion that foreign trade in all regions, which are not, beyond all doubt and by general recognition, directly annexed by a European power, should be open equally to all nations,"\(^ {63}\) indicated the starting point of Germany’s colonial interest. The Times’s reaction was friendly, and the newspaper stated that "it is to the interest of mankind as a whole, and especially to that of the English race, that the trade of the uncivilized quarters of the globe should be developed as quickly and as completely as possible. Moreover, to adopt a hostile attitude towards the spread of the German race would be a proceeding as futile as ungracious" (26 June 1884).

The German relatives of Queen Victoria, on the other hand, were anything but enthusiastic about the colonial venture of Germany. The Crown Princess of Germany harshly expressed her opinion that the "ideas of Colonies I think very foolish and I do not fancy they will succeed"\(^ {64}\) - remarkably enough, she excluded herself from the

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\(^{62}\) Bentley, Politics without democracy, p.256.

\(^{63}\) 5 May 1884 Bismarck to Münster. In: Medlicott/Coveney (edd.), Bismarck and Europe, p.141.

German interest in colonies and viewed the development from a neutral point of view. Prince Frederick William's correspondence reveals a much more balanced approach to the situation, since he explained that "the German Government is now as heretofore, animated by friendly sentiments towards the English and would like to see the same sentiments shown to German inhabitants in countries such as: the Fiji Islands, the Congo, and Agra Pequenna." However, it must be stressed that the Crown Prince was the exception to the general aggressive German mood, since the prospect of colonies was welcomed in Germany as the dawn of a new era: German Imperialism.

Despite this energetic disposition of Germany, Britain did not perceive the initiation of German Imperialism as threatening. Derby was in fact the first British politician who, at the end of 1884, justified the British interest in New Guinea as being based on "the encouragement which Prince Bismarck is supposed to be giving to plans of German colonisation," in short, a competitive approach from the British side was beginning to make itself felt. Queen Victoria herself approved of Britain's interest in colonization, since "it will enable us to protect the poor natives and to advance civilization which she considers the mission of Great Britain," but at this stage she had not yet made up her mind with regard to Germany's colonial interest, as she certainly would have expressed her opinion very openly.

Hence, Germany's first interest in colonies met with a predominantly friendly reaction in Britain, and the Times expressed the "faith in the continuance of cordial relations between ourselves and Germany" (20 August 1884). Gladstone even inquired from his Foreign Secretary: "Would you like me to say in Midlothian a good word for German Colonies?" Granville's answer revealed the sympathetic feeling of the Foreign Office towards the rising colonial aspirations of Germany, since he stressed that "I think it would do with 'favourable to the general principle of German Colonization' - but pointing out that there are many complicated details which require discussion but can all be satisfactorily settled." Queen Victoria, on the other hand, still refrained from making her opinion on this subject heard.

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67 8 August 1884 Queen Victoria to Derby. Found in: RA P26/70.
When Germany took the initiative in colonial affairs by proposing a conference with respect to Africa in October 1884, Queen Victoria did finally voice her opinion and urged her Prime Minister that Britain should agree to participate in this conference immediately; what is more, she asked Granville if "it is really wise (certainly not quite just) that we should protest against any country but ourselves having colonies. Germany especially cannot and would not unless treated with suspicion and opposition hurt us, and surely our alliances ought to be with her". This argument of Queen Victoria was delivered during a time when the Bulgarian crisis was still unresolved; hence, the British Queen was not yet opposed to a closer alliance with Germany. Granville agreed "with Your Majesty that it would be unwise and unjust for this country to object to other countries possessing colonies. (...) There can be no jealousy of Germany as long as she adheres to the principle of freedom of trade for all in the colonies." Although the so-called 'Congo-Conference' eventually had no direct positive outcome for either Britain or Germany, it demonstrated the growing British interest in Germany's colonial endeavours. But even at the beginning of 1885, when the German colonial interest had intensified, the Times still assured its readers that "we can see no more reason than Prince Bismarck sees why such questions should give rise to serious misunderstanding, still less to anything like hostility. (...) The truth is that there is room enough in the world for the colonial enterprise of both England and Germany" (12 January 1885).

This friendly disposition of Britain experienced a first blow when Bismarck showed a distinct interest in a German protectorate over the Northern coast of New Guinea. This step caused rather unfavourable comments from the German Crown Princess, who even abandoned her status as German Crown Princess in her statement: "I think it a great shame that the German flag has been hoisted in New Guinea. I do so wish we had taken the whole three years ago, before colonising had become the rage and fashion here." This time, the Princess Royal viewed the development not with a neutral eye, but from a distinct British point of view. Queen Victoria agreed with the opinion of her oldest daughter and confirmed that "this German colonisation and

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27 October 1884 Queen Victoria to Granville. Found in: RA O43/279.
28 October 1884 Granville to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA O43/280.
King Leopold II of the Belgians acquired the Congo as a Belgian territory, thus defeating both British and Portuguese claims.
hoisting of German flags has perfectly enraged our Colonies who protest in every direction.”

Even the *Times* made its first negative remark about the colonial policy of Germany and noted that “perhaps we should be better disposed (...) if Prince Bismarck’s colonial diplomacy were as straightforward in substance as it is outspoken, not to say ill-mannered, in language” (9 February 1885).

Gladstone, on the other hand, recommended a cautious approach and insisted on his original view, remarking that “the Colonial feeling is marked by exaggeration, and it may be found that there is no great objection to the acts of Germany in themselves, but only to the careless impropriety which attaches to the manner of them.” This constellation of the monarch and the Prime Minister indicated a complete reversal of roles: whereas in earlier years, Queen Victoria had been a vehement advocator of German affairs, frequently expressing her opinion in opposition to the Foreign Office, it was now Gladstone who supported the German interest in colonial matters. This disposition of the monarch is another indication for the altered attitude of Queen Victoria towards Germany.

Interestingly enough, the pro-German attitude of Gladstone (and indeed Granville) was supported by Chamberlain, who observed that “if foreign nations are determined to pursue distant colonial enterprises, we have not the right to prevent them.” On the other hand, Queen Victoria’s condemnation of Germany’s colonial conduct was in harmony with the view of the politically interested part of the British nation, since “the German was beginning, indeed, to be a very conspicuous and annoying person in British eyes.” This incident confirms Kennedy’s argument that “Victoria’s views were (...) more sensible than those of many ministers,” since her customarily emotional political approach was more in accord with the prevalent feeling of the majority of the British public than the abstract political notions of some British ministers.

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74 27 December 1884 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Germany. In: Ibid., p.175.
78 Kennedy, *The rise of the Anglo-German antagonism*, p.125.
On the other hand, it was indeed the political responsibility of these ministers to find a way of bringing the colonial affairs into an international accord, whereas Queen Victoria approached this problem with emotions rather than political perceptions. As a consequence, she resented the possibility of Germany actually acquiring any substantial colonies in the long run, which implies her view that Great Britain had rather exclusive rights to obtain colonies. By 1885, Queen Victoria entirely agreed with the Princess Royal’s approach of condemning the colonial strategy of Germany, arguing “how ill she behaved about colonial affairs, irritating our colonies in every way.”

At the same time, Gladstone came again to the opposite conclusion, as illustrated by his statement that “German colonisation will strengthen and not weaken our hold upon our colonies.” Granville tried to mediate between the monarch and the Prime Minister and pointed out to the British Ambassador in Germany that Bismarck’s impression “that the policy of her Majesty’s Government has been intentionally hostile to German colonization is so devoid of any real foundation.” This is a further indication of the reversal of the traditional role pattern between Queen Victoria and her ministers: it was now the Cabinet and the Foreign Office who opted for a co-operation with Germany, whereas the Queen had developed a distinct anti-German disposition.

Bismarck, on the other hand, tried to strengthen the sympathetic disposition of the British government by sending his son to Britain. The aim of Herbert Bismarck’s visit was to correct any potential misconceptions about Germany’s increasing colonial interest. The Bismarcks certainly accomplished this task, since Gladstone subsequently declared in the House of Commons that “as German colonisation had been often though not methodically referred to, the occasion ought not to pass without some general and warm declaration of the friendly manner in which the Government of your Majesty view the German effort.” Gladstone’s sympathetic

81 7 February 1885 Granville to E.Malet. In: Medlicott/Coveney (edd.), Bismarck and Europe, p.146.
statement was received favourably in the House, and some Members of Parliament expressed the hope that it might "put the final seal on our improved relations with Bismarck." However, not even Herbert Bismarck was able to appease Queen Victoria, whose scepticism regarding Germany's colonial ambitions remained unchanged.

VII-6: ROYAL MARRIAGES V

Another area in which Queen Victoria's increasingly anti-German outlook can be perceived was her modified attitude towards marriage links between the royal houses of Great Britain and Prussia. Whereas she had actively encouraged these links in the 1850s, the political developments of the 1860s and 1870s had changed the Queen's opinion so thoroughly that she did not welcome the decision of her third son to marry a Prussian Princess who, however, came from a politically unimportant sideline. Princess Beatrice's choice of Prince Henry of Battenberg as her future husband was then the occasion of serious frictions between the royal houses of Great Britain and Prussia. The Hohenzollerns did not consider this match as being appropriate for a daughter of the British Queen, but Queen Victoria had ceased to regard marriage links as political decisions and wanted to ensure her children's personal happiness instead. As a consequence, the marriages of Queen Victoria's younger children had no longer a political significance, but they illustrated a social change: instead of securing international alliances, they strengthened the monarchy's bond with all classes of society; by adapting to social transformations, the monarchy was no longer seen as an exclusive and unapproachable caste. In combination with the monarchy's accentuation of its charitable responsibilities, the social significance of the royal marriage pattern paved the way for the subsequent perception of the British monarchy, since political importance was increasingly replaced by social significance.

The united Germany under the leadership of Prussia was not considered by the Queen to be an appropriate country for any further marriage links of her children, an opinion which was strengthened by Germany's imperialistic tendencies. As a consequence, the decision of Queen Victoria's third son Prince Arthur to choose Princess Louise Margarethe of Prussia as his future bride was not welcomed by

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Queen Victoria. She remarked that the decision was "entirely his own doing," a remarkable statement indeed, considering her earlier intense encouragement of royal marriage links with Prussia. The Queen eventually accepted Prince Arthur’s bride, but her resolution was certainly helped by the fact that the Prussian Princess came from a politically unimportant sideline of the Hohenzollern family. What is more, Prince Arthur and his wife spent most of their time in India, where Queen Victoria’s son pursued a career in the army, and this location prevented Arthur and Louise from obtaining or providing any vital political information concerning Germany.

This marriage certainly strengthened the already mentioned tendency with regard to a substitution of political relevance by social significance. As the role of the politician was gradually taking over the functions of the monarchy, this development was only logical. The children of Queen Victoria can serve as a striking illustration of this changing pattern: whereas the Prussian marriage of the Queen’s first child Victoria had generally been regarded as a politically important demonstration of the friendship between Britain and Germany, the Prussian marriage of the Queen’s seventh child, Prince Arthur, did not lead to any political comments at all.

Only the marriage of Queen Victoria’s youngest daughter effected a remarkable variance of observations with regard to the level of Anglo-Prussian royalty. In 1884, Princess Beatrice announced that she had fallen in love with Prince Henry of Battenberg, a brother of the Prince of Bulgaria. Once Beatrice and Henry agreed to live at the British Court, Queen Victoria happily consented to this match. It is important to realize that there was virtually no political gain from this marriage, since the father of Prince Henry and Prince Alexander had married a Polish Countess, a link which was regarded as unsuitable for the royal league of Europe. As a consequence, Prince Henry did have his title, but neither property nor power, which however did not displease Queen Victoria, who was mainly interested in ensuring her daughter’s happiness and also in keeping Princess Beatrice at her side.

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85 The first notification about Prince Arthur’s betrothal can be found in The Times of 1 May 1878; then The Times notified its readers briefly about a visit of Princess Louise on 26 June 1878, and the description of the actual marriage can be found in The Times of 14 March 1879. However, on none of these occasions did The Times express any political opinion about the link between Britain and Prussia.
But the matter was not settled yet, since the Prussian Hohenzollern family was "incensed by the match" they regarded Prince Henry's ancestry as unacceptable for a royal marriage. Especially Empress Augusta and Prince William condemned a link of Britain's royalty with a family of inferior rank, and Augusta "was so shocked that she simply stopped writing to Victoria." Queen Victoria herself reacted very indignantly to Empress Augusta's insinuations and stated to the Princess Royal that she "could not understand how she [Augusta] could object so much to the family when she remembered that the father of her own son-in-law and his brothers and sisters were the children of a Fraulein Geyersberg," moreover, she suggested that "if no fresh blood was infused occasionally the races would degenerate finally - physically and morally." Seen from this perspective, Queen Victoria's outlook can certainly be called modern, in sharp contrast to the traditional view of the German Empress. Queen Victoria's disappointment about the political development of Germany had evidently resulted in a pragmatic attitude towards royal marriage associations, since the Queen clearly preferred affectionate matches to politically significant links. The deeper significance of the marriages of the Queen's younger children lay therefore not in the political but in the social sphere, as indeed indicated by Queen Victoria's acceptance of Prince Henry of Battenberg.

VII-7: PRINCE WILLIAM OF PRUSSIA

Queen Victoria's relationship to Prince William of Prussia was divided between a personal element and a political component. Whereas she deeply disagreed with Prince William's increasingly conservative, pro-Russian perspective, she continued to maintain a high personal regard for her oldest grandchild.

Queen Victoria certainly approved of Prince William's decision to marry Princess Auguste Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg in February 1881, mainly because of the bride's family connection: her father had been the late Duke of Augustenburg. This sympathetic reaction of Queen Victoria was noted by Empress

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Augusta, who wrote to a close friend that “the Queen of England also agrees with the choice of our grandson.”

Bismarck, on the other hand, referred to the Princess as “the cow of Holstein,” which indicates clearly that he did not regard Prince William’s wife as a political danger. This estimation was certainly right, since the Princess was “a plain, unimaginative person with few intellectual interests and few talents.” The personal bonds between the royal families of Prussia and Great Britain were strengthened even further when, in May 1882, Queen Victoria became the godmother to William’s and Victoria’s first child.

The strong interest in Prince William’s personal development was not limited to the circle of British royalty only; for example, in 1877, the *Times* had notified its readers that Queen Victoria’s Prussian grandson was about to enter the German military service, pointing out the Emperor’s “eagerness that this young grandson should be able to defend the heritage of national unity” (14 February 1877). During the following years, British newspapers regularly informed the nation about Prince William’s frequent visits both to Great Britain and to other European countries.

The same years, however, were marred by a deterioration of Queen Victoria’s perception of her grandson’s political opinions, since Prince William’s initial esteem for Britain was increasingly replaced by an interest in both Russia and Bismarck’s policy, since the Chancellor’s “militarism which had so enlarged Germany” impressed the Prince deeply. In 1886, Emperor William even ordered the German Foreign Office to instruct Prince William “under the guidance of Prince Bismarck (...), how to do politics and how to manage to steer the ship of state between the shoals and intricate channels of treaties.” At the same time, he refused to familiarize his son, Crown Prince Frederick William, on a regular basis about the latest developments with regard to Germany’s foreign policy.

Based on his increasing rejection of his mother’s British background, the political outlook of Prince William was characterised by an anti-British connotation.


The Queen was informed about this development by her oldest daughter, and both of them certainly disapproved of Prince William’s political inclination towards Russia. Interestingly enough, this complex relationship “mirror[ed] the Anglo-German antagonism,”\textsuperscript{*} since the slow deterioration of Prince William’s family ties reflected the international condition, where the rise of German Imperialism resulted in a beginning decay of Anglo-German relations. However, it has to be emphasized that this process was mainly restricted to the political sphere, and Queen Victoria and Prince William (later Emperor William II) maintained their amiable personal relationship until the death of Queen Victoria, and Prince William came regularly to stay at the British Court.

However, Prince William’s disapproval of Princess Beatrice’s choice of spouse led to Queen Victoria’s unwillingness to actually invite him to the Golden Jubilee of 1887, and she observed “how ill he behaved, how rude, to me, to Liko… and how shamefully he calumniated dear, excellent, noble Sandro.”\textsuperscript{\textdagger} Yet after a reminder from the Princess Royal that this step would hurt her son’s feelings, Queen Victoria changed her opinion and did invite Prince William. Thus, she avoided a family conflict, but she still proved her point by placing Prince William and his wife on chairs behind the Queen of Hawaii and by “receiving them rarely and then with minimal courtesy.”\textsuperscript{\textdaggerdbl} This arrangement is significant with regard to the Queen’s highly emotional and personal approach to political developments, since Prince William’s disapproval of Prince Henry of Battenberg’s inferior royal rank caused his own degradation behind the Queen of Hawaii. As a consequence, Prince William thanked his grandmother after his return to Germany only in a moderately polite manner for having “had the pleasure of seeing you again looking so well and fresh.”\textsuperscript{\textdaggerdbl}

**VII-8: JUBILEE**

The Golden Jubilee marked Queen Victoria’s fiftieth year on the British throne - a true reason for a nationwide commemoration, since the Queen was perceived “as a


\textsuperscript{\textdagger} 21 March 1887 Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess of Germany. In: Ramm (ed.), Beloved and darling child, pp.46-47. Liko was the family name for Prince Henry, and, as already explained above, Sandro was the family name for Prince Alexander of Battenberg.


\textsuperscript{\textdaggerdbl} 3 July 1887 Prince William of Prussia to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA Z82/103.
symbol of national unity - above party, above politics; a position occupied by all subsequent British monarchs." However, this impression of the monarchy ignored "the gulf between the Queen as she really was and the constitutional paragon who appeared in contemporary writings," since Queen Victoria's evident support for the Conservative party of Disraeli and Salisbury, as shown in previous sections of this thesis, was a clear indication that the Queen stood anything but above parties. Nevertheless, the celebrations commemorated Queen Victoria as the symbol of Great Britain, the Empire and indeed as a representation of the nation's greatness.

The various festivities celebrating Queen Victoria's Jubilee Day were a first sign of Queen Victoria's image of "a legend like the gods of old;" more to the point, "it was hardly possible after this to accuse the Queen of neglecting her royal duties and it is from this time onwards that the role of the monarchy as a purveyor of pageantry began to be established as part of the pattern of London, if not English, life."

The Queen described the Jubilee day with the words: "The day has come, and I am alone, though surrounded by many dear children." The Times pointed out that "no constitutional monarch has shown a more consistent respect for popular liberties or a clearer concept of royal duties. (...) Nothing in the rich and various history of the past fifty years is more worthy to record than the purification and refinement of social life and manners to which the influence of the Court has most powerfully contributed." However enthusiastic this comment may have been, it is still rather moderate when compared with official Jubilee odes, which either praised: "All hail to thee, Victoria, our much lov'd Empress - Queen! Thou art the best that ever reign's! The best the world hath seen," eulogized: "Glorious your reign was - great in ev'ry

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98 P.R.Williams, Public discussion of the British monarchy, 1837-87 (PhD, University of Cambridge, 1989), p.83.
99 Ibid., p.152.
103 The Times, 20 June 1887.
104 21 June 1887 A loyal ode. In: Major Trist, A loyal ode. To commemorate the events that occured at Haberton on Her Majesty's Jubilee Day, the 21st of June (No place, 1887), p.52.
phase - Length - wealth - success - happiness! highest flight,"\textsuperscript{105} or revered the reign of Queen Victoria: "While, then, we rejoice, let us thank God for His goodness to us as a nation, and from our hearts congratulate the Sovereign in her happy reign."	extsuperscript{106} These are only a few illustrations of the "wave of personal loyalty and patriotism [which] swept the country."\textsuperscript{107} From now on, Queen Victoria was certainly perceived as a "symbol of Empire."\textsuperscript{108}

In addition to these spirited comments in Britain, the Jubilee was also covered in many other countries, among them Germany. The \textit{Deutsches Tageblatt} for instance, a leading German newspaper, summarized for its readers the daily festivities taking place in Britain. The reports informed the German public about Queen Victoria’s international guests, as is illustrated by the observation that "the impressive appearance of the German Crown Prince (...) attracted general attention;"\textsuperscript{109} similarly, they also described London’s stately processions, where "the spectators cheered loudly to every division marching past."	extsuperscript{110} The most touching part of the ceremony was certainly the Queen’s decision to "throw, overwhelmed with sudden emotion, her arms around the neck of the Prince of Wales and of the German Crown Prince, ardently kissing the pair on both cheeks, as an admonishing legacy that, as heirs to the two related Germanic thrones of Europe, they should co-operate in the times to come."\textsuperscript{111} These German press comments were genuinely sympathetic towards the Jubilee of the British sovereign, an event which probably represented the last incident of an undisturbed positive feeling between Great Britain and Germany.

The era of 1877 until 1887 witnessed important domestic developments of Great Britain. The Third Parliamentary Reform Act of 1884 was an essential step for the enlargement of the British franchise by adding two million voters. At the same time, Irish issues focused the attention of not only Gladstone; the announcement and the subsequent defeat of Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill brought Salisbury’s government

\textsuperscript{105} L.L. Bigger, 1887. \textit{Jubilee year of our beloved Queen Victoria} (Dublin, 1887), p.30.
\textsuperscript{106} G.H. Pike, \textit{Victoria, Queen and Empress. A Jubilee Memoir} (London\textsuperscript{2}, 1890), p.96.
\textsuperscript{107} Ensor, \textit{England}, p.177.
\textsuperscript{108} Seaman, \textit{Victorian England}, p.450.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Deutsches Tageblatt}, 23 June 1887. Translation by the author.
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Deutsches Tageblatt}, 24 June 1887. Translation by the author.
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Deutsches Tageblatt}, 24 June 1887. Translation by the author.
into office, and it was this conservative politician with whom Queen Victoria co-operated most closely during the last part of her reign.

Queen Victoria's emotional and personal approach to politics resulted in her full support of Disraeli's (and later Salisbury's) Conservative party, while she deeply disapproved of Gladstone's political objectives. However, the Queen not only differed from Gladstone individually, but in fact from the Liberal party as such, since it was this party that "viewed Disraeli's jingoistic speeches and empty, monarchical, imperial symbols (such as the title 'Empress of India' (....)) as an attempt to delude ignorant, irrational voters into giving a clamorous support for reckless adventures."\(^{112}\)

It seems therefore justified to conclude that Queen Victoria's political convictions had changed only little since her succession, while political circumstances had undergone substantial transformations since 1837. Thus, although the Queen's initial preference for the Whig politician Melbourne was subsequently balanced by Prince Albert's emphasis on an impartial attitude of the Crown, the Queen showed an increasing inclination towards conservatism after her husband's death, as illustrated by her partiality towards Disraeli and Salisbury. As a consequence, it would be mistaken to claim that Queen Victoria ever had a truly liberal political outlook; instead, her initial Whiggish perspective reappeared after Prince Albert's death in 1861, but in the meantime the political scenery had altered so fundamentally that what had seemed liberal in 1840 was actually conservative in 1880.

An explanation for this development can be found in the changing definition of patriotism: when Queen Victoria succeeded to the British throne, she was labeled a 'patriot Queen', as has been shown in Chapter four. In the following years, Palmerston's liberalism used the idea of patriotism in order to obtain popular support; by the late 1870s, however, "patriotism had ceased to have this liberal content, and Palmerston's mantle had been inherited, not by Gladstone's Liberal Party, but by Disraeli and the Conservatives."\(^{113}\) In accordance with this development, Queen Victoria characterized Gladstone's disposition towards Russia in 1878 as a "want of patriotism."\(^{114}\) It is indeed important to notice that Queen Victoria regarded any form

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\(^{113}\) Williams, Public discussion of the British monarchy, p.158.

of national loyalty which differed from her personal point of view as a lack in patriotism, since she evidently failed to comprehend the liberal notion of patriotism, which was "opposed to military intervention in Europe and territorial empire overseas."

Besides, the years between 1877 and 1887 saw a further deterioration of Queen Victoria’s image of Germany, as she made Bismarck personally responsible for the dethronement of Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, a sovereign whom she held in a high personal esteem. The subsequent German interest in colonial matters was initially welcomed by Queen Victoria, but as soon as Germany actually claimed colonies for herself, the Queen’s attitude changed into open condemnation. This sentiment of the Queen corresponded with the nation’s view in general, since Germany’s imperialistic attitude with regard to foreign affairs was increasingly regarded as a threat to Britain’s superiority. The Foreign Office, on the other hand, sought to maintain a friendly international relationship to Germany, and this approach included a support of Germany’s colonial interests.

The Golden Jubilee of 1887 celebrated Queen Victoria’s fiftieth year on the British throne, but the official celebrations of the monarch as the impartial symbol of the British Empire differed notably from the political reality.

This chapter examines the last part of Queen Victoria’s reign, which was characterized by the Queen’s final hope for a liberal Germany under Emperor Frederick III. Queen Victoria’s reaction to Frederick III’s succession will be discussed, as well as the implications of his death for Queen Victoria, since the reign of Emperor William II marked an important modification of her perception of Germany. From that point onwards, Queen Victoria differentiated between the political development of Germany, which she disapproved of, and her personal feelings for William II, for whom she maintained a deep affection.

The more general aim of this chapter is to examine the Anglo-German relationship, which underwent considerable alterations during the time between 1887 and 1901. The question of possible alliances has to be asked, which will also touch on the repercussions of the ongoing process of colonization. After the end of the depiction of Queen Victoria’s own life, some comments on the subsequent development of Anglo-German relations will conclude this final chapter.

**VIII-1: FREDERICK III**

In 1888, when Frederick III finally succeeded to the German throne, his cancer had already afflicted his health so deeply that any modifications of the political course of Germany were out of the question; nevertheless, Queen Victoria welcomed her son-in-law’s succession, since he personified in her eyes the political hopes of Prince Albert. The Emperor himself, on the other hand, did realize his limited range of activities. Frederick III’s death only ninety-nine days later signalized Queen Victoria’s abandonment of her interest in German affairs, which had been such an important part of her life for the past forty-eight years. However, although she distanced herself from the subsequent development of Germany under the leadership of Germany, the Queen preserved her concern for the future of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, since her son was the heir to this Dukedom.

The Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria saw the presence of the German Crown Prince Frederick William, who was praised by the German press as “the most stately figure of yesterday’s pageant,”¹ and who was given an enthusiastic welcome by the

¹ *Deutsches Tageblatt*, 25 June 1887. Translation by the author.
British spectators. At this time, German doctors had already diagnosed a throat illness of the Crown Prince as cancerous, but the British doctor Mackenzie contradicted this opinion; as a consequence, Frederick William and his wife decided against an operation and opted to stay in the mild climate of Scotland and later San Remo. By that time, the *Times* agreed with Queen Victoria’s personal confidence in regarding Prince Frederick William as the liberal hope for Germany’s future, and the paper stated that “he is looked to as the pillar and the reserved force of the Empire” (19 October 1887).

At the end of 1887, when the diagnosis of cancer had been confirmed by both the German and the British side, observers close to the Court were “giving up all hopes of his recovery,” nonetheless, Queen Victoria was still convinced that “the illness is not so serious as assumed.” Notwithstanding this optimism of Queen Victoria, the *Times* sent its best wishes to Germany by declaring that “we trust it is not necessary for us to say to the German people how profoundly Englishmen sympathize with them in their great grief over the cruel blow which has fallen on a Prince who is so justly beloved by his countrymen, and whose exalted station renders his life of such vast importance not merely to Germany, but to Europe and to the world” (14 November 1887).

While Frederick William and Victoria stayed at San Remo, the Queen decided to contact the British Ambassador in Germany directly, since her usual source of information, her eldest daughter, was not present at the German Court. From Malet, the Queen received the official German assurance that, as the Queen put it to her eldest daughter, “no one dreams seriously of making Fritz resign his rights.” Considering that the British Queen was actively participating in affairs which were, constitutionally speaking, strictly German, it is astonishing that there seems to have been no official disapproval of her approach; a reason for this might have been that the German Foreign Office realized that Queen Victoria had ultimately no influence in

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2 See: *Deutsches Tageblatt*, 13 July 1887  
4 7 December 1887 Queen Victoria to Duke Ludwig IV of Hesse. Found in: Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt, D 24, 14/2, documents 287-91.  
the domestic affairs of Germany whatsoever, and it therefore abstained from intervening.

Not even the Queen’s eldest grandson Prince William, usually one of the sternest critics of his grandmother’s behaviour, voiced any concern about her inquiry; he did, however, express his opinion about his father’s serious illness, and he told the Queen that “the hopes are resting on a very slender base, as to a complete recovery; it is clear that the illness quietly and stealthily works in the depths.” He quickly realized the tactical error of upsetting the Queen, as he stated in his next letter that he was “very happy that the close of the old year leaves us more hope for dear Papa as was at first thought of. May God give him a sure and complete recovery!” It is more than evident that Prince William took great care to ensure his grandmother’s benevolence towards him by stressing the hopes of Frederick William’s recovery.

When further “good news of dear Uncle Fritz” reached Britain at the beginning of 1888, Queen Victoria again asked Malet directly: “What is the real state of the Emperor? Think there is little doubt C Prince’s trouble in throat is not malignant and life not imperiled.” The British Ambassador replied that William I was “much better again,” and he also informed the Queen about the Stellvertretungs-Gesetz (law of representation), which authorized Prince William to sign documents in case “the Emperor were unable and the Crown Prince were absent.” Although the German press saw the main aim of this law to relieve Frederick William “of his governmental duties,” Queen Victoria considered it as a betrayal of his rights: “How Bismarck and still more William can play such a double game it is impossible for us honest, straightforward English to understand. Thank God! we are English!”

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6 22 December 1887 Prince William of Germany to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA Z82/120.
10 14 January 1888 E. Malet to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid.
11 14 January 1888 E. Malet to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid.
12 Volkszeitung, 25 March 1888. Translation by the author.
Considering that the law was certainly a sensible way of ensuring efficient working conditions for the German government, it is quite surprising that Queen Victoria judged it in such an utterly dismissive way. In any case, this statement clearly illustrates the decisive change of her view of Germany, since the distinct differentiation between British and German, and the equation of these nationalities with positive and negative connotations, was a new characteristic in the Queen’s image of Germany. Whereas in earlier years she had seen Germany as an important part of her own heritage and indeed of her life and personality, her definition of Britishness now clearly personified herself completely. As a consequence, she differentiated rigorously between Germany on the one hand as part of her past and as a country where a considerable amount of her closest relatives were living, and England on the other hand as the nation to which her monarchical allegiance belonged and with which she identified herself completely.

The death of Emperor William I in March 1888 changed the political constellation in Germany notably, since his son, now Emperor Frederick III, returned to Berlin and assumed his duties as German sovereign. Queen Victoria’s expressions of mourning for William I were rather restrained; she pointed out that “he was always very kind to me, but for some years, alas! he was made a tool of for no good!” As he had “long identified himself with the policy of Bismarck,” no closer political or in fact personal understanding between the German and the British sovereign had been possible since 1862.

However, Queen Victoria’s quite indifferent reaction to the news of William I’s death was not representative for Britain, since the Times praised the German Emperor’s merit much higher when articulating its condolences: “The greatest career of our modern days has come to an end. (...) The passing away of a man who has made so much history, who has filled so long and so well a great place in the eyes of the world, is one of those rare occasions which unquestionably mark an epoch” (10 March 1888). Queen Victoria, on the other hand, did not think William I’s death

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14 Considering that Queen Victoria’s interest in Irish affairs was rather limited, it seems wrong to suggest that the Queen had an image of Britain; instead, she concentrated her activities on England and Scotland, with which she connected highly sentimental feelings in remembrance of the happy time she spent there with her late husband.


important enough to regard it as a representation of the end to an epoch; instead, her thoughts were clearly directed towards the future. As a consequence, for the Queen personally, the truly important event of March 1888 was the succession of Frederick III, which for her signaled the fulfillment of Prince Albert’s expectations with regard to a liberal future of Germany.

Therefore, despite Frederick III’s illness, the Queen’s immediate reaction to his succession was one of profound optimism. She told her oldest daughter, now Empress of Germany: “May you now see the right thing done for beloved Fritz as it should be (...). I am thankful and proud that dear Fritz and you should have come to the throne.”

Frederick III, on his part, reassured his mother-in-law of his “sincere and earnest desire for a close and lasting friendship between our two nations,” an aspiration which in Queen Victoria’s eyes seemed to be all more realistic once Bismarck’s influence would be curtailed.

Bismarck’s own future was indeed uncertain until Frederick III assured him that he would “rely on your oft-proved devotion, and on the support of your tried experience. May I be destined to lead Germany and Prussia in a course of peaceful development to new honours.” Since the German Emperor had no illusions about his deteriorating health, he realized that his illness ultimately prevented any drastic modifications in the political course of Germany. An amiable co-operation between monarch and Chancellor seemed therefore the only appropriate answer, which, however, implied a continuance of Emperor William I’s reign and hence “the possibility of Germany being given responsible parliamentary government by royal action, the only method of introducing it short of revolutionary pressure, virtually disappeared.”

Had Frederick III insisted on any liberal modifications with regard to Germany’s political course, Bismarck might indeed simply have handed in his resignation, leaving the Emperor “with a situation with which he did not have the

18 9 March 1888 The Emperor of Germany to Queen Victoria. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, third series, vol.1, p.390. The letter was written while Frederick III was still in San Remo.
strength to cope.” It was the Empress who familiarized her mother with this realpolitische approach to politics when she wrote that “we are our masters now, but shall we not have to leave all the work undone which we have so long and so carefully been preparing? Will there be any chance of doing the right thing, any time to carry out useful measures, needful reforms?” As time was not on his side, Frederick III was determined to introduce his eldest son immediately to the business of government and he announced that “the Crown Prince William is going to familiarize himself with affairs of state by participating directly.” Considering the Crown Prince’s difficult relationship with his parents, this decision was certainly not an easy one to make; however, Frederick III showed far-sighted responsibility by doing so.

During a personal visit of Queen Victoria at Berlin, which will be discussed later, a lady-in-waiting summed up the situation by observing that “they have all resigned themselves to the poor Emperor’s doom;” only Empress Victoria maintained her hope that “if dearest Fritz pulls up again things will alter materially.” However, this expectation did not come true. Bismarck’s statement towards Queen Victoria, regarding the aptness of Prince William as ruler - “if you throw him into the water, he’ll swim” - was put to a test on 15 June 1888, when the German Emperor Frederick III died, having reigned for only ninety-eight days.

Queen Victoria was shattered when the news reached Britain and stated that “I cannot, cannot realize the dreadful truth. (...) None of my own sons could be a greater loss.” With the death of Frederick III, who, according to the Times, “had been cordially adopted as one of our own Royal house by the British people” (16 June

23 Die Nation, 31 March 1888. Translation by the author. The newspaper published the decree of the Emperor.
1888), the enormous hopes which Prince Albert and Queen Victoria had put into their son-in-law were ultimately destroyed.

After Frederick III’s death, Queen Victoria’s lost any remaining interest in the political development of Germany, for with him departed the last liberal hope (in the tradition of Prince Albert) which Queen Victoria still attached to the political future of Germany. But, as explained earlier, Queen Victoria’s image had always been divided on the one hand into Germany as a whole under the leadership of Prussia, and on the other hand into the smaller German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha or Hesse. From now on, the Queen’s diminished attention applied only to Germany as a whole, since her concern for the development of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha remained invariably high.

Although Queen Victoria lost her interest in the political affairs of Germany, she maintained her personal family ties with relatives living in Prussia and in Hesse, yet without combining these with political connotations any longer. Thus, even though she admonished Frederick’s successor, his son William II, to “help and do all you can for your poor dear Mother and try to follow in your best, noblest, and kindest of father’s footsteps,” she did not go into any political detail. The Times, on the other hand, assured the new German Emperor “of the warm interest of all Englishmen, for we remember that he is the grandson of the Queen,” and the newspaper distinctly expressed its hope that “the good understanding, based on ties of national kinship as well as on community of interests, which subsists between Germany and this country will (...) be more closely cemented under the reign of the Emperor William II” (16 June 1888). Hence, whereas the succession of William signified for Queen Victoria the end of her political hopes for, and indeed interest in, the political development of Germany, the Times viewed the same event much more optimistically.

VIII-2: William II

The succession of Emperor William II signified the end of Queen Victoria’s remaining hopes with regard to a better understanding between Great Britain and Germany. William II’s continuance of his grandfather’s pro-Russian policy, in combination with his distinctly individual style of government, was certainly no basis for a political understanding of the British and the German monarch. As a consequence, Queen Victoria saw no possibility for a closer association between these

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28 15 June 1888 Queen Victoria to the Emperor of Germany. In: Ibid.
countries, a view which did not necessarily correspond with the opinion of the Foreign Office. Yet whereas Queen Victoria disapproved of the political direction Germany was taking under William II, she maintained her personal regard for her oldest grandson, as illustrated by frequent visits and the Queen’s contemplation of William II’s particular requests.

After he had represented the British royal family at Frederick III’s funeral, the Prince of Wales was convinced that William II was “anxious to do what is right,”

but his sister, the Dowager Empress, voiced a gloomier opinion when she stated that “Bertie always thinks in a positive way, he thinks everything will be all right with William (I don’t).”

The personal future of the Dowager Empress was anything but promising, since her son left no doubt that she would cease “to be a figure of any political importance,” and she decided to retire to Hesse, where she spent the last thirteen years of her life. Although Queen Victoria continued to receive regular letters from her eldest daughter, these were no longer concerned with highly political matters, but dealt mainly with the Dowager Empress’s personal life. As a consequence, this source of information ceased to have its political significance.

It is an interesting fact of William II’s succession that he refused to be crowned, since “he wished the ceremony to take place in Westminster Abbey,”

a requirement that was obviously out of the question. William’s unusual wish was based on the fact that “he felt himself in many ways an Englishman;”

this emotional bond to Britain was strengthened by the Emperor’s pastimes of sailing and shooting, with their distinct British touch. However, these habits were “a question of style rather than ideal,” since William II did not necessarily extend his vague ideas of Britishness to the political area as well.

Before long, Queen Victoria adopted her daughter’s pessimistic view, as in his first speech from the throne, Emperor William II referred to his father but briefly,

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29 18 June 1888 The Prince of Wales to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid., p.419.
30 20 June 1888 Extract from the journal of the Dowager Empress. Found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.52 (Dahlem - Friedrichs Tagebuch), nr.3, document 204. Translation by the author. Bertie was the family name for the Prince of Wales.
31 Balfour, The Kaiser and his times, p.120.
while putting a strong emphasis on the friendship between Germany and Russia. Queen Victoria found this attitude “incredible and disgraceful,” a feeling which was based both on her traditional mistrust of Russia and on her disappointment with what she deemed William’s rejection of his father’s heritance. It was indeed William’s aim to eradicate Frederick’s short reign from public memory by stressing the fact that William II continued the policy of his grandfather, Emperor William I - and one of William I’s prime concerns had certainly been Germany’s close association with Russia. Queen Victoria, however, was rather infuriated at what she called a “leaning towards Russia,” and she remarked about the beginning of William II’s reign that “it is too dreadful for us all to think of Willie & Bismarck & Dona - being the supreme head of all now! Two so unfit & one so wicked.”

This comment of the Queen is highly revealing, for on the one hand she evidently considered William II and his wife to be incompetent of reigning, and thus of ruling Germany, while at the same time she estimated Bismarck as being corrupt and atrocious. The first judgement was certainly due to the generation gap between Queen Victoria and her German grandson, since Queen Victoria deeply resented his rather flamboyant style of governing; the second verdict, however, was based on a difference in political beliefs, since Queen Victoria always associated the authoritarian reign of William I with his trusted Chancellor Bismarck. Her choice of terminology is, however, vehement, and the anger behind these words was clearly motivated by Frederick III’s death shortly beforehand.

William II’s following announcement, “I shall inspect the fleet and take a trip in the Baltic, where I hope to meet the Emperor of Russia, which will be of good effect for the peace of Europe,” did nothing to improve Queen Victoria’s opinion. She was “offended by such a hasty disregard of mourning” and rather annoyed at William II’s preference for Russia as the first nation he visited. The reasons for this

36 27 June 1888 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Ibid.
37 4 July 1888 Queen Victoria to Princess Victoria of Hesse. In: R. Hough (ed.), Advice to a grand-daughter, letters from Queen Victoria to Princess Victoria of Hesse (London, 1975), p. 95. Dona was the family name for Empress Augusta, wife of William II.
39 Balfour, The Kaiser and his times, p. 122.
view of the Queen, however, seem to have been entirely emotional, since the *Times* judged the inaugural speeches of William II in a thoroughly positive manner and expressed its conviction that "the accession of William II must produce a tranquilizing effect" (18 June 1888). However tragic the loss of Frederick III must have been for Queen Victoria personally, it has to be said that the *Times* was right in its judgement, since Frederick's illness had obstructed the smooth course of political affairs in Germany for the last three months.

This 'soothing' caused by her son's succession was certainly not experienced by the Dowager Empress Victoria, who could not fail to realize William's aim of continuing his grandfather's principles; she told her mother that "the reigning party here [is] anxious to wipe out all traces of Fritz's reign." This attitude of William II was certainly based on a habit established during his grandfather's lifetime: the young Prince William would rather ask Emperor William I for political advice than to be guided by his father, Crown Prince Frederick William. As a result of his dependence on William I it was only the next logical step that William II would perpetuate the policies of his grandfather.

Queen Victoria criticized this concept of continuity harshly and urged Salisbury "that we shall be very cool, in our communications with my grandson and Prince Bismarck, who are bent on a return to the oldest times of government." Since the Foreign Office viewed William II's succession attentively, Salisbury agreed with this opinion of Queen Victoria, and as a result, the royal view was in accordance with the judgement of the Foreign Office. Neither the Queen nor Salisbury were interested in binding Great Britain closer to Germany, which illustrates the remarkable modification in Queen Victoria's personal belief. It is certainly significant that from this point onwards, Queen Victoria judged Germany's development from the perspective of Frederick's death, since for her personally, every following year made "the misfortune more keenly felt," and she never ceased to evaluate Frederick III's loss as "a calamity (...) for the whole of Europe."

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42 15 June 1891 Queen Victoria to the Dowager Empress of Germany. In: Ramm (ed.), *Beloved and darling child*, p.128; this was the third anniversary of Emperor Frederick III's death. The same words can be found in an extract from the journal of Queen Victoria on 18
In October 1888, immediately after Frederick's death, a rather unfortunate personal incident occurred at Vienna, which led to a serious disagreement between the Prince of Wales and his nephew Wilhelm II. The latter suggested that the presence of the British heir to the throne was not advisable at a time when the Russian Tsar would stay at Vienna, as "it would irritate the Emperor of Russia, at a moment when matters were very delicate, without offering to Germany any substantial compensation in the shape of a genuine English alliance." On a more personal level, Wilhelm II was dissatisfied with the fact that the Prince of Wales "treated him as an uncle treats a nephew, instead of recognizing that he was an Emperor." Queen Victoria did not even think of contemplating the first point, but she reacted very fiercely against the second accusation and stated that "this is really too vulgar and too absurd, as well as untrue, almost to be believed. We have always been very intimate with our grandson and nephew, and to pretend that he is to be treated in private as well as in public as 'his Imperial Majesty' is perfect madness."

This incident is an interesting illustration for the fact that the younger generation of European sovereigns gave a clear preference to the monarchical status of their realm, thus putting the family ties between the international elite of royals in second place. The same can be said about the young Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, for whom family connections simply had not the same importance than for Queen Victoria for example (one explanation for this viewpoint of the Tsar might have been that he was indeed related to most European royal houses, which made a balanced approach to any political problem virtually impossible). Queen Victoria on the other hand never ceased to see exactly this international 'family of royals' as a closely connected caste, in which blood relations were as important as the requirements of the individual realms. However, this personal opinion of the Queen ignored the fact that

October 1891, when the Queen remembered an anniversary of Frederick III's birthday. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, third series, vol.2, p.77.

15 June 1898 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, third series, vol.3, pp.168-9; this was the ninth anniversary of Frederick's III death. The same statement can be found in an extract from the journal of Queen Victoria on 15 June 1898, when the Queen remembered the tenth anniversary of Frederick III's death. In: Ibid., third series, vol.3, p.255.


13 October 1888 Memorandum of Salisbury. In: Ibid.

the end of the nineteenth century witnessed the outcome of a long and complicated process of formation of a system of ‘nation states’. As a consequence, each monarch had to guide his/her single nation, a requirement Queen Victoria should in fact have realized, taking into account her own symbolic status as the head of the British nation.

Despite her excitement about William’s behaviour, Queen Victoria did not discuss this development with him personally, and eventually, political considerations had to take first priority. Accordingly, Queen Victoria thought about Salisbury’s proposition that the German Emperor had “a very strong desire to be received back into your Majesty’s favour. Probably his relations with Russia are less satisfactory than they were. But it is also probable that he has now thoroughly awakened from the temporary intoxication of last summer. It is your Majesty’s interest to make his penitential return as easy to him as possible.” After a long correspondence and the mediation of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein (brother-in-law of the Prince of Wales and uncle of Wilhelm II), an acceptable compromise on the royal level could be reached, and Queen Victoria accepted her grandson’s expression of regret.

This mutual attempt to find an acceptable compromise for a rather unfortunate personal discord is only the most prominent example for the problematic relationship between the British Queen and her German grandson. Notwithstanding Queen Victoria’s frequent criticism of William’s opinions and political preferences, she continued to have a friendly personal relationship with him, and they kept up a regular correspondence; as a consequence, “nothing occurred which the genuine, mutual affection of grandmother and grandson could not overcome.” Nevertheless, the Queen’s strong disapproval of William’s political opinions prevented any hopes on her side that Britain and Germany might ever reach a common understanding in the future. However, this strictly personal reserve of Queen Victoria was not shared by the Times, which pointed out during William’s first visit to Britain in August 1889 that “England and Germany are friendly and kindred peoples. In spite of the occasional protests from irresponsible politicians, this country knows well that in the main lines of political progress it has more in common with Germany than with any

48 Every year, letters were exchanged on birthdays, Christmas and the New Year; but apart from this conventional correspondence, both sides wrote the latest personal and (most of the time) political developments as well.
other of the great nations of the Continent" (3 August 1889). Thus, it is a significant development that Queen Victoria’s hopes for a political understanding of the two nations were diminished precisely at a time when both representatives of the British press and of Britain’s political spectrum became increasingly interested in promoting a friendly relationship between the two nations, as will be explained in more detail later.

Queen Victoria considered William II’s personal conduct during his visit of 1889 as “very amiable,” and she concluded after his stay that “much cordiality between the two Countries was shown on both sides.” However, the actual significance of William’s visit to Britain was much higher, since even conservative German newspapers entirely agreed with the British press in stating that “there is not the slightest reason why we should clash with English interests at any point. We hope that the present event will strengthen the relations between the thrones and peoples of Germany and England, and render them entirely cordial.”

This first unofficial visit of Emperor William II was followed by a second unofficial stay in August 1890, and he and his wife paid their first official state visit to Britain in July 1891. During subsequent years, William was a frequent guest at his grandmother’s residence in August 1892, August 1894 and August 1895, but the Kruger telegram prevented any more stays until his last official state visit in 1899. Considering these regular personal meetings and the abundant flow of letters between the courts of Great Britain and Germany, the relationship between Queen Victoria and William II was certainly close; however, as explained earlier, this intimacy only existed on the personal level and did not include the political arena as well.

The close family ties between Queen Victoria and the German Emperor led in 1894 to William II’s inquiry for “an English military uniform, in order that, should he attend a Review, he would not be obliged to mount a horse in Admiral’s garb.”

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52 This article from the Kreuz Zeitung, a right-wing newspaper, was reprinted in the Times on 5 August 1889.

53 13 January 1894 Col.Swaine to H.Ponsonby. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen Victoria, third series, vol.2, p.345. Henry Ponsonby was Queen Victoria’s Private Secretary at that time.
Queen Victoria, however, refused this desire downright, since, in her own words, "this would never do, and he is an Admiral. The Queen thinks he is far too much spoilt already." Despite her personal indignation, Queen Victoria realized the political dimension of William’s request and delegated the question to her ministers. Thus, the wish of the German Emperor caused a heated discussion between Salisbury, Rosebery, Campbell-Bannerman, the Prince of Wales and the Queen herself. After a careful consideration of every possible implication, William II did in fact receive the British military title of 'Colonel-in-Chief of the First Royals,' an honour "which seemed to please him exceedingly." He thanked his grandmother with the words: "I am moved, deeply moved at the idea that I now too can wear beside the naval uniform the traditional 'British Redcoat'." Apart from being an example for William II's enthusiasm for uniforms, this incident is also a striking illustration for the special treatment the German Emperor received from British statesmen once he had intervened on the royal level. In sharp contrast to earlier years, however, it was the side of the politicians who seriously discussed the issue, while the Queen opposed the suggestion of her grandson. Once the Queen was then convinced of the political advantages of complying with her grandson’s wishes, she readily agreed to the opinion of the Foreign Office, but it is important to realize that it was no longer the British sovereign who took the initiative in these issues.

However, Salisbury seems to have succeeded rather thoroughly in convincing Queen Victoria of the propriety of keeping a friendly relationship with William II, as she wanted to "ascertain William's feeling" when, in August 1895, Malet, the British Ambassador to Germany, announced his retirement and a successor had to be found. Since Queen Victoria was more than aware of her grandson’s interest in military issues, she suggested the future Commander-in-Chief, Lord Wolseley, for the post, without, however, ensuring Wolseley’s consent first. Wolseley had indeed expressed his interest in the post of Ambassador at Berlin, but when he had to chose between the two appointments, Wolseley preferred the position of Commander-in-

56 24 April 1894 The Emperor of Germany to Queen Victoria. In: Ibid.
57 5 August 1895 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Ibid., p.544.
Chief, while at the same time William II was now "very anxious to have him at Berlin."\textsuperscript{58}

In the end, Salisbury suggested Frank Lascelles, the current British Ambassador in Russia, as an alternative, but Queen Victoria still had to explain this development to her grandson. She tried to excuse her recommendation of Wolseley by stating that she was "very sorry; had I not thought from what he wrote himself that he would be Ambassador, I would not have mentioned his name to you." Justifying the alternative of Lascelles to William II, she wrote that "in this choice I have been most anxious to find someone who would be agreeable to you and would do all he could to maintain the best relations between the two countries."\textsuperscript{59} This argument of Queen Victoria seems surprising, considering that her political interest in a friendly understanding between Britain and Germany had virtually ceased to exist by this time; as a consequence, it seems correct to judge the Queen's behaviour as a personal favour towards her eldest grandson. The Foreign Secretary, however, had certainly more general issues in mind when he suggested Lascelles as the new British Ambassador for Germany; although Salisbury did not want to bind Britain too close to other European states, he was also not interested in risking any disagreement with Germany over an issue which was comparatively easy to solve.

After William II's telegram to Kruger, the personal relationship between Queen Victoria and the German Emperor cooled down for a short time, but it eventually resumed its friendly tone; however, she decided not to invite him to the Jubilee this time. When William II inquired in January 1897 if the Queen had "any plans or wishes about our coming or not coming for your Jubilee,"\textsuperscript{60} Victoria decided for the first time against the possibility of making an exception for her grandson and she pointed out that his stay in Britain "would never do for many reasons,"\textsuperscript{61} which reflected the deteriorating opinion of the politically interested parts of British society with regard to Germany.

\textsuperscript{58} 8 August 1895 A. Bigge to Lansdowne. In: Ibid., p. 547.
\textsuperscript{59} 28 August 1895 Queen Victoria to the Emperor of Germany. In: Ibid., p. 561.
\textsuperscript{61} 30 January 1897 Queen Victoria to A. Bigge. In: Ibid., p. 127. Arthur Bigge was the Queen's Private Secretary.
The succession of Frederick III in 1888 was greeted by Queen Victoria with the hope that it might be the beginning of an improved Anglo-German relationship, but his death only ninety-nine days later marked the final decline in the Queen’s interest in the political affairs of Germany. As a consequence, the subsequent development of Germany under her oldest grandson William II had the Queen’s attention, but no longer her devotion. This, however, did not apply to Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, which remained a focus of royal concern. The Queen therefore participated actively in the discussions about the succession of first her son and later of her grandson to a Dukedom which was part of the German Empire.

After Frederick III’s succession, Queen Victoria soon realized that he was not able to fight his cancer for much longer; as a consequence, she decided to visit Prussia, and her arrival at Berlin met with an enthusiastic reception. It is interesting to note that the Times informed its readers as follows: “the English people need no assurance (...) that Her Majesty’s visit to the German capital is quite without political significance. It is simply the visit of a mother to her daughter, and to that daughter’s suffering husband” (24 April 1888). It is rather striking that Queen Victoria’s visit to Prussia was thus denied any greater relevance; in fact, Queen Victoria did see both Frederick III and Bismarck, and she did have a political conversation with the latter. The first meeting of the Queen, however, was with her son-in-law, but the German Emperor had by that time already lost his voice and, in order to communicate, had to write down everything he wanted to communicate on a note-pad.62

After this personal meeting, Queen Victoria had a conversation with Bismarck, whom she openly asked about Frederick III’s illness. Bismarck answered that “he thought him weak and not able to attend for long at a time to business.”63 Notwithstanding this bleak prospect, Queen Victoria insisted “that there was no idea of a Regency, as I knew it would upset dear Fritz dreadfully,”64 the Chancellor agreed, considering that the present form of reign, as Queen Victoria put it, “could

62 Emperor Frederick’s III so-called ‘Sprechzettel’ (talking notes) are a most touching documentation of his strength and his will to live. They are held in the Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv.


and should be managed.”

This discussion between the British sovereign and the German Chancellor illustrates the high interest Queen Victoria still had in the political development of Germany, which for her at that time was still inseparable from the personal fate of her son-in-law. As already pointed out earlier, Queen Victoria never distinguished the person from his rank, and this highly emotional approach to politics was certainly characterized by a lack in abstraction. Once William II succeeded his father to the German throne, the political context changed in the eyes of the Queen so substantially that her interest in the further political development of Germany virtually ceased to exist.

After her meeting with Bismarck, Queen Victoria expressed the hope that she had “done a little good and that my visit has had a good and beneficial effect in Berlin and elsewhere.” Her aspiration proved to be justified, since Malet confirmed that “the Queen’s visit to Berlin had been a political success,” just as Salisbury told the Queen that “Bismarck was deeply gratified at your Majesty’s visit.” Bismarck himself was indeed satisfied with the meeting, and his subtle observation that “one could do business with her” is a positive statement rarely to be found in his personal notes.

Considering that Queen Victoria had continuously received negative reports about the German Chancellor through the channel of her eldest daughter, it can truthfully be stated that her personal impression of Bismarck did not add a positive aspect to this perception, and after the meeting, her only explicit comment in her journal stated that she had been “agreeable surprised to find him so amiable and gentle.” Only Bülow observed in his memoirs that Queen Victoria had allegedly said: “I don’t understand why my daughter could not get on with Prince Bismarck. I

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66 27 April 1888 Queen Victoria to the Empress of Germany. In: Ramm (ed.), Beloved and darling child, p.67. Queen Victoria was already on her way back to Britain when she wrote this letter.
69 Balfour, The Kaiser and his times, p.118.
think him a very amiable man, and we had a most charming conversation.” While the second part of the statement does sound accurate, it seems very unlikely that the Queen would judge her daughter’s opinion so harshly. As a consequence, it is doubtful whether Bülow’s quotation can be taken for granted. On the other hand, it is interesting that the Queen’s negative view of Bismarck was in complete contrast to the conclusion of the *Times*, which stated in 1887, at a time when Bismarck had been German Chancellor for twenty-five years, that “no one can doubt that the strength and unity of Germany, which are Prince Bismarck’s great achievements, [are] the surest and most solid guarantee for the maintenance of European peace” (24 September 1887).

The same newspaper pointed out after Bismarck’s resignation in March 1890 that this step had “no other significance than that the Emperor intends for the future to make his own will the inspiring influence in the German Government” (20 March 1890); shortly before, the British Ambassador in Germany had indeed informed Queen Victoria that William II “wishes to govern, himself.” In the long run, this was an indication that “Bismarck’s complex juggling act in Europe was (...) replaced by a more aggressive, expansionist and imperialist foreign policy which culminated eventually in the First World War.”

Queen Victoria was personally informed about Bismarck’s resignation by her grandson, as William II wrote to her “that Prince Bismarck has placed his resignation in my hands - his nerves and strength have given out,” and he also familiarized her with Bismarck’s successor Caprivi. Queen Victoria thanked her grandson for this communication with the words “I can well understand how troubled you must be,” and this incident is an apt illustration for the close personal relationship existing between the British Queen and the German Emperor, since Victoria was usually

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75 31 March 1890 Queen Victoria to the Emperor of Germany. Found in: Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv, BPH, Rep.52, W 3 (Merseburg), nr.11, documents 9-11.
informed by the Foreign Office whenever changes in an European government took place.

The impact of Bismarck’s resignation was strengthened when Herbert Bismarck followed his father’s decision some days later, and Cecil is certainly right in pointing out that this left the way open for William II to interfere “frequently in the Foreign Office, insisting on having his way concerning men as well as measures.”

Thus, at a time when in Britain Queen Victoria was considerably reducing her influence in matters of the Foreign Office, her grandson in Germany radically extended his direct influence on the German Foreign Office. This development certainly throws an interesting light on the parliamentary development and on the role of the monarchy in both countries; while in Britain, the monarchical power was increasingly diminished, the authority of the German Emperor remained unchallenged. If William II wanted to, he was perfectly able to interfere in matters of Germany’s foreign policy and, once Bismarck had resigned, William II was in fact free to determine “the direction of German diplomacy.”

As a consequence, the German Foreign Office was not under the control of the Chancellor Caprivi, but of the Emperor himself. Craig’s suggestion that after 1888, “William II played an essentially passive role, the decisive force being exerted by the Foreign Ministry,” has to be refuted with regard to the time following Herbert Bismarck’s resignation and also for the ministries of Caprivi and Hohenlohe; in fact, the strong position of William II was even recognized by the Times, which stated in 1891 that “Germany has a Constitution, though it does not perhaps count for very much against the Emperor and the army” (19 February 1891). Only under Bülow did then the German Foreign Office later regain a strong position.

However, Queen Victoria’s personal interest for the political development of Germany had virtually ceased to exist, and although she thanked William II for informing her about the latest news, she did not actively follow Germany’s political affairs any longer. But this lack of attention did not apply to the smaller German state

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of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, since Ernest II’s death in August 1893 resulted in Queen Victoria’s concentration on this Dukedom. The Duke’s death created the precedent of succession Prince Albert had been preparing for, since Prince Alfred, “probably the most intelligent of Victoria’s sons,” now became the new ruler of the German Dukedom. As already pointed out, this arrangement had been discussed fifty-three years before it actually happened, and there was no discussion about its legitimacy in 1893. As a result, the agreement which had been arranged on the royal level of Great Britain and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was not disputed by the parliaments of either country. However, the same can not be said about the public opinion in Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, which was, in the cautious words of the *Times*, “considerably exercised” (26 December 1893) about the English education of Duke Alfred. Only when Queen Victoria’s second son announced his resignation from the Privy Council did this public disapproval fade; in the following months, Duke Alfred successfully disconnected “himself as much as possible from all English ties which might in any way interfere with his character as a German Prince.” As a consequence, the *Times* notified its readers that the people of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha had “accepted their new Prince loyally” (6 February 1894).

Prince Alfred’s older sister Victoria, herself a German citizen, was convinced that “dearest Alfred will make an excellent Duke,” and she even expressed her hope that the new Duke might be “an example to William.” The German Emperor himself reacted gracefully to Alfred’s succession and welcomed him in Germany with the assurance that “the ties of sincere friendship which I always felt for the late Duke link

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80 *The Times*, 26 December 1893. The article reviewed the development of the previous months.
81 2 September 1893 The Dowager Empress of Germany to Queen Victoria. In: Ramm (ed.), *Beloved and darling child*, p. 161. Prince Alfred was the second son of Queen Victoria, Prince Arthur the third and Prince Leopold the fourth. At this point, the Duke of Albany had already been dead for nine years; accordingly, his title was inherited by his son, Prince Charles (named Charlie in the royal family).
82 2 September 1893 The Dowager Empress of Germany to Queen Victoria. In: Ramm (ed.), *Beloved and darling child*, p. 162.
For Duke Alfred personally, however, the situation was certainly “not a happy” one, since he had to abandon his career in the British navy at a time when the navy was becoming a very interesting issue. What is more, he had only “few responsibilities” to fulfil in his new position as Duke, which, after all, was a notably lower rank than that of the German Emperor.

The topic of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha then came again to the attention of Queen Victoria when the Duke’s son, Prince Alfred, unexpectedly died in February 1899, since this event raised the question of the succession to the Dukedom. The Salic Law established the Queen’s next son, Prince Arthur, as the heir to the title; however, Queen Victoria insisted that her third son “cannot give up his military career” in Britain, while Marie Mallet, a lady-in-waiting of Queen Victoria, observed about the alternative of Prince Charles, the young son of the late Prince Leopold, that he “would be obliged to become German, enter the German navy, and give up his happy healthy English life.”

The ensuing discussions of the members of the British and German royal families were, as a close observer put it, “rather stormy;” this emotional quality was intensified by Queen Victoria’s fear of the “danger of William interfering,” since she insisted that “this he has not the slightest right to do.” However, at this point of the debate, Emperor William II of Germany revealed that he would in fact have preferred to have been consulted about the succession to a German Dukedom before the British royal family had already shortlisted some candidates. Despite the claim of the Dowager Empress of Germany that her son had “nothing to do with the Coburg

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83 The letter of Emperor William II to Duke Alfred of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was published in the Times on 3 October 1893.
85 Ibid., p.161.
87 20 March 1899 M. Mallet to B. Mallet. In: Mallet (ed.). Life with Queen Victoria, p.158.
succession," it was of course the constitutional right of William II to be at least included in the discussion about a hereditary change in a Dukedom which, after all, belonged to the German - and not the British - Empire. The German Emperor had therefore the law on his side when he emphasized the current “German feeling that the heir-apparent to the throne of Coburg should leave the British and enter the German Army, should have his principal residence in Germany, and should have his son educated in that country,” which, after all, was a sentiment the Queen agreed with herself. At the same time, William II assured his British relations of his good-will and promised not to “bring in a Bill to prevent the succession of foreign princes to German thrones,” a step that would certainly have been possible. As a consequence, a joint action of the royal families of Britain and Prussia might well have been imaginable, but Queen Victoria insisted that her grandson had “nothing to do” with the issue; accordingly, she regarded her grandson’s approach as an interference and as “a real misfortune.”

In the end, the decision of Prince Arthur to abdicate his rights for Saxe-Coburg and Gotha left Prince Charles as the next heir for the German Dukedom, and Queen Victoria expressed her hope that “every thing is likely to be settled to the satisfaction of the Family and the Duchies.” As Prince Charles indeed left Eton and, in order to be properly prepared for his future task, lived in Coburg from now on, this arrangement was also in William II’s interest, who therefore agreed. Only five months later, Duke Alfred died of cancer, and Prince Charles succeeded him as Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.

This highly emotional discussion about the succession to the Dukedom reveals the deep interest Queen Victoria in fact still had for this smaller German state. Although her claim of having an exclusive right to decide the successor was certainly wrong, William II gave way in the end, probably because he did not pay much

90 17 April 1899 The Dowager Empress of Germany to Queen Victoria. In: Ramm (ed.), Beloved and darling child, p.228.
93 1 June 1899 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. Found in : RA QVJ.
94 1 May 1899 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. Found in: RA QVJ.
95 12 June 1899 Queen Victoria to the Emperor of Germany. Found in: RA L17/104.
attention to this German realm, which was politically insignificant and geographically small.

VIII-4: Colonies II

After his succession to the German throne, William II signaled a renewed interest in Germany's colonial development, an announcement which was the occasion of a careful attention of the British Foreign Office. During the following years, any closer co-operation between Great Britain and Germany was indeed restricted to the field of colonial affairs. The most important incident was the suggestion to exchange the British colony of Heligoland with Zanzibar, which was dominated by German influence. After extensive considerations, the final agreement was authorized by the British parliament; Queen Victoria herself, however, did not welcome this colonial settlement, since she feared negative repercussions for the British imperial empire.

The beginning of Emperor William II's reign was characterized by intensified colonial ambitions of Germany. In July 1888, reports about Germany's interest in the colonization of Zanzibar reached Britain, but neither Queen Victoria nor Salisbury regarded this topic to be of major interest, as illustrated by Salisbury's observation that the "Zanzibar news is chiefly important to the German Government." Considering that the African kings of Zanzibar had signed treaties with Germany and Britain in order to be protected from Arab slave hunters, both European countries had a connection with this colony; however, in Salisbury's words, the British side had "not begun operations," which left the responsibility for Zanzibar entirely to the Colonial Department of the German Foreign Office.

At the same time, Bismarck declared in a parliamentary speech that "it is my desire to maintain the friendly relations we have had with England for the last 150 years, and in colonial questions too," just as his son, Herbert Bismarck, emphasized "the strongest intention of working entirely with England [in colonial matters]." The German Dowager Empress supplied Queen Victoria with the interesting background information that "with regard to the Colonial policy, Prince Bismarck is caught in his

96 17 September 1888 Salisbury to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA N45/59.
97 29 October 1888 Salisbury to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA P19/151.
own trap! He never seriously thought of having colonies or fighting for them, (...) but William has taken it quite au sérieux.\textsuperscript{100}

During the following years, the friendly personal relationship between Queen Victoria and Emperor William II was extended to the political sphere of Anglo-German relations. Although discussions about an Anglo-German alliance did not lead to a positive outcome, subsequent communications succeeded in establishing a new arrangement with regard to Anglo-German frontiers in Africa. During the discussions about Africa’s future, Zanzibar was also discussed and for the first time, the possibility of exchanging the colony of Zanzibar, seen as a mainly German territory, with the island of Heligoland, which belonged to Britain since 1815, was mentioned.

As usual after her oldest daughter’s retirement from the political scene, Queen Victoria was informed by the Foreign Office about this suggestion, and her first reaction was utterly disapproving. The Queen expressed her opinion that this was “a very serious question which I do not like. 1. The people have been always very loyal (...) and it is a shame to hand them over to an unscrupulous despotic Government like the German without first consulting them. (...) 2. It is a very bad precedent. (...) All our colonies will wish to be free.”\textsuperscript{101} Both points are highly revealing: firstly, she rarely expressed her negative opinion about Germany so openly as in this statement to Salisbury, which in fact summarizes her altered view rather aptly. Only under Emperor William II did she characterize Germany as autocratic and amoral, which was indeed the precise opposite of the Germany outlined by her late husband. Secondly, it is evident that the Queen severely opposed any change to Britain’s imperialistic policy, which might threaten the established order. What is more, her sole concentration on Heligoland ignored the fact that Great Britain was gaining Zanzibar in this exchange.

As the next step, Salisbury informed the Queen about the Foreign Office’s reply that “in any agreement arrived at with Germany the rights of the people of Heligoland should be carefully reserved,”\textsuperscript{102} which certainly took the Queen’s scepticism regarding this arrangement into adequate consideration. Accordingly, Victoria authorized this compromise, but she still insisted on her second point and emphasized that “I can only consent on receiving a positive assurance from you that

\textsuperscript{100} 20 March 1889 The Dowager Empress of Germany to Queen Victoria. In: Ponsonby (ed.), Letters of the Empress Frederick, pp. 372-3.

\textsuperscript{101} 9 June 1890 Queen Victoria to Salisbury. Found in: RA P20/30.

\textsuperscript{102} 10 June 1890 Salisbury to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA P20/31.
the present arrangement constitutes no precedent.” Salisbury hastened to assure Queen Victoria that “this case is not and cannot be a precedent. It is absolutely peculiar,” since giving up Heligoland would not affect other British possessions. He also explained that whenever Britain would “quarrel with Germany, [Heligoland] would be seized by Germany the day she declared war,” which clarified that the ease with which Germany could seize Heligoland if a war should occur was in fact the main reason why Britain should give it up now. Convinced by this reasoning, Queen Victoria did agree to the colonial exchange, but she clearly only gave her consent because it was her monarchical duty to do so, since her emotions remained opposed to this step.

The *Times* mirrored the Queen’s feelings when it stated that “doubtless it is a somewhat startling thing for a Great Power to give up, without a war, a portion of European territory, however small and insignificant;” but the correspondent then went on to support the government’s policy by expressing that “in itself the connexion [sic] between the little Frisian island and Great Britain is extremely slight, and is not even sacred by long prescription” (18 June 1890).

On the German side, William II simultaneously formed a positive opinion about the exchange of Zanzibar with Heligoland, since, as he put it in his memoirs, Germany “was given a good opportunity to avoid colonial conflicts with England and to find an amicable arrangement with her.” He announced himself for an unofficial visit to Britain, during which he expressed his gratitude towards Britain by stating that he had “always felt at home in this charming country. Moreover, the same blood runs through English and German veins. Following the example of my grandfather and unforgettable father I will always - as far as this is in my power - keep the historic friendship between our nations.”

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104 12 June 1890 Salisbury to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA P20/32.

105 Ibid.


How friendly Anglo-German relations actually were is highlighted by the fact that precisely at that time, the House of Parliament authorized the exchange of Heligoland with Zanzibar. As a consequence, William II interrupted his journey back to Germany in Heligoland and announced to the islanders that they would “peacefully return to the relationship with the German fatherland which is indicated by history and the location as well as the conditions of trade of your island.”\textsuperscript{108} History proved Salisbury right in his assumption that the geographical location of Heligoland was relevant only for the future of Germany, as the island “became afterwards the keystone of her maritime position.”\textsuperscript{109} Ultimately, this was more important than the German hopes with regard to an East African Empire, which Germany gave up by substituting Zanzibar with Heligoland in 1890. The years following 1890 saw a friendly understanding between Britain and Germany on the governmental level, but the Zanzibar-Heligoland Treaty did not “lead to further accommodations between London and Berlin,”\textsuperscript{110} since Salisbury was not interested in binding Britain too close to a continental alliance; as a consequence, an “effective Anglo-German co-operation was limited largely to Africa.”\textsuperscript{111}

\textbf{VIII-5: ALLIANCES II}

In 1889, Bismarck approached Great Britain with a proposal for an Anglo-German alliance, which was, however, refused by the parliament of Britain. Queen Victoria herself abstained from participating in the debate, since by that time, she left German affairs to the responsibility of the Foreign Office. Although in 1896, Anglo-German relations deteriorated after the Kruger telegram, Chamberlain suggested to conclude an Anglo-German alliance only two years later, when the mutual view had improved slightly. However, this time the German side declined the possibility of an alliance, which, after all, had not been officially proposed in the first place. Instead of concluding a formal agreement, Bülow preferred to assure Great Britain of Germany’s goodwill. The Queen again refrained from voicing her opinion, which would certainly not have been in favour of an Anglo-German alliance. The same can be said about a


\textsuperscript{110} Cecil, Wilhelm II. p.278.

second attempt of Chamberlain to suggest an alliance in 1899, which stood no chance whatsoever, considering Bülow’s pro-Russian inclinations.

Considering the various expressions of goodwill originating from the German side after Emperor William II’s succession, it would have been politically unwise had Britain not reacted in a positive manner. As a consequence, Salisbury was interested in Bismarck’s proposal for an Anglo-German defensive alliance, which the German Chancellor made in 1889. However, as soon as the German restriction that “each pledges help to the other if France in the course of the next one, two, or three years, as the case may be, should attack either power,” was explained to the British side, it became apparent that the offer was attractive for Germany only, since the exclusion of Russia did not encourage Britain to enter the alliance. What is more, a major problem in concluding the agreement arose when Bismarck explained his intention to settle the treaty as an arrangement between the two Foreign Offices only. Although this was by all means the traditional practice of the first half of the nineteenth century, Salisbury preferred to involve the rising parliamentary factor into the process by insisting on a parliamentary sanction to the treaty from the British side, in addition to the assent of the Queen. This decision of the Prime Minister is highly significant, since it gave a clear indication about the increasing weight British statesmen were attributing to the participation of parliament (seen as the representative of the electorate) in the political process.

Since the British Parliament preferred an increase in the naval expenditure to forming a closer association with the German Empire, Salisbury and Bismarck “could discover no means of driving an equal bargain,” which put an end to these alliance plans. However, as Bourne argues, it has to be stressed that Bismarck’s alliance offer to Britain “can hardly have been serious” in the first place, since “he hoped the refusal he anticipated from Salisbury would demonstrate to his new Emperor the futility of an alliance with Great Britain.” This argument does in fact seem correct, since Sontag’s opinion that Bismarck “underestimate[d] the strength of British fear of entanglement in Continental politics,” is hardly convincing when one considers the

113 Ensor, England, p.199.
effort Bismarck had made during previous years to create a complex alliance system, one integral part of which had always been to isolate Britain.

Queen Victoria's approval of the terminated alliance talks is hardly surprising, considering the Queen's disillusionment about Germany's political development. She did not participate in the alliance discussions at all, which were restricted to the level of the respective Foreign Secretaries and the Foreign Offices, but she did retain her constitutional right of being fully informed about the debate. This neutral approach of the Queen intensified her already emerged inclination not to participate actively in the foreign affairs of Britain any longer, but to leave this responsibility to the Foreign Office.

After a considerable deterioration of the Anglo-German relationship following William II's Kruger telegram in 1896, the mutual exasperation began to calm down in subsequent years. Accordingly, it would have been the task of the Foreign Office to approach Germany for a more friendly understanding; however, considering that the general mood in Britain was still sceptical about an alliance with Germany, the initiative "came not from the government." Instead, in 1898, the British Colonial Secretary Chamberlain started the first of two attempts to establish closer relations with Germany by suggesting "an Anglo-German alliance that would permit imperial expansion to run forward without concessions to any other Great Power" - by which he clearly meant France. Chamberlain denounced Salisbury's policy of isolation and tried to show the advantages of a dynamic diplomatic activity with Germany instead by arguing that "the Anglo-Saxon nations should conclude an alliance." He even made "an unauthorized approach to Germany for an alliance," but the German side was "not interested," and Chamberlain's proposal did not lead to a positive result as far as a specific alliance was concerned.

There was however a positive response in Germany insofar as a friendly speech of the Foreign Secretary Bülow paved the way for more cordial relations between the two countries; in this speech, Bülow observed that "there are all sorts of

120 Ibid.
questions and a great variety of points in which we can go together with England, and
do gladly go together with England, without prejudicing, and while completely
maintaining, our other valuable connexions.” The Times reacted to this statement
with a leading article, pointing out that “what we ask from Germany, and are ready to
give her in return is friendliness of attitude, co-operation where co-operation is for
mutual advantage, and complete abstention from wanton opposition when the aims of
the two countries are not actually incompatible” (13 December 1898). This friendly
relationship between Great Britain and Germany, which, however, did not include an
alliance, corresponded with the opinion of the large majority of Britain’s electorate,
which preferred Salisbury’s approach of forming no exclusive alliance but of showing
a basic readiness to participate in a policy of international co-operation. What is more,
even Chamberlain’s ministerial colleagues favoured Salisbury’s option and “showed
no inclination to move closer to Germany.”

It is very interesting to note that Chamberlain propagated the former opinions
of Queen Victoria at a time when the British monarch herself had completely changed
her judgement, since the Queen showed no interest in an Anglo-German alliance in
1898. However, whereas Chamberlain’s approach represented only a minority in
Britain, the emotional approach of Queen Victoria was once more in accordance with
the general feeling of the nation.

During a visit of William II and Bülow to Britain in 1899, Chamberlain seized
the opportunity of suggesting an Anglo-German alliance for the second time, but the
view of the politically interested public on both sides was again profoundly opposed
to any closer association between the two countries. Chamberlain observed that
“sooner or later the two countries would have to come to a general under­
standing,” and his suggestion was at first received favourably by William II and
Bülow. They even expanded his proposal into a plan for a Triple Alliance of Germany,
Britain and the United States, and Chamberlain then took up this idea in a speech
given at Leicester, in which he recommended “a new Triple Alliance between the
teutonic race and the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon Race.” However,
once he had returned to Germany, Bülow showed his true face by sending only “vague soundings”\textsuperscript{125} back to Britain, since his real interest had been with Russia all along. As a consequence, he actually “worked actively against”\textsuperscript{126} the possibility of an Anglo-German agreement, which in the end prevented Chamberlain’s idea from taking shape. Thus, Bülow truly represented the general feeling in Germany, which in fact favoured the side of the Boers in the South-African War.

\underline{VIII-6: JUBILEE II}

Queen Victoria’s sixtieth year of reign was the occasion of an enormous range of festivities in Britain, and a contemporary voice judged that “never was the popular enthusiasm greater, more personally affectionate in its demonstration, than on this sixtieth anniversary of her accession to the Throne.”\textsuperscript{127} Thus, the person of the British Queen symbolized the entire British Empire, and her own German background was beyond recollection during the last part of Victoria’s life.

It was indeed an important development that, as another contemporary source pointed out, “in 1887, for the celebrations of her fifty years’ reign, she [Queen Victoria] had been escorted by kings and princes, her descendants and relatives. For her Diamond Jubilee (...) she was escorted by all her peoples.”\textsuperscript{128} These celebrations were a clear sign that the British sovereign had become an undisputed institution, forming an uniting bond for the whole nation. Leading journals observed that “the loyalty of the British nation has increased tenfold in strength, till it is stronger and fuller than it has ever been since an English King first sat upon a Throne.”\textsuperscript{129} The \textit{Times} praised the Queen for representing “the principles of order, of civilization, and of rational progress” and attributed “a direct influence upon public and private life” to the Queen (22 June 1897). The general feeling of the nation’s identification with the monarch was certainly intense, as illustrated by observations such as “if ever there was a moment at which one might feel proud of being a member of the British Empire it was now.”\textsuperscript{130} Queen Victoria was perceived as the “Mother of the Land,”\textsuperscript{131} which

\textsuperscript{125} Cecil, \textit{Wilhelm II}, p.331.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Vanity Fair}, 24 June 1897.
assisted in establishing an exclusive feeling of "indeed British of the British."\textsuperscript{132} This intensification is an interesting illustration of how completely the Queen was perceived as a British monarch, thus utterly disregarding her undeniably German background during the last part of her life.

In the year of the Jubilee, a book entitled \textit{The life of the Queen. By one of her Majesty's servants}, which was published anonymously, depicted Queen Victoria as a "hard working woman,"\textsuperscript{133} thus evoking a distinctly positive image of the monarch. This anonymous account was one of the most intimate publications available, since the author revealed that he worked for the Queen at a certain time, or was even still present at her Court. He informed the reader that "there is nothing which goes on of which she has not intimate knowledge of,"\textsuperscript{134} for "every paper and question has always been perused and criticized by the Queen herself."\textsuperscript{135} These statements contradicted widespread rumours that the Queen was leading a lazy life, an image that she had unwittingly supported with her two books about life in the Scottish Highlands. Although the author does admit that "much of the Queen's heavy daily work is self-imposed, and, from the point of view of governing her great Empire, absolutely unnecessary,"\textsuperscript{136} he does not dispute the basic right of the Queen to participate in the affairs of state.

As the revelation of 'insider' knowledge of the Royal family was not as common as it is nowadays, it was an important step to make it publicly known that Queen Victoria was in fact a hard working monarch. This seemed for the world outside the court even more astonishing when considering that by that time, the Prince of Wales had begun to take over the official functions of the monarchy. The contemporary observation, "Marlborough House had become the real seat of the Court,"\textsuperscript{137} was however an exaggeration, since Marlborough House had become the

\textsuperscript{131} 29 June 1897 A.J.C.Hare to the Countess of Darnley. In: A.J.C.Hare, \textit{The story of my life} (London, 1900), vol.6, p.465.

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Vanity Fair}, 24 June 1897.

\textsuperscript{133} Anon., \textit{The life of the Queen. By one of her Majesty's servants} (Old Woking, 1979; first edition 1897), p.108.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p.217.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p.163.

\textsuperscript{137} C.S.Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, \textit{The glitter and the gold} (New York, 1952), p.93. Marlborough House was the London residence of the Prince of Wales.
centre for fashionable society only. Queen Victoria, on the other hand, still held audiences and investitures, and she received foreign Sovereigns and other distinguished visitors. In 1900, she paid a visit to Ireland and appeared at a series of public functions.

Finally, apart from Queen Victoria’s epitomization of the British nation, the Jubilee was also marked by an intensifying expression of British Imperialism, which made itself most manifest in the naval review at Portsmouth, characterized by a contemporary witness as “a Jingo apotheosis.”

VIII-7: ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS AT THE END OF THE CENTURY

The already marred Anglo-German friendship was irreversibly shattered by William II’s telegram to Kruger in 1896. Whereas the politically interested part of the British public reacted appalled to this step of the German Emperor, the German side agreed enthusiastically with this anti-British action. Queen Victoria tried twice to influence the negative British press coverage about Germany, but only her second attempt temporarily succeeded. However, this royal effort was based on an emotional approach towards a country of which Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was perceived to be a vital part. On the political level, Queen Victoria eventually agreed with Salisbury’s proposition to improve Britain’s relations with Russia. Anglo-German relations received a final blow when the politically interested parts of the German public sided with the Boers during the Boer War, but even at that time, Queen Victoria and William II preserved their royal friendship on a personal level.

Any possibility of a friendly Anglo-German relationship was destroyed by William II’s reaction to the Jameson Raid in 1896, since this step damaged the Anglo-German friendship irreparably. In December 1895, Captain Jameson launched an invasion, a so-called raid, from the Cape Colony into the neighbouring Transvaal; he acted on the assumption that the Transvaal was so weak that it would be comparatively easy to annex it for the Cape Colony. Yet the British Colonial Secretary Chamberlain was not informed about Jameson’s decision; what is more, Kruger, the Governor of the Transvaal, easily overwhelmed the invaders. After Jameson’s defeat, Rhodes accepted the incident as his political responsibility and resigned from his post of Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, and as soon as the

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Foreign Office had finally been informed about this development, Chamberlain familiarized Queen Victoria with the news. With this step, the whole matter could have been brought to an end, had not William II decided in January 1896 to send Kruger a congratulatory telegram. The Kaiser complimented him "that you and your people have succeeded, without having to invoke the help of friendly powers, in restoring peace with your own resources in face of armed bands which have broken into your country as disturbers of the peace and have been able to preserve the independence of your country against attacks from outside."

The subsequent British reaction to this telegram, aptly described by McLean as "a powerful manifestation of Wilhelm's hostility towards England," was devastating. Lady Monkswell, a contemporary observer, was a comparatively mild representative of the British opinion when she wrote that "it is most unfriendly of him to rejoice at our discomfiture." The Prince of Wales went a step further and criticized the telegram as "a most gratuitous act of unfriendliness." Queen Victoria herself was extremely infuriated and reprimanded William's step as "outrageous, and very unfriendly towards us." She decided to write a straightforward letter to her grandson, in which she remarked: "As your Grandmother to whom you have always shown so much affection and of whose example you have always spoken with so much respect, I feel I cannot refrain from expressing my deep regret at the telegram you sent President Kruger. It is considered very unfriendly towards this country, which I feel sure it is not intended to be, and has, I grieve to say, made a very painful impression here."

139 3 January 1896 Telegram of the Emperor of Germany to President Kruger. In: Balfour, The Kaiser and his times, p.194 (English translation), and Klaussmann (ed.), Kaiserreden (Leipzig, 1902), p.117 (German text).
143 3 January 1896 Extract from the journal of Queen Victoria. In: Ibid.
However, the overwhelming majority of British citizens did not at all correspond with the Queen’s assumption that William II had not intended that the diction of his telegram was hostile towards Britain; in fact, because of its nationalistic tendencies, “the telegram surprised the British public much more than it did British Ministers,”¹⁴⁵ as the latter had had more experience of William II’s behaviour. Thus, William’s action “provoked a mood of Germanophobia in British public opinion,”¹⁴⁶ even more so since it blatantly contradicted the general British impression that “Germany under Queen Victoria’s grandson was Great Britain’s friend;”¹⁴⁷ moreover, the politically informed parts of the British public had not forgotten that, only two years earlier, William II had been shown the favour of receiving a Colonel-in-Chief title. As a consequence, the Times pointed out that “it is becoming more and more difficult to follow the kaleidoscopic transformation which the attitude of Germany towards England is successfully undergoing” (21 January 1896).

In Germany, on the other hand, the Emperor’s telegram “proved very popular,”¹⁴⁸ for “the middle class shared William’s resentment of Britain;”¹⁴⁹ when the British side realized that the reaction in Germany was that of a general approval of William’s conduct, contemporary British voices stated that “the Germans become more odious and aggressive every day and the Kruger telegram has given the German Emperor a popularity in his own country he never would have earned in any other way.”¹⁵⁰ The Times likewise observed that “signs exist that the feeling of the people towards Germany is no longer so friendly as until quite recently (...). The British public are beginning to realize that the sentiments habitually expressed towards England in many important German newspapers are those of rooted suspicion and hostility. (... The popular feeling towards Germany is already becoming estranged. If the Germans persevere in their policy of exasperation, it will be wholly alienated and, perhaps, converted into a fixed dislike” (16 October 1896). Thus, the conduct of the German Emperor “brought Anglo-German relations to an all-time low,”¹⁵¹ a development which for the foreseeable future obstructed any attempts to form an

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¹⁴⁵ Balfour, The Kaiser and his times, p.195.
¹⁴⁶ Bentley, Politics without democracy, p.301.
¹⁴⁹ Carr, A history of Germany, p.201.
¹⁵⁰ 5 November 1896 M.Mallet to B.Mallet. In: Mallet (ed.), Life with Queen Victoria, p.95.
¹⁵¹ Craig, Germany, p.243.
Anglo-German alliance, since from now on, public opinion in both countries was adamantly against this possibility.

Despite the outrage caused by the telegram, William II tried to explain to his grandmother that "never was the telegram intended as a step against England or your Government." His justification was based on the rather distorted construction that he "was standing up for law, order and obedience to a sovereign whom I revere and adore," namely Queen Victoria. However, it was simply not possible to read the telegram in any pro-British way. Queen Victoria realized that her grandson's excuses were "lame and illogical," but she agreed with Salisbury's suggestion to "accept all his explanations without enquiring too narrowly into the truth of them." Accordingly, she wrote a friendly letter to her grandson, which resolved the matter on the personal level.

After the Queen had therefore successfully restored harmony within the internationally connected royalty, she also attempted to counteract the strong anti-German feelings which William II's telegram had caused in Britain. The Queen asked Salisbury if he could "not hint to our respectable papers not to write violent articles to excite the people?" but Salisbury politely refused to do so. His noncompliance with the sovereign's wish portrayed the distinction the Prime Minister made between the royal opinion on the one side and the open expression of the nation's feelings on the other side.

Salisbury likewise reassured Queen Victoria about the appropriateness of Britain's isolation when Victoria argued that "affairs are now so different from what they used to be." Both incidents illustrate the immense confidence which Queen Victoria placed in her Prime Minister, since she accepted his decision without insisting on her opinion. Salisbury's belief in Britain's isolation had intensified since 1891, when the Entente between France and Russia had complemented the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, which had been renewed in 1887; as a

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152 8 January 1896 The Emperor of Germany to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA O45/140a.
153 Ibid.
consequence, "Britain stood outside the two camps, unattached to either." It was certainly an important development that the Foreign Office chose isolation "not merely [as] an involuntary position of weakness, but also [as] a deliberate policy," since the two alliance system seemed to balance each other.

During the following years, Salisbury eventually decided to establish "links with the Franco-Russian group," and he indicated this intention to Queen Victoria by suggesting that "it is most desirable to try to be on best terms with Russia, it is the only way to keep Germany in check." Considering that Tsar Nicholas II was the husband of her beloved Hessian granddaughter Alix, Queen Victoria's traditional antipathy towards Russia had diminished slightly, and since she never ceased to see political relations on the basis of personal connections, she eventually agreed with Salisbury's view and decided to invite the Tsar. This was an astonishing step, since the Queen preferred to ask the Russian Tsar to come to Britain rather than continuing the tradition of Wilhelm II's annual visits (who usually invited himself). Hence, because of the British antipathy towards Germany following the Kruger telegram, Emperor William II did not stay in Britain in 1896. The Times, on the other hand, welcomed Nicholas II after his arrival and pointed out that "he will find on all sides amongst us that cordial and respectful greeting which our own dignity requires us to pay him no less than his exalted rank" (22 September 1896). The Queen got on well with Nicholas II, who also had several political conversations with Salisbury. Once the Tsar had left again for Russia, Queen Victoria concluded that "the charming visit will have done great good."

The Queen's decision not to invite her German grandson to the Jubilee has already been mentioned, but after the Jubilee ceremonies, Queen Victoria was increasingly alarmed by the signs of deteriorating Anglo-German relations. This

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160 Jarman, Democracy and world conflict, p.103.
concern was no longer based on a political interest in Germany, but on a purely personal regard for the country in which many of the Queen's closest relatives were living, and of which Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was a part of. Queen Victoria therefore told her eldest daughter that "the bad feeling between England and Germany is indeed a great distress and anguish to me (...) but I trust this will pass away gradually if William will not keep it up by speeches and colonial follies." One example for the Anglo-German animosity mentioned by Queen Victoria can be found in the *Times*, which expressed its opinion that "it is next to impossible for this country to do or to abstain from doing anything in any quarter of the globe without calling forth angry criticism from the German newspapers, which more or less regularly intelligently derive their inspiration from the German Foreign Office" (29 April 1897).

As a result, Queen Victoria tried once more to influence British newspapers to give a more positive coverage of German affairs; this time, however, she did not ask Salisbury for assistance, since the Prime Minister was convinced that with regard to the *Times*, "we have no influence with it whatever." Instead, the Queen approached Theodor Martin, the official biographer of the Prince Consort. After he had contacted the most important British newspapers, Martin assured Queen Victoria that "the leading Journals will adopt a quite altered tone towards the Emperor of Germany and the German people." In fact, he succeeded in persuading *The Standard, The Telegraph, Morning Post, Daily News, Daily Chronicle, The Globe, The St.James's Gazette, The Pall Mall Gazette* and, one day later, *The Times* to follow the Queen's wish. Eventually, even *Punch* agreed to Martin's request, but the Queen's success was only short-lived and the leading newspapers soon returned to their original diction.

As a consequence, this appeal of Queen Victoria had no deeper implications, but it is interesting to notice that the sovereign's approach corresponded once more with the political development, since in 1898, Anglo-German relations reached again a more co-operative phase. The Foreign Offices of both countries agreed on a colonial arrangement which established a theoretical distribution of the Portuguese colonies

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should Portugal at any time renounce her colonial interests. Germany promised to
abandon any "interest in the Transvaal," and in return received a comparatively
large share of Portugal's colonies. This settlement illustrates the possibility of an
international co-operation between Britain and Germany, despite the rather irritated
public opinion in both countries. However, interestingly enough, it was not Queen
Victoria, but Cecil Rhodes who expressed the opinion that "in view of the
complications in the world we must work with some nation, and Germany seems the
best."¹⁶⁷

Queen Victoria, for her part, restricted her actions to attempts to alter the
public opinion in Britain, and did not normally participate in the responsibilities of the
Foreign Office any longer, not even when German affairs were concerned. Her
gradual acceptance of Russia led however to an unofficial attempt to prevent an effort
of William II to alienate Great Britain and Russia by promoting a wrong image of
Britain; Queen Victoria wrote directly to the Tsar, Nicholas II: "I feel I must write
and tell you something which you ought to know and perhaps do not. It is, I am sorry
to say, that William takes every opportunity of impressing upon Sir F. Lascelles that
Russia is doing all in her power to work against us. (...) I need not to say that I do not
believe a word of this, neither do Lord Salisbury nor Sir F. Lascelles. But I am afraid
William may go and tell things against us to you, just as he does about you to us. If
so, pray tell me openly and confidentially. It is so important that we should understand
each other, and that such mischievous and unstraightforward proceedings should be
put a stop to."¹⁶⁸ The Queen's letter represented an extraordinary step, since
formulations of this kind had formerly been restricted to her correspondence with
Germany; by now, however, the Queen agreed with Salisbury's beliefs with regard to
the foreign policy of Britain, and as a consequence, she even conquered her traditional
distrust of Russia. The Tsar thanked Queen Victoria personally for writing to him so
openly about William II, and he assured her that "now I fully understand what he is up
to - it is a dangerous double game he is playing at."¹⁶⁹ Although the Anglo-Russian

¹⁶⁷ March 1899 Cecil Rhodes to the Prince of Wales. In: Buckle (ed.), The letters of Queen
¹⁶⁸ 1 March 1899 Queen Victoria to the Emperor of Russia. In: Ibid., pp.343-4.
¹⁶⁹ 13 March 1899 The Emperor of Russia to Queen Victoria. In: A.Mayhuras/S.Mironenko
relations did never completely replace Queen Victoria’s former interest in Germany, it is astonishing to see how adaptable her opinions still were.

The outbreak of the Boer War in October 1899, however, focused Britain’s attention on the developments in South Africa. The war caused a further deterioration of Britain’s image in Germany, since, in the words of Bülow, “the public opinion in Germany did consider the whole situation not with the head, but with the heart, and the German people were eagerly supporting the poor Boers.” An anonymous British source of 1918 agreed with this perception by stating that “in 1900 England was the least popular State in Europe,” which illustrates how isolated Britain in fact was at the end of the nineteenth century. This negative German image of Britain had serious repercussions, since “the British people and royal family came to make a greater distinction between the Kaiser, whom they considered to be friendly towards them, and the German people, who because of their pro-Boer sympathies, they considered to be irremediably hostile.”

This distinction was also made by Salisbury, who agreed with Queen Victoria’s opinion that William II had “shown himself disposed to be friendly towards this country.” Simultaneously, the Times voiced Britain’s willingness to grant Germany a considerable share of influence in the world, writing that “the great position which Germany has made for herself as a Continental Power we have assuredly no reason either to regret or to envy. Nor do we see any reason why she should regret or envy the great position which we have made for ourselves as an insular and Colonial Power” (27 October 1899). Queen Victoria herself had already received hints from both the Dowager Empress and Lascelles that William II was interested in friendlier relations of Germany with Britain, since the Russian Tsar had not responded enthusiastically to the Emperor’s pro-Russian inclinations. Although the Queen wished that her grandson would be “more prudent and less impulsive at such an age,” she did eventually invite him for his second state visit, which took

171 Anon., The last of the war lords: new light on the life and personality of Kaiser Wilhelm II, his relations with Britons and Americans, with artists and writers, and some account of his love-affairs (London, 1918), p.160.
place in November 1899. This time, William II was accompanied by his Foreign Secretary Bülow. Interestingly enough, the German Foreign Office provided the Emperor with an ‘aide mémoire’ which stated that “this English journey offers Your Majesty (...) the authority which is properly due to Your Majesty’s high qualities and great power. All that Your Majesty need do to secure this is to avoid all political conversations.”¹⁷⁵ Both William II and Bülow were received warmly; in fact, Britain “seemed to have completely forgotten the Kruger telegram.”¹⁷⁶

In accordance with the ‘aide mémoire’, Queen Victoria and Salisbury chose Bülow as their partner for several political discussions. The sovereign’s first impression of the German Foreign Secretary was positive, since she thought that “he spoke most sensibly and kindly, and appeared much distressed at the bad feeling in Germany against us, which I said was really most unfair and unreasonable, in which he quite agreed.”¹⁷⁷ The Queen was equally pleased when she learnt that it was her grandson’s aim to achieve “a good understanding between our two countries.”¹⁷⁸ However, it is important to realize that the German Emperor had come to Britain, as a contemporary observer wrote, “in spite of the disgust of his own people, who are furious against us [Britain] on account of the Boer war.”¹⁷⁹ Bülow himself expressed the same opinion when he pointed out that “there is no question that the feeling in Britain is much less anti-German than the feeling in Germany is anti-British.”¹⁸⁰

Despite this international constellation, Queen Victoria was thoroughly pleased with William II’s visit, and she concluded that “I had a good deal of talk with William on all subjects and found him very amiable and most anxious that all should go well between the two countries and that they should be on the best of terms. Count Bülow (...) spoke very openly to me and quite in the same sense.”¹⁸¹ Despite the

¹⁸⁰ In: Padfield, The great naval race, p. 87.
discrepancy between royal judgement and public opinion, William II’s second state visit to Britain did in fact help to promote a better understanding between Germany and Britain on the governmental level, where “for the moment relations were cordial,” a conclusion also reached by the Times, which wrote that British and German interests “to a very great extent run upon parallel lines” (29 November 1899).

This willingness to co-operate became important when reports about an active participation of German soldiers on the side of the Boers reached Britain, an account that was the occasion of immense British antipathy towards Germany. The matter was considered important enough by the Foreign Office to be delegated to the royal level; however, Queen Victoria was assured by William II that “no actively serving officers are fighting or leading Boers,” and his guarantee settled this issue officially.

What is more, the German Emperor also tried to comply with the request of the Transvaal, who had asked the German Foreign Office for a ‘friendly intervention’ on behalf of the South African Republic, clearly hoping that this approach would lead to a peaceful solution. Accordingly, William II asked the British Queen if “England was also ready” to consider a mediation by Germany; his grandmother, however, was deeply opposed to this idea and told Salisbury that “the German Emperor’s suggestion as to terms of peace should not be listened to for a moment.” The British Prime Minister agreed with his sovereign, and the Queen replied to William’s proposal that “the time for, and the terms of, peace must be left to our decision, and my country, which is suffering from so heavy a sacrifice of precious lives, will resist all interference.” William was utterly sympathetic and declared his understanding, since “after nearly 14,000 officers and men have shed their blood for Queen and country, there can be only this issue.” He even notified Kruger during the latter’s visit to Germany in December 1900 “that the emperor would not receive him,” a decision which illustrated his personal support for Britain during the Boer War.

182 Evans, The Victorian age, p.526.
184 11 March 1900 The Emperor of Germany to Queen Victoria. Found in: RA P7/103.
186 11 March 1900 Queen Victoria to the Emperor of Germany. In: Ibid., p.509.
188 Ensor, England, p.262.
Thus, even at a time when the relations between Great Britain and Germany deteriorated beyond repair, Queen Victoria and Emperor William II maintained their personal friendship on the royal level.

**VIII-8: FINALE**

Queen Victoria’s death in 1901 was perceived as the end of an era in Great Britain. A rather unexpected bystander at the Queen’s deathbed was her oldest grandson, Emperor William II of Germany. Yet whereas his presence at a time of national bereavement resulted in favourable comments in the British press, it was exactly this constellation which was the occasion for decidedly negative comments in Germany. With the death of Queen Victoria, the royal families of Great Britain and Germany lost their common foundation, while at the same time the Anglo-Japanese alliance began a configuration of foreign alliances completely different from Queen Victoria’s own initial hope of promoting an Anglo-German association.

The Boer War contributed to the deteriorating of Queen Victoria’s health during the months following William II’s visit to Britain in November 1899; this had in fact been the last occasion on which a lady-in-waiting of the Queen observed that the monarch looked “more marvellously well than ever.”\(^{189}\) Only seven months later, another lady-in-waiting remarked that she was “not very happy about the beloved Queen, she has changed since I was here last and looks so much older and feeble that my heart rather sinks.”\(^{190}\) After July 1900, statements about her increasing weakness began to appear in the Queen’s journal, together with observations such as “pain in the back”, “appetite is completely gone” and “too tired to do anything.”\(^{191}\) At the end of 1900, it became evident to the British court that Queen Victoria was losing her strength, and by January 1901, the fact that “the Queen is unwell”\(^{192}\) became known to the British public. A first official bulletin was issued on 19 January, and three days later, Queen Victoria died, surrounded by her children and her grandchildren.

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190 1 February 1900 M.Mallet to B.Mallet. In: Mallet (ed.), Life with Queen Victoria, p.176.
Surprisingly, one of these grandchildren was Emperor William II of Germany, who immediately came to Britain once he was informed about his grandmother’s ill health. As the Queen’s Private Secretary put it, although “no one had asked him to come, he behaved in a most dignified and admirable manner,” and immediately after Queen Victoria’s death, the German Emperor issued an order to his army which stated that “the demise of my beloved, honoured, unforgettable grandmother (...) has caused immense grief to myself and to my family.” Sinclair even postulated that William II arranged the late Queen’s lying-in-state; however, this fact is inaccurate, since the public could not pay their respect to the coffin, but, with the Emperor’s help, a private room was arranged at Osborne. The funeral was planned by the Earl Marshal, the Lord’s Chamberlain’s Office and the Office of Works.

King Edward’s VII reign started a new era, as Queen Victoria’s epitomization of Great Britain’s supremacy had led to the fact that it was “almost impossible to imagine Her passing away or to form any idea of the effect it would have throughout the world.” After Queen Victoria’s death, the obituaries in newspapers and contemporary journals were innumerable; in the context of this thesis, the German reaction is of the main importance. On 22 January 1901, German newspapers shortly notified their readers about the news of the Queen’s death; on the next day, extensive obituaries were published, all of which paid detailed reverence to the life of the British Queen. The leading Berlin newspaper, the Vossische Zeitung, for example, wrote that “a blessed life has come to its end. At the bier of Queen Victoria, we shake hands with the English people in honest sympathy and wish that her new King will prove to be a protector of the liberty of the people, just as his mother has been.”

195 See: A. Sinclair, The other Victoria, the Princess Royal and the great game of Europe (London, 1981), p. 241. Viscountess Milner revealed that “he offered his services to his uncle as secretary and wrote many of the King’s letters for him.” In: Milner, My picture gallery, p. 233.
196 I am indebted to Lady de Bellaigue from the Royal Archives for this explanation.
198 Vossische Zeitung, 23 January 1901. Translation by the author.
However, this forward looking perspective was limited to the death notices of foreign countries only, for the contemporary reactions in Britain were characterized by an intense grief. The general feeling that “the great Victorian age is at an end”\textsuperscript{199} could no longer deny that “the twentieth century had come.”\textsuperscript{200} The Queen’s death seemed to mark “the passing of the golden age of the British empire,”\textsuperscript{201} since, as an ‘American resident’ put it in 1937, she had served “as a glorified model for the entire conduct of life for the people.”\textsuperscript{202} Queen Victoria’s Hessian grandson, Grand Duke Ernest Louis, aptly summarized the British emotions when he stated that “one felt as if a people wept for its mother.”\textsuperscript{203} Since only “very few living could remember a time when she was not Queen,”\textsuperscript{204} Victoria’s death caused “a sense of desolation (...) mingled with sudden alarm,”\textsuperscript{205} which is a striking illustration that Queen Victoria had accomplished to “reconcile a large part of the population to an institution (...) to an extent that could hardly have been imagined in 1837.”\textsuperscript{206}

The fact that Emperor William II of Germany was present at Queen Victoria’s deathbed had, as a contemporary German source put it, “taken the hearts of the English people by storm;”\textsuperscript{207} and another observer remarked that “the Kaiser’s visit (...) caused profound gratification, as demonstrating his personal good-will.”\textsuperscript{208} Even such an intimate source as the Queen’s Assistant Private Secretary, Frederick Ponsonby, stressed that William II “behaved in a most dignified and admirable manner.”\textsuperscript{209} William II himself did not fail to realize the significance of his

\textsuperscript{200} Auchincloss, Persons of consequence, p.200.
\textsuperscript{203} E.G.Franz (Hg.), Erinnertes, Aufzeichnungen des letzten Großherzogs Ernst Ludwig von Hessen und bei Rhein (Darmstadt, 1983), p.92.
\textsuperscript{204} V.Mersey, A picture of life, 1872-1940 (London, 1941), p.320.
\textsuperscript{207} Klaußmann, Kaiserreden, p.126. The Times of 6 February 1901 also thanked William II for his stay in Britain and stated that he had “impressed the heart and mind of the nation.”
\textsuperscript{208} J.Coulter/J.A.Copper, Queen Victoria. Her grand life and glorious reign. A complete story of the career of the marvellous Queen and Empress (Chicago, 1901), p.101.
\textsuperscript{209} Ponsonby, Recollections of three reigns, p.82.
grandmother’s death when he stated that “after the Queen had gently passed away in my arms, the curtain had fallen over many memories of my youth. Her death marks a chapter in English history and in England’s relationship with Germany.”\(^{210}\) The *Times* thanked the German Emperor by declaring before his departure to Germany: “Farewell, Sir, mists between us may have been,/But this salt mist that doth the eyelids wet,/Your English tears for love of England’s Queen,/England will not forget.”\(^{211}\)

However, this enthusiastic coverage was restricted to Britain, since in Germany, the Emperor’s prolonged visit to the country of his grandmother was regarded as “a highly unpopular gesture at the height of the Boer War anglophobia;”\(^{212}\) accordingly, William II’s visit to Britain in 1901 “was roundly condemned in the German press.”\(^{213}\) This anti-British feeling was also recognized by the *Times*, which observed that the Emperor’s visit “did not accord with the feelings of the vast majority of the German people” (9 February 1901); as a result of these candid comments, Bülow had to reassure the German Parliament that the Emperor’s visit to Britain had no political meaning, which contradicted the *Times’s* hope that “the visit of the German Emperor may improve the spirit of our relations with the great nation he governs” (6 February 1901).

In ignorance of the anti-British feelings prevalent in Germany, William II returned to Germany in “a state of Anglophile euphoria,”\(^{214}\) and it took Bülow quite some time to re-establish the former anti-British disposition of his Emperor. Although an Anglo-German alliance seemed possible for a short while after Queen Victoria’s death, Bülow had to consider Germany’s anti-British sentiments, which led to his opinion to “better wait and leave the initiative to the English.”\(^{215}\) At the same time, Salisbury came to the conclusion that Britain should not end her self-chosen isolation, since this isolation did not create any hazard: “It would hardly be wise to incur novel and most onerous obligations, in order to guard against a danger in whose existence

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\(^{211}\) *The Times*, 6 February 1901. The verses were by R.Rhoades.


\(^{214}\) Balfour, *The Kaiser and his times*, p.140.

we have no historical reason for believing.\textsuperscript{216} Some evidence that Salisbury was not the exception to the public opinion in Britain can be found in a ‘private and secret’ memorandum, which declared that “there may be some danger, but there are also advantages to us in isolation.”\textsuperscript{217}

Subsequently, Britain chose not to associate herself with any continental alliance, but opted for an entirely different partner when, in July 1901, Britain began alliance talks with Japan. Accordingly, only one year after Queen Victoria’s death, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was officially announced, and this step symbolized a very different path for Britain from the one begun under Queen Victoria.

On a personal level, Queen Victoria’s death “marked the starting point for a deterioration in the relations between the two royal families which was to prove irreversible and politically damaging,”\textsuperscript{218} since the personal relationship between King Edward VII of Great Britain and Emperor William II of Germany was anything but affectionate when compared with that of Queen Victoria and her German grandson. As a consequence, friendly personal associations between the royal families of Great Britain and Germany were no longer a constituent of the international relationship between these two countries.

The years following the Queen’s Jubilee in 1887 saw the final deterioration of Queen Victoria’s image of Germany. The death of Emperor Frederick III, who reigned for only ninety-nine, disappointed any remaining hopes the Queen still associated in memory of her late husband with the political future of Germany. The only links she preserved were personal relations, mainly with grandchildren; among these, Emperor William II played a special role. From now on, Queen Victoria defined her own nationality as thoroughly British, and her undeniable German background was no longer significant. This image was also accepted by the British nation, as reflected in the pageantry of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee.

In the wider context of international relations between Britain and Germany, it was certainly ironic that at a time when Queen Victoria had ceased to be interested in

\textsuperscript{217} 27 October 1901 Extract from F. Bertie’s ‘private and secret’ memorandum. In: Ibid., no. 137, p. 464.
\textsuperscript{218} McLean, Monarchy and diplomacy in Europe, p. 37.
a closer association between these two countries, the idea did finally attract the attention of statesmen on both sides. As a consequence, several attempts to form an Anglo-German alliance were made, but Queen Victoria did not play any part in these negotiations - an attitude inconceivable only some years earlier, when she certainly would have supported such plans fervently. However, none of these endeavours led to a positive outcome, a fact which corresponded with the deteriorating Anglo-German relations before and during the Boer War.

At the end of the nineteenth century, "Britain had become the leading power in the world, and Germany the predominant power in Europe." The First German Navy Bill of 1898 laid the foundation for the realization of Germany's Weltpolitik, which was complemented by the Second German Navy Bill in 1900. Great Britain observed this expansion of Germany's power as increasingly threatening, and that constellation was not improved by Queen Victoria's death in 1901. The subsequent deterioration in the relations between the royal families of Great Britain and Germany "removed one of the few mechanisms which bound Britain and Germany together. For much of the nineteenth century, dynastic ties had been an asset to Anglo-German relations. Sadly, in the first decade of the twentieth century, they lost this function and became a political liability." From this configuration, it was only one more step to the path that eventually led to the First World War.

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220 McLean, Monarchy and diplomacy in Europe, p.91.
IX. CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that Queen Victoria’s image of Germany underwent considerable changes, which were based on her highly emotional view of the political developments in certain German states. In illustrating the causes and symptoms of the Queen’s altering perception, this study is an important contribution to the current research, since it adds vital aspects to existing interpretations about Queen Victoria. Previously there have been either highly romanticized accounts of the Queen’s private life, or conceptual explications about Anglo-German relations in the second half of the nineteenth century. This work, however, combined the personal approach of the British monarch with the political development of sixty-four years of German history, thus demonstrating the adaptation of Queen Victoria’s image to the changing political circumstances.

Queen Victoria’s image of Germany was always divided into two perceptions: on the one hand a permanent and highly emotional empathy with the smaller German state of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, the country from which most of the Queen’s closest relatives came from; and on the other hand an opinion about Prussia which experienced substantial alterations over the years. It is therefore not possible to discuss the image of Germany, but one has to differentiate between Queen Victoria’s two perceptions of Germany.

Prince Albert inaugurated a very positive impression of one of the most powerful states of the German Confederation, Prussia, and he moreover strengthened the friendship between the royal houses of Great Britain and Prussia by supporting a marriage of the Princess Royal to Prince Frederick William of Prussia. Queen Victoria came to completely rely on her husband’s political guidance, and the royal focus on foreign affairs came into direct conflict with the domain of the British Foreign Office. With regard to Britain’s foreign policy, Victoria and Albert claimed a supremacy of German affairs in 1848, whereas Palmerston emphasized the need for a more balanced approach. In the end, the royal couple agreed with this pragmatic evaluation of the Foreign Office, and their difference in opinion was eventually settled during the Crimean War, which saw the monarch and the Foreign Office on the same side.

At the time of Prince Albert’s premature death in 1861, Queen Victoria’s image was genuinely sympathetic towards Germany, since she transferred her positive perception of Prussia to the whole of the German Confederation. Based on her complete reliance on Albert, the Queen maintained the Prince’s beliefs with regard to
IX: Conclusion

Germany even at a time when the political circumstances were changing so substantially that these were no longer applicable. During the Schleswig-Holstein crisis of 1864 Queen Victoria began to have first doubts about Prussia’s political conduct, since the oppressive course of action which Prussia chose against the Duchies was perceived by the Queen as a possible threat to smaller states of the German Confederation, Saxe-Coburg and Gotha being one of them. She vehemently advocated a neutral attitude of Britain, since an active participation in the war would have seen Britain on the side of Denmark. By ceaselessly urging both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to remain neutral and not to support Denmark, the Queen made her opinion distinctly heard, and by siding with the peace-party in the Cabinet, she found the governmental assistance she ultimately needed to defend her intervention.

The Austro-Prussian war of 1866 was then the turning-point for the Queen’s perception of Germany, since from then on, she clearly distinguished between Saxe-Coburg and Gotha on the one side and Prussia (as the leading power of Germany) on the other side. Prussia’s hostilities against Austria were incomprehensible for the Queen, who saw the war as a fight of ‘brothers against brothers’, and the subsequent decision of Prussia to annex certain smaller states, such as Hanover, was utterly condemned by Queen Victoria. She realized that her late husband’s political beliefs were outdated and began to develop political opinions of her own. During these years following Prince Albert’s death, Queen Victoria had to face her monarchical duties on her own, and contrary to the general assumption, her interest in the political development of Britain did not decline. On the contrary, she upheld Prince Albert’s opinions during the subsequent political process, and only in 1866 did she then recognize the need to adapt her own views to the changing political circumstances; as a consequence, after 1866 Queen Victoria increasingly shared the Foreign Office’s opinions with regard to German affairs.

The Queen’s already sceptical image of Germany under the leadership of Prussia deteriorated beyond rectification when Germany did not respond actively to Prince Alexander of Bulgaria’s dethronement in 1886, and Queen Victoria made Bismarck personally responsible for this fate of a Prince whom she held in a high personal regard. As ever, her political opinion was based on an emotional approach, which is also mirrored in the Queen’s condemnation of Germany’s beginning interest in colonial matters, since she essentially denied the right to claim colonies to any country but Great Britain. However, this gradual deterioration of Queen Victoria’s
image of Germany only applied to the German Empire as a whole, since her positive perception of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha remained unchanged.

The final motive for this disintegrating image of Germany was the death of Emperor Frederick III in 1888, as the subsequent conservative reign of Emperor William II signaled for Queen Victoria the ultimate tendency towards Germany’s Weltpolitik. From now on, Queen Victoria was against any closer association of Great Britain with Germany, and this personal opinion was in accordance with Salisbury’s emerging confidence in Britain’s isolation. Considering that the Queen’s perception of Germany was by then dominated by negative characteristics, she abstained from participating in any subsequent discussions about the prospect of a closer alliance between the two countries. It was certainly ironic that the Queen’s lack of interest in German affairs coincided with the first serious attempts to consider an Anglo-German alliance on the governmental level; however, in the end these discussions did not lead to any results, and the Foreign Office ultimately shared the Queen’s doubts with regard to Germany’s future development. Interestingly enough, this close cooperation between monarch and Foreign Office experienced a reverse development in Germany, where William II dominated the direction and the decisions of foreign affairs once Bismarck had left the political scene. As a result of both royal and governmental doubts with regard to William II’s political reliability, Britain maintained friendly relations with Germany but did not form any closer link with a nation that sided with the Boers during the South-African war.

An interesting indication of Queen Victoria’s changing perception of Germany is the gradual adjustment of the marriage associations of her nine children. The links of the Princess Royal and of Princess Alice with Prussia and Hesse were connections the royal British family intentionally sought with Protestant states of the German Confederation, thus substituting the traditional method of geographical expansion with family connections between the royal families of the particular states: marriage therefore replaced war.

However, the end of the nineteenth century witnessed the formation of individual nation states on the continent, which in the long run rendered the idea of the significance of marriages on the royal level superfluous; instead, the concept of the German monarchy was modified, and the unified German Empire was strengthened by the identification of the entire nation with one dynasty. Great Britain, on the other hand, had already completed this stage, since the Jubilee of 1887 was in fact a striking
illustration of the existing identification between nation and monarchy; as a consequence, the marriage links of Queen Victoria’s younger children ceased to have a political significance, but they gained in their social relevance instead. Princess Louise’s and Princess Beatrice’s marriages to a commoner and a Prince of inferior royal rank reflected the contemporary development in Britain’s society, where the aristocratic class opened up and adjusted its marriage pattern to the conditions of the social reality: rank was substituted by wealth.

When Queen Victoria died in January 1901, the sovereigns of Great Britain and Germany were assembled at her deathbed. Her death marked the end of the nineteenth century, with its accentuation of a monarchical state systems headed by an internationally connected royalty, and the beginning of the twentieth century, in which individual nation states emerged as dominating forces on their own rights.

This thesis has depicted the way towards the end of the nineteenth century. Changing political circumstances in Germany had caused a gradual deterioration in Queen Victoria’s image of Germany, which the monarch therefore adapted on a personal level to the modifying characteristics of the transforming political situation.
X: Genealogy

Duke Francis of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1750-1806) \(\sim\) Duchess Augusta of Reuss (1757-1831)

- Princess Sophie
- Princess Antoinette
- Princess Julie

Prince Ferdinand

Prince Leopold, King of the Belgians (1790-1865)
\(\sim\) 1817 Princess Charlotte (1796-1817)

Duke Ernest I of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1784-1844)
\(\sim\) 1817 Princess Louise of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg (1800-1831)

- Duke Ernest II of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1818-1893)
  \(\sim\) 1842 Princess Alexandrine of Baden (1820-1904)

Princess Victoria (1786-1861), widowed Duchess of Leiningen
\(\sim\) 1818 Edward, Duke of Kent (1767-1820)

Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1819-1861) \(\sim\) 1840

QUEEN VICTORIA (1819-1901)

Victoria 1840-1901
\(\sim\) 1858 Frederick III
---\(\Rightarrow\) I.

Edward VII. 1841-1910
\(\sim\) 1863 Alexandra
---\(\Rightarrow\) II.

Alice 1843-1878
\(\sim\) 1862 Louis IV
---\(\Rightarrow\) III.

Alfred 1844-1900
\(\sim\) 1874 Marie
---\(\Rightarrow\) IV.

Helena 1846-1923
\(\sim\) 1866 Christian
---\(\Rightarrow\) V.

Louise 1848-1848
\(\sim\) 1871 John Campbell
---\(\Rightarrow\) VI.

Arthur 1850-1942
\(\sim\) 1879 Louise Margaretha
---\(\Rightarrow\) VII.

Leopold 1853-1884
\(\sim\) 1882 Helene
---\(\Rightarrow\) VIII.

Beatrice 1857-1944
\(\sim\) 1885 Henry
---\(\Rightarrow\) IX.
THE CHILDREN OF QUEEN VICTORIA AND PRINCE ALBERT

I. Victoria, Princess Royal, Princess Frederick William of Prussia, Crown Princess of Prussia, Crown Princess of Germany, Empress of Germany, Dowager Empress of Germany
   2. William II, Emperor of Germany (1859-1941) 1881 Auguste Victoria, Princess of Schleswig-Holstein (1858-1921)
   4. Prince Henry (1862-1929) 1888 Irene, Princess of Hesse (1866-1953)
   5. Prince Sigismund (1864-1866)
   6. Princess Sofie (1870-1932) 1889 Constantin I, King of Greece (1868-1923)

II. Edward VII., Prince of Wales, King of Great Britain and Ireland, Emperor of India (1841-1910)
   1. Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence (1864-1892)
   2. King George V (1865-1936) 1893 Mary, Duchess of Teck (1867-1953)
   4. Princess Victoria (1868-1935)
   5. Princess Maud (1869-1938) 1896 Haakon VII, King of Norway (1872-1957)

III. Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse
   1. Louis IV, Grand Duke of Hesse (1837-1892)
   2. Princess Victoria (1863-1950) 1884 Louis, Prince of Battenberg (1854-1921)
   3. Princess Elizabeth (1864-1918) 1884 Sergei, Grand Duke of Russia (1857-1905)
   4. Princess Irene (1866-1953) 1888 Henry, Prince of Prussia (1862-1929)
   6. Princess Alix (1872-1918) 1894 Nicolaus II, Tsar of Russia (1868-1918)
   7. Princess Mary (1874-1876)
IV. Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha
   • Marie, Grand Duchess of Russia (1853-1920)
     1. Prince Alfred, Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1874-1899)
     2. Princess Marie (1875-1938) • Ferdinand I, King of Roumelia (1865-1927)
     4. Princess Alexandra (1878-1942) • 1896 Ernest, Prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg (1863-1950)

V. Helena, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland
   • Christian, Prince of Schleswig-Holstein (1831-1917)
     1. Prince Christian Victor (1867-1900)
     2. Duke Albert of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg (1869-1931)
     3. Princess Helene Victoria (1870-1848)
     4. Princess Marie-Louise (1872-1957) • 1891 Prince Aribert of Anhalt (1864-1933)

VI. Louise, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland
   • John Campbell, 9th Duke of Argyll (1845-1914)
     no children

VII. Arthur, Duke of Connaught
    • Louise Margarethe, Princess of Prussia (1860-1917)
      1. Princess Margaret (1882-1920) • 1905 Gustav VI, King of Sweden (1882-1973)
      2. Prince Arthur (1883-1938) • 1913 Alexandra, Duchess of Fife (1891-1959)

VIII. Leopold, Duke of Albany
      • Helene, Princess of Waldeck and Pyrmont (1861-1922)

IX. Beatrice, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland
    • Henry, Prince of Battenberg (1858-1896)
      1. Alexander Mountbatten, Marquess of Carisbrooke (1886-1960) • 1917 Lady Irene Denison (1890-1956)
      2. Princess Victoria Eugénie (1887-1969) • 1906 Alfons XIII, King of Spain (1886-1941)
      3. Leopold (1889-1922)
      4. Maurice of Battenberg (1891-1914)
THE ROYAL HOUSE OF HOHENZOLLERN

Frederick William III ~ Princess Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz
(1770-1840) ~ (1776-1810)

Frederick William IV ~ William I ~ 5 other children
(1795-1861) ~ (1797-1888)
~ Princess Elizabeth ~ Princess Augusta
of Bavaria ~ of Saxe-Weimar

no children ~ Frederick III ~ Louise
(1831-1888) ~ (1838-1923)
~ Victoria, Princess Royal ~ Grand Duke of Baden

William II (see 1.)
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