The Princess Stateswoman:

Dorothea Lieven and Russia's Informal Diplomacy Between 1812 and 1834

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Master thesis

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Russian and Eurasian studies

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Word count: 20 751

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Introduction

"There never figured on the Courtly stage a female intriguer more restless, more arrogant, more mischievous, more ... odious and insufferable than this supercilious Ambassadress."[1]

- *The Times*

This fragment described Dorothea Lieven (Дарья Христофоровна Ливен, 1785-1857), a nineteenth century figure. She was notorious in both Russia and Great Britain for a variety of reasons. Considering her reputation in 19th century diplomatic circles, it is surprising that Dorothea is not a well-known figure today. Her husband Christopher Andreyevich Lieven (Христофор Андреевич Ливен, 1774 – 1838) was the Russian ambassador to England and represented Russia in London between 1812 and 1834. Dorothea joined him in the move to England, where she established herself as a diplomatic force in the Russian embassy.

Beside diplomatic involvement, she was a sensation in England's high society and an esteemed patroness of Almack's, London's exclusive social club. Here she introduced the waltz in England in 1813. However, it is unlikely that the anonymous author from the Times would have described her as "mischievous" and " supercilious" for introducing a dance to the ballrooms of English high society. The quote above illustrates that she did have some enemies. However, her correspondences tell us she had many friends, too. She befriended famous men like Klemens von Metternich, Lord Grey, Lord Castleraegh, and later in her life François Guizot. It is surprising that the names of her friends are well-known in diplomatic history while hers is rarely recognized.

Dorothea's reputation is controversial. Despite the aforementioned quote, not every mention of Dorothea vilified her. This dichotomy can be seen in the following quote by *the Times* just over two decades later, after her death in 1857: "Madame de Lieven was a woman of accomplishment, attainment and esprit; … she possessed talents and attainments which, in the humblest station, must have raised her to importance."[2] This is an image of someone who possessed character traits that made her stand out in her time. *The Times* and *The Morning*

[1] Author Unknown, "The Recall of Prince Lieven," *The Times*, May 23, 1834, 5, https://www.newspapers.com/image/32892010/.
[2] Globe, "The Late Princess de Lieven," *The Morning Chronicle,* February 2, 1857, 6, https://www.newspapers.com/image/392538223/.

Chronicle were not the only media that featured her. Her colleagues, authors and scholars described her in various ways and gave reasons to both praise and discredit her. When her contemporaries attempted to identify what it was that made her such an extraordinary figure, it seemed that it was neither her bookishness nor her physical beauty that made her an intriguing person. The other quote described her as "a woman of accomplishment" and "attainment" which meant she must have been talented and at least diligent.

The aim of Dorothea's work and activities in England was to establish favourable conditions for Russia in international relations. The role she played in Russia's international policies is not always acknowledged. She was politically active at the time when the Congress of Vienna had established its principles on legitimacy of sovereign power in Europe. The winners of the Napoleonic war gathered in Vienna and discussed how to maintain rest and stability in Europe. Revolutions were seen as a threat to peace and order and had to be eradicated to maintain this established status quo. Russia was one of the more conservative powers in this alliance. However, it was put in an ambiguous position when the Greek revolt against the Ottoman empire began in 1821. Europe's public opinion and Russia's elite appealed to the tsar's role as protector of the Orthodox Greeks. This meant that Russia's position in foreign affairs had to be redefined.

This is the backdrop to Dorothea's diplomatic story. It is difficult to determine what her diplomatic role precisely was but the amount of written sources about her indicate that she was someone of importance. She occurs in letters of tsar Alexander I, Lord Palmerston and George Canning but they do not account for exact records of Dorothea's contribution. She herself described her exact involvement and events in her letters and diary. Her contribution does not have an exact formal record because she was active in informal diplomacy. She was not the person who signed deciding treaties. Her job revolved around influencing those who did sign international formal treaties that took steps towards Greek independence.

Women, as well as non-aristocratic men, often played an important role in informal diplomacy. The social happenings, correspondences, friendships, and affairs–were all platforms that were important to political decisions. Diplomatic history has shown a recent renewed interest in informal diplomacy and proposes that the formal and informal fields were actually much more intertwined than was previously assumed. This has challenged the belief that decision making only takes place in the formal spheres of diplomacy. This renewed focus expanded diplomatic history to the side-lines and focused on the impact people besides

statesmen had, which gave more attention to the importance of race, gender, and class in furthering diplomatic relations.[3]

This gives an opportunity to revisit Dorothea's political contributions. Considering the importance of informal diplomats, it seems strange that Dorothea is not famous today. The fact that so few people know her today may indicate that she has been written out of history. The publications of her correspondences and diary contributed to shifts in the debate that exists around her and sparked an interest in researching her life and contributions. This research challenged some of the negative imagery that she was subjected to. Nevertheless, her image remained one of controversy. The existing literature provides a variety of concepts and ideas on Dorothea and her political contribution. Either she was a manipulative intriguer or she was a woman who exaggerated details in her own records to fight her boredom.

I hypothesize that Dorothea was neither a bored wife nor an intriguer with the agenda of becoming a powerful stateswoman. In my thesis, I aim to show that Dorothea's political contribution had been genuine and of bigger importance than was previously assumed. Besides, I will argue that it was not a mere longing for power or a manipulative nature but instead a professional vocation that enabled her to make her contribution. In this research I will be focusing on her political highlights of the 1820s in relation to the events after the Greek revolt in 1821. With an eye on the expanded scope of new diplomatic history, I hope to show Dorothea in a new light. The following research question is central to this thesis: What were Dorothea Lieven's motivations and results from being an informal diplomat between 1812 and 1834 and have her achievements and motivations been previously misinterpreted due to a stereotypical understanding of women in politics?

In order to come to a final conclusion, this thesis is structured as follows. The first chapter will elaborate on Dorothea's upbringing, personality, and contacts. It will also discuss the negative image that surrounds her personality. Finally, it will discuss her character traits and discuss her important contacts and correspondences. In this chapter, I intend to disprove that she did her work with disreputable motivations.

[3] G. Scott-Smith, Maurits Ebben, "Research Field: New Diplomatic History," accessed May, 31st 2021, https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/humanities/new-diplomatic-history.

The second chapter focuses on the existing academic discussion about Dorothea's image. It will outline how historians have interpreted her role and summarize the reasons for their positions.

The third chapter is devoted to Dorothea's political background, in order to understand how she appeared in international relations. It will focus on Russia's stance in international policy from 1800 to 1830.

In the fourth chapter, I lay out which techniques Dorothea used and how these were effective. I intend to show that Dorothea had diplomatic agency with her activities and that it were in fact these activities that caused her to be selected to complete a mission for tsar Alexander the First.

In the fifth chapter, I will describe the political results of Dorothea's work. Her involvement and precise contribution has been debated, so I will attempt to find out what Dorothea did exactly and intend to place the scepticism about Dorothea's political contributions in a different light, considering the importance of informal diplomacy.

My research

In order to understand how Dorothea worked and what she did, I will in part be relying on her letters to both her brother Alexander von Benckendorff (1781-1844) and to Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859). In her letters to von Metternich, she shows a more sentimental side of herself. Both correspondences added value to her career. I intend to prove that these correspondences served a professional purpose and were not just for the sake of contact. Lastly, I will use her diary, where she describes interviews, reports, and experiences of her mission.

Descriptions from both her contemporaries and history have not been kind to Dorothea's reputation. Therefore, unbiased fact-checking can illuminate valuable and relevant facts previously minimized or omitted. Yet, the reports on her political role and her personal image are very diverse. Some said she was unintellectual, snobbish, and meddling.[4] Rarely mentioned are her consistency in networking and reporting, and her devotion to Russian diplomacy. The most glaring omission is that of her personal life, details of which can hardly be found in documents outside of her personal correspondences and diary. Writers and academics reference her lust for power and manipulative nature without referring to instances

[4] Priscilla Zamoyska, *Arch Intriguer : A Biography of Dorothea De Lieven* (London: Heinemann, 1957), 38.

where she expressed herself as such. When digging into her letters and diary, I found support for a diligent, persevering personality and honest motivations that explain such accomplishments in diplomacy. I suspect she has been judged too harshly as a successful woman. I will argue that her contribution, especially in the light of the informal diplomatic field, was sizable. I will also argue this contribution was motivated by vocational passion instead of a lust for power.

1: Dorothea's upbringing, marriage and personality

This chapter elaborates on Dorothea Lieven's life and personality and aims to elucidate the character traits that helped her become politically successful. In order to answer the research question: What were Dorothea Lieven's motivations and results from being an informal diplomat between 1812 and 1834 and have her achievements and motivations been previously misinterpreted due to a stereotypical understanding of women in politics? It is important to understand who Dorothea was as a person. The following questions will be answered: who was Dorothea? And which connections and characteristics were important to her career? What motivated her to do her work?

This chapter begins by introducing Dorothea and elaborates on her motivations, connections, and personality. Ultimately, this section argues that Dorothea's personal drive to network with other ambassadors and politicians paved the way for her political successes. Simultaneously, it aims to correct the assumption that she was solely a manipulative intriguer. Ultimately this section argues that Dorothea's character was of key importance for her eventual success in diplomacy. This chapter also aims to debunk the assumption she only networked for professional reasons, considering her strong personal reliance on her personal contacts and friends. This research aims to contextualize Dorothea's political contribution through not only her political accomplishments but also through her personality. I will reference her correspondences with Klemens von Metternich and Alexander Benckendorff, as well as secondary literature.

Upbringing and marriage

Dorothea Lieven (née Dorothea von Benckendorff) was born in Riga, Latvia in December of 1785. The Benckendorffs were an aristocratic Lutheran family of Baltic-German descent. The German-Baltic nobility heavily participated in the Russian government, and Dorothea's family was no exception; her father was General Christopher von Benckendorff–military governor of the Baltic provinces of Russia–and her mother, Anna Juliane von Benckendorff, was a senior lady-in-waiting in the Russian court.[5]

It was common for the German-Baltic nobility to be woven into the governmental threads of the Russian empire. During Peter the Great's reign, the Baltics became part of the Russian empire. The empire suffered from *maloliud'e*, a shortage of skilled personnel to

[5] Montgomery Hyde, *Princess Lieven*, (London: George Harrap and Co, 1938), 17.

complete the increasing administrative and diplomatic tasks. The Baltic-German nobility often found positions in the Imperial Officer Corps or in the civilian administration. Thus, Dorothea's family was part of the Russian Imperial service personnel.[6]

Dorothea left Riga in 1791 to be educated at the Smol'ny Convent Institute in Saint Petersburg, Russia. At this institute, students were educated to be ladies-in-waiting and they were taught a wide variety of subjects. Diary entries and letters show Dorothea was a witty and confident girl. At the age of fourteen, she received a marriage proposal from the 26-year-old Count Christopher Lieven. Her diary entrances show that this proposal brought her great joy, mainly because it meant she would make her debut in court and leave the convent of the institute.[7] Her eagerness to talk and flirt during her first appearance in court almost cost her engagement but she was able to convince her fiancé otherwise. The couple got married on February 24, 1800. Interestingly, it became beneficial to Christopher Lieven's career.[8] Directly after the wedding, Dorothea spent a lot of time in Saint Petersburg's high society. She wrote extensive letters and recorded meticulous notes on the scandals and affairs she encountered.

In 1808, Christopher was transferred to a diplomatic post and he became the Russian Ambassador in Prussia, so the couple moved to Berlin. Letters to her family tell us she initially disliked the city and felt bored for the majority of her stay there.[9] Politics, however, soon reintroduced intrigue back into her life. In 1812, Christopher was recalled to Saint Petersburg and appointed as the Russian ambassador in London; Dorothea was delighted with the prospect of broadening her horizons and changing locations. She fell in love with English high society and felt at home in London.[10] Political ties between England and Russia after 1810 were delicate due to their positions in naval trade in the Baltic sea.[11] The two powers relied on diplomatic mediation. Eventually, Lieven's embassy would last twenty-two years. By the end of these two decades, the Lieven's were recalled to St. Petersburg.

While Dorothea fell in love with England, it did not always love her back. *The Times* is but one example of the enemies she made while living there. "Arrogant" and "insufferable"

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[6] Roger Bartlett, "The Russian Nobility and the Baltic German Nobility in the Eighteenth Century," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe Et Soviétique* 34, no. 1/2 (January – June 1993): 238.

[7] Priscilla Zamoyska, *Arch Intriguer : A Biography of Dorothea De Lieven*, 10.

[8] Ibid: 12.

[9] Ibid. 32.

[10] Ibid. 33.

[11] James Davey, *The Transformation of British Naval Strategy* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 186.

are hardly flattering descriptions; "intriguer" implies pursuing secret objectives for the Russian court. And others railed against her with similar ferocity, like French poet François-René de Chateaubriand: "Madame de Lieven, with her sharp and misadventurous face, is a common, fatiguing, arid woman, who has only one kind of conversation, vulgar politics; moreover, she knows nothing, and she hides the poverty of her ideas under the abundance of her words."[12] Dorothea's letters to von Metternich, however, show that she was unfazed with Chateaubriand's vision of her.[13] These attacks share common threads: they actively disapprove of her favourite conversation topics. She enjoyed discussing current affairs and politics and this was considered inappropriate for someone in her position.

Family life

In order to understand Dorothea's personality, it is important to unpack a different, less talked-about title: mother. While upholding an active society figure in London and furthering her political agenda, she and Christopher had six children together, only three of whom eventually outlived their mother. Dorothea and Christopher's marriage was arranged and their love was not as profound as one would wish from a modern marriage. Despite it all, they had a good, harmonious relationship and both enjoyed parenthood. Dorothea gave birth to her first child in 1804 in Saint Petersburg, her daughter Magdalena. She died in infancy due to a fever that Dorothea attributed to Saint Petersburg's climate. In the following years, her sons were born: Paul in 1805; Alexander in 1806; and Constantine in 1807. Later Dorothea had two more sons: George was born in 1819 and Arthur in 1825.[14] Speculation swirled who George's father might be; Dorothea had an affair with Klemens von Metternich, their meeting in 1818 inspired a correspondence that lasted eight years. The two spent a lot of time together at the Congress of Aix la Chapelle which lasted one and a half months. Therefore it was gossiped that George was *l'enfant du Congrès* but this was impossible; he was born eleven months after the last time Dorothea and von Metternich were physically together.[15]

Arthur's birth wasn't without controversy either. Dorothea wrote to von Metternich: "I have a fifth son and it is very stupid. I suffered greatly and for a long time, and I am still so

[12] François-René de Chateaubriand, *Memoires d'Outre-Tombe,* Vol. II (Paris: Garnier, 1910), 249, https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/M%C3%A9moires_d%E2%80%99outre-tombe/Troisi%C3%A8me_partie/Livre_IX.
[13] Dorothea Lieven, "July 8, 1820," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 - 1826,* ed. John Murray (London: Albemarle Library, 1948), 36.
[14] Priscilla Zamoyska, *Arch Intriguer : A Biography of Dorothea De Lieven*, 22.
[15] John Charmley, *The Princess and the Politicians* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2005), 50.

weak on the seventeenth day that I am not allowed to see anyone."[16] Since Magdalena's death, Dorothea only had sons; it is likely she complained about Arthur's birth because she had hoped he would have been a girl. The quote seems to illustrate a depressing realization that Arthur was her last child. Dorothea and Christopher did lament that they never had another daughter later in their lives.

Historical documents rarely mention Dorothea's affection for her children and family. Whenever she could not do anything besides spending time with her children, her mood consisted of either boredom, melancholy or both. In fact, her letters to Von Metternich reveal that these episodes were the cause for her political participation, though she never explained her reasoning. Perhaps it was the tragedy of Magdalena's passing earlier in her life that made solitude with her children and boredom insufferable to her. This characteristic formed a big incentive for her to supersede the traditional feminine role of her time. Dorothea repeatedly updated Von Metternich on boredom and unfulfillment, especially when she was on vacation or unable to occupy herself with affairs.[17] "The very absence of any object capable of stimulating heart or mind promotes a perpetual disposition to melancholy..."[18]

It's possible she constantly needed distractions because she did not want to be reminded of sadness or sorrows. Despite her tendency to occupy herself with other things than her kids, her expressions about her children show she loved them a lot. When she was to leave England to meet tsar Alexander I to discuss Russia's foreign policy in 1825, she wrote to von Metternich: "I cannot bear the thought to part with my little children. You cannot imagine how I love them..."[19] Dorothea's attitude towards her children shows a different side of her personality, in which she shows her love and affection, than the quotes from Chateaubriand and the newspapers.

Her husband and children were not the only family members with whom she stayed in touch. Dorothea corresponded with her family members in Russia while she was in England. The most frequent and consequent correspondence was with her brother Alexander von Benckendorff,[20] who held a high position in the Russian court. Benckendorff was Major General in the Russian army, Lieutenant General in 1821, and a confidant of tsar Alexander I

[16] Lieven, "March 6, 1825," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 - 1826*, 283.
[17] Lieven, "August 29, 1822," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 164.
[18] Lieven, "January 11, 1823," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 181.
[19] Lieven, "May 9, 1825," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 289.
[20] He commanded the Russian army that freed the Dutch (now Belgians) from Napoleon in Mechelen and Leuven in 1813.

and tsar Nicholas I.[21] This position put him in close proximity with the Russian court, and this connection became important for Dorothea's diplomatic work; through Aleksander, she had direct contact with both the English and the members of the Russian court.

Alexander and Dorothea's correspondence shows that they deeply cared for each other but also demonstrates Dorothea's devotion to the embassy position her husband held in London. The correspondence provides a lot of insight into the nature of her work and the cases with which she occupied herself. She reported to her brother regarding notable political affairs in England, including the Queen's trial in 1820; the congresses of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818 and Verona in 1820; and the Catholic Relief Act in 1829. Dorothea also updated the tsar on the affairs in England concerning the events around Greek Revolt in 1821 and the Eastern Question.

Friendship with Klemens von Metternich

Though she was lambasted in the media and by outspoken detractors, Dorothea maintained a strong network of diplomatic connections, the majority being politically active men. Among them were Lord Grey, Lord Palmerston, Lord Castleraegh, and George Canning. She gathered information from them through letters or conversations at salons, dinner parties, and social events.

Dorothea was never allowed to forget her gender in the diplomatic spaces she occupied, as illustrated by her thoughts on attending the Congress of Verona in 1822: "I am very glad to find myself here, my curiosity is altogether satisfied… The feminine element is weak … so that I am the sole representative of my species."[22] This quote shows that the majority of her friend circle was male. Her happiness while attending the congresses and the content of her letters to Von Metternich and her brother tell us she was more easily fascinated by what were considered masculine topics of conversation.[23]

Klemens von Metternich's friendship was particularly important for her career. He was the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and a representative of the conservative order. The third chapter discusses the significance of this position in international European politics

[21] "Count Aleksandr Khistofovich Benckendorff," Encyclopædia Britannica Online, last modified, 2020-07-02. https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/levels/collegiate/article/Aleksandr-Khristoforovich-Count-Benckendorff/78540.

[22] Dorothea Lieven, "October 23, 1822," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834,* ed. Lionel G. Robinson (New York: Longmans, 1902), 57.

[23] Lieven, "August 23, 1823," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 231.

in more detail. He had a hierarchical understanding of the world which was based on religion and monarchy. He was known as a well-read, charming and eloquent man.[24] Dorothea befriended him at the conference in Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818. They only met in person four times: once at Aix la Chapelle, a few years later in Hanover in 1821, and once in the Congress of Verona in 1822. They saw each other in London in 1848 but by this time, their friendship had ended and they were both much older. Combined, they only spent two and a half months together in person. Their first meeting started an eight-year correspondence from 1818 to 1826.[25]

In the first three years of their correspondence, she offered many updates on various news. She did so in a similar way as she did to her brother. When Russia came out in favour of intervention in Greece in 1825 and Austria came out in opposition, their views diverged. After this situation, she chose her words to von Metternich more carefully. She omitted sensitive information that could jeopardise Russia's position in negotiations. Generally speaking, Dorothea and Klemens von Metternich had things in common, they were both from aristocratic families and for a long time they shared similar lines of thought about revolutions, marriage and monarchy.

The beginning of their correspondence tells us that they found common ground in the conversative backgrounds of the Russian and Austrian courts. Considering the activities she liked to occupy herself with, their correspondence was a natural result of their meeting. In him, she found someone who inspired her and satisfied her curiosity. In her, he found someone who was intelligent and informed but simultaneously a potential romantic partner. Romantic involvement with such a valuable source of information shows that Dorothea must have been intelligent. She was not the most avid reader and therefore she is often blamed to be unintellectual, this liaison shows that this did not compromise her intelligence.

Their letters show gentle romantic feelings for each other but simultaneously rich political discussions. This contact was important for Dorothea's career because he showed her his work and she subsequently commented on his plans and reports. Hence, this correspondence taught her a lot about diplomacy and about reporting and on how to gather and extract meaningful information to report on. The English ministers knew of her close contact with von Metternich, and they saw a direct line of communication with Austria

[24] Kirsten E. Borg, "Princess Lieven: A New Interpretation of her Role and Image" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1978), 156.
[25] Ibid.

through Dorothea. This meant they could send messages to Austria while avoiding official diplomatic protocol. Their correspondence started from personal interest but transformed into something that was beneficial for her work.[26]

Personal life, work and reputation

"That she possessed neither beauty nor intellect was probably a positive advantage; she was attractive and clever—that was enough. Her long gawky figure and her too pronounced features were somehow fascinating, and her accomplishments were exactly suited to her milieu…"[27]

- Lytton Strachey

The fragment above by writer and essayist Lytton Strachey portrays not only an ungenerous portrait of Dorothea but a general dislike of diplomacy as well. His criticism neatly aligns with Mr. Chateaubriand's comments on her superficiality and lack of external beauty. This line of thought assumes that a woman who was neither beautiful nor intellectual must use vulgarity to thrive politically. Once more maligned in the media, Dorothea's interests and favourite topics of conversation about political affairs were not always deemed appropriate by thought leaders of the day.

At times she felt jealous of her husband and von Metternich. She was happy to occupy herself with politics and diplomacy because a traditional feminine gender role did not give her the fulfilment she craved. "How I envy you with your affairs!" she wrote to Metternich in February, 1823. "Time passes quickly for you; but as for me, I am bored to death… My baby is my only distraction…"[28] In her letters, she never linked her fits of sadness to specific tragedies in her life, always pointing to either boredom or stupidity. Once, during a trip at the seaside resort in Brighton in March of 1822, she contemplated suicide. For a moment, she sat on a rock to wait for the tides to sweep her out to sea, but she soon decided against it, left, and returned home. This moment reinvigorated her: "I laughed at myself when I went home; for, at that moment, nothing seemed so delightful as the small details of life, and nothing so stupid as a desire to die." [29]

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[26] Lieven, "August 1, 1822," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 153.
[27] Lytton Strachey: *Portraits in Miniature and other Essays* (1931)*:* https://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/stracheyl-portraitsinminiature/stracheyl-portraitsinminiature-00-h.html#chap12 accessed on May 4th, 2021.
[28] Lieven, "February 1, 1823," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 190.
[29] Lieven, "March 14, 1822," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 132.

Dorothea often mentioned that she was not able to find peace when she was alone with her thoughts.[30] Whenever she felt melancholy, she liked to talk to someone she considered clever. This was a continuous coping strategy in her life: whenever she encountered people who could tell her interesting stories or news, her mood and well-being greatly improved.[31] Because of this tendency, being an "intriguer" who just manipulates those around her to favour Russia's interests seems unlikely. Her strong personal reliance on contact with others makes it illogical for her to prefer cold politics at the expense of all of her relationships. Despite her reliance on good contacts and friendliness, her concerns for her reputation flew out of the window when it concerned Russia's interests. Therefore, I argue she did not make contacts for the sake of her diplomatic work but she did not allow her contacts to interfere with her work either. Her eventual achievements show that despite her sincerity in some of her friendships and affairs did not harm her diplomatic work. Her eventual diplomatic success, which was not expected from someone in her role, stemmed from the unlikeliest of places: depression and boredom.

As Dorothea grew into her role as an informal ambassadress, she understood that diplomatic involvement gave her fulfilment. I argue that she was successful at her job and realised that this work was out of line with societal expectations. She took great joy in occupying herself with politics up to an extent unheard of from her gender. Her reply to one of von Metternich's letters illustrates this: "I implore you, from time to time, to keep me informed how the world goes. My mind is accustomed to it and I should be sorry to get out of the habit. … without you, I run the risk of relapsing into the conventional feminine role; it seems to me that would be a pity… Treat me as I deserve; and, in a few months, I shall take up my diplomatic post again without having deteriorated."[32] Ambassadors' wives were more politically influential than is often assumed, and Dorothea's involvement serves as a notable example. This quote does not just illuminate her involvement, it shows that she considered her post to be her own.

Conclusion

Who was Dorothea Lieven? And which contacts and characteristics were important to her career? Dorothea was the wife of the Russian ambassador to England between 1812 and 1834. Her background in nobility and marriage to an ambassador brought her into the diplomat's

[30] Lieven, "October 20, 1823," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 240.
[31] Lieven, "March 11, 1820," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 13.
[32] Lieven, "October 14, 1825," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 239.

world but her own consistent networking and ennui allowed her to develop into an informal diplomat in her own right. Her image is one of notoriety, though her actions invited comparisons to a manipulative intriguer. She was not famous for her outstanding intellect, kindness, or beauty. However, despite history's attempt to say otherwise, she was a devoted friend and affectionate mother.

She was prone to sadness when she was alone or bored. In letters to von Metternich, she claims to escape from these feelings as the impetus for becoming involved in politics. These persistent feelings gave her strength to give meaning to her life outside the home, and a strength it was. While she was most unhappy when she felt mentally unstimulated, she maintained her wit and conversational abilities even in the throes of melancholy. Her gift for communication sparked the interest of men, who engaged in correspondences and conversations with her. Without these emotions chasing her, she may never have chased her own ambition.

Communicating with Prince Metternich and with her brother Alexander von Benckendorff established her as a legitimate node in the Russian-English diplomatic network. History has attributed her drive to network as evidence of a secret agenda, but this assertion ignores how important companionship was to her mental health. These correspondences and letters helped her on a personal level and taught her about diplomacy. They were her informal schooling in preparation for a role in informal diplomacy. She strongly relied on her contacts to maintain her post, but letters and diary entries indicate she found true joy in rising above the traditional expectations. Her success is in part because of her inner turmoil, which forced her to be diligently devoted to a network of contacts she relied on for mental stability.

2: Interpretations of Dorothea's role and influence

How do historians interpret Dorothea's position in diplomacy? This chapter will provide answers to that question. Dorothea received many attacks because of the notorious position she held for Russia in England's diplomatic circles. Her occupations did not consist of the activities average aristocratic women were deemed to occupy themselves with. The society of the early 1800s did not expect a woman to hold such professional power and prestige. Yet there are diverse views on her personality and political career. After her death, her letters, diary and other papers were transcribed and published. Research and interpretations on Dorothea subsequently spiked. Interest in her life and work peaked in 1902 and in 1937 when the Edinburgh Review and Albemarle Library published her correspondences to Alexander Benckendorff and von Metternich, respectively. This section argues that the majority of the approaches are either defences or critiques and that focusing on informal diplomacy shows Dorothea's political contributions in a new light. Over time, the research approach to Dorothea's diplomacy changed from the approach that concentrates on treaties and protocols to the focus on the importance of informal diplomacy. The final section of this chapter elaborates on studying informal diplomacy.

In 1902, Lionel G. Robinson wrote the foreword for the publication of Dorothea's correspondence with her brother, Alexander Benckendorff. Robinson argued that aristocratic women made considerable contributions to diplomacy and politics. Even in this group, he considered Dorothea to be exceptional; he found writings from her contemporaries who regarded her as superior to her husband in fulfilling the diplomatic duties of the Russian embassy in London.[33] He argued that Dorothea's success lay in her ability to strategically befriend and influence ministers and aristocrats in favour of Russia.[34] Thus, Robinson argues that her social life was the gateway to her success.

Florence Mary Parsons also confirmed Dorothea's exceptional contribution to Russian diplomacy in an essay she wrote in 1903. She investigated Dorothea's letters and even argued that no ambassador in history was more determined to advance their government's agenda.[35] Parsons argued that Dorothea's precise reporting and discrete corresponding were the reasons for her success and considered her career as proof of the female mind's fit for diplomatic

[33] Lionel G. Robinson, "Letters of Dorothea, Princess Lieven, during Her Residence in London, 1812-1834," *Edinburgh Review* 197, no. 403 (1903): 230.
[34] Ibid: 239
[35] To Dorothea Lieven "her government" was identical to the Russian imperial family.

politics.[36] Parsons referred to Dorothea's letters and diary entries and found that she had a particular way of communicating that helped her to gather information. This enabled her to make her contacts tell her things they were not supposed to talk about. Parsons asserts that this ability to gather information enabled Dorothea to shape London's political environment in favour of the Russian government. Her analysis notes how curious it is that such few quotes from Dorothea are remembered in her time. She suggested this was the case because of Dorothea's extraordinary ability to listen.[37] But Parsons also identified something besides Dorothea's network that made her thrive: her ability to make the influential men she befriended feel like she was always in agreement with them. That this must have made them feel understood and safe to elaborate on the topics discussed.

Scepticism

In 1825, Dorothea was sent on a mission from tsar Alexander I to England. This assignment had been deemed Dorothea's greatest diplomatic achievement. The goal of this mission was to re-establish England as an ally. Dorothea wrote the majority of the accounts of this mission herself, and after intense research, historian Harold Temperley questioned their reliability. He thoroughly investigated her exact influence in achieving this goal by reading sources written by politicians with whom she was in contact.[38]

Temperley discovered that the Russian minister of foreign affairs Count Nesselrode and British minister George Canning both reported on Dorothea's mission. She had to communicate Russia's openness to bilateral agreements with England about Greece. The majority of England's ministers were pro-Ottoman empire so this was not an easy task. Dorothea wrote the majority of the account on this mission herself and Temperley argued that she made herself look more important than she truly was, and that in actuality, her mission was one and expected communication.[39]

Despite his conclusion that Dorothea's influence in re-establishing ties with England was limited, his research did prove she made genuine, but according to his research very small, political contributions. Temperley found valuable evidence, in the form of written corroborations by her husband that proved Dorothea was part of a diplomatic mission in 1825.

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[36] Florence Mary Parsons, "Princess Lieven," *Temple Bar* 127, no. 507 (1903): 151.
[37] Ibid: 165.
[38] Harold Temperley, "Princess Lieven and the Protocol of 4 April 1826," *The English Historical Review* 39, no. 153 (1924): 67.
[39] Ibid: 62.

According to Temperley, Dorothea's participation was a powerful statement at a time when there were "no female diplomats."[40] Temperley proved that her political contribution, though small, was genuine.

John Murray, who wrote an introduction for the published correspondence between Dorothea and Klemens von Metternich in 1937, also questioned the validity of Dorothea's self-reported successes. He claimed that Dorothea craved power and used people without remorse to further her career. He cites her contemporaries, who wrote about her unfavourably and hinted that she was inconsequential and perverted.[41]

Reinterpretations

In 1978, Elizabeth Aida Borg reinterpreted Dorothea's role and image. Borg wrote that no one would have dared to insult Dorothea to her face and that her influence and character have been historically minimized. She also recontextualized Dorothea's image by looking at her career after England, when she hosted her political salon in Paris. Here she noted that Dorothea's gifts continued to make her an influential figure in diplomatic spheres. In her research she investigated her later affairs with François Guizot (1787 - 1874). In order to do so she investigated Dorothea's career in London and again found, despite the sceptical nature of previous research, valuable proof in Dorothea's correspondences with Earl Grey for the legitimate nature of her career. Her letters to him and his answers portray she was someone with indirect, but genuine, agency. [42]

Borg continued her analysis by acknowledging the reasons for Dorothea's bad image: she was an aristocratic conservative, snobbish and almost constantly working. However, the reasons for Dorothea's bad image were not uniquely attributed to her; many other politicians had these habits. Borg concluded that Dorothea did not consider herself a liberated woman while she probably was. She argues in line with Robinson: she was in a niche of her own and played a role bigger than most upper class women of her time.[43]

Daniel H. Thomas's research in 1983 did not doubt Dorothea's genuine influence but did question the reliability of her reports.[44] He took a similar stance as Robinson: he ascribed

[40] Ibid: 78.

[41] John Murray, *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich*, (London: Albemarle Library, 1948), xvii.

[42] Kirsten E. Borg, "Princess Lieven: A New Interpretation of her Role and Image" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1978), 112.

[43] Ibid: 422.

[44] Daniel H. Thomas, "Princess Lieven's Last Diplomatic Confrontation," *The International History Review Vol. 5*, No. 4 (1983): 557.

Dorothea' success as a diplomat to her network. He agreed with Robinson that she eventually outshone her husband, describing her as the spider in a web of communication between England, Austria and Russia. He gave a new argument in favour of the seriousness of Dorothea's career. Noting that authorities were cautious in allowing her to host her political salon in Paris, he showed that Dorothea made genuine political contributions to Russian international diplomacy by re-establishing ties with the English to intervene in favour of the Greeks in the 1820s. If she had not been influential, her salon would have not been a cause for concern.[45]

Despite this evidence, Thomas admitted that it is difficult to accurately determine her true political influence. He gives a similar reason as Temperley: the majority of detailed texts about it are written by Dorothea. Her talent was not in her academic accomplishments nor in a potential likeable nature; Thomas ultimately ascribed her success to fanatical letter writing. He even argues she was the most well-known unofficial diplomatic gateway to Russia from London.[46] Her consistency and ability to maintain contacts is what made her successful.

Informal Diplomacy

When John Charmley studied Dorothea's career in 2005, the field of diplomatic history was changing. The cultural turn commenced in the 70s, diplomatic historians widened their scope. The cultural turn is a movement among scholars in humanities and social sciences that focuses on the importance of culture and emphasizes "the causal and socially constitutive role of cultural processes and systems of signification."[47] Researchers paid more attention to non-governmental actors who influenced policies through informal diplomacy; the field realized that spouses, intellectuals, activists and public figures could engage in dialogues to build confidence between different political actors or resolve conflicts.[48]

Charmley identified Dorothea as an informal diplomat and argued she ought to be taken seriously. The field of informal diplomacy is less precisely recorded on paper. Dorothea fills in a big gap by describing her accounts precisely in her, now published, correspondences. It were the balls, social events and friendships where reputations were build or broken and this greatly influenced the political reality. Charmley took her writing as the serious reporting

[45] Zamoyska, *Arch Intriguer : A Biography of Dorothea De Lieven*, 59.
[46] Daniel H. Thomas, "Princess Lieven's Last Diplomatic Confrontation," 550.
[47] G. Steinmetz, *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1 - 2.
[48] G.P. (Giles) Scott-Smith, "New Diplomatic History and Informal Diplomacy," accessed on 6th of April 2021. https://www.narcis.nl/research/RecordID/OND1349447.

on the unofficial side of European diplomacy. He argued the rich written sources Dorothea left of the informal diplomatic field give plenty of room for a new and broader interpretation of her role. He discussed every era and aspect of her life and career and carefully mentioned everything in which she took part.[49] Charmley took a more favourable stance towards Dorothea. He concluded she was able to maintain an unofficial diplomatic post successfully and made herself known through Europe.

N. P Tyanshina devoted research on Dorothea's role by using her correspondences with Russian colleagues and family members in 2018. Tyanshina considered Dorothea as the first female Russian diplomat. Tyanshina thought that Dorothea's role has been subjected to stereotypes in history. She argued that the fact that Nesselrode instructed Dorothea on assignments instead of her husband is proof that she played a serious role in the embassy. She based her arguments on written accounts about Dorothea (not by or to her.) The Russian minister of Foreign Affairs Count Nesselrode (1780 – 1862) truly must have valued her sensibility and he understood the extent of her connections.[50] What she asserted for sure is that Dorothea was a key figure in the shadow-diplomacy of the beginning of the 19th century. She considered that the stereotypes that Dorothea had encountered were the reason for her absence in history and current discourse.[51]

Susan Groag Bell discussed a study about politically active women in England in the Victorian Era in 2000. She argued that class, rather than gender, was the motivator for engaging in political activities. Formal politics were all the business of male aristocrats, but dairy entries and letters of British aristocrat women reveal their crucial role in their husbands' work. She found that there were two types of aristocratic political wives: those who aided their husbands in his formal work and those who hosted political parties and salons. Political hostesses were political linchpins; they curated the surroundings that facilitated discussion, exchange of information, and ideas–the bedrock of formal decision making.[52] Considering the essential nature of political hostesses, Dorothea's political contributions were not as small as previously assumed.

[49] Charmley, *The Princess and the Politicians*, xv.

[50] Таньшина, "При дворе трех тмператоров, Княгиня д. х. Ливен," *Новая и новейшая история*, no. 3 (2018): 110.

[51] Ibid: 117.

[52] Susan Groag Bell, "Review: Untitled," Review of *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain,* by K. D. Reynolds, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31, no. 2, (2000): 262-64.

In 2019, Susanna Erlandsson made a case for the forgotten roles of women in diplomatic history. With a case study about Margaret van Kleffens, she addressed the shifting focus in diplomatic history to practices and processes rather than on political results. She argued that traditional diplomatic history does not mention the impact of female roles and therefore omits an important part of political history. These roles influenced processes that preceded important political decisions. Erlandssons case study showed that the majority of the ambassadors' wives in history were mentioned only with their maiden name and whether they had children. Erlandsson argued that this elides the importance of the work ambassadors' wives did. In this work she also notes the importance of processes that preceded political decisions were as important as the decisions themselves. In this light, the informal diplomatist had more agency than previously thought.[53]

Interpreting the work of unofficial diplomats in history is complicated. Proletarians, workers and aristocratic women were excluded from formal diplomacy. John Charmley and Jennifer Davey researched informal diplomacy in a case study and they described the tendency to produce a history of diplomacy dominated by aristocratic men. Researching the influence of the press or the wives of aristocratic men is a recent development in the field. Charmley suggests that studying informal diplomacy as a separate niche creates an impression of separate spheres when in fact these were intertwined. It seems that Dorothea was taken less seriously for a long time due to this described tendency.[54]

Conclusion

How is Dorothea's role interpreted by historians? Most research is written by either sceptics or supporters. It's notable that Dorothea is mentioned in early diplomatic history. To be even a footnote in this field as a woman is an extraordinary achievement and is a testament to just how influential her work and correspondences were. In fact, she was so notable that she is referenced in the beginning of the twentieth century by the historians mentioned in this chapter. Though she was assailed in the media, her work left a legacy.

Dorothea's contemporary image was mostly negative, but historians have recently reinterpreted her role and new research shows different dimensions of Dorothea's personality,

[53] Susanna Erlandsson, "Off the Record: Margaret Van Kleffens and the Gendered History of Dutch World War II Diplomacy," *International Feminist Journal of Politics 21*, no. 1 (2019): 46.
[54] John Charmley, Jennifer Davey, "The Invisible Politician: Mary Derby and the Eastern Crisis," In: *On the Fringes of Diplomacy : Influences on British Foreign Policy*, *1800–1945*, ed. John Fisher, Antony Best, Ashgate Burlington (London: Routledge, 2011), 17.

image and political contribution. For example, influencing decision-makers in meetings and social events before they made formal decisions was more important than was previously thought–and this is where Dorothea shined. Personality aside, the negativity she fought against is a strong indicator of success–momentum draws detractors. However, scepticism remains. Because informal diplomacy was not as carefully documented, it is difficult to verify the importance of her diplomatic actions in a meeting considered the highlight of her career. New research challenges the idea that informal and formal diplomacy were separate spheres, which allows researchers to take Dorothea's work more seriously. This idea breathes new life into the legitimacy of Dorothea's political contribution in 1825.

3: The Russian Empire and foreign affairs in Europe

In order to understand Dorothea's work and political contributions, it is important to discuss the political context in which she worked. This chapter will explain two crucial elements of the political situation in which she worked: descriptions of Russia's and Europe's political situations and an analysis of the international negotiations considering the Eastern Question after the Congress of Vienna. The aim is to provide the context for Dorothea's diplomacy. The research of this chapter is centred around Russia's stance in foreign affairs because this is the empire she represented.

Russian foreign affairs

Dorothea was sent on a mission by Russian tsar Alexander I in 1825, right before he passed away in Taganrog. Aleksander I ascended the throne in 1801 and partially due to the developments in Europe, he saw the need to modernize the Russian empire. Domestically as well as in foreign affairs. During his reign, Alexander I abolished the table of ranks, reorganised the empire's administration, took steps to advance the position of the peasants in the Russian empire and founded a Ministry on education.[55] This is important because it preluded an era in Russia where feudal power structures and privileges of nobility were questioned. Arguably, these power-structures of absolutist rule were even more firmly ingrained in the Russian empire than in the rest of Europe.[56] This is the political system in which Dorothea grew up and this defined her understanding of political power for a long time.

Besides domestic reforms, the tsar inherited an empire that found itself in a delicate position when it came to foreign affairs. The Russian population and territory had grown enormously due to Peter the Great's and Catherine's expansionism in Sweden, Turkey and Poland. This put an administrative burden on the Empire's resources. Besides the monetary burdens, it also created a situation in which international relations and ambitions had to be monitored.[57] In the Great Northern war (1700 – 1721), Peter the Great occupied Sweden and therefore a significant part of the eastern Baltic. In 1795 Russia colluded with both the Porte and Prussia to get Poland off the map. In 1783 Russia annexed Crimea from the Ottomans.[58] The relationship between England and Russia was delicate because British control in the

[55] David Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1992), 22.
[56] Ibid: 25.
[57] Ibid: 30 – 32.
[58] Ibid: 10.

Northern water suffered from Catherine's mediation in the War of Bavarian Succession. During this conflict, Russia adopted 'armed neutrality' and this harmed the British sphere of influence. The situation in Poland caused the Russian empire to border directly with Austria and Prussia. The ambitions of Russia and its bordering central European states had to be monitored constantly.[59] There were many relations to be maintained and especially England was an important trading partner for the Russian empire.

The Congress of Vienna

Monitoring international relations was not just important for England. After Napoleon's defeat, the victors of the war England, Russia, Prussia and Austria, came together at the Congress of Vienna (1814 – 1815), to discuss measures that would ensure lasting peace and stability throughout Europe. The victors of the war had one conviction in common: revolution was a threat to peace and the polities altered by it were to be restored. The congress of Vienna had a lot of balls and social events. Writer and field marshal Charles-Joseph de Ligne (1735 – 1814) described it took a lot of time to come to decisions and made a note to the social events: "Le congrès danse beaucoup, mais il ne marche pas." During these balls and social events ladies played a prominent role, however, this is not where Dorothea entered the stage yet.[60]

Despite the abundance of dances the congress of Vienna established a new understanding of legitimacy of power in the realms of international relations. The protection of monarchic systems in Europe was of top priority and revolutionary unrest was seen as a threat to overall peace, security and safety.[61] The events of the previous decades changed the political map of Europe and not just in means of territory. The sentiment of many throughout Europe changed and particularly nationalism fuelled revolutionary and liberal sentiments. They agreed on keeping enough military resources to cushion a French attack and to continue to meet each other. The final act of Vienna, on the 28th of May in 1814, undid the territorial changes imposed by Napoleon. Besides territorial restorations, the Congress members decided that the monarchy had to be re-installed and this was executed with traditional dynastic claims. [62]

[59] Ibid, 19.

[60] А.Л. Хазин, "Стратегические Коммуникации, Коммуникативные Инструменты Решения Международных Проблем в Деятельности Конгрессов Священного Союза," *Вестю Мослю ун-ма*, Сер. 21, (2016): 207.

[61] L. H. M Wessels, A. Bosch en Open Universiteit, *Nationalisme, naties en staten, Europa vanaf circa 1800 tot heden* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 171.

[62] The Netherlands were an exception with the installation of the Oranje-Nassaus.

The aim of these meetings would be to stay on top of political developments in Europe and to ensure the objectives of peace and stability were met. This meant an absence of revolutionary upheavals. This intent of meeting became reality at the congresses of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818), Troppau (1820), Laibach (1821) and Verona (1822). Here, the powers made further financial settlements and discussed how to keep revolution out of Europe.[63]

Alexander I initiated the idea that mere agreements on territories and weaponry would not be enough to ensure peace. Treaties and coalitions were broken before and he proposed that religion, Christianity, should be a unifying factor in Europe to ensure peace. Thus he proposed the Holy Alliance on the 14th of September 1815, an agreement to protect all Christians and Christian values throughout Europe.[64] Prussia and Austria agreed to be part of the Holy Alliance. These three were the conservative power of the Vienna congress system.[65]

Sooner than later the interests of the different powers diverged. All members had different interests, especially since the war was over. Russia, Austria and Prussia adopted a protocol to exclude states who underwent revolutions from international diplomacy. Britain and France refused this protocol and this weakened the quintuple alliance.[66] The allies were divided on the correct responses to revolutionary unrest. One reason for this was that Great Britain benefited from the revolution in Spain. This ameliorated the trading position with the Spanish colonies in Latin America. Russia, Prussia and Austria were the conservative powers within the alliance. They were more eager to opt for armed intervention against revolution.[67]

The Greek Revolt

This eagerness of tsar Alexander I to deploy weapons against revolution was challenged when the Greeks started a revolution against the Ottomans in 1821. The concert of Europe did not know what to do since on one hand the Ottomans were considered the sovereign ruler of Greece but on the other hand the Christians in the area had to be protected. The Russian elite was in favour of military intervention against the Ottomans. When the revolt had just started, generals Ermolov, Kiselev and Zakrevskii wanted to intervene. The ambassadors of Russia,

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[63] "Quadruple Alliance," Encyclopædia Britannica Online, last modified, 2020-07-02. https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/levels/collegiate/article/Quadruple-Alliance/62141.

[64] Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, "The Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818) and Russia's Proposal for a Treaty of Guarantee," *Journal of Modern Russian History and Historiography* 12, no. 1 (2019): 245.

[65] Ibid. 250.

[66] "Congress of Troppau," Encyclopædia Britannica Online, last modified, 1998-20-07. https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/levels/collegiate/article/Congress-of-Troppau/73508.

[67] А.В. Чернов, "Российская Внешняя Политика и Конгрессы в Троппау и Лайбахе," *Вестник РУДН, серия История России* № 4 (2014): 67.

among them Dorothea's husband Christopher, were also in favour of intervention. The argument was that tsar Alexander I had to appear as the protector of the fellow Orthodox Greek Christians.[68]

Alexander I was at the Congress of Laibach when the news of the revolt reached him. In the beginning he was hesitant to initiate unilateral intervention without the allies' consent. He had been loyal to the principles of the Vienna system, which dictated that the status quo of sovereignty should be maintained. He feared it would rise suspicions of expansionism and that this would cause even more unrest and agitation in Europe.[69] Eventually, it was the public opinion and the tsar's deteriorating liaison with von Metternich that caused him to take a different stance.[70] A quarrel with von Metternich and a pressing Russian elite that appealed to the tsar's role as Orthodox protector caused his position to be increasingly ambiguous. Eventually he became more warlike and more inclined to intervene in favour of the Greeks.[71] In April 1821, the Greek Patriarch Gregory V was executed and this invoked a lot of positive European sentiment in favour of the Greek rebels.[72]

The British ministers were divided on the Eastern Question. The conservative ministers opted in favour of the Ottomans and regarded them as their loyal (trading) ally. On the other hand, the British minister George Canning was anti-Ottoman empire and believed in a strong independent Greece. Besides, he realised that the sentiment about the Greek question would eventually urge Alexander I to go to war. He understood that the tsar had enough military resources to do so unilaterally. He envisioned that sooner or later Alexander I would intervene and therefore he argued it would be best to join Russia than to go against her.

Canning proved to be an ally to the Russian empire for this exact reason. Intervening in favour of the Greeks would oppose the agreements of the Vienna system. Finding an ally within the pentarchy would be complicated and therefore Canning's stance was useful for Russia. Russia was a conservative member of the alliance and therefore it was important that Britain would understand its openness to intervention. This was a delicate situation for the cautious tsar and this change in international politics would have to be communicated

[68] Matthew Rendall, "Russia, the Concert of Europe, and Greece, 1821-29: A Test of Hypotheses about the Vienna System," *Security Studies* 9, no. 4 (2000): 60 – 61.
[69] Е. И. Зеленев, И. В. Зеленева, "Восточной вопрос во внешные политике Николая I," *Вестник Санкт-Петербургского Университета* 9, сер. 2 (2005): 64.
[70] Harold Temperley, "Princess Lieven and the Protocol of 4 April 1826," 55.
[71] Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36.
[72] Ibid.

discretely. It is this exact problem of discrete communication to England where Dorothea proved to be someone who brought useful skills and knowledge to the table.

The Eastern Question and Dorothea's mission

The Eastern Question in diplomatic history is the issue of the political considerations in regards to the Ottoman Empire. The military strength of the Ottoman Empire was declining and this caused an imbalance in the status quo that was determined by the Concert of Europe. The Serbian revolution, the revolutions of 1848 and the Crimean wars were all occurrences where this came afront.[73] The instance that was important for Dorothea's career was the Greek revolt that commenced in 1821. In this year, the Greeks declared independence from the Sultan. Dorothea's friend von Metternich and the other members of the pentarchy feared increased Russian influence in the Balkans.[74]

The majority of the English ministers were pro-Turk, or at least weary of the Russian influence in Greece. As aforementioned, George Canning was an exception in the Parliament, for he favoured neutrality on the Eastern Question. Dorothea initially disliked Canning, he was of more humble descent and she initially opposed his more liberal political orientation. This changed when his stance suddenly made him a potential ally to Russia.

The tsar and count Nesselrode saw potential in an agreement with England. To achieve this, the tsar needed someone with discrete skills and intricate knowledge about the English ministers. That could be the foundation of a bilateral Anglo-Russian agreement to mediate Greece. Dorothea's contacts and reputation in England made her someone who could appeal to Canning. Due to her more informal position and her knowledge and contacts, she was the person who could build a foundation for this renewed trust and potential bilateral agreement.[75]

In 1825, Dorothea went to Russia to speak to tsar Alexander about Greece. At this point, there was a consensus between the Russian court and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs that there was no imaginable arrangement that would satisfy both Austria and Russia. Dorothea's interview with tsar Alexander made her understand that he was open to the idea to

[73] A. L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 51.
[74] О. В. Василенко "О помощи России в создании независимого греческого государства," *Новая и новейшая история*, № 3. (1959): 149.
[75] Zamoyska, *Arch Intriguer : A Biography of Dorothea De Lieven*, 92.

forgo diplomatic ties with Austria and to reapproach England. Dorothea was to serve as a living dispatch which contained this confidential idea to reapproach England.[76]

Conclusion

Which political process is influenced by Dorothea's role in international relations? Dorothea lived in politically tumultuous time. Her contribution is a smaller occurrence in a web of political processes in Europe's international relations. Alexander I attempted to reform the Russian empire and had to carefully monitor its relations with the rest of Europe since the territorial acquisitions of the empire.

The Napoleonic wars (1803 – 1815) caused unrest in Europe and after his defeat the winners of the war assembled in the Congress of Vienna (1814 – 1815). Here the powers established what was done with France and they set an understanding of legitimacy of power. The changes that were caused by the Napoleonic wars had to be reversed and this was done by dynastic claims. This meant monarchic power had to be restored and established an understanding of legitimacy of power in Europe. The powers agreed to continue to meet to carefully monitor the revolutionary situation in Europe. Tsar Alexander I wanted to prevent revolution because he saw it as a danger to safety and rest. He proposed the Holy Alliance, because treaties on weaponry and territories were broken before. Prussia and Austria joined the alliance.

Alexander I was cautious and loyal to the Vienna principles and alliance. When the Greek revolt started in 1821 his anti-revolutionary principles were challenged, because he was obliged to appear as the Orthodox protector of the Greek Christians. However, in Greece the Porte was considered to be the legitimate sovereign. The English were divided on the issue but the minister George Canning could be a potential ally in favour of intervening in favour of the Greeks. This meant a change in international policy for Russia and a breach from Austria. Dorothea was the person who had a lot of English connections and the tsar talked to her about how to approach England. This is how Dorothea appeared in international relations and where she eventually made her contribution to diplomacy.

[76] Ibid: 94.

4: Dorothea's diplomatic techniques

What did Dorothea's diplomatic techniques consist of? This chapter aims to explore the techniques that Dorothea used to develop herself as an informal diplomat. In order to understand her motivations, results and successes, it is important to identify which techniques she used. This chapter elaborates on the nature of Dorothea's work and aims to prove that Dorothea's diplomatic activities and techniques prove that her career was serious and that these activities were impacting the political milieu. The effectiveness will be demonstrated with examples that evince her involvement in the Eastern Question, after her mission. The precise outcome of this involvement will be discussed in the next chapter. However, the activities discussed here contributed to her selection for her mission in 1825. To answer this question, I will use primary sources: the correspondence between Dorothea and her brother Aleksander von Benckendorff (1812 – 1834) and the correspondence between Dorothea and Klemens von Metternich (1818 – 1826).

Informant through letters

Alexander Benckendorff and Dorothea sent their letters through different channels: regular post and through Russian couriers that made routes through Europe to collect and deliver letters of ambassadors and ministers. A courier was different from a regular mailman and the most reliable mode of transportation for mail. Couriers were servants bound to both the household of the ambassador as to the household of the minister in the country of origin.[77]

The content and the length of the letters show whether they were taken by a courier or sent by regular post. Dorothea wrote about her whereabouts and meetings differently when there was no courier available. Most of the letters that were sent through regular post have a maximum length of approximately two, at most three pages (in print). On the other hand, letters that were transported by couriers were, especially at the end of the correspondence, at least double the length, with occasional booklets that consisted of reproduced dialogues and carefully constructed updates on current affairs. "I have given you a long letter, my dear brother, but the knowledge of a safe occasion to write always makes me loquacious."[78] The content of the letters, as well as the tone, were adjusted according to the channel of

[77] Howard Robinson, "Post and Courier Service in the Diplomacy of Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review* 81, no. 2 (1976): 374.
[78] Lieven, "January 3, 1829," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834,* 178.

transportation.[79] The fact that Dorothea adjusted the content of her letters to the channel of transportation indicates that the letters contained sensitive, important information. It shows she was not merely corresponding for the sake of her family relations but also because she was doing her job and passed on sensitive information.

"If communications are re-established by some direct channel, as I trust," wrote Dorothea in a letter to her brother in 1813, "let me know, dear Alexander, if you have any commissions I can execute for you, or if there are any things you wish to be forwarded."[80] This illuminates that an important part of her job was passing on information. Dorothea realised she could be a communicative agent for her brother, who was not able to physically attend London's political circles, but was able to address for example the Russian minister of foreign affairs. Often she reproduced conversations or forwarded messages from others through her letters. She actively asked her brother to provide her with information that could prove useful to pass to others. This indicates that she understood how to contribute early on in her career.

A later fragment shows how she grew and developed this service through her letters and how they impacted the political milieu. After 1825 she heavily involved herself in the proceedings around Greece. Constantine, her other brother, was present at the Russo-Turkish war (1828 – 1829) which commenced as a result of the Russian involvement in the Greek war of independence. "I have just received your letter of May 31 – June 12 … please go on sending them (his letters), as they are also very useful. I show so much of them as is advisable to those whom it is judicious to inform."[81] This fragment was sent to Alexander, but Dorothea requested Alexander to send this part of her letter to Constantine. He was present at the war in the Balkans and her updates on the formations and stances of the ministers in England were important for Russia's warfare and negotiations with England.

Dorothea updated Constantine via Alexander on the changing formations of the English Cabinet after the passing of George Canning in 1827. Russia's move to war with the Ottoman empire caused concerns in Britain and Austria. The Treaty of London formally prevented England from stopping Russia, but that did not mean they were contempt with it. The Duke of Wellington (1769 – 1852), the premier of England between 1828 and 1830, feared that if the Russians would gain territory in Greece it could hinder England's overland route to India.[82]

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[79] Lieven, "March 17, 1829," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 186.
[80] Lieven, "September 16, 1813," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 5.
[81] Lieven, "June 18, 1828," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 134.
[82] Charmley, *The Princess and the Politicians*, 166.

After Canning's passing and the signing of the Treaty of London (1827) Dorothea was convinced England could not stop Russia. Dorothea saw the importance of informing Alexander and Constantine about the developments of Wellingtons Turcophile stance. She informed them that Lord Grey and Lord Aberdeen were orientated towards Russia's side in this matter. She let Constantine know that Wellington sent Lord Heytesbury (1779 – 1860) as an ambassador to Russia and she wrote that he may prove to be an opportunity because he was more open to conciliatory views to Russia's actions in the Balkan. "I am satisfied that he (Lord Heytesbury) will make himself popular with you all, if only at St Petersburg he is anything like what he showed himself to us here."[83] Here Dorothea is not just passing on information but operating as a direct informant to Constantine and letting him know where to look for negotiations within her brothers' reach to ease Russia's position in negotiations with England.

Another instance occurred in 1828, when the Duke of Wellington was losing popularity in the public opinion, which was heavily influenced by public sympathy for the Greeks. Dorothea decided to discuss this situation with Earl Grey, whom she befriended. These talks caused her contemporaries, among them Harriet Arbuthnot, to suspect her to be part of a scheme to get the Duke of Wellington dismissed. What is for sure is that Dorothea considered him an obstacle for Russia's position in negotiations. Wellington expressed his sympathy for Russia's losses in the Turkish campaign in an attempt to get on better terms with the woman who, at this point, interpreted English behaviour for the Russian court. Despite this try she remained convinced he was against her and against Russia.[84]

Hence, she discussed Wellington's position with both Lord Palmerston and Lord Grey, who were, in Dorothea's eyes, more favourably disposed to Russia than Wellington was.[85] She reported in a letter to Alexander that Lord Aberdeen, Wellington's Chief Secretary, paid a rather peculiar visit to Lord Grey in which he discussed his ideas on the Porte and the Balkan. Dorothea decided it could be useful to share Grey's update on this visit in detail: "I have just received a letter from Lord Grey and I cannot think of anything better than to send you the translation of a passage in it. I had recounted to him the strange visit he had received from Lord Aberdeen. Here is his reply. Show it to Count Nesselrode. It is not without importance to

[83] Lieven, "June 30, 1828," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 140.
[84] Charmley, *The Princess and the Politicians*, 172.
[85] Ibid: 171.

know Lord Grey's way of looking at things."[86] This example shows that she was able to involve the ministers in England into conversations and that they confided in her. Here she used her knowledge to inform Alexander and his co-readers.

Lord Aberdeen provided another instance that demonstrates Dorothea knew how to disentangle information from her surroundings. The peace settlement at Adrianople, signed on September 14, 1829 ended the war and settled autonomy for Serbia and promised the same for Greece. Besides, it gave Russia access to the Danube and settled Russia's acquisition of territory on the Black Sea. In some British eyes this was not a modest peace settlement. In the light of this settlement Lord Aberdeen had told Dorothea while visiting her he felt duped and that "Russia dominated the world"[87] and an intimate relationship between Russia and England would be necessary. This openness to her from him was surprising and shows Dorothea understood how to make people speak, even about things they were not supposed to speak about.

These examples display how she forwarded knowledge that she disentangled from others. It shows that she was a thorough informant and understood which comments were of importance or useful and how she had to write to bring messages across. Besides, it gives an account of her ability to get ministers to speak to her. Even about things they would better not tell her and these instances illuminate the activity of her position. It shows that Dorothea was not just passively rephrasing her brother's or her British friends' information. She had an active role in selecting communications herself, demonstrating her adequate understanding of current affairs and social skills.

This understanding was not just useful for herself but it relieved some workload from her husband. Her adequate reporting was noted by count Nesselrode and from 1826, the correspondence with Alexander became less frequent and intricate because Dorothea started to report directly to him. The information she gathered in the drawing rooms and at dinner tables were transformed into reports to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. She mentioned that the minister preferred her reports to those of her husband for their length, clarity and comprehensibility.[88] This says something about her position: the Russian court needed her knowledge and pen to inform them.

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[86] Lieven, "October 10, 1829," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834* , 201.
[87] Lieven, "August 29, 1830," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834,* 240.
[88] Lieven, "April 16, 1823," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 207.

Reporting

Occasionally Dorothea reported directly to Russia earlier in her career, gradually it became a more constitutional part of her job. When Christopher was obliged to travel, she took charge of his affairs. The fact that this direct reporting became more frequent and occurred when Christopher was with her demonstrates the growth in her career: between 1812 and 1818 she asked Alexander regularly to pass on a message to Nesselrode. [89] But between 1818 and 1834 this was not necessary anymore, she started reporting to Nesselrode directly.[90] "Dear Alexander, I am only sending a line in answer to the letter which the last courier brought me from you. I am writing such a long letter to Count Nesselrode about things in general that nothing remains for me to tell you and I know that my letters to him are common to you both." This passage shows that her letters to her brother, which were filled with political news, were not just read by him. This quote shows that even if she did not, her letters were useful to the Russian minister of foreign affairs and not fully private.

Sometimes, there was no courier and Dorothea had to adjust the content of her letters. In these cases, she did not hesitate to be creative. A good example is a correspondence from 1830. During this period, the English Ministry was being formed. "Let me know too, Alexander, if you were able to decipher all my previous citron, and in future do not fail to take notice if my Christian name appears at the end of my letter. It may be that I shall have occasion to use of it."[91] Dorothea was updating Alexander with information from others who were involved in the process. She enclosed a list of the new ministers. And in a letter from London, dating from the 10th of November 1830, she included a passage about this ordeal in invisible ink. The letter was transported by a Prussian courier, so Dorothea probably felt at liberty to write extensively but also not completely free to make it all visible. She urged Lord Grey to support the union of the five powers in order to ensure peace. He promised her to speak to England in order to settle this business, also on the Emperor's behalf. He promised Dorothea that she would be satisfied and that Lord Palmerston would make such an explanation to the plenipotentiaries as will amply content Russia.[92] This ordeal and passage

[89] Lieven, "August 29, 1830," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834,* 239.
[90] Lieven, "November 3, 1831," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 259.
[91] Lieven, "December 10, 1830," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 291.
[92] Lieven, "November 10, 1830," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 280 – 281.

shows that she was able to influence the ministers she surrounded herself with and that she knew which precautions to take before reporting.

Social events Dorothea was known to be fashionable and a good hostess, which contributed to her eventual success. The abovementioned examples show that she often reported on what she heard during social events and visits. She enjoyed conversations about current affairs and politics. "… generally I am so quickly bored with trivialities , that it is rare for anyone who is endowed with a little tact not to realise immediately that this is the kind of conversation I like least."[93] This shows she was enjoying discussions of current affairs for her entertainment and enjoyment. However, she must have understood that these topics of conversation served another purpose. "The position in England is indeed extraordinary. I know a great deal more than the interested parties, for I am treated so much as an Englishwoman by both sides that nobody minds to speak in front of me. The English, silent and cold about everything else are particularly talkative about their own affairs."[94] In this case she discussed rumours about Lady Conyngham, the mistress of George IV who had said something imprudent to the Duke of Wellington. However, it exemplified her position in a broader sense. This indicates that she was hosting not for mere entertainment purposes, but that she wished to learn from the conversations she was able to engage herself in or to extract useful news for her correspondents.

The knowledge that Dorothea passed on either in conversation or in one of her letters was often acquired within English high society. During these events she was easily bored and this has been interpreted as haughtiness. The previously mentioned quotes showed that this did not contribute to a positive personal reputation. Despite that, she was very well integrated and not everyone disliked her. She was even the first foreigner to be elected a patroness of the Almack's. This was an exclusive social club that was very sought after in its heydays. This gave her the opportunity to maintain and expand her network which she needed to do her work. Her level of integration was even subjected to some gossip. Alexanders colleagues even gave her the impression they considered her an Englishwoman or an Austrian. She immediately denied such allegations in the following fragment to her brother. "Conclusions such as these, do not reflect much credit on the intelligence of your colleagues… For myself I

[93] Lieven, "August 23, 1823," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 230.

[94] Lieven, "July 11, 1820," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 38.

may say that I have made all possible advances to the Russians..." [95] The eventual proceedings of her embassy showed that the intense contact with either von Metternich or her English friends did not make her doubt for whom she did her job.

Dorothea was searching for relevance in her conversations at social events because the salon was her work field. At her own salon she invited many different guests, with diverging political stances and backgrounds. She disliked being in agreement with everyone she spoke to and differences in opinions kept her soirées interesting, this must have eased her position in regards to George Canning. This strategy of invitations must have caused a milieu where politics were discussed more easily and this atmosphere made it easier for Dorothea to find out what she needed to know.[96] Her role as salon hostess gave her a position of autonomy: she decided who she invited and who she spoke to.

Engaging in society can be seen as a part of her job. As John Charmly noted, the gatherings at soirées, balls and salons played a crucial role in policy making. Even though society was not traditionally considered the place of diplomatic policymaking, it was the place where reputations were built and broken and where the outcomes of meetings were discussed. "My husband is very busy and goes very little into society; I go partly for duty and partly for pleasure. For I like the bustle and the gossip."[97] This exhibits her view of attending these events. She was aware that it was part of her job and she saw it as an obligation. The following quote proves that she understood the importance of her salon and the subsequent reporting. She knew the importance of contacts and good reputations, which could be broken or build in her society gatherings. "This is how gossip runs, my dear Alexander, but it is the principal food for diplomacy."[98]

As a hostess, Dorothea was not very talkative. Her reporting capacities must have been underestimated, especially in the beginning of her embassy. For the majority of the time, her ability in getting people to talk was by listening and not by talking herself. When she was alone in London, she constantly had visitors in her drawing room. These assemblies that she hosted, gave her plenty of opportunities to listen and to gather information. "I am acting as I told you at Warsaw. I know everything and say nothing, which means that only in this

[95] Lieven, "December 1, 1822," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 59.
[96] Susan Groag Bell, "Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31, no. 2 (2000): 263.
[97] Lieven, "March 10, 1822," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 55.
[98] Lieven, "October 8, 1827," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 108.

condition I told everything that passes."[99] This shows how she understood the usefulness of her silence and attendance of the social events. Others may have interpreted her silence as passivity. Especially in the beginning of her time in England. The examples of her reports show that this was not the case. She as a listener transformed into an active agent, by not talking too much or by saying things that invited others to speak.

Dorothea was not just an active agent within the correspondence with her brother, in which she chose topics to write about. She did not keep her brother's information within their correspondence or Russian politicians. She used them as a pawn to impress the English ministers as a strategy in favour of her own embassy. "Your letter from Breda, dear Alexander, was read by us to the whole English Ministry, assembled at our house. Liverpool remarked that is was a pity you had not 80 000 men instead of the 4000 under your command."[100] In this example, she read one of his letters aloud to the British ministers in which Alexander reported on the liberation of the Netherlands. This reminded the ministers of Russia's and England's (at that point) shared objectives against the French. In her turn she was sure to carefully report on the flattery expressed about Alexander's military actions by the English ministers. This example conveys Dorothea's role as an active informal diplomat. She passed on letters in secret to those who she trusted in her own government but she also selected letters to read to the English ministers and chose which comments she, on her turn, would pass on to others.

Besides passing on the information that she gathered, Dorothea also set the stage for more fluent diplomatic meetings. It was in Russia's interest that the court members made a good impression. For example in 1816, Dorothea carefully prepared the arrival of Grand Duke Nicholas (later tsar Nicholas). Previously, the Grand Duchess of Russia, Anna Pavlovna, visited England and she made a very bad impression with the conservative British Prince Regent. Dorothea knew that Grand Duke Nicholas came to visit and she imagined the way Anna spoke about her English experience at the Russian court. To prepare a smoother meeting for the Grand Duke, Dorothea wrote to Alexander that she expected their meeting to be a success unlike the one with the Grand Duchess. Bringing flattery across before the arrival of the diplomat or representative can ease negotiations a lot.[101] After this preparation she wrote the following: "Will you do me a favour, dear Alexander, to burn this page of my letter. I

[99] Lieven, "October 25, 1830," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 268.
[100] Lieven, "December 27, 1813," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 9.
[101] Lieven, "December 1, 1816," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 31.

know by experience how important it is to even exaggerate prudential precautions."[102] This request shows that she was very aware of the sensitive nature of her messages and that she understood it was better to be too careful. This example demonstrates her awareness and sensitivity, qualities that made her a successful informal diplomat.

Dorothea had an intense sense of professionalism and devotion to her post. There are multiple instances in her letters that illustrate this. For example, when her mother in law passed away. Dorothea wrote that she quarrelled with Christopher because he was asking for a leave to return to Russia to attend his mother's funeral. Dorothea was not even remotely hesitant to express her dissatisfaction about this. "I am a little annoyed, I must admit, that my husband should have asked for leave for private business. I have done my utmost to hinder it ..."[103] Another instance is with the French ambassador Talleyrand. He had been ambassador for seventy five years and during a dinner, Dorothea noticed that he spoke about himself a lot. She bent to the English King and told him that one who spent multiple decades in diplomacy would have to understand that speaking of oneself instead of the nation one represents is rather odd.[104]

Conclusion

What did Dorothea's diplomatic techniques consist of? Dorothea's diplomacy consisted of hosting, entertaining, listening and reporting in letters. In her position of an informal diplomat she was more than the ambassador's wife or a society figure. She was an active agent in an international network that influenced political processes. She consistently communicated with different political participants. If the information she exchanged would not have been influential or important, she would not have adjusted the length and content of her letters according to the mode of transportation. Nor would she have requested her brother to burn parts of her letters or have written in invisible ink. These precautions do not just show something about the nature of her work but also about her own sensitivity and awareness towards the issues she engaged herself in. She took active decisions by choosing to whom she showed or read the letters, both to members in the Russian court and in the English court and ministry. The remarks as a result of these readings illuminate that it was impacting those she interacted with.

[102] Lieven, "October 30, 1816," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 28.
[103] Lieven, "March 16, 1828," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 127.
[104] Lieven, "August 29, 1830," in *Letters of Dorothea, princess Lieven, during her residence in London, 1812 – 1834*, 258.

Dorothea extensively described her meetings with the English ministers and forwarded their letters or reproduced dialogues to her brother or directly to count Nesselrode. These descriptions show that she was actively involved in affairs and it demonstrates her understanding of these affairs. By doing so she set the stage for more fluent diplomatic meetings.

Another important activity she engaged herself in was the society and hosting salons. She considered these as a part of her job and she understood how important this more informal stage was integral to building and maintaining good relations. Her descriptions of her soirées illuminates one of Dorothea's key strengths as the active listener. She was listening more often than she spoke and she knew how to approach those she needed to hear more of. The letters show that she was aware of this talent herself but others did not notice the impact she made, if they would have noticed they would not have shared the information that Dorothea passed on.

Dorothea's self-awareness did not compromise her professionalism. She was able to shift her political stance towards a more liberal view because her court demanded her to do so. She liked England a lot and spent a lot of time there but she always stayed loyal to her post. The way she equalized the welfare of this post to the welfare of her family demonstrates that she identified herself with her work and that she saw herself as an ambassadress, not just as an ambassador's wife.

Briefly put, Dorothea's activities as an informal diplomat consisted of reporting, informing and hosting from England to Russia. The Russian government and mostly Count Nesselrode was interested in the information she provided. This meant that she was not just a woman of symbolic worth, she was someone with diplomatic agency.

5: Political results and processes

The central question of this chapter is: What were the political results of Dorothea's activities? In the previous chapters it was researched which techniques Dorothea used to conduct her diplomacy. The examples used demonstrated her involvement in the Eastern Question and the Russo-Turkish war. In this chapter I will research how Dorothea's activities contributed to Russia's breach with the Holy Alliance in international policy. The aim is to elucidate what the exact political results of her work were. In this chapter, I will show how Dorothea's activities contributed to the treaties that led up to the Greek independence (1832). Central to this chapter are the political results of her mission surrounding the Greek revolt and the Eastern Question. These results will be researched with both primary sources, Dorothea's correspondences and private diary and with secondary literature. I will attempt to make a case for her by quoting corroborations of her influence away from her own writing.

Dorothea's talks with Alexander I

In the previous chapter it was shown how Dorothea involved herself in the negotiations surrounding bilateral agreements between Russia and England about the Greek Revolt. These negotiations eventually led up to the Greek independence. Previous to this independence the Russians initiated an armed intervention against the Porte. Doing so meant forgoing the principles of the Vienna system. It meant that Russia broke ties with Austria. Naturally, the diverging interests of their courts influenced the liaison between Dorothea and von Metternich. The coolness between Russia and Austria was not just a result of a different stance on Greece. Von Metternich had boasted about his influence over tsar Alexander I, the Russian ambassador Pozzo di Borgo (1764 – 1842) heard and relayed this to the tsar and eventually to Dorothea.[105] The discussions between Dorothea and tsar Alexander provide extra insights in Dorothea's precise contribution, her journey to Russia set the stage for her political highlight and were part of the reason for the talks and letters described in the previous chapter.

In May 1825 Dorothea left to Russia to discuss the situation in Greece with tsar Alexander I. She described their discussions in her diary and recalled that she urged the tsar to put his foot down in regards to Austria. "Finally, after an hour and a half's tête-à-tête, I made enough impression on his mind … It was truly an honour, though I did not deserve it, but this

[105] Harold Temperley, "Princess Lieven and the Protocol of 4 April 1826," 57.

opinion put me in the right relation to him…"[106] Which could have meant she was aware that Alexander I already knew he wanted to forgo Austria and renew allyship with England. This allyship could be found in George Canning and to explore this option the tsar appealed to her knowledge about the English affairs. He assumed Canning's political stances were not in line with his own and Dorothea wrote she made a case for him: "You will pardon me, sire, Canning is not a Jacobin. The distinctive mark of his policy today is to be the enemy of Prince Metternich and he has some reason to be that."[107] Alexander I explained to Dorothea that it did not fit his dignity to simply propose bilateral intervention with England. This is because Russia was one of the more conservative powers and initiated the Holy Alliance to stop revolutions, not to support them.

The point of the mission was to let England, in this case especially Canning, know that Russia would not shy away from intervening if it decided to take steps against Turkey.[108] This is another reason for Dorothea's choice, in her informal position it would be easier to communicate this intention off-the-books. This could have eased the tsar's position in international negotiations. The idea to let go of diplomatic ties with Austria meant a renewal in international politics. The issue was that this had to be brought across with tact and discretion. The fact that the tsar considered her someone worth listening to demonstrates her capacities as a diplomat. Count Nesselrode had written down his conversation with tsar Alexander about Dorothea after their interview. She reproduced them in her diary and said that she read that the tsar had told Nesselrode: "I have found her sensible on all questions… Could we not profit by her return England to re-approach that Cabinet? She knows the influential persons in this country… she well knows the means to use her position to render the service I ask of her."[109]

Count Nesselrode showed her these notes he when gave her the instructions for her mission in the morning of the 31st of August in 1825. He wrote a note for her husband, telling him he should believe her. Their discussion came down to the following: a reversal of Russian foreign policy and a break with Austria. According to Dorothea's own writing, count Nesselrode instructed her to tell Canning that Russia would be open to intervention if England would be. She recollected his instructions: "Here was the most cautious and discreet of

[106] Dorothea Lieven, "Diary Entry, August 1825," in: Harold Temperley, *The Unpublished Diary and Political Sketches of Princess Lieven* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1925), 89.
[107] Ibid: 92
[108] Ibid: 95.
[109] Ibid: 96.

Ministers compelled to entrust the most confidential, most intimate and most bold political projects to a woman."[110] Despite this, her interview with tsar Alexander I left an honourable impression. The fact that he had an interview with her in the first place shows that he valued her input and opinion. Dorothea's connection made someone who brought something to the table.

In fact, her femininity was considered an advantage in this case. Dorothea mentioned the following about Nesselrode's instructions: "A woman knows how to make people speak, and that is precisely why the Emperor considers you have a unique opportunity."[111] This portrays her womanhood as a disguise of her actual function. To von Metternich she wrote: "The Emperor took me for a man ; he treated me as one as regards confidence, and as a woman as regards attentions and consideration. I accepted all this with reserve but I took advantage of my position to put in a useful word whenever I got the chance."[112] That these 'useful words' were used to plan something that would strongly dissatisfy von Metternich was something he probably did not imagine. Von Metternich would have been sensible to question the change in her tone, but he did not, which indicates he did not expect the level of Dorothea's involvement to be this high. This shows that Dorothea herself enjoyed this employment and considered this a great honour and opportunity. She enjoyed superseding her traditional role by carrying confidential information from the court. She did not keep a secret about her flattered feelings and wrote to von Metternich: "…It has had very important consequences for me; and I shall come back rich, very rich in precious knowledge,… I had some long talks with the Emperor; he confides in me. Accept what I tell you at its proper value. Trust me in my tact and my zeal."[113]

The exact accounts from Dorothea's interview with tsar Alexander I and count Nesselrode are not precisely recorded. However, in her interview with Nesselrode he gave her a note so she could inform her husband of the mission he and tsar Alexander entrusted her with. The note stated that Christopher was to believe everything Dorothea would tell him. Christopher wrote to Nesselrode on the 5th of October in 1825: "… my wife put me in possession of the little note which you had charged for me, and by which you authorize me to collect from her mouth all the details of the last interview you had together… these data offer

[110] Ibid: 97.
[111] David Bewer, *The Greek War of Independence: The Struggle for Freedom from the Ottoman Oppression and the Birth of the Modern Greek Nation* (London: Overlook Duckworth, 2011), 24.
[112] Lieven, "October 23, 1825," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 292.
[113] Ibid.

me a precious latitude of which I shall take advantage in the event that the circumstances … or to useful insinuations in the service of the Emperor."[114] This is a written corroboration that Dorothea was definitely involved in this question and had spoken to the tsar about a reversal in foreign policy.

Executing the plan

Dorothea arrived in London from Saint Petersburg on the 28th of September in 1825. While she was on her journey back home she wrote to von Metternich. "My visit to Russia is over. It has had very important consequences for me… I will tell you what is most urgent; there is a certain coldness to you … waste no time in arguing; but try to make your peace."[115] Here she probably told him something he already knew, despite that, it shows that she valued their friendship. Her interview with the tsar and their dissatisfaction about von Metternich did not invalidate her warm sentiments towards him. Within professional limits, she tried to keep their correspondence pleasant which shows she was not as cool, blunt and arid as she was often seen.

After her arrival in England she requested a seat next to George Canning at the Cottage of Windsor, in the beginning of November of 1825. This was a reassurance for George Canning because "although minister (he) had no title, had no rank at Court…"[116] Dorothea reported she initiated a conversation with him on court etiquette. "Canning had very gauche manners and sinned against the etiquette of elegant society."[117] She reports she gradually raised the question of Greece. George Canning reported in his letters to Nesselrode that he was now able to speak to Russia with more trust than before. This is an indicator that Dorothea communicated her message. Canning wrote this in November, which aligns with Dorothea's reports.[118] 30th of October, again, Lieven to Nesselrode: "My conduct will prove

[114] Christopher Lieven, "October 5th, 1825," Quoted in: Theodor Schiemann, Geschichte Rußlands unter Kaiser Nikolaus I / Vom Tode Alexanders I. bis zur Juli-Revolution: Band 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1908), 613.
Original: C'est dans cette position des choses que le retour de ma femme m'a mis en possession du petit billet dont Vous l'aviez chargée pour moi, et par lequel Vous m'autorisez à recueillir de sa bouche tous les détails du dernier entretien que Vous avez eu ensemble. — J e n'ai pas cru pour le moment devoir apporter la moindre nuance dans ma conduite, parceque je la crois conforme aussi bien à nos intérêts qu'à notre dignité; mais ces données m'offrent une latitude précieuse de laquelle j e profiterai pour le cas où les circonstances, ou bien les dispositions que je puis rencontrer ici, se prêtent à quelque combinaison nouvelle, ou à des insinuations utiles au service de l'Empereur. (Translated by me.)

[115] Dorothea Lieven to Klemens von Metternich, September 2, 1825, in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 – 1826*, 291.

[116] Temperley, *The Unpublished Diary and Political Sketches of Princess Lieven,* 106.

[117] Ibid: 107.

[118] Temperley, "Princess Lieven and the Protocol of 4 April 1826," 67 – 68.

to you that I have understood the sense of the "living dispatch" that you have sent me."[119] Christopher acted upon this and started negotiations with Canning. "The months of autumn passed in frequent and secret conferences between my husband and Canning."[120] On the 25th of October Dorothea and Christopher went to see Canning and by December they must have found an agreement and Canning's eventual conduct showed that Dorothea must have communicated Russia's openness to bilateral intervention. This is because George Canning sent an ambassador to Saint Petersburg and because he wrote to Christopher on the 12th of January 1826 that he wanted to send Wellington to Saint Petersburg to negotiate Greece.[121]

Dorothea enjoyed her participation and involvement in these processes. However, her positive mood received a big blow in the time when these secret conferences took place. Tsar Alexander I passed away on the 1st of December in 1825. The following fragment shows Dorothea strongly lamented the loss of a man who engaged in political relations with her. "…He gave me a new interest in life... He was the kind of man liable to become infatuated ; and it was a new experience for him to have political relations with a woman. Here there was no occasion for pride and, possibly, none for distrust; since a woman's zeal is no suspect."[122] The tsar's passing did not change the mission nor plans for bilateral negotiations. The quote above is important because it illuminates her impressions and understanding of what she was involved in. This letter illustrates the nature of their friendship but it also demonstrates Dorothea's understanding of the change in international politics in which she was about to participate. It is as if she wanted to show von Metternich that she was about to use the knowledge and skills she had acquired.

Despite the tsar's passing she continued her work with even more diligence. The fact that the tsar even relied on her to informally pass through communication showed her success. The corroborations away from her own writing by both her husband and by Canning confirmed her involvement. The quote above, from von Metternich's letter, demonstrates that Dorothea saw her femininity as an advantage as well as her employers did. She understood that her surroundings were talking about her but at this point no one took her advances seriously enough to suspect them to have the course of events they eventually had. Dorothea's contribution was a small part of a process that directly contributed to the Greek independence

[119] Temperley, *The Unpublished Diary and Political Sketches of Princess Lieven*, 107.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid: 109.
[122] Lieven, "January 6, 1826," in *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820 - 1826*, 291.

(1832). The negotiations that were planned by Canning and Christopher led up to the protocol of Saint Petersburg (1826) and to the Treaty of London (1827) which eventually led to the Battle of Navarino.

Communicating the secret that Russia would be open for intervention with England in an off-record conversation is not the only action Dorothea undertook. According to her own accounts she also passed on a note about the 'barbarisation project' that the Turkish government had planned. This note was written in French and it stated that Russia had information about certain plans of the Turkish government: "The Court of Russia has positive information that before Ibrahim Pasha's army was put into motion, an agreement was entered into by the Porte with the Pasha of Egypt that whatever part of Greece Ibrahim Pasha might conquer should be at his disposal; and that his plan of disposing of his conquest is (and was stated to the Porte to be and has been approved by the Porte) to remove whole Greek population, carrying them off to slavery in Egypt…"[123]

The plan that Ibrahim Pasha would take all the Christian inhabitants of his conquered Greek territory into slavery was an extra motivation to opt for intervention against the Porte. On the 25th of October 1825 Canning wrote about the meeting with the Lievens to Lord Liverpool. He described here that Christopher Lieven had read the note above to him. He told Liverpool the plans of the project above were new to him.[124] This plan was a strong breach of the Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji (1774) which, among other things, appointed Russia the protector of the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Besides, the public opinion in England and throughout Europe was increasingly in favour of intervention in favour of the Greeks. Canning considered this public opinion in his calculations, besides, he must have realised Russia would eventually intervene. Going to war with Russia as an ally would be more beneficial to Britain's position than to let her go unilaterally. Canning probably realised this himself, but the positive affirmation that Russia would be Britain's ally, if they would decide to intervene, eased his position.[125] Canning previously understood that the only way to prevent war was to act with Russia and to put pressure on Turkey.[126]

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[123] David Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence: The Struggle for Freedom from the Ottoman Oppression and the Birth of the Modern Greek Nation,* 254.

[124] Steven Schwartzberg, "The Lion and the Phoenix - 1: British Policy toward the 'Greek Question', 1831-32," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 24, no. 2 (1988): 159.

[125] Ibid: 158.

[126] M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), 251.

The Protocol of the 4th of April in 1826, Treaty of London

After the tsar's passing and Dorothea's fulfilled mission, the negotiations between England and Russia continued. In March 1826, her husband Christopher went to Russia to attend the coronation of tsar Nicholas. The Duke of Wellington attended the event as the English minister of foreign affairs like Canning had planned. The Duke of Wellington took on this job with fervour. Canning could see that Wellington's presence in Russia proved a fine opportunity to discuss an understanding on the situation in Greece.

In Russia, Christopher, Wellington and Canning came to an agreement that was formalized in the Protocol of 4th of April 1826. Unsurprisingly, Austria declined the coalition of Russia and England and the Protocol angered von Metternich. Despite her friends disapproval Dorothea was delighted that this protocol was seen as a diplomatic success for Russia.[127] In summary, the protocol decided that Greece would become an autonomous part of the Ottoman empire. The Greeks could choose their own government and they would have complete freedom of trade and administration. The borders of the new autonomous region would be settled after meetings with Greek, Turkish, British and Russian diplomats and Russia nor Britain could seek territorial gains or economic influence in Greece.

This protocol was not necessarily important due to the exact agreements but because it was the first time that two powers in the European congress had agreed on mediation in war, which granted the Greeks limited independence. Austria fully declined the arrangement and Prussia followed its lead. France was hesitant due to the sentiment of the French people versus the concept of legitimate sovereignty.[128] Canning kept working on the terms of the principles of the protocol of St. Petersburg and gave them to the French ambassador in London in August 1826. He went to Paris and after negotiations with the French King, Charles X, the French agreed to the protocol to at least maintain some influence in Greece. Hence, the Russian, British and French signed the Treaty of London in July 1827. This protocol proposed an armistice and a warning that the three powers would use force if anyone would reject their mediation. The Greeks accepted but the Porte did not. This eventually set the stage for the battle of Navarino on the 20th of October in 1827.[129]

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[127] Zamoyska, *Arch Intriguer : A Biography of Dorothea Lieven*, 103.

[128] M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*, 316.

[129] David Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence: The Struggle for Freedom from the Ottoman Oppression and the Birth of the Modern Greek Nation,* 319.

Dorothea's role as diplomat

The existing scepticism around Dorothea's contribution stems from the fact that most of the information about her exact contribution is written by herself. According to her own accounts, she gave the note about the rumour of Ibrahim Pasha's plan to her husband, who gave it to George Canning. Her communication about Russia's "secret" (openness to bilateral intervention) is hard to be avowed for because it is not precisely corroborated in ink, like many other formal diplomatic communications were.

I argue that there is a strong case for Dorothea in this question. Whether or not she was the one who wrote the note about the potential breach of the Kutchuk-Kainardji Treaty is not the most important issue. What is important is that there are clear indicators that she played an important role in the process that eventually kickstarted a series of events that changed the state of international affairs. The fact that Canning wrote about his renewed trust in Russia right at the time when Dorothea herself reported on communicating her message invigorates this point. Her husband reported on the note and the "sense of the living dispatch" to count Nesselrode, which aligns with her own report. Besides, her journey to Russia was not without reason and there are written sources away from her writing that confirm their interview actually took place. It is for sure that they both spoke to her about the question of change in international relations and this cannot have been without a reason.

Tsar Alexander I wrote to Dorothea's brother Alexander von Benckendorf: "It is a shame your sister wears skirts, she would have made an excellent diplomat."[130] Which shows the grand impression she made on him with her diplomatic knowledge. It demonstrates that the tsar fully recognized her talent and that he was satisfied with what she thus far had achieved. He passed away before he could witness the final results of the negotiations and Dorothea's employment. His hint of disappointment about the fact that he could not simply establish Dorothea as an ambassador exemplifies the potential he must have seen in her. Dorothea made a contribution that was genuine, determining what it precisely looked like is impossible but the tsar and Count Nesselrode would not have written these account about her if she had made these things up.

Lastly, there are writers and journalists who described Dorothea's career after she passed away in the beginning of the 20th century. Generally speaking, these stories do not do

[130] Tsar Aleksander I, "October 23, 1825," as quoted in: Marina Soroka, *The Summer Capitals of Europe 1814 – 1919,* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2017), footnote 116.

her personal image well, but they do confirm her diplomatic contribution. Writer Lytton Strachey (1880 – 1932), who previously described her negatively summarized her career as follows: "Henceforward, high diplomacy was to be her passion... Besides her native wits, she had two great assets—her position in English society, and the fact that her husband was a nonentity—she found that she could simply step into his place. Her first triumph came when the Czar Alexander entrusted her personally with an overture to Canning on the thorny question of Greece… Madame de Lieven became the presiding genius of the new orientation; … it was certainly owing to her efforts that the Treaty of London was signed in 1827…" [131]

He partially ascribes Dorothea's success to the supposed lack of success of her husband, which was based on the gossip of Dorothea's contemporaries and the press. His stories were biographical and he was a critical writer. Despite his negative description of Dorothea, the fragment displays the traits that made Dorothea successful. Her social skills and good integration were her own achievements and that made her an active participant in diplomacy. This piece above, even though it is perhaps partially fictional, actually acknowledged her influence and strongly aligns with the corroborations found about Dorothea's contribution. Strachey was not the only one who incorporated Dorothea's reports in his work. Journalist and writer Egon Jameson (1895 – 1969) described how Dorothea worked for the Russian court in St. Petersburg and wrote that she had been a tsarist secret agent, who wrote reports in code for the Russian court.[132] These literary processions of Dorothea's work may be exaggerated but in combination with the written corroborations of Dorothea's own word they must have been, at least partially, inspired by actual events.

The renewed look on the importance of informal diplomacy as an influential niche in negotiations which is interwoven with formal diplomacy give reasons to take Dorothea seriously. The understanding that the processes leading up to formal treaties are at least as important as the signatures on the treaties themselves diminishes the importance on who wrote the note about the plan from Ibrahim Pasha. There are a lot of reasons to argue that Dorothea was a key figure in these processes and a lot of written confirmations she did not write herself validated this role. The fact that her own reports aligned with these corroborations make an even stronger case for her. She possessed the social skills and the diligence in her reporting and her involvement may not have been direct but her efforts

[131] Lytton Strachey, 'Madame Lieven' *Portraits in Miniature*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1933) 120-29. https://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/stracheyl-portraitsinminiature/stracheyl-portraitsinminiature-00-h.html#chap12.
[132] Egon Jameson, *10 Downing Street: The Romance of a House* (London: Francis Aldor, 1946), 302.

contributed to the eventual course of events. Even if she did exaggerate her own contributions, this probably says more about her character than about the nature of her political highlight itself. The descriptions of her work by others show that she may have been right to give herself some credit, for this level of influence and involvement was exceptional.

Conclusion

What were the political results of Dorothea's activities? The results of Dorothea's activities were related to the events that established the Greek independence. Dorothea was part of a bigger web of events that caused historical changes. Another result was a negative personal image, her involvement caused her contemporaries to speak of her negatively. Dorothea's contribution was made in the context of the Eastern Question, where international relations and public opinion urged tsar Alexander I to back away from the status quo which was established by the Concert of Europe. George Canning was the person through which a Russo-British agreement could be realised. Dorothea was the person who had to communicate this overture. According to her own writing she did so by communicating Russia's openness to Canning and by communicating the information she had about Ibrahim Pasha's plan to take the Greek Christians into slavery.

In this process, her audience with the tsar made a big impression and this is proved by his written corroborations of her success. Her femininity was recognized as an advantage in this process. The nature of her exact contribution is hard to pinpoint, because it all occurred in the informal sphere and the majority of the messages about the precise nature of her actions in the mission are written by Dorothea herself. However, there are enough additional written sources to confirm that she had been of importance in the processes that contributed to the treaties that led to the Greek independence.

The political consequences of this rapprochement were formalised in the Protocol of St. Petersburg on the 4th of April, 1826. It decided that Greece would become an autonomous part of the Ottoman empire. Later, in July 1827, France joined in the Treaty of London. This treaty proposed an armistice and warned of any involved party that would refuse either Russian, British or French mediation. In this process, Dorothea played a small role. Tsar Alexander I found himself in a delicate position because her usually proposed measures against revolutions, which stimulated the Congress system. Communicating internationally that he was open to forgo the principles he previously stood behind was complicated and the fact that he asked for her help in this situation exemplifies Dorothea's important position.

Considering the number of written corroborations away from Dorothea's own pen and considering the importance of the processes Dorothea was undoubtedly involved in, she made a contribution that can make us consider her a diplomat in her own right.

Conclusion

Dorothea was the wife of the Russian ambassador Christopher Lieven in England between 1812 and 1834. Her characteristics and devotion eventually allowed her to develop as an informal diplomat in her own right. The interpretations of Dorothea's role are very diverse. Both her political career and personality are described with both scepticism and with praise. Her image is one of controversy and notoriety and she became known as a manipulative busybody. Yet, her personal accounts about her family and her attitude towards friendships show a softer and kinder side of her. In fact, her reliance on contact with others diminish the chances that she was just a bland intriguer. Despite that, she was very diligent because she was unwell when she felt mentally unstimulated. From a personal field this motivated her to develop as a political force. From her diary and correspondences it could be concluded that Dorothea's motivations were not as negative as was often assumed. She wished to be professionally occupied in a way that was not expected from her or considered appropriate for someone in her position. According to my readings, it is simply what she wanted to do to be happy and to feel fulfilled. Dorothea's image and diplomatic career has been interpreted in various ways. The existing literature about her diary and correspondences showed she was active in informal diplomacy. In this field she managed to do something most upper-class women of her time could not. This research aimed to categorize this contribution and to reinterpret Dorothea's personal and political image.

Dorothea's political integrity has been questioned, mainly because it is harder to find hard data to back her own words in her correspondences and diary. However, considering the imagery around her she made a lot of friends and perhaps even more enemies. This meant she achieved something that was considered exceptional, whether this was received in a positive or negative sense. Dorothea befriended those with whom she could discuss politics. This yielded friendships with some of the most influential European politicians of her time. It were not academic activities that taught Dorothea about diplomacy and politics, it were here experiences with those who were part of her network. Her integration in England's society and this network is what contributed to her eventual success.

Various historians have researched Dorothea's role in politics and most research is undertaken by a stance of scepticism or by a stance of defence. It stood out that Dorothea was mentioned in early diplomatic history. Dorothea made some enemies in her time and some of her contemporaries have described her negatively. The scepticism about the sincerity of

Dorothea's contribution stems from the fact that the majority of the detailed accounts of her political contribution were written by herself. Some historians suspected and argued that she overestimated herself. However, the turn that took an interest in informal diplomacy provided opportunities to reinterpret Dorothea's role and gave more reasons to take her own accounts seriously.

Dorothea played a role in international relations when the Russian Empire chose to forgo the principles of the congress system. These principles set out to prevent revolutions in Europe and to maintain sovereign monarchic power. Her contribution is a smaller occurrence in a web of political processes in Europe's international relations. Tsar Alexander I wanted to prevent revolution but when the Greek Revolt started in 1821 the Russian political elite appealed to his role as Orthodox protector. Intervening in favour of the Greeks against the Porte meant a breach with the principles of the Vienna congress. Supporting a revolution and going against the Porte, a sovereign that was considered legitimate, meant a breach with Austria as well. Hence, Russia wanted to call upon Britain to propose bilateral intervention. Tsar Alexander I had to find someone who was discrete enough to seek renewed allyship with Britain. He chose Dorothea to explore the possibilities with the English minister George Canning. Dorothea herself wrote that she communicated this secret about Russia's openness to bilateral intervention and she was able to convince Canning by informing him about the plan to carry Greek Christians into slavery. She was a small part of a web that eventually caused big changes.

Dorothea was eventually in this position because she mastered diplomatic techniques, which consisted of hosting, entertaining, listening and reporting in letters. Her success in practicing and perfecting these techniques is why she was assigned the mission to communicate Russia's openness to England. Her letters and replies showed that she was an active agent who was on top of current affairs and was able to disentangle information from others. Besides, her correspondence with her brother showed that she adjusted the length and content of her letters according to their mode of transportation. She asked her brother to burn parts of her letters and wrote passages in invisible ink and this demonstrates she understood the sensitivity of the affairs she described or occupied herself with. The correspondence showed her active role in the embassy because of the reports she wrote for Count Nesselrode. There were instances, such as the visit of Arch Duke Nicholas (later tsar Nicholas), that showed she successfully set the stage for more fluent diplomatic meetings between Russia and England. The majority of the information she reported on was gathered during social events.

She considered the society and her salons of great importance and she understood how good relations were built on these events. The appreciation her subsequent reports received demonstrates she was successfully providing insights that the Russian court needed. She knew how to approach others and how to make them more inclined to talk. She was aware of this skill herself but her bystanders did not notice. Dorothea always stayed loyal to her post and equalized the welfare of her embassy to the welfare of her family.

What Dorothea exactly did is hard to pinpoint because the most detailed descriptions are from her own hand. What we do know for sure by written corroborations of for example Canning and tsar Alexander I is that her audience made a big impression. This makes a strong case for her. There had been enough additional written sources to confirm she had been of great importance in the processes and negotiations that led to the Protocol of St Petersburg (1826) and the Treaty of London (1827). Dorothea's contributions can be put in a new light with the thought that formal and informal diplomacy were more interwoven than often is assumed. The renewed focus on the importance of informal diplomacy and the focus on the importance of processes that preceded political decisions as formulated by Charmely and Erlandsson, gave an opportunity to see Dorothea's contribution and image in a new light. Even if Dorothea overestimated herself, I argue this says more about her character then about her over-all integrity. The reason for this conclusion is the amount of literature and written corroborations that acknowledged her as a diplomat in her own right.

What were Dorothea Lieven's results and motivations as a diplomat between 1812 and 1834 and are her achievements and motivations previously misinterpreted due to a stereotypical understanding of women in politics? Hence I argue that Dorothea's achievements and motivations were previously misunderstood. Both due to a lack of focus on the importance of informal diplomacy and due to her successes in a position that was not considered appropriate for someone in her role. Yet, feminist liberation or acquiring power is not what motivated her. Dorothea found fulfilment in occupying herself with diplomacy and her happiness was her motivation to partake in it. I can even surmise it was a coping mechanism for the sorrows she had in her life. The result of her work was ambiguous. It led to a reputation that both caused her to be described negatively but also caused her to be selected by tsar Alexander I to fulfil a mission. In this mission she had been successful and eventually played a role in establishing the Greek independence.

There are many more things that can be found out about Dorothea and the course of her life. She never stopped hosting her political salons, later in her life she hosted a famous

one in Paris. Even when she was very old and sick she kept having long talks with often old, politically involved men. Her professional wish for occupation stemmed from something in her life, it could be the loss of her children, or a sense of non-belonging due to the extensive time she spent away from her home country where she did not feel at home again when she was forced to return. These are all suggestions and additional research is needed to fill in the gaps in the story of the course of her life.

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