

CHAPTER 16

The Congress of Vienna and the Concert of Europe

TIME LINE

- 1814 The first Treaty of Paris establishes a lenient peace for France
- 1814-1815 The Congress of Vienna meets
- 1815 The Hundred Days end with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo
 - The Treaty of Vienna establishes a European territorial settlement
 - The second Treaty of Paris imposes harsher terms on France
 - Russia, Prussia, and Austria sign the Holy Alliance
 - Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia sign the Quadruple Alliance
- 1818 The great powers meet in the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle
- 1820-1821 The great powers meet in the Congresses of Troppau and Laibach
 - The Greeks begin a revolt against Turkish rule
- 1822 The great powers meet in the Congress of Verona
- 1823 The United States issues the Monroe Doctrine
- 1829-1830 Greece gains independence from the Ottoman Empire
- 1830 Belgium secures independence from the Netherlands

After entering Paris in March 1814, the allies restored the legitimate Bourbon dynasty to the French throne, and Louis XVIII (r. 1814-1824) became king. In the first Treaty of Paris (May 1814), the allies offered France relatively lenient peace terms. However, following

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Napoleon's return to power during the Hundred Days in 1815 and his final defeat at Waterloo, the allies imposed harsher terms on France in the second Treaty of Paris (November 1815).

The other details of the peace settlement were determined by an international congress. The statesmen who met in this Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815 sought to reestablish a conservative order in Europe following the years of upheaval and war brought about by the French Revolution and Napoleon.

The First Treaty of Paris (May 1814)

Under the terms of the first Treaty of Paris, France lost all of its conquests of the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods but was permitted to retain its frontiers of 1792. France regained almost all of its colonies and was not required to pay an indemnity.

The Congress of Vienna

The Congress of Vienna began its deliberations in September 1814, and its sessions continued until June 1815.

Although a number of small states were represented, the four great powers that had joined to defeat France: Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia-expected to make the major decisions. In their deliberations, the representatives of the great powers were influenced by several considerations.

1. The allied statesmen did not so much want to punish France as to insure that the French could not again embark on wars of aggression.
2. In addition, the statesmen sought to restore a balance of power, so that no one country could attempt to dominate Europe. France had a proper place in that balance; therefore, France should not be weakened excessively.
3. The principle of compensation was related to the balance of power. If one major state made gains, then the other major states should be compensated.
4. The principle of legitimacy involved the desire of the great powers to restore rulers and frontiers as they had existed prior

to the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, insofar as that was possible and desirable.

5. Finally, the victorious allies expected to be rewarded for their efforts in defeating Napoleon and penalized countries that had cooperated with Napoleon.



The Major Statesmen at Vienna

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Prince Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859), who served as Austria's foreign minister from 1809 to 1848, represented the interests of Emperor Francis I (r. 1806-1835) and acted as host for the Congress of Vienna. In recognition of his influence on the decisions of the congress and his active role in European affairs after 1815, the 1815 to 1848 period is called the Age of Metternich.

Metternich was firmly committed to the principles of conservatism. He regarded the new ideas of liberalism and nationalism as a threat to the survival of the Austrian Empire. He especially feared the spread of nationalism among the empire's subject nationalities. Metternich hoped the major powers would cooperate to maintain the conservative order, and he advocated intervention in any country where that order was threatened by the forces of change.

Viscount Castlereagh (1769-1822), the British foreign secretary from 1812 to 1822, generally shared Metternich's conservative views and strongly supported efforts to restore the balance of power.

Tsar Alexander I of Russia (r. 1801-1825) was in general agreement with his colleagues, although he also pushed for substantial territorial acquisitions, especially in Poland.

Prince Karl von Hardenberg (1750-1822) represented his king, Frederick William III (r. 1797-1840) of Prussia. He shared his colleagues' belief that the great powers should collaborate to maintain European peace and stability.

Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand (1754-1838), King Louis XVIII's foreign minister, found himself in the difficult position of representing the interests of his defeated country.

The Principle of Legitimacy

As a servant of the Bourbon king of France, Talleyrand was an ardent advocate of the principle of legitimacy. Not only was the legitimate Bourbon ruler restored to the French throne, but Talleyrand's influence led to the decision to restore Bourbons to

the thrones of Spain and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, as well. In addition, the Congress of Vienna restored legitimate princely rulers in several other Italian states, including Sardinia-Piedmont, Tuscany, Modena, and the Papal States.

In Germany, however, the principle of legitimacy was ignored. The statesmen at Vienna had little desire to recreate the old Holy Roman Empire or to restore the more than 300 states it had comprised. Instead, the Congress of Vienna created 39 German states, loosely joined in a new German Confederation.

The Conflict Over Poland and Saxony

Tsar Alexander I pressed his demand that Russia receive all of Poland. Prussia agreed to cede its Polish territory to the Russians on condition that it receive the German kingdom of Saxony as compensation.

Austria and Great Britain objected. Austria did not want to surrender its Polish territory and opposed both a further extension of Russian power into Europe and an increase of the power of Prussia, a potential rival of Austria's in German affairs. Like the Austrians, the British opposed an increase of Russian power, believing that an Eastern Europe dominated by Russia was as much a threat to the balance of power as was a Western Europe dominated by France.

The division among the victors gave Talleyrand the opportunity he sought to become an equal in the negotiations. He supported Austria and Great Britain, placing Metternich and Castlereagh in his debt.

Faced with British, Austrian, and French opposition, Russia and Prussia backed down, agreeing to accept less than they had initially demanded. Alexander I got a Russian-controlled kingdom of Poland, although it was smaller than he had wished, while Prussia acquired about two-fifths of Saxony.

The Territorial Settlement

Napoleon's return to power during the Hundred Days temporarily interrupted the deliberations of the Congress of

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Vienna, but the Treaty of Vienna was signed on June 9, 1815, nine days before Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo.

Russia

In addition to acquiring more Polish territory, Russia retained Finland, which it had taken from Sweden in 1809. As compensation, Sweden retained Norway, which it had seized from Denmark, Napoleon's ally.

Prussia

In addition to acquiring two-fifths of Saxony, which had supported Napoleon, Prussia gained Swedish Pomerania and territory in the Rhineland in western Germany. Possession of the Rhineland brought Prussian power to the border of France to serve as a check on possible future French aggression.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands acquired the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium). The enlarged Kingdom of the Netherlands, bordering on France, would also serve as a check against future French aggression. For the same reason, the northern Italian state of Sardinia-Piedmont was strengthened by the acquisition of the republic of Genoa.

Austria

In compensation for its loss of Belgium, Austria acquired the northern Italian provinces of Lombardy and Venetia, which strengthened Austrian control over Italian affairs. Relatives of the Austrian emperor ruled the states of Parma, Modena, and Tuscany, while an Austrian archduchess was married to the Bourbon king of the Two Sicilies.

In addition to dominating Italy, Austria, the largest of the German states, dominated the German Confederation. Metternich was thus able to impose his repressive policies on the German states, just as he did in Italy.

Great Britain

The British, whose interests lay primarily outside of Europe, acquired a number of valuable colonial possessions. From the Dutch, they gained the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa and the large island of Ceylon off the southeastern coast of

India. In the West Indies, the British acquired several former French colonies, including Trinidad and Tobago. They also gained several other strategically located islands, including Helgoland in the North Sea and Malta in the Mediterranean.

The Second Treaty of Paris (November 1815)

Following Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo, the allies imposed the second Treaty of Paris on France. Its terms were more severe than those of the first Treaty of Paris, but because of Talleyrand's influence, they were less harsh than they might have been. France was reduced to the borders of 1790. The French were required to pay an indemnity of 700 million francs to the allies and to accept allied military occupation of seventeen French forts for five years.

The Holy Alliance and the Quadruple Alliance

In September 1815, the rulers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria signed the Holy Alliance, proposed by Tsar Alexander I. The three rulers pledged to observe Christian principles in both domestic and international affairs. While most of Europe's rulers ultimately signed the Holy Alliance, in practice it had little significance.

The Quadruple Alliance, signed by Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia in November 1815, was of greater importance. The four powers agreed to maintain the alliance that had defeated Napoleon and to meet periodically to discuss issues of mutual concern. This laid the basis for the Concert of Europe, the effort of the great powers to resolve international issues by consultation and agreement.

The Concert of Europe

The great powers hoped that the Concert of Europe would lead to the preservation of the balance of power and of the conservative order established at Vienna.

The Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle

In 1818, meeting in the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, the members of the Quadruple Alliance decided that France, which

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had paid its indemnity, should be freed of occupation. France rejoined the ranks of the great powers, and the Quadruple Alliance now became the Quintuple Alliance. Tsar Alexander I proposed that the great powers support existing governments and frontiers in Europe. Viscount Castlereagh, the British foreign secretary, rejected the proposal, marking the first break in the accord among the major powers.

The Congresses of Troppau and Laibach

In early 1820, a revolution broke out in Spain, where the army forced King Ferdinand VII (r. 1808-1833) to agree to rule in accordance with the liberal constitution of 1812, which he had previously ignored. In July 1820, a revolution also broke out in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, where the army compelled King Ferdinand I (r. 1816-1825) to accept a constitution.

These revolutions were high on the agendas of the Congresses of Troppau and Laibach in 1820-1821. In the Protocol of Troppau, Russia, Prussia, and Austria asserted their right to intervene in other countries to oppose revolutions. Once again, the British objected to this interventionist policy.

The breach between the British and the three conservative powers widened at the Congress of Laibach, which authorized Austria to suppress the revolution in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, which it did in 1821.

The Congress of Verona

In 1822, the last of the congresses, the Congress of Verona, authorized France to intervene in Spain. With French support, King Ferdinand VII reestablished his absolute power.

George Canning (1770-1827), who became British foreign secretary in 1822, continued Britain's opposition to the policy of intervention. This opposition resulted, in effect, in Britain's withdrawal from the Quintuple Alliance.

British Opposition to Intervention and the Monroe Doctrine

British opposition to intervention made it impossible for the conservative powers of Europe to suppress the revolts in Spanish America, because they could not act effectively without the support of Britain's naval power. The British opposed intervention both because of principle and because they did not want any interference with their profitable trade with Latin America. Canning proposed that Great Britain and the United States join in a declaration against any European intervention in the Western Hemisphere.

The Americans, however, preferred to act independently. In the Monroe Doctrine, issued by President James Monroe (1758-1831) in December 1823, the United States announced its opposition to intervention and any further colonization by the European powers in the Western Hemisphere. The British endorsed the Monroe Doctrine, and both the United States and Great Britain began to grant formal diplomatic recognition to the new Latin American republics.

Greek Independence

Revolution against Turkish rule broke out in Greece in 1821, and often brutal fighting continued for several years. By 1825, the Turks had almost crushed the revolt.

In Western Europe, sympathy for the Greeks mounted, in large part because of a sentimental regard for the contribution of the ancient Greeks to the development of Western civilization.

The Treaty of London (1827)

Great Britain, France, and Russia agreed in the Treaty of London of 1827 to demand that the Ottoman Empire recognize Greek independence and to use force, if necessary, to end the fighting. An allied fleet defeated a Turkish and Egyptian force at Navarino in October 1827.

The Treaties of Adrianople and London

In 1828, Russia declared war on Turkey, and Russian forces moved into the Turkish-controlled Danubian provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia (modern Rumania). Under the terms of

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the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), the Danubian provinces gained autonomy, as did Serbia, which the Turks had also ruled. Russia acquired territory at the mouth of the Danube River and in the Caucasus on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. The Turks agreed to permit Russia, France, and Great Britain to determine the future of Greece. In the Treaty of London (1830), the three powers recognized Greek independence. In 1832, Otto I (r. 1832-1862), the son of the king of Bavaria, was chosen as king of Greece.

Belgian Independence

In late August 1830, a revolt against Dutch rule broke out in Belgium. In November, a national congress declared Belgium's independence, and a liberal constitution was adopted in 1831. A German prince, Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, became Leopold I (r. 1831-1865), the first king of the Belgians. In 1839, the Netherlands formally recognized the independence of Belgium. Under the terms of the Convention of 1839, the major powers of Europe agreed to guarantee Belgian neutrality.

The conservative order established at Vienna in 1814-1815 prevailed throughout Central and Eastern Europe without serious threat until the outbreak of the revolutions of 1848. The balance of power established at Vienna remained fundamentally undisturbed until the unification of Germany in 1871, and no major war involved all of the major powers until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

In Italy and Spain, the conservative powers succeeded in suppressing revolutions. However, Greece and Belgium, as well as the Latin American colonies of Spain and Portugal, made good their claims to independence. And in Great Britain and France, the conservative regimes that ruled in the years immediately following 1815 were able to forestall only temporarily the trend toward liberalization.