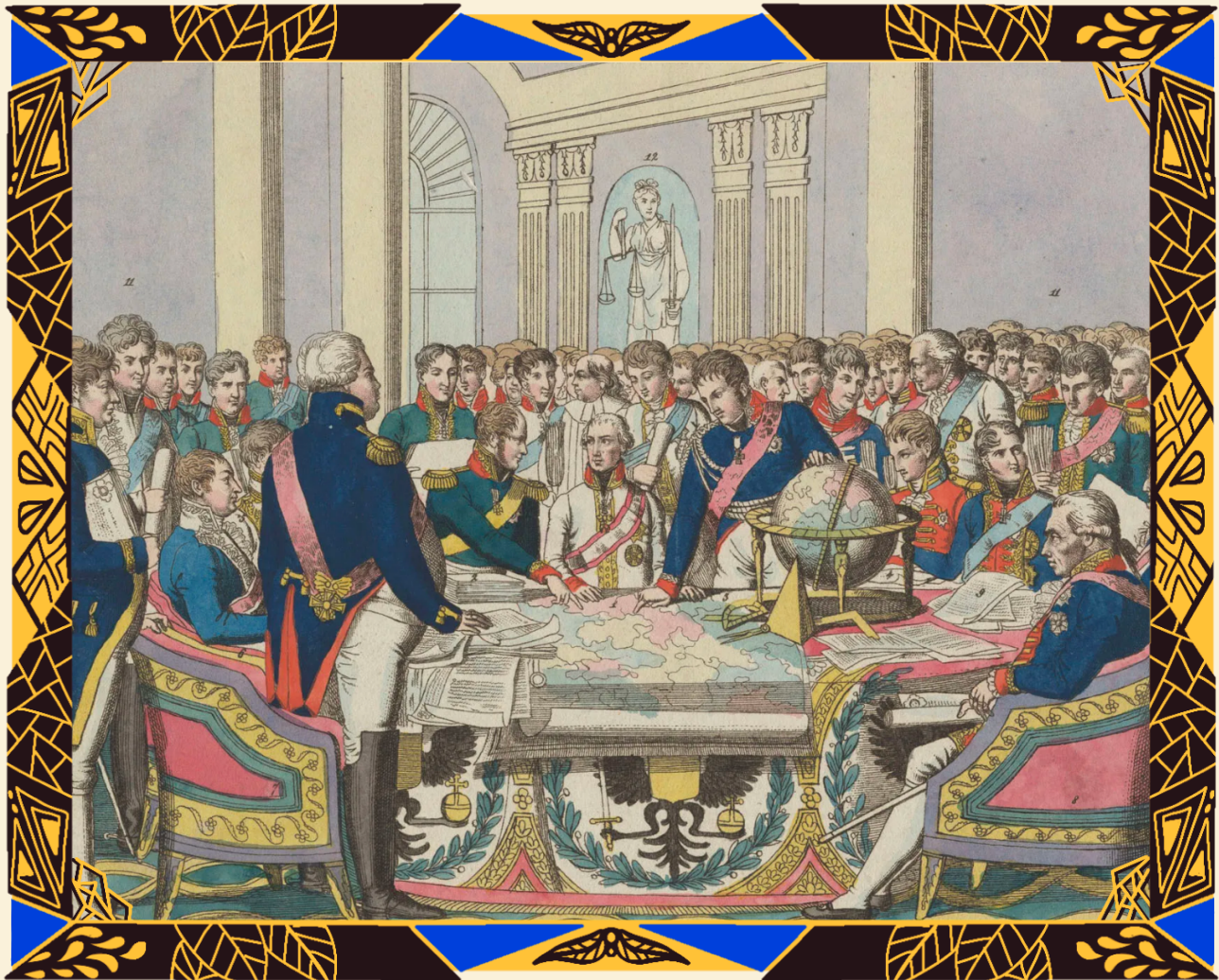


The Concert that Rocked Europe: The Congress of Vienna of 1814-1815

Specialized General Assembly



The Congress of Vienna, watercolor etching by August Friedrich Andreas Campe





Letter From The Author

Dear Delegates,

Welcome back to FCMUN, and welcome to Vienna, Austria!! My name is Nicole Mattiacci, a prospective International Relations major, and I'm the Director of Special Events for FCMUN XIV. As a first-year student at Mount Holyoke, I'm the Web Manager for the Mount Holyoke Model United Nations club, the Co-Chair of the Climate Justice Coalition, and I'm involved in three SGA committees. When I was asked for potential ideas for a specialized GA committee, my mind immediately went to the Congress of Vienna. It was something that I learned about last semester in a class on World Politics with our two USGs, and I thought that it would make the perfect Model UN committee.

The reason why I chose to write about this topic is because the Concert of Europe has been widely regarded as one of the most important international collaborations in history. It set so many precedents for international politics and the international system as a whole, so I thought that it would be interesting to recreate that moment here at Mount Holyoke. When you're in the conference room, be sure to consider the wider implications for Europe with every decision you make, and try to aim to make peacekeeping decisions that will last for generations. Most importantly: have fun with it!! You're a rich, elite, European statesman now, so act like it.

Regards,

Nicole Mattiacci

FCMUN XIV Director of Special Events



Introduction

Welcome to the greatest concert of all time! Step aside the Eras Tour and the Renaissance Tour: here comes the Concert of Europe! It's 1814 and you, a representative of one of the great powers of Europe, have just been invited to the beautiful country of Austria to participate in the Congress of Vienna and forge a new world order from the ashes of the first Napoleonic Wars and the French Revolution and bring peace and stability back to Europe. This goal can only be achieved through cooperation with the superpowers that dominate the current European society and economy: the infamous Quadruple Alliance of Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, with the later addition of Bourbon France, as well as their allied nations.

In this specialized General Assembly, delegates will assume the roles of key players representing the great powers of Europe and their allied nations and construct a new set of rules and principles within the international system to preserve peace and prevent another systemic war from ravaging Europe. The committee will take place on the "first day" of the congress. There will be a front room and a back room with crisis updates affecting the course of the debate, but no crisis notes.





Background to the Congress

Napoleonic Wars

To set the scene as to why the Congress of Vienna was necessary, one must know the impact of the Napoleonic Wars— particularly the First Napoleonic War— on Europe. In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte’s rise to power resulted in a Military Dictatorship in France₁. This set off a series of military campaigns and battles waged by Napoleon in Europe to gain hegemony over Europe. In this context, the term “hegemony” refers to the complete and absolute power and dominance over one or more countries within the hegemon’s sphere of influence. There were seven conflicts in total, with five being named after the coalitions that fought against Napoleon’s France, namely the War of the Third Coalition, War of the Fourth Coalition, War of the Fifth Coalition, War of the Sixth Coalition, and the War of the Seventh Coalition. Additionally, the Peninsular War (1807–1814), where Napoleon lost against British, Spanish, and Portuguese forces, eventually leading to his first abdication and exile to the Isle of Elba₁₀, and the failed French invasion of Russia (1812), are also included in the definition of conflicts of the Napoleonic Wars₉. Napoleon’s France saw immense territorial gains during these conflicts, with France absorbing territory in the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Catalonia, Dalmatia, and portions of Italy and Germany₁₁.

The rise of French hegemony incited fear in the other established European powers, which led to the Congress of Vienna being developed as a systemic mechanism that would contain systemic war within a multipolar balance of power framework₂. This balance of power system comprised checks and balances to ensure that one state does not have absolute hegemony and universal domination. In opposition to a unipolar system, in which one state dominates international affairs (think: the United States after World War II), a multipolar system comprises more than two superpowers within a global framework that influence the international system. The idea of a multipolar balance of power system was the driving force behind the Concert of Europe.





Goals of Concert of Europe

Kyle Lascuresses summarizes the purpose of the 19th-century Concert of Europe as an informal “agreement among the elite statesmen of Europe’s great powers to adhere to and enforce a particular set of principles in their relations with one another on the European continent₄.” Through international cooperation, they aimed to mitigate systemic wars (which involve multiple countries or powers in a large-scale conflict with each other) in Europe. The great powers in question during this period were Great Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and France. Though France was still recovering from the effects of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, they were still involved in peace negotiations, with a representative of Bourbon France invited to the 1814 Congress of Vienna. Unlike the modern-day United Nations or European Union, decisions made through the Concert of Europe system were not made through written rules and legislation, but through meetings and congresses such as Vienna₅ to avoid potential conflicts through diplomatic means and restore territorial boundaries lost during the Napoleonic Wars. Additionally, the Concert acted as a mechanism for larger powers to protect and control smaller European countries₆.



The cornerstone of the Concert of Europe was the Treaty of Chaumont, which laid the foundation for the guiding principles of the Concert for nearly a century. Signed by the Great Powers of Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria and negotiated by Britain’s Viscount Castlereagh, this treaty was used to unite the powers against French aggression. This initial idea was put into practice at the Congress of Vienna₁₂.

The foundational principles of the Concert of Europe were designating special status for the most powerful actors in the system to maintain peace on the continent (the most influential countries present in the Congress of Vienna), territorial changes dictated by the great powers within the Concert, and regular great-power meetings in various European cities to resolve conflicts₄. The last principle was known as the “Congress System,” which was “one of the very first attempts in world history to build a peaceful order based on the cooperation of the key players₅.”



Europe In 1815



Credits to <https://lotusarise.com/congress-of-vienna/>



The Congress of Vienna

The Congress of Vienna marked the beginning of the “Vienna System,” which laid the foundational principles of the Concert of Europe. This event was especially significant because it set a precedent for the cooperation between the European great powers that characterized the Concert and fostered peace in Europe for the rest of the 19th century⁴. The Congress was hosted by the infamous Austrian Chancellor Prince Klemens von Metternich, who was a huge proponent of the principle of balance of power as the driving force behind the Concert. The other key figures in the Congress were the British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh, King Frederick William III of Prussia, Czar Alexander I of Russia, and the representative of France, Talleyrand-Périgord². Metternich and Castlereagh were the primary architects of the Concert of Europe and played the largest roles in the creation of the Vienna System. While the four Great Powers and France dominated the conference, the Lesser Powers of Europe— most importantly Spain, Portugal, and Sweden— had less influence and joined the alliance in time for the Treaty of Paris of 1814.

Though the Congress was established to establish a new world order after Napoleon invaded Europe, the inclusion of a representative of Bourbon France helped to quell any bad blood between the new French government and the other powerful European states, further cementing the Concert of Europe as a peacemaking mechanism².



The idea of small, shifting alliances between European states discouraged secret alliances that could threaten the balance of Europe. To further maintain peace and balance, they divided and adjusted their territories equally among the most influential states to ensure that none of the proclaimed “great powers” could overpower the others. This was known as the Final Act of 1815. Some examples of these territorial changes include the creation of a German Confederation, an organization of 39 German states from the remnants of the Holy Roman Empire, the acquisition of parts of Poland by Russia, and Austrian acquisitions in Italy.

Additionally, the territory acquired by France from the Napoleonic Wars was also given up. Many of the great powers’ territories were resized to ensure that no hegemonic power ruled over all of Europe. The territorial changes in Europe decided at the Congress of Vienna helped to foster a sense of unity and set the precedent of the balance of power as a peacekeeping mechanism in Europe.

The leadership of the Congress was overwhelmingly conservative. The delegates at the Congress of Vienna wanted Europe to return to the “status quo” pre-Napoleon. As a result, the Congress attempted to restore the old monarchies that fell during the Napoleonic Wars.

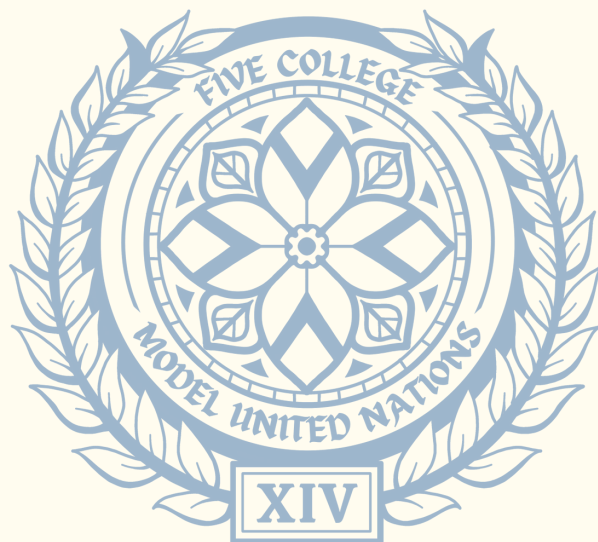


In particular, Prussia, Russia, and Austria were known as the “Holy Alliance,” a military agreement within the Concert of Europe that shared similar Eastern conservative values. The restoration of the “old order” of former monarchical powers was done to contain the vestiges of Napoleon’s revolutionary ideas and bring stability back to Europe. Examples of these monarchical restorations and contingents include the return of the Bourbon Dynasty to France and Spain and the placing of the House of Orange-Nassau on the throne of the Netherlands, which expanded to contain the Dutch Republic and the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium),⁷.

Surprisingly, the atmosphere of the Congress was light and festive. It was as much of a social event as it was a diplomatic one, being rife with balls (the famous “Congress Dances”) and other social events.⁸ While the Vienna delegates were lavishly partying, Napoleon Bonaparte was examining the unfolding events at the Congress of Vienna intently from his exile on the Island of Elba. While the great powers of Europe were distracted by the Congress, Napoleon made his escape in March of 1815. This caused a temporary halt in the Concert’s proceedings as the Allies scrambled to contain Napoleon once and for all: the War of the Seventh Coalition.

They signed the Treaty of Alliance, which proclaimed that each of their countries would pledge 150,000 men each for the war against Napoleon¹³. After Napoleon was defeated in Waterloo, the Congress reconvened to finish the construction of the new Europe.

The Final Act of the Congress of Vienna was signed on June 9, 1815, and it was signed by all parties except the delegation of Spain, represented by Marquis de Labrador in protest of the territorial settlements in Italy¹⁴. The Final Act comprised all of the territorial arrangements, peace settlements, and monarchical changes established throughout the conference.





Why was the Congress Briefly Successful? Why did it Ultimately Fail?

The Congress of Europe, and the Concert of Europe as a whole, thrived during the first half of the 19th century. While wars were still emerging in Europe, they didn't pull in the Great Powers until the second half of the 19th century, when the Concert started to crumble¹⁵. By 1853, the outbreak of the Crimean War pitted the two opposing forces of the Concert of Europe against each other, with Russia fighting over control of the Black Sea and the island of Crimea against the Ottoman Empire, supported by Britain, Austria, and France¹⁶. This was the beginning of the end of the Concert of Europe. While it still formally stayed together until the outbreak of World War I, when the Concert formally crumbled, the spirit of peace and cooperation between the Great Powers vanished long before Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot. While the Concert of Europe did succeed in bringing the principle of the balance of power to Europe, becoming a framework for modern institutions such as the European Union, it failed because it did not take into account the smaller European states and territories that got taken over by the Great Powers due to the territorial shifts decided at Vienna, leading to a wave of liberal revolutions slowly degrading the Concert of Europe in the 19th century. This was later achieved during the Treaty of Versailles after World War I¹⁶.

All in all, the Congress of Vienna was an experiment in peace and cooperation among Europe's most influential states. Dictating international relations for nearly half a century, and still remaining present up until 1914, the Concert of Europe's legacy is one worth remembering. When taking on the role of these statesmen, one must remember that, while each representative had their own self-interests and motives, they passed the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna because they worked together despite their differences to decide on what was best for the whole of Europe. Whether you want to uphold that in your committee or choose to take an alternative route to hegemony is up to you. Have fun constructing the future of Europe in your own image!





Delegates

Austrian Chancellor Prince Klemens von Metternich

Prince Klemens Von Metternich was the nationalist Foreign Secretary of Austria and the host of the Congress of Vienna. As one of the main architects of the Concert of Europe, he was an influential figure in the Congress during this time. He stressed the importance of maintaining the “status quo” and preserving conservative European ideals over liberalism and revolutionary ideologies. As the leader of the conservatives, he was the major proponent of restoring peace and stability in Europe through a new balance of power system.

Baron Johann von Wessenberg of Austria Deputy of Metternich

Baron von Wessenberg was the deputy of von Metternich present at the Congress of Vienna. As Metternich’s right-hand man, he shared many of his superior’s ideas of conservatism and European nationalism. His most influential move in the Congress of Vienna was establishing the German Confederation, which was one of the most prominent outcomes of the Congress. Due to his diplomatic prominence in Austria, he eventually became the 4th Foreign Minister of the Austrian Empire in 1848.



British Foreign Secretary Viscount Castlereagh

Viscount Castlereagh was, along with Metternich, the other main architect of the Congress system pioneered at the Congress of Vienna. While he was a conservative like Metternich, he was also concerned with the economic and imperial interests of Great Britain, opposing harsh terms proposed by other members of the Congress that could potentially threaten the prominence of Great Britain. Among Castlereagh's most important contributions to the success of the Congress of Vienna was the inclusion of France as a member of the negotiations for the new international system. This was incredibly significant because it quelled any bad blood the recovering France might have had with the other European powers, and led to more effective diplomatic connections to be made.

Arthur Wellesley, The First Duke of Wellington

The Duke of Wellington, previously the ambassador to France, led the British delegation to the Congress after Castlereagh returned to England in 1815. A man with a strong military background, he reiterated the same conservative position as Castlereagh did. After Napoleon escaped Elba, Wellington left to face Napoleon during the Hundred Days war, culminating in the Battle of Waterloo. Wellington eventually became the British Prime Minister in 1826.



Russian Foreign Minister Count Karl Robert Nesselrode

Count Nesselrode was the formal leader of the Russian Delegation to the Congress of Vienna as the formal minister, but his advice to Czar Alexander, who was a key figure in the Congress, mostly fell on deaf ears. Regardless, he was still a notable figure in the Congress of Vienna, during which he was a big proponent of restoring the Bourbon monarchy to France. After the Congress of Vienna, his foreign policy moves against the Ottoman Empire ultimately led to the Crimean War, which was one of the biggest reasons behind the decline of the Concert of Europe as a whole.

Czar Alexander I of Russia

The Czar of Russia played an influential role in the Congress of Vienna, achieving his goals of controlling Poland and establishing the infamous Holy Alliance between Russia, Prussia, and Austria to combat liberalism and secularism in Europe. Czar Alexander wanted to combat revolutionary threats in Europe and return to the “status quo”. Although Count Nesselrode was the formal leader of the Russian Delegation, the Czar was the real figure behind the scenes pulling the strings to ensure Russia’s position in the Concert of Europe was secure.



Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord of France

Talleyrand is one of the most well-known and renowned diplomats in French history, surviving the French Revolutionary Wars, the Napoleonic era, as well as the Bourbon regime. While his diplomatic achievements include negotiating a place for France within the new European peace settlement, with great success, his personal escapades during the duration of the Congress were notable. Throughout the duration of the Congress, Talleyrand had an affair with his nephew's wife, Dorothee, who was friends with Metternich. The result of this entanglement was a series of secret negotiations between Metternich and Talleyrand. A brilliant and sneaky delegate, Talleyrand was able to achieve success for France within the Concert of Europe by allying himself with the less prominent players of the Congress, namely Spain, Sweden, and Portugal, then abandoned those allies once the prominent players, England, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, recognized him as apart of their "inner circle".

Prince Karl August von Hardenberg of Prussia

The Prussian Chancellor Hardenburg formally represented Prussia throughout the Congress. While King Frederick worked mostly behind the scenes, Hardenberg had passed his prime in terms of diplomatic influence, being constantly overshadowed by Metternich. Although he was more liberal than the other key players of the Congress, having abolished serfdom and reformed Prussia's education system earlier in his career, he still joined Austria and Prussia in the Holy Alliance.



King Frederick William III of Prussia

King Frederick was present in the Congress of Vienna, electing to play a role behind the scenes while the Prussian Chancellor von Hardenberg formally led the delegation. One of King Frederick's key goals in Vienna was to secure territorial gains for Prussia. While King Frederick did succeed in gaining territory for Prussia, he and Hardenberg did not succeed in getting the territory they did want: the whole of Saxony, which they lost to their ally, Russia.

Marquis Pedro Gómez de Labrador of Spain

The Marquis de Labrador was the Spanish representative to the Congress of Vienna, and his legacy at the Congress was quite embarrassing, with Britain's Duke Wellington referring to him as "the most stupid man [he has] ever [come] across". Indeed, Labrador did not achieve any of his goals as the representative of a declining empire at the Congress of Vienna. This was likely due to Labrador not attending most of the social events in Vienna and regarding the other delegates with arrogance and apathy. Spain never signed the Final Act of the Congress of June 9, 1815. Perhaps if Labrador could redo the Congress of Vienna, he would change his strategy (or lack thereof) to achieve his goals and avoid embarrassment for Spain.



Pedro de Sousa Holstein, Count of Palmela, Portugal

Count Holstein was the representative of Portugal and one of the members of the “Committee of Eight” lesser powers with Spain, Sweden, and temporarily Talleyrand of France, who soon ditched the alliance once he used it to gain leverage with the greater powers at the Congress. Unlike some of the other countries, Portugal did not gain much territory after the Congress of Vienna and didn’t have much influence within the balance of power system created by the Congress. One of Holstein’s main goals at the Congress of Vienna was to reclaim the territory of Olivenza, which was recognized by the Final Act of 1815. Regardless of his lack of influence within the Concert of Europe, Holstein is famous for being an influential and important figure in Portuguese diplomacy. Later in his career, he became the first modern Prime Minister of Portugal.

Count Carl Löwenhielm of Sweden

Count Löwenhielm was the representative of Sweden to the Congress of Vienna, where he was one of the lesser powers allied with Spain and Portugal. As the lesser powers weren’t invited to as many meetings and gatherings as the Great Powers, he didn’t get many opportunities to advocate for Sweden’s interests within the new balance of power system. In his personal life, he was the illegitimate child of King Charles XIII of Sweden and the wife of a royal chancellor. Perhaps if Löwenhielm had been given more opportunities to make a name for himself and Sweden within the Congress of Vienna, he would’ve been able to gain more territory and recognition by the end of the Congress.



Baron Hans von Gagern of The Netherlands

Baron von Gagern was the Prime Minister of the Netherlands representing the Congress of Vienna. While the Netherlands as a country did not have much sway or influence within the Congress of Vienna, they still saw major territorial gains thanks to Gagern. The delegates at Vienna united the northern and southern Netherlands into the United Kingdom of the Netherlands under King William I, which made the Concert of Europe more stable. While Gagern succeeded in his goals at the Congress of Vienna, the territorial gains of the Netherlands were allocated because it benefitted the Great Powers' goals.

Count Niels Rosenkrantz of Denmark

Count Niels Rosenkrantz grew up extremely poor, but ascended to become the Foreign Minister of Denmark, playing a minor role at the Congress of Vienna. Though Denmark was not as influential as the Great Powers of Europe, it still received minor territorial gains as part of the Final Act of 1815. Perhaps if Rosenkrantz made stronger allies with the other smaller states present, he would have made a larger impact on the Congress of Vienna.



Charles Pictet de Rochemont, Delegation of Geneva, Switzerland

Of all the small cantons representing parts of Switzerland, Rochemont was by far the most influential. A diplomat (and avid farmer), he represented Geneva and Switzerland at the Treaty of Paris and the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna. He was an active member of the debates during the Congress of Vienna, achieving his goals of Geneva joining the Swiss Confederation and the formal recognition of permanent Swiss neutrality in Paris.

Cardinal Ercole Consalvi of The Papal States

Cardinal Ercole Conslavi was the Secretary of State and advisor to Pope Pius VII and represented the Papal States at the Congress of Vienna. A great diplomat and religious figure, he was able to secure the restoration of nearly all of the Papal States and their neutrality in world affairs, which secured the Pope and the Papal States a secure position within the new Concert of Europe system. He took a firm stance against Napoleon, being jailed by the French invading forces in 1798, and he still holds a grudge against the short leader today.



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