

# Metternich system



“ France made its revolutions and gave them their ideas, to the point where a tricolor of some kind became the emblem of virtually every emerging nation, and European (or indeed world) politics between 1789 and 1917 were largely the struggle for and against the principles of 1789, or the even more incendiary ones of 1793. ” The principles of the French revolution lived on in every European continent; the French Revolution poured out its ideas and sent shock waves throughout Europe.

Therefore this phenomenon together with the period of enlightenment, contributed to the rise of consciousness and of antagonism against the “ Ancien Regime ” (a general term for ‘ The Old Order ’ in Europe before the French Revolution of 1789, when most countries were ruled by absolute monarchs and the aristocracy were the dominant class). The Bourgeoisie class took full advantage of this period to bring across their needs and Ideologies but was rarely at the forefront of the revolution as the peasants were usually causing the riots. The Bourgeoisie played a more underlying role in this revolution.

The people within the perimeters of the European wanted nationalism and liberalism. Napoleon Bonaparte also known as the “ little corporal ” came and restored stability and glory to France , “ He was the man of the Revolution, and the man who brought stability. ” Napoleon brought the French Revolution to its conclusion when he entered the French arena to restore peace by putting an end to the “ Reign of Terror ” and extinguishing the fire of the Bourgeoisie . His megalomaniac personality and ambitious thirst for battles made France a great power in Europe.

This was illustrated in the series of battles he won, “ Napoleon fought about sixty battles in his career and won all but a few of them, he rose to power because of his victories and fell because of his defeats. ” Metternich’s influence came about before the end of Napoleon’s regime. “ Metternich was first appointed foreign minister in 1809 the Habsburg Empire was at its lowest point in its struggle against Napoleon. The French leader had forced the Empire out of its northern Italian territories, taken over the Austrian Netherlands and subsumed the Habsburg parts of Poland into the Duchy of Warsaw.

Habsburg domination of Germany had also been smashed as a result of the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire. This was a particularly powerful psychological blow to the dynasty’s sense of self worth: the Habsburgs had been Holy Roman Emperors for almost all of the previous 400 years and suddenly it no longer existed. To add insult to injury, this particular act of Napoleonic modernisation changed the title of the Habsburg Emperor from Francis II, Holy Roman Emperor, to Francis I, Emperor of the remaining Habsburg dominions. One of the few times in history that a monarch has been devalued. Napoleon was defeated in 1815, after which the initiative was taken through the employment of the Vienna Congress of 1814-1815, to restore political stability to the fragile European which Napoleon had compromised. The Vienna Congress was chaired by Klemens Wenzel von Metternich, its objective was to address issues which arose out of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. This settlement led to the redrawing of the continental map, in so doing establishing new boundaries of France,

the Netherlands, Germany, Italian territories and Napoleon's duchy of Warsaw.

In 1815 when Napoleon failed to reassert his influence over Europe, the Congress of Vienna to all intensive purposes coped well with this problem. The Second Treaty of Paris further punished the French by reducing her borders to that of 1790, enforcing a large indemnity on her as well as forcing her to give back the stolen art pillaged from European Cities. This was a just punishment for France who had supported and welcomed Napoleon's return. Additionally the Congress was against liberalism and nationalism which infiltrated into other European states from the French Revolution which they felt would disrupt their conservatism. First, it was necessary to build a security ring around the recent aggressor, France, and second, to provide the customary cartographical compensation for all the allied partners. " The Congress of Vienna also had to deal with the key matters of containing France, which was accomplished by strengthening those countries on the French border. The Austrian Netherlands was incorporated into Holland, and on France's southern borders, Piedmont, Nice and Savoy became one state.

Of course these new single states, not one could contain France by physical presence alone and so the Quadruple Alliance was signed by the major powers for a further 20 years should France rise up again the Congress was very " lenient" towards France despite the fact that they had just been defeated. Their main purpose was to restore the " status quo" and by doing this, they were able to ignore the demands for democracy and nationalism by the French people. Metternich made every effort to remove political or administrative power from local or subordinate levels and oncentrate it in a

central authority was illustrated through his opposition of conservatism. He was of the opinion that that social mobility should be based on ascription not on achievement. Metternich was known for his advocacy of strong, administratively efficient governmental organization which he felt was successfully portrayed by his ideal form of government the monarchs. This is captured when he said he opposed any other type of government and constitutional change which he felt would inevitably lead to chaos and revolutions.

Metternich was aware that all of Europe was conscientious and was aroused easily by the ever present spirit of nationalism and liberalism inherited from the French Revolution. Consequently this is the sole reason for his objection of liberalism and nationalism becoming operational. “ Metternich therefore set his face against any constitutional change. Comparing revolution in turn to a hydra ready to swallow everthing up, to a fire, to a flood, and later to the cholera, hostile to the sovereignty of the people and constitutional government. As such Metternich’s principles opposed the ideology of liberty, equality and fraternity. The spread of Metternich’s ideology throughout Europe he tried to ensure that this objective was not materialized. Another great political idea development by Metternich was the Holy Alliance in 1815; this alliance was created by Tsar Alexander I, members of this alliance included Russia, Austria, and Prussia. The Holy Alliance was implemented to maintain the status quo so that the bourgeoisie were hindered from infiltrating into the upper class.

Additionally the Quadruple Alliance of April 22, 1834 formed between Spain, France, Britian and Portugal, was aimed at ensuring the victory of liberalism,

at accomplishing a collective security and protecting the existing peace and balance of power. Social factors is seem as a factor that resulted in the revolutions. The 1820's revolution damages were widespread as the first bout of unrest was experienced. Revolutionary upheavals began in the Italian states of Naples, Piedmont and Sicily.

These revolutions “ occurred because the political systems reimposed on Europe were profoundly, and in a period of rapid social change increasingly inadequate for the political conditions of the Continent, and because of economic and social discontents were acute as to ...outbreaks virtually inevitable. ” They felt that the Metternich system disregarded their desire for liberalism and nationalism. In 1818, the church was restored to supremacy, regaining its influential power in Naples this angered the people and the resentment against the leadership grew.

The liberals were inciting members of society to stage revolutions in efforts to gain freedom and oppose the leadership of the Kings whose rulings reflected the ideologies of the Metternich system. A proletarian and socialist revolutionary movement “ was chiefly visible in the countries of the dual revolutions, Britain and France. ” The most notable results of 1830's revolution was the “ modifications of left-wing politics. They split moderates from radicals and they created a new international situation. In doing so they helped to split the movement not only into different social but into different national segments. The 1820's and the 1830's revolution both failed miserably because of little cooperation among the revolutionary movement and due to isolation of territories which preferred to stay alienated instead of forming union between the territories. The economic factors must now be

considered, Metternich's system amended the administration throughout Europe. As such the changes fostered by the Vienna Congress in particular was a major handicap for some countries. The Vienna Congress rulings were catastrophic to France who had to repatriate seven million francs and relinquish some colonies from the Italian providences to Austria.

Primarily because of the personal interest Metternich had in Austria such drastic effects were taken, therefore it can be stated that the major powers of the Vienna Congress made decisions to their individual advantage. Germany was another state who suffered immense losses just as France in efforts to settle international disputes. The territories bought economic stability as it increased the size of their purses and their power on the international arena. The Metternich system assisted in the financial prosperity of some nations while it crippled the acquisition of economic stability of other imperial powers.

Metternich fetish of restoring the monarchy of many countries was a financial burden on many countries whose desire was to be included in this grand change. The economic hardships were responsible for many of the revolutions in Europe both before and after the Metternich's rule. The congress of Aix-La Chapelle in 1818 had a major concern about what should be done with France in terms of allowing them to attend future congress meetings and more importantly if they should relieve them of their military occupation.

The congress came to a unanimous decision on both issues where they allowed France to return to future meetings and the military occupation would end. " Metternich also frustrated Russian hopes of facilitating a

Franco-Russian alliance as a counter to the Austrian-British alignment. He achieved this by sowing the seeds of mistrust between the two powers. The Congress of Aix-La-Chapelle therefore coped well with the problem facing it in 1818. " There was another meeting in 1820 that took place in Troppau which was convened to discuss the matters about the uprising in Spain and Naples.

Each of the main powers at the congress had a different view about how the matter should be handled. Metternich made the decision to take action in Naples as it posed a great threat to Austrian influence in Italy. Alexander who represented Russia at the congress wanted to send troops into Spain to restore the monarchy (Ferdinand) while Castlereagh (Britain) thought that Naples and Spain were continental problems and as a result were not a concern of the British.

The end result was the signing of the Troppau protocol which was a great success for Metternich as he gained the support of Russia and isolated France. As Metternich gained the support of Russia, he somewhat lost the support of the British. " However on the whole the congress system itself had failed to cope with the problems of Spain and Naples. The question of Spain would remain a problem even after the Congress of Verona in 1822, and the Troppau agreement had split the major powers in two. The system could not cope without a general agreement by all the major powers.

The main problem was, all the major powers had differing opinions and interests, which made certain a general agreement on a course of action was unlikely. Without such an agreement time would run out on the lifeline of the system. " The Congress met for the last time in Verona, 1822 to discuss the



fact that Spain was still facing problems and there was a revolution that was taking place in Greece as well. “ It might seem as though the Congress had coped well with the problems it faced but this is misleading.

The Spanish problem, had been a problem since 1820 and was still not solved. Metternich who had pressed for the signing of the Troppau protocol would still not summon action to be taken. ” The congress system finally met its end in 1822. Some historians have argued that the system itself was a failure, however in my opinion this was not the case. Metternich accomplished a lot during his time such as his defeat of Napoleon and the formation of the Vienna Congress. “ The Congresses stretching from Vienna to Verona had to contend with a number of issues and it was not surprising given the nature of the system itself that certain problems would split the powers in attendance. After all the motivation behind the creation of the Congress Meeting was to deal with France, and not to deal with revolutionary uprisings. How could the Congress system deal with problems it was not designed to face. ” There were multiple views on all of issues which arose after 1818 and up to 1822 could not be accommodated. At Vienna and Aix La Chappelle the powers in attendance came to a general agreement, but there would be a time when no such agreement would be possible.

This can be seen with the Troppau protocol which split the powers in two. “ After the congress of Troppau time was effectively running out on the life line of the congress system. Britain no longer wanted to be involved in continental affairs that did not concern her directly and the other European powers had a mutual suspicion of one another's ambitions and interests.

Forces of political intrigue were working behind the scenes to isolate powers and force an agreement on a certain course of action. ”