

The vienna settlement essay



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The Vienna Settlement was embodied in four different yet interlocked arrangements: the Treaty of Chaumont, the two Treaties of Paris, the Treaty of Vienna and the Quadruple Alliance. The Settlement aimed to prevent further aggression from France, eliminate the revolutionaries, redraw the map of Europe, maintain peace and an effective alliance of the four Great Powers. These aims were achieved through the Principles of Legitimacy and Balance of Power. Despite the mutual jealousy of the Great Powers, the Settlement helped prevent major wars in Europe for 40 years. To a certain extent, some of the aims were achieved wisely in accordance to the principles aforementioned.

The determination to prevent further aggression from France was made possible by the creation of buffer states around France. For instance, Belgium and Holland were united in the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the north-eastern frontier of France, Genoa was added to Piedmont Sardinia, and Prussia was strengthened because of the acquisition of territories along the Rhine. These measures were adopted in the hope of containing France. Furthermore, the allies prevented the return of Napoleon by exiling him to St. Helena.

The signing of the Second Treaty of Paris in 1815 stated that an allied army was to occupy France for 5 years. A war indemnity coupled with the reduction of French boundaries prevented her from invading other countries. The second aim of the Settlement was achieved in a peaceful manner. The most disputed territories, namely Saxony and Poland, were settled in a way acceptable to all the Great Powers.

It was agreed that Russia received most of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw while Prussia gained two-fifths of the Kingdom of Saxony. Other arrangements made by the Congress included the cession to Austria of Lombardy and Venetia in northern Italy, in place of her abandoned Netherlands and territory along the Adriatic coast and territory along the Adriatic coast. Sweden gained Norway from Denmark partly as compensation for her loss of Finland to Russia and partly as a punishment of Denmark for her continued alliance with Napoleon. As a result, wars were avoided during the course of remapping Europe. Nevertheless, this sparked off a sense of anti-foreign sentiment and mutual jealousy in some states. The first and foremost objective of the Settlement was to maintain peace and an effective alliance of the four Great Powers.

The Treaty of Chaumont in bound the signatories to remain an alliance for twenty years. This paved the way for the later Quadruple Alliance and the Quintuple Alliance. The great powers agreed to meet at fixed periods in order to promote their common interests and discuss any important matters affecting Europe. A new idea of co-operation was put forward as a consequence, this system of international diplomacy lasted throughout the 19th century and beyond.

In addition to this, legitimate rulers were restored to their thrones. The restored rulers included King Louis XVIII to France, King Victor Emmanuel I to Piedmont-Sardinia and King Ferdinand I to Naples. They were relied upon to stamp out revolutionary movements and uproot liberalism and nationalism. There are some drawbacks, however. One of which is that revolutions against the restored rulers and foreign domination broke out. The

conservative Eastern Powers (Prussia, Austria and Russia) were eager to put down these revolutionos.

The two liberal powers (ie. Britain and France) were opposed to this on grounds of ideological differences and economic interests. It can be seen in the Congress of Verona which Britain only sent representatives to attend. This divergence finally led to the collapse of the alliance system.

Aside from that, the Great Powers failed to realize that the social changes (e. g. liberalism and nationalism) made by Napoleon were irreversible and it was unwise for them to swim against the tide of liberalism and nationalism. To sum up, the unfair territorial arrangements eventually led to disturbances in Europe (revolutions of 1830 and 1848) and wars seemed inevitable.

After Napoleon was defeated by the Allies (Forth Coalition), he was exiled to Elba and France signed the First treaty of Paris. This treaty was moderate to France since she did not receive any harsh punishment. She was not disarmed, nor was she called upon to pay a war indemnity. Moreover, she was not even asked to return the masterpieces of art to Italy and Germany. Except for some overseas territories, she virtually kept all the territories she held in 1792.

This was because the victorious powers did not want to weaken the new government of Louis XVIII. Nonetheless, the punitive actions taken in the Vienna Settlement on the whole should not be seen as moderate as the First treaty of Paris. In the wake of the Hundred Days, the Second Treaty of Paris was signed in November 1815 and sterner terms were imposed on France. This time, she had to pay a war indedmnty of 700 million francs.

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An Allied army was to occupy France for 5 years. Moreover, her boundaries in Europe were further reduced to those of 1790. Aside from these humiliating terms, she was required to restore the art treasures taken by Napoleon from foreign countries. Similiar actions were taken on Denmark as mentioned above (cession of Norway to Sweden). As to other states, they were subject to alien rule in view of the principle of balance of power and defensive arrangement against France. For example, Austria gained Lombardy and Venetia, Piedmont gained Genoa and Russia gained Poland.

Thus, the fate of these small states was determined by the Great Powers. In conclusion, some of the chief objectives of the Vienna Settlement were achieved by peaceful means. In a sense, the creation of buffer states played a key role in containing France, however, it did not help much in checking the spread of revolutionary ideas. As division among the powers grew, the Alliance system gradually fell apart.

Neither a perpetual Congress system nor eternal peace was achieved. The Settlement was moderate or even lenient to some countries while extreme to others due to the fact that small states did not have a say. Despite efforts made by the brilliant statesmen, problems still emerged as time went by. So, wise is just too big a word to describe the Settlement.