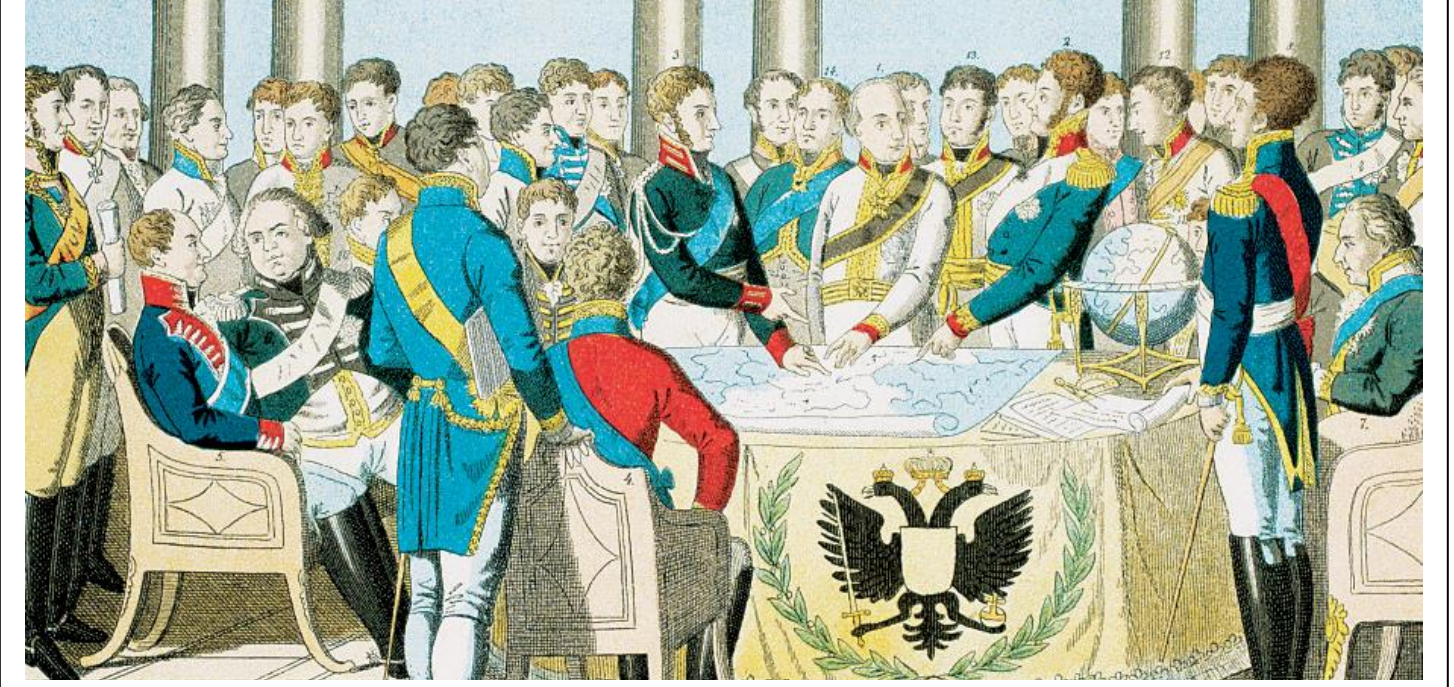


AIM 2.6: Was the Congress of Vienna a success or a failure?

DO NOW: Write down three observations about the picture below:



Document 1

Q: Why did European leaders hold a series of meetings in Vienna? Who was the most influential leader?

After the defeat of Napoleon in 1814, European heads of government were looking to establish long-lasting peace and stability on the continent after the defeat of Napoleon. A series of meetings in Vienna, known as the **Congress of Vienna**, were called to set up policies to achieve this goal. Most of the decisions made in Vienna were made in secret among representatives of the five “great powers”—Russia, Prussia, Austria, Great Britain, and France. The most influential representative was Prince **Klemens von Metternich** of Austria.

Document 2

Q: According to the maps, how did the borders of France change after the Congress of Vienna?



Europe Before Congress of Vienna, 1810



Europe After Congress of Vienna, 1815

Document 3

Q: According to the document, why did the leaders of Europe not want to weaken France too much?

Metternich wanted to restore a **balance of power**... Although the leaders of Europe wanted to weaken France, they did not want to leave it powerless. If they severely punished France, they might encourage the French to take revenge. If they broke up France, then another country might become so strong that it would threaten them all. Thus, the victorious powers did not exact a great price from the defeated nation. As a result, France remained a major but diminished European power. Also, no country in Europe could easily overpower another...

Document 4

Q: What does Metternich think is “evil”? Who is responsible for the evil? Who must stop the evil?

The evil exists and it is enormous... It is principally the middle classes of society which this moral gangrene [corruption] has affected, and it is only among them that the real heads of the party are found. For the great mass of the people it has no attraction and can have none. The labors to which this class—the real people—are obliged to devote themselves, are too continuous and too positive to allow them to throw themselves into vague abstractions [unrealistic ideas] and ambitions.

We are convinced that society can no longer be saved without strong and vigorous [energetic] resolutions on the part of the Governments... By this course the monarchs will fulfill the duties imposed upon them by Him, who, by entrusting them with power, has charged them to watch over the maintenance of justice, and the rights of all, to avoid the paths of error, and tread firmly in the way of truth. Union between the monarchs is the basis of the policy which must now be followed to save society from total ruin. In short, let the great monarchs strengthen their union, and prove to the world that if it exists, it is beneficent [doing good], and ensures the political peace of Europe: that it is powerful only for the maintenance of tranquility [peace] at a time when so many attacks are directed against it; that the principles [ideas] which they profess are paternal [fatherly] and protective, menacing [threatening] only the disturbers of public tranquility.

- *Memoirs of Prince von Metternich (1820)*

Document 5

Q: In what ways did the Congress of Vienna succeed? In what ways did it fail?

The Congress of Vienna was a political triumph in many ways. For the first time, the nations of an entire continent had cooperated to control political affairs. The settlements they agreed upon were fair enough that no country was left bearing a grudge. Therefore, the Congress did not sow the seeds of future wars. In that sense, it was more successful than many other peace meetings in history. By agreeing to come to one another's aid in case of threats to peace, the European nations had temporarily ensured that there would be a balance of power on the continent. The Congress of Vienna, then, created a time of peace in Europe. It was a lasting peace. None of the five great powers waged war on one another for nearly 40 years.

However, the conservative leaders of Europe could not contain the ideas that had emerged during the French Revolution. France after 1815 was deeply divided politically. Conservatives were happy with the monarchy of Louis XVIII and were determined to make it last. Liberals, however, wanted the king to share more power with the legislature. And many people in the lower classes remained committed to the ideals of liberty and equality. Similarly, in other countries there was an explosive mixture of ideas and factions that would contribute directly to revolutions in 1830 and 1848.

Despite their efforts to undo the French Revolution, the leaders at the Congress of Vienna could not turn back the clock. The Revolution had given Europe its first experiment in democratic government. Although the experiment had failed, it had set new political ideas in motion. The major political upheavals of the early 1800s had their roots in the French Revolution.

