Congress of Vienna - 1814

Chairs:
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# Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Let us be the first to welcome you to the 2020 MIT Model United Nations Conference (MITMUNC)! We are pleased to introduce you to the historical Congress of Vienna committee. We are Lacthu Vu and Roland Rocafort, and we will be your chairs for the course of this conference.

Lacthu is a freshman from California majoring in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Computer Science. She has competed in MUN throughout high school, and is excited to chair her first conference at MITMUNC!

Roland is a sophomore from Puerto Rico majoring in Business Analytics and Economics with a minor in Math. He has competed in MUN throughout his four years in high school and chaired in last year's MITMUNC conference.

It is 1814, and the Congress of Vienna has been called to discuss the future of post-war Europe, and come to a long-term international peace plan following the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars by redrawing European boundaries and establishing a balance of power to prevent future wars and ensure stability on the European continent.

The topics that we plan to debate in the Congress of Vienna include:

I.     Redefining European Political Boundaries

II.    Maintaining Peace and a European Balance of Power

This background guide is meant to be an introduction to the topics and should not replace your research. Please take the time to research the topics, and your delegation's position well. The decisions made at this congress will dictate the future of Europe for decades to come, and could very well determine if European peace will be restored, or if the continent is plunged into yet another war. The committee will be starting on **November 1, 1814**.

We wish you all the best as you prepare, and we look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,

Lacthu Vu & Roland Rocafort

Chairs, Congress of Vienna

# Introduction

The Napoleonic Wars have been going on for over a decade, with many nation-states entering, capitulating and re-entering the battle against Napoleon. After Napoleon's historic losses during his attempts to invade Russia in 1812, many countries saw this sign of weakness as an opportunity to defeat Napoleon and the French army once and for all. The Sixth Coalition, composed of the United Kingdom, Prussia, Austria, Russia, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, and several German States, formed and declared a sixth and final war against Napoleon's forces in March 1813. After several months of fighting, the Sixth Coalition won a decisive victory at the Battle of Leipzig in October 1813. This was the largest military battle in history, and at its conclusion, France lost its remaining allies to the Coalition and had to retreat inside its borders. With this loss came the dissolution of the Confederation of the Rhine, a group of German States that Napoleon had organized to serve as a buffer and provide resources for the French army. They immediately joined the Sixth Coalition in their efforts to stop France.

Unsure of what to do next, the Coalition, guided by Austrian statesman Klemens von Metternich, offered a peace initiative, known as the Frankfurt Proposals, to Napoleon. These proposals would have Napoleon remain as the emperor of France under the condition that the country would revert to its pre-war natural borders, giving up claim to all territories it had annexed and all puppet states it had created.

Thinking he could still rebuild his army and win, Napoleon ignored these peace terms, and, in the following months, his forces were steadily pushed back and forced to retreat into Paris. In early February 1814, however, Napoleon was able to hold his own against the advancing Coalition armies on his Six Day Campaign. In the meantime, the Sixth Coalition signed the Treaty of

Chaumont on March 9, 1814, to reaffirm their alliance and figure out the terms for Napoleon's impending defeat. The treaty demanded Napoleon's immediate surrender and further demanded that France revert its borders back to their pre-revolutionary war. In exchange, they would have allowed Napoleon to remain the emperor. The members of the coalition also pledged resources to protect Europe against potential French aggression in the future. Napoleon rejected the terms, and within the following weeks, on March 30, 1814, the allied coalition entered Paris.

After over a decade of French aggression, the Sixth Coalition was finally able to put an end to Napoleon and his army, as Napoleon was forced to abdicate on April 11, 1814, under the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau, signed by representatives of Russia, Prussia, and Austria and Napoleon. Under the agreed-upon terms, Napoleon abdicated and was exiled to the neighboring island of Elba and where he would continue to rule. Lord Castlereagh, the British representative, rejected this treaty, stating that it would legitimize Napoleon as the French Emperor, instead of a usurper who took control from the Bourbon monarchy during the revolutionary wars.

A month later, the coalition started peace talks with France and, on May 30, 1814, they signed the Treaty of Paris. Apart from the cessation of hostilities, the Treaty of Paris had France revert its borders to its original 1792 borders, and granted independence to the conquered neighboring kingdoms, the treaty was signed by Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia and the Bourbon king, Louis XVIII, essentially legitimizing the reinstatement of the Bourbon monarchy in France. The treaty further stipulated plans for drafting a final settlement, in a congress with all of the belligerents of the Napoleonic Wars, to be held in Vienna in the coming months.

# Topic I: Redefining European Political Boundaries

## War Reparations and the Fate of France

After years of ongoing armed struggle, the European Continent has finally negotiated peace and now needs to deal with the disastrous effects of the Napoleonic Wars. Europe has suffered casualties ranging the hundreds of thousands, potentially millions, of people, and the entire continent has been ravaged. The four major powers of the Sixth Coalition, Russia, Prussia, Austria, and the United Kingdom, are now to meet in Vienna to work out the terms of their victory and discuss the future of France and Napoleonic Europe.

France has been in chaos ever since the revolution in 1789, and now that the rightful rulers have been restored, and Napoleon exiled, it is up to the Coalition to assure France's stability and prevent any further French aggression. The Bourbon Dynasty has been restored, but the political map still has to be redrawn to erase the Napoleonic Europe of the last decade. The Congress of Vienna needs to find ways to promote order and stability around France and its surrounding regions, many of which have just been freed from French rule. These smaller states would need protection from the Congress to prevent France, or any other major power, from taking over. Furthermore, the regions surrounding France need to be fortified and be able to act as buffers between the major European powers. Thee Congress must decide on how it wishes to protect small sovereign states and on which of these states could act as a buffer from France through their annexation to other major powers.

Furthermore, the treaty of Chaumont already stipulates that the major powers of the Coalition would pledge men and resources to prevent future French aggression, but they still need to

take further measures to prevent France from gaining control of the continent as it had previously done. It's up to the congress to decide on the punitive measures France would have to endure for the decade of fighting. In doing so, it's important to note the state of France and its current government. Upon the Bourbon restoration, the King Louis XVIII installed a constitutional monarchy, in order to appease the revolutionaries from decades ago, still, social tensions remain incredibly high, as the ideals of monarchists and ultra-monarchists, liberals, and followers of Napoleon's clash together, in a France that is already exhausted of economic and capital resources.

## Territorial Disputes and Sovereignty and Independence

### Poland and Saxony

Poland had formally ceased to exist in 1795, after Prussia, Russia and Austria partitioned the remaining regions of the already weak state in the Third Partition of Poland. After the French Revolution, however, the Polish saw Napoleon as their best hope to regain their land back and joined his military ranks. In 1807, after the War of the Fourth Coalition, Napoleon created the Duchy of Warsaw with lands it had taken from Prussia, and a Polish state under King Fredereick Augustus, King of Saxony, was created. For the following years, the duchy would serve as a satellite state of great importance to Napoleon's dominance of the region. After Napoleon's defeat against Russia, however, the state was very weakened, and is now under Coalition occupation. With the fall of Napoleon, it is up to the congress to decide the fate of the Polish territories. The great powers bordering the Duchy of Warsaw, especially Russia, all want a piece of the land as part of war reparations. Whoever ends up owning these lands might tip the delicate balance of power in eastern Europe. Furthermore, after bringing back a sovereign Polish state that had not existed for years, the

Polish will definitely want to remain independent, a hard task to do with three of the great powers so close to its borders.

Saxony on the other and, had remained an independent German state allied to Napoleon throughout the wars. Prussia is now demanding that Saxon lands to be under their control, as part of the treaty. Doing so, however, would further tip the scales of balance in eastern Europe, and would cause Prussia to hold a significant amount of influence among the German states.

## Portugal and Spain

In 1807, France, assisted by Spain, invaded and consequently occupied the Kingdom of Portugal. Several months later, in 1808, under the pretense of sending in more troops to Portugal, Napoleon turned on his ally and also occupied Spain. Thus ensued the Peninsular War for control of the Iberian Peninsula. France was met with heavy resistance from English troops in Portugal, which were able to retain several large ports and cities, and by Spnish nationals who resisted the French occupation. With the help and input of their colonies, both the Spanish and Portuguese governments were able to conduct their affairs in exile; however, the countries were in crisis as neither the Portugues nor the Spanish had enough resources to either maintain an effective centralized government or to push the French away.

In Spain, the War for Independence surged as nationals in Madrid started rebelling in 1808 to drive the French out. France squashed this small revolt and forced King Ferdinand VII to abdicate and return to France as a prisoner, and place Joseph Bonaparte as the new King of Spain. Discontent amongst many Spanish nationals led to the rise of guerilla-type warfare that gradually wore down the French army and made it impossible for France to rule Spain in its entirety. A kingless Spanish government-in-exile, known as Las Cortes de Cadiz, set up a new system of government in order to  keep order throughout these tumultuous and uncertain years. The new

government adopted an incredibly liberal constitution in 1812 based on the ideals of the French Revolution throughout the Spanish Empire. A year later as France struggled to keep its military strength against the coalition, Napoleon agreed to recognize Ferdinand's rule over and had him returned to Spain. Once Ferdinand VII got to sit on the throne again in early 1814, he declared the constitution null and had many of the liberal constituents of the Cortes imprisoned. This marked a return of an absolute monarchy in the Spanish Empire, causing tensions amongst liberals and conservatives and further igniting revolution in the Americas.

At the end of the War, both Portugal and Spain were left all but destroyed, with a lack of military capacity, bankrupt governments and stagnant economies, entire towns and cities destroyed, and high social tensions in Spain, especially between Francophiles, liberals and monarchists, and in the colonies.

The Napoleonic wars resulted in many territorial disputes and in many smaller states either gaining or losing sovereignty, or being transferred as collateral from one major power to another, this background guide looks at only a few of the many cases. Furthermore, it led many nation states into economic, social and political crisis. While probably most notable in Spain and Portugal, many of these issues are faced by many sovereign states, which all face an uncertain future. It is up to this congress to help guide these states back into order. It is encouraged that the delegates continue doing their own research and try to look for solutions that would work in specific states and in a more general, broader sense.

## Questions To Consider

1. How should France compensate the victors of the war, considering that it was Napoleon, and not the Bourbon Dynasty, that threw the continent into chaos? Should the allied

powers of the Sixth Coalition remain in France, and should their purpose be to restore the old order or to prevent France from rebuilding its military capacity?

2. Does your delegation consider that the terms towards France be more lenient, as to help with the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy?

3. How can the borders of France be strengthened so as to prevent the possibility of French aggression against smaller and weaker nation states close to its borders?

4. How will the political borders be redrawn to favor the victors of the war without upsetting the balance of power in favor of any specific European power?

5.  How can the congress squash the ideas of freedom and independence that Napoleon's army spread across Europe, especially among historically cultural and ethnic groups?

6. What are the social and political consequences of redrawing state maps after an era of war and confusion? How can these be resolved?

# Topic 2: II.  Maintaining Peace and a European Balance of Power

## Concert of Europe and a European Balance of Power

In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, the five major powers— Great Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, and France— aimed to create a system to resolve disputes, establish principles to maintain a balance of powers, and act as a deterrent from nationalism and any further major revolutionary conflicts. The theory of a *balance of power*, wherein military power would be distributed among the states to ensure that no state has enough power to dominate others, was a necessary response to the rise of Napoleonic France.

The Congress of Vienna has been called to bring together fellow representatives of the European powers to restore balance and stabilize geopolitical relations in Europe after the recent defeat of Napoleon for the future peace of Europe.

## Nationalism, Liberalism, and Conservatism

The Enlightenment, spearheaded by philosophers such as Kant, Locke, Hobbes, and Rosseau and fueled by the scientific revolution of the time, created a desire for a political upheaval of the traditional monarchy and nobility structures based on faith for a new order of liberty and equality based upon reason and natural laws. The French Revolution had resulted in a surge of nationalism, as Napoleon promoted the ideals of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" and justified French expansionism and military campaigns as a means to spread the liberal philosophies of the French Revolution across Europe. Many states controlled by Napoleon adopted the Napoleonic Code, which brought about legal reforms while making them clearer and more accessible. Radical

Enlightenment thought promoting nationalism and anti-absolutism brought about desires for democracy, individual liberty, freedom of expression, and the removal of the religious order, most evident with the abolition of the Bourbon monarchy in France in 1792, and the abdication of Bourbon rulers due to the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

Conservatism emerged as the dominant political and ideological reaction to nationalism and liberalism and remained a deciding factor in redrawing the political boundaries of post-Napoleonic Europe and creating a balance of power.

*Burkean conservatism*, detailed more prominently in Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* in 1790, was based on a belief in gradual change and adherence to tradition and precedents. Burke was a proponent of a government that could maintain the status quo while exercising its powers, rather than radical revolutions in a response to social problems. Conservatives, desiring peace after years of war, had disdain for the social upheavals that led to conflict during the French Revolution and disagreed with the revolution's ideals of *liberty, equality, fraternity*. General principles of conservatives included the dominance of political authorities, a distaste of revolutionary liberal demands for civil liberties, representative government, and nationalism, and an ordered society guided by traditions rather than liberal ideals.

Internally, conservatives had disagreements about the best way of preventing revolution, split between *reform conservatives*, who believed that conservative ideals could often be seen hand in hand with liberal progress, and *reactionary conservatives*, who feared the onset of revolutionary changes left behind by the French Revolution and staunchly opposed and tried to repress reform. Most statesmen occupied a middle ground, aligning with reform conservatives or moderate liberals concerning political philosophy, as with Tsar Alexander I's promotion of human rights and citizenship concurrently with historical rights and privileges and estates and properties.

Reform conservatives, while resistant to radical changes in government, could still see that state reforms were needed. However, change in either direction, towards a monarchy or a liberal constitutional rule would be difficult. Joseph de Maistre, Savoyard philosopher and known religious conservative, who saw the monarchy as a "divinely sanctioned institution" and the "only stable form of government" still acknowledged that "To stifle the revolutionary spirit immediately, as one extinguishes a candle, would be the enterprise of a madman."

The Fourth Coalition, composed of Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, shared a common goal of conserving traditional social and political order, and suppress the ideas that arose during the French Revolution. The Conservative Order was established by Austrian foreign minister Klemens von Metternich and British foreign minister Viscount Castlereagh, supporting the re-establishment of old ruling aristocracies and the creation of buffer states between the major powers to restore peace in Europe.

Despite the general trend towards monarchical conservatism following the revolution, such values could not be easily eliminated. Louis XVIII granted the liberals a constitution in 1814 to please them, and liberalism and nationalism remained a constant in Italy, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, and other states who favored freedom from rule by foreigners.

The stability of the European continent will be resting on the balance of liberal and conservative ideologies; the direction of state governments and civil systems in Europe are dependent on the decisions made at the upcoming congress.

## Confederation of German States

In 1806, The Holy Roman Emperor abdicated following defeats from Napoleon. With this came the final, permanent dissolution of the already weak, and virtually powerless, Holy Roman

Empire. Soon after, Napoleon helped create the Confederation of the Rhine, a military alliance of German states, an ally of Napoleonic France that provided Napoleon with troops, and served as a buffer from Austria, Russia, and Prussia that collapsed in 1813 upon Napoleon's loss at the Battle of Leipzig.

The Treaty of Paris may have declared the German states independent, but it did not declare any boundaries, leaving behind the consolidated German states from Napoleon. Leading up to the Congress, Heinrich vom Stein, a champion of liberal ideals and a proponent of parliamentary institutions, created and led the provisional *Zentralverwaltungsbehörde*, a Central Managing Authority for Germany to replace the now-defunct government of the confederation.

The future of the members of the former Confederation of the Rhine has now been left to the hands of this committee: it is up to the delegates of this Congress to decide whether to allow Germany to become a unified nation, remain as independent states, or to be incorporated as territories as a part of the existing major powers, to best maintain peace and a balance of powers in Europe for years to come.

## Questions for Consideration

1. What provisions must be set out in order to maintain a balance of power in Europe?
2. How can differences between conservative and liberal political philosophies be reconciled to guarantee order in Europe following the conference?
3. What effects would having a German confederation have on European political stability and balance of power? How can the stability of a unified Germany be ensured in the long term?

## Country Blocs

Instead of being represented by countries, this committee will be represented by country ambassadors. Thus, while country blocs are useful in understanding your delegations position and the positions of others with respect to their nationality, they might not necessarily reflect the position of specific ambassadors. We encourage you to research more about your delegations position.

### United Kingdom

The United Kingdom emerged from the Napoleonic Wars as a European superpower. Of the major powers, the United Kingdom was the most liberal, supporting a constitutional monarchical government, whereas Austria, Russia, and Prussia desired a return to absolutism. While interested in maintaining peace through a balance of power, the United Kingdom also seeks to prevent the beginnings of hegemony by another rival that could challenge their status as a superpower, as well as expand their mercantile and imperial interests overseas.

### Austria

As the most influential of the German states, Austria oversaw a large empire in Eastern and Central Europe. Austria finds revolutionary nationalism as a threat to the empire, thereby opposing independence movements that would potentially inspire a revolution within its boundaries. To maintain its power in Eastern and Central Europe and prevent future invasions from the other major powers, Austria aims to limit territorial gains by Russia and Prussia in this sphere, while also seeking territorial gains in Italy.

*Russia*

Napoleon's invasion in 1812 cost thousands of Russian lives and devastated their lands. Having faced the greatest losses in the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of Vienna provides Russia with a major opportunity to make territorial claims on Poland and Eastern Europe, expanding their influence in the continent.

*Prussia*

Due to an early defeat in the Napoleonic Wars, Prussia lost part of its territory to land that became the Duchy of Warsaw. Like Russia, Prussia also seeks territorial gains in the aftermath of the wars— particularly from Saxony and German territories— at the Congress of Vienna to be re-elevated to their status as a leading European power. Prussia may prove to be a rival of Austria if both states choose to lay claim on the independent German territories in the Rhineland.

*France*

As the losing party of the Napoleonic Wars, France has a diplomatic disadvantage, desiring not to suffer any significant losses while negotiating the best deal possible during the congress. France seeks to keep as much of the land acquired during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic expansions. The Bourbon monarchy has been restored in France, leaving the state with the objective of distancing itself from Napoleonic France to position itself as an equal negotiator to the four major powers and not have to pay reparations to the other European powers.

*Switzerland*

Switzerland will remain a neutral party throughout the Congress of Vienna to avoid foreign conflicts, though nations have continued to get Switzerland involved to maintain stability and a balance of power in Europe.

*German States*

After the disbanding of the Confederation of the Rhine following Napoleon's defeat at Austerlitz, the future of the German states was left up to the Congress of Vienna. Nationalism and liberalism in Germany led to a call for unification and liberal representative government for the states. Individual German states had delegates at the congress to discuss issues of the future of German states.

*Italian States*

Many smaller Italian states have been under France's control for the majority of the Napoleonic Wars. After abolishing French rule, these small states will want to call for greater protection against occupation from  major powers, and social tensions will remain a top issue in these states as the Itailian nationalism continues to grow thanks to the ideologies that traveled from the French Revolution.

*Spain & Portugal*

Spain and Portugal permanently lost their place as major European powers after the wars. As they struggle to remain relevant in European politics, Spain and Portugal will want to rebuild their nations, as their sovereigns try take control back from the disaster that proved to be the French

occupation. The social ideologies of the revolution have travelled throughout their entire Empires, and they will want to stop the liberal movements taking place.

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## Helpful Links for More Information

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