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A World Half Restored The Vienna Settlement and the Restoration Regimes

After the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, the treaties that constituted the Vienna Settlement redefined the borders of most European states, and in many cases determined the regimes that would rule those states. Consideration of the Settlement thus provides an opportunity to introduce nineteenth-century European politics. Domestic and foreign policies were intricately linked, and decision-making was restricted to narrow elites. Much as they might have liked to, statesmen could not, however, simply reverse all of the change that had occurred since the outbreak of the Revolution of 1789. Certain elements of the pre-1789 social and political order were so badly damaged or decayed that they could not be restored, and in some cases it was in the interests of the powers to maintain legacies of the Revolutionary-Napoleonic era. The powers thus created a new order that combined traditional elements of the *ancien régime* (old order) with institutions, laws, conventions and practices of more recent vintage.

When they gathered at Vienna in September 1814, delegates of the smaller states held great expectations. An article of the First Peace of Paris, signed on May 30, 1814, had called on the powers previously engaged in the Napoleonic Wars to convene for a congress that would reorganize Europe after the collapse of the French Empire. Many delegates thought they were summoned to a constituent assembly in which they could exercise influence. Although the four great powers (Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria) did want ratification by the other states, they had already agreed that they alone would make decisions as to territorial distribution. Emperor Francis I of Austria attempted to divert the delegates, sovereigns, princely families, and lobby groups of the lesser states with lavish entertainment organized by a festivals committee. Between 40 and 50 tables were set at the Hofburg Palace



Map 1.1 Vienna Settlement (Europe in 1815). Charles Breunig, *The Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1789–1850*, 2nd edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970), p. 132.



Figure 1.1 The Congress of Vienna. Hardenberg is seated on the far left. Metternich is standing, pointing at Castlereagh, who is seated with his legs crossed. Talleyrand is seated on the right, with his forearm on the table. © Bettmann/Corbis.

for banquets at which diners could plow their way through eight courses each evening. Nevertheless, frustrated dignitaries often wasted time quarreling over minor matters of precedence; given that they felt they had been invited under false pretences, endemic bickering was to be expected. They did have input in certain issues. Delegates from the minor powers participated in constitutional committees for Switzerland and a new German Confederation, and in a committee that developed new guidelines for diplomatic protocol. All the same, the great powers reserved the most vital considerations for themselves. Viewed from this perspective, the Congress of Vienna can be seen as a harbinger of a century in which regimes sought approval without accepting genuine accountability (Figure 1.1).

Initially there were four principal power brokers: Lord Castlereagh, the British foreign minister, Tsar Alexander I of Russia, Prince Metternich, the Austrian foreign minister, and Prince von Hardenberg, Prussian chancellor and foreign minister. Although Alexander's mercurial temperament caused conflict, he was determined to maintain his prestige as the "liberator" of Europe and would compromise at crucial moments so as to avoid isolation. Due to the distance between Vienna and London, Castlereagh could act with considerable independence, but he adhered to broad policy outlines established well before the Congress. Given that Britain had no continental territorial ambitions, Castlereagh was well placed

to play the role of “honest broker”; nevertheless his self-righteousness was irritating – Alexander disliked being told that his policies were not in the interests of the Russian people. Metternich believed that his diplomatic cunning had brought the fall of Napoleon and was convinced that “error never had access to my mind.”¹ Despite the machinations of rivals at the Austrian court, he had solid backing from his sovereign during confrontations with the Tsar. Having to contend with the devotion of King Frederick William III to Alexander, Hardenberg was more constrained in pursuing Prussian objectives. Prussia’s position as the weakest of the powers meant that while it was the most avid for gain, it was the least able to stand against the others. By January 1815 Prince Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, the French foreign minister, had wormed his way into the decision-making of the great powers. Initially Talleyrand set himself up as the spokesman of the smaller states. While the other powers politely listened to his arguments, they were not swayed; it was a squabble among the four that gained Talleyrand a say. Once the directing council of four had become a council of five, Talleyrand happily dropped the guise of representing the smaller states.

In the Final Act, the ultimate statement of the Congress signed on June 9, 1815, the principle of “legitimacy” was strongly emphasized as a foundational principle. Espoused particularly by Talleyrand, an aristocratic former clergyman who had advocated state sequestration of Church lands during the Revolution and served Napoleon in typically treacherous fashion as foreign minister, “legitimacy” loosely implied that the regimes overthrown from 1789 onward should be reconstituted. However, while statement of the principle served rhetorically to repudiate all that had been created by the Revolution and Napoleon, “legitimacy” was set aside whenever it conflicted with more fundamental objectives. Three main priorities guided the Settlement: reduction of French power, rewards for the four great powers for their part in dethroning Bonaparte, and establishment of a rough equilibrium of power.

Reduction of French power occurred in two stages. The First Peace of Paris was lenient. The French would give up claims to lands beyond their 1792 borders, but they would retain certain acquisitions made after 1789 – Avignon, the Venaissin, and parts of Savoy, the Palatinate, and Belgium. Captured French colonies would be returned, although Britain would retain Tobago and Santa Lucia in the West Indies, and Mauritius, Rodriguez, and the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean. In granting generous terms, the powers had several considerations in mind. Having reinstalled the Bourbon dynasty, they wanted to enhance the regime’s prospects for maintaining rule in France. They also wanted to reconcile the French public to the new European order they envisaged; hence King Louis XVIII was obliged to grant a constitution that included provisions for a parliament. Finally, they also wanted to maintain a French state sufficiently strong that it could play a part in maintaining equilibrium of power on the Continent. Such calculations had to be adjusted after Napoleon re-established his rule at Paris on March 20, 1815. The statesmen gathered at Vienna carried on with their deliberations, refused to deal

with Bonaparte, and marshaled their forces for a second onslaught on the “usurper.” By June 18 the French army had been defeated at Waterloo, and on June 22 Napoleon was again forced to abdicate.

What to do with the French? The Second Peace of Paris, signed on November 20, 1815, fell somewhere between the leniency of the first treaty and the demands of the Prussians, who pressed for dismemberment. French borders would recede to those of 1790 and several fortresses on the northern and eastern frontiers would be yielded. The French must pay an indemnity of 700 million *francs* within three to five years, support an army of occupation of 150 000 men until final payment, and return previously looted art treasures. Subsequent French desire to revise the Vienna Settlement sprang partly from wounded pride, and partly from the fact that while forcing France to disgorge her acquisitions, the other powers consolidated or extended their own.

Before assessing territorial redistribution, it is instructive to note what was not on the table. The British had already ensured that there would be no discussion of their navy’s “right” to stop and search neutral shipping in times of war, and overseas colonies seized by the British would be considered only in so much as the British wished them to be. Similarly, Russian acquisition of Finland and Bessarabia were accepted as a *fait accompli*.

The main battles occurred over Poland and Saxony. Alexander wanted to reconstitute Napoleon’s Grand Duchy of Warsaw with himself as ruler. He did not intend to include the lands Russia had seized during the eighteenth-century partitions of Poland, although he pressed Prussia and Austria to yield the provinces they had taken. Given Russian presence in the Duchy, Alexander was strongly positioned, though he overstated the matter when he alleged “there can be no argument with six hundred thousand troops.”² The Prussians were willing to agree, provided they were compensated in Saxony, which had made the mistake of realigning with Napoleon in mid-1813. Neither Russian expansion in Poland nor Prussian expansion in Saxony appealed, however, to Metternich, and Castlereagh wanted Prussia to be compensated in the Rhineland. Clashes between former allies turned ferocious and at one point Alexander gave Metternich a dressing down that, according to Talleyrand, “would have been thought extraordinary even toward one of one’s own servants.”³ It was this dangerous rift that enabled Talleyrand to gain France an alliance with Britain and Austria in early January 1815. Whether the alliance was more than a bluff is questionable; yet news of it soon convinced Alexander to compromise, mostly by sacrificing the demands of Prussia.

The powers would create a new “Congress” Poland with Alexander as monarch. Austria would retain the province of Galicia, with Cracow constituted as a free city. Prussia would retain Danzig and the province of Posen, but yield the rest of her Polish acquisitions. Ultimately, Congress Poland amounted to about three-quarters the size of Napoleon’s Grand Duchy, itself a pale reflection of the former Polish state. The Prussians had to settle for taking roughly two-fifths of Saxony; the rest remained an independent state. Fortuitous Prussian acquisition of the former

Duchy of Westphalia and of lands on the left bank of the Rhine would, however, provide the base for subsequent industrial power.

Austria made gains principally in the Italian peninsula. Austria reacquired the province of Lombardy and annexed Venetia, including a strip of territory along the Dalmatian coast. Elsewhere highly dependent regimes were established, often with Habsburgs as rulers. Marie Louise, wife of Napoleon, but more importantly daughter of Austrian Emperor Francis I, became the ruler of Parma. Archduke Ferdinand, brother of Francis, was reinstated as Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Grand Duke Francis IV, a cousin of the Austrian Emperor, was re-established as ruler of Modena. Ferdinand IV of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, a Spanish Bourbon, was tied to the Habsburgs through marriage and owed his acquisition of Naples partly to a promise to Metternich that he would not grant the Neapolitans a constitution. Moreover Ferdinand rescinded a parliament previously gained, due to British influence, by Sicilian landowners. Austria also played the principal role in the Papacy's recovery of most of its former possessions; Metternich would have to negotiate traditional Papal antipathy to Austrian domination of Italy, but he could hope that support from the Church would help secure conservative rule throughout Austria's sphere of influence.

British policy reflected shrewd calculation of global interests. British gains consisted partly of securing recognition of far-flung maritime acquisitions that secured naval supremacy. Bases at Heligoland in the North Sea, Malta in the Mediterranean, the Cape Colony in the southern tip of Africa, Ceylon in the Indian Ocean, and Santa Lucia, Tobago, and Trinidad in the Caribbean provided opportunities to control trade routes. British interests were also pursued by Castlereagh's efforts to ensure that no power could dominate the continent. Re-establishment of Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch independence worked to Britain's advantage. Conversely, Castlereagh's advocacy of abolition of the slave trade sprang from a humanitarian impulse. Lobbying at Vienna yielded a declaration condemning the practice, and various inducements led Holland and Sweden to join Britain and Denmark in decreeing total abolition in 1815. In pursuit of liberal support, Napoleon had decreed abolition in French colonies during his brief return, and thereafter Louis XVIII felt obliged to follow suit. Although Spain and Portugal proved harder nuts to crack, cash payments, beginning in 1817, induced them to sign agreements to suppress the trade, initially north of the equator, and then totally.

For a long time historians have argued that above all the great powers sought a balance of power, but this interpretation has been challenged by Paul W. Schroeder.⁴ The term "balance of power" has a liability in that it implies a system wherein the leading states have roughly the same amount of power. Such was not the case in 1815; Britain and Russia were significantly stronger than the other powers. What in fact was achieved was an equilibrium wherein none of the powers could unilaterally dominate the continent. Such equilibrium was fostered partly by creation of intermediary states whose independence was guaranteed in law by the great powers. Intermediary states could act as buffers between the powers, and their

mere existence would make any drive for hegemony more difficult. The notion of “equilibrium” is not, however, entirely novel; earlier historians tended to use the terms “balance” and “equilibrium” interchangeably, without clearly distinguishing between the two. Given this scenario, rather than eliminate use of the term “balance of power,” it seems more appropriate to employ Schroeder’s notion of equilibrium as a more precise definition of what balance of power actually meant.

Equilibrium was achieved partly by surrounding France with states better able to defend themselves. Prussian expansion in the Rhineland was directed toward this end; so too was Dutch acquisition of the southern Netherlands (Belgium), Luxembourg, and a small parcel of land along the left bank of the Rhine. Piedmont-Sardinia gained through annexation of the former Republic of Genoa. Switzerland added three cantons (Geneva, Valais and Neuchâtel), and by adopting a constitution negotiated at Vienna acquired an international guarantee of her neutrality.

Arrangements in central Europe were guided by desire to provide security for the German states. There was no attempt to restore the three hundred or so states that had comprised the Holy Roman Empire; internal divisions had made the latter far too vulnerable to French expansion. Thus much of the concentration instigated by Napoleon, including significant enlargement of Baden, Württemberg, and Bavaria, was retained. The remaining 38 states, including Prussia and Austria, would combine in a German Confederation headed by the Austrian Emperor. The Confederation was in essence an organization for mutual defense rather than a step toward creation of a unified German state.

The Nature of the Restored Regimes

Legitimacy thus played little part in territorial distribution. Nor did re-established regimes constitute a full-blooded reversion to the *ancien régime*. The latter point becomes obvious if we consider several legacies of the Revolutionary-Napoleonic era.

Although the Revolution began in France in 1789 as an attack on royal despotism, it soon extended into the realm of social relations. In their attempt to create a regime which could be held accountable, the revolutionaries started with the principle of national sovereignty. To delimit the function of the state, revolutionaries drew up a constitution that proclaimed certain “natural” rights, and divided power between the government and a legislature of elected representatives of the nation. Among these rights were freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of association. Simultaneously, the revolutionaries also attacked social privilege. One set of laws would apply to all social groups, entry into state office would be based on merit, all would be subject to taxation, and any remaining seigniorial obligations would be abolished. Pursuit of equality often entailed a drive for uniformity and hence the Revolution brought destruction to a

broad array of corporate privileges, ranging from guild monopolies to regional exemptions from taxes. It also inspired a secularizing trend that eroded the status of the Catholic Church. The ideal of equality had limited impact on gender relations; women did make gains in family law, but they were excluded from the political sphere. All the same, the Revolution enunciated a template of ideals that inspired advocates of change throughout the nineteenth century.

The Revolution also fostered increased expectations of what the state should do. Especially during the period of radical Jacobin ascendancy, governments began state provision of social services that included mass education and aid for the impoverished. Such programs collapsed under the strains of war, but their short-term existence provided examples for the future. More immediately consequential was a conservative backlash against the chaos that ensued from too much rapid change. As much of France (and a good deal of the rest of Europe) fell into virtual anarchy, desire rose for a state capable of maintaining order. Bonaparte exploited such desire to develop a state in which power was highly centralized. The Napoleonic model of government was by no means as intrusive as twentieth-century totalitarian regimes; nevertheless, a major part of Napoleonic rule lay in enhancing the repressive capacity of the state. Like his Revolutionary predecessors, Bonaparte spread French institutions and laws to conquered lands. The Revolution thus had extensive impact outside France, but in the long run political liberty advanced more as a shared ideal than as a practical reality.

Napoleon knew that prosperity served as an antidote to opposition and hence his administrators busied themselves with compiling information about society and the economy. The Imperial penchant for economic planning was far from the command economies of the twentieth century, and its inspiration can be located in the reforming impulse of enlightened despotism. All the same, the Napoleonic state was significantly more developed than its *ancien régime* predecessors, and its impulse to render the public docile through provision of material needs was stronger.⁵

Using these three broad, and at times contradictory, Revolutionary-Napoleonic legacies – creation of liberal, if not democratic, rule, fostering of civil equality, and enhancement of state power, we now can turn to the Restoration regimes, asking to what extent they constituted a return to the pre-Revolutionary era.

Constitutional Monarchies

With the exception of Switzerland, European states were organized as dynastic monarchies. Among the latter there was a rough division between autocracies and constitutional monarchies wherein rulers shared power with parliaments. The leading constitutional monarchies were Britain and France.

Of all the European states, the one least in need of “restoration” was Britain. The French Revolution had actually impeded political change, although the Act of

Union of 1801 was a noteworthy exception. By the terms of the Union, the Dublin parliament was abolished; henceforth Ireland would elect 100 members to the House of Commons at Westminster, and 28 peers and four Church of Ireland bishops would enter the House of Lords. Despite promises made at the time, no Act of Emancipation, which would have enabled Catholics to sit in the new United Kingdom parliament, followed.

A feature of the state was its limited nature. Many Britons associated government with elite patronage and wanted to keep it as cheap as possible. Radicals were alarmed that the number of government offices had increased from 16 000 in 1797 to almost 25 000 by 1815. Policy-making state departments were however small; in the early 1820s the Home Office had a staff of 17, the Colonial Office 14, and the Foreign Office fewer than 36. Most of the state's attention was directed toward foreign relations and the departments in charge of supply for the armed services were relatively large, maintaining some 4000 employees. In the domestic sphere, taxation was a chief preoccupation. Customs, Excise, and Stamps and Taxes agencies employed close to 20 000 officials. Provision of law and order was also a major concern; yet here one is struck by how little the central government provided. There was no national police force; in the event of mass disorder, officials must turn to their own constables, local militias, and the regular army. Because the role of the home army was crucial, it was essential to ensure that the "right" sort of fellow commanded the troops. In a notorious state paper the Duke of Wellington justified the purchase of officer commissions as follows: "it is promotion by purchase which brings into the service men of fortune and education; men who have some connection with the interests and fortunes of the country."⁶

Most responsibility fell to local authorities. In the counties, lords lieutenant and justices of the peace played the key roles in quelling disorder. While the lords took the lead in organizing response to crisis, it was the justices of the peace who performed the bulk of day-to-day work – in addition to justice they handled tasks ranging from monitoring upkeep of roads to supervision of workhouses. Local magistrates were neither trained nor paid and their services were voluntary; hence they were drawn from the local elite and enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. There was little uniformity in the organization of government in corporate towns, and the functions of mayors, aldermen, bailiffs, and municipal councils varied according to town charters. Complicating matters further was the existence of agencies (for policing, street repair, water and light provision, market supervision and the like) that owed their existence to private acts of parliament and were independent of the town corporations. The net effect was a great deal of overlapping jurisdiction. All too often, limited government brought what it was supposed to avoid – inefficiency.

In theory, the political system rested on a balance of the interests of the Crown, the aristocracy (in the House of Lords), and the common people (in the House of Commons). Yet the relative power of the three components was shifting. The monarchy had been tarnished by defeat in the American War of Independence, and during the Revolutionary-Napoleonic era royal influence over the cabinet had

diminished as King George III lapsed into insanity. Since the 1780s parliament had cut back on the number of state sinecures (appointments that were designed solely to secure loyalty) by which the Crown had been able to influence members of parliament (MPs). With the decline of sinecures, the Crown turned to appointment of the lords as a means of enhancing influence. Conversely, an increasingly independent Commons, composed largely of country gentry, could pose challenges for the government. Initiative in the lower house often rested with individual MPs who could push for select commissions to investigate whatever issues they might wish to pursue, and bills proposed by the cabinet were by no means certain of passing.

Adding to the complexity of passing legislation was the absence of a disciplined party system. Among the 658 MPs there were three main *blocs* formed partly on personal or patronage ties, and partly on ideological lines. The Tories were suspicious of constitutional reform and defenders of landed interests, royal prerogative, and the central place of the Anglican Church in the regime. The Whigs were more inclined to take an adversarial position with the Crown, more attached to commercial, manufacturing, and financial interests, skeptical about close ties between Church and State, and at times open to reform. The leading advocates of change were the Radicals, who were especially eager to enhance the power and independence of the Commons so that it could keep “Old Corruption” (the use of the state to further elite, particularly Tory, interests) in check. While the Tories were in effect the governing party, and the equally aristocratic Whigs had similar numbers in the Commons, Radical MPs were few in number. In combination, these features placed independent (unaligned) MPs in an often-decisive swing position. Moreover, members generally voted according to their own lights. The parties did not elect an official leader; instead they had several prominent figures. Pursuit of power often dictated whether these factions cooperated, and there were significant divisions within all three *blocs*.

The right to choose MPs was held by a small minority. Prior to 1832 there were roughly 478 000 voters. The extent of the franchise varied dramatically among the electoral units (boroughs and counties), and many “rotten boroughs” were secured by patronage or corruption of a handful of voters rather than genuine contestation. Little effort had been made to adjust to demographic change; while certain sparsely populated villages elected MPs, many cities did not. Nevertheless, partisan divisions, often between Anglicans and the non-Anglican (Dissenting) Protestant sects, were hardening and many seats were fiercely contested.

Although Britain was a plutocracy, the import of public opinion was rising. Figures such as the Tory George Canning or the Whig Henry Brougham derived their influence from ability to mobilize public support. They were not necessarily typical of MPs, but even among the Tories there were factions well aware of a need to serve more than just the landed interest. A broader sense of obligation was encouraged by relatively high literacy rates, a flourishing press over which the government exercised little control, and relatively widespread political association. Ultimately what distinguished Britain was the growing weight of public opinion in the calculations of elite politicians. These points become more obvious if we turn to the Continent.

To recover the French throne, the Bourbon pretender Louis XVIII found it necessary to submit to pressure from the allied powers to accept a constitution known as the Charter. Even so, there was uncertainty over the mixed nature of the regime because the preamble to the Charter stated that the King had granted the constitution “voluntarily and by the free exercise of our will.”⁷ Politics would thereafter revolve around the issue of whether the Charter constituted a contract by which the monarch was bound. Lurking here was a fundamental issue – did sovereignty rest solely with the monarchy or with the nation? Or could it be divided? If the monarch alone was sovereign, could he not abolish parliament?

Such issues hung like dark clouds; yet institutions proved enduring. A Chamber of Peers initially consisted of a mix of former Imperial senators and men appointed by the King; in the future the Crown would make all appointments. The lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, was elective. Based on tax payment, the franchise was highly restrictive; roughly 90 000 male property owners were entitled to vote. Nevertheless the lower house could claim to represent the nation, however imperfectly, and did exercise significant power. Legislative initiative technically rested solely with the government, but deputies circumvented this restriction by forwarding public or private petitions to parliamentary committees which then sent recommendations to the government. Better yet, state budgets required annual parliamentary approval, creating opportunities to exert influence. Perhaps more significant than such structural considerations, were more elusive aspects of political culture. From very early on, political factions confronted governments and such groups soon saw in parliament a place where they could seek to influence policy.

While the regime thus bore certain affinities to the British system, it differed in fundamental regards as Louis XVIII adopted the legal and fiscal reforms of the Revolutionary era, including the Napoleonic government model. Key components of the model were chain of command and government appointment, rather than election, of local officials. Just as he retained parliament while turning it into a rubber stamp for the executive, so too did Bonaparte maintain local and regional councils which could do little more than advise state officials. Such bodies provided opportunities for consultation with the “notables” (elite elements of the public), but real power rested with institutions such as the Council of State, a body of appointed experts who drafted legislation and trained officials such as the prefects. The chief administrative units in France were called departments and each one had a prefect. The prefects wielded extensive power and were responsible for a range of tasks similar to the administrative functions of British magistrates. In the Napoleonic system, however, officials were hired, paid, and dismissed by the central government. They were trained in an ethos that was hostile to notions of representative government, and the fact that they administered elections would produce all sorts of problems for parliamentary independence.

Thus the position of parliament in France was insecure, and similar uncertainties surrounded the constitutions established in the lesser German states between 1814 and 1820. Of the 36 states that, in combination with Prussia and Austria, com-

posed the German Confederation, only a couple possessed roughly the same territories they had held in 1789, and better than half the population had new rulers. Thus the smaller states faced challenges of integration and some rulers saw in constitutions a means by which internal unity could be promoted.

States such as Saxony, Hanover, Mecklenburg, Nassau, and Saxe-Weimar retained or slightly modified the old system of estates, whereas several rulers modeled constitutions loosely on the French Charter. Like Louis XVIII, the latter rulers disavowed national sovereignty, viewing constitutions as gifts they granted to their subjects. Most adopted a bicameral system, finding in upper houses a means to placate former imperial knights and counts. Only Baden followed the French example of a lower house elected by individuals in regional districts rather than corporate bodies. Baden thus became the first German regime with a modern representative system; more typical was the lower house in Bavaria, where unelected nobles and churchmen occupied a quarter of the seats. Franchises were narrow and elections were managed by the state. Nevertheless, in the south German states of Württemberg, Bavaria, Baden, and Hesse-Darmstadt constitutions provided for freedom of the press and association, religious toleration, and legal equality. Lower houses used their right to approve legislation and became the centers of political attention, although they could not initiate legislation, had limited budgetary control, and often found their efforts weakened by conservative upper houses.

Despotism in Italy and Spain

Constitutional regimes were exceptional. More typical were states wherein representative government had no place and the Napoleonic administrative model had put down roots. Even so, the Revolution had triggered liberal aspirations that would challenge despotic regimes in Italy and Spain.

The concept of “restoration” does appear, upon first glance, to apply to Italy. Whereas Napoleon had reduced the peninsula to three states, after the Vienna Settlement there were eight and the Italian map looked much as it had done in the eighteenth century. Except in the Papal States, Italians were ruled by dynastic regimes, and all eight states were authoritarian. Much, however, depended on the character of individual rulers. In the immediate aftermath of liberation, most rulers wanted to give an impression of rejecting all things French. Victor-Emmanuel I made a determined effort to return to the *ancien régime*, abolishing all Napoleonic legislation in Piedmont, though he found retention of the *gendarmérie* (a semi-military rural police force) useful. The papacy reversed the Napoleonic Codes. In Tuscany the Habsburg Grand Duke also rejected Napoleon’s reforms, but he developed the similar traditions of Austrian enlightened despotism and here was the rub: most rulers could see how Napoleonic institutions elevated the powers of the central government. Even the Austrian Emperor retained most of the

Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy's administrative institutions in Lombardy; Marie-Louise did the same in Parma and also kept the Napoleonic Codes. Napoleonic administrative and judicial structures and laws suited Ferdinand I so well at Naples that in 1816 he extended them to Sicily.

The greatest immediate problem for Italian rulers lay in the demands of reactionary elements who expected restitution of their former privileges. Influenced by the Catholic revival of the period, many rulers turned control of education over to the Church, though few followed the Piedmontese example of reconstituting the ecclesiastical courts. There could, however, be no question of restoring Church lands previously expropriated and sold to private individuals, even in the Papal States. Similarly, rulers had to cope with nobles demanding reconstitution of corporate privilege and administrative decentralization. Rulers soon re-established the nobility as a distinct social group; yet they drew a line at returning old privileges and jurisdictional powers.

Napoleon had achieved much of what enlightened despots had sought by consolidating the Revolution's destruction of restrictions placed on the state by the *ancien régime* society of orders. While they may or may not have been enlightened, Restoration rulers were sufficiently despotic to appreciate his methods. Even in Piedmont, provincial councils of local notables nominated by the King in newly acquired Genoa were established due to conditions set by the great powers at Vienna. Although they could block imposition of new taxes, otherwise the councils were simply advisors to royal officials. In the Papal States, reform in July 1816 contained both reactionary and modernizing elements. The state was divided into 17 provinces. Five beyond the Apennines were placed under the authority of legates (and hence were called the Legations); papal delegates governed the 12 closer to Rome. While the provinces gained advisory bodies called congregations that possessed a lay element, the legates and delegates were all cardinals or priests and they possessed powers roughly equivalent to those of French prefects. Baronial jurisdiction was abolished in the Legations and Marches and although this feudal relic remained in the other provinces the dues previously paid to the barons were terminated. Thus while the regime regained its distinctly clerical nature, a more modern system was introduced.

Spain provides a similar example of the limits to restoration. When Ferdinand VII returned from captivity in April 1814, liberals who had led resistance to the French expected him to accept the constitution they had given Spain in 1812. A constitution that established basic civil and political liberties and created a parliamentary system, however, held little appeal for a Bourbon king. Nor was the constitution's onslaught on corporate privilege appreciated by reactionary nobles or Catholic clergymen. They too had fought against the French and enjoyed more popular support than liberals due to the latter's anti-clericalism, desire to remove regional privilege in the name of national unity, and inclination to convert common land into private property. When right-wing elements called on Ferdinand to reject the liberal constitution, he happily did so, unleashing brutal repression of the liberals.

Spanish reactionaries were not bent simply on undoing the work of liberals; they wanted reversal of all the efforts of early-modern Spanish enlightened despots to reduce corporate power and privilege. In a manifesto presented to the king, it was claimed that “to exclude the nobility destroys the juridical order and strips society of its splendour, whilst depriving it of the generous spirits needed for its defence.”⁸ Ferdinand balked at the latter demands and, after a period of reflection, could see that there was much in the liberal revolution that he might wish to preserve.

Because he could count on the loyalty of the army, and turn from the reactionaries to the reforming ministers and bureaucrats of his father's reign, Ferdinand had a measure of choice as to what he wished to retain from the past. Nobles gained the restoration of their seigniorial territorial and economic privileges, but there was to be no return of their former judicial attributes. Royal decrees enabled the Catholic Church to retrieve some of its old advantages: previously dissolved religious communities were allowed to re-occupy their old houses, the Jesuits were permitted to return, the Inquisition and Index of prohibited books were re-established, and an evangelization campaign was launched to extirpate the effects of what the Bishop of Pamplona described as “an era of confusion, disorder, and crimes.”⁹ But Ferdinand refused to order the return of Church lands that had been seized and sold off, and effectively reasserted Crown control through his powers of appointment, naming some sixty new bishops. Moreover, the desperate state of Crown finances inclined Ferdinand to attack fiscal privilege. Thus in 1817 the elites of Castile and Aragon found themselves subjected to a universal income tax, and municipal indirect taxes were unified throughout the kingdom, eliminating regional inequalities. While Navarre and the Basque provinces retained the right to determine their own levels of taxation, they soon lost their exemption from conscription. They could avoid this military obligation through financial payments, but their fiscal privileges had thereby been undermined.

The Eastern Autocracies

Although the eastern autocracies of Prussia, Austria, and Russia had been less directly affected by French revolution, they all had been threatened by French expansion. They responded in differing ways in seeking to mobilize resources for defense, and what was most notable was the extent to which the Prussian state undermined the old society of orders.

Restoration Prussia was partly a product of reforms undertaken to combat Napoleon, and partly the result of older traditions. Prussia's expansion under the Hohenzollern dynasty in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was directly attributable to a remarkably efficient bureaucracy. It was the superior ability of the administration to extract economic and human resources that enabled Prussia to hold its own in battle against significantly larger states. Prussian expansion also fostered centralization of power, as rulers used the army to chip away at the rights of

provincial estates to approve state taxation. Although the estates acted as vehicles for noble interests, noble opposition was weakened by creation of a “service nobility” that manned the bureaucracy and monopolized the officer corps of the army.

A school of thought known as cameralism imbued the Prussian state with a strong inclination to intervene in society and the economy. Cameralist writers argued that rulers should create a large and productive population that would yield more by way of tax revenue, and under Frederick the Great Prussia became a model of “enlightened despotism” as the state fostered canal building, industry, overseas commerce, and immigration. Frederick even broached social reform by reducing the feudal obligations of peasants on Crown lands; however, he took no measures to emancipate serfs on private lands. He could not afford to antagonize the *Junkers* (noble landowners) who were the backbone of the army.

It took the shock of defeat by Napoleon in 1807 to jolt the monarchy into reforms that further undermined the old social order. In October 1807 serfdom was abolished on royal lands, and as of 1810 it would be abolished everywhere. Serfs would be free to leave the domains of their lords, no longer required permission to marry, and could take up a trade. Commoners could purchase land formerly restricted to noble ownership, and nobles gained the right to enter trade. Desire to modernize could also be seen in expansion of the education system as the state took on a primary role in the training and appointment of teachers and supervision of schools at all levels. Moreover, in 1807 Prussian Church administration was unified under state control, a process which would be continued in 1817 after acquisition of the predominantly Catholic Rhineland.

While the state thus reduced corporate privilege, the principle of national sovereignty made little headway as the plans of reformers for creation of representative institutions were set aside after the wars of liberation. Far from honoring past promises, in 1823 King Frederick William reconstituted provincial estates that possessed only limited advisory powers and were dominated by the nobility. Hopes raised by the ambiguous edict of May 22, 1815 promising “representation of the people” by an “assembly of representatives of the land”¹⁰ thus were dashed, creating resentment, particularly in the Rhineland provinces. Nevertheless, in terms of legal equality, weakening of the regulatory powers of guilds, and subordination of the Church to the state, Prussia had taken a major step away from the old society of orders.

Given that Joseph II had been the most enlightened of the despots, it was ironic that the Austrian Empire underwent no such transformation in the Revolutionary-Napoleonic era. In the 1740s Joseph’s mother Maria Theresa had begun state rationalization by dividing Habsburg lands in Austria and Bohemia into ten administrative districts run by Crown-appointed War Commissars who took over taxation and conscription responsibilities previously exercised by the local Estates. Along with centralization of power came economic and social reform: guild monopolies were limited, internal customs were suppressed, laws were passed to prevent lords from abusing peasants, and seigniorial obligations were reduced. From 1765 to 1780 Maria Theresa ruled jointly with Joseph. Although both were devout Catholics,

they removed the clergy's exemption from taxation and made Crown permission mandatory for publication of papal bulls. Subsequently Joseph closed hundreds of monasteries, used the property thus acquired for state charity institutions, asserted state control over seminaries, and established civil marriage. With Joseph as sole ruler, reform accelerated in the 1780s. Judicial procedures were rationalized, peasants were emancipated from serfdom, noble patrimonial justice and tax exemptions were abolished, and German became the sole language of state administration. To watch over the entire edifice, Joseph created a secret police.

The need to create a network of spies derived from growing noble, Catholic, and particularistic backlash. By the time Joseph died in 1790 there were revolts in Hungary and the Austrian Netherlands, and resentment smoldered in Bohemia. Leopold II soon found it necessary to grant concessions to the clergy and nobility, and when he died in 1792 his son Francis¹¹ reversed most of Joseph's reforms.

Thereafter the Revolution strengthened reaction by associating reform with Jacobinism. Plans to abolish feudal obligations were shelved and compulsory labor service began to increase. In 1793 French publications were banned, newspapers were prohibited from reporting on events in France, reading rooms, libraries, Masonic lodges, and learned societies were closed, and a censorship commission began to re-examine works published since 1780, banning some 2500 of them. Not even repeated defeats, loss of territory, and destruction of the Holy Roman Empire could shake Francis's determination to avoid structural change. The privileges of the Church and nobility remained unscathed, guilds continued, and the Hungarian Diet reasserted its autonomy. Despite rapidly growing debt, the fiscal system was left untouched and administration remained chaotic. Failure to remove the limitations placed on state power by the society of orders would gravely affect Austria's ability to retain great power status in the future.

There were reasons why Tsar Alexander's adoption of a liberal pose at the Congress of Vienna drew skepticism. Russian government was despotic and monarchs claimed to rule by divine right. Ever since Peter the Great had replaced the office of patriarch with a Holy Synod, Russian rulers had possessed extensive control over the Russian Orthodox Church. The nature of the relationship could be heard in the oath sworn by members of the Synod: "I swear by Almighty God that I resolve, and am in duty bound, to be a faithful, good, and obedient slave and subject to my natural and true Tsar and Sovereign."¹² Such close ties between Church and State were anathema to liberalism, as was serfdom. The latter remained widespread in parts of Europe, but it varied in degree of bondage. Where serfdom remained in the west, a noble generally controlled only the property of the peasant. In Prussia, prior to reform in 1807, bondage extended to the person: nobles determined peasant marriage, the practice of a trade, and the right to leave the land. In Russia bondage was complete; a peasant was tied to the soil, could not leave the village without consent, could not own property, and could be bought or sold.

During the reign of Catherine the Great noble power had been entrenched. Noble ownership of peasants had been recognized in law, and the former right of

peasants to appeal to the state against abuse had been abolished. Local government had been parceled out between state appointees and officials elected by the nobility, who had also gained provincial assemblies wherein they could determine their corporate affairs. Noble monopoly of the officer corps of the army and the civil administration had been confirmed, as had noble exemption from taxation. After the death of Catherine in 1796 Paul I had sought to rein in the nobility, but he was assassinated by a court faction in 1801. Clearly, there were limits as to what a monarch could do, even if he or she wanted to undermine the society of orders.

Nevertheless Russia was not a playground for nobles, partly because they were far from united. The tsar possessed vast tracts of land that could be distributed to loyal servants who thereby gained gentry status. Moreover, early in her reign Catherine had promoted western culture and Enlightenment ideals had affected a part of the nobility. Thus a strong ruler could play divide and rule among conservative and liberal factions, and draw on the inclination of the bureaucracy to enhance the power of the state. The remit of the Tsarist regime lay primarily in territorial expansion, and noble dominance was secure only as long as it complemented expansionist objectives.

Tsar Alexander I started out with benevolent intentions. Although he confirmed the Charter of Nobility, he also announced that he would grant a constitution and abolish serfdom. In the event his reforms proved less far reaching. During the period of 1801–1805 several changes were made. The Senate was restored and became the supreme judicial and administrative body of the state; the government was organized on a western model with clearly defined ministries and ministers directly responsible to the Tsar, new universities were founded, and secondary education was increased. None of this constituted representative government, however; the Tsar still ruled by decree. Similarly, there was no attempt to impose emancipation of the peasantry, although a decree in 1803 encouraged voluntary liberation and about 50 000 peasants (perhaps 1% of the total) were freed. Subsequently Mikhail Speranski directed a second phase of reform from 1807 to 1812. Speranski established the Council of State, a body of senior officials who advised the Tsar as to legislative projects. When Speranski proposed, however, to change the fiscal system, noble opposition to removal of their tax exemptions led Alexander to dispatch him into exile.

Thereafter Alexander's illiberal tendencies came to the fore. Education was put under the control of Church conservatives who expelled liberal professors, and writing on political issues was forbidden. The most unpopular of all Alexander's measures was creation of military colonies in 1810. The purposes of the colonies were to supply troops for service abroad, aid in border policing, spread new agricultural techniques, and colonize new lands. Alexander hoped to turn all state peasants (about half the total rural population) into military colonists; unfortunately the soldiers resented having to labor in the fields and peasants disliked the interference in their private lives that went with imposition of military discipline. A British observer commented that the military colony was "held in utter abhorrence by the

peasantry [and] detested by the regular army”¹³ and, indeed, massive revolts in 1817 and 1819 testified to his observations. There were perhaps 750 000 people in the military colonies and therein lay the seeds of a long tradition of revolution.

Perhaps to impress other rulers, the Tsar’s liberal side remained evident in his treatment of Finland and Poland. Exemption from serfdom, conscription, and taxation granted in 1809 kept the Finns quiescent for the following decades. In November 1815 Alexander granted Congress Poland a constitution that to a surprising degree retained the institutions and laws of the former Duchy of Warsaw. The constitution provided for a bicameral parliament (the *Sejm*) that would meet every second year; although members of the Senate would be nominated by the state, the lower house would be elected on a relatively broad franchise. The constitution also guaranteed religious freedom and *habeas corpus*, and provided for freedom of the press. Government would be conducted in Polish and separately from that of Russia, and Poland would have its own army, although Alexander’s brother Constantine would command it. All the same, royal power remained great: the Tsar would control appointment of all state officials, could initiate or amend legislation, could bypass parliament on budgetary matters, and would determine foreign policy. Moreover there was a threat in the challenge Alexander threw down at the opening of the parliamentary session of 1818: “The results of your labours will show me whether I will be able to abide by my intention of expanding the concessions I have already made to you.”¹⁴

The Ottoman Empire

Although the Ottoman Empire will not be given sustained discussion in this volume, it played an important role in the states system and hence we need to note certain characteristics of the regime. The sultan’s European territories were extensive and included roughly nine million people. What distinguished the Ottomans, in the eyes of most Europeans, was that they were Islamic. Yet the Ottomans were relatively tolerant. Far from seeking to force conversion, they organized state administration in terms of religious affiliation and the Church, especially the Greek Orthodox Church, played a major role in local government. The various communities developed separately, linked only by an Ottoman ruler who allowed a good deal of self-government, but inspired little loyalty.

Once greatly feared, the Empire was notoriously weak by 1815. State revenues were much reduced by employment of tax farmers – private contractors mostly concerned with lining their own pockets. Worse still, the state was increasingly unable to maintain public order as repeated defeat in warfare corroded Ottoman prestige. Although local Muslim leaders known as *ayans* had risen to prominence as agents of the central government, in the performance of their duties they had assembled their own armies. Such forces could be turned against the central government, or used to exploit peasants. Christian notables developed similar forces.

Often stretched thin by foreign war, the Porte frequently compromised with the *ayans*, appointing them to official posts and using their forces to supplement the regular army. A succession of former *ayans*, nominated as *pashas* (provincial governors) then sought to establish autonomous principalities. Whereas in the west noble possession of private armies had been overcome by the growth of royal standing armies, in the Ottoman Empire military organizations such as the *janissaries* were as apt to rebel against as to obey the sultan. Sultans such as Selim III did recognize the need for reform; Selim sought to build a new infantry that would be given western-style training and subdue the *janissaries*. Attempted change then triggered revolt among the elements that possessed an interest in keeping the Ottomans weak. Although the rebellion of 1807 was overcome, Selim lost his life and ultimately was succeeded by Mahmud II.

The problems that Mahmud and subsequent sultans would repeatedly encounter could be seen in Serbian revolt. In the war of 1788–91, Austrian forces occupied Serbia, and many Serbs fought in the Habsburg Free Corps, gaining military skills and organization. Habsburg government was, however, accompanied by a Catholic Church bent on converting Orthodox Serbs; this experience, in combination with Slavic ties, would incline Serb leaders to look for Russian aid after the Ottomans regained control in 1792. While the sultan was willing to grant concessions, *janissaries* and rebel *ayans* then began to pillage Christian and Muslim villages. With the Ottoman government unable to provide much by way of aid, Serbs organized their own defense. Thereafter Serb fortunes rose and fell in tandem with Russian support. Initial success inclined the Serbs to shift their objectives from increased autonomy to independence, but internal divisions and inconsistent Russian backing ultimately led to compromise in 1815. The Serbs received favorable tariff and trading agreements, and they would occupy leading positions in the administration and judiciary.

The revolt of Serbia was a harbinger for the remainder of the century: drives for independence, a central authority weakened by fractious internal elements, and foreign intervention would characterize the “sick man of Europe.” Repeated Russian involvement in Balkans wars of independence resulted partly from geostrategic considerations (the status of the Turkish Straits and defence of the Black Sea) and a strong current of support for Slavs and Orthodox Christians manifest in belief that Russia had a historical mission in the region. The latter sentiment would at times render Russian statesmen dangerously blind to the interests of the other powers.

Ultimately, all European states had to pay attention to public demand, if only to monitor or repress dissent. Few states, however, possessed political institutions designed to ensure responsible government, and even where such institutions existed, they were weak. Only Britain possessed a regime wherein the place of an independent parliament was well established. In France the security of parliament was shadowed by royal rejection of the principle of national sovereignty and, implicitly, division of power. The basic hostility of Austria and Prussia raised doubts about the prospects of constitutional regimes in the German Confederation, and the rulers of Spain and the Italian states had little sympathy for notions of

representative government. Russia remained firmly autocratic, although the constitution granted Congress Poland was a striking experiment.

Even where regimes contained an element of representative government, franchises were designed to exclude the vast majority. Politics does not of course consist solely of parliaments and voting; yet even if we take a broader view of what constitutes political culture, restriction is more striking than participation. Freedom of expression, particularly in the press, was reasonably well established in Britain, and recognized as a constitutional right in France and several of the German states. Nevertheless, freedom of the political press was anything but secure outside of Britain, and virtually nonexistent in the eastern autocracies. Even the British placed restrictions on freedom of association and assembly, and continental governments were inclined to repress these liberties.

If liberal or democratic ideals found little place in contemporary systems, this did not mean that Europe had returned to the pre-Revolutionary status quo. The principle of "legitimacy" played only a minor role in the Vienna Settlement. Priority had been given to establishing a rough equilibrium among the powers and in their desire to secure stability the powers had greatly altered the boundaries and populations of many states. The powers had involved themselves in constituting political regimes, and while they set a valuable precedent for cooperating to resolve inter-state disputes, they also set a less positive precedent for intervention in the domestic affairs of less powerful states.

The restored regimes frequently differed from those that had existed prior to 1789. Already weakened by eighteenth-century enlightened despotism, the *ancien régime* society of orders was further undermined during the Revolutionary-Napoleonic era. Many Restoration rulers were besieged by requests for the return of corporative privileges; yet it was not in the interest of rulers to renew privileges that limited state power. No ruler dared to reverse the massive redistribution of wealth that French or French-inspired governments had conducted through expropriation and selling off of lands, generally at the expense of the Catholic Church. Similarly, certain Napoleonic institutions were retained by rulers who saw in them a means to enhance their power. Even Prussia had dealt a major blow to the old society of orders through abolition of serfdom. Though noble privilege was not completely eradicated, Prussia had taken a modernizing step that distanced her from Russia and Austria.

Thus most Restoration rulers chose, or were obliged, to consolidate at least some of the changes first undertaken during the Revolutionary-Napoleonic era. In seeking to strengthen state power, they hoped to restrict, or entirely eliminate, the political liberties associated with 1789. The inclination of rulers to set up consultative bodies, which gave an illusion of self-government, or to turn parliamentary bodies into puppets for the governing executive, however indicated recognition that the public could not simply be ignored. Despite such stratagems, memories of, and longings for, more liberal regimes were going to be difficult to eradicate.