

# The Idea of “Perpetual Peace” in the Foreign Policy Practice of European Monarchs

A Story of How a Czech, a Frenchman,  
and a Russian Tried to Create a Fair World Order

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## Abstract

The article studies the diplomatic practice of building sustainable peaceful relations in Europe. The authors conduct a comparative analysis of projects intended to create pan-European forms of power, which at different times

were proposed by European monarchs to ensure peaceful relations between countries: Treaty on the Establishment of Peace throughout Christendom by Bohemian King George of Poděbrady, the Grand Design by Henry IV, and the Holy Alliance by Alexander I. Although similar to the European monarchs’ initiatives in content and form, the Russian initiative implied freer and more distributed institutional ties and rejected the idea of an authorized pan-European body in favor of a broad association of European monarchies. The concept of joint action, including non-expansionist military intervention to preserve the natural process of social development in Europe, was an important part of the Russian project. Anglo-Austro-Russian team diplomacy, with the active peacemaking role of the Russian emperor, succeeded in creating the first working pan-European order, and the proposed institutions and principles ensured governable and peaceful relations in Europe for almost a hundred years within the framework of the Vienna system of international relations. Thus, instead of the unrealizable idea of “perpetual peace,” the Austro-Russian tandem implemented the idea of “perpetual struggle for peace,” but on diplomatic battlefields.

**Keywords:** perpetual peace, George of Poděbrady, Duke of Sully, Alexander I, Holy Alliance, Grand Design, Vienna system of international relations, international order, Vienna world order.

A world without war is a pipe dream of humankind, which for centuries has attracted many minds. From the great philosophers of antiquity to the classics of German social thought, reflections on “perpetual peace” constantly acquired new features and content, gradually laying the theoretical and practical foundation for relations between peoples and states. The concepts of peaceful coexistence that sprang up in Europe at different times eventually established a comprehensive peaceful tradition in the history of political thought, the study of which clarifies the general evolution of diplomatic culture in the “international community” (Ni, 2006). Unfortunately, the theoretical insights of individual peace advocates did not immediately turn into the ideological basis for political programs and even less often made their way into actual interstate relations.

The modern international agenda actualizes the search for new models to organize harmonious relations between major actors in world politics. Studying the historical experience of implementing the ideas of universal peace, defining their institutional features, and determining the motivating and restraining factors of peace initiatives is of great importance for expert discourse about the new world order. This article makes a comparative analysis of doctrinal, statutory, and regulatory foundations of diplomatic initiatives in the history of international relations, which called for moving from abstract schemes to specific political projects to ensure peaceful relations between states. We identify organizational forms of power relations in the economic, political, ideological, and military spheres, which made up the institutional architecture of peace projects that ensured their socio-political vitality. In addition, we assess the importance of personal motives of specific politicians who spearheaded peace initiatives and their implementation.

Researchers usually consider the notion of perpetual peace from two perspectives. The first one is an anthology of the development of public thought on peace and war, whereby various researchers, trapped in the “it would be great if ...” narrative, reflect on the most significant ideas put forth by outstanding European theorists of public thought such as Pierre Dubois, Émeric Crucé, William Penn, Charles Irénée de Saint-Pierre, Jean-Jacques Russo, Jeremy Bentham, and Immanuel Kant (Richmond, 2014; Manning, 2016; Orlov et al. 2016; Seth and Rotraud, 2017). The second perspective studies the nature of the world order in the history of international relations, where the idea of perpetual peace is sidelined by musings on the interests, rules and law upheld by major actors (Cutler, 2001; Schröder, 2017). A special place in this narrative is given to the Vienna system of international relations, which is recognized as one of the most effective mechanisms for maintaining peace between European states (Dodolev, 2000). In his PhD thesis, Henry Kissinger praised the Vienna agreements: “...what is surprising is, how sane,... how balanced... was the settlement that emerged. It... gave this generation... a period of stability which permitted their hopes to be realized without a major war or a permanent revolution...”

a ‘legitimate’ order was constructed, an order accepted by all the major powers, so that henceforth they sought adjustment within its framework rather than in its overthrow” (Kissinger, 1957, p. 5). In our work, we propose to combine these two approaches to study the development and influence of conceptual patterns set in various political projects that their creators regarded as the basis for their political actions to harmonize interstate relations in European history.

### **CZECH ATTEMPT TO BUILD “PERPETUAL PEACE”**

One of the first political initiatives concerning the idea of perpetual peace is Bohemian King George of Poděbrady’s Treaty on the Establishment of Peace throughout Christendom (1464) (King George, 1964). The king’s success in the Hussite Wars (1419-1437) made Bohemia the first Protestant kingdom in Europe, which objectively sparked tension between King George and other Catholic monarchs led by the pope (Manning, 2016, p. 142). The king tried to make up for the difficult international situation by initiating a common international project and calling for cohesion among European states against Turkish expansion, the threat of which became most obvious after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (Heymann, 1965, pp. 124-146). The Czech project was based on an ideological component: strengthening the religious kinship of Catholic and Protestant European states through joint struggle against non-Christians. In the preamble of the document, King George states the values underlying his diplomatic initiative: “...we believe that we cannot do anything more pleasing to God in our piety... than working hard to ensure genuine, just and lasting peace between Christians... and protecting the Christian faith from the fiercest Turks” (King George, 1964, pp. 91-92).

King George’s ten-point plan suggested building an anti-Turkish coalition of leading European kingdoms and principalities, above all, France, the Holy Roman Empire, Italian cities, and Castile. The call for an allied coalition was justified by the need to overcome the fragmentation of Christian states and restore their former splendor through the reconciliation of all Christians and the return to religious covenants.

The Bohemian king's project was part of the public discourse designed by prominent philosophers of that time. In particular, it overlaps with Pierre Dubois' idea of the Christian Republic, presented in the *Ending Wars and Disputes in the Kingdom of France* (1300). The contours of King George's initiative were also defined by the criticism of the papacy by Marsilius of Padua whose tract *The Defender of Peace* (1324) condemned the pope's theocratic order and power ambitions in Europe, as well as by the conciliatory efforts of Nicholas of Cusa and his work *On the Peace of Faith* (1453).

At the same time, one cannot but notice the exclusivity of the project, which puts emphasis on political cooperation between major states on the basis of the following political principles: refusal to use weapons; joint response to illegal actions of other rulers; no collusion against another state; extradition of criminals from own territory; financial aid to the affected party. The idea of a special political institution to coordinate, finance and resolve disputes between the coalition's monarchs and princes runs through the entire project. To this end, it was proposed to create an advisory administrative body in Basel—a parliament or consistory of kings and princes alternately headed by one of them. Joint diplomatic and military actions were to be financed out of a common fund. Disputes were to be resolved through the establishment of new legal principles and institutions between the coalition participants: mediation, arbitration, and the court. In fact, the Bohemian king's plan implied the creation of an alliance of European monarchs with its own agency since the proposed council was supposed to have all the relevant attributes of power (Orlov, 2010, p. 42). In this respect, power contradictions arose not so much between European sovereigns as between different organizational forms of political and ideological power in Europe: the Czech project directly challenged the papal authority, which clearly hindered its implementation.

Another novelty of King George's peace project was that it proposed a new dispute settlement system: the resolution of contradictions between states on the basis of the old feudal tradition was considered obsolete; instead, emphasis was placed on new and fairer legal

principles. Article 9 of the project says: “As the cult of peace is unthinkable without justice... we link justice with the cause of peace; however, because the law written on judicial matters has undergone many changes ... and has gradually lost all its significance..., we consider judicial procedure to be utterly confused and hold that in accordance with the customs, usages and conditions of the new times and of our various provinces, kingdoms and principalities, new laws drawn from the heart of the nature must be introduced and that new evils must be opposed by new remedies under which the virtuous will be rewarded and the vicious constantly crushed under the hammer of penalties” (King George, 1464, p. 94-95). In this context, the Czech initiative can be seen as an attempt at a renaissance in politics, where the feudal-theocratic system of values was opposed by an alternative ancient anthropocentric concept, which implied a broader role for the personal power of monarchs in European politics. This shift posed a direct challenge to the established political order, which also reduced the chances for the project’s success.

As a result, King George’s project remained just a political slogan, and his diplomacy failed to overcome the current organizational forms of European power: the Catholic Church and the feudal-theocratic system of checks and balances. However, the tract is quite valuable for its innovation: it brought the ideas of universal peace between Christian states from philosophical discourse into real politics and actually reflected the strengthening of secular power by questioning the exclusive status of the papacy in the European power hierarchy.

### **FRENCH VERSION OF EUROPEAN PEACE**

The second attempt to create an alliance of European states was undertaken by the Duke of Sully. At the beginning of the 17th century, at the court of French King Henry IV, he worked on a political construct to institutionalize the domestic and foreign policy of European countries, known as the Grand Design (Sully, 1776). An important feature of the French project is its extensive analytical perspective and attention not only to fundamental points in key

spheres of life, but also to political and diplomatic practice.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, as a practical politician, the Duke of Sully, just like the Czech monarch above, proposed military-political institutionalization against external competitors, but only as part of a solution to resolve contradictions between European states. Another part of the French project paid great attention to organizing more harmonious internal relations by counterbalancing the influential Habsburg dynasty, whose power ambitions were seen as the main provocative factor in the Old World. Sully clearly recorded the interdependence of internal and external processes in ensuring the viability of the state. Accordingly, the ideas of a fair domestic policy in European countries and comprehensive equality between European states were considered the key to ensuring European leadership in international relations (Manning, 2016, p. 254).

The focal point in the Grand Design was a balance of power between the key players in European diplomacy. The overall design of this system was as follows: the main counterbalance should be at the bilateral level—cooperation between France and England against the Empire; at the multilateral level, it was planned to engage Sweden and Denmark in the Anglo-French front against the Habsburgs, pull Spain from under the influence of the Empire, and win the support of the pope as the spiritual leader of Catholics. From the inside, European diplomatic architecture was supposed to be anchored by a rather ambitious, even idealistic, system of equality based on geographical, military, political, and economic factors.

Geographical equality was understood as a necessary condition for harmonizing interstate relations. Aggressive wars between European monarchs were proclaimed senseless if interstate borders could be fixed legally. The main purpose of territorial reorganization was to correct

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, most researchers believe that the Grand Design was most likely written by the Duke of Sully between the end of Henry IV's reign and the duke's own death in 1641. At the same time, the duke calls Henry IV the author of this plan, and Elizabeth I of England, its important co-author (Demicheva, 2015). It is important that the Grand Design was written in the midst of a big European war (later called the Thirty Years' War), and Sully proposed his reflections of a statesman on how to end wars in Europe. His numerous strategic and tactical constructs were proved correct by subsequent historical processes during the coordination and functioning of the Westphalian system of international relations.

political asymmetries between European states, thereby ensuring a fairer distribution of power, with new geographical borders serving as a reliable guarantor of peaceful relations between 15 territories: “The purpose of this new plan is the equitable division of entire Europe between several known Powers, of which none would have any reason to envy another with regard to the mutual equality of forces, or be afraid of anything with regard to universal and general equilibrium” (Sully, 1776, p. 387). At the same time, Sully negatively assessed small state forms, which, for objective reasons, could not resist external circumstances, and would sooner or later turn into objects of large states’ policies. Obviously, such a division of territories was at odds with the 17th century European political map and indirectly implied military methods for achieving the set goals.

Military equality was based on the idea of consensus among European monarchs on the use of collective armed forces. Country quotas for the main types of weapons were to be distributed proportionally.<sup>2</sup> Army quotas were seen as an important way to ensure a balance of power between European countries, solving the security paradox, where the military potential of a state could not pose a security threat to its neighbor or did not allow it to oppose the combined forces.

Political equality was to be ensured through the increasingly deepening institutionalization of European politics from a joint treaty to an alliance. The first step is the adoption of a single document containing key provisions and obligations in relations between European countries with regard to religious freedoms, the freedom of trade, and a new, fair territorial division. The second step is the creation of a universal council in order to resolve both the remaining minor disagreements and future ones between 15 powers: six great

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<sup>2</sup> Emperor - 60,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 5 siege cannons, 10 galleys or ships; France, England, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Poland - 20,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry, 20 cannons, 10 ships or galleys; Hungary - 12,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, 20 cannons, 6 ships; Switzerland - 15,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, 12 cannons; Netherlands - 12,000 infantry, 1,200 cavalry, 12 cannons and 12 ships; Kingdom of Italian - 10,000 infantry, 1,200 cavalry, 10 cannons, 8 galleys; the pope - 8,000 infantry, 1,200 cavalry, 10 cannons, 10 galleys; Lombardy - 8,000 infantry, 1,500 cavalry, 8 cannons; Venice - 8,000 infantry, 1,200 cavalry, 8 cannons, 25 galleys; Bohemia - 5,000 infantry, 1,500 cavalry, 5 cannons (Sully, 1776, p. 365-367).



hereditary monarchies (France, Spain, Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Lombardy), five elective monarchies (Empire, Pontificat, Poland, Hungary, Bohemia), and four autocratic republics (Venice, Neapolitan, Swiss, and Netherlands).

The Duke of Sully's project placed the council's work at the center of European politics. It was supposed to constantly ensure the peaceful resolution of internal disputes and the coordination of the common diplomatic and forcible foreign policy actions of European monarchs. Membership in the council was to be organized in a special way, too: the emperor, the pope, France, Spain, England, Denmark, Sweden, Lombardy, Poland, and Venice were each entitled to four representatives, and each of the remaining powers delegated two representatives. In total, there had to be 60 representatives rotated every three years. The council was to meet either in three different places, each attended by 22 members, chosen according to geographical and logistical convenience in key cities of western, central and eastern Europe, or in one place in the center of Europe (Metz, Luxemburg, Nancy, Cologne, Mainz, Treves, Frankfurt, Würzburg, Heidelberg, Speyer, Worms, Strasbourg, Basel, Besançon). In addition, there were also to be additional deliberative bodies on the harmonization of relations in the most difficult areas, primarily military cooperation and military coalitions (Sully, 1776, pp. 387-392).

It is noteworthy that in distributing both quotas for military contingents and seats in the pan-European council the Grand Design allows certain country asymmetries and the division of countries into more influential and less influential ones. These circumstances could not but raise doubts among Sully's contemporaries about the sincerity of France's pan-European slogans. The French version of the balance of power, while ensuring peace and security, markedly strengthened France's position in European affairs, making its image as a defender of European equilibrium more attractive than its claims to hegemony (Schröder, 2017, p. 91).

Economic equality was not elaborated as thoroughly: only such categories as order, economy, the difference of merits, justice, and coordination of administrative decisions between all participants were

listed. The freedom of trade was particularly stipulated as an important condition within European relations (Sully, 1776, p. 375).

Sully names the main obstacles facing his project. Firstly, it is a lack of political will and a violation of established rules: “Great undertakings are not fulfilled due to the undiligent and insufficient efforts applied; and they are not sufficiently studied and measured due to the inaccuracy of the rules used.” Secondly, the distrust of small countries towards the projects of major powers: “The rulers of Europe, who are in constant danger from excessive Spanish power, would immediately begin to fear France itself as soon as it helps them free themselves from danger; and this alone was an insurmountable obstacle to me.” Thirdly, the expansionist ambitions of major states (Sully, 1776, p. 375, 340-342).

So, the French duke shows the direction for resolving contradictions between countries—self-limitation of ambitions by major states. With regard to expansionist policies, he proposes a collective response by small and large countries to a large state’s own plans: “If there were none from them, then how could the House of Austria stand out against the Powers desiring and finding pleasure in disparaging the power with which they were oppressed by it, bringing obvious and secret enemies, that is, the whole of Europe, against it?” (Sully, 1776, p. 355). In this context, Sully stresses the need for a moderate policy of large states, which must be publicly declared in the form of manifestos and at diplomatic meetings. Major states bear the brunt of responsibility for maintaining peace in the continent through the balance of power and a collective response to the policies of a high-handed state.

The Grand Design also assigns importance to the external identification of united Europe based on the principle of religious kinship, calling for a halt to discrimination between the three branches of Western Christianity: Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists. However, Christian tolerance is limited, and Sully practically excludes the possibility of Russia’s participation in a pan-European alliance as he sees more differences in approaches to the interpretation of Christian teaching: “[Russians] are still in the darkness of idolatry, infected with the Greek and Armenian schisms, belonging as much to Asia as to

Europe,... regarded by us, just like the Turks, as a Barbarian people” (Sully, 1776, p. 361).

Religious grounds become not only the ideological basis for the external identification of Henry IV’s peace project and an important motive for unity, but also an international mission prescribing the expulsion from Europe of all sovereigns who refuse to swear allegiance to the three conventional branches of Christianity: “Another political approach... was in the judgment of the unfaithful Sovereigns in Europe, and required their total expulsion from our part of the world, if there was no hope of turning any of them into one of the aforementioned three Christian confessions” (Sully, 1776, p. 368-369). “If the Grand Duke of Moscow, or the Russian Tsar... refuses to enter into a universal agreement, proposed to him in advance, he should then be treated the same way the Sultan of Turkey was” (Sully, 1776, p. 364). In addition to Russia and Turkey as targets for the “liberating” mission of the pan-European army, the author also considered the nearest Asian territories and North Africa (Seth and Rotraud, 2017, p. 11).

The construct of peace between European states as seen by a practical politician of Versailles turned out to be highly detailed, with emphasis on the organization of power counterbalances in key spheres of life between leading European countries. Like the Czech project, the French initiative implied a high level of institutionalization and regulation, especially in the field of pan-European military-political cooperation, as well as a stronger role for supranational bureaucracy. At the same time, the Grand Design has an obvious drawback: it openly challenges the most influential Habsburg dynasty, which entails another pan-European conflict, as well as the advancement of French interests, thus raising concern among other European sovereigns. Jean-Jacques Rousseau praised Sully’s work for proposing realistic solutions, but the French project was destined to remain on paper: the assassination of Henry IV made it impossible to test the viability of this ambitious political venture. However, the Grand Design spurred deep political and public reflections on intra-European relations, impacting future attempts to streamline European diplomacy and reduce the possibility of conflict in these relations (Reza and German, 2015). The

next attempt to create a peaceful pan-European format for interstate relations in Europe was the Anglo-Austro-Russian diplomatic initiative after the Napoleonic Wars.

### **THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN WORLD HISTORY**

In 1815, after winning the pan-European war as part of the Quadruple Alliance, the Russian Empire took a leading position in European affairs, which created favorable conditions for fulfilling Russia’s foreign policy initiative and the ambitions of Emperor Alexander I. If we trace the political maxims of Emperor Alexander I, we will notice several things. Firstly, his domestic and foreign policy style gravitated towards enlightened absolutism, inherited from his grandmother, Catherine the Great, who had personally overseen his upbringing. Secondly, it is his quality and versatile education, received under the direction of his teacher Lagarp, that included the latest achievements in exact sciences and the humanities. The crown prince was well acquainted with the key principles of the increasingly popular liberal paradigm, and the theoretical views of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Diderot had an important influence on shaping his attitude towards monarchical power, which was viewed as an institution capable of self-upgrading and reconstruction to lead the development of society in the spirit of the philosophy of Enlightenment based on the cults of Reason, Virtue, Legality, and General Opinion (Lyashenko, 2014).

An important aspect in the personal system of values upheld by the Russian monarch was the idea of peacemaking, which became the public leitmotif of his reign. The texts telling of his ascension to the throne clearly record this aspiration in Alexander I’s political style. Historian Nikolai Karamzin compared Suvorov in the Alps with the “god of horror,” and portrayed the new emperor as a peacemaker. Historian Vladimir Izmailov also noted the Russian monarch’s commitment to peace. He condemned Alexander the Great and praised Alexander I: “That one is the god of war, the god of ferocity, but this one is the doer of good and the giver of bliss” (Karamzin et al., 1801). Subsequently, contemporaries often compared the personality and the policy of the Russian emperor with Henry IV’s (Parsamov, 2003).

Over time, the Russian emperor's vision of a united Europe based on legitimacy and common values turned into the direct antithesis of Napoleon's attempt to unite European states by force (Vasilenko, 2019).

An important source of influence on the Russian emperor's foreign policy views was his inner circle—Adam Czartoryski, Alexander Stroganov, and Nikolai Novosiltsev—which facilitated the incorporation of European liberal ideas in his governance style (Czartoryski, 1912-1913, pp. 137-138). Subsequently, it was the Russian emperor's closest associates—members of the Private Committee under the ideological leadership of Adam Czartoryski, a diplomat and the future foreign minister—who formulated the basic principles of Alexander I's foreign policy (the so-called Czartoryski Plan), including the reorganization of interstate relations in Europe (Rey, 2013). Adam Czartoryski detailed his views on the principles of international relations in Europe after Napoleon in *Essai sur la diplomatie* (Essay on Diplomacy), which was based on the ideas of the Russian-English peacemaking tandem as a guarantor of the European code and on the goal of liberating oppressed peoples through federative associations, primarily Italian and German, as well as Slavic and Greek peoples (Baluev, 2003).

In public space, the Russian emperor's first foreign policy constructs appeared in the "Instructions of Alexander I to Nikolai Novosiltsev" of September 11-23, 1804 (Russia, 1961, pp. 146-148). This document spelled out diplomatic formulas that subsequently laid the groundwork for Alexander I's foreign policy: the primacy of the great powers; the right to interfere in the internal affairs of small powers; encouragement of internal constitutional transformations in European states according to the "spirit of the times"; the incorporation of small powers into great powers or their association into large federative unions; peace on the basis of a general treaty; rational change of borders along natural barriers; the principle of national homogeneity (Chernov, 2013, pp. 32-33).

### **EMERGENCE OF THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE VIENNA WORLD ORDER**

On 9 June 1815, the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, consisting of 121 articles and 17 annexes, was signed by the authorized representatives of Russia, Austria, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal,

Prussia, France, and Sweden. Over the next five years, 33 more states acceded to it. The current system was largely the result of the diplomatic work of Austrian Chancellor Metternich, who had made great efforts to create a “concert of powers” in order to regulate interstate relations in Europe (Kudryavtseva, 2014, p. 92). Researchers also note a significant contribution to the Vienna system by British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh, whose diplomatic efforts helped ensure a “balance of power” (Kissinger, 1957, pp. 81-86). Meaningfully, the Metternich-Castlereagh system was not much different from the previous European political constructs based on a “balance of power” and “friendship against.” Moreover, collusion between London, Vienna, and Paris against Moscow at the Congress, which upset the Russian emperor’s negotiating position on the Polish and Prussian issues, might as well have provoked a new European conflict. However, Alexander I did not react to the diplomatic squabble of the former allies, and a few months later, on September 26, 1815, parried their demarche by proposing an important innovation to Austro-English diplomacy. As a result, the Holy Alliance Act was signed on the initiative of the Russian monarch (Martens, 1876, pp. 1-7).

There are several key elements in the Holy Alliance that determined the viability of the Vienna world order.

*Firstly*, the European peace construct relied on traditional ideational and ideological forms of power based on the religious commonness of all European countries. Like King George and Sully’s projects, Alexander I’s initiative attempted to overcome religious, cultural, and value obstacles between European states. While the former two projects sought to harmonize relations between the main branches of Western Christianity, the Holy Alliance expanded the boundaries of Christian reconciliation, proposing to overcome the Great Schism and start reconciling Western and Eastern Christianity.<sup>3</sup> This furnished an ideational and ideological basis for the European order, and facilitated

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<sup>3</sup> Obviously, the religious factor remained significant for relations between Russia and European countries. In fact, this is what soured diplomatic contacts between Russia and Sweden when the engagement of King Gustav IV and Grand Duchess Alexandra failed as the former insisted that his fiancée abandon Orthodoxy to adopt Protestantism, and the latter refused to do so (Czartoryski, 1912-1913, p. 119).

Russia's engagement in European affairs, which formalized the new status of the Russian Empire as a great European power.

**Secondly**, Alexander I's project defended the existing organizational forms of power in politics—monarchical power. In this respect, the Russian project can be described as reactionary or conservative. The Act proclaimed the sovereignty of the monarch as the main rule of interaction between European states, which was in stark contrast to the increasingly popular concept of people's sovereignty and associated revolutionary activity. To motivate cooperation, the Russian project did not propose external expansion or friendship of some countries against other countries, but offered an internal motive clear for European elites—fighting revolutionary and anti-monarchist movements. On the one hand, this reflected the needs of the old European elites that had rallied around monarchy, but on the other hand, the Russian initiative ran counter to the current trends of social development in Europe, where capitalist social relations continued to gain momentum.

In the field of social development, the document proposed to follow the “improved version” of monarchical power—enlightened absolutism, which clearly held the monarch responsible for reforms and the socio-economic development of his country and people. In this respect, the Russian project contained not only reactionary, but also certain preventive and reformist principles for regulating social relations in European states that were complementary to European liberal social thought. The first step in Moscow's diplomacy, explicitly demonstrating “enlightened absolutism,” was the solution of the Polish question during the Congress of Vienna, which obliged Alexander I, as the King of Poland, to grant the Polish state its most liberal constitution ever.

**Thirdly**, a special institutional form of relations between European monarchs was specified. It implied a certain regime or association in relations: a brotherhood with open membership. This also distinguished the document from the Czech and French projects, which suggested building European relations on strict institutional obligations and a “balance of power” for a particular set of countries. The subsequent international practice proved that the proposed

format helped preserve the diplomatic leeway needed for creating a system of checks and balances in the nascent Vienna system of international relations and push out the club-like great-power nature of the Quadruple Alliance, which largely fit into the traditional model of European relations.

The Final Act of the Congress of Vienna can be considered an important institutional contribution of the Russian Empire to the creation of a new system of international relations, where the Holy Alliance served as an organizational form of power, helped legitimize the Vienna concert, and eased political pressure between the great European powers. The axiological content of the Act became a fundamental addition to the Vienna world order: Russian ideas based on traditional religious tenets, the sacred value of monarchy and the personal activity of the Russian emperor expanded the Anglo-Austrian political construct, thus ensuring a more loyal regime of relations between the key powers.

### **VIENNA PEACE IN DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE**

Based on the common values laid down in the Holy Alliance Act between European states, diplomatic activity continued in the conference format in Aachen in 1818, Troppau in 1820, Laibach in 1821, and Verona in 1822. These meetings helped develop and consolidate new principles, norms, and most importantly, the common European policy practice not only with regard to specific issues in relations between European countries, but also international problems (Zhidkova and Popova, 2019).

The Congress of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) showed that European countries were not ready to commit themselves to more binding institutional ties, but were able to make collective decisions on a wide range of international problems, particularly Danish-Swedish-Norwegian disagreements, the safety of merchant shipping, measures to stop the African slave trade, the civil and political rights of Jews, and other issues (Martens, 1888, p. 282). The results of the Aachen discussions showed that the Holy Alliance congresses had become an effective pan-European decision-making mechanism.



Revolutionary activity in Western European countries in the early 1820s was the first stress test for the Vienna system of international relations. Reports of revolts in Spain and then in Italy prompted Alexander I to mobilize diplomatic efforts to discuss the situation in the continent (Chernov, 2014, p. 62). The conferences in Troppau and Laibach became crucial for developing the principles and models of interstate interaction within the Vienna system. In particular, these conferences approved and tested the procedure for applying the principle of interference in the internal affairs of European states. This set the rules for the use of force in the European world order after the Napoleonic Wars and the legitimacy of changing the balance of power by force for many years ahead. The Troppau conference protocol recorded the sequence of actions when interfering in internal affairs in the event of the violent overthrow of the legal (monarchical) regime, and concerned the Holy Alliance members only (Martens, 1888, p. 283).

It is noteworthy that the congresses of 1820 and 1821 focused on the non-expansionist nature of the new rules of interference, the publicity of diplomatic settlement efforts, and consensus between large and small powers, which made it possible to break the great-power behind-the-scenes style of diplomacy hitherto used by European states. Russia ensured a multilateral discussion on common efforts to “calm Europe.” While the preliminary congress in Troppau brought together representatives of Russia, Austria, England, France, and Prussia, the conference in Laibach, which adopted specific decisions concerning the Neapolitan rebels, was also attended by representatives of the Italian kingdoms, who agreed, except for the pope, with the Holy Alliance’s actions in Italy.

The congress in Verona combined the formats of all the previous meetings. Firstly, it made decisions to put down the rebellion in Spain. Secondly, the Verona meeting agenda included other international political and economic issues such as the independence of the former Spanish colonies in America; the withdrawal of Austrian troops from Italy; a ban on slave trading; the common position of the Holy Alliance members on the Ottoman Empire and its policy in the Balkans; and

the elimination of the customs restrictions imposed by the Netherlands on the Rhine.

It is important to note separately that in his foreign policy practice the Russian emperor followed the principle of “self-limitation of ambitions by great powers” which was considered important (including in Sully’s project) for ensuring constructive relations between European countries. This can be clearly seen in the Greek revolts, when Russian diplomacy gave up active unilateral actions in support of the anti-Turkish rebellions in Greece, trying instead to coordinate a collective response of the European Christian states to Turkey (Martens, 1888, p. 323). Regarding the Greek events, Alexander I said: “I should be the first to show adherence to the principles on which I founded the alliance” (Soloviev, 1996, p. 686).

So, instead of the unrealizable idea of “perpetual peace,” Britain, Austria and Russia proposed the idea of “perpetual struggle for peace,” but on the sidelines of diplomatic battles in Aachen, Troppau, Laibach, and Verona. The Russian part of the peace formula placed denominators in relations between European states in its own way, focusing on more associated, free and distributed institutional ties and rejecting an authorized pan-European institution as the sole arbiter; relying on the reigning power institutions in politics—European monarchies—and holding them responsible for social development; and promoting common civilizational values based on the religious kinship of Western and Eastern Christianity. It is noteworthy that one of the most renowned thinkers of the first half of the 19th century, Saint-Simon, praised the Holy Alliance, directly linking it with universal peace in Europe, which allowed European society to develop peacefully (Saint-Simon, 1948, pp. 273-317).

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Unfortunately, the unexpected death of Alexander I resulted in a dramatic decline in the Holy Alliance’s conference activity. And yet, the inbuilt diplomatic strength ensured one of the most peaceful periods in relations between European states. According to the most modest estimates, that peace period lasted until the Crimean War of 1853.

It is important to note that the Vienna system crisis began with the deliberate erosion of its ideological foundations laid down by the Holy Alliance. Discrimination of the Orthodox Church's status in Palestine in favor of the Catholic parish and public challenging of Russia's role as the patron of co-religionists in the Middle East became a prologue to the conflict between the great European states (Kudryavtseva, 2014, p. 102). However, the fact that up until the First World War, European powers had managed to resolve contradictions, and the use of force had not led to serious changes in the political map, testifies to the high efficiency of the principles laid down by the Vienna system of international relations.

Today, the system of international relations is going back to a multipolar format, which in many ways resembles the 19th century situation. According to all forecasts, the process of splitting, dividing and reorganizing international space into various economic, political, and cultural segments will continue throughout the current century. Multiple decision-making centers will play an increasingly noticeable role in the modern world. This process will inevitably be accompanied by both individual state system crises and the decline of existing interstate institutions.

The current situation actualizes such issues as the emergence, development, rise, and fall of the Vienna world order. There is every reason to recall and rethink, in the context of modern realities, the time-tested Russian contribution to the Vienna system of international relations, which has become a unique phenomenon in the history of not only Europe, but also the whole world. Diplomatic experience based on the consistent harmonization of countries' positions through conference diplomacy, respect for the principles of legitimate non-expansionist interference and self-limitation of national ambitions, mutual recognition of common values and ideology coupled with an active and highly moral position of decision-makers—it is too early to discard all this as obsolete. It is quite possible that certain foreign policy principles and techniques from the past can under certain circumstances be used for building a new world order in the 21st century.

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