

Q: DESCRIBE CONCEPT OF EUROPE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES. WHY DID THE CONCEPT OF EUROPE DECLINE?

INTRODUCTION:

The coalition Powers, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain, which had overthrown Napoleon in 1815 signed a treaty of alliance known as Quadruple Alliance. The signatories agreed to act jointly, as 'Concert of Europe'. These powers wanted to ensure that France would not again upset the Peace of Europe. Though as guardians of peace they maintained peace for 40 years, yet they ignored nationalism, legitimacy, liberalism and pursued the policy to interfere in internal affairs which ^{were} causes of decline in Concert of Europe. According to David Thomson "The Concert of Europe viewed by the conservative powers as a dam against revolution, was thought of by Britain rather as a sluice gate, allowing for a measured flow of national and liberal Powers."

The Concert of Europe: Foundational Principles

The settlement of concert of Europe was a network of bargains.

In order to achieve political and territorial arrangements according to four principles, i.e. legitimacy, containing the aggressor, compensation and balance of power.

① RESTORATION UNDER THE PRINCIPLE OF LEGITIMACY:

The Kings and Princes in Europe who had been dethroned during the French revolution and Napoleonic wars were to restore to their thrones.

Although the principle of legitimacy was applied in France, Spain, Piedmont, Tuscany, Modena and Papal states, yet many German princes and republics of Venice and Genoa were not restored.

(2) CONTAINING THE AGGRESSOR: FRANCE

The diplomatists tried to make the world safe for kings by adopting measures to prevent the French

future aggression. For this purpose Prussia, Holland, Sardinia and Austria got a large number of treaties to make strong borders with France.

(3) The BALANCE OF POWER:

This was really a principle of eighteenth century diplomacy designed to prevent any one state gaining a dominant position in Europe. To maintain a balance of power, territories were equally distributed among four powers.

(4) COMPENSATION: DIVISION OF TERRITORIES

In order to maintain peace in Europe, territories were distributed among the victor powers which lost their territories under the new balance of power. Therefore, Austria received a large part of Italy, Prussia got Saxony, Westphalia and River Rhine, Russia gained Finland and part of Poland while Britain kept colonies and naval bases.

CAUSES OF DECLINATION:

It was an attempt by the four big powers to govern Europe according to their ideas and interests. The chief object of the Quadruple Alliance was to make France homeless and to uphold the Second Treaty of Paris. But with the passage, it declined due to following reasons

① DIVERGENT OUTLOOK: BRITISH OPPOSITION

The principle of intervention in the internal affairs of other states divided the powers into two camps. Great Britain opposed this principle when France along with Austria, Russia and Prussia intervened in Spain. So she withdrew from it.

② PRINCIPLE OF LEGITIMACY SET ASIDE:

The principle of legitimacy was set aside when it did not suit the convenience of big powers. Many of the old states were not restored.

③ DIFFERENCE OF POLITICAL SYSTEM:

Great powers were differed in their political system as well. Austria, Prussia and Russia were staunch supporters of absolutism and wanted to preserve it. On the contrary, England firmly believed parliamentary system. It was obvious that autocracy and constitutionalism could not move together.

④ GREED AND SELF INTEREST OF BIG POWERS:

In making the territorial divisions "self-interest" was the key to the matter of bargains and agreements. Each of the eastern states acquired large territories at the cost of their weak and helpless neighbours.

⑤ MUTUAL JEALOUSIES:

Mutual Jealousies arose among powers from the very beginning. In the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818), the powers disagreed on the question of slave trade and intervention.

⑥ FRANCE: NO MORE A COMMON ENEMY

The Concert of Europe was a product of the Napoleonic wars. Its objective was to provide against a common enemy, France. However, when the French danger was over, the unity among allies was gone.

⑦ RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM:

The Concert of Europe attracted Russia into European affairs. Russia was granted the Grand Duchy of Warsaw and parts of Saxony. This brought more tensions and conflict within Ottoman Empire that led to Greek war of revolt and the Crimean War.

⑧ FAILURE TO INVOLVE THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE:

Ottoman Empire was ignored which led to violent events that constituted the Eastern Question. The Vienna settlement did not consider the fate of Ottoman Empire leading to Crimean War and Balkan Wars of 1877-78.

(9) THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONALITY IGNORED:

The principle of nationality in order to uphold the 'principle of legitimacy' was completely ignored. The national aspirations of Belgians, Poles, Italians and Germans were crushed.

(10) INSTABILITY IN THE SMALLER STATES:

Although general peace was restored, there was no peace in small states. Smaller states were not a part of decision making and were dominated by big powers. This became a source of unrest in Europe from 1820-1871 when the Italians and Germans unified.

CONCLUSION:

The Concert of Europe which main aim was, to restore the old monarchies, to keep peace and maintain the balance of power, completely failed in it. It favoured only great powers and ignored the smaller states which were

exploited by these great powers. The forces of change made "new wine in old bottles" was impossible. Its existence was to suppress the national demand of minor states. It failed to meet the new changes which occurred after the Congress of Vienna.

"The Monarch redivided Europe in their own interest and without any consideration for the rights and aspiration of people."

(JERMONI).