

Assignment: Congress of Vienna vs. Treaty of Versailles (Chart and LEQ.)

Both the Congress of Vienna and the Treaty of Versailles came after devastating conflicts in Europe, but both were approached quite drastically. Answer the below prompt:

Compare and contrast the degree of success of treaties negotiated in Vienna (1814-1815) and Versailles (1919) in achieving European stability.

It has been a common part of European history to witness the execution of violent conflict and the resolution thereof through mutually agreed upon peace treaties, be it through negotiation or force. Prior to the Great War, the Napoleonic Wars had been one of the most devastating series of conflicts that the continent had witnessed, at least in terms of the destabilization it resulted in of the previously standing European powers. This conflict was resolved with the exile of Napoleon for the second time and the Congress of Vienna, intended to properly establish a stable, long-lasting balance of European power among the continent's states. It was this balance of power that was agreed upon that the Great War was fought over. The Great War was similarly resolved by a treaty, and much like the treaty that ended the Napoleonic Wars, the Treaty of Versailles was negotiated between a wholly victorious and wholly defeated party/parties. When comparing these two peace treaties, it is apt to compare the degree of success that they attained. Looking at the Congress of Vienna, it is apparent that it saw comparatively greater success in attaining its goals when considering it against the Treaty of Versailles. The resulting peace of the Congress of Vienna was relatively unbroken, with no great European wars occurring, only small conflicts and revolutions. The Treaty of Versailles saw only a short period following its establishment before a more terrible conflict, the Second World War, broke out. However, the two were similar in that the state whose power was supposed to remain diminished did not, in fact, stay under the heel of other European states.

The Congress of Vienna's success is evident in the lack of conflict engulfing the entirety of the continent at one time until the outbreak of the Great War. This success was achieved thanks to the efforts of the victorious powers to carefully tailor a balance amongst themselves in the wake of the end of the Napoleonic Wars. They were also careful to ensure that feelings of animosity were diminished, offering a restored France a position in the Congress despite them being an utterly defeated and powerless state. The victorious powers of the Napoleonic Wars also invited delegates from all other European states to ensure that no one was left out. Compromises were made and deals were struck. The masterful Metternich worked to establish a Concert of Europe in which the power of all states was balanced, thereby ensuring peace. Monarchs were restored and retained influence, as agreed upon by the powers that were represented. The Congress of Vienna was designed to remain in effect no matter what happened to ensure that peace was maintained. Unlike the Treaty of Versailles, the victorious powers were amenable to compromises and did not seek revenge upon others or selfish gain, at least not without consideration of the consequences. The shock by which Napoleon had

taken so much of Europe was not an experience that any states wished to repeat, and so it was agreed upon by this treaty that the focus of all would be peace and prosperity, which was successfully achieved thanks to the balance that was struck and the diminishment of animosity. Peace was maintained and only interrupted with less serious events such as the 1848 revolutions, but conflicts such as the Crimean War would foreshadow what was to come if states were not careful, and careful they were eventually not.

The Treaty of Versailles, unlike the Congress of Vienna, did not produce a long lasting peace. Unlike the Congress of Vienna, the Treaty of Versailles did not consist of any negotiations with the defeated powers on any level, nor any invitation of the defeated power to the table upon which the final treaty would be decided. In the case of the Congress of Vienna, many decisions were made to ensure that France did not rise up again, but this did not disallow a restored monarchy in France from participating in the discussion. This was not what happened following the end of the Great War. Austria-Hungary and the Ottomans were gone, and Germany was the target of anger and blame by the Allied Powers. The goals of the Treaty of Versailles were ostensibly similar to the goals of the Congress of Vienna, in that the victorious powers sought the establishment of lasting peace, prosperity, and a redrawing of Europe for purposes of stability. The victorious states, however, did not conduct them in the civilized and conscientious manner that states attending the Congress of Vienna did. France and Britain in particular made punishments upon Germany particularly harsh, which only served to stoke the fire of nationalistic, prideful anger amongst the German people, making it easy in the future for the National Socialist Workers' Party to take control and begin another terrible conflict. The United States, for all that Woodrow Wilson is lauded for, was not a repeat of Metternich and Austria. Woodrow Wilson proposed allegedly brilliant ideas for the maintenance of peace, such as the League of Nations, but the United States itself failed to join, dooming the organization to not only be barely effective, but without the backing of the only remaining viable power in the wake of the devastation of the Great War. There were no provisions in place to ensure that the Treaty of Versailles would remain in effect as was the case with the Congress of Vienna, in which states were bound to abide by it no matter the change in leadership and to negotiate participation if issues arose. A balance of power was not a goal of primacy in the negotiations of the Treaty of Versailles. An overly harsh but toothless treaty was established, and an ineffectual organization was established. These failed to curb the rise of the National Socialist Workers' Party and Adolf Hitler, who, once in power, simply withdrew a reconstituted and reconstructed Germany from the Treaty of Versailles and League of Nations and further ended the extensive war reparations and restrictions on military reconstruction. Even though the Treaty of Versailles was harsher and broader than the Congress of Vienna in its proposed measures, it was this aggressiveness that doomed it to failure.

The two peace deals, however, do bear some similarity, at least. The Congress of Vienna witnessed the end of Napoleonic France, and the victorious European powers of Austria, Prussia, Russia, and the United Kingdom had no great wish to see a France similar to the state under Napoleon arise again. Thanks to the carefully thought out provisions of the Congress of Vienna, however, when France did arise again, the balance of power was adjusted and peace was able to be maintained, at least on a grander scale when exempting consideration of conflicts such as the Franco-Prussian War. The rebuilt France remained weaker and was no longer the threat to stability of the continent it once was. The Treaty of Versailles likewise hoped

to prevent the rise of another powerful German state capable of waging war across the continent as it had done in the Great War, but it failed in this regard in a similar manner as Germany rebuilt itself and rebuilt its military despite provisions against it. These two treaties still differed in the outcomes of these events, but at least a similarity could be identified that links the identity of these peace deals, for it was their execution that differed and doomed one to failure while the other was relatively successful.

The Napoleonic Wars and the Great War were conflicts that engulfed the whole of Europe, although the latter was without a doubt the more devastating of the two. However, this did not preclude treaties of either conflict from being successful in maintaining peace and preventing such terrible conflict from recurring, at least for some time. The Congress of Vienna that ended the former and the Treaty of Versailles that ended the latter both set out with the same goals of rebuilding Europe, maintaining peace and prosperity, and ensuring that the enemies to that peace would never rise again. However, the Congress of Vienna proved more successful by being more balanced, well-thought out, and conscious of other European states. The Treaty of Versailles failed to maintain the same length of peace that the Congress of Vienna did because it was not as adaptable and proved too harsh to be palatable for Germany and other European powers. There were failings in both, of course, that were shared, such as the inevitable reconstruction of both France and Germany into capable powers, and of course, both failed to curb the increasing rise of nationalism. The Congress of Vienna, despite this, remains the more successful of the two peace deals. The Treaty of Versailles and Congress of Vienna could be observed to correlate and share similarities, but their differences in execution helped to cause differences in the degree of success experienced by each treaty.