Why did the map of Europe change in the 19th century?
Edited extract from Murphy et al Europe 1760-1871

The period 1815—1871 was dominated by competing ideas about the organisation of government and society. Conservatism was a set of ideas that wished to preserve the type of society associated with absolutist monarchy. Absolute monarchy supported a society where large-scale landowners (the aristocracy) possessed considerable political power, usually in the regions of a state. Before the French Revolution, France under Louis XVI was regarded as the best example of this type of state. From 1815 to 1848, Prince Metternich (Chancellor of the Austrian Empire) was the main defender of this view of society. For most of the period 1760-1871 liberalism was associated with nationalism - a set of political ideas which suggested that states should consist of people with a common language, culture or race. In 1760, no state could be described as a 'nation state'. Instead, loyalty within a state was to a monarch rather than to 'the nation'. Those republics (e.g Switzerland or Venice), that did exist were not nation states.

In 1820-21, 1830-32 and 1848-49 liberal-national revolutions took place across Europe. Most revolutionary leaders wanted to create political regimes based on the parliaments elected by the property-owning classes. In virtually every case, the revolutions were defeated. Only in France, in 1830 and in 1848, was a political regime overthrown by revolution. One of the reasons for the continued failure of liberal revolution was the lack of military power and opposition from peasants and urban industrial workers who became increasingly attracted by the new ideology of the Industrial Revolution, socialism.

Throughout the period 1789-1871 European monarchs had feared the spread of liberalism and nationalism. Both ideas would undermine their authority and could, ultimately, lead to their overthrow. Napoleon I's eventual defeat between 1814 and 1815 was the result of considerable cooperation between the European states. The highlight of European international co-operation took place in Vienna in 1814-15 - a new balance of power based on the Great Powers of the 18th century. The political map of Europe was redrawn to help ensure that a recurrence of the Napoleonic Wars could not occur. To maintain European peace the Great Powers agreed to work in concert (together) to resolve any major European crisis. The Concert of Europe worked successfully to end the Greek War on Independence (1830-32), the Belgian Revolt (1830-39) and conflicts in the Ottoman Empire (1840 and 1841).

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From 1815 to 1854 war between European Great Powers was avoided. However, between 1854-71, European international relations were transformed. From 1854 to 1856 Russia fought Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean War. This conflict occurred as a result of the Eastern Question and the European 'balance of power'. The Eastern Question was an international problem created by the widespread belief that the Ottoman Empire was in a state of collapse. Britain feared Russia would gain territory and influence if this took place. This would result in an alteration in the European balance of power in Russia's favour.

The Crimean War had a major impact on international relations. The most important was the end of the Holy Alliance. This international agreement had united Austria, Russia and Prussia since 1815. The main aim of the alliance was to prevent the success of liberal revolutions in Europe. In 1849, the Hungarian revolution within Austria was defeated with the aid of the Russian army. In 1855, at the height of the Crimean War, Austria allied itself with Britain and France against Russia.

The end of the Holy Alliance helped to bring about the two most important developments in international relations between 1815-1914 - the unification of Italy and the unification of Germany. The unification of Italy began with the defeat of Austria by France in 1859. From 1859 to 1861 the Italian state of Piedmont-Sardinia and Italian nationalists led by Giuseppe Garibaldi united most of the Italian peninsula. Of great significance was the unification of Germany. The old rivalry between Prussia and Austria reappeared in the 1860s. Prussia wanted to be co-equal in importance with Austria within the German Confederation. When this could not be achieved through diplomacy, war broke out between Austria and Prussia in 1866. Prussia's crushing victory resulted in the Prussian domination of Europe. In 1870-71, the Franco-Prussian War led to the creation of the German Empire.

By 1871, European international relations had been transformed. Since the Middle Ages central Europe, in the form of Germany and Italy, had been divided into a large number of small states. Both areas had been the battlegrounds of large powers such as France, Spain, Sweden and Austria. By 1871, both areas were united into large states. Germany, in particular, had now replaced France as Europe's most important Great Power. Ever since the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715) France had been Europe's most important state. This position reached its height under Napoleon I. In 1870-71, France lost its position in dramatic fashion. At the battle of Sedan (September 1870), the French Emperor, Napoleon III, was captured by the Prussians. Between 1870 and early 1871, Paris was besieged by the Prussians and forced to surrender.

Although Germany was the dominant Great Power on the continent, Britain was Europe's only world power. Although Britain lost its American colonies between 1775-83, it still controlled a large world empire. The centrepiece was the British Indian Empire. In addition, Britain had colonies in every continent. It dominated world trade and had Europe's most industrial economy.

**Activities**

1. Explain the key differences between conservatism and liberalism in this period.
2. Identify five places where revolts took place in the period 1820-49 and give three reasons to explain why revolutions failed.
3. What was the Holy Alliance and why was its collapse so important to international relations.
4. How far would you agree with the assertion that 'war was the most important factor in the changing map of Europe in the 19th century'? Explain your answer carefully with examples.