

# **HISTORICAL EVALUATIONS**



# THE HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL EVOLUTION OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY (INCLUDING IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION) FROM THE 1648 WESTPHALIA PEACE TO WOODROW WILSON'S 1920 LEAGUE OF NATIONS

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## Abstract

*Modern political thinkers have ushered in the theoretical concepts of modern alliances and collective security/defense. Before these political theories were turned into modern organizations, many radical changes had to take place in how international relations were perceived in Europe and the world. These dynamic changes started at the end of the Thirty Years War, with the signing of the Westphalia treaties in 1648, and came to fruition with*

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*the forming of the League of Nations in 1920. This article explores this 272 year historical process including its impact on the population of the Baltic Sea countries.*

**Keywords:** Thirty Years War; Holy Roman Empire; Cardinal de Richelieu; collective security; Westphalia; Baltic Sea Region; Central Europe; Congress; Concert of Europe; charter; covenant; & League of Nations.

## Introduction

Two modern political thinkers, Professor Immanuel Kant and Dr. Woodrow Wilson, heralded the theoretical concepts of modern alliances and collective security/defense. Before their political theories could be turned into modern organizations, many radical changes had to take place in the way international relations (IR) were perceived in Europe and the world. These dynamic changes started at the end of the Thirty Years War with the signing of the Westphalia treaties in 1648 which began the “age of the sovereign state.” The Baltic Sea countries of Denmark, Sweden, and the Holy Roman Empire (mainly the area of Europe that is now called Germany) were involved in the Thirty Years War. The legal basis of the European state system was solidified by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 (also called the Peace of Utrecht) which ended The War of Spanish Succession, known in Britain and America as Queen Anne’s War. During the 150 years between 1648 and the 1790s, the questions of how to keep the peace between states in an anarchical world became more complex. The 23 years of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars ended with the 1815 Congress of Vienna. After 1815, an informal interaction between the European great powers developed, which became known as the Concert of Europe.

The Concert was neither a multinational institution like the United Nations (UN) nor a formal alliance like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although it arose out of the war-time coalition that defeated Napoleon, its members always looked to the Final Act of the Vienna Congress as a kind of “charter”<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Moran, Concert of Europe (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute’s monographs, 9 June 1995), p. 2.

This “charter” was the first multinational concept to attempt to keep the peace in Europe and laid the early foundations for the 1889 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) that was the forerunner of the 1920 League of Nations (League). The “charter” also provided the basis for the UN, NATO, the European Union (EU), and some of the intergovernmental organizations that are forming in the Baltic Sea Region presently<sup>3</sup>.

Some basic questions need to be answered to understand the importance of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century event, the Thirty Years War, in 2016:

The first question is what is the significance of a 1648 event like Westphalia in 2016? 1648 is not ancient or even part of the Middle Ages, but part of the Modern Period, in fact by definition, part of the Early Modern Period. For that matter America already had multiple permanent English settlements in 1648 and even the foundations of the modern US National Guard had already started by December 1636. A partial answer to the significance of a 1648 event in 2016 is brought to light by Richard N. Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, who believes a strong comparison can be made between the Thirty Years War and the present crisis in the Middle East concerning the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The Thirty Years War had started as a war between Catholics and Protestants but gradually became a political war with Catholics and Protestants on both sides. This present crisis also supposedly started over religious issues but is really being fought about political issues<sup>4</sup>.

Secondly, why start the discussion with Westphalia in 1648? Since the beginning of modern European history there have been four major continent wide devastating wars (1618–1648, 1792–1815, 1914–1919, and 1939–1945). The first of these was the Thirty Years War which ended with the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. Due to its long length and wide geographic area, the Thirty Years War was extremely destructive, fitting into the same category as WWI & WWII. Technically, only WWII with airpower was more destructive. Maybe the Thirty Years War was the

3 Jost Delbruck, “A European Peace Order and the German Question: Legal and Political Aspects” (1990), Faculty Publications, Paper 1025, Law Library, Indiana University, Bloomington (<http://www.repository/law.indiana.edu/facpub/1025>).

4 Richard N. Haass (President of the Council on Foreign Relations), “The New Thirty Years’ War,” Project Syndicate (The World’s Opinion Page), (<https://www.project-syndicate.org/print/richard-n--haass-argues-that-the-middle-east-is-les...>) 21 July 2014.

most extensively damaging war that had happened in Europe up until that time. Participants were exhausted after 30 years of war and, therefore, were ready for a complete change. Thus the Peace of Westphalia basically laid the foundation for a new system of governance which was the modern state system that we live in today.

Thirdly, what were the main connections of the populations of the Baltic Sea Region to the development of the concept of collective security? When looking at the greatest major wars in modern European history, it is evident that the countries of Central Europe were involved and, from 1618, with the beginning of the Thirty Years' War until the end of WWII in 1945, France and what is now called Germany were two of the major players in every war during this 350 year period. Only now with the creation of the European Union has the course of European modern history maybe been changed.

Besides France and what is now called Germany, a lot of other European countries have been involved in each of the major European wars of the last 350 years and many of them from the Baltic Sea Region. Actually, populations from every geographic section of the Baltic Sea Region have been involved in some wars and some populations have been involved in every war. During the Thirty Years War, Sweden was one of the major powers and another was the Holy Roman Empire. Some parts of the Holy Roman Empire bordered the Baltic Sea. Also, other Baltic Sea countries were involved like Denmark and the areas that were controlled by these countries, such as present day Norway, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia. Both Sweden and the Holy Roman Empire took part in the final peace conferences and, therefore, some of the population of the Baltic Sea region was part of the signing the Westphalia Treaties, which included some reference to collective security.

During the French Revolution & Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815), both Russia and Prussia (now part of Germany on the Baltic Sea) were significant players and serious Denmark and Sweden were seriously involved. In addition, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, & Poland (all later to be separate countries) of the Baltic Sea Region were involved in the wars because they were under the control of at least one of the above listed countries (or Austria which was involved in the wars). At the ceremony for the signing of the First Treaty of Paris in 1814, which ended the Napoleonic Wars, and during the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Sweden (including Norway) were signatories and

Denmark was represented. But, through them, all the people of the entire Baltic Sea region were represented because the areas that are now Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and parts of Poland were under the control of Russia. In addition, some other parts of Poland were under the control of Prussia and Austria.

In WWI (1914-1919), Germany and Russia were again major players with many of the areas they controlled also involved, such as Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, but Denmark, Norway and Sweden remained neutral during the Great War. Also, at the end of the war, there was some Baltic Sea activity including the British Navy action to help Estonia become independent of Russia. In addition, after the end of WWI, not only did Estonia become independent but so did Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

When the League, the first international organization dedicated to the concept of collective security, was formed at the end of WWI, all of the nations of the Baltic Sea Region joined. Some immediately joined when it was formed and others joined later. The League was officially disbanded and replaced by the United Nations in 1946, but before 1946 a few left the League including Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), recently having reverted to its older name, Russia. Between 1920 and 1922, under the umbrella of the League and the Red Cross, the Baltic Sea nations, especially Estonia, played a very big role in being a bridge for the humanitarian repatriation of prisoners of war between Russia and Central Europe<sup>5</sup>.

From the end of the Napoleonic wars until just a couple of years ago, Sweden has stayed neutral, but very recently Sweden has returned, but on a smaller scale, to a similar role it played during the Thirty Years War of seriously affecting the political/security developments in the Baltic Sea Region. Sweden is now playing a significant part in the development of collective security/defense in the region and it might even join NATO<sup>6</sup>.

5 “When the Baltic Sea was a ‘bridge’ for humanitarian action: the league of nations, the red cross and the repatriation of prisoners of war between Russia and central Europe, 1920–22” *Journal of Baltic Studies* Volume 38, Issue 1, 2007.

6 Leo G. Michel, “Finland, Sweden, & NATO: From ‘Virtual’ to Formal Allies?” *Strategic Forum* # 265, National Defense University, Washington, DC, Feb 2011; plus *The Guardian*, [<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/27/finland-sweden-strengthen-ties-nato>]; and NATO press release, 5 Sept 2014 [[http:// www.aco.nato.int/finland-and-sweden-signing-a-memorandum-of-understanding-with-nato-for-operational-and-logistic-support.aspx](http://www.aco.nato.int/finland-and-sweden-signing-a-memorandum-of-understanding-with-nato-for-operational-and-logistic-support.aspx)].

## Early History of Collective Security

When did the term collective security first begin to be used in early modern European history? Cardinal de Richelieu (1585–1642) of France was not only a cardinal in the Catholic Church and a statesman for France, but also a political thinker. He had been France’s foreign minister from 1616–1624 when he became France’s chief minister until he died in 1642. Upon his death, he was succeeded by his protégé, Cardinal Mazarin. In 1629, Richelieu used the term collective security in relation to a discussion about Spain. Naturally, Richelieu was using the term slightly differently than it would be used today, since his idea of collective security was for states to work together on security issues, but under the guidance of France, not as part of some totally independent international body, but maybe in the world of 1629 he was thinking of the papacy in Rome as an “international body”<sup>7</sup>.

At the end of the Thirty Years War at the writing and signing of the peace treaties in 1648, Cardinal Mazarin, representing France and indirectly representing the deceased Richelieu, inserted sentences about collective security into the Treaty of Münster, which was part of the Peace of Westphalia. Thus, one can easily state that the concept of collective security started moving from theoretical status to political status with the Peace of Westphalia. It would take until 1920 for it to take on a role that we are more familiar with in the League of Nations, almost 270 years with many armed conflicts including two major long wars<sup>8</sup>.

What is collective security? Two published political science scholars, Dr. Karen Mingst and Dr. Ivan Arreguin Toft, defined collective security, in 2011, as “the concept that aggression against a state should be defeated collectively because aggression against one state is aggression against all.” In their writings, they go on to explain its modern role in the League of Nations and the United Nations, but before the League there are hundreds of years of evolution<sup>9</sup>.

7 J.H. Elliott, *Richelieu and Olivares* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), p. 100.

8 Fred Israel (Ed.), *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History, 1648- 1967*, Vol. I (NY: Chelsea House Pub, 1967), Treaty of Westphalia, Munster, 24 Oct 1648, Article CXXIV, p.47.

9 Karen A. Mingst and Ivan M. Arreguin-Toft, *Essentials of International Relations*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2011), pp. A-18, 78, &

During the approximate 140 years between the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and the start of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars in 1792, some growth in political theory and some political changes affected the way collective security developed.

In 1651, immediately after the end of the 30 Years War and at the end of the English Civil War, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) of Malmesbury, Wiltshire, England published Leviathan, his book on political philosophy. Hobbes, born in England but lived in France (1640–1651), for all of the English Civil War (1642–1651), and in England and France during the 30 Years War (1618–1648), had some strong ideas about nations and war. Hobbes is seen by many as the one who laid the foundation for a school of thought that describes the “state of nature as a state of war” and, since he treats each country as a sovereign entity with absolute rights, he sees that it is only natural for the associations between states to be anarchy or a state of “war of all against all”<sup>10</sup>.

It is against this theoretical political background that the idea of Collective Security drafted by the deceased Richelieu which was put into the Treaty of Münster of the Peace of Westphalia by Mazarin, began to take on both a much larger political and theoretical life of its own. Did the associations between states have to be anarchy of “war of all against all” or could it be something more peaceful and therefore better?

The Peace of Westphalia established a Collective Security system within the overall concept of a balance of power program. This idea was not spelled out in exact words in either of the two final treaties of the Peace of Westphalia, but was inherent within the wording of both the Osnabrück and Münster treaties. The treaties provided a sweeping ban on the use of force, a prohibition on state’s individual self-defense (except after the expiry of a long period of diplomacy), and the duty of all states to act in collective self-defense. The treaty rule on collective sanctions implied a latent deterrence that might curb hostile tendencies in balance-threatening situations<sup>11</sup>. Westphalia’s aftermath was balance of power

**10** Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing 1994) (Originally printed for Andrew Crooke at the Green Dragon in St Paul’s Churchyard, 1651), Chapter 13.

**11** Michael N. Schmitt (Ed), *International Law Studies*, Vol 75 (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2000), Ove Bring, “The Westphalian Peace Tradition in International Law,” p. 62.

diplomacy (or status quo diplomacy) that was usually favorable to peace, but its weakness was that it had no institutional process for handling the procedures for crisis management. These issues are not really resolved even today, but the 1815 Concert of Europe, coming after Westphalia, and the 1920 League of Nations, coming after the Concert, were major steps forward in the evolution of collective security.

Even without crisis management mechanisms in 1663 and again in 1683 when Turkish troops threatened the Habsburg Empire at its capital, Vienna, troops from several countries worked collectively to save Vienna. France plus the Holy Roman Empire with others in 1663 and Poland plus the Holy Roman Empire with others in 1683 exercised a type of collective security when there was a common enemy (the Islamic presence) at the “gates of Europe” and it basically ended further expansion from the Ottoman Empire into Europe<sup>12</sup>.

Collective security had a few more post Westphalia opportunities before it fell into less use until 1815 when it got a rebirth. These were in 1688, 1697, and from 1701 to 1714 with the War of Spanish Succession. These were coalitions against France trying to stop Louis XIV from upsetting the balance of power in Europe and it ended with the defeat of France in the treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt. The 1713 Peace of Utrecht clearly confirmed what the Westphalia Peace had only alluded to. That is peace had to have a foundation of a “fair geopolitical equilibrium.” But, even though Europe had built coalitions of the willing against the one who had broken the peace, there still were no mechanisms set up to enforce peace or manage these balance of power and/or collective security arrangements<sup>13</sup>.

Starting in 1699, a new issue appeared in north east Europe. Peter the Great had become the Tsar of Russia and, at first, he tried to build a new coalition against the Ottoman Empire but, when the major powers of Europe were not interested, he turned his attention away from collective security and built an aggressive alliance with Denmark and Poland against Sweden bringing about the Great Northern War (1700–1721). Sweden was not able to develop a coalition against Russia, mainly because the major European powers until around the end of 1713 and

<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Black, *European International Relations 1648-1815* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 77-80.

<sup>13</sup> Schmitt, p. 63.

the beginning 1714 were still involved in the War of Spanish Succession and also because the problems of north east Europe were a long way from the interest of the other Great Powers at that time. During the Great Northern War, Sweden rejected several peace offers, but at the end was defeated by Russia. With the signing of the Treaty of Nystad in 1721, Sweden lost the Baltic provinces (now Estonia/Latvia) and completely lost her status as a Great Power. Russia now had become a Great Power and also had become a major coastal state of the Baltic Sea Region. The Balance of Power in Europe was shifting and collective security had not played a positive part<sup>14</sup>.

Another shift in the Balance of Power equation was soon to happen and again in the Baltic Sea Region. This time it was Prussia's turn. Starting in 1740, Frederick the Great of Prussia became involved in the Austrian War of Succession, which ended in 1748 with Prussia having become another new European Great Power. Over the next few years, other wars followed called the Seven Years War (1756–1763) and the Bavarian War of Succession (1778–1770). During these times, Prussia, with the verbal support of Russia, became a major power in the Baltic Sea and Sweden, as well as Austria, who continued to slip further away from being Great Powers. Thus, from the end of the Westphalian Peace to the start of the French Revolutionary Wars, the Baltic Sea Region lost a Great Power (Sweden) but gained two new ones (Russia and Prussia). Both of these new powers played a significant role in the Napoleonic Wars and in the hundred years following the 1815 Congress of Vienna. The other significant issue is that the Westphalian Peace concept of Collective Security gradually died out in the political world of statecraft until it had a rebirth in 1815, but, after 1713, the concept began to be discussed more and more by political philosophers.

In 1693, William Penn wrote a booklet “An essay towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe by the Establishment of a European Dyet, Parliament, or Estates.” This essay discusses the idea of a confederation of all European states (including Russia and the Ottoman Empire). Penn believed that such an organization was needed to maintain peace in a form of collective security. His idea may have influenced Charles-Irénée Castel, abbé de Saint-Pierre when he

<sup>14</sup> Maurice Ashley, *A History of Europe 1648-1815* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1973). Pp. 25-27.

published his articles in 1712/1713 titled “A Project for Setting an Everlasting Peace in Europe.” Saint-Pierre had served as the secretary to the French delegation at the negotiations leading up to the Peace of Utrecht in 1713. He advocated a confederation of European/Christian States based on the status quo created by the Peace of Utrecht. His confederation would have an assembly where the Great Powers would have more votes than the other states. The collective security tradition, started at Westphalia, was evident in his thinking<sup>15</sup>.

The concepts that Saint-Pierre proposed gradually over the next few years became widely understood throughout Europe, including by individuals like Thomas Payne, who published an essay in 1792, and Immanuel Kant, who published in 1795. Both Payne and Kant believed that strong commercial links between countries would prevent war. Payne’s ideas were major precursors for the later thinking of a Robert Schumann and Jean Monnet in the early development of the European Economic Community, which was the precursor of the present European Union (EU). Kant’s ideas were a significant part of the foundation of Woodrow Wilson’s thoughts for the development of the League of Nations<sup>16</sup>.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) lived his whole life in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) in East Prussia (later Germany and now part of Russia) on the Baltic Sea. Kant did not even leave Königsberg while he attended Königsberg University and later worked for the same university. Thus his concepts were strongly influenced by the Baltic Sea Region of north central Europe. Approximately 150 years after Thomas Hobbes had developed his theories (about the “state of nature as a state of war”), Kant’s discussions, in his 1795 essay titled “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” did not really include collective security but did a modernizing update on other Westphalian heritage topics like balance of power, international agreement, non-use of force, etc. and included the forming of a “league” of nation-states dedicated to peace maintenance<sup>17</sup>.

A British political philosopher, who in many ways followed on from Immanuel Kant’s liberal thinking related to IR, was Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Bentham

<sup>15</sup> F.H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 33-45.

<sup>16</sup> Schmitt, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Rohlf, “Immanuel Kant.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2010 Edition (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant>), 8 May 2012.

also wrote about perpetual peace in his *The Principles of International Law* with his Essay Number Four, “A Plan for a Universal and Perpetual Peace.” Both Kant and Bentham had ideas that an international body had to be created to develop a legal and institutional framework for the organization and operation of the peace<sup>18</sup>.

With the end of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty in 1814, and the ending of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, a rebirth of the old Westphalian traditions and some new ideas were undertaken to preserve the hard won peace. Europe had just gone through 26 years of warfare and, as after the end of the Thirty Years War, Europe was desperately looking for ideas that would secure the status quo in a peaceful way. As the concept of collective security developed as a result of the interpretations of the Congress of Vienna during the 100 years between 1815 and 1914, the population of the Baltic Sea Region was part of this process.

Even before the end of the wars in 1815, after only 15 years of war, individuals were getting tired of the war and looking forward to a peace. In 1804, the Tsar of Russia, Alexander I, assuming that Napoleon would soon be defeated, proposed a plan for peace developed on the basis of the old Westphalian concepts. Since Napoleon was not defeated for another 11 years, the Russian plan never really had a fair opportunity to be observed.

Before the end of the 1815 Congress of Vienna, the Foreign Minister of Britain, Lord Castlereagh, proposed a Final Declaration which became the 13 March 1815 Proclamation of the Congress, which was a pledge by the Committee of Eight to protect the peace. The Committee of Eight consisted of the four victorious Great Powers (Austria, Britain, Prussia, & Russia) and four other countries that had also signed the 1814 Treaty of Paris (France, Portugal, Spain & Sweden)<sup>19</sup>.

At the Congress of Vienna, Lord Castlereagh designed and proposed a form of collective security for Europe, which became known as the Congress System or Concert of Europe. For approximately the next seven years he, as Britain’s Foreign

**18** Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, 11 volumes published under the Superintendence of his Executor, John Bowring (Edinburgh, UK: William Tait, 1838-43).

**19** John Lowe, *The Concert of Europe: International Relations 1814-70* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 16.

Minister, influenced and helped develop this system until he suddenly died while still in office in 1822. In the Congress System, the European Powers (the main signatory powers of the Congress of Vienna) met every two years or so and collectively managed European affairs. After 1822, the Congress System began to collapse without the British leadership and because some of the other nations had radically different ideas and were not able to easily agree. Even though the System was collapsing, the concepts of working together using diplomacy had set a precedent in Europe that was here to stay with some modifications to the present time. One could say that the Concert of Europe loosely represented the balance of power that existed in Europe from the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1815) to the outbreak of World War I (1914).

In addition to and in conjunction with the Concert of Europe, the Holy Alliance was developed by Tsar Alexander I of Russia, which was originally to consist of the four Great Powers at the Congress of Vienna (Austria, Britain, Prussia & Russia), but, in reality, only consisted of Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Both of the Baltic Sea Great Powers (Russia and Prussia) had leaders that were personally involved in the peace process at this time in history. Tsar Alexander of Russia was very involved in the peace process during the Napoleonic Wars through the Congress of Vienna and with the Holy Alliance. The other Baltic leader was Frederick William III of Prussia. The major negotiators at the Congress of Vienna who stayed very involved in the peace process afterward were Prince Metternich, the foreign minister of Austria, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord the foreign minister of France and, as stated above, Lord Castlereagh of Britain. Dr. Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State of the USA and a well-recognized specialist on this period of European history, says Castlereagh developed a reputation for integrity, consistency, and goodwill, which was perhaps unmatched by any diplomat of that era<sup>20</sup>.

After the 1822 partial collapse of the congress aspect of the concert program, diplomacy via conferences improved again in 1830 under the leadership of Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, who initiated a result oriented process of crisis management. The same issue that caused Britain to enter WWI,

<sup>20</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1994), pp. 78-103 and H. Kissinger, *World Order* (New York, Penguin Press, 2014), pp. 41-73.

the neutrality of Belgium, was the driving force that set this process in motion. The conferences were smaller than the congresses had been and more aimed at a particular issue, and so easier to manage, but they kept the collective security seed alive in Europe.

The issue in 1830 was that a revolution had broken out in Belgium against the rule of the Dutch. Both Prussia and France were becoming interested in intervening, but they were going to be on opposite sides of the issue. Lord Palmerston assembled an international conference in London and a solution was designed by making Belgium a neutral country independent of the Dutch and the French, which pleased the Prussians. When the Dutch attempted to use its military to stop this action, Britain and France, in a form of collective security, intervened with their joint armed forces and guaranteed the solution that the conference had decided. This kept the balance of power status quo the same between France and Prussia and kept the ports in Belgium free of any Great Power, which is what Britain wanted in 1830 and was what the British still wanted 85 years later in 1914<sup>21</sup>.

Even though this rebirth of a type of collective security was still without an international body to manage it, the diplomatic seed had been saved from completely dying, thus the Concert of Europe was able to carry on with a new life after the 1830/1831 Belgium crisis and manage many other issues during the next 80 years (the revolutions of 1848, the unifications of Germany and Italy, etc.). Many times, some form of collective security allowed for the finding of a peaceful solution or for the military situation to be kept at a limited level. In addition, because the concert principles had not died, they slowly matured and, by the end of the 1800s, were beginning to take on some organizational characteristics, but first they had to deal with the “Eastern Question” and to survive the Crimean War of 1854–1856.

The “Eastern Question” refers to a problem that haunted Europe for over 125 years and was not partially “solved” until after World War One.

The Eastern Question – the problem of what to do about the decline and possible disintegration of the Ottoman Empire -- was a recurring issue in

<sup>21</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 671-91 & 716-18.

international affairs throughout the nineteenth century. Turkey's decline had important, though different, implications for most of the Great Powers individually, as well as serious repercussions on the relations between them. The Eastern Question was therefore a major challenge to the Great Powers acting collectively as the Concert of Europe. The fate of the Turkish Empire became a source of rivalry and suspicion among the major European states because they were unable to agree on a 'solution' to the problem posed by Turkey's decline<sup>22</sup>.

Without any agreement, the loose collective security concepts of the Concert of Europe began to unravel and the Eastern Question became a series of crises which led to the 1854-1856 Crimean War. Russia, a Great Power, was on one side during this war and two of the other members of the Concert of Europe (France and Britain) were on the other side along with the Ottoman Empire. Prussia and Austria were not combatants in this war. Russia lost the war but the "Sick man of Europe," the Ottoman Empire, did not improve and, even though the Eastern Question was modified by the Crimean War, it was not partially resolved until the end of WWI, and it could be strongly argued that it was one of the causes of WWI. Some could even argue that it still has not been really resolved, since there was NATO involvement in Kosovo in 1998/1999.

The Crimean War did not solve the Eastern Question, but it greatly reduced the whole idea of the Concert of Europe being involved in a type of collective security for its members. Thus, the Concert of Europe, with its collective security overtones, in a very weakened state, was not able to satisfactorily deal with the challenges to the concepts of the 1815 Congress of Vienna that arose in the 1860s and early 1870s with the unification of Italy and Germany and some of these challenges involved the populations of the Baltic Sea region.

The first significant issue was the unification of Italy. The Concert of Europe, instead of working together, worked against each other. An island off the coast of Italy, Sardinia, had significantly helped France and Britain in the Crimean War, so France and Britain sided with the Italian unification personnel in their attempt to unify Italy where the major perceived enemy was Austria, who was also a member of the Concert of Europe<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Lowe, *The Concert of Europe: International Relations 1814-70*, p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> Hinsley, pp. 247-249.

Soon after the unification of Italy, the process started to unify Germany under Prussian leadership, which had ramifications for the Baltic Sea Region and eventually for all of Europe. Otto Von Bismarck, the Minister President of Prussia (later the first Chancellor of Germany), having realized the Concert of Europe would not become involved and not try to stop his actions, engineered a way to have German unification complete by 1871 under Prussian leadership (except for Austria). This process was by use of three well planned wars that Prussia won in 1864 with Denmark, 1866 with Austria, and 1871 with France<sup>24</sup>.

By 1871, after the war with France, Prussia had all of the major German lands (except Austria and some smaller German lands in the Austro-Hungarian Empire) unified under Prussian leadership into a new country named Germany<sup>25</sup>. During the 1860s and early 1870s, the dynamics of the Baltic Sea region of northern Europe had greatly changed. The center of European power had moved north with two of the five or six most powerful countries in Europe bordering the Baltic Sea.

Denmark's place in the hierarchy of the Baltic Sea Region at the end of the 1860s had changed and Denmark would not have its forces involved in war outside its frontiers again until 1999 with the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. Thus gradually, from the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648 through the Napoleonic Wars ending in 1815 and now with the Danish Prussian War of 1864, all of the Scandinavian Countries became more peace loving and less aggressive, setting the ground work for the five nations to be leaders and supporters on the world stage of the concepts that led to the League of Nations and the humanitarian work of the League and later the UN. There was no longer a Nordic Great Power, but their influence would be felt around all of Europe, and even the entire world, with concepts like the development of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Another of the Baltic Sea Nations, Russia, had risen to the Great Power status by the end of the Napoleonic Wars, but its loss in the Crimean War and its vast internal issues kept Russia constantly leaning to being unstable. Russia controlled a lot of land and people around or near the Baltic Sea (what is presently Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and parts of Lithuania/Poland). This area was mainly stable, but the most

<sup>24</sup> Lowe, *The Concert of Europe: International Relations 1814-70*, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> Rene Albrecht-Carrie (Editor) *The Concert of Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 216-242.

restlessness was in Poland/Lithuania, where both areas had been independent countries for hundreds of years previously. The Russian Empire, as a whole, had over 1/3 of its population whose first language was not Russian, therefore Russia was not a very united Empire and had a lot of concerns and was slow to get into the industrial revolution and so not as wealthy as Germany, Britain, or France. In addition, Russia had constant concerns with trying to have a free and open year round port into the Mediterranean, which forced Russia to have constant issues with the Ottoman Empire and, finally, disagreements with both Austria and the Ottoman Empire over the Slavic areas in the Balkans. For the above reasons and others, the leadership of Russia felt insecure and its Tzar, Alexander II, was always looking for “friends.” The Tzar had tried to stay friendly with Prussia and, after German unification, with Germany, but, after 1890, with Bismarck leaving office, Russia had to find new friends. During this whole period, Alexandria made many gestures towards trying to “rebuild” the Concert of Europe via conferences and congresses<sup>26</sup>.

The greatest change in the Baltic Sea region was Bismarck’s Germany, starting in 1871. Without a doubt, Germany now had the best trained and largest land force in Europe. Would Germany continue to want to increase its land size and would Germany want to develop more coast line along the Baltic Sea now that it was the greatest continental power in Europe? Germany also was the third most industrialized country in the world, only behind Britain and the USA, and, by 1900, only the USA was ahead of Germany<sup>27</sup>.

From 1815–1854, there was relative peace in Europe and the Concert of Europe managed relatively well, but from the 1854 Crimean War until the 1871 Franco-Prussian War, a number of wars of aggression occurred which suggests the existence of Clausewitz’s concept that war is just one possible extension of national policies<sup>28</sup>.

**26** John Lowe, *Rivalry & Accord: International Relations: 1870-1914* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), pp. 10-12.

**27** *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

**28** John Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* [Translator & Editor: Michael Howard & Peter Paret] (New York: Everyman’s Library, 1993), pp. 701-732.

## The road to WWI

After 1871, with German unification, peace returned to Europe for approximately 45 years because, besides Britain and Russia looking for peace, Germany under Bismarck (until 1890) wanted to keep a peaceful balance of power in Europe. Bismarck was not interested in enlarging Germany any more, he even admitted several times that he had not wanted to annex Alsace-Lorraine from France at the end of the Franco-Prussian War, and only did it because the Kaiser and the leading Prussian General, Moltke (the elder) wanted it. Bismarck believed that this land grab from France would cause long term trouble in Europe, which Bismarck worried would encourage France to build or form an alliance with other countries against Germany. From 1871 until he left office in 1890, Bismarck was interested in working with the other Great Powers in Europe to rekindle the concepts of the Concert of Europe to isolate France so that Germany would not find itself surrounded by enemies<sup>29</sup>.

After 1871, the return to the use of congresses, and smaller meetings called conferences, was beginning to happen again in Europe with all of the Great Powers more inclined to try in theory to follow the guidance of the 1815 Congress of Vienna. This was especially true of Germany, Britain, and Russia, who needed friends. Some of these meetings were the London Conference of 1871, the Constantinople Conference of 1876-7, the Congress of Berlin of 1878-9, the Conference of Madrid of 1880, and the Berlin conference on Africa of 1884.

...and it was Great Britain, appealing in her turn to the principle that the Eastern Question was the concern of all of the Powers, who obtained the outstanding success at the Congress of Berlin of 1878-9. This Congress harked back to the Congress of Vienna in more ways than merely in name. The London Times was not alone in hailing it as 'the first instance of a real Parliament of the Great Powers.'<sup>30</sup>

If this was the first real parliament of the Great Powers since at least 1815, then maybe it should be considered a major step towards the formation of the "Council" of the 1919/1920 League of Nations. In addition during these times, a significant,

<sup>29</sup> Paul H. W. Koch, *A History of Prussia* (NY: Barnes & Nobel, 1978), pp. 267-270.

<sup>30</sup> Hinsley, pp. 254-255.

but not directly related, event took place that set an important precedent for the way nations could settle disputes without war. This was the Alabama Claims arbitration of 1872 which was the result of a dispute between Britain and the US concerning the fact that Britain had self-declared to be neutral during the American Civil War of 1861–1865, but had seriously helped supply the “rebels” with ships for use of the Confederate Navy. At the end of the American Civil War, the US demanded compensation from Britain and this dispute went on for several years until a Joint High Commission meeting in Washington, DC, during the early part of 1871, arrived at the basis for a settlement which was finalized in September 1872. This agreement not only demonstrated to the world that major countries could settle serious issues without armed conflict, but, for the first time in over 100 years, Britain and America began the long road to becoming close allies. Their special relationship has now lasted for over 140 years, including two world wars, and, working together, they became the joint main founding fathers of the League of Nations, the UN and NATO<sup>31</sup>.

With the states of Western Europe becoming more democratic in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the public was gradually becoming more involved in discussions related to foreign affairs. The idea of peace instead of conflict was a concept that was gaining attention and international non-government organizations (NGOs) began to develop to promote peace and nonaggression.

An international organization that was started in 1888/1889, as an NGO, but involving official government personnel, was the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). This was started by an Englishman and a Frenchman in 1888, but, at its second conference in 1889, there were 94 representatives of parliaments: fifty-five French, twenty-eight British, five Italians and one each from Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Hungary, the United States, and Liberia. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) was the first permanent forum for political multilateral negotiations. This organization, which many see as part of the foundation for the future League of Nations, is still in existence today but is now funded by governments that send legislative representatives, thus no longer a true NGO. It is presently located in

**31** Office of the Historian, “The Alabama Claims” (Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2014) (<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1861.../alabama>).

Switzerland, but with a small office in the USA at the UN. It now has 166 members and ten associate members<sup>32</sup>.

The peacefulness of Germany, a Baltic Sea Nation, underwent a major change in 1890, when the new Kaiser of Germany, William II, removed Bismarck from office. Bismarck had pursued a German foreign policy that concentrated on security for the new German nation-state within Europe and some called it, "Realpolitik" or realistic. William II (a close relative of the king of Britain) wanted Germany to have its 'place in the sun,' like Britain had with its empire. Thus, the new German Kaiser pushed for a foreign policy that was a world policy, called by some "Weltpolitik." The goal of this new policy was to make Germany into a global power with assertive/combatative diplomacy, a colonial empire, and a large navy to protect the empire<sup>33</sup>.

This foreign policy drove Germany into isolation, except for Austria-Hungary which had a lot of problems because of the Balkans. After 1890, Germany stopped trying to keep France isolated, which it had successfully done since the end of the Franco-Prussia War of 1871. In 1890, Germany did not renew the 1887 Reinsurance Treaty with Russia and, since Russia was interested in allies, Russia turned to France. In August 1892, Russia and France signed a treaty and now Germany would feel it had enemies on both its east and west borders<sup>34</sup>.

Even though changes did not appear suddenly (Russia took until January 1894 to fully agree to the new treaty with France), it did begin to seem that the Concert of Europe was really dying as Europe gradually broke into two alliance groups which took on the names of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. The Triple Alliance, supposedly a defensive alliance, was started in 1882 and was made up of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. By the time of WWI, Italy switched sides, since Italy believed Germany and Austria started the war, thus Italy felt she was not obligated since it was a defense alliance and, in addition, Italy had a secret agreement with France that it had made in 1902. After Italy dropped out of the Triple Alliance, Italy was slowly replaced during WWI by the Ottoman Empire

**32** Claudia Kissling, *The Legal and Political Status of International Parliamentary Institutions* (Berlin: Committee for a Democratic UN, 2011), pp. 22-25.

**33** Lowe, *Rivalry & Accord: International Relations: 1870-1914*, pp. 86-123.

**34** Richard Langhorne, *The Collapse of the Concert of Europe: International Politics 1890-1914* (London: MacMillan Press, 1981), pp. 69-71.

(Turkey) and Bulgaria and the group became known as the Central Powers and/or Quadruple Alliance. Near the end of WWI, other nations attempting to break away from Russia joined this group. Two of these were the Baltic Sea Nations of Lithuania and Finland and some of the rebel groups in Poland, Estonia and Latvia cooperated with the Central Powers while trying to separate from Russia<sup>35</sup>.

The Triple Entente has a more complex development. As stated above, it first started in 1894 with an agreement between Russia and France. Russia was glad to sign with France and, since Bismarck had kept France isolated since 1871, France was very happy to have a diplomatic friend. These two countries were philosophically very far apart. Russia was a very conservative absolute monarchy and France was a liberal democracy, but Germany had left them no choice but to work together looking for some security against what they perceived as potential German threats. By 1904, Britain and France signed a series of agreements which were known as the Entente Cordiale. This signing was an extremely important development in European and world history marking the end of approximately 1,000 years of intermittent conflict between these two nations. In 1907, Britain and Russia signed a friendship agreement, thus now the triple entente was formed between Britain, France, & Russia, even though there were philosophical differences between Russia and Britain as there were between Russia and France. This was not a formal alliance binding the three to go to war if any were attacked, like the Triple Alliance that Germany was part of, but it was an agreement that morally bound the three to support each other in time of need<sup>36</sup>.

The concepts of collective security and collective defense did not really die during this time, but were seriously modified to accommodate not one whole Europe, but a Europe seriously divided into two camps, maybe in some ways similar to the height of the Cold War when the Warsaw Pact and NATO existed at the same time in Europe. Both the Warsaw Pact and NATO were types of collective defense organizations, with maybe arguably the Warsaw Pact being like the Triple Alliance because the members were committed to actually using military force. NATO

**35** James Joll & Gordon Martel, *The Origins of the First World War*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2008), pp. 49-86.

**36** Margaret MacMillan, *The War that Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War* (London: Profile Books, 2014), pp. 131-196.

is maybe more like the Triple Entente because the members are only morally obligated to provide support.

One could debate that the concept of collective security was still in place with an almost defunct Concert of Europe, but the greatest problem with all of these comparisons was the same as it had been since 1648: there was no formal centralized organization or organizations to manage the operations. Whereas the UN, NATO, and EU all have a centralized administrative headquarters, nothing like that existed until the League of Nations was formed in 1920. How does the Concert of Europe develop into the League or does it have to completely die for the League to be born?

In between the 1889 founding of the IPU and the 1920 founding of the League of Nations, there were two Hague Conferences/Conventions. These were also known as the International Peace Conference of 1899 and the Second International Peace Conference of 1907. It can be argued that, to a certain extent, these were the last two meetings of the Concert of Europe, under a new name. The first was initiated by the Czar of Russia, a Great Power according to the “rules of 1815,” and the second, though requested by the President of the US, was really an extension of the first. The two meetings focused on the governing rules of war and the peaceful settlement of international disputes and thus helped set the stage for the future League of Nations.

As stated earlier, the theoretical concept of a peaceful world community of states was proposed in 1795, when the political philosopher Kant wrote “Perpetual Peace.” In his essay, Kant sketched the concept of a confederation (league) of states (nations) to promote peace and control conflict between countries. He also believed that a republican form of government for the states is more pacific than other forms of government and that freedom of emigration (hospitality between states) as well as his “league of nations” are keys to a more peaceful world<sup>37</sup>.

Also stated earlier was that Jeremy Bentham was a disciple of Kant’s liberal international thinking about perpetual peace and the need for an international

37 Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History* [Ed & Introduction by Pauline Kleingeld & translated by David Colasure] (New Haven, CN: Yale Univ Press, 2006) (Parts originally printed in Europe, 1795), pp. xv-xix & 67-109.

body that would provide the legal framework for the organization and operation of the peace, which was their idea behind a collective security system.

Jeremy Bentham also had ideas on the way government was organized and some of his materials reached the United States and were later read and used by the future President Woodrow Wilson while he was a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Thus Bentham's (and indirectly Kant's) liberal ideas about international relations had a major impact on the thinking of Wilson as he developed his subconscious concepts on collective security and the institution framework of his League of Nations during and at the end of WWI<sup>38</sup>.

President Wilson became the world's most influential statesman in the immediate aftermath of World War I. His arguments dominated the new discipline of International Relations. They drew heavily (and often unselfconsciously) on a liberal social-contract tradition, and were expressed in tight legislative arguments which strongly echoed those which Jeremy Bentham had formulated a century before<sup>39</sup>.

## Conclusion

The discussions that led to the founding of the League of Nations started in several countries long before World War I had ended. Some Europeans, especially the French, wanted to build a formal grand alliance (similar to the future NATO) and others, like Jean Monnet, one of the founding executive committee members of the League, had the concept of building a confederation of European states (similar to the EU). Approximately 30 years later, Jean Monnet was one of the founders of what would become the EU. However, at the end of 1918 after four long years of a war that had started as a European War, but ended as a World War, it was obvious that if an international organization was to be formed, it had to be

**38** Dorothy Ross, *The origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 274-288.

**39** Torbjörn L. Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 214.

something new, different, unique, and have the potential to cover all of the world not just Europe<sup>40</sup>.

In a speech to the US Congress, US President Woodrow Wilson, who held a PhD in political science, announced his 14 Points for Peace on 8 January 1918. WWI had started over three years earlier, the US had been at war for nine months, and the war lasted eleven more months. The final point of the 14 laid the basis for the future League of Nations:

14. [establishment of] A general association of nations [must be] formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike<sup>41</sup>.

With the development of the League in January 1920, the world had created the largest/most influential international organization ever to have existed, and Wilson had personally chaired the League's designing committee at the Peace Conference. The League's basic task was to maintain the international order as it had been established by the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. The League's aims differed little from the replaced Concert of Europe, but its structure was totally different. It had a body of full time paid employees independent of the member governments' civil servants<sup>42</sup>.

Even though President Wilson was the chief proponent of the League, the US never joined the League, thus the League did not live up to its purpose. Regardless, the League is very important in the history of IR as an attempt to shape a new international order based on a formal institution with near universal membership. Social and economic concerns did receive attention in the League's design and operations, but the League's main purpose was promoting peace. Article 16 of the League's Covenant requiring all members to assist any member that had suffered a military attack. The League's outstanding place in history is the first attempt at "organized" collective security: that is an institution operating under what the

<sup>40</sup> C. Archer, *International Organizations: 3rd Ed* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2001), p.14.

<sup>41</sup> H.W. Brands, *Woodrow Wilson* (NY: Times Books, Henry Holt & CO, 2003), p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> Volker Barth, "International Organizations & Conferences," *European History on Line* [Mainz, Leibniz European History Institute {IEG} ([www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/](http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/))], 7 May 2012].

British might call the “musketeers’ oath” or in other words functioning with the idea of “all against one”<sup>43</sup>.

Wilson’s announcement of his 14 Points in January 1918 not only started the move to a League of Nations but also united great hopes throughout the world with his concept of “self-determination”, thus supporting the concept of nation-states<sup>44</sup>.

The “age of the sovereign state” started in 1648 with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia ending the Thirty Years War. Then, with the end of WW I and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the Paris Peace Conference in June 1919, Wilson’s words, coming from a political philosopher who happened to be the President of a great power, created the “age of the sovereign nation-state” which we still have today almost 100 years later.

1648 also started the beginnings of collective security, but it took over 270 years and two additional very destructive major wars (French Revolution/Napoleonic War and WWI) for the creation of the 1920 League. The League provided an organizational framework for the concept of collective security that still continues today.

Even though the League did not survive, the resulting UN did and so have two other organizations created from the ideas of this same period: NATO and the EU. As a consequence of the League, and later the UN, NATO and the EU, small nations, like those of the Baltic Sea Region, have a voice which they would not have otherwise, allowing the concept of sovereign nation states to exist in reality and not just in theory.

<sup>43</sup> Inis Claude, Jr., *Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization*, 4th Edition (New York:, Random House, 1971), pp. 51-55, 261-268, 459, etc.

<sup>44</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six months that changed the world* (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. viii-ix, xxix, & 10-14.