



The Congress of Vienna

BathMUN One-Day Conference

Introduction

BACK IN FEBRUARY, I had the pleasure of chairing the beginner UNSC committee at BrisMUN 2026. The topic was the Korean War, and although the delegates were extremely competent at making speeches, proposing motions, and writing resolutions, the part that they seemed to enjoy the most was an unmoderated caucus where they attempted to solve the conflict by drawing a line on a map.

The Congress of Vienna is certainly an important topic: it was the first major international peace conference, it created a balanced international system that remained more or less stable for 99 years, it was heavily significant to German and Italian unification – but the main reason it’s a good topic for Model UN is its geopolitical scope: the Congress completely redefined the map of Europe, sculpting borders, abolishing old countries, inventing new ones, picking new monarchs and succession laws, and creating brand new international systems. In other words, the bulk of the Congress was spent drawing lines on maps.

Model UN is a serious endeavour – and I have made every effort to fill this study guide with useful and relevant information – but more importantly, it’s fun, and I would much prefer a lively debate filled with outlandish proposals for partitioning France than a choreographed reenactment of the exact proceedings at Vienna.

Have fun!

Peter Meiklem

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Historical Background

IF YOU HAVE AN HOUR TO SPARE, I would strongly recommend watching *The Napoleonic Wars* by Oversimplified on YouTube, which presents a detailed overview of the wars which preceded the Congress of Vienna. The short version is:

The French Revolution (1789 -1803)

In the 18th century, France was one of the most conservative, religious, and feudal societies in Europe. This made the royal family increasingly out of touch, and in 1789 a series of economic disasters (partially caused by bad harvests, and partially by bankrolling the American War of Independence) led to the entire government being overturned by revolutionaries. Over the next decade, the revolutionary government abolished the monarchy, the nobility, the feudal system, the calendar, and the church; guillotined nearly 17,000 people, and declared war on everyone in Europe.

The Napoleonic Wars (1792 -1814)

Despite being completely surrounded and outnumbered, France somehow started winning, and reorganised their conquered territories into 'sister republics'. As France grew in power (and started rolling back the more radical reforms) they found allies in Spain, Germany, and Poland. Everywhere else was repeatedly beaten into submission by the French army, which defeated various allied coalitions under the leadership of General Napoleon Bonaparte.

Napoleon's victories made him a national hero, and in 1804 he had himself crowned 'Emperor of the French'. Under his rule, France annexed vast swathes of Europe, and various other countries were reformed into radical monarchies led by French marshals or Napoleon's relatives.

The system finally began to collapse when Napoleon tried to impose his brother as King of Spain, which was fiercely resisted by the Spanish populace. The final blow was Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia, where a Russian strategy of scorched earth led to the total disintegration of France's largest army. France's network of allies collapsed, and Paris fell to the allied powers (Russia, Prussia, and Austria) in 1814.

The 1814 Treaty of Paris restored the old French monarchy¹, restored France to its 1792 borders, and said that everything else would be decided at a 'general congress' in Vienna.

¹ Napoleon was banished to the Italian island of Elba.

Delegates at the Congress

HUNDREDS OF STATES, princely houses, and special interest groups sent delegations to the Congress of Vienna. This conference will focus on the territorial disputes between the various governments (some of which had spent the last two decades in exile) which sent delegations to Vienna. Some (e.g. Russia²) were led by a single figurehead, others (e.g. Switzerland³) by several ambassadors. For the purposes of this conference, each country will have one delegate, who will represent a real historical figure present at Vienna.

The countries presented hereunder have been divided into three groups. The **great powers** – Austria, Britain, France⁴, Prussia, and Russia – were the most powerful countries in Europe at the time, and their consent was essential for any treaty to pass the Congress (kind of like the P5). The **lesser powers** – Portugal, Spain, and Sweden – were also required to sign the treaty, but lacked the influence of the great 5. Finally, **minor nations** includes any other state, however significant, which sent delegates to petition the Congress.

Country Matrix

The following delegates will be present at this simulation of the Congress:

Great Powers

Empire of Austria	Klemens von Metternich
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland	Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh
Kingdom of France	Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand
Kingdom of Prussia	Karl August von Hardenberg
Russian Empire	Tsar Alexander I

Lesser Powers

Kingdom of Portugal	Pedro de Sousa Holstein
Kingdom of Spain	Pedro Gómez Labrador
United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway	Carl Löwenhielm

Minor Nations

Kingdom of Bavaria	Maximilian von Montgelas
Kingdom of Denmark	Niels Rosenkrantz

² Russia was represented personally by Tsar Alexander I.

³ Each Swiss canton had its own delegate.

⁴ With Napoleon ousted and the monarchy restored, France was theoretically a normal country again, and so was allowed a seat at the Congress.

Republic of Genoa
Electorate of Hanover
Order of St. John of Malta
Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin
Kingdom of Naples
Sovereign Principality of the United Netherlands
Papal States
Duchy of Parma
Kingdom of Sardinia
Kingdom of Saxony
Kingdom of Sicily
Swiss Confederation
Grand Duchy of Tuscany
Kingdom of Württemberg

Agostino Pareto
Ernst zu Münster
Antonio Miari
Leopold von Plessen
Ottavio Mormile
Hans von Gagern

Cardinal Ercole Consalvi
Adam Albert von Neipperg
Filippo Antonio Asinari
Hanns Augustus Fürchtegott von Globig
Luigi de Medici
Charles Pictet de Rochemont
Neri Corsini
Georg Ernst Levin von Wintzingerode

Voting Mechanics

This conference will use a unique but simple voting system. **Procedural votes** will require a simple majority of delegates. **Substantive votes** will also require a simple majority, with the additional requirement that if **two great powers** (or one great power and all three lesser powers) oppose, the vote fails.

If the Congress fails to pass a treaty, Europe will be engulfed in war.

Germany

Germany in this period was so hideously fragmented that they had to invent a word for border gore (*kleinstaaterei*, literally ‘small-state-ery’) long before the invention of Paradox games.

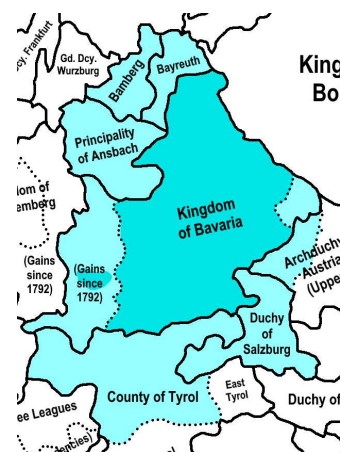
Starting with the territories directly annexed by France, **East Friesland** was an old Prussian exclave, and the **Duchy of Oldenburg** was formerly independent, as was the **Prince-Bishopric of Münster** and the **Electorate of Hanover** (split in two by Napoleon, but now restored).

The **Grand Duchy of Berg**, **Grand Duchy of Hesse**, **Principality of Waldeck**, **Duchy of Nassau**, **Grand Duchy of Frankfurt**, **Grand Duchy of Würzburg** and **Grand Duchy of Baden** were all independent states which had allied with France as members of the Confederation of the Rhine. The same was true for the ‘sister duchies’ of **Mecklenburg-Schwerin** and **Mecklenburg-Strelitz** in the north. **Westphalia** (a particularly loyal French puppet) had been expanded under Napoleon’s rule to include the old **Electorate of Hesse-Kassel** and parts of Hanover and Brandenburg (Prussia).

The **Duchy of Holstein** was a German duchy ruled in personal union with Denmark. **Swedish Pomerania** was a similar territory historically ruled by Sweden, but was now disputed between Sweden and Denmark after an 1814 deal involving Norway (the Treaty of Kiel).

The **Kingdom of Saxony** was a major sticking-point at the Congress, because they had sided with France, and Prussia wanted to ‘punish’ them by annexing their territory. The neighbouring **Saxon Duchies** were a collection of separate states, owned by distant relatives of the King of Saxony, but not part of his kingdom.

The **Kingdoms of Württemberg** and **Bavaria** had both made territorial gains thanks to France, but made last-minute plea bargains with the allies to switch sides. In Bavaria’s case, these gains included the old **Prince-Bishopric of Bamberg**, the Prussian **Principalities of Bayreuth** and **Ansbach**, the formerly independent **Duchy of Salzburg**, most of the Austrian **County of Tyrol**⁵, and part of the **Archduchy of Austria**. The allies had initially promised to let them keep this land, but now that victory had been achieved it was unclear whether this would be honoured.



Bavarian expansion from 1792 (dark blue) to 1814 (light blue).

Prussia

The **Margraviate of Brandenburg**, **Prussian Silesia**, **Province of Pomerania**, **West Prussia** and **Duchy of Prussia** were all core Prussian territories held throughout the wars.

South Prussia and **New East Prussia** were obtained during the second and third partitions of Poland, but were taken by France (with part of West Prussia) to form the Duchy of Warsaw, which was now under Russian occupation. The **Free City of Danzig** was originally part of West Prussia, but was split off into an independent state by Napoleon.

⁵ South and East Tyrol went to Napoleon’s puppet Kingdom of Italy.

Prussia also had claims to several small German exclaves it lost during the Napoleonic Wars. These included **East Friesland**; parts of **Münster**, **Berg**, and the **Lower Rhine**; and the now-Bavarian principalities of **Bayreuth** and **Ansbach**.

Austria

Austria was a bit of a mess, as it was made of several countries which were formally independent. Those that remained Austrian throughout the Napoleonic Wars included the **Archduchy of Austria**, **Bohemia**, **Moravia**, **Duchy of Silesia**, **Galicia & Lodomeria**, **Hungary**, **Bukovina**, **Transylvania**, **Serbia & Temeschwar**, **Slavonia**, and **Styria**.

Habsburg realms partially or fully lost to French clients included the Austrian Netherlands (**Belgium** and **Luxembourg**), Italian **Duchies of Milan** and **Mantua** (to France), **County of Tyrol** (split between Bavaria and France), **Duchy of Carinthia** (partially, to France), **Austrian Littoral** (France), **Duchy of Carinola** (France), and the **Kingdom of Croatia** (partially, to France). There was also the matter of the Holy Roman Empire: a bloated relic of mediaeval bureaucracy which was 'ruled' by the Austrian Emperor until Napoleon forced its dissolution in 1806.

When Venice fell in 1797, Austria briefly gained the **Venetian Province** and **Kingdom of Dalmatia**, but later lost them to France. Austria also obtained **West Galicia** during the final partition of Poland, but Napoleon incorporated it to the Duchy of Warsaw, which by 1814 was under Russian occupation.



Prussian provinces held throughout the Napoleonic Wars (dark green) and lost during the Napoleonic Wars (light green).



Austrian crown lands held throughout the Napoleonic Wars (red), and lost during the Napoleonic Wars (orange). Former Holy Roman Empire depicted in yellow with red borders to indicate which Habsburg territories were members.

Northern Europe

The Nordic realms – that is, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland – suffered few border disputes, but changed hands a few times during the Napoleonic Wars. The **Kingdom of Sweden** initially owned **Finland** and **Swedish Pomerania** (in north Germany), and the **Kingdom of Denmark** owned **Norway** and **Schleswig** (in north Germany).

In 1809, Russia (on France's side) defeated Sweden and took Finland. In 1814 Sweden (on the allied side) defeated Denmark and took Norway in exchange for Swedish Pomerania (the Treaty of Kiel). Norway rebelled, and Sweden used this as an excuse to refuse to hand over Swedish Pomerania as agreed, which Denmark contested at the Congress of Vienna.

Of the Baltic islands, **Aland** was Finnish, **Dago** and **Osel** were Russian, **Gothland** was Swedish, and **Bornholm** was Danish.

Poland

The early phases of the French revolutionary wars coincided with the 'Partitions of Poland', where the absolutely massive Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was split between Prussia (**West Prussia**, then **South Prussia**, then **New East Prussia**), Russia (the **Russian Partitions**), and Austria (the **Kingdom of Galicia & Lodomeria**, then **West Galicia**).

When Napoleon restored Poland as the Duchy of Warsaw, he did so entirely from the Austrian and Prussian partitions (West Galicia, South Prussia, New East Prussia, and part of West Prussia). During Napoleon's retreat, Russia placed the entire duchy under military occupation, and refused to restore it to Prussia or Russia, demanding Poland as a Russian spoil.



The Prussian (blue), Russian (green), and Austrian (yellow) partitions of Poland. Borders of Napoleon's Duchy of Warsaw in red.

Switzerland

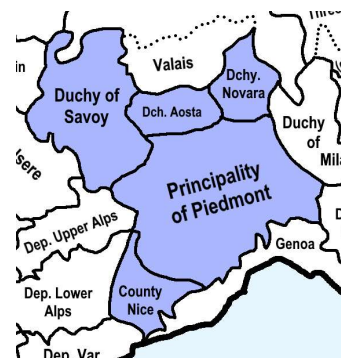
Switzerland was divided into several small independent cantons and associate states, which have been lumped together on the provided map. Most remained Swiss throughout the Napoleonic Wars, with two major exceptions: the **Canton of Valais** was annexed by France, and the **Three Leagues** (a Swiss associate) lost some dependent territories to Napoleonic Italy.

Italy

Pre-Napoleonic Italy was (though less seriously than Germany) horribly fragmented, and had been completely reorganised under Napoleon into a network of French client states. Some ancient states had been completely destroyed, and others were forced into exile or submission, hoping to be restored by the Congress.

Piedmont-Sardinia

The **Principality of Piedmont**, together with the **County of Nice** and the **Duchies of Savoy, Aosta, and Novara** were all historically ruled by the King of Sardinia, and were all annexed by France⁶ during the Napoleonic Wars. **Sardinia** itself held out due to the protection of the Royal Navy, and sent a delegation to Vienna to petition for its old territories.



Mainland territories of the King of Sardinia prior to the Napoleonic Wars.

Northern Italy

The rest of Northern Italy was either annexed by France or incorporated into Napoleon's 'Kingdom of Italy'. The old **Republic of Genoa**, the **Duchy of Parma**, and northern **Duchy of Lucca** all went to France. The **Duchies of Milan and Mantua** (formerly Austrian), **South Tyrol** (Austrian), **Venetia** (Venice⁷), and the southern **Duchy of Lucca** all went to Napoleonic Italy.

Central Italy

The independent **Grand Duchy of Tuscany** was annexed by France. The Papal States – known as legations – were split between Napoleonic Italy (the **Legations of Romagna and Marche**) and France (the **Legations of Umbria, Rome, and Campagna**)⁸. The tiny **Republic of San Marino** remarkably maintained its independence throughout the Napoleonic Wars, apparently because Napoleon respected it as a bastion of France's libertarian and republican ideals.



Papal States in 1792

The island of **Elba** (historically part of Tuscany, annexed by France) was given by the allies to the defeated Napoleon in the initial peace settlement at Paris. This bemusing decision was Russia's idea, and was hotly contested by the British⁹.

⁶ The Duchy of Novara went to Napoleon's puppet Kingdom of Italy

⁷ The east part of Venetia, known as the 'Venetian Province', briefly went to Austria.

⁸ The Papal States also held an exclave in France until 1791 known as the *Comtat Venaissin*, now the west half of the Department of Vaucluse.

⁹ The British government had made a point of never recognising Napoleon's title of Emperor, but were forced by the Treaty of Paris to recognise Napoleon as 'Emperor of Elba'.

Naples

The Kingdom of Naples (shown here split into its historic provinces) was historically held in personal union with the Kingdom of Sicily, but had been conquered by Napoleon who put his marshal Murat in charge. This led to a dispute at the Congress between Murat (who had been promised he could keep Naples if he switched sides) and the old King of Sicily (who refused to renounce his claim).

The island of **Malta** was originally owned by the Knights Hospitaller (known as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta), but was annexed by France, and then captured by Britain. The Order's government went to exile in Sicily, where they spent the rest of the Napoleonic Wars petitioning Britain for their island back.

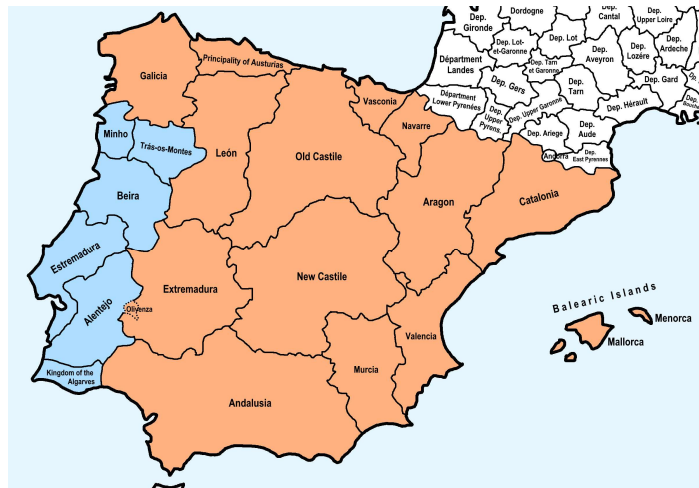


Provinces of Naples (blue) and Sicily (green).

Iberian Peninsula

The provided map depicts the historic regions of Spain and Portugal. Those worthy of note include **Catalonia** (which was annexed by France during the Napoleonic Wars), and **Olivenza** (a Portuguese border town annexed by Spain during the Napoleonic Wars, now disputed¹⁰).

Spain also owned the Mediterranean **Balearic Islands** (**Mallorca** and **Menorca**).



Historic regions of Spain (orange) and Portugal (blue).

¹⁰ Fun fact: this dispute was never resolved, and Portugal and Spain still dispute the region to this day.

Resolution Writing

SINCE THIS IS THE 19TH CENTURY and the United Nations is yet to be established, the modern UN resolution format does not exist. Fortunately for ROP stans, 19th-century diplomatic treaties have their own equally strict formatting conventions. Should you wish to format your final treaty in the most authentic manner, please observe this style guide.

Structure

Introduction and Preamble

A treaty should begin with a title, date, and the opening line “**In the Name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity.**” After this, delegates may include **preambulatory paragraphs** detailing their motives for signing the treaty. For example:

Treaty of Paris

20th of November, 1815

In the Name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity.

The Allied Powers having by their united efforts, and by the success of their arms, preserved France and Europe from the convulsions with which they were menaced by the late enterprise of Napoleon Bonaparte, and by the Revolutionary system reproduced in France...

Second Treaty of Paris, 1815

After the preamble, there is a **list of signatories**. This includes **each monarch** (or republic) who is party to the treaty, **followed by the delegate** (or ‘plenipotentiary’) they appointed to sign. For example:

And the above-mentioned powers having appointed Plenipotentiaries to the Congress, that is to say:

His Majesty the Emperor of Austria:

Klemens von Metternich, his Minister of Foreign Affairs.

His Majesty the King of Spain:

Dom Pedro Gomez Labrador, his Councillor of State.

His Majesty the King of France:

Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, Secretary of State in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
(etc.)

Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, 1815 (heavily abridged)¹¹

The list of delegates concludes with a sentence to the effect of:

Who, having exchanged their Full Powers, found to be in good and due form, have signed the following Articles:

Treaty of Paris, 1815

Articles

Instead of clauses, sub-clauses, and sub-paragraphs, treaties are broken down into **articles**. Articles are numbered with **Roman numerals** and may contain any number of sentences or paragraphs. For example:

Article III: It is agreed that the People of the United States shall continue to enjoy unmolested the Right to take Fish of every kind on the Grand Bank and on all the other Banks of Newfoundland, also in the Gulph of St Lawrence, and at all other Places in the Sea where the Inhabitants of both Countries used at any time heretofore to fish...

Treaty of Paris, 1783

Articles are not generally subdivided into numbered subparagraphs, but may include numbered lists or tables if necessary.

Signing

A treaty ends with a declaration that it has been **signed and sealed**, followed by the **date and location** of the signing, followed by the **signatures of the delegates**¹². For example:

In faith of which the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed this Act, and have affixed thereunto the seals of their arms.

Done at Vienna the 9th of June, in the year of our Lord 1815.

(L.S.) The Prince von Metternich,

(L.S.) The Prince de Talleyrand,

¹¹ The actual treaty includes excessively long titles for each delegate.

¹² Each signature is preceded by the acronym (L.S.). This stands for *locus sigilli*, meaning “place of the seal”, and stands in place of the traditional wax seal which would historically have been affixed to a treaty.

(etc.)

Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, 1815

Language

Treaties should be written in formal English, using fancy words like ‘stipulation’, ‘desirous’, and ‘shall’. The signatories of the treaty should be collectively referred to as ‘**the high contracting parties**,’ and individual states should (where possible) be referred to **by monarch**, and not by name. For example, instead of saying:

The island of Malta shall belong to the United Kingdom.

Consider saying:

The island of Malta and its dependencies shall belong in full right and sovereignty to his Britannic majesty.

Treaty of Paris, 1814. Article VII.

Treaty Titles

In the example above, “his Britannic majesty” is used as a shorthand for the more cumbersome “his majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland”. This is known as a **treaty title**. At the time of the Congress of Vienna, the following treaty titles were in use:

Monarch	Treaty Title
Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary	<i>His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty</i>
King of Bavaria	<i>His Bavarian Majesty</i>
King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland / Elector of Hanover	<i>His Britannic Majesty</i>
King of Denmark	<i>His Danish Majesty</i>
King of France	<i>His (Most) Christian Majesty</i>
Holy Roman Emperor ¹³	<i>His August Majesty</i>
King of Naples	<i>His Neapolitan Majesty</i>
The Pope	<i>His Holiness</i>
Queen of Portugal	<i>Her (Most) Faithful Majesty</i>
King of Prussia	<i>His Prussian Majesty</i>
Emperor of all the Russians	<i>His Russian Majesty</i>

¹³ The Holy Roman Empire was abolished in 1806, so this should only be used if delegates choose to restore it.

King of Saxony

His Saxon Majesty

King of Sardinia

His Sardinian Majesty

King of Sicily

His Sicilian Majesty

King of Spain

His Catholic Majesty

King of Sweden

His Swedish Majesty

Republics should be referred to in third person with female pronouns, for example:

Switzerland, independent, shall continue to govern herself.

Treaty of Paris, 1814. Article VI.

Citations and Bibliography

Videos

The Napoleonic Wars by Oversimplified: an entertaining but highly detailed pair of videos chronicling the series of wars which led up to the Congress of Vienna.

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqlxbPWKNI>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mY3SEMTR0as>

The Congress of Vienna by Historia Civilis: an excellent pair of videos breaking down the diplomatic goals of the five great powers (Part 1) and the negotiations that took place at the Congress (Part 2). Highly recommended watching, especially for delegates of the great powers (and Saxony).

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtOXq9SwarQ>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGJHE6O7Mhk>

Articles

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_of_Vienna

<https://historyguild.org/the-congress-of-vienna/>

Documents

Treaty of Fontainebleau, 1814: the first of several treaties ending the Napoleonic Wars, renouncing Napoleon's claim to the French throne and exiling him to Elba.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Fontainebleau_\(1814\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Fontainebleau_(1814))

Treaty of Paris, 1814: the treaty restoring France to its 1792 borders, and providing the basis for the Congress of Vienna.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_\(1814\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_(1814))

Declaration at the Congress of Vienna: the allies' official response to Napoleon's escape from Elba, which occurred during the negotiations at the Congress.

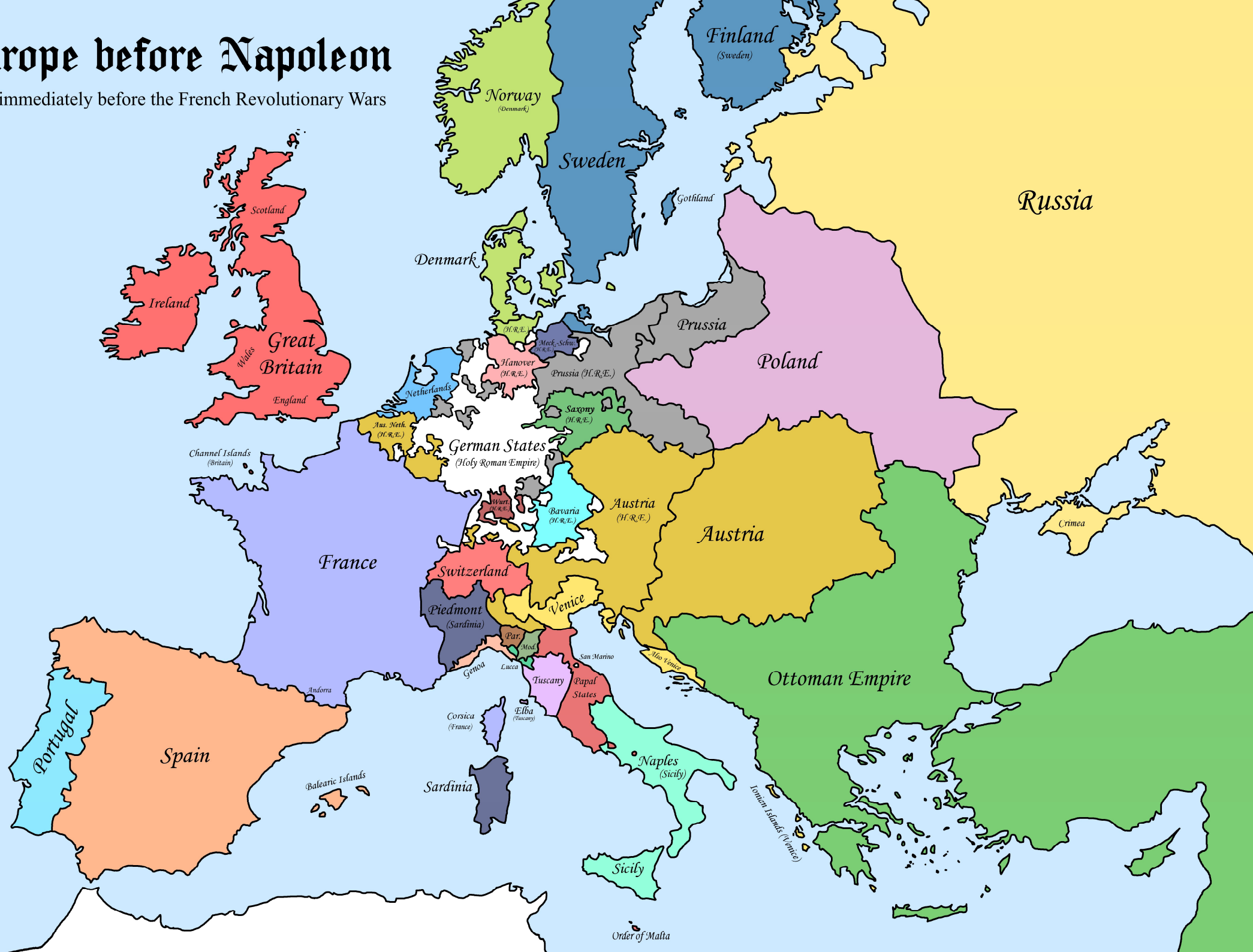
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Declaration_at_the_Congress_of_Vienna

Final Act of the Congress of Vienna: the main treaty to come out of the Congress of Vienna, including all the major territorial changes (warning: extremely verbose).

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Final_Act_of_the_Congress_of_Vienna/General_Treaty

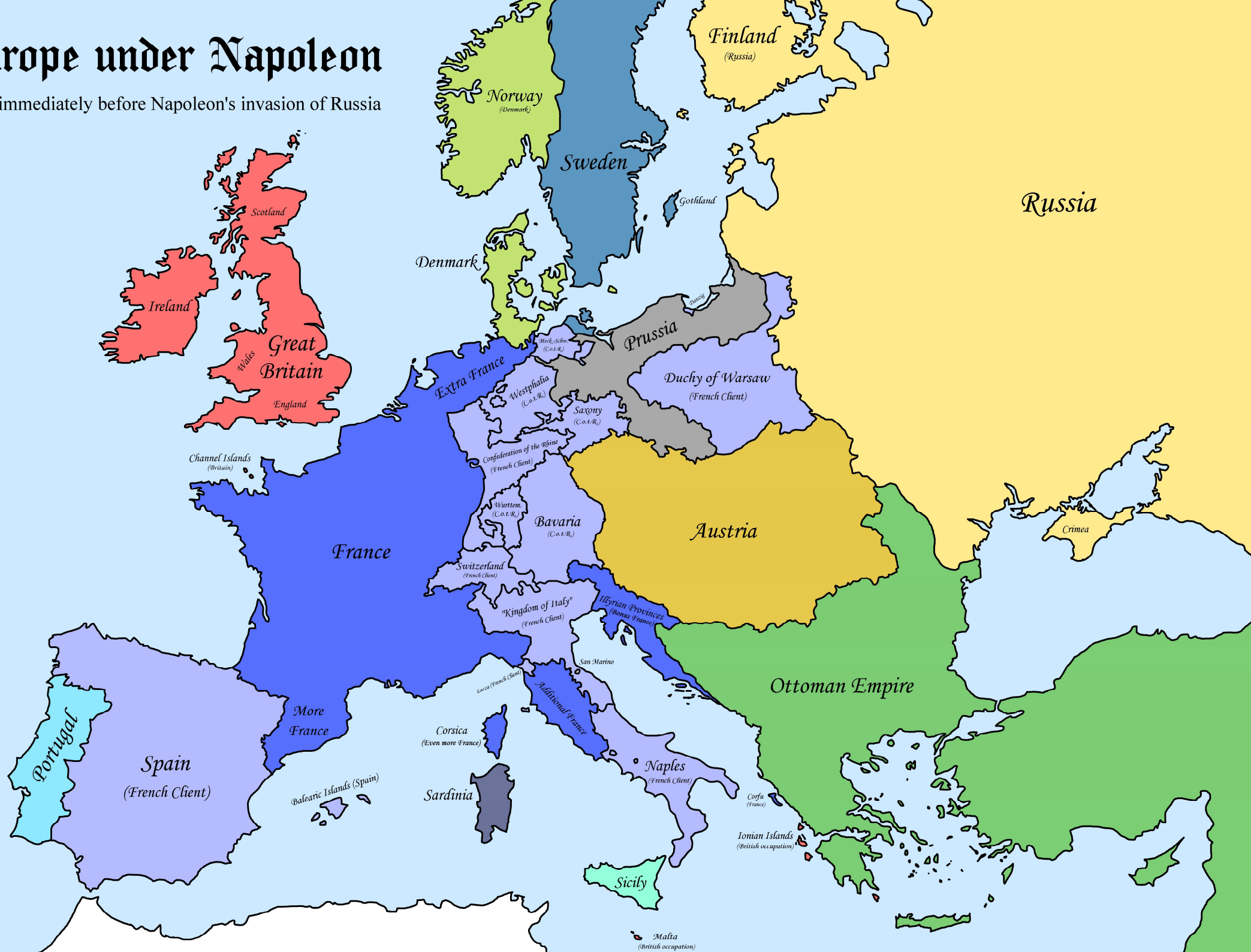
Europe before Napoleon

1792, immediately before the French Revolutionary Wars



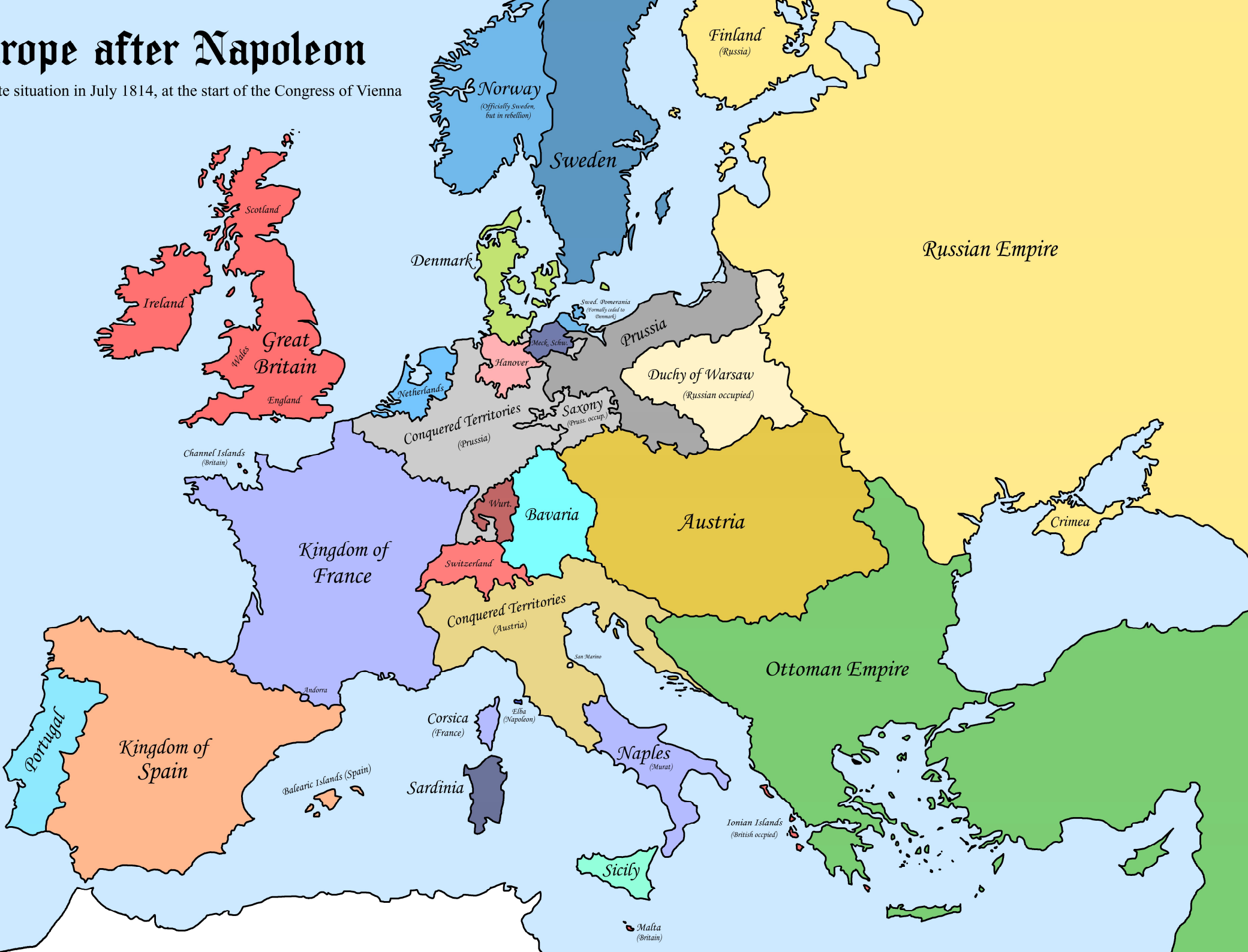
Europe under Napoleon

1812, immediately before Napoleon's invasion of Russia



Europe after Napoleon

Approximate situation in July 1814, at the start of the Congress of Vienna



Territorial Divisions of Europe

Including the départements of France maintained by the Treaty of Paris, the provisional governments established in the Low Countries after France's defeat, various historical German & Italian states, the Habsburg & Savoyard realms, the partitions of Poland, the countries of the United Kingdom, and the historical provinces of Prussia, Naples, Sicily, the Papal States, Spain, and Portugal.

