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Henry IV, and a fragile, temper-
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whom plots swirled, the monar-
chy of France had nonetheless
been greatly strengthened, build-
ing upon the accomplishments
of his predecessor. Louis XIII's
sometimes decisive and brutal
actions enhanced the reputa-
tion of the king who was
known to many of his subjects
as "The Just," whether fitting
or not. A hypochondriac whose
health was even worse than he
feared, Louis XIII died of
tuberculosis in 1643 at the age
of forty-two. But the man-child monarch had, with Richelieu, laid the
foundations for absolute monarchical rule in France.



Philippe de Champagne's portrait of the
sad-eyed Louis XIII.

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR (1618–1648)

In Central Europe, religious divisions and intolerance led to the Thirty Years' War, a brutal conflict during which the largely mercenary armies of Catholic and Protestant states laid waste to the German states. Dynastic rivalries were never far from the stage, bringing the continental Great Powers into the fray. When the war finally ended, the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) established a territorial and religious settlement that lasted until the French Revolution.

Factionalism in the Holy Roman Empire

The Holy Roman Empire was a loose confederation of approximately 1,000 German autonomous or semi-autonomous states. These states ranged in size from powerful Habsburg Austria to Hamburg, Lübeck, and other free cities in the north, and even smaller territories no more than a few square kilometers in size run by bishops. It would have been almost impossible for a traveler to determine where one state stopped and another began had it not been for the frequent toll stations, which provided revenue for each. The

southwestern German state of Swabia, for example, was divided among sixty-eight secular and forty ecclesiastical lords and included thirty-two free cities.

Geographic factors further complicated the political life of the German states. A few of the largest states included territories that were not contiguous. The Upper Palatinate lay squeezed between Bohemia and Bavaria; the Lower Palatinate lay far away in the Rhineland. The former was predominantly Lutheran, the latter Calvinist.

Since 1356, when the constitutional law of the Holy Roman Empire had been established, seven electors (four electoral princes and three archbishops) selected each new Holy Roman emperor. The empire's loose federal structure had a chancery to carry out foreign policy and negotiations with the various German princes. But only in confronting the threat of the Turks from the southeast did the German princes mount a consistent and relatively unified foreign policy.

Other institutions of the Holy Roman Empire also reflected the political complexity of Central Europe. An imperial Diet brought princes, nobles, and representatives of the towns together when the emperor summoned them. An Imperial Court of Justice ruled on matters of importance to the empire. The Holy Roman Empire, once the most powerful force in Europe, had been weakened by its battles with the papacy in the thirteenth century. Yet for some states the empire offered a balance between the desire for a figure of authority who could maintain law and order and their continued political independence.

The Peace of Augsburg (1555), which ended the war between the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and the Protestant German states, had stated that, with the exception of ecclesiastical states and the free cities, the religion of the ruler would be the religion of the land (*cuius regio, eius religio*) (see Chapter 3). This formula, however, did not end religious rivalries or the demands of religious minorities that rulers tolerate their beliefs. The Peace of Augsburg, in fact, reinforced German particularism. It also helped secularize the institutions of the Holy Roman emperor by recognizing the right of the German princes to determine the religion of their states. This also served to end the hope of Charles V to establish an empire that would bring together all of the Habsburg territories in the German states, Spain, and the Netherlands.

The Origins of the Thirty Years' War

Rudolf II (1557–1612), king of Bohemia and Holy Roman emperor (he succeeded his father Maximilian II as Holy Roman emperor in 1576), wanted to launch a religious crusade against Protestantism. He closed Lutheran churches in 1578, reneging on an earlier promise to Bohemian nobles that he would tolerate the religion to which a good many of them had converted.

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Moreover, Rudolf's cousin Archduke Ferdinand II (1578-1637) withdrew the religious toleration Maximilian II had granted in Inner Austria.

Rudolf's imperial army, which had been fighting the Turks on and off since 1593, had annexed Transylvania. The emperor moved against Protestants both there and in Hungary. But in 1605, when Rudolf's army undertook a campaign against the Turks in the Balkans, Protestants rebelled in both places. A Protestant army invaded Moravia, which lies east of Bohemia and north of Austria, close to the Habsburg capital of Vienna. In the meantime, Emperor Rudolf, only marginally competent on his best days (he was subject to depression and later to fits of insanity), lived as a recluse in his castle in Prague. His family convinced his brother Matthias (1557-1619) to act on Rudolf's behalf by making peace with the Hungarian and Transylvanian Protestants, and with the Turks. This Peace of Vienna (1606) guaranteed religious freedom in Hungary. Matthias was then recognized as head of the Habsburgs and Rudolf's heir.

Most everyone seemed pleased with the peace except Rudolf, who concluded that a plague that was ravaging Bohemia was proof that God was displeased with the concessions he had granted Protestants. He denounced Matthias and Ferdinand for their accommodation with the Protestants and with the Turkish "infidels." Matthias allied with the Protestant Hungarian noble Estates and marched against Rudolf, who surrendered. Rudolf ceded Hungary, Austria, and Moravia to Matthias in 1608, and Bohemia in 1611. Rudolf was forced to sign a "Letter of Majesty" in 1609 that granted Bohemians the right to choose between Catholicism, Lutheranism, or one of two groups of Hussites (see Chapter 3). Protestant churches, schools, and cemeteries were to be tolerated.

The decline in the effective authority of the Holy Roman emperor contributed to the end of a period of relative peace in the German states. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, these states had become increasingly quarrelsome and militarized. "The dear old Holy Roman Empire," went one song, "How does it stay together?" Rulers of some member states began to undermine imperial political institutions by refusing to accept rulings by the Imperial Supreme Court and even to attend the occasional convocations of the Diet. "Imperial Military Circles," which were inter-state alliances responsible for defense of a number of states within the empire, had become moribund because of religious antagonisms between the member states.

For a time, the Catholic Reformation profited from acrimonious debates and even small wars between Lutherans and Calvinists. But increasingly Protestants put aside their differences, however substantial, in the face of the continued determination of some Catholic rulers to win back territories lost to Protestantism.

Acts of intolerance heated up religious rivalries. In 1606, in Donauwörth, a southern German imperial free city in which Lutherans held the upper hand and Catholics enjoyed toleration, a riot began when Lutherans tried

to prevent Catholics from holding a procession. The following year, Duke Maximilian of Bavaria sent troops to assure Catholic domination. This angered Calvinist princes in the region, as well as some Lutheran sovereigns. The imperial Diet, convoked two years later, broke up in chaos when Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II refused to increase Protestant representation in the Diet. The political crisis now spread further when some of the German Catholic states sought Spanish intervention in a dispute over princely succession in the small northern Rhineland Catholic territories of Cleves-Jülich, which Henry IV of France threatened to invade. In 1609, Catholic German princes organized a Catholic League, headed by Maximilian of Bavaria. Six Protestant princes then signed a defensive alliance, the Protestant Union, against the Catholic League.

Matthias, who had been elected Holy Roman emperor in 1612, wanted to make the Catholic League an institution of Habsburg will. He also hoped to woo Lutherans from the Protestant Union, which was dominated by the Calvinists. But Matthias's obsession with Habsburg dynastic ambitions, his history of having fought with the Protestant Dutch rebels against Spain (see Chapter 5), and his opportunistic toleration of Lutheranism cost him the confidence of some Catholic princes. Archduke Ferdinand, ruler of Inner Austria, waited in the wings to lead a Catholic crusade against Protestantism. Ferdinand, who had inherited the throne of Hungary in 1617 and that of Bohemia the following year, became Holy Roman emperor upon his uncle Matthias's death in 1619. Ferdinand was a pious man whose confessor convinced him that he could only save his soul by launching a war of religion. In the meantime, Protestant resistance in Bohemia mobilized, seeking Protestant assistance from Transylvania and the Palatinate.

Conflict in Bohemia

In Bohemia, Ferdinand imposed significant limitations on Protestant worship. In Prague, Calvinists and Lutherans began to look outside of Bohemia for potential support from Protestant princes. Protestant leaders convoked



FERDINAND II PAR LA GRACE
DE DIEU EMPEREUR DES ROMAINS

Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia.

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Protestant prince in Central Europe. In 1619, the Estates offered Frederick the crown, and he accepted.

The Protestant cause, like that of the Catholics, became increasingly internationalized and tied to dynastic considerations (see Map 4.2). Now Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II learned that Protestant rebels had refused to recognize his authority in Bohemia and had offered his throne to Frederick. Even more determined to drive Protestants from his realm but lacking an army, Ferdinand turned to outside help. The Catholic king of Spain agreed to send troops he could ill afford; the price of his intervention was the promise of the cession of the Rhineland state of the Lower Palatinate to Spain. The Catholic Maximilian I of Bavaria also sent an army, expecting to be rewarded for his trouble with the Upper Palatinate and with Frederick's title of elector in the Holy Roman Empire.

The Expansion of the Conflict

Protestant armies besieged Vienna, the Habsburg capital, until the arrival of Catholic armies in 1619. The Dutch could not provide assistance to the Protestants, as they were fighting for independence from Spain. Several of the German Protestant states also declined, fearing Catholic rebellions in their own lands. However, with Spanish armies and monies already on the way, the internationalization of the Bohemian crisis had reached the point of no return.

In 1620 the Catholic League raised a largely Bavarian army of 30,000 troops. Count Johannes von Tilly (1559–1632) commanded the Catholic forces. The depressed, indecisive count from Flanders managed to subdue Upper Austria and then defeated the main Protestant Union army at the Battle of White Mountain, near Prague, in November. With the Catholic forces now holding Bohemia, Tilly's army then overran Silesia, Moravia, Austria, and part of the Upper Palatinate. The extent of the Catholic victory expanded the war, increasing the determination of the Catholic League to crush all Protestant resistance and, at the same time, of the Protestant forces to resist at all costs.

Frederick's Protestant forces fought on, counting on help from France and other states who had reason to fear an expansion of Habsburg power in Central Europe. Frederick also hoped to convince James I of England that a victory of the Catholic League would threaten Protestantism. But the English king had placed his hopes on the marriage of his son, Charles, to the sister of Philip IV of Spain (see Chapter 5). Again dynastic rivalries outweighed those of religion.

The war went on, and Tilly's army won a series of small victories. In 1622, the Spanish army defeated Dutch forces at Jülich in the Rhineland, eliminating any possibility of English armed assistance to Frederick through Holland. For the moment, Frederick's only effective force was a plundering mercenary horde in northeastern Germany. Tilly's victory over a Protestant army in 1623

and conquest of most of the claims to Bohemia's throne encouraged by the renewed plans for the marriage of his son turned north to Scandinavia.

The Danish Period

Christian IV (ruled 1588–1646) was ambitious and money, but not a German state of Holstein, to extend his influence and power over the German states. Frederick's difficult opportunity of a lifetime. In man states, assuming that the French as well, would rush to

But King James I of England whose provocative policies gave the Protestant cause on the continent only some money and a few Moreover, Louis XIII of France Rochelle, provided the Danes against the Habsburgs. Christian was unaware of the approach of a most intriguing figures in the

Albrecht Wallenstein (1583–1630) marrying a wealthy widow, had of armies. Raised a Lutheran, and became the most powerful convert could rise to such a power war evolved into not only a dynastic Spain, and Austria, as well as unprincipled free-for-all in which major part. Wallenstein, an ar ruthless, and possessed a violent obsessive—and odd, for a milit of barking or meowing, he some arriving in a town, and forbade wearing heavy boots or spurs or alternated between extreme g always accompanied by an execution Wallenstein, entrusted by Ferdinand army drawn from states for 30,000 men.

and conquest of most of the Palatinate forced Frederick to abandon his claims to Bohemia's throne after having been king for all of one winter. But encouraged by the renewed possibility of English assistance after James's plans for the marriage of his son to the Spanish princess fell through, Frederick turned north to Scandinavia for assistance.

The Danish Period

Christian IV (ruled 1588-1648), the Protestant king of Denmark, had ambition and money, but not a great deal of sense. Also duke of the northern German state of Holstein, the gambling, hard-drinking Dane wanted to extend his influence and perhaps even add territories in the northern German states. Frederick's difficulties seemed to offer the Danish sovereign the opportunity of a lifetime. In 1625, he led his troops into the northern German states, assuming that the English and the Dutch, and perhaps the French as well, would rush to follow his leadership against the Habsburgs.

But King James I of England had died and was succeeded by Charles I, whose provocative policies generated increasing opposition from Parliament (see Chapter 6), leaving him little time to consider intervening on behalf of the Protestant cause on the continent. England and the Netherlands sent only some money and a few thousand soldiers to help the Danish king. Moreover, Louis XIII of France, who was besieging Protestants at La Rochelle, provided the Danes with only a modest subsidy to aid the fight against the Habsburgs. Christian, essentially left to his own devices, was unaware of the approach of a large imperial army commanded by one of the most intriguing figures in the age of religious wars.

Albrecht Wallenstein (1583-1634) was a Bohemian noble who, after marrying a wealthy widow, had risen to even greater fortune as a supplier of armies. Raised a Lutheran, he converted to Catholicism at age twenty and became the most powerful of the Catholic generals. The fact that a convert could rise to such a powerful position again reveals how a religious war evolved into not only a dynastic struggle between the rulers of France, Spain, and Austria, as well as Sweden and Denmark, but also into an unprincipled free-for-all in which mercenary soldiers of fortune played a major part. Wallenstein, an ardent student of astrology, was ambitious, ruthless, and possessed a violent temper. His abhorrence of noise was obsessive—and odd, for a military person. Because he detested the sound of barking or meowing, he sometimes ordered all dogs and cats killed upon arriving in a town, and forbade the townspeople and his soldiers from wearing heavy boots or spurs or anything else that would make noise. He alternated between extreme generosity and horrible cruelty, and was always accompanied by an executioner awaiting his master's command. Wallenstein, entrusted by Ferdinand with raising and commanding an army drawn from states for the Catholic cause, marched north with 30,000 men.

The Catholic army defeated the Danes in 1626, and then marched to the Baltic coast, crossed into Denmark, and devastated the peninsula of Jutland. But Wallenstein's successes engendered nervous opposition within the Catholic states. Furthermore, his troops devastated the lands of friend and foe alike, extracting money and food, plundering, and selling military leadership positions to any buyer, including criminals.

Christian, who had bankrupted his kingdom during this ill-fated excursion, signed the Treaty of Lübeck in 1629, whereby he withdrew from the war and gave up his claims in northern Germany. The treaty was less draconian than it might have been because the seemingly endless war was wearing heavily on some of the Catholic German states. They feared an expansion of Habsburg power, and some of them did not want to add Protestants to their domains.

Ferdinand II now implemented measures against Protestants without convoking the imperial Diet. He expelled from Bohemia Calvinist and Lutheran ministers and nobles who refused to convert to Catholicism and ennobled new men, including foreigners, as a means of assuring Catholic domination. He confiscated the property of nobles suspected of participating in any phase of the Protestant rebellion. With Frederick's electorship now transferred to Maximilian I of Bavaria, the Habsburgs could count on the fact that a majority of the electors were Catholic princes. Captured Habsburg dispatches in 1628 made clear that Ferdinand sought to destroy the freedom of the Protestant German cities of the Hanseatic League in the north in the interest of expanding the Habsburg domains. These revelations alarmed Louis XIII of France.

Ferdinand found that it was not easy to impose Catholicism in territories where it had not been practiced for decades. In the Upper Palatinate, the first priests who came to celebrate Mass there were unable to find a chalice. Half of the parishes in Bohemia were without clergy. Italian priests brought to Upper Austria could not be understood by their parishioners. The Edict of Restitution (1629) allowed Lutherans—but not Calvinists, who were few in number in the German states except in the Palatinate—to practice their religion in certain cities, but ordered them to return to the Catholic Church all monasteries and convents acquired since 1552, when signatories of the Peace of Augsburg had first gathered. Because the Edict of Restitution also gave rulers the right to enforce the practice of their religion within their territories, the war went on.

The Swedish Interlude

In the meantime, England, the Dutch Republic, the northern German state of Brandenburg, and the Palatinate asked the Lutheran king Gustavus Adolphus (ruled 1611–1632) of Sweden to intervene on the Protestant side. The possibility of expanding Swedish territory, a kingdom of



King Gustavus

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King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden in battle.

barely a million inhabitants, was more than Gustavus, with an adventurer's disposition, could resist.

Gustavus, the "Lion of the North," who survived a shipwreck at the age of five, had been tutored in the art of war by mercenary soldiers. He also played the flute, composed poetry, and conversed in ten languages. Gustavus retained, as did a disproportionate number of rulers in his century, a violent temper. Once, coming upon two stolen cows outside an officer's tent, he dragged the thief by the ear to the executioner. His courage was legendary—he barely paused as cannonballs exploded nearby and as his horses were shot out from under him or fell through the ice.

Gustavus, influenced by an appreciation of Roman military tactics, formed his battle lines thinner—about six men deep—than those of rival commanders. This allowed his lines to be more widely spread out. Gustavus organized his army into brigades of four squadrons with nine cannon to protect them, sending the unit into battle in an arrow-shaped formation. Superior artillery served his cause well, hurling larger shot farther and more accurately than the cannon of his enemies.

The dashing young Swedish king subdued Catholic Poland with his army of about 70,000 men. Swedish intervention and the continuing woes of Spain, now at war in the Alps, Italy, and the Netherlands, gave Protestants reason for hope. After defeating a combined Polish and Habsburg army in 1629, Swedish troops occupied Pomerania along the Baltic Sea.

In 1630, sure of a Catholic majority, Emperor Ferdinand convoked the imperial electors to recognize his son as his heir. He also wanted them to support his promise to aid Spain against the Dutch in exchange for Spanish

assistance against the Protestant armies. But the Protestant electors of Saxony and Brandenburg refused even to attend the gathering. Catholic electors demanded that the powerful Wallenstein be dismissed; even the king of Spain feared the general's powerful ragtag army. Ferdinand thereby dismissed the one man whose accomplishments and influence might have enabled the Habsburg monarchy to master all of the German states.

Despite a sizable subsidy from the king of France, Gustavus Adolphus enjoyed the support of only several tiny Protestant states. Some Lutheran German states still hoped to receive territorial concessions from the Habsburgs. The Catholic dynasty preferred Lutherans to Calvinists, viewing the latter as more radical reformers. Ferdinand now sent Tilly to stop the invading Swedes. He besieged the Protestant city of Magdeburg in Brandenburg, forcing its surrender in 1631. The subsequent massacre of the population and accompanying pillage had an effect similar to that of the Defenestration of Prague; the story of the atrocities spread across Protestant Europe. Brandenburg and Saxony now allied with Sweden. The combined Protestant forces under Gustavus Adolphus defeated Tilly's imperial Catholic army at Breitenfeld near Leipzig. The Swedish army, swollen by German mercenaries, then marched through the northern German states, easily reversing Habsburg gains over the previous twelve years.

The expansion of Swedish power generated anxiety among both Protestant and Catholic states, including France, although Louis XIII had helped finance Gustavus Adolphus. In Bavaria, the Swedes defeated Tilly, who was killed in battle in 1632. The rout of the Catholic imperial forces seemed complete. Spain, its interests spread too far afield in Europe and the Americas, could not then afford to help. The plague prevented another Catholic army from being raised in Italy; even the pope begged off a request for help by complaining that the eruption of Mount Vesuvius was preventing the collection of taxes.

In April 1632, Ferdinand turned once again to Wallenstein to save the Catholic cause, the latter agreeing to raise a new imperial army in return for almost unlimited authority over it. Wallenstein reconquered Silesia and Bohemia. Against him, Gustavus led the largest army (175,000) that had ever been under a single command in Europe. Although reason dictated that the Swedish army should dig in for the winter of 1632, Gustavus took a chance by attacking Wallenstein in the fog at Lützen in Saxony in November. The two sides fought to a bloody draw, but a draw amounted to a Catholic victory. Gustavus Adolphus fell dead in the battle, facedown in the mud.

Wallenstein's days were also numbered. His new army was now living off the land in Central Europe, engendering peasant resistance. Furthermore, Wallenstein, who was ill, demanded command of a Spanish army that had subsequently arrived to help the Catholic forces. In the meantime, it became known that Wallenstein had considered joining Gustavus after the Battle of Breitenfeld in 1631, and that he was offering his services to both France and the German Protestants. Ferdinand dismissed Wallenstein for

the final time, and mercenary crept into

With the aid of the Swedes, the Catholic army defeated the combined Protestant forces in Swabia. The electors of Saxony and Brandenburg made peace in 1635 with the Swedes, who had left the war. The Ca

The Armies of the Thirty Years' War

The Thirty Years' War was a story of warfare. A century of less brutalities than the

[The soldiers] were driven into a wooden wedge in a bucket full of straw. They called it a Swedish torture. The peasants were captured wives, and let me watch their faces in various dark cor

Several factors made the Thirty Years' War

Soldiers pillaging and torturing the peasants and stealing the fruit



the final time, and then ordered his murder. In February 1634, an Irish mercenary crept into Wallenstein's room, and killed him with a spear.

With the aid of the remnants of Wallenstein's forces, the Spanish army defeated the combined Swedish and German Protestant army in 1634 in Swabia. The elector of Saxony abandoned the Protestant struggle, making peace in 1635 with Ferdinand. One by one, other Protestant princes also left the war. The Catholic forces now held the upper hand.

The Armies of the Thirty Years' War

The Thirty Years' War was certainly one of the cruelest episodes in the history of warfare. A contemporary described the horror of the seemingly endless brutalities that afflicted Central Europe:

[The soldiers] stretched out a hired man flat on the ground, stuck a wooden wedge in his mouth to keep it open, and emptied a milk bucket full of stinking manure droppings down his throat—they called it a Swedish cocktail. . . . Then they used thumb-screws . . . to torture the peasants. . . . They put one of the captured bumpkins in the bakeoven and lighted a fire in it. . . . I can't say much about the captured wives, hired girls, and daughters because the soldiers did not let me watch their doings. But I do remember hearing pitiful screams in various dark corners.

Several factors may have contributed to the barbarity of soldiers during the Thirty Years' War. Mercenaries and volunteers were usually fighting far

Soldiers pillaging a farmhouse during the Thirty Years' War, some torturing the farmer over his hearth while others rape the women and steal the food.



from home, living off the land to survive. Strident propaganda against other religions may have contributed to the brutality. In response, however, Gustavus Adolphus and other leaders imposed harsh penalties, including execution, for atrocities, not wanting to so frighten the local population that ordinary channels of provisioning the army would disappear.

During the Thirty Years' War, at least a million men took arms. The armies were enormous for the time. Even Sweden, where there was no fighting, felt the impact of the death of at least 50,000 soldiers between 1621 and 1632 from battle wounds and, more often, disease. Yet, considering the number of troops engaged in the long war, relatively few soldiers perished in battle, particularly when compared to those who succumbed to illness and to civilians who died at the hands of marauding troops. Armies rampaged through the German states, Catholic and Protestant, speaking many languages, taking what they wanted, burning and looting. Marburg was occupied eleven different times. Atrocity followed atrocity.

The armies themselves remained ragtag forces, lacking discipline and accompanied by, in some cases, the families of soldiers. The presence of large numbers of women (including many prostitutes) and children as camp followers may have contributed to the length of the war, making life in the army seem more normal for soldiers.

Soldiers, for the most part, wore what they could find. Some, if they were lucky, had leather clothes, carried rain cloaks against the damp German climate, and wore felt hats. Some Habsburg troops sported uniforms of pale gray, at least at the beginning of a campaign. As the months passed and uniforms disintegrated, soldiers were forced to disrobe the dead, friend and foe alike, or to steal from civilians. At best, soldiers wore symbols indicating their regiment and fought behind banners bearing the colors of the army—thus the expression “show your colors.” The Swedes wore a yellow band around their hats. The imperial forces placed red symbols in their hats, plumes, or sashes if they could find them.

Most armies also lacked a common language. The Habsburg army included Saxons, Bavarians, Westphalians, and Austrians; Maximilian's Bavarian army counted various other Germans, Italians, Poles, Slovenes, Croats, Greeks, Hungarians, Burgundians, French, Czechs, Spaniards, Scots, Irish, and Turks.

Some soldiers may have joined regiments because they were searching for adventure; others joined out of religious conviction. Yet a multitude of soldiers fought against armies of their own religion, changing sides when a better opportunity arose. Army recruiters gave religion not the slightest thought in their search for soldiers to fill quotas for which they were being handsomely paid. In any case, recruits on both sides were attracted by the strong possibility that they would be better clothed and fed—bread, meat, lots of beer, and occasionally some butter and cheese—than they were when they joined up.

The Wars

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The war: Catholic an in 1636, no Swedish for sought a sej ern France i outbreak of choice but it

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The Wars of Religion and Dynastic Struggles (1635-1648)

Between 1635 and 1648, what had begun as a religious war became a dynastic struggle between two Catholic states, France and Habsburg Austria, the former allied with Sweden, the latter with Spain. France declared war on Philip IV of Spain in 1635. Richelieu hoped to force Habsburg armies away from the borders of France. He took as a pretext the Spanish arrest of a French ally, the elector of Trier. Alliances with the Dutch Republic and Sweden had prepared the way, as did reassurances given by neighboring Savoy and Lorraine, and by French protectorates in Alsace.

The French incursions into the Netherlands and the southern German states did not go well. Louis XIII's army was short on capable commanders and battle-experienced troops, largely because France was already fighting in Italy, the Pyrenees, and the northern German states. But France's involvement, like that of Sweden before it, did provide the Protestant states with some breathing room. French forces joined the Swedish army, helping defeat the imperial army in Saxony.

The wars went on. When the pope called for representatives of the Catholic and Protestant states to assemble in Cologne for a peace congress in 1636, no one showed up. Four years later, another combined French and Swedish force defeated the Habsburg army. Maximilian I of Bavaria then sought a separate peace with France. Devastating Spanish defeats in northern France in 1643, as well as in the Netherlands and the Pyrenees, and the outbreak of rebellions inside Spain, left the Austrian Habsburgs with no choice but to make peace.

At the same time, unrest in France, including plots against Richelieu, and the English Civil War, which began in 1642, served to warn other rulers of the dangers that continued instability could bring. The Swedish population was tiring of distant battles that brought home nothing but news of casualties. In the German states, calls for peace echoed in music and plays. Lutheran ministers inveighed against the war from the pulpit. Among the rulers of the great powers, only Louis XIII wanted the war to go on, at the expense of the Austrian Habsburgs. He helped subsidize an invasion of Hungary by Transylvanian Protestants in 1644. As Swedish and Transylvanian forces prepared to besiege the imperial capital of Vienna, Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III (ruled 1637-1657), who had succeeded his father, concluded a peace treaty with the prince of Transylvania, promising to tolerate Protestantism in Hungary. After Habsburg armies suffered further defeats in 1645, Ferdinand III realized that he had to make peace, and offered an amnesty to princes within the empire who had fought against him.

The preliminaries for a general peace agreement had begun in 1643 and dragged on even as a Franco-Swedish army drove the imperial army out of the Rhineland and Bavaria in 1647. Following another French victory early in 1648, only the outbreak of the Fronde, a rebellion of nobles against the

king's authority in France (see Chapter 7), forced the young Louis XIV to seek peace.

The Treaty of Westphalia (1648)

The Treaty of Westphalia was unlike any previous peace settlement in history, which had invariably been between two or three states, rarely more. Its framers believed that they could restore international stability and diplomatic process in a Europe torn by anarchy by eliminating religious divisions as a cause of conflict. The treaty proved almost as complicated as the Thirty Years' War itself. Two hundred rulers converged on Westphalia. Thousands of diplomats and other officials shuffled back and forth between two towns. Letters took ten to twelve days to reach the courts of Paris and Vienna, at least twenty to Stockholm, and a month to arrive in Madrid. In the meantime, the French tried to delay any treaty, hoping to force Spain to surrender. In the summer of 1648, the Swedes reoccupied Bohemia, hoping to win a larger indemnity and toleration for the Lutherans. When, by the separate Treaty of Münster, Spain finally formally recognized the *fait accompli* of Dutch independence, the Spanish Army of Flanders fought against France in a last-ditch effort to help Ferdinand III. In August 1648, the French defeated a Spanish force a month after the Swedes had captured part of Prague. His back to the wall, Ferdinand signed the peace treaty, finally concluded on October 24, 1648.

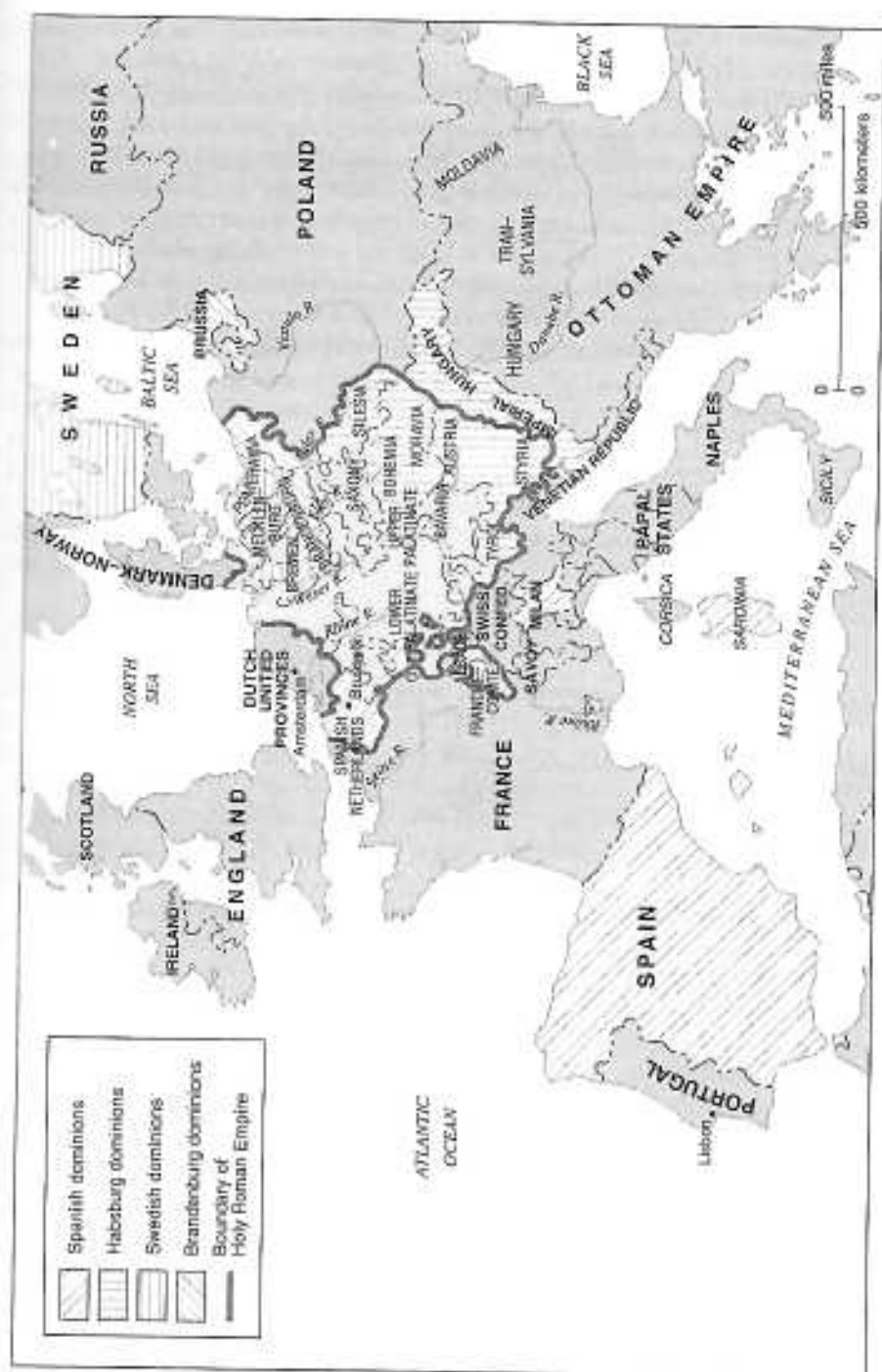
The Treaty of Westphalia redrew the map of Europe, confirming the existence of the Dutch United Provinces and Switzerland. The treaty did not end the war between Spain and France, but it did end the wars of the German states and in doing so put an end to one of the most brutal, ghastly periods in European history. Sweden absorbed West Pomerania and the bishoprics of Verden and Bremen on the North Sea (see Map 4.3). France, by an agreement signed two years earlier, annexed the frontier towns of Metz, Toul, and Verdun, and parts of Alsace. Maximilian I of Bavaria kept the Upper Palatinate, and therefore the status of elector. Frederick's Protestant son ended up with the Lower, or Rhine Palatinate. With this addition of an elector, eight votes would now be necessary to elect the Holy Roman emperor.

With minor exceptions, the territorial settlement reached in Westphalia remained in place until the French Revolution of 1789. For the most part, the treaty ended wars of religion in early modern Europe. It encouraged religious toleration, finally rewarding those people who had worked for and advocated religious toleration, or suffered intolerance and repression, during the long, bloody conflicts. The philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), who had been forced to flee intolerance in Portugal, undoubtedly spoke for many when he wrote, "As for rebellions which are aroused under the pretext of religion . . . opinions are regarded as wicked and condemned

MAP 4.3 EUROPE AFTER THE TREATY OF WESTPHALIA, 1648 The treaty ended the Thirty Years' War



Map 4.3 Europe after the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648. The treaty ended the Thirty Years War.



as crimes, and their defenders and followers sacrificed. Not to the public well-being, but only to the hate and barbarism of their opponents."

The Treaty of Westphalia reinforced the strong autonomous traditions of the German states, which emerged from the long nightmare of war with more independence from the considerably weakened Holy Roman Empire. Member states thereafter could carry out their own foreign policy, though they could not form alliances against the empire. The Habsburg dynasty's dream of forging a centralized empire of states fully obedient to the emperor's will had failed. Bohemia lost its independence. Bohemian Protestant landowners recovered neither their lands nor their religious freedom.

By the Treaty of Westphalia, German Calvinists gained the same rights as those previously granted to Lutherans. The settlement granted religious toleration where it had existed in 1624. But it also confirmed the Peace of Augsburg's establishment of territorial churches—Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist—still to be determined by the religion of the ruler. Dissident groups were often forbidden, and their followers were persecuted. Generally speaking, Lutheranism remained dominant in the northern half of the Holy Roman Empire, Catholicism in the southern half, with Calvinists in the Rhineland.

Before his death in battle, Gustavus Adolphus noted "all the wars of Europe are now blended into one." More than 200 states of varying sizes had fought in the war. The devastation brought by thirty years of war is simply incalculable. Catholic Mainz, occupied by the Swedes, lost 25 percent of its buildings and 40 percent of its population. In four years, the predominantly Protestant duchy of Württemberg lost three-quarters of its population while occupied by imperial troops. Almost 90 percent of the farms of Mecklenburg were abandoned during the course of the war. Many villages in Central Europe were now uninhabited. Although devastation varied from region to region during the Thirty Years' War, German cities lost a third of their population, and the rural population declined by 40 percent. Central Europe, like the rest of the continent, may have already been suffering from the economic and social crisis that had begun in the 1590s. But the wars contributed to the huge decline of the population of the states of the Holy Roman Empire from about 20 million to 16 million people.

A year before the Treaty of Westphalia, a Swabian wrote in the family Bible: "They say that the terrible war is now over. But there is still no sign of peace. Everywhere there is envy, hatred and greed; that's what the war has taught us. . . . We live like animals, eating bark and grass. No one could have imagined that anything like this would happen to us. Many people say there is no God . . . but we still believe that God has not abandoned us."

War was not alone in taking lives: epidemics, the worst of which was the bubonic plague, and diseases, including influenza and typhus, also took fearsome tolls. Towns were clogged with starving, vulnerable refugees from the fighting and marauding. The flight of peasants from their lands reduced

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agricultural productivity. It would be decades before the German states recovered from the Thirty Years' War.

Although much of the religious settlement of the Treaty of Westphalia would endure, dynastic rivalries still raged. France had emerged from its religious wars with a stronger monarchy; Louis XIII had made his state more centralized and powerful. France's rivals, too, would extend their authority within their own states. In the mid-seventeenth century, Europe would enter the era of monarchical absolutism. The most powerful European states—above all, Louis XIV's France—would enter a period of aggressive territorial expansion. Dynastic wars would help shape the European experience from the mid-seventeenth century to the French Revolution of 1789.