

The aims of European rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries far exceeded what they could actually do, and could also work at cross-purposes to one another. Opening schools or taking them over from the church allowed greater control of the education of one's subjects, but cost money, as did the bureaucracy needed to oversee other royal projects. Building fabulous palaces or better roads enhanced royal prestige, but could be enormously expensive. Defending or expanding one's territories offered the greatest possibilities for personal and national aggrandizement, but could also bring bitter disappointment and financial ruin. The possibilities war offered were too great to ignore, however, so that all political developments in these centuries played themselves out against a backdrop of nearly constant warfare.

Warfare and alliances

The history of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is often told in terms of a series of wars. Some of these wars came to have specific names, and some did not; some of them involved long-standing conflicts over trade and territory that flared into actual warfare from time to time but simmered continuously. There were general Europe-wide wars, such as the Thirty Years War of 1618-48. There were regional wars, civil wars, naval wars, and wars about who would succeed to various thrones when rulers died childless or without male heirs. There were revolts against rulers, particularly in the 1640s to 1660s, which first led historians to call this a time of "crisis." Wars that started in the New World came to involve Europe, including the war for American Independence (1775-83), which eventually included England, France, Spain, and the Netherlands. European wars also spread outward, including the Seven Years War (1755-63), which came to be fought in North America (where it was called the French and Indian War) and India, as well as in Europe.

Most of these wars involved frequently shifting alliances, some of them open and some of them secret. They were often ended by treaties involving only some of the participants, so war in one theatre dragged on after fighting stopped elsewhere, with rulers shifting their armies and navies. The treaties of Nijmegen in 1678 to 1679, for example, which ended one of the many wars that pitted France and its allies against the Netherlands and its allies, were actually six different peace treaties, all separately brokered.

This pattern of shifting alliances and complex treaties was set by the Thirty Years War, which many historians see as the first "modern" war in terms of tactics, organization, and level of devastation. As noted in chapter 5, the Thirty Years War can also be seen, at least in its initial stages, as round 3 in the series of religious wars that resulted from the Reformation. Round 1 had ended with the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, and round 2 with Henry IV of France allowing French Protestants limited freedom of worship, and a truce in 1609 between the Netherlands and Spain.

The Peace of Augsburg years, but it was an union of Lutheranism and Catholicism. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Calvinist, ignoring the Catholicism to Lutheranism. The emperor may of the Catholic Church tried to bring the princes back to Catholicism with every generation had opposed. In 1608, the Protestant Union, and Catholic League.

Dynastic considerations opened warfare. Dismayed Emperor Charles V had his son Philip II (who and his brother Ferdinand II) succeed him, and the title of Emperor of Spain and an Austrian ruler. He was firmly Catholic. In 1617, the king of Bohemia (in which the Catholic Church was dominant) objected, and threw the emperor out. They did not die - deposed. They were not angels or by a pile of manure.

Armies of the Catholic and in the first years the emperor had meanwhile been (ruled 1619-37), wiped out. He appointed a wealthy Protestant (1634) as general of the imperial army, including nobles of Denmark. Wallenstein raised an army - by that eventually numbered and confiscated. It looked like he had eluded his great-uncle's state in central Europe. Restitution, which forbade Protestant since 1552 to

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The Peace of Augsburg ended religious wars in central Europe for over fifty years, but it was an uneasy peace. The terms of the treaty recognized only Lutheranism and Catholicism as allowable denominations, but in the second half of the sixteenth century Calvinism was more dynamic. Some states became Calvinist, ignoring the terms of the treaty. A few bishops converted from Catholicism to Lutheranism, taking their territories with them, to the dismay of the Catholic Church. Jesuit preachers and scholars converted Lutheran princes back to Catholicism, and territories sometimes switched denominations with every generation, as rulers backed whatever religion their father had opposed. In 1608, Lutheran rulers formed a military alliance called the Protestant Union, and in the following years Catholics responded with the Catholic League.

Dynastic considerations mixed with religion to turn this tense situation into open warfare. Dismayed at the failure of his efforts to secure religious unity, Emperor Charles V had abdicated in 1556, dividing his vast holdings between his son Philip II (who got Spain, the Netherlands, and the Spanish empire) and his brother Ferdinand I (who got Austria and other central European holdings, and the title of Emperor). The Habsburg family was thus divided into a Spanish and an Austrian branch, though both supported each other and were firmly Catholic. In 1617, Ferdinand of Styria, a Habsburg cousin, was chosen king of Bohemia (in what is now the Czech Republic), an area that had rejected the Catholic Church a century before Luther and was overwhelmingly Protestant. When Ferdinand began to close Protestant churches, Bohemian officials objected, and threw two of his representatives out of the window in Prague. They did not die – depending on your point of view, they were saved either by angels or by a pile of manure – but the incident led to civil war in Bohemia.

Armies of the Catholic League and the Protestant Union joined the fight, and in the first years the Catholics were overwhelmingly successful. Ferdinand, who had meanwhile become Holy Roman Emperor with the title Ferdinand II (ruled 1619–37), wiped out Protestantism in Bohemia with forcible conversions. He appointed a wealthy Bohemian nobleman, Albrecht of Wallenstein (1583–1634) as general of the imperial armies, who continued scoring victories against Protestants, including not only German troops but also those sent by the king of Denmark. Wallenstein was an effective leader and ruthless entrepreneur, raising an army – by forcible conscription as well as promises of pay – that eventually numbered over 100,000, supplying them through extortion and confiscation. It looked as if Ferdinand might be able to accomplish what had eluded his great-uncle Charles V: the creation of a large, strong Catholic state in central Europe under Habsburg rule. In 1629 he passed the Edict of Restitution, which forbade Calvinism and ordered all lands that had become Protestant since 1552 to revert to Catholicism.

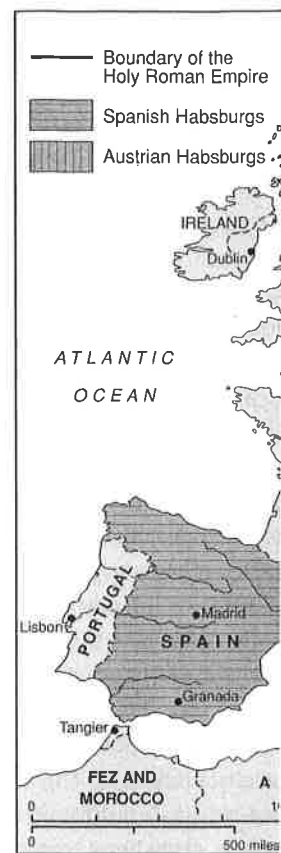
The prospect of a strong Empire under Habsburg domination frightened not only Protestants in Europe, but also Catholic opponents of Habsburg power, especially France. In the early 1630s, well-disciplined and well-armed Swedish troops, under the leadership of King Gustavus Adolphus (ruled 1611–32) and

bankrolled by the French, successfully defeated Catholic forces several times, though Gustavus Adolphus died at the Battle of Lützen. Wallenstein was accused of conspiracy with the French, and was assassinated at the emperor's orders. Ferdinand II decided to dissolve the Catholic League and make peace with the German Protestant princes, but this Peace of Prague (1635) did not satisfy either the Swedes or the French. France sent troops against those of the emperor and his Habsburg cousins in Spain; Spanish forces were defeated in naval battles with the Dutch and by the Portuguese, who revolted against Spanish rule in 1640 and declared themselves an independent country again. The war had become a Europe-wide war, with territorial aims now more important than religious allegiances.

Each side won battles, but was not able to exploit its victories, and the war dragged on, with devastating effects. Troops were often recruited by independent military contractors, of which Wallenstein had been the most successful, with promises of pay and plunder, and little training or discipline. There were no clear lines of battle, so that these mercenary armies indiscriminately burned crops and villages and killed animals and people. Hunger and disease, including dysentery, plague, and syphilis, accompanied the troops and the refugees who fled from place to place. Some historians estimate that at least one-quarter and perhaps as many as one-third of the population of the Empire died during the course of the war, though total devastation was localized. Such civilian losses would not be matched again until the wars of the twentieth century. Finally, in 1645 negotiations were begun in two cities in the German province of Westphalia, but it took three years for the terms of a peace treaty to be agreed upon, with armies sporadically fighting and living off what was left of the German countryside during that time.

The resulting Peace of Westphalia recognized certain political realities in Europe, but did not lead to lasting peace. It recognized the United Provinces of the Netherlands and Switzerland as fully independent, and made the larger principalities within the Holy Roman Empire effectively sovereign, though the Empire itself also continued to exist. France gained territory on its eastern border, and Sweden gained most of the German North Sea coastline, which enhanced the prestige of the monarchy in both countries. Territorial rulers in the Empire were given the right to choose the religion of their territories, with Calvinism joining Catholicism and Lutheranism as an acceptable choice. There were more than a hundred other clauses, largely confirming various princes' rights over certain territories, though occasionally stipulating transfers of land or new titles. The religious lines of division in central Europe were largely fixed, with most of northern Germany Protestant and most of southern Germany Catholic. The Habsburgs largely retained their family holdings and claims on the imperial title. As it had in the sixteenth century, the basic conflict in Europe continued to pit France against the Habsburgs, especially as the Peace of Westphalia had not included stipulations about the war between France and Spain, which continued.

The Thirty Years War set the pattern for later wars in many ways, but it also provided lessons about what not to do for more astute military commanders



Map 10. Europe after the P

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Map 10. Europe after the Peace of Westphalia, 1648.

and political leaders. The biggest problem was logistical, not tactical, for supply systems could not keep up with troops. Roads were primitive or nonexistent and rivers could not be found everywhere. Armies had to stop every three or four days to let the millers and bakers who accompanied the troops catch up and bake the rough bread that was the soldiers' standard ration, and let the wagons with tents and other supplies catch up. Looting supplies from the surrounding countryside only worked for a short time, for farmers in most parts of Europe lived near subsistence level themselves and had little food to spare. In fact the most impressive aspect of Ottoman armies - which were not involved in the Thirty Years War, although they were in other seventeenth-century conflicts - was not their enormous size, but the relatively effective way they were supplied. Even the Ottomans could not sustain large armies in the field for many months, however, and shorter wars with limited objectives were more likely to produce clear-cut outcomes than those that dragged on for years.

Even these shorter wars - of which there were many in the 150 years after the Peace of Westphalia - were fought with larger and more deadly standing armies, however. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Brandenburg-Prussia,

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34 Warfare at sea

Improved training and increasing specialization affected warfare at sea as well as on land. During the sixteenth century, most states relied on merchant ships temporarily armed with a few cannon for their naval battles, but it became increasingly clear that specialized gun-armed warships and merchant ships built to carry a substantial number of guns were more effective. Between 1652 and 1678, the English and the Dutch fought a series of wars for control of the English Channel and the North Sea, which involved larger and larger sailing ships armed with heavier guns, arranged in a formal line of battle and firing continuously. Such tactics required professionally trained officers, well-drilled gun crews, and disciplined sailors who could maintain clear battle lines.

In the eighteenth century, the Dutch preferred neutrality, concentrating on defending and supplying their worldwide trading network. The British continued to expand their navy, becoming the world's dominant sea power; measured in terms of total weight, the British navy in 1790 was almost ten times what it had been in 1650, a figure that reflects both the greater number and the larger size of ships. The French and the Spanish also built up their battle fleet strength, largely to challenge Britain in the Atlantic, while in the Baltic, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia expanded their navies. By the end of the eighteenth century the Russian navy was the third largest in Europe (after Britain and France), confronting the Ottomans in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean as well as the Scandinavian states in the Baltic.

one of the larger states in Germany, tried to sustain a permanent army of about 80,000 troops with a population of perhaps 3.5 million; during the Seven Years War, this army increased to almost 150,000, or about one-quarter of all adult males. Most eighteenth-century armies were equipped with reliable flintlock muskets that no longer needed a separate match to fire, bayonets on the end of those muskets, and more accurate and mobile artillery. The best-supplied soldiers had cartridges in which shot was prepackaged with gunpowder, and the best-disciplined had spent long periods training and drilling. These technical improvements increased battlefield casualties significantly, with losses sometimes approaching one-quarter of all the troops deployed in the field. Better weapons, bigger armies, longer training, and fuller supply systems all significantly increased the costs of warfare. Pressures of war finance enhanced the power of some monarchs, including those of Brandenburg-Prussia, while derailing the expansion of royal power elsewhere, most

dramatically, as we will see below, in England.

The development of colonial empires and international trade meant that European wars in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often spread beyond Europe itself. (In some ways, the Thirty Years War can be seen as the last “pre-modern” war as well as the first “modern” one, because it was at least initially motivated by religion and was limited to Europe.) In the Anglo-Dutch wars, British ships attacked Dutch holdings in Africa, the West Indies, and North America, eventually gaining New Amsterdam, which was renamed New York. During the 1630s, the Dutch challenged the Portuguese in Brazil, and the British captured part of French Canada, though they later gave it back. During the War of the League of Augsburg (1689–97), French and British colonists in North America massacred each other, while during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13), the British attacked Spanish forts in Florida and the French attacked Portuguese Brazilian ports. The colorfully named War of Jenkins' Ear between Spain and Britain (1739–48) started after an English sea captain appeared before Parliament with his ear, claiming it had been cut off by Spanish authorities boarding his ship in the Caribbean. During the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–8), French ships captured British-held Madras in India, while British colonists captured Louisburg in Canada from the French.

The Seven Years War called the first “world” war, with fighting in the Pacific, and India. The problems proved as results.

The Seven Years War reflected changing realities, the major line between the Habsburgs, the Swiss, Switzerland, Spain, and the Protestants during the colonial holdings expanded, but, however, France worried about France in Europe in the seventeenth century, below, monarchs in European states in the Netherlands to defend. The Austrians in Central Europe, but by the eighteenth century, increasingly worried about the east of the Atlantic, an enormous and world in the religious and centuries, was also its own.

This complicated situation with Prussia, to which with a triple alliance in America, in part because in the Ohio Valley, and might and military : Prussia, but the ruler (the Great), was a brilliant types of troops attacked Austria, and with one another. British French fleet in naval in either North America surrendered all of Quebec and the British captured the Philippines, French India. Two separate powers losing most of its overseas, including Cuba and the of the territory of Sicily

The Seven Years War (1755–63) was so global in scope that it could almost be called the first “world war,” involving conflict in North America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and India as well as Europe. As in other early modern wars, logistical problems proved as important as battlefield losses in determining the final results.

The Seven Years War also involved new lines of alliance and hostility that reflected changing realities of power. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the major line of antagonism in Europe was hostility between France and the Habsburgs. As we saw in chapter 3, this had resulted in wars in Italy, Switzerland, Spain, and elsewhere, and in France coming in on the side of the Protestants during the Thirty Years War. As the British navy and British colonial holdings expanded during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, France worried increasingly about British power, while Britain worried about France, which was the strongest and wealthiest country in Europe in the seventeenth century. After 1688, as we will see in more detail below, monarchs in Britain came from the ruling houses of two medium-sized states in the Netherlands and Germany, so they had continental territories to defend. The Austrian Habsburgs continued as the strongest power in central Europe, but by the middle of the eighteenth century they were increasingly worried about Prussia, a state made up of scattered territories within and to the east of the Holy Roman Empire, whose rulers were establishing an enormous and well-disciplined army. Russia, which had played no role in the religious and dynastic controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was also worried about Prussia, and had expansionary plans of its own.

This complicated scenario led, in 1756, to Great Britain making an alliance with Prussia, to which France, Russia, and the Austrian Habsburgs responded with a triple alliance. War broke out between France and Britain in North America, in part because settlers from both countries were staking out claims in the Ohio Valley, and between all the allies in Europe. In terms of economic might and military manpower, the triple alliance was much stronger than Prussia, but the ruler of Prussia, Frederick II (ruled 1740–86; known as Frederick the Great), was a brilliant military strategist who understood how to use different types of troops – infantry, cavalry, and artillery – very effectively. He attacked Austria, and his opponents were slow to respond and did not cooperate with one another. British blockades of French ports and victories over the French fleet in naval battles meant that France could not resupply its forces in either North America or eastern Germany, and in 1760 the French governor surrendered all of Quebec to the British. Spain joined in on the side of France, and the British captured both Spanish and French colonies, including Cuba, the Philippines, French islands in the Caribbean, and French forts in Africa and India. Two separate peace treaties finally ended the war in 1763, with France losing most of its overseas colonies, Spain ceding Florida to England but gaining back Cuba and the Philippines, and Prussia being confirmed in its takeover of the territory of Silesia from Austria.