CHAPTER 1

THE THIRTY YEARS WAR AND THE TREATY OF WESTPHALIA

The Thirty Years War (1618-48) marks a watershed in the history of Europe. It ushered in the modern state system and defined its structure and characteristics. Till then, Europe had been fascinated with the medieval dream of a 'united Christendom' under the spiritual authority of the Pope and the temporal authority of the Holy Roman Emperor. The War destroyed forever all hopes of attaining this dream. Instead, it legitimised a Europe composed of multiple sovereignties and governed by diverse faiths. States, as the new entities came to be referred to, shared one characteristic though - their actions were governed by the new concept of raison d'état. The modern state was thus forged on the anvil of this great seventeenth century conflict between the Habsburgs and their opponents.

The War was fought over the scope and extent of the religious and secular role of the emperor both within the Holy Roman Empire and in Europe at large. Since the later Middle Ages, the authority of the Holy Roman Emperors had been on the decline due to their inability to project effective power throughout Christendom.1 This had given rise to the feudal system wherein authority was totally decentralised. Almost

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1 By this time, Europe and Christendom had become largely interchangeable terms, whereas earlier, Christendom had meant all Christians everywhere. See J. P. Cooper, 'General Introduction', in idem., ed., The New Cambridge Modern History [hereafter NCMH], vol. 4: The Decline of Spain and the Thirty Years War 1609-48/59 (Cambridge, 1970). p. 34.
simultaneously, Europe witnessed the growth of princely authority along its fringes - in Spain, France, and England.

The continent’s decentralized political set-up was threatened when the House of Austria linked-up with the newly-united Spanish monarchy. Charles V's assumption of the Spanish and imperial crowns in 1516 and 1519, respectively, was almost coterminous with the outbreak of the 'Reformation' (1517) and the resultant schism within the empire and Christendom. From then on, Habsburg emperors, backed by the financial and military strength of Spain, undertook the twin task of restoring the 'confessional and territorial integrity' of Christendom.²

During the Thirty Years War, Emperor Ferdinand II attempted to carry out this 'duty' only within the empire. In fact, both his and Spain’s goals during the War were rather limited. Nevertheless, had the Emperor and Spain achieved even their limited goals, 'the mastery of Europe would virtually have been theirs... [which] would have greatly eroded the pluralism that had so long been the continent’s most important feature.'³ For it would have entailed the suppression of heresy within the Empire, the crushing of the Dutch Revolt, pushing the Turks back from the eastern Mediterranean, maintaining friendly regimes in France and England, and the triumph of the Counter-

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Reformation. Only Muscovy and the lands still under Ottoman rule would not have been subject to Habsburg power and influence.4

Thus, the place of Protestantism and the extent and scope of imperial authority within the Holy Roman Empire and, by extension in Europe at large, were the two principal issues of the War. The explanation for the expansion of the imperial war thus lies in the conflict between the centrifugal and centripetal forces in Europe. While the former was represented by the Emperor and Spain, the latter was made up of German princes and other European dynasts. In other words, the conflict was between the Habsburg desire to organise Christendom along ancient hierarchical lines and the determination of the other European princes to preserve their independence and ‘liberties’.5

BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

The origins of the War are well-known. It started with a politico-religious revolt by the Protestant Bohemian Estates against their Catholic Habsburg rulers. It soon evoked a response in other Habsburg territories as well. Germany was sucked into this conflict when Elector Frederick V of the Palatinate accepted the Bohemian crown offered by the rebels. The revolt was crushed by imperial troops with help from the

4 *ibid.*, p. 44. Also see Kissinger’s comment regarding such a possibility in Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1995), pp. 56-57.

5 At Westphalia, the Emperor’s representative had publicly declared that the King of France was no different from the German princes and therefore subject to the Holy Roman Emperor. Cited in K. J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 33.
army of the Catholic League, Saxon forces, and a detachment of the Spanish 'Army of Flanders'. But this did not end the conflict. It became linked with other wider conflicts that had been racking Europe for a long time. And the centre of these other conflicts was the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs based in Madrid.

It is important to note here that all these conflicts, except that between France and Spain, had stemmed from the Habsburg advocacy of the Catholic cause. While the emperors focused their religious energies on Germany and on their Austrian possessions, the Spanish kings aimed at crushing the Dutch rebels and Protestant England. Thus, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, Habsburg religious policy had given rise to two distinct sets of conflicts centred around Madrid and Vienna. One was Spain's conflicts with the United Provinces, England and France, while the other was the internal politico-religious convulsions of Germany and of the Austrian Habsburg lands. Each of these conflicts, moreover, had its own focal point - the Netherlands for the former and Bohemia for the latter. Most importantly, they were linked by two factors -- the involvement of Habsburg dynasts, and the fundamental role of religion. These linkages fused the two conflicts when they broke out almost simultaneously and led to their conflagration into the Thirty Years War.

6 The title of the Holy Roman Emperor [the temporal head of western Christendom] had become hereditary with the Habsburgs since 1438 in which capacity they had to take the lead in defending the church.

7 The Netherlands had been the focus of the sixteenth-century anti-Spanish struggle assumed by England, the United Provinces and France. This coalition was renewed when the Spanish-Dutch truce expired in 1621. Palatine efforts to prevent a Habsburg succession to the Bohemian throne ultimately led to the expansion of the Bohemian Revolt into the imperial civil war.
Spain and Its Rivals

Spain had three major rivals in western Europe - France, the traditional adversary, the rebellious United Provinces, and Protestant England. By the seventeenth century, conflict between Spain and France was one of the oldest in Europe. It had started late in the fifteenth century over the question of mastery over Italy and intensified following Charles V’s inheritance of Spain, the Burgundian Circle, and Habsburg territories in central and eastern Europe. French interference in German affairs was partly responsible for Charles V’s defeat and abdication in 1555. In response, Madrid continuously intervened in the French Wars of Religion in order to weaken France and to influence the succession in Spain’s favour.

Only Henry IV’s conversion to Catholicism and subsequent consolidation of internal authority, combined with the death of Philip II and the financial exhaustion of Spain, led to the Peace of Vervins in 1598. But it failed to resolve their long-standing conflict and was consequently meaningless and nothing more than a truce. Both states continued their competition for pre-eminence in western Europe. Henry IV was on the point of launching an invasion of Germany when he was assassinated. The Franco-Spanish conflict, however, simmered on ready to flare up whenever a strong hand appeared at the helm of French affairs.

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More than France, it was the United Provinces that dominated Spanish thinking in the decade before the outbreak of the Thirty Years War. The Dutch Revolt had broken out in 1568 over Philip II’s policy of religious intolerance, church reorganisation, and heavier taxation. \(^9\) Calvinism had spread among the Dutch nobility and Spanish attempts to restrict their traditional liberties and impose stricter control provoked them into an open revolt. Madrid succeeded in limiting the revolt to the seven northern provinces. It, however, could not strike a decisive blow and the conflict waxed and waned depending upon the Dutch ability to gather international support and Spain's ability to generate the resources for a campaign. Although Spain was willing to recognise the independence of the United Provinces, other Dutch demands prevented a treaty. They finally settled on a truce in 1609.

The Twelve Years' Truce had been forced down Madrid's throat by the leaders of the southern Netherlands. They had argued that inadequate military commitment and 'half-measures' would not recover the rebellious provinces but would only lead to the loss of the loyal southern provinces. \(^{10}\) However, the truce proved to be disadvantageous to Spain with the Dutch making spectacular gains at Madrid's expense. The next decade saw the establishment of Dutch domination in European trade, Dutch expansion in the East and West Indies, and a massive shift in economic


and military power in favour of the United Provinces. As a result, most Spanish statesmen advocated a resumption of the conflict with the United Provinces.

Spain’s conflict with England was an off-shoot of Philip II’s aggressive advancement of the Catholic cause. Anglo-Spanish relations had been quite cordial till the 1550s. But when England adopted Protestantism in 1559, relations began to sour. English support to the Dutch rebels and the execution of Queen Mary of Scots, a catholic contender to the throne, gave Spain the excuse to move against London. Philip II despatched an armada to invade England. But it was foiled by a mixture of English resistance and bad weather. Thereafter their conflict petered out and they eventually signed a peace early in the seventeenth century. England, however, adopted an anti-Spanish policy following the resumption of the Dutch war. London played a leading role in convincing Denmark to intervene in the German conflict. But England could not play a major role in the Thirty Years War due to the civil war.

The Bohemian Tangle

The War began with the defenestration of Prague and the civil war in Bohemia. It was the direct result of the conflict between the Protestant Estates of Bohemia and the Habsburg advocacy of Catholicism. In contravention of the terms of

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12 Defenestration means throwing a person out of the window. It was a Bohemian custom in times of rebellion. In this instance, representatives of the Protestant Estates threw two governors and a secretary of the Catholic-dominated Bohemian administration out of the window of the royal palace.
the 1555 Augsburg settlement, which allowed a prince to determine the religion of his subjects, Lutheranism had continued to spread in the territories of the Austrian Habsburgs. To stem this Protestant tide and to restore Catholicism to its earlier supreme position, Vienna instituted the Counter-Reformation in its Austrian provinces in the late 1570s. The success of this policy in Austria led to its introduction in Bohemia and Hungary as well. This, however, proved disastrous with the Hungarians rising in revolt.

When Emperor Rudolf II proved unable to handle these troubles, his brother, Archduke Matthias took over the direction of policy and made peace with the rebels and with the Turks. This set off a power struggle between Rudolf and Matthias which gave the Estates an excellent opportunity to advance their own interests. Both Matthias and Rudolf granted concessions to the Protestant Estates under their control in order to retain their allegiance. The Letter of Majesty granted by Rudolf to the Bohemian Estates in July 1609 was one such. But this was anathema to the Habsburgs whose abiding principles were Catholicism and absolutism. So, when Matthias succeeded to the Bohemian crown in 1611, he used every single opportunity to advance Habsburg political and religious interests. The events which led to the Bohemian Revolt were a part of this struggle between the Habsburgs and their Protestant Estates.

13 By 1580, some ninety per cent of the nobility in Upper and Lower Austria were Protestant. Similar trends prevailed in Bohemia and Hungary as well. Geoffrey Parker, The Thirty Years' War (London, 1984). p. 5.

14 This was consequent to a family compact of April 1605. For details of these events, see ibid., pp. 4-11.
A similar religious situation prevailed in the Holy Roman Empire as well. The spread of Calvinism (not recognised at Augsburg) in the latter half of the sixteenth century began to undermine the Augsburg settlement. Calvinist proselytisation was in direct contravention of this settlement which made no provision for any Protestant belief other than the Lutheran. Moreover, the secularisation of church lands and their absorption by neighbouring Protestant princes continued unabated. At the same time, there was increasing trouble between the practitioners of the two faiths in the Imperial Free Cities. Consequently, demands for the redefinition and enforcement of the Augsburg settlement became very insistent by the first decade of the seventeenth century.

While Protestants demanded a redefinition of the terms of Augsburg, Catholics insisted on 'restitution' of all ecclesiastical lands that had been secularised since 1552. Such contradictory positions only encouraged recourse to violence and to the collapse of imperial institutions. Religious rivalry and imperial attempts to enforce the Augsburg settlement led to a series of crises. Demands for restitution and the emperor's actions in Donauwörth convinced Protestant princes that the Catholics, supported by the emperor, were bent upon asserting their claims by recourse to violence. Such assessments led to the establishment of the Evangelical Union in 1608. Soon, it was confronted by a Catholic League organised by the Duke of Bavaria in 1611. The two religious alliances initiated a new phase in the politics of the Empire as they increasingly
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turned to their religious brethren abroad for support. As a result, 'imperial politics and the international balance of power became closely enmeshed'.

The situation was further complicated by the growing power of individual princes vis-à-vis that of the Emperor, and the increasing fragmentation and paralysis of imperial institutions. As a result, the Habsburg rulers and their subjects were totally at odds by the end of the sixteenth century. While their subjects expected continued political liberties and religious tolerance, the Habsburgs wished to extirpate Protestant heretics and re-establish imperial political dominance. These divergent aims were bound to lead to a certain conflict at some point of time.

*Origins of the War*

Elector Frederick V of the Palatinate and Prince Christian of Anhalt, the leaders of the Union, were convinced of the existence of an international Catholic alliance, led by the Habsburgs, to root out Protestantism throughout Europe. Their one desire was to see the world power of the Habsburgs crushed, by excluding them from the imperial throne. To achieve this, the Protestants needed a majority in the imperial electoral college. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were three Catholic and three Protestant electors. The King of Bohemia [traditionally a Habsburg and therefore a Catholic] was the seventh elector. Unlike other electorates, the kingship was elective. More importantly, the Bohemian Estates were largely Protestant and were being

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15 Simon Adams, 'The Union, the League, and the Politics of Europe'. in Parker. n. 13. p. 25.

increasingly assertive against their Habsburg masters at this time. Anhalt hoped to use this resistance to prevent the election of a Habsburg to the Bohemian throne. If this were to happen, the chances of a Habsburg imperial succession would be considerably reduced. And if the Bohemian Estates could be induced to elect a Protestant prince, then the imperial title could even pass to a Protestant prince.

The prospects of preventing a Habsburg succession seemed all the more favourable given the childlessness that haunted the Habsburg family at this time. Neither Emperor Rudolf nor his successor Matthias produced male heirs. All the other archdukes were old and had no legitimate children. The King of Spain or even one of the Spanish princes would be unacceptable to the Bohemians owing to their religion. Consequently, the family decided to field Ferdinand of Styria for the Kingship of Bohemia initially and later for the imperial title as well upon the death of Matthias. This was in spite of the fact that Ferdinand, known for his proselytising zeal, was an unsuitable candidate in the tense religious atmosphere then prevailing in Bohemia. In the event, his election was brilliantly managed by the Spanish party in Bohemia. However, Habsburg attempts to get Ferdinand elected as the King of the Romans, i.e., the successor to the then-reigning emperor, was foiled by the Palatinate objection that outstanding religious problems should be first settled before an election in conducted. The election, initially blocked by the Palatinate, then several times postponed, was finally rescheduled for the end of May 1618. This time, it was averted by the outbreak, on 23 May 1618, of the Bohemian Revolt.

\[\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 611.}\]
The revolt itself was a direct outcome of the easy Habsburg victory in getting Ferdinand elected as King-designate of Bohemia. Emboldened by the almost total lack of opposition from the Protestant Estates, Emperor Matthias and Ferdinand entrusted the Bohemian administration to the Catholic-dominated regency council which adopted strict measures against Protestants. It restricted Protestant worship in two towns and threw dissenters into prison. When the Estates met to protest these actions, they were ordered to disperse. Thereupon, the enraged deputies rushed into the royal palace, whence the orders had come, and threw two of the catholic governors and a secretary out of the window. Known as the 'Defenestration of Prague', this marked the beginning of a new Bohemian rebellion against their catholic masters.

At first, it was not certain whether the rebels would carry the revolt to its logical conclusion by unseating their Habsburg ruler. Things came to a pass when Emperor Matthias died in March 1619. When the election was finally held on 26 August 1619, the Bohemian Estates deposed Ferdinand and elected Frederick V of the Palatinate instead. The major reason for their choice of Frederick V was the hope of gaining military and diplomatic support for their cause. For, Frederick was not only the leader of the Protestant Union but also related by marriage to the dynasts of England and Denmark. In the event, the only concrete support they received was a mercenary army from the Duke of Savoy.

Palatinate hopes of preventing a Habsburg succession to the imperial title were, however, belied. The other two Protestant electors - those of Brandenburg and Saxony - refused to be a part of the Palatinate scheme and decided to vote in favour of
Ferdinand. Consequently, Ferdinand was elected on 28 August 1619 as Holy Roman Emperor. Furthermore, Palatinate hopes of a great anti-Habsburg coalition comprising England, France, the United Provinces, and German Protestant princes also failed to emerge. As a result, an isolated Frederick was forced to take on the might of the Habsburg power all by himself.

*Initial Objectives*

Ferdinand's task now was to crush Frederick V and the rebellious forces supporting him. Towards this end, and also to gain the empire's support for his subsequent actions, the new Emperor roped in Bavaria and Saxony onto his side. By the Treaty of Munich signed in October 1619, the Bavarian-dominated Catholic League army was to take part in the operations against the rebels. In return, Ferdinand offered the Duke of Bavaria a cash indemnity, a guarantee of Habsburg non-interference in Catholic League affairs, and most importantly, possession of any part of the Palatinate conquered by the League forces, and the promise to transfer Frederick V's electoral dignity.18 In a separate deal with the Elector of Saxony, Ferdinand promised to protect Lutheranism and to allow the Saxon occupation of Lusatia. In return, the elector promised to participate on the imperial side. Spain too chipped in with a detachment of troops from Flanders. The rebels had no chance against this overwhelming opposition.

The Emperor's initial objectives were thus to crush the Protestant forces defending Bohemia and the Palatinate and force Frederick V to renounce the kingship

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of Bohemia. At the same time, Frederick was also to be deprived of his electoral title which would now be transferred to the Duke of Bavaria. Ferdinand succeeded in carrying out these tasks quite easily. His military superiority enabled him to bludgeon the weak Protestant forces opposing him. Thus, the early years of the conflict were nothing more than an imperial civil war. And it was technically over with the Habsburg occupation of all rebel territory and the dispersal of their forces.

EXPANSION OF THE CONFLICT

However, the war continued due to Frederick’s stubborn refusal to make a formal submission to the Emperor. Ferdinand II, for his part, was buoyed by his military successes and the rightness of his cause. Consequently, he authorised harsh measures on his Protestant subjects and set about centralising authority in his own hands. His imperial policies in Germany especially caused widespread concern among other European states. They were doubly alarmed when Spain resumed its struggle with the United Provinces in 1621 and posted a quick succession of victories. And when the two branches of the Habsburg family began co-operating and co-ordinating their military and diplomatic efforts, European fears about a Habsburg campaign to extirpate Protestantism and establish their hegemony over the Continent began to revive. And along with these fears revived the late-sixteenth century diplomatic alignments between England, France and the United Provinces. Denmark and Sweden were also now brought into this alliance to counter the latest Habsburg bid for hegemony. As a result, a war that had almost ended in the summer of 1620 became
enmeshed with other wider European conflicts and raged on for more than a generation.

Austro-Spanish Co-operation

The Bohemian Revolt and the subsequent deposition of Ferdinand put the power and prestige of the emperor at stake. These were important to Spain not only because of the family connection with the House of Austria but also because of the importance of a strong Habsburg emperor for the Spanish position within Europe. The Spanish dynasty was the only one in Europe with an empire on the continent. Madrid considered its possessions in the Netherlands and in Italy as the foundations of Spanish domination over the world at large. Moreover, neither of these territories (Milan and Flanders) directly belonged to the King of Spain who held them as imperial fiefs. More than the fear of being militarily evicted from these provinces by a Protestant emperor, Spain was concerned about the legal difficulties which could be created to the Spanish position in these two areas. This made it absolutely important to ensure a Habsburg succession to the imperial title.

In addition, the emperor himself was lord of numerous fiefs in Italy, controlled the Tyrolean passes, and had rights throughout the Rhineland, including the sovereignty of Alsace. He thus controlled important territories along the ‘Spanish Road’ by


20 Ibid.

21 In 1617, Ferdinand of Styria and the Spanish ambassador at Vienna, Count Oñate, had signed a secret agreement at the Archduke’s residence in Graz to the effect that the former would transfer the
which Spain transferred troops and money to Flanders. Madrid also feared that France might use these routes for aggressive ends in Italy. Here again a Habsburg emperor was useful for Spain in that he could protect the Spanish position in those routes between Milan and Flanders and between Milan and the Austrian hereditary possessions in the empire. 22

All these were threatened when the Austrian Habsburgs faced rebellion throughout their lands. 23 Spain was bound to come to the emperor's aid. The Spanish ambassador at Vienna, Count Oñate, repeatedly implored Madrid to send a substantial army to help save Bohemia. At the same time, a furious debate had begun in Spain regarding the Dutch truce. Most Spanish statesmen were convinced that the Dutch truce had been ruinous for Spain and looked forward to resuming the conflict in 1621. This situation demanded that the empire be peaceful and in a position to assist Spain in controlling the land route to Flanders. Madrid, therefore, responded to the Emperor's and Oñate's pleas and sent 700,000 talers between July and September 1618. And in May 1619 it despatched a 7,000 strong force from Flanders to Vienna.

When the rebellion spread to Germany, Oñate once again insisted on large-scale military aid to the Emperor. Unable to ignore its ambassador's pleas, Madrid decided to take the pressure off Vienna by mounting a diversionary attack on the Rhenish

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22 Brightwell, n. 19, p. 420.

23 The Bohemian rebellion spread in the summer of 1618 to Lusatia, Silesia and Upper Austria; Moravia and Lower Austria joined in the summer of 1619. And in late August 1619, Bethlen Gabor began the conquest of Habsburg Hungary and reached the gates of Vienna in November to lay siege along with the Bohemian rebel army. Parker, n. 13, pp. 51 ff.
Palatinate. This would, at the same time, deliver Alsace to Spain and bring one more obstacle along the ‘Spanish Road’ under Madrid’s control. Consequently, Madrid dispatched 20,000 veterans in the spring of 1620 into the Palatinate. By March 1621, some 40,000 troops were assisting the Austrian Habsburgs. Apart from this, a steady supply of money was sent to Vienna which totalled six million talers by the end of 1624.

However, Spanish policy was not one of total commitment to the imperial cause. Madrid was aware of the danger of provoking the French, the Dutch, and the German Protestants to come together in a grand anti-Habsburg alliance. Spanish statesmen did not want to find themselves at war with a majority of European states. At the same time, they could not afford to leave their kinsman to his fate, especially given the Emperor’s importance to Spain. Therefore, the solution they advocated was one of isolating the revolt and simultaneously encouraging the rebels to accept reasonable terms. So, while the Emperor was given assistance to fight the rebels, he was also urged to work for a settlement by peaceful means.

This policy was, however, overturned with the succession of a new set of leaders in 1621. The death of Archduke Albert, the Governor of the Netherlands, once again brought the Netherlands under the direct control of Madrid where a new King.

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24 Spinola, the commander of Spanish forces in the Netherlands, viewed the Palatinate as a ‘Protestant barrier between the source of his military power and his objective’ of militarily crushing the Dutch Republic. See C. V. Wedgwood, The Thirty Years War (London, 1964 edn.), p. 114.

25 Parker, n. 13, p. 50.

26 Brightwell, n. 19, p. 426.
Philip IV, and his favourite, the Count-Duke of Olivares, had assumed power. To Olivares, the central problem facing Spain was the world-wide anti-Spanish activities of the United Provinces. He had no illusions about bringing the rebellious provinces back under Spanish control. What he hoped for, however, was to induce the Dutch, through military and economic pressure, to negotiate a new peace containing terms more favourable to Spain. For this he needed the Emperor’s help.

The guiding principle of Olivares’ foreign policy, therefore, was an alliance with Vienna. Consequently, the whole thrust of his diplomacy was aimed at bringing about an offensive and defensive alliance between the King of Spain and the Emperor. Imperial victories in north Germany seemed to provide an ideal opportunity for united Habsburg action. He therefore began negotiations with Vienna and Munich regarding the implementation of the ‘Baltic Design’ which involved co-operation on both land and sea between Spanish and imperial forces. Even though this scheme was cut short by their growing involvement in Italy, Habsburg preparations to implement this plan aroused considerable unease in Sweden and ultimately led to the Swedish invasion of Germany.

Italy was another theatre where Austria and Spain co-operated at this time. As early as 1620, the Emperor had assisted Spain to establish control over the strategic

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27 Parker, n. 13, p. 104.

28 All his efforts to conclude a formal agreement proved futile because of the divergent interests of Madrid and Vienna. While Spanish interest was limited to crush the Netherlands, the emperor was more worried about the French presence in Italy and about consolidating his authority within the empire. See J. H. Elliott, Richelieu and Olivares (Cambridge, 1984), p. 120.
valley of the Valtelline. Later in the decade, he despatched up to 50,000 imperial troops to the Italian peninsula. This was again to help Spain secure Mantua and Montferrat against a resurgent France. Austro-Spanish co-operation intensified further in the 1630s when they joined forces to inflict a crushing defeat on the Swedes at Nördlingen.

Thus, co-operation between the two branches of the Habsburgs led to increasing linkages between the two sets of conflicts. Spanish involvement in the emperor’s wars turned the latter’s opponents against Spain. And imperial assistance to Madrid focused the eyes of Spain’s adversaries on the troubles in the empire. Moreover, Austro-Spanish co-operation added fuel to the already existing doubts about Habsburg ‘hegemonic’ aspirations. This only added further vigour to the anti-Habsburg cause. Furthermore, since religion was at the source of both the disputes, the two alliances were drawn along religious lines. As a result, the intensity of the conflict increased manifold with men fighting for a noble cause rather than for personal or territorial or dynastic aggrandisement.

Ferdinand I’s Policies

Ferdinand’s ambition was absolute power and he saw the future of the Habsburg dynasty from this angle. His goal was to revive imperial power so that no other dynasty or nation would be able to stand up against the Habsburgs. It is towards this end that his policies were directed after the initial victories over the Protestant rebels. First in Bohemia, and later in the empire, he implemented a series of

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measures which ultimately revealed his absolutist and imperial intentions. He adopted a three-pronged strategy in Bohemia to ensure its complete subjection to his will. He issued an edict in 1622 which forfeited all or part of the lands of all those who participated in the revolt which brought almost half of Bohemia under its purview. At the same time, he went about creating a new aristocracy bound only to the Crown through the sale of confiscated land and the grant of new titles. To accomplish the second leg of his strategy - the extermination of Protestantism - he ordered all Protestant clergymen and teachers to leave, banned Protestant worship, excluded Protestants from all rights and privileges, and systematically enforced conversion. The third prong of his strategy was to extinguish all national privileges which he did by abolishing the elective monarchy and making Bohemia a hereditary preserve of the Habsburg family. Further, the Letter of Majesty that had been traditionally granted to the Protestant Estates was repealed.

Ferdinand imposed similar measures on Moravia, Silesia and Austria. Hungary alone escaped with its religious and political privileges intact because of the threat posed by the Turks. All this reorganisation was designed to mould Habsburg lands into one state 'united by religion and controlled from Vienna' which would form the 'essential foundation for the rebuilding of Catholic Europe'. In accordance with this

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30 Albrecht von Wallenstein is a good representative of this new aristocracy. By 1623, he controlled almost a quarter of all land in Bohemia and was raised to the title of Count in the same year. See, ibid., p. 173.


32 Wedgwood, n. 24, p. 142.
policy, the Emperor altered the traditional constitution of the Habsburg dominions. He replaced the earlier family confederation by a system of primogeniture and even tried to unite the entire southern block of land from Tyrol to Hungary under a single head. He, however, desisted from such a move upon the urgings of Leopold who counselled that such a move would only irritate German princes.33

Ferdinand’s project of reorganisation stretched even beyond Habsburg lands. In Germany, loyal princes were rewarded with lands that had been taken over from rebellious subjects. The most important of these concerned the disposal of the lands and title of the defeated Frederick V. Ferdinand granted the Duke of Bavaria complete possession of the Upper Palatinate as compensation for the latter’s war-time expenses. Besides, in accordance with his earlier promise, the Emperor also invested upon the Duke in February 1623 the electoral title hitherto held by the Elector Of the Palatinate.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand had effectively dealt with the opposition of the Protestant Union. When the imperial ban was pronounced on the Elector Of the Palatinate in January 1621, the princes and cities of the Protestant Union assembled at Heilbronn to protest the Emperor’s violation of the imperial constitution. In response, Ferdinand demanded that they disband the few troops they still had in arms. At the same time, he threatened them with Spanish troops stationed on the Rhine. Unwilling to be overrun, the Union gave way and agreed to disband its army. In return, their rights as neutrals was guaranteed. Known as the ‘Mainz Accord’, this agreement

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33 So he decided that Leopold and his heirs would have the county of Tyrol, while Austria, Hungary, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia would go to his own eldest son and continue so in the direct line. See, ibid., p. 178.
marked the dissolution of the Union. Soon other Protestant armies in the field were also crushed by League forces.

Devoid of any more armed support to his cause, Frederick V signed an armistice with the Emperor.\textsuperscript{34} For the first time since Charles V, a Habsburg Emperor had successfully overcome the limitations on imperial power. And he seemed to be well on his way to establishing absolute control throughout the Holy Roman Empire, especially after acquiring his own army raised and commanded by Wallenstein. Now, the old universal idea of Charles V became a living principle in the nephew: he would subdue Germany, as his predecessor had done the peasants and the estates in the Austrian provinces; he would crush all independence, the privileges of cities, the rights of the estates, the pride and family power of princes - he hoped to subjugate all Germany to his faith and his house.\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{Course and Scope of the War}

1. \textit{Denmark Enters the War}

By the mid-1620s, Spain's traditional rivals began to wake up to the possibility of a Habsburg-dominated Europe. French policy which until then had been rather benign towards Spain began to change. The continued Spanish occupation of part of the Palatinate had led to French suspicion that Madrid was planning to acquire that part of the empire, thereby creating one more frontier between the two rivals.\textsuperscript{36} Using the

\textsuperscript{34} ibid., p. 185.
\textsuperscript{36} Ward, n. 31, p. 88.
invasion of the Rhenish Palatinate in August 1620 as a diversionary tactic, Spain had also occupied the strategic valley of the Valtelline. These events led to a reappraisal of French policy. It led to France advancing some minimal aid to the Protestant rebels in 1623. When Cardinal Richelieu formed his ministry, this anti-Habsburg policy became even more open. In June 1624, he concluded a friendship treaty with the United Provinces and an agreement with Venice and Savoy in July 1624. The latter provided for joint intervention in the Valtelline.

English policy also began to take an aggressive tone at this time. With the collapse of the King's plans for his son's Spanish marriage, England's pro-Habsburg policy broke down. Moreover, there was no longer any possibility of recovering the Palatinate with Spanish help, especially after Ferdinand had put Frederick V to the imperial ban and transferred his electoral title to the Duke of Bavaria. France now replaced Spain in English marriage plans and for the recovery of the Palatinate. The French alliance, however, proved to be a bitter disappointment because of divergent areas of interest. While France looked towards Italy, England was more interested in Germany. And the outbreak of a Huguenot revolt in January 1625 rendered French co-operation further remote.

England therefore proposed the formation of a great anti-Habsburg coalition comprising the United Provinces, Denmark, Sweden, Venice, Savoy and the German princes and dispatched ambassadors to the continent for this purpose. At this time, the

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37 E. A. Beller, 'The Thirty Years War', in NCMH, vol. 4, p. 320.
Dutch were hard-pressed on their own frontier with Spanish troops laying siege to Breda. The fall of Breda in May 1625 and the consequent threat that Spain posed to the independence of the United Provinces made any Dutch intervention in the empire impossible. The only capable players left were Denmark and Sweden.

Gustavus Adolphus, the King of Sweden, had turned his attention towards Germany in 1623. At that time, he had expressed his wish to invade Bohemia with the backing of a general Protestant alliance for the purpose of restoring Frederick V to the throne of that kingdom. When the English approached him in 1624, he put forward such an elaborate project that London was forced to reject it.\(^{38}\) Instead, it showed greater interest in the more modest proposal that Denmark submitted in January 1625.

Danish interest in Germany stemmed from the fact that King Christian IV was also Duke of Holstein (in which capacity he voted in the imperial diet) and a member of the empire’s Lower Saxon Circle. His intention was to secure the bishoprics of Halberstadt and Osnabrück for his son (who had been elected bishop of Verden in 1623), and to establish control over the mouths of the Elbe and Weser rivers. Thus, it was principally to defend their position as German princes that King Christian and his

\(^{38}\) Gustavus’ project hinged on a proposed Russian marriage for his sister-in-law Catherine, and a consequent Russian war against Poland. He, at the same time, backed by a great Protestant league, would carry the war into the heart of the Austrian dominions. For this purpose, he proposed the creation of a 50,000 strong army with England, Sweden and the German princes each sharing one-third its expense. In addition, he also demanded seventeen warships to defend himself against a sudden attack by Denmark or Poland, and the cities of Wismar and Bremen for use as disembarkation and supply bases. Upon hearing this scheme, James I exclaimed: ‘I am not so great and rich a prince as to be able to do so much. I am only the king of two poor little islands!’. See, Ward, n. 31, p. 90 and Beller, n. 37, p. 321. The quote is from Beller.
son sought to oppose the further progress of the League army in the direction of the North Sea and the Elbe.\textsuperscript{39}

But the Danish schemes began to unravel soon. The Emperor denied to grant the bishoprics that the King desired and even demanded the return of a secularised church in the bishopric of Halberstadt. This was part of Ferdinand’s demand that all church properties secularised after 1552 be returned to the Roman Catholic church.\textsuperscript{40} Moreover, League forces violated the neutrality of the Circle which had been guaranteed by the agreement of Mülhausen signed in 1620. Furthermore, the very presence of these troops frightened some chapters into electing Catholic bishops. Northern Germany looked defenceless and seemed set for enforced catholicisation by the Emperor’s demands and imperial troops.

Denmark’s military plan was to first eject imperial and League troops from Lower Saxony and then relieve Spanish pressure upon the Netherlands. This was adopted by the convention of The Hague in December 1625 which bound the Netherlands, England, Denmark and Frederick of the Palatinate.\textsuperscript{41} But the hoped-for

\textsuperscript{39} Christian’s willingness to intervene is also attributed to the fear which Gustavus’ plans and its implications for Danish-Swedish rivalry in Scandinavia and in the Baltic induced in him. See, E. Ladewig Petersen, “The Danish Intermezzo”, in Parker, n. 13. pp. 71-74. There was also a commercial angle to the Danish desire to dominate this portion of Germany. Moreover, the boundaries between religious policy and commercial policy are not very well defined. See George Pagès, The Thirty Years War 1618-1648, David Maland and John Hooper, trans. (London, 1970). pp. 83-85.

\textsuperscript{40} Beller, n. 37, p. 318.

\textsuperscript{41} The plan of campaign envisaged a fourfold advance by Christian IV (into Lower Saxony), Christian of Brunswick (into the Lower Rhineland), Ernest of Mansfeld, the generalissimo of the coalition (against Bohemia, Silesia and Moravia) and Bethlen Gabor (against Austria and Moravia and effect a junction with Mansfeld). Steinberg, n. 18. p. 45.
anti-Habsburg coalition proved to be a non-starter. England's promise to pay a monthly subsidy failed to materialise after the first instalment due to Parliament's refusal to grant the necessary funds. Denied supreme command, Gustavus withdrew from the coalition. Christian of Brunswick died in June 1626 thus enabling the League forces to concentrate against Denmark. The campaign in Silesia, Moravia and Hungary failed because of lack of co-ordination between the German Protestant and Transylvanian troops. And most importantly, France failed to provide any support due to the outbreak of a Huguenot revolt.

Despite inadequate support, the King of Denmark went ahead with his military preparations. At the same time, the Emperor's position had been considerably strengthened by the appearance of a new imperial army raised and commanded by Wallenstein, the new Duke of Friedland. Danish troops were repeatedly defeated by imperial troops and finally destroyed by Wallenstein in September 1628. As a result, Denmark was forced to sign the Peace of Lübeck in June 1629. King Christian IV renounced his claims to the German bishoprics but was allowed to retain his hereditary lands. He also undertook not to interfere in the affairs of the empire thereafter.

With Denmark's defeat, Ferdinand's power within the empire increased further. There was no longer any effective opposition to curtail his ambitions. It was the perfect time to use his military preponderance for the benefit of the Catholic church and of the Habsburg dynasty. In March 1629, the Emperor issued the Edict of Restitution which

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42 Ferdinand's position had not changed since 1608 when, as imperial delegate, he had demanded the restitution of all church lands seized by Protestants after 1552. Beller, n. 37, p. 326.
required the return to the Catholic church of all ecclesiastical properties taken over by Protestants after 1552. Commissioners, appointed to oversee these transfers, were granted the right to call in imperial troops to enforce their decisions. The edict also gave its approval for expelling Protestants from Catholic territories. Only Lutheranism was given recognition. Restitution continued for the next three years and drastically changed the map of northern Germany. By the time Gustavus Adolphus intervened, five bishoprics, about thirty imperial or Hanseatic cities, nearly 100 convents, and a great number of parishes were restored to the Catholic church. The move was also personally beneficial to the Emperor who secured for his son, Archduke Leopold William, the north-German bishoprics of Bremen, Verden, and Minden - a territory larger than those held by any other ecclesiastical elector.43

In the meantime, Wallenstein had enthusiastically embarked upon the ‘Baltic Project’ - a Spanish proposal for the joint Habsburg control of the North and Baltic Seas. The idea was to provide Spain with a Baltic naval base which would serve as the home port for a new trading company to compete with the Dutch and wrest from them control over the lucrative Baltic-Mediterranean trade.44 Wallenstein’s contribution was to be the occupation of one of the Baltic ports. By this time, he had extended his conquests on the Baltic coast - Mecklenburg had been occupied and its native Dukes expelled, and the prince of Pomerania had been forced to admit imperial troops.

43 Ward, n. 31, p. 111.
44 Olivares had correctly identified this as the foundation of Dutch ‘economic prosperity and military resilience’. Parker, n. 13, pp. 104-05.
But he faced unexpected opposition from the Hanseatic cities which were suspicious of Habsburg, and especially Spanish, domination. The Hanse refused to submit to Wallenstein’s overtures regarding the garrisoning of imperial troops in their territories and the furnishing of ships and seamen for his purposes. The imperial general was therefore forced to use military means. He first seized Wismar and coerced some others like Rostock to pay up huge sums to avoid similar treatment. He next laid siege to the port of Stralsund which refused to admit imperial troops. But his efforts to subdue this small port were thwarted by timely Swedish and Danish assistance. This focused Wallenstein’s attention on Sweden for the first time. Apart from being a Protestant power, Sweden had acquired control over Livonia and Prussia in 1626 and thereby came to control the whole line of the Baltic, east of Pomerania.45

2. Sweden Enters the War

At this time Sweden was involved in a war with Poland. In order to further enmesh Gustavus in this conflict and thereby restrict Sweden’s ability to interfere with his plans, Wallenstein dispatched a 15,000-strong force to assist Poland. The joint Polish-Imperial army inflicted a crushing defeat on Swedish forces at Honigfelde in June 1629 and forced Gustavus to rush to the theatre of war. The same year saw the imperial navy worsting a Swedish fleet in an engagement off Wismar. In an attempt to diplomatically isolate Sweden, Wallenstein convinced the emperor to grant especially moderate terms to the King of Denmark who consequently withdrew from the Swedish

alliance. He also undertook not to interfere in the affairs of the empire. And on top of all this came the imperial proclamation of the Edict of Restitution. Gustavus was convinced that the spread of imperial power in north Germany not only threatened the very existence of Protestantism but also aimed at the heart of the Swedish State.46

The King was aware of Habsburg plans to dominate the Baltic. He had also taken note of Wallenstein's assumption of the title of the 'General of the North and Baltic Seas' and the general's occupation of Mecklenburg, Pomerania, and Wismar. Moreover, Poland had also transferred its naval squadron to Wismar. Gustavus was convinced that a combined Polish-Imperial fleet, if allowed to grow undisturbed, might very soon be powerful enough to launch a 'legitimist invasion' of Sweden.47 The expansion of imperial power in the Baltic was thus of fundamental concern to Sweden.48 Consequently, the north German coast became an area of Swedish interest and the German Protestant cause became Sweden's cause as well. But his Polish war was yet to end and was in fact prolonged by the assistance that kingdom received from Wallenstein. Gustavus had to wait till France successfully negotiated the Truce of Altmark in September 1629 and freed him for his German enterprise.

46 See C. R. L. Fletcher for Gustavus' comments on the threat Habsburgs posed to Sweden in idem, 'Gustavus Adolphus and the Thirty Years War' in T. K. Rabb, ed., The Thirty Years War (Lexington, Massachusetts, 1972 edn), p. 87.

47 Michael Roberts, "Sweden and the Baltic", in J. P. Cooper ed., NCMH, vol. 4, p. 392. Both Poland and Sweden were at this time ruled by different branches of the Vasa dynasty with the former being Catholic and the latter Lutheran. Princes of both branches continued to claim each other's crown whenever a succession was in question.

48 Gustav Droysen argues that the history of Gustavus Adolphus until 1628 is filled 'throughout by the question of supremacy in the Baltic'. See, idem, 'Gustavus Adolphus: The Statesman of "Realpolitik"', in T. K. Rabb, ed., n. 35, pp. 52-54.
Gustavus' German campaign was essentially defensive in character. It was not only to save Sweden from an imperial invasion, but also to save German Protestantism. At this time, the King had no ally save Stralsund and no way of knowing what lay in store for him in Germany. When he landed at Peenemünde in July 1630, the King's only goal was to push Wallenstein's troops away from the coast and make sure that they did not come back. But how was this to be done? And what would happen after this had been accomplished? Gustavus initially seems to have had no idea regarding these questions. The answers developed later in tune with the fortunes of the war. In the King's view, the War was about Habsburg aspirations to hegemony within the empire and in Europe. His proposed solution was to prevent a recurrence of this hegemonic drive through military domination.

Upon landing in Germany, he set about achieving his goals. Within a month, he had established control over the greater part of Pomerania. The King's victories in late December established his position in the empire and soon he concluded a five-year treaty of alliance with France - the Treaty of Bärwalde in January 1631. After a stunning victory over Catholic League forces at Breitenfeld in September 1631, Gustavus marched on to the Rhine. His plan was to move south and east for the final conquest of Bavaria and Austria. This would establish Swedish military domination over the empire, protect Protestantism and prevent imperial forces from dominating Germany.

After his initial victories over imperial and League forces, Gustavus proclaimed his plans for post-war Germany. He projected two alliances, a military league [corpus
bellicum] to win the war, and a political league [corpus politicum] to keep the peace.

He hoped that all the German Protestant estates and cities would join these alliances which would be headed by Sweden. The political league was to be a part of the empire, with its own army and legislature and would thus act as a buffer against further imperial aggression. Sweden was to hold Pomerania [later Prussia was included] as an imperial fief thereby making the Swedish monarch a prince of the empire. These measures were to ensure security for German Protestants and for Sweden. At the same time, Pomerania would form the compensation for the Swedish war effort.49

Gustavus deputed his chancellor, Axel Oxenstierna, to convene a meeting of the Franconian, Swabian and Rhenish Circles at Ulm to discuss these ideas. After Gustavus' death at Lützen, Oxenstierna succeeded in giving concrete shape to the King’s ideas through the Heilbronn League formed in April 1633. Its objectives were to continue the war till: 'German Liberties' and respect for the imperial constitution were established; Protestant estates were restored and a just peace concluded; and, Sweden was assured of appropriate satisfaction.50 At the same time, Oxenstierna and his colleagues in the Swedish Regency Council agreed upon the fact that any peace with the Emperor should include territorial acquisitions in the empire as recompense for Sweden's war efforts, the establishment of Swedish command over Baltic ports as security against imperial invasion, and the destruction of all Habsburg pretensions to any real sovereignty in the empire. Germany was thus to be restored to the position it

49 Beller, n. 37, pp. 338-9.
50 Parker, n. 13, p. 135.
occupied in 1618 not only for the sake of the Protestant Cause, but for Sweden’s sake as well.\textsuperscript{51}

But these were the maximum objectives discussed at the height of Swedish military successes in the empire. They were considerably scaled down after the defeat at Nördlingen in September 1634. This Swedish defeat had considerable military and political consequences. At one stroke, all of Gustavus’ conquests in southern Germany were lost and the political and religious conditions of 1631 were restored.\textsuperscript{52} Also, Nördlingen and subsequent imperial successes led to the dissolution of the Heilbronn League. Oxenstierna consequently scaled down Sweden’s war aims, especially in the area of territorial compensation. He felt that it would be sufficient to hold on to a few naval bases in the Baltic provided Germany was restored to the position of 1618. Sweden’s major objective from April 1641 was to prevent the ‘enslavement of the empire’, and to guarantee the satisfaction of the soldiery under the Swedish banner.\textsuperscript{53}

Imperial successes led the Elector of Saxony to begin negotiating for peace with the Emperor. A truce was arranged in February 1635 and final peace was signed in May of that year. Known as the Peace of Prague, this agreement suspended the Edict of Restitution for forty years and instead fixed 1627 as the determining year for the possession of church lands. Calvinists were, however, excluded once again. Disputes were to be adjudicated by an imperial court composed of Catholic and Protestant

\textsuperscript{52} Beller, n. 37, p. 345.
\textsuperscript{53} Roberts in Parker. n. 50, p. 161.
members in equal number. Princes and cities were forbidden to enter into alliances with one another. And all princely forces were to be integrated into the imperial army, with the Electors acting only in the capacity of imperial generals. 54

Unwilling to endure the terrible conflict any longer, most German princes and cities hastened to sign the peace. But those who subscribed to it found that they had to drive not only Swedish, but also French, armies out of Germany. Moreover, any conflict with France meant making common cause with the King of Spain. Thus, the Peace of Prague was metamorphosed into a military alliance with its signatories binding themselves to fight the battles of the House of Austria. 55 The only opposition Ferdinand faced in the empire came from the dispossessed princes - the Elector Of the Palatinate, Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, William of Hesse-Cassel, and the Duke of Brunswick.

3. France Enters the War

Since the reign of Charles V, French objectives in Germany had revolved around the preservation of the traditional liberties enjoyed by the princes and towns. The concomitant to this was opposition to imperial consolidation of authority at the expense of the individual political units of the empire. 56 Traditionally, French policy had focused on building a third party (the first and second being the Habsburg/Catholic and Protestant, respectively) centred around the Duke of Bavaria which would preserve the

54 Steinberg, n. 18, p. 68.
55 Wedgwood, n. 24, p. 391.
56 R. J. Bonney, 'France's War by Diversion', in Parker, n. 13, p. 148.
equilibrium within the empire by denying absolute majority to either of the extremist factions. Richelieu had tried to revive this in the late 1620s but without success.\(^5\)

So, when Ferdinand seemed set to consolidate his authority within the empire, the only alternative France had was to encourage Sweden to intervene in Germany. Towards this end, France brokered a truce between Poland and Sweden and later concluded a subsidy treaty with Gustavus Adolphus. Much to Richelieu's surprise and discomfort, Gustavus refused to serve as a French pawn. Moreover, the King's victories shut France off from the empire. Richelieu could no longer call the shots and had to play second fiddle to the 'Lion of the North'. Sweden's military might proved to be an obstacle to French interests even after Gustavus died in 1632. Richelieu was not able to assert French interests till after the Swedish defeat at Nördlingen.

In the interim, France stayed on the sidelines and began building up its position so as to be ready to take any passing tide at the flood. Richelieu concluded several agreements with the electors of the Rhineland which ensured free passage for French troops. He also acquired several points along the Franco-German frontier, some by occupation and others through negotiation. By the end of 1634, France held a great block of imperial territory, from Basel in the south, and Coblenz in the north, to Lorraine in the west. These annexations were meant to enable future French

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\(^5\) Both France and Bavaria shared the same objective of curtailing the power of the Habsburgs within the Empire. They could not co-operate because each wanted to use the other for its own purposes. Richelieu wanted to use the third party as 'a pliable instrument of French policy', while Maximilian wanted to use the threat of French intervention to improve his bargaining position with the emperor. See. George Pagès, n. 39, pp. 123-4.
interventions in the affairs of the empire and thus protect German princes against the centralising tendencies of the emperor.58

The Swedish defeat, the collapse of the Heilbronn League and the Peace of Prague all seriously undermined the French position in Europe. The Emperor had at last managed to impose peace in Germany. And now he could provide Spain with all the assistance the latter needed to re-conquer the United Provinces. At the same time, the widespread acceptance of the Peace of Prague by German princes meant that they were all committed to fight on the emperor’s side against Sweden. France feared that this would very soon lead to a situation where Sweden would have to leave Germany to its fate and withdraw.59 Moreover, without a Swedish alliance, France’s position was precarious since it would have to single-handedly face the combined onslaught of both Austria and Spain. Richelieu’s main concern, therefore, was to destroy Habsburg power by preventing the ‘strategic and political union’ of the two branches at Madrid and Vienna.60

This situation forced France to assume an open leadership role of the anti-Habsburg cause. France’s initial efforts, however, were focused on its main rival - Spain. Paris believed that Spain was the more serious threat to European security and that once the power of Spain was decisively weakened, the emperor would no longer

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58 Richelieu considered these territories as necessary to create a general European security system. See, Holsti, n. 5, p. 31.

59 Sweden was already facing severe difficulties within the empire with troops mutinying over lack of pay and the hopelessness of their cause. Disaster was, however, averted at the last minute. For details see, Wedgwood, n. 24, pp. 398-99.

60 G. Livet, “International Relations and the Role of France 1648-60”, in NCMH, vol. 4, p. 411.
make war to suit the ‘appetite and passion’ of the Spaniards. Moreover, France was in no position at that time to wage a long war for it was still recovering from the aftermath of the Huguenot rebellion. In addition, the nobility was still powerful and given to intrigue. And, the country’s finances were not strong enough to maintain armies even in times of peace. These constraints forced Richelieu to concentrate on one front at a time. Consequently, France did not declare war on the Emperor till 1638.

One other reason for France’s hesitation to make an open breach with the Emperor at that time could be the decision by most German princes, including the Protestant electors of Saxony and Brandenburg, to accept the Peace of Prague. Even during the negotiations with the Heilbronn League, France had insisted that it would break with the emperor only if the Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg remained loyal to the League. So, when these two Electors joined forces with Ferdinand II, France refused to declare war on the Emperor. Paris, which had all along been espousing the cause of ‘German liberties’, had no locus standi to intervene in the affairs of the empire in such circumstances.

Moreover, all of Richelieu’s efforts to wean the Duke of Bavaria away from the Habsburg cause had failed. As a result, the French policy of forming a neutral third party in Germany lay in ruins. In this situation, all France could do was to take into its pay the two small Protestant armies still opposed to the Emperor. Till this unfavourable

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61 Bonney in Parker, n. 56, p. 147.
circumstance changed, France was forced to act under the nominal authority of Sweden.

There was another reason for the French concentration on Spain at this time. France and the United Provinces had struck a deal in February 1635 over the joint conquest and partition of the southern Netherlands. The accomplishment of this feat would have meant the removal of the Spanish presence along one French frontier and a major breach of the 'Spanish ring' around France. At the same time, it would have dealt a major blow to the 'Spanish System' within Europe. A victory would, in addition, make France the strongest power in the continent and catapult it to the forefront of European politics. Consequently, Richelieu embarked upon a simultaneous attack on Spain in both the Netherlands and in Italy.

The joint Franco-Dutch campaign of 1635 started successfully but failed to produce decisive results. After the French failure against Spain in the Low Countries, the combined forces of Spain and the emperor took the offensive against France in the summer of 1636. While Spanish troops based in the Netherlands advanced into Picardy, imperial troops occupied Franche-Comté and invaded Burgundy. But they were not able to follow up on their initial advantages due to difficulties in provisioning their forces. This gave Richelieu the pretext to move against the Emperor.

63 The Spanish System implied 'a structure of relationships between the states of Europe, set up by, and organised primarily in the interests of, the Castilian monarchy..., embracing the whole of western and central Europe along with South America, the East Indies and parts of the coasts of Africa and India'. Peter Brightwell. "The Spanish System and the Twelve Years' Truce". The English Historical Review, vol. 89 (April 1974), p. 270.
In March 1638, France and Sweden entered into a three-year alliance (the Treaty of Hamburg) which provided for a French declaration of war on the Emperor and for the rejection of any separate truce with the enemy. Thereafter, French and Swedish troops began co-ordinating their efforts within the empire. Even before this, the struggle for the Rhine had commenced with a Protestant army under French auspices making spectacular progress down the Rhine and capturing the strategic town of Breisach. The following years witnessed successive French and Swedish military victories over imperial troops. At the same time, Protestant opposition to the new Emperor, Ferdinand III, began to revive. Moreover, Spain, buffeted by revolts in Catalonia and Portugal and by military defeats on both land and at sea, was no longer in a position to help the emperor. Ferdinand III had no option but to agree to peace negotiations.

Intensity of the Conflict

Religious zeal and hatred of the rival faith led to cruel atrocities by soldiers on both sides. For example, Catholic League troops put the town of Magdeburg to destruction by assault and fire. It evoked a Protestant response when Gustavus reached Bavaria. The King ordered the deliberate devastation of the duchy and the slaughter of its peasants. The full horrors of the War come out clearly in the account of William Crowne who, at this time, was accompanying the Earl of Arundel on a special mission to the Emperor. He found many dead people ‘with grass in their mouths’, children

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64 Beller, n. 37, p. 338.
starving to death, villages, towns and castles pillaged and sometimes burnt, and people without even water except for what they had collected during rains.\textsuperscript{65}

The War exacted a terrible toll in human life, particularly in Bohemia and Germany, where rival armies roamed the land in desperate search of food and fodder. The War brought in its wake the other horsemen of the apocalypse - famine, pestilence, and destruction of property. Civilians bore the brunt of the ill-effects brought on by the War. It has been estimated that as much as one-third or even half of the German and Bohemian populations perished during the War. And the effects on economic activity and commerce were equally debilitating.\textsuperscript{66}

\textit{Objectives of the Combatants}

1. \textit{Denmark}

Danish objectives were part religious and part power-political. Denmark was a Protestant power and hence wished to protect the interests of its German religious brethren who were facing a dangerous Catholic assault led by the Habsburg Emperor. At the same time, the King held important territories in the Lower Saxon Circle and consequently was a prince of the Holy Roman Empire. And like other princes -- both Catholic and Protestant -- he too feared the consolidation of power by the Austrian Habsburgs backed as they were by the power of Spain. Consequently, Denmark's

\textsuperscript{65} ibid., p. 346.

\textsuperscript{66} The scale of destruction attributed to the war has been open to much criticism. For example, see S. H. Steinberg, "The Not So Destructive, Not So Religious, and Not Primarily German War", in Rabb, ed., n. 18, pp. 25-32.
major objective in the War was to crush Catholic League forces and thus make Germany safe for Protestants, including itself. Moreover, the King also hoped to gain some long-coveted territories which would establish Danish control over the mouths of the Elbe and Weser rivers and thus help to dominate the North Sea trade.

2. Sweden

In the case of Sweden as well, objectives were both religious and power-political. Gustavus Adolphus entered the War for the sake of both Protestantism and Sweden's security. Lutheranism was the official creed in Sweden and the King was definitely moved by the plight of German Protestants. Moreover, given the Emperor's religious zeal and commitment of the promotion of the Catholic cause, Gustavus could clearly see a Habsburg threat to Swedish Protestantism in the near future. Imperial support to the Polish military effort against Sweden and a naval encounter Habsburg and Swedish navies were clear indications of such a threat. Habsburg control of the Baltic thus posed a definite threat to Sweden's security.

When Gustavus embarked upon his German campaign, he was unclear about his goals. All he wanted was to defeat the imperial army and thwart Habsburg attempts to control the Baltic. This would serve the twin purpose of reducing a Habsburg threat to Sweden as well as make Germany safe for Protestants. Military success, however, led to a considerable widening of his objectives. The King developed a grand strategic plan to move towards the Rhine, establish a strong position in the west and, then move north and east for the final conquest of Bavaria and Austria. Thus, now his objectives came to include the conquest of the whole of Germany and the Emperor's homeland as
well. Gustavus came to regard these as absolutely necessary to assure Sweden’s security and the safety of Protestantism. Gustavus’ death and the subsequent Swedish defeat put paid to all the King’s schemes. From then on, Swedish objectives were much more limited and focused on safeguarding the traditional German liberties and the establishment of Swedish power on the Baltic.

3. France

Unlike other anti-Habsburg powers, France had to factor in both Austria and Spain in its strategic calculations. Consequently, its greatest fear was the establishment of close co-operation between the two Habsburg powers. It was faced with precisely such a scenario in 1634 when the combined armies of Spain and the Emperor victoriously appeared along France’s eastern frontier. France had to move away from its hitherto neutral stance to counter this grave threat. Even if their combined armies were to be directed against the United Provinces, it spelled grave danger for the French position in Europe. For any Dutch defeat would mean that Paris would have to face the Habsburg menace all by itself. Therefore, the major French objective in the War was to sever the link between the Habsburgs in Austria and Spain. Also, the traditional liberties of the German princes were to be maintained and thereby the Habsburgs prevented from consolidating authority within the Empire.

The Treaty of Westphalia

The Congress of Westphalia assembled at two venues, Münster and Osnabrück. The Emperor treated with France and its Catholic allies at Münster (with the Pope and
Venice acting as mediators) and with Sweden and its Protestant allies (with the mediation of Denmark) at Osnabrück. The latter venue also witnessed negotiations between Spain and the United Provinces over a final settlement of their conflict. France, however, refused to negotiate with Spain. In fact, the French goal at the Congress was to make a separate peace with the emperor and thus detach him from Madrid in which plan Paris succeeded.67

At the same time, France was unable to retain Dutch support for its war against the Spaniards. The United Provinces no longer took a benign view of French policies and felt that only Paris could benefit from any further prolongation of the war against Spain.68 Consequently, the Dutch began serious negotiations for a final settlement with Spain. A peace agreement was signed in January 1648 by which Spain recognised the complete independence of the United Provinces with each party retaining the lands it had possessed - both in Europe and overseas - at the time of the signing of the treaty.

Thus, the structure of the post-war European politics was governed not by any of the war-time alliances but rather by the interest of each dynasty. Even though the family connexion persisted between Spain and the Austrian Habsburgs, the latter no longer offered any support to Madrid in its war against France. Similarly, France’s erstwhile ally, the United Provinces, made its peace with Spain and grew ever more suspicious of French intentions in Europe. The next half-century was dominated by

67 Wedgwood, n. 24, p. 471.
68 Dutch fears were fuelled by news of Franco-Spanish negotiations regarding a marriage deal by which Louis XIV would receive the southern Netherlands as his dowry. At the same time, France was to give up Barcelona of which the King of France had been chosen Duke. Livet, n. 60, p. 413.
French ambitions within Europe under the 'absolutist' reign of Louis XIV. Louis XIV's ambitious schemes provoked the United Provinces to put together a series of alliances against France which gave birth to the 'classical age' of the balance of power. All these, it must be remembered, were the direct result of the terms of the Westphalian peace.

The religious settlement was contained in the Treaty of Osnabrück. It was essentially a broadening of the Pacification of Passau (1552) and the Peace of Augsburg (1555). Calvinism was now recognised as a legitimate branch of Christianity. At the same time, the anti-Protestant Edict of Restitution (1629) was abrogated. The new settlement provided for complete equality between all German Estates - whether Catholic or Lutheran, Elector or Prince or City. Restitution was to be effective from 1 January 1624. These provisions were only of an interim nature. But, at the same time, it was provided in the treaty that these provisions would become a perpetual law of the empire in case of a failure to resolve the religious controversies in the near future.

Furthermore, subjects were to have freedom to follow their own faith and to educate their children in accordance with these principles. The general principle of *cuius regio eius religio* was reaffirmed thus giving the prince 'territorial superiority in all matters ecclesiastical as well as political'. One exception to this principle was that any prince willing to retain Protestants within his lands should grant religious tolerance to these subjects. Since these provisions applied only to the Holy Roman Empire, Habsburg lands did not come under the purview of this settlement.

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69 Beller, n. 37, p. 355.
The 'Ecclesiastical Reservation' was re-confirmed at the Congress and the holdings of church lands were to remain as they were in 1624. Any dispute was to be negotiated or submitted to judicial settlement. At the same time, imperial institutions were to be reformed with equal representation given to Catholics and Protestants. Religious disputes, thereafter, were to be settled by consensus among the parties rather than by a majority vote. Moreover, the terms of the peace prohibited recourse to force. Only thirty years of continuous warfare, with all its attendant horrors, could induce them to arrive at such a compromise.

The power-political aspects of the conflict between the emperor and the princes were dealt with at both Münster and Osnabrück. The fundamental issue here was the question of 'German liberties' advocated by both Sweden and France. At the root of the political conflict in the empire stood the rival claims of the territorial princes and the emperor. What the Estates demanded was the restoration of their earlier territorial sovereignty and a fresh affirmation of the rights that were inherent in that sovereignty.70

The issue was settled in favour of the German Estates which were granted the right to conclude alliances (including the right to wage war) both within and outside the empire so long as the emperor or the empire or the terms of Westphalia were not the targets. This provision was common to both the Treaties of Münster and Osnabrück. This assured them complete independence and overnight some 300-odd sovereign political entities were created in the heart of Europe.

Furthermore, the Estates of the empire were given the right to vote in all imperial businesses (earlier restricted to the Electors), be it legislation, taxation or foreign policy. This ensured that no future emperor could resort to arbitrary measures, whether from religious or dynastic motives, such as the proclamation of the Edict of Restitution or the pronouncement of the Imperial ban on Frederick V. In addition, Ferdinand III and his successor had to issue formal disavowals regarding future imperial ambitions. All these measures were designed to ensure that no future Habsburg emperor could even aspire for European 'hegemony'.

What these peace terms did was to deny any role to either the pope or the emperor in resolving the religious and political issues afflicting Germany. The Estates themselves were made responsible for the resolution of future religious disputes. This delegitimised the role of both the Pope and the emperor - the founts of medieval religious and temporal authority - within the Holy Roman Empire. Westphalia, of course, provided only an interim solution to the empire's religious problems. This interim solution, however, ultimately became the permanent solution. It proved to be quite adequate since religion counted for little in post-war European politics.

In a very specific sense, Westphalia provided a new constitution for the empire. It created an international system within Germany itself by giving to the Estates many of the attributes of sovereignty. At the same time, this prevented

71 ibid., p. 414.
72 Cited by Holsti, n. 5, p. 35.
73 Referred to as the Westphalian Constitution, it lasted till Napoleon dissolved the empire in 1806.
Germany from becoming a modern state by prohibiting both the emperor or any other prince from centralising authority and infringing upon the ‘liberties’ of the German Estates. Loss of territory to France and Sweden, coupled with such constitutional checks, turned the empire into a power-vacuum in the heart of Europe. This would lead to future French efforts under Louis XIV to dominate the empire.

These were the unintended consequences of the peace. French, Swedish and German negotiators at Westphalia were only bothered about curbing the emperor’s ability to play an imperial role in Germany. Because the fact was that the Habsburgs still held the imperial title which was immensely prestigious. Furthermore, they were the only dynasty in that part of Europe with extensive territorial holdings in addition to their continuing family connexion with Spain.74 These preventive measures were the practical efforts of European statesmen to preserve their autonomy and a decentralised Europe.

A further insurance was taken against future Habsburg imperial aspirations by giving Sweden and France the right to intervene in the affairs of the empire. Moreover, both countries also received ‘satisfaction’ for their efforts during the War thus giving them a foothold in the empire. In addition to a cash indemnity of five million talers for the contentment of its soldiery,75 Sweden also demanded certain imperial territories to

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74 During the last years of the war, King Philip IV had married his niece, Ferdinand III’s daughter, Maria Anna. In order to bind his Austrian cousin more firmly, Philip also appointed the Archduke Leopold, Ferdinand’s brother, as the Governor of the Netherlands. Wedgwood, n. 24 p. 495.

75 This partly served as monetary compensation for the Protestant exiles of Austria and Bohemia, who could not go back to their lands because the amnesty did not extend to them and also because the religious settlement of the Treaty of Osnabrück did not apply to Habsburg Crown lands. Thus, they could neither go back to their lands nor practise their religion in their former homeland. See Robert
be given as fiefs to the Swedish Crown. It received half of Pomerania, the bishoprics of Bremen, Verden and Wismar, the territory at the mouth of the Oder, Weser and Elbe, the islands of Rügen, Usedom and Wollin. The Swedish sovereign thus became an Estate of the empire with the right to send delegates to the Imperial Diet. More importantly, as a member of the empire, Sweden was in a position to organise the Protestant Estates under its leadership against any future imperial ambitions. Furthermore, the Swedish presence also served as a ‘deterrent’ against any Habsburg attempt to fill the power-vacuum that was Germany.

As ‘satisfaction’ France received the bishoprics of Metz, Toul and Verdun (in French occupation since 1552), Pinerolo, part of Alsace with the fortress of Breisach and Philippsburg. In addition, the emperor ceded all Imperial rights in the ‘landgraviate of Alsace’ to France. Moreover, the Rhine was to be free for navigation and commerce. These territories, Breisach and Philippsburg especially, were designed to enable French intervention in Germany in case of future Habsburg imperial ambitions. Moreover, as a guarantor of the peace, France had the right to send an ambassador to the Imperial Diet, to form alliances with the Estates of the empire and to intervene in imperial affairs in defence of ‘German liberties’. This provision applied to Sweden as well and thus effectively sealed the emperor’s ‘impotence’ and destroyed forever his dream of religious and political unity.


66 Steinberg, n. 18, p. 78.

77 Livet, n. 60, p. 412.
One other issue pertaining to the empire that was resolved at the Congress was
the status of the Swiss cantons which had earlier been a part of the Holy Roman
Empire. Their independence was recognised by a collective decision of the Congress.
Westphalia also recognised the independence of the United Provinces. Such recognition
marked a historical watershed in European affairs. It indicated the existence of a
'nascent society of states' and the fact that states were not just created by their own
efforts, but were to gain international recognition from the society in which they come
into being. 78 This is evident from the fact that apart from Sweden and its allies, the
Osnabrück treaty also included France, England, Poland, Portugal, Denmark, Muscovy,
and Spain.

The other side of this coin was the indication that the earlier hierarchical system
- deriving its legitimacy from the Pope and the emperor - was finally de-legitimised. 79
The very fact that the emperor treated with his opponents as an equal indicated the
shattering of the medieval dream of a hierarchical Christendom. Delegitimisation of
papal authority was evident from the provision incorporated in the treaty forearming it
against the Curia's protests regarding the religious settlement. As a result, the Pope's
outburst that the peace is "null, void, invalid, unjust, damnable, reprobate, inane, empty
of meaning and effect for all time" 80 failed to have any effect on European statesmen.

78 Holsti, n. 5, p. 36.
79 Miller writes that the medieval conception of a united Christendom was a collective European
delusion which was recognised for what it was only at Westphalia. For a concise description of the
medieval conception of order see, Lynn H. Miller, Global Order: Values and Power in International
80 Cited in Holsti, n. 5, p. 25.
The Pope was no longer seen as the spiritual head of Christendom and the religious schism in Europe was finally given legal recognition.

The War thus helped to confirm, and the peace legitimise, the political and religious diversity of Europe. For, even though the principle of cuius regio eius religio formally applied only to Germany, the practice quickly spread throughout Europe. Many monarchs had already taken control over the church in their lands. By granting kings supreme religious authority within their domains, the cuius regio principle finally legitimised their earlier actions. At the same time, it also carried with it, as a corollary, the principle of non-interference by one state in the internal affairs of another. Proclaiming the distinct identity and separateness of each state, this doctrine admirably suited their monarchs, great and small, who all wanted to exclude outside interference from complicating their relations with their own subjects. This legitimisation of the concept of absolute sovereignty meant 'the formal rejection of a hegemonial order'.

In its place arose a system of nation-states organised along secular and national lines. Their actions were governed not by religious or hierarchical principles but by the concept of raison d'etat. Westphalia thus marked the formal birth of the modern

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nation-state system whose characteristic is the existence of multiple sovereign entities in an anarchic set-up.\textsuperscript{83}

There was, however, a flip-side to this political fragmentation. A state of anarchy prevailed among the constituents of the new order. In their zeal to destroy hierarchy and strengthen state autonomy and sovereignty, European statesmen overlooked the need for the establishment of rules and norms that would govern inter-state relations. Neither did they devise any mechanism to manage, control or resolve future conflicts, nor place limits on the use of force. The only exception was the proscription that war should not be employed to change the Westphalian order. Delegates at Westphalia failed to grasp the Grotian idea that true peace required organised co-operation,\textsuperscript{84} especially in an age when the concept of \textit{raison d’État} reigned supreme. For states were no longer restrained by any moral precepts and their interests came to be widely regarded as the highest good. Consequently, dynasts saw their duty as one of promoting the glory and aggrandisement of the state.\textsuperscript{85} By thus not establishing a restraining principle, Westphalia encouraged the quest of absolutist states for primacy. As a result, the post-Westphalian era was one of the most violent epochs in modern European history.

\textsuperscript{83} Westphalia is more a reference point rather than the source of change in the system. Some elements of the modern world were well-established long before 1648, while others did not emerge many years later. But what the terms of the settlement did was to create the foundations of a new European system.


\textsuperscript{85} Louis XIV symbolised the essence of this age by his ceaseless quest for \textquoteleft La Gloire\textquoteright.