17

European Power and Expansion 1500–1750

The seventeenth century was a period of crisis and transformation in Europe. What one historian described as the long European "struggle for stability" that originated with conflicts sparked by the Reformation in the early sixteenth century and continued with economic and social breakdown was largely resolved by 1680.[1] To meet the demands of war, armies grew larger, taxes increased, and new bureaucracies came into being. Thus at the same time that powerful governments were emerging and evolving in Asia—such as the Qing Dynasty in China, the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan (see Chapter 21), and the Mughal Empire in India (see Chapter 20)—European rulers also increased the power of the central state.

Important differences existed, however, in terms of which authority within the state possessed sovereignty—the Crown or privileged groups. Between roughly 1589 and 1715 two basic patterns of government emerged in Europe: absolute monarchy and the constitutional state. Almost all subsequent European governments have been modeled on one of these patterns, which have also influenced greatly the rest of the world in the past three centuries.

Constitutional or absolutist, European states sought to further increase their power through colonial expansion. Jealous of the silver that had flowed into Spain from the New World, England, France, and the Netherlands vied for new acquisitions on the mainland and in the Caribbean. •

CHAPTER PREVIEW

Seventeenth-Century Crisis and Rebuilding
- What were the common crises and achievements of seventeenth-century European states?

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- Why and how did the French absolutist state arise under Louis XIV, and why did absolutist Spain experience decline in the same period?

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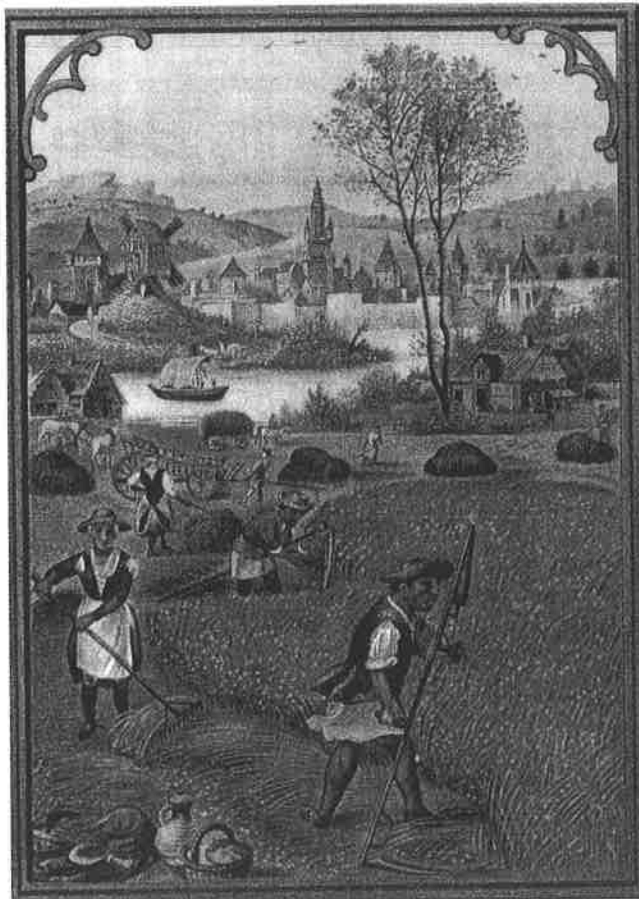


Estonian Serfs in the 1660s The Estonians were conquered by German military nobility in the Middle Ages and reduced to serfdom. The German-speaking nobles ruled the Estonian peasants with an iron hand, and Peter the Great reaffirmed their domination when Russia annexed Estonia. (Mansell Collection/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images)

Seventeenth-Century Crisis and Rebuilding

- What were the common crises and achievements of seventeenth-century European states?

Historians often refer to the seventeenth century as an "age of crisis." After the economic and demographic growth of the sixteenth century, Europe was challenged by population losses, economic decline, and social and political unrest. These difficulties were partially due to climate changes that reduced agricultural productivity. But they also resulted from religious divides, increased taxation, and war. Peasants and the urban poor were hit especially hard by the economic problems, and peasants took action against rising food prices, sometimes rioting for food to obtain relief. In the long run, however, governments proved increasingly able to impose their will on the populace. This period witnessed a spectacular growth in army size as well as increased taxation, expansion of government bureaucracies, and strides toward state sovereignty.

Crises Among Peasants and the Urban Poor

In the seventeenth century a period of colder and wetter climate throughout Europe, dubbed the "little ice age" by historians, meant a shorter growing season with lower yields. The result was recurrent famines that significantly reduced the population of early modern Europe. Most people did not die of outright starvation, but rather of diseases brought on by malnutrition and exhaustion. Facilitated by the weakened population, outbreaks of the Black Death (bubonic plague) continued in Europe until the 1720s.

In 1651 the estates of Normandy, a provincial assembly, reported on the dire conditions in northern France during an outbreak of plague in which disease was compounded by the disruption of agriculture and a lack of food:

> Of the 450 sick persons whom the inhabitants were unable to relieve, 200 were turned out, and these we saw die one by one as they lay on the roadside. A large number still remain, and to each of them it is only possible to dole out the least scrap of bread. We only give bread to those who would otherwise die. The staple dish here consists of mice, which the inhabitants hunt, so desperate are they from hunger. They devour roots which the animals cannot eat; one can, in fact, not put into words the things one sees.[2]

When food prices were high, industry also suffered because consumers had little money to purchase goods.

The result was low wages and widespread unemployment, which further exacerbated economic problems. The output of woolen textiles, one of the most important manufactured products from Europe, declined sharply in many parts of Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century. This economic crisis was not universal: it struck various regions at different times and to different degrees. In the middle decades of the century, Spain, France, Germany, and England all experienced great economic difficulties. In the Netherlands, however, an influx of foreign capital, among other factors, made these years a golden age (see page 515).

The urban poor and peasants were the hardest hit. When the price of bread rose beyond their capacity to pay, they frequently expressed their anger by rioting. In towns they invaded bakers' shops to seize bread and resell it at a "just price." In rural areas they attacked convoys taking grain to the cities. Women often led these actions, since their role as mothers gave them some protection against punishment by authorities. Historians have labeled this vision of a world in which community needs predominate over competition and profit a moral economy.

CHRONOLOGY

ca. 1500–1650 Consolidation of serfdom in eastern Europe

1533–1584 Reign of Ivan the Terrible in Russia

1589–1610 Reign of Henry IV in France

1598–1613 Time of Troubles in Russia

1612–1697 Caribbean islands colonized by France, England, and the Netherlands

1620–1740 Growth of absolutism in Austria and Prussia

1642–1649 English civil war, ending with the execution of Charles I

1643–1715 Reign of Louis XIV in France

1651 First of the Navigation Acts

1653–1658 Oliver Cromwell's military rule in England (the Protectorate)

1660 Restoration of English monarchy under Charles II

1665–1683 Jean-Baptiste Colbert applies mercantilism to France

1670 Charles II agrees to re-Catholicize England in secret agreement with Louis XIV

1670–1671 Cossack revolt led by Stenka Razin

1682 Louis XIV moves court to Versailles

1682–1725 Reign of Peter the Great in Russia

1683–1718 Habsburgs push the Ottoman Turks from Hungary

1685 Edict of Nantes revoked

1688–1689 Glorious Revolution in England

1701–1713 War of the Spanish Succession

The Return of Serfdom in Eastern Europe

While economic and social hardship was common across Europe, important differences existed between east and west. In the west the demographic losses of the Black Death allowed peasants to escape the bonds of working the landed estate of a lord (serfdom) as they acquired enough land to feed themselves and the livestock and ploughs necessary to work their land. In eastern Europe, however, the Black Death had the opposite effect, and peasants largely lost their ability to own land independently. Before the arrival of the plague, starting in about 1050, rulers and nobles in eastern Europe had attracted new settlers to their sparsely populated estates by offering them land on excellent terms and granting them much personal freedom. But in the fourteenth century eastern lords addressed labor shortages caused by the Black Death by restricting the right of their peasants to move to take advantage of better opportunities elsewhere. Moreover, lords steadily took more and more of their peasants' land and arbitrarily imposed heavier and heavier labor obligations. By the early 1500s lords in many eastern territories could command their peasants to work for them without pay for as many as six days a week.

The power of the lord reached far into serfs' everyday lives. Not only was their freedom of movement restricted, but they required permission to marry or could be forced to marry. Lords could reallocate the lands worked by their serfs at will or break up serf families by selling individual members. The local lord also monopolized the legal system, acting as prosecutor, judge, and jailer. There were no independent royal officials to provide justice or uphold the common law.

Between 1500 and 1650 the consolidation of serfdom in eastern Europe was accompanied by the growth of commercial agriculture, particularly in Poland and

eastern Germany. As economic expansion and population growth resumed after 1500, eastern lords increased the production of their estates by squeezing sizable surpluses out of the impoverished peasants. They then sold these surpluses to foreign merchants, who exported them to the growing cities of wealthier western Europe.

The worsened conditions for serfs in eastern Europe reflected the fact that eastern lords enjoyed much greater political power than their western counterparts. In the late Middle Ages, when much of eastern Europe was experiencing innumerable wars and general public chaos, the noble landlord class had greatly increased its political power at the expense of the ruling monarchs. Moreover, the western concept of a king as one who protects the interests of all his people was not well developed in eastern Europe before 1650.

With the approval of weak kings, landlords in eastern Europe systematically undermined the medieval privileges of the towns and the power of the urban classes. For example, eastern towns lost their medieval right to provide refuge to runaways and were compelled to return escaped peasants to their lords. The populations of the towns and the urban middle classes declined greatly. This development both reflected and promoted the supremacy of noble landlords in most of eastern Europe in the sixteenth century. Although noble landlords held onto their powers in the seventeenth century, kings increased their authority during this period (see pages 501–509).

The Thirty Years' War

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the fragile balance of life was violently upturned by the ravages of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). Leading up to the war were conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in the Holy Roman Empire, a confederation of hundreds of principalities, independent cities, duchies, and other polities loosely united under an elected emperor. Although the emperor was Catholic, Protestantism had started to take hold in parts of the empire, including Germany, and clashes resulted. In 1555 the two religious groups came to an uneasy truce under the Peace of Augsburg, which officially recognized Lutheranism and allowed political authorities in each German territory to decide whether the territory would be Catholic or Lutheran. But the truce deteriorated as the faiths of various areas shifted. Lutheran princes felt compelled to form the Protestant Union (1608), and Catholics retaliated with the Catholic League (1609). Each alliance was determined that the other should make no religious or territorial advance. Dynastic interests were also involved; the Spanish Habsburgs strongly supported the goals of their Austrian relatives: the unity of the empire and the preservation of Catholicism within it.

The war is traditionally divided into four phases. The first, or Bohemian, phase (1618–1625) was characterized by civil war in Bohemia (part of the present-day Czech Republic) between the Catholic League and the Protestant Union. In 1620 Catholic forces defeated Protestants at the Battle of the White Mountain. The second, or Danish, phase of the war (1625–1629) — so called because of the leadership of the Protestant king Christian IV of Denmark (r. 1588–1648) — witnessed additional Catholic victories.

The third, or Swedish, phase of the war (1630–1635) began with the arrival in Germany of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus (r. 1594–1632) and his army. The ablest administrator of his day and a devout Lutheran, he intervened to support the empire's Protestants. The French chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu, subsidized the Swedes, hoping to weaken Habsburg power in Europe. Gustavus Adolphus won two important battles but was fatally wounded in combat. The final, or French, phase of the war (1635–1648) was prompted by Richelieu's concern that the Habsburgs, France's greatest rival for power, would rebound after the death of Gustavus Adolphus. Richelieu declared war on Spain and sent military as well as financial assistance. Finally, in October 1648 peace was achieved.

The 1648 **Peace of Westphalia** that ended the Thirty Years' War marked a turning point in European history. The treaties that established the peace not only ended conflicts fought over religious faith but also recognized the independent authority of more than three hundred German princes (Map 17.1), reconfirming the emperor's severely limited authority. The Augsburg agreement of 1555 became permanent, adding Calvinism to Catholicism and Lutheranism as legally permissible creeds. The north German states remained Protestant; the south German states, Catholic.

The Thirty Years' War was probably the most destructive event for the central European economy and society prior to the world wars of the twentieth century. Perhaps one-third of urban residents and two-fifths of the rural population died, leaving entire areas depopulated. Trade in southern German cities was virtually destroyed. Agricultural areas also suffered catastrophically. Many small farmers lost their land, allowing nobles to enlarge their estates and consolidate their control.[3]

Achievements in State Building

In this context of economic and demographic depression, monarchs began to make new demands on their people. Traditionally, historians have distinguished be-

- **Peace of Westphalia** The name of a series of treaties that concluded the Thirty Years' War in 1648 and marked the end of large-scale religious violence in Europe.

MAP 17.1 Europe After the Thirty Years' War Which country emerged from the Thirty Years' War as the strongest European power? What dynastic house was that country's major rival in the early modern period?

tween the absolutist governments of France, Spain, eastern and central Europe, and Russia and the constitutionalist governments of England and the Dutch Republic. Whereas absolutist monarchs gathered all power under their personal control, English and Dutch rulers were obliged to respect laws passed by representative institutions. More recently, historians have emphasized commonalities among these powers. Despite their political differences, all these states sought to protect and expand their frontiers, raise new taxes, consolidate central control, and compete for the colonies opening up in the New and Old Worlds.

Rulers who wished to increase their authority encountered formidable obstacles. Without paved roads, telephones, or other modern technology, it took weeks to convey orders from the central government to the provinces. Rulers also suffered from lack of information about their realms, making it impossible to police and tax the population effectively. Local power structures presented another serious obstacle. Nobles, the church, provincial and national assemblies, town councils, guilds, and other bodies held legal privileges that could not easily be rescinded. In some kingdoms many people spoke a language different from the Crown's, further diminishing their willingness to obey the Crown's commands.

Nonetheless, over the course of the seventeenth century both absolutist and constitutional govern-

ments achieved new levels of central control. This increased authority focused on four areas in particular: greater taxation, growth in armed forces, larger and more efficient bureaucracies, and the increased ability to compel obedience from subjects. Over time, centralized power added up to something close to sovereignty. A state may be termed sovereign when it possesses a monopoly over the instruments of justice and the use of force within clearly defined boundaries. In a sovereign state, no nongovernmental system of courts, such as ecclesiastical tribunals, competes with state courts in the dispensation of justice. Also, private armies, such as those of feudal lords, present no threat to central authority. While seventeenth-century states did not acquire total sovereignty, they made important strides toward that goal.

Absolutism in France and Spain

□ Why and how did the French absolutist state arise under Louis XIV, and why did absolutist Spain experience decline in the same period?

Kings in absolutist states asserted that, because they were chosen by God, they were responsible to God alone. They claimed exclusive power to make and enforce laws, denying any other institution or group the authority to check their power. Louis XIV of France is often seen as the epitome of an absolute monarch. In truth, his success relied on collaboration with nobles, and thus his example illustrates both the achievements and the compromises of absolutist rule.

As French power rose in the seventeenth century, the glory of Spain faded. Once the fabulous revenue from American silver declined, Spain's economic stagnation could no longer be disguised, and the country faltered under weak leadership.

The Foundations of Absolutism

Louis XIV's absolutism had long roots. In 1589 his grandfather Henry IV (r. 1589–1610), the founder of the Bourbon dynasty, acquired a devastated country. Civil wars between Protestants and Catholics had wracked France since 1561. Poor harvests had reduced peasants to starvation, and commercial activity had declined drastically.

Henry IV inaugurated a remarkable recovery by keeping France at peace during most of his reign. Although he had converted to Catholicism, he issued the Edict of Nantes, allowing Huguenots (French Protestants) the right to worship in 150 traditionally Protestant towns throughout France. He sharply lowered taxes and instead charged royal officials an annual fee to guarantee the right to pass their positions down to their heirs. He also improved the country's infrastructure, building new roads and canals and repairing the ravages of years of civil war. Despite his efforts at peace, Henry was murdered in 1610 by a Catholic zealot.

After the death of Henry IV his wife, the queen-regent Marie de' Medici, headed the government for their eldest son, nine-year-old Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643). In 1628 Armand Jean du Plessis — Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642) — became first minister of the French crown. Richelieu's maneuvers allowed the monarchy to maintain power within Europe and within its own borders despite the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War.

Cardinal Richelieu's domestic policies were designed to strengthen royal control. He extended the use of intendants, commissioners for each of France's thirty-two districts who were appointed directly by the monarch, to whom they were solely responsible. They recruited men for the army, supervised the collection of taxes, presided over the administration of local law, checked up on the local nobility, and regulated economic activities in their districts. As the intendants' power increased under Richelieu, so did the power of the centralized French state.

Under Richelieu, the French monarchy also acted to repress Protestantism. Louis XIII personally supervised the siege of La Rochelle, an important port city and a major commercial center with strong ties to Protestant Holland and England. The fall of La Rochelle in October 1628 was one step in the removal of Protestantism as a strong force in French life.

Richelieu did not aim to wipe out Protestantism in the rest of Europe, however. His main foreign policy goal was to destroy the Catholic Habsburgs' grip on territories that surrounded France. Consequently, Richelieu supported Habsburg enemies, including Protestants (see page 494). For the French cardinal, interests of state outweighed religious considerations.

In 1642 Cardinal Jules Mazarin (1602–1661) succeeded Richelieu as chief minister for the next child-king, the four-year-old Louis XIV. Along with the regent, Queen Mother Anne of Austria, Mazarin continued Richelieu's centralizing policies. His struggle to increase royal revenues to meet the costs of the Thirty Years' War led to the uprisings of 1648–1653 known as the **Fronde**. In Paris, magistrates of the Parlement of Paris, the nation's most important law court, were outraged by the Crown's autocratic measures. These so-called robe nobles (named for the robes they wore in court) encouraged violent protest by the common people. As rebellion spread outside Paris and to the sword nobles (the traditional warrior nobility), civil order broke down completely, and young Louis XIV had to flee Paris for his safety. In 1651 Anne's regency

Louis XIV Receiving Ambassadors from Siam The kings of France and Siam (today's Thailand) sent ambassadors to each other's courts in the 1680s. This engraving commemorates Louis XIV's reception of the second Siamese diplomatic mission at Versailles, a visit that aroused great excitement and enthusiasm throughout western Europe. (Private Collection/Photo © Luca Tettoni/The Bridgeman Art Library)

ended with the declaration of Louis as king in his own right. Much of the rebellion died away, and its leaders came to terms with the government.

The twin evils of noble rebellion and popular riots left the French wishing for peace and for a strong monarch to reimpose order. This was the legacy that Louis XIV inherited when he assumed personal rule of the largest and most populous country in western Europe. Humiliated by his flight from Paris during the Fronde, he was determined to avoid any recurrence of rebellion when he assumed personal rule at Mazarin's death in 1661.

Louis XIV and Absolutism

In the long reign of Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) the French monarchy reached the peak of absolutist development. Louis believed in the doctrine of the divine right of kings: God had established kings as his rulers on earth, and they were answerable ultimately to him alone. However, though kings were divinely anointed and shared in the sacred nature of divinity, they could not simply do as they pleased. They had to obey God's laws and rule for the good of the people. To symbolize his central role in the divine order, when he was fifteen years old Louis danced at a court ballet dressed as the sun, thereby acquiring the title "Sun King."

Louis worked very hard at the business of governing. He ruled his realm through several councils of state and insisted on taking a personal role in many of the councils' decisions. He selected councilors from the recently ennobled or the upper middle class because he believed "that the public should know, from the rank of those whom I chose to serve me, that I had no intention of sharing power with them."[4] Despite increasing financial problems, Louis never called a meeting of the Estates General, the traditional French representative assembly composed of the three estates of clergy, nobility, and commoners. The French people, and its noble leaders, therefore, had no means to form united views or exert joint pressure on the monarch.

• **Fronde** A series of violent uprisings early in the reign of Louis XIV triggered by growing royal control and oppressive taxation.

Also, Louis freed himself from the inordinate power of a Richelieu by not appointing a first minister.

Although personally tolerant, Louis hated division within the realm and insisted that religious unity was essential to his royal dignity and to the security of the state. He thus pursued the policy of Protestant repression launched by Richelieu. In 1685 Louis revoked the Edict of Nantes and took steps to suppress the Huguenots.

Despite his claims to absolute authority, there were multiple constraints on Louis's power. As a representative of divine power, he was obliged to rule in a way that seemed consistent with virtue and benevolent authority. He had to uphold the laws issued by his royal predecessors. Moreover, he also relied on the collaboration of nobles, who maintained authority in their ancestral lands. Without their cooperation, it would have been impossible for Louis to extend his power throughout France or wage his many foreign wars (see page 499). His need to elicit noble cooperation led him to revolutionize court life at his palace at Versailles.

Life at Versailles

Through most of the seventeenth century, the French court had no fixed home, following the monarch to his numerous palaces and country residences. In 1682 Louis moved his court and government to the newly renovated palace at Versailles, in the countryside southwest of Paris. The palace quickly became the center of political, social, and cultural life. The king required all great nobles to spend at least part of the year in attendance on him there. Since he controlled the distribution of state power and wealth, nobles had no choice but to obey and compete with each other for his favor at Versailles.

Louis further revolutionized court life by establishing an elaborate set of etiquette rituals to mark every moment of his day, from waking up and dressing in the morning to removing his clothing and retiring at night. He required nobles to serve him in these rituals, and they vied for the honor of doing so. Endless squabbles broke out over what type of chair one could sit on at court and the order in which great nobles entered and were seated in the chapel for Mass.

These rituals may seem absurd, but they were far from meaningless or trivial. The king controlled immense resources and privileges; access to him meant favored treatment for government offices, military and religious posts, state pensions, honorary titles, and a host of other benefits. The Duke of Saint-Simon wrote of the king's power at court in his memoirs:

> No one understood better than Louis XIV the art of enhancing the value of a favour by his manner of bestowing it; he knew how to make the most of a word, a smile, even of a glance. If he addressed any one, were it but to ask a trifling question or make some commonplace remark, all eyes were turned on the person so honored; it was a mark of favour which always gave rise to comment.[5]

Courtiers sought these rewards for themselves and their family members and followers. A system of patronage — in which a higher-ranked individual protected a lower-ranked one in return for loyalty and services — flowed from the court to the provinces. Through this mechanism Louis gained cooperation from powerful nobles.

Although they were denied public offices and posts, women played a central role in the patronage system. At court the king's wife, mistresses, and other female relatives recommended individuals for honors, advocated policy decisions, and brokered alliances between noble factions. Noblewomen played a similar role among courtiers, bringing their family connections into their marriages to form powerful social networks.

Louis XIV was also an enthusiastic patron of the arts. He commissioned many sculptures and paintings for Versailles as well as performances of dance and music. Louis loved the stage, and in the plays of Molière and Racine his court witnessed the finest achievements in the history of the French theater.

With Versailles as the center of European politics, French culture grew in international prestige. French became the language of polite society and international diplomacy, gradually replacing Latin as the language of scholarship and learning. The royal courts of Sweden, Russia, Poland, and Germany all spoke French. France inspired a cosmopolitan European culture in the late seventeenth century that looked to Versailles as its center.

French Finances

France's ability to build armies and fight wars depended on a strong economy. Fortunately for Louis, his controller general, Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), proved to be a financial genius. Colbert's central principle was that the wealth and the economy of France should serve the state. To this end, from 1665 to his death in 1683, Colbert rigorously applied mercantilist policies to France.

Mercantilism is a collection of governmental policies for the regulation of economic activities by and for the state. It derives from the idea that a nation's international power is based on its wealth, specifically its

• **mercantilism** A system of economic regulations aimed at increasing the power of the state based on the belief that a nation's international power was based on its wealth, specifically its supply of gold and silver.

supply of gold and silver. To accumulate wealth, a country always had to sell more goods abroad than it bought. Thus, to reduce imports Colbert insisted that French industry should produce everything needed by the French people.

To increase exports, Colbert supported old industries and created new ones. He enacted new production regulations, created guilds to boost quality standards, and encouraged foreign craftsmen to immigrate to France. To encourage the purchase of French goods, he abolished many domestic tariffs and raised tariffs on foreign products. In 1664 Colbert founded the Company of the East Indies with (unfulfilled) hopes of competing with the Dutch for Asian trade. Colbert also sought to increase France's control over and presence in New France (Canada) — rich in untapped minerals and some of the best agricultural land in the world (see page 516).

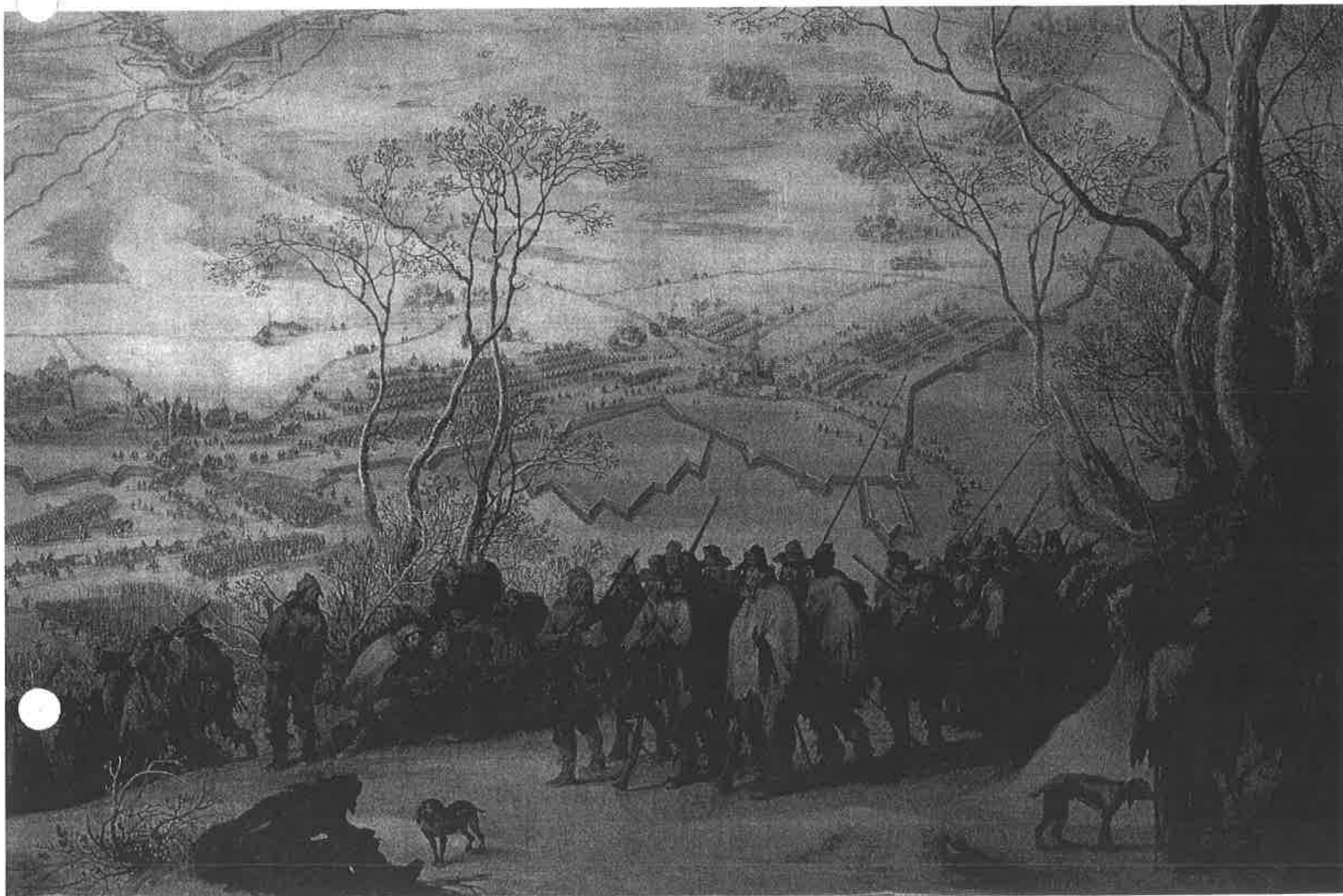
During Colbert's tenure as controller general, Louis was able to pursue his goals without massive tax increases and without creating a stream of new offices. The constant pressure of warfare after Colbert's death, however, undid many of his economic achievements.

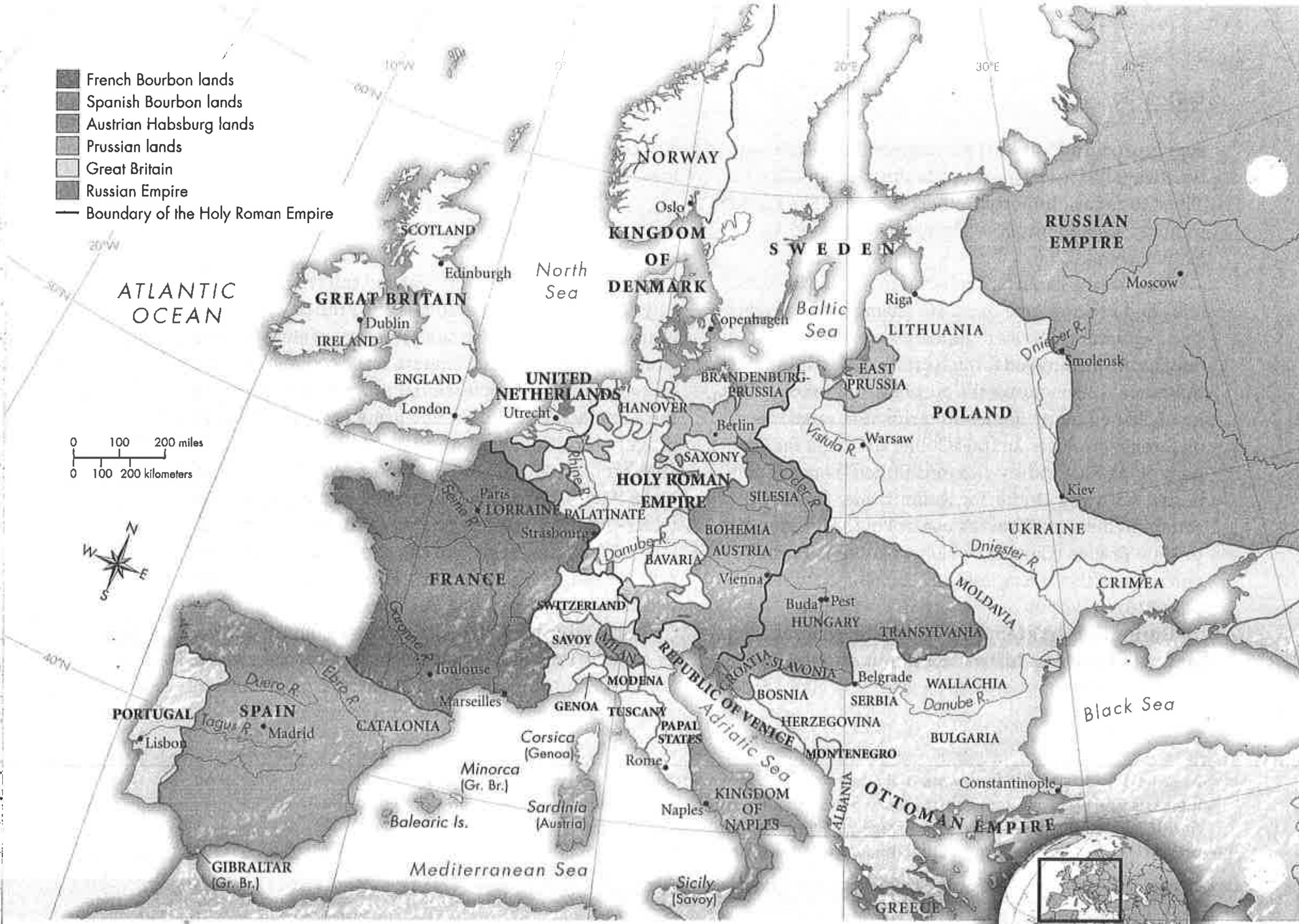
Louis XIV's Wars

Louis XIV kept France at war for thirty-three of the fifty-four years of his personal rule. François le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois, Louis's secretary of state for war, equaled Colbert's achievements in the economic realm. Louvois created a professional army in the employ of the French state. The French army grew in size from roughly 125,000 men in the Thirty Years' War (1630–1648) to 250,000 during the Dutch War (1672–1678) and 340,000 during the War of the League of Augsburg (1688–1697).[6] Uniforms and weapons were standardized, and a rational system of training and promotion was devised. As in so many other matters, Louis's model was followed across Europe.

During this long period of warfare Louis's goal was to expand France to what he considered its natural borders. His armies managed to extend French borders

Spanish Troops The long wars that Spain fought over Dutch independence, in support of Habsburg interests in Germany, and against France left the country militarily exhausted and financially drained by the mid-1600s. In this detail from a painting by Peeter Snayers, Spanish troops — thin, emaciated, and probably unpaid — straggle away from battle. (Prado, Madrid/Index/The Bridgeman Art Library)





◻ Mapping the Past

MAP 17.2 Europe After the Peace of Utrecht, 1715 The series of treaties commonly called the Peace of Utrecht ended the War of the Spanish Succession and redrew the map of Europe. A French Bourbon king succeeded to the Spanish throne. France surrendered the Spanish Netherlands (later Belgium), then in French hands, to Austria and recognized the Hohenzollern rulers of Prussia. Spain ceded Gibraltar to Great Britain, for which it has been a strategic naval station ever since. Spain also granted Britain the *asiento*, the contract for supplying African slaves to America.

ANALYZING THE MAP Identify the areas on the map that changed hands as a result of the Peace of Utrecht. How did these changes affect the balance of power in Europe?

CONNECTIONS How and why did so many European countries possess scattered or discontiguous territories? What does this suggest about European politics in this period? Does this map suggest potential for future conflict?

to include important commercial centers in the Spanish Netherlands and Flanders as well as the entire province of Franche-Comté between 1667 and 1678. In 1681 Louis seized the city of Strasbourg, and three years later he sent his armies into the province of Lorraine. At that moment the king seemed invincible. In fact, Louis had reached the limit of his expansion. The wars of the 1680s and 1690s brought no additional territories but placed unbearable strains on French resources. Colbert's successors resorted to desperate measures to finance these wars, including devaluation of the currency and new taxes.

Louis's last war was endured by a French people suffering high taxes, crop failure, and widespread malnutrition and death. This war resulted from a dispute over the rightful successor to the Spanish throne. In 1700 the childless Spanish king Charles II (r. 1665–1700) died. His will bequeathed the Spanish crown and its empire to Philip of Anjou, Louis XIV's grandson (Louis's wife, Maria-Theresa, had been Charles's sis-

ter). The will violated a prior treaty by which the European powers had agreed to divide the Spanish possessions between the king of France and the Holy Roman emperor, both brothers-in-law of Charles II. Claiming that he was following both Spanish and French interests, Louis broke with the treaty and accepted the will, thereby triggering the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713).

In 1701 the English, Dutch, Austrians, and Prussians formed the Grand Alliance against Louis XIV. War dragged on until 1713, when it was ended by the **Peace of Utrecht**. This series of treaties allowed Louis's grandson Philip to remain king of Spain on the understanding that the French and Spanish crowns would never be united. France surrendered large territories overseas to England (Map 17.2; see also page 519).

The Peace of Utrecht marked the end of French expansion. Thirty-three years of war had given France the rights to all of Alsace (on France's present-day border with Germany and Switzerland) and some commercial centers in the north. But at what price? In 1714 an exhausted France hovered on the brink of bankruptcy. It is no wonder that when Louis XIV died on September 1, 1715, many subjects felt as much relief as they did sorrow.

The Decline of Absolutist Spain

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, France's position appeared extremely weak. Struggling to recover from decades of religious civil war, France could not compete with Spain's European and overseas empire or its mighty military. Yet by the end of the century the countries' positions were reversed.

By the early seventeenth century the seeds of Spanish disaster were sprouting. Between 1610 and 1650 Spanish trade with the colonies in the New World fell 60 percent due to competition from local industries in the colonies and from Dutch and English traders. At the same time, frightful epidemics of disease reduced the number of native Indian and African slaves who toiled in the South American silver mines. Ultimately, the mines that filled the Spanish Empire's treasury started to run dry, and the quantity of metal produced steadily declined after 1620.

In Madrid, royal expenditures constantly exceeded income. To meet mountainous state debt, the Spanish crown repeatedly devalued the coinage and declared bankruptcy, which resulted in the collapse of national credit. Meanwhile, commerce and manufacturing shrank. In the textile industry manufacturers were forced out of business by steep inflation that pushed their production costs to the point where they could not compete in colonial and international markets.[7] To make matters worse, the Crown expelled some three hundred thousand Moriscos, or former Muslims, in 1609, significantly reducing the pool of skilled workers and merchants.

Spanish aristocrats, attempting to maintain an extravagant lifestyle they could no longer afford, increased the rents on their estates. High rents and heavy taxes drove the peasants from the land, leading to a decline in agricultural productivity. In cities wages and production stagnated.

The Spanish crown had no solutions to these dire problems. Philip III (r. 1598–1621) handed the running of the government over to the duke of Lerma, who used the position to increase his personal and familial wealth. Philip IV (r. 1621–1665) left the management of his several kingdoms to Gaspar de Guzmán, Count-Duke of Olivares. Olivares was an able administrator who has often been compared to Richelieu. He did not lack energy and ideas, and he succeeded in devising new sources of revenue. But he clung to the belief that the solution to Spain's difficulties rested in a return to the imperial tradition of the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, the imperial tradition demanded the revival of war with the Dutch at the expiration of a twelve-year truce in 1622 and a long war with France over Mantua (1628–1659). These conflicts, on top of an empty treasury, brought disaster.

Spain's situation worsened with internal conflicts and fresh military defeats through the remainder of the seventeenth century. In 1640 Spain faced serious revolts in Catalonia and Portugal. In 1643 the French inflicted a crushing defeat on the Spanish army at Rocroi in what is now Belgium. By the Treaty of the Pyrenees of 1659, which ended the French-Spanish conflict, Spain was compelled to surrender extensive territories to France. And in 1688 the Spanish crown reluctantly recognized the independence of Portugal. With these losses the era of Spanish dominance in Europe ended.

Absolutism in Austria, Prussia, and Russia

- How did Austrian, Prussian, and Russian rulers transform their nations into powerful absolutist monarchies?

Rulers in eastern and central Europe and in Russia also labored to build strong absolutist states in the seventeenth century. But they built on social and economic foundations far different from those in western Europe, namely serfdom and the strong nobility who

Peace of Utrecht A series of treaties, from 1713 to 1715, that ended the War of the Spanish Succession, ended French expansion in Europe, and marked the rise of the British Empire.