In the course of the seventeenth century the people of England had succeeded in taming the great Leviathan, the modern state; they had not destroyed its vast might, but rather had made it responsive to their will and subservient to their law.
CHAPTER VII

Toward a New Balance of Power

THE distinguished historian, Professor G. N. Clark, has calculated that during the entire seventeenth century there were only seven complete years in which there was no war between European states: 1610, 1669–1671 and 1680–1682. Furthermore, when wars occurred—as they did with such depressing regularity—they were seldom fought out between just two contestants, but rather they tended to involve great alliance systems embracing many powers. As a consequence, many of the leading powers of Europe were actively engaged in warfare for more than half of the century, while for the other states, diplomatic negotiation and military preparedness were an urgent and ever-present necessity. In short, as Clark points out, war “may be said to have been as much a normal state of European life as peace.” Shocking as this statement may be—and it is perhaps less so in our own time than it would have been during the two intervening centuries—it raises important questions for the historian. Most obviously, it raises the question, Why were there so many wars during this period? One might be tempted to dismiss the extraordinarily belligerent record of the seventeenth century with the observation that it was simply a natural consequence of baroque man’s fas-
cination with power. But to do this would be to ignore the fact that these men fought for something more than sheer, undifferentiated "power"; rather, they fought for certain specific objectives, objectives which were meaningful only within the given political context. Thus, although it may be true that their ultimate motivation was the "restless desire of Power, after Power, that ceaseth only in Death," the historian must concern himself with the particular forms which this desire took.

Certain far-reaching general developments and broad patterns are discernible within the field of international politics in the seventeenth century; it is to these that we must turn before examining in any detail the relations among the states of Europe. Perhaps most striking of all, in terms of the great sweep of European history, was the decline of Spain. Formerly the most powerful nation in Europe as well as the leader in the colonization of the non-European world, Spain during the seventeenth century fell to a position of minor—but not negligible—importance among the great powers. Although the process of decline had begun in the sixteenth century and was to continue through the eighteenth, its influence was most deeply felt during this period. If one accepts the notion of "power vacuums," lacunae which must somehow be filled, it is easy to view the meteoric rise of France as a corollary of Spanish weakness; on the other hand, it may also be argued that the spectacular successes of France were a contributing cause of the weakness of Spain. Be that as it may, the fact remains that under Richelieu, Mazarin, and especially Louis XIV, the French monarchy achieved a position of unquestioned supremacy on the continent. Alliance after alliance was formed with the explicit purpose of containing the
expansive force of the Grand Monarchy, and some of these alliances achieved considerable success; but their very existence serves to dramatize the crucial importance of France’s role in the international politics of the age of power. By default of the Spanish, the task of opposing French designs on the continent fell primarily to the two leading commercial powers of the age, England and the Netherlands. Despite the fact that both were Protestant countries, their conflicting mercantile interests led them often to open hostility. Finally, however, under William III they were united to form a bulwark against the aggressive designs of Louis XIV. From this time forward England was a factor to be reckoned with in the politics of the continent, pursuing with remarkable consistency and success a policy designed to maintain the European balance of power. In central and eastern Europe, too, revolutionary changes were occurring. Following upon the virtual disappearance of the Holy Roman Empire as a significant factor in international politics, Prussian and Russia rose to the position of great powers under the guidance of two extraordinarily able leaders, the elector Frederick William of Brandenburg (1620–1688) and the tsar Peter I (1672–1725). In the second half of the seventeenth century these two new powers came to dominate the area around the Baltic Sea, displacing Sweden, Denmark, and Poland. Finally, the success of the Austrian Hapsburgs in stemming the westward expansion of the Turkish Empire laid the foundations for their future hegemony in the southeast.

Even this bare outline suggests certain conclusions about the pattern of international politics in the seventeenth century. In the first place, it is clear that religion played a constantly diminishing role in the relations among nations
during this period. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the papacy, which had formerly been such a potent participant in affairs of state throughout Europe, had virtually nothing to do with the developments which we have traced. Similarly, religious allegiances and controversies, which had been at the very heart of the Thirty Years’ War, played an exceedingly minor role in the complex international drama of the later seventeenth century. It is customary to describe this change by saying that the age of religious wars had ended and that it was replaced by the age of power politics. In a sense, this is a perfectly true and accurate statement. It is perhaps more useful, however, to say that the successor to the age of religious wars was the age of “reason of state.” For the crucial fact is that the participants in the international relations of the later seventeenth century—the dramatis personae in this vast European drama—were neither religious sects nor royal dynasties, but rather secular, territorial states, the products, at least in part, of the political genius of such figures as Richelieu, Wallenstein, and Gustavus II Adolphus. In their tradition, the objectives for which these new states fought and negotiated were defined—albeit not always overtly—in terms of their secular interests, or “reasons of state.” Thus, in a very real sense, it may be argued that the history of international politics in the seventeenth century is the story of the creation of the modern European state system. Furthermore, it should be noted that the word European is used here deliberately. In this period—for the first time—the area stretching from Russia and Turkey on the east to England on the west, from Scandinavia on the north to the Iberian peninsula on the south, became truly a political unit, in the sense that the nations included in it acted within
a common frame of reference and were aware always of the interrelations of their actions. True, one may still speak of “the Baltic powers” and even of “the Balkan question,” but it is clear that these subsidiary issues were precisely that—subordinate parts of what contemporaries, with their baroque sense of the dramatic, were pleased to call “the theater of Europe.”

Before looking more closely at the process which led to the creation of this European state system, we must pause briefly to introduce two of its most important participants, men whom history has deemed worthy of the epithet “great”: the Great Elector of Brandenburg-Prussia and Peter the Great of Russia. In the careers of these men one may observe with unparalleled clarity the deliberate, conscious attempt to erect a modern state, and one may observe also the vital relationship between domestic and foreign politics in this age of power.

The Great Elector

The House of Hohenzollern, electors of Brandenburg, inherited the sief of Prussia in 1618, when the male line of the dukes of Prussia died out. Nine years earlier the Hohenzollerns had established their claims on the Rhine as a part of the disputed Jülich succession. Thus the east-west span of their dominions was laid out, which during the next two hundred years would be rounded out and eventually expanded into the German empire that collapsed in 1918. But during the generation immediately following these acquisitions, Brandenburg-Prussia played a largely passive role under the direction of her weak prince, George William (1619–1640). No sooner had Frederick William, his gifted son, ascended the throne than the situation began to change.
The young prince, though only twenty years of age, displayed a remarkable sagacity in his dealings with an all but hopeless situation—"a beggar on horseback," his most recent biographer has called him.\(^1\) Although his extended dominions consisted largely of claims, he proposed to maintain these claims with the utmost vigor.

He decided to make haste slowly. Trained in the Netherlands, he would doubtless have liked to work in close cooperation with the House of Orange, and in 1646 he married the daughter of the prince of Orange, Louise Henriette. But the failure of the Dutch merchant republic to become his ally (they saw him only as an impoverished prince), turned the elector's eyes back to the east. He had gained much in the Peace of Westphalia,\(^2\) but the gains did not include all of Pomerania, which he considered his rightful inheritance. A generation had to pass before he could seize through war what peace had denied him.

In the meantime he faced another perplexing problem. He held Prussia as a fief of Poland. The Polish king, Ladislas VII (1595–1648), although a weak ruler, insisted upon the formalities, and the proud young prince was obliged to proceed to Warsaw to render homage to his liege lord. He did so in 1641, enduring this spectacular event as a crushing humiliation. With the passing of time, his bitterness increased until an attack on Poland in 1655 by the brilliant young Swedish king, Charles X Gustavus (1622–1660), presented him with an opportunity for escape from this humiliating dependence.

By that time Frederick William had come to the conclusion that he must provide himself with a standing army.

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\(^1\) Ferdinand Schevill, *The Great Elector* (Chicago, 1947), ch. iii.
\(^2\) See above, p. 95.
His experiments with temporary forces, like the ones he had raised in 1644 and in 1651 in his abortive attempt to force the issue of his claims in the west, had shown him that such forces made him dependent upon the estates of his various dominions, a dependence which threatened disaster. When the clash between Sweden and Poland seemed imminent, therefore, he established the nucleus of a permanent organization to defend himself and his territories against his two more powerful neighbors. The year 1655 may properly be designated as the birth year of the Prussian army, an army which in the course of time became the symbol of militarism and aggression. In the beginning, however, the new force was clearly defensive. As he told the Prussian estates in 1662, the great elector had come to recognize that "the conservation of his state and country would depend next to God upon arms"; a few years later in his testament to his son he added that "alliances are good, but one's own forces are even better."

It was Frederick William's determination to create a standing army, a *miles perpetuus*, as the times called it, which lay at the heart of his protracted struggle with his estates, a situation similar to that in France a generation earlier. But whereas in France the estates were completely eliminated, in the Hohenzollern realm they remained functioning elements of the government throughout the Great Elector's reign and later. Their effectiveness, however, was reduced by their rigid insistence upon local patriotism. Thus there were separate estates in Prussia and Brandenburg, in Cleve-Mark and in Pomerania, as well as in the lesser component units of the Great Elector's dominions. In each of the three larger units, Brandenburg, Cleve-Mark, and Prussia, a long-drawn-out controversy between Fred-
erick William and the estates over whether the prince could permanently maintain an armed force ended with the victory of the elector. The perils of the war between Sweden and Poland, combined with the renascent aggressiveness of France after 1660, convinced the more recalcitrant representatives of the “people” of the cogency of the monarch’s argument. To meet a permanent threat there must be a permanent security force—an argument familiar again in our time. Nor should it be forgotten that, in fact, the provincial estates represented only the feudal landlords, now on the way to becoming agricultural capitalists, and the burgher element of the towns, but not the peasants and more dependent workers. Indeed, in 1653 Frederick William was forced to concede to the Brandenburg estates a reaffirmation of the right of the feudal lords to hold the peasants in virtual serfdom, and ten years later the same right was confirmed in Prussia (March 1663).

In contrast to his persistent, though occasionally frustrated, attempts to establish absolutism, greeted by many as tyranny that should be resisted, Frederick William’s policies proved singularly enlightened in the field of religion. Although an ardent Calvinist himself, he insisted upon the basic similarity of the two Protestant faiths and generally pursued with unrelenting vigor a policy of broadminded tolerance, a policy which reached its climax in the Edict of Potsdam (November 1685), issued in response to Louis XIV’s revocation of the Edict of Nantes. There is something Cromwellian in the character of Frederick William, which combined religious piety, administrative skill, military ambition, and broad tolerance with occasional outbursts of rage when he encountered bigotry, disloyalty, or wanton opposition.
The consolidation of Frederick William's dispersed possessions into a single modern state advanced slowly, and it was severely strained by the war between Sweden and Poland which Charles X Gustavus precipitated in 1655. We may trace briefly the means by which the elector exploited the varying fortunes of this war to wrest advantage for himself by a series of "treaties" culminating in that of Oliva (1660). His chief problem arose from the fact that in this war the unavowed aim of Sweden was the conquest of Prussia; control of the Prussian coast would nearly complete Swedish control of the shores of the Baltic and make that sea a Swedish lake. Realizing this fact, Frederick William had attempted, in spite of his bond to the Polish king, to negotiate with Sweden beforehand. When the haughtiness of the Swedes frustrated this attempt, the elector could rely only upon a treaty of mutual defense with the Dutch, in which he secured their naval protection for his Prussian ports in exchange for granting them maintenance of existing tariff rates.

The startling and overwhelming initial victories of Charles X, as a result of which the whole of Poland lay prostrate at his feet within a few weeks, forced the elector to accept the terms of the Treaty of Königsberg, acknowledging the suzerainty of Sweden over Prussia, opening the ports of Memel and Pillau to Sweden, and granting the Swedes a share of their customs (January 1656). When, as a result of an outburst of Polish national resistance, Charles X began to meet with reverses, the elector found himself in the happy position of being wooed by both sides. Since the Poles had little to offer but risks, the elector concluded another treaty with Sweden, at Marienburg (June 1656), in which he gained large parts of western Poland.
between Prussia and Brandenburg in exchange for armed support to Charles X. By this time Frederick William had assembled a well-organized Prussian army of about 8,500 men; they won their spurs in the great battle of Warsaw (July 1656), in which the Poles were badly beaten.

This proved a Pyrrhic victory for Charles, for it brought Austria and Denmark into the fray and forced him to turn west to meet the new threat. Meanwhile, the elector returned to Prussia, after repeatedly (but vainly) urging his ally to conclude peace. Determined to crush Poland, Charles soon renewed the attack, but not before he was obliged to grant Prussia its sovereign independence and to relinquish the Swedish share in the customs of the Prussian ports in the Treaty of Labiau (November 1656). While Charles was occupied in the west, the elector proceeded to open negotiations with Poland and its allies, as a result of which the Polish king recognized the sovereignty of Prussia in return for Frederick's promise to abandon all claims to Polish territory outside the duchy that had been promised him by Sweden.

In spite of the startling successes scored by Charles X against Denmark which culminated in the Danish surrender at Copenhagen (1659), the Swedes finally quit, and the Treaty of Oliva (1660) concluded the Swedish-Polish war which had threatened to engulf Brandenburg. Due to his statesmanlike skill and moderation, Frederick William gained from this war not only international recognition as sovereign of the Prussian duchy, but also greatly enhanced prestige both at home and abroad. The Treaty of Oliva marked the turning of the tide against Sweden's Baltic empire and the emergence of Brandenburg-Prussia as the effective rival of Sweden and Poland for predominance in
northeast Europe. The elector's swift maneuvering has been both denounced as an immoral disregard of all rules of good faith, and celebrated as a sign of true greatness. In fact it was neither. It was the ruler's steady and sober pursuit of his state's interests in the approved and prevailing fashion of the baroque age. The failure of Brandenburg to gain at least a part of Swedish Pomerania by the terms of the Treaty of Oliva provoked the elector's later international exploits. He was now a European sovereign in his own right, and his remaining task—namely, to link the scattered areas of the Hohenzollern domains—became the concern of this rising dynasty for the next two hundred years.

During the first two decades of his reign the Great Elector had been preoccupied with foreign concerns; his chief domestic interest during these troubled years, as we have seen, had been the creation of a disciplined, reliable standing army. Now, after the Treaty of Oliva, he was free to turn to the problem of the internal organization of his domains. Without losing sight of immediate military and diplomatic necessities—his army grew constantly to a maximum size of 40,000 men in 1678—Frederick William undertook during these years the task of constructing a powerful, unified state. If power was his ultimate goal, he realized that domestic prosperity and order were the means to its achievement. In the mid-eighteenth century the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote that an infallible sign of good government is a growing population. Although his reasoning was quite different from Rousseau's, the Great Elector seems to have shared this view. Throughout his reign he actively encouraged immigration into his domains, and he was particularly anxious to foster the colonization of the sparsely settled areas of Brandenburg and East
Prussia. In this connection, his avowed policy of religious toleration became highly useful to the interests of the state; Lutherans and Calvinists alike, fleeing persecution elsewhere, were welcomed by Frederick William and remained to contribute to the prosperity and strength of Brandenburg-Prussia. Particularly important was the influx of nearly 150,000 Huguenots, who settled in Brandenburg after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in direct response to the elector's invitation embodied in the Edict of Potsdam. Combining this population policy with the familiar techniques of mercantilism—the improvement of communications and the encouragement of industry and agriculture through the instrumentalities of the state—Frederick William succeeded in laying the foundations upon which the future greatness of Brandenburg-Prussia was built.

More than any other European ruler, the Great Elector may be said to have created a state as a deliberate, conscious act of will. Although quantitatively his achievement can hardly be compared with that of Louis XIV, in one respect it is even more impressive. The very fact that Louis was king of France implied, inevitably, that he would be a figure of immense importance on the European scene; he might have been more or less ambitious, and more or less successful, but history guaranteed him a place in the sun, simply because he was head of the House of Bourbon and ruler of a great power. The situation was quite different for Frederick William. The House of Hohenzollern was simply one among many minor German dynasties. Its possessions were relatively small and widely scattered, and its claim even to these was disputed. In the harsh world of seventeenth-century diplomacy, a world in which "the big
fish devour the little fish by natural right," a ruler of average talents might well have congratulated himself for maintaining intact his tenuous hold on these domains. But Frederick William was by no means a ruler of average talents, nor was his goal the modest one of survival. Fired by an insatiable desire for power and glory—which has led his biographer to state that "Brandenburg's outstanding baroque exhibit was the Great Elector himself"—he succeeded in the course of sixty years in turning his unpromising inheritance into a major European power. While history and tradition dictated the greatness of the monarchy of Louis XIV, the Great Elector willfully carved out his own destiny and that of his state.

Peter the Great

In the year 1613 Russia emerged from its anarchic "time of troubles." A national assembly (the zemski sobor) elected to the throne Michael Romanov, the grand-nephew of Ivan the Terrible, and for the next seventy years Russia was ruled by Michael, by his son Alexis, and by his grandson Feodor III. In contrast to the anarchy of an earlier age, or to the absolutist monarchical regime of the tsars after 1689, this may be called the brief oligarchic period of Russian government. Among the most notable events of the period must be reckoned the new code of laws passed by the zemski sobor in 1648–1649 and formally attributed to Tsar Alexis, a code which remained the basis of Russian law until 1832. Its aristocratic flavor is revealed by the fact that it finally riveted serfdom upon Russian society as a legal institution. The development of serfdom—which converted a free peasantry into a species of slaves who were tied to the soil on penalty of death and exposed to cruel
extortions and brutal treatment generation after generation
—was the most disastrous and most important event of this
period.

Broadly speaking, the pattern of the age was one of re-
construction, as the tsardom received the support of the
most influential elements of the population, and notably of
the so-called “service gentry,” who realized that such
support was the only means of preventing a return to the
anarchy of the early seventeenth century. There were two
notable exceptions which did not support the tsar: the reli-
gious group known as the Old Believers and the peasants
of southeastern Russia. As their name indicates, the Old
Believers were a profoundly conservative group; they ob-
jected strenuously both to the religious reforms undertaken
by the patriarch Nikon (1605–1681) and to the general
westernizing tendencies of the government. Although they
were condemned by a church council in 1667, the tradi-
tionalist, nationalist beliefs which motivated them have
continued to this day as a powerful force in Russian life.

The second major source of unrest during the reigns of
the first three Romanov tsars was a great peasant revolt,
led by the Don Cossacks, under Stenka Razin (d. 1671), in
the years 1670–1671. This revolt was finally crushed, but
only after a long, difficult, and bloody struggle. By the end
of the reign of Alexis, however, the position of the central
government had been firmly established, despite the fact
that its foundation was exceedingly narrow even when
measured by the standards of the seventeenth century.
When Feodor III died in 1682, he was succeeded by his
feeble-minded brother Ivan and his half-brother Peter,
while their sister Sophia acted as regent. Seven years later,
in 1689, Peter overthrew the regency and established him-
self as sole ruler of Russia, a fitting beginning for one of the most extraordinary reigns in modern history.

Physically a giant, a man of great intelligence and unbounded determination, completely ruthless but also completely dedicated to his country and his people, Peter I occupies a position in the history of Russia similar to that of the Tudor monarchs in England, Louis XIV in France, and Frederick William in Prussia. In short, he stands as the creator of the modern Russian state. One historian describes his role:

Up to his time the political sense of the people had, as regards public life, identified the State idea solely with the person of the Tsar... but these two conceptions Peter separated by legalising separate oaths of allegiance both to the Tsar and to the State, and insisting that the supreme and unconditional norm of any State system was the State’s interest, even though that might involve the Sovereign himself, for all that he was the State’s paramount dispenser of law, the public weal’s paramount overseer, playing second fiddle to that interest. Peter, therefore, considered his every act a personal service to the State.3

This conception of service, which so strikingly anticipates Frederick the Great’s proud dictum, “I am the first servant of my state,” 4 is the key to the understanding of the reign of Peter the Great. Indeed, like those of Louis XIV and the Great Elector, Peter’s achievement suggests that only a monarch inspired by such an ideal is capable of eliciting a similar response from his subjects and thus of building a great state.

Throughout the thirty-six years of his reign, Peter’s foremost concern was to strengthen the international position

4 See Manuel, op. cit.
of Russia, to win for her the status of a great European power. Although he is equally famous for his policies of domestic reform—for establishing the power of the central government, for creating an effective bureaucracy, for rehabilitating the economy of his country—in each case the initial impulse was the tsar’s military ambition, his desire to create a fighting force that could prevail over those of his great rivals, Sweden and Turkey. Never noted as a theorist, Peter was first led to reform and then impelled along this path by the exigencies of war; his policies were inspired more by urgent necessity than by any preconceived plan. In 1695 a Russian expedition which sought to win the fortress of Azov from the Turks, thus gaining access to the Black Sea, was resoundingly defeated. The young tsar was quick to learn the lesson of the relation between internal organization and military capacity; after months of careful and arduous preparation, Azov was taken in 1696. This early experience set the pattern for the remainder of Peter’s reign. Every defeat was taken as evidence of the need for further reform, and even victories became the occasion for redoubled effort. Thus, after his great triumph over the Swedish army at Poltava (July 1709), the tsar wrote a brief *History of the Swedish War*, which he began by remarking that this success should not be permitted to interfere with the vital work of domestic reconstruction upon which depended the enjoyment of the advantages won at Poltava.

By far the most spectacular manifestation of Peter’s passion for reform and modernization was his journey to western Europe in the years 1696–1698, the first such journey ever made by a Russian tsar. He went not as a reigning monarch visiting his royal “cousins,” but rather as a private
citizen under the name of Peter Mikhailov; the official motto of the mission to which he attached himself was, "I am among the pupils, and seek those who can teach me." With considerable insight, Peter had concluded that the political and military successes of the states of western Europe were the fruit largely of their scientific and technical achievements; only by duplicating these achievements could Russia hope to meet her western rivals on their own terms. Thus, he believed that those who could teach him were above all the scientists and technicians, the shipbuilders and craftsmen, the bureaucrats and military experts of these states. After traveling through Germany, where he became a close friend of the elector of Brandenburg-Prussia, Peter settled in a humble cottage in the Dutch village of Zaandam and found work as a common shipwright. When his identity was discovered, he moved to Amsterdam, journeying thence in all directions to visit factories, shipyards, museums, hospitals, and other institutions in which the new technology of the west could be studied. By the time of his return to Russia, after visiting and studying in London and Vienna, Peter had recruited more than a thousand technicians for the imperial service and had himself become a highly skilled naval architect and shipwright. It was symbolic of Peter’s position that his travels in the west should have been cut short by an uprising of the conservative, aristocratically led palace guard, the streltsi. Clearly, the process of modernization could not succeed so long as the embittered remnants of the old order were able to frustrate the forces of the new. This threat to his program was met by Peter with characteristic ruthlessness and efficiency.

Returning to Russia in the early summer of 1698, Peter immediately determined to make a public example of the streltsi who had revolted during his absence. Since the ranks
of the palace guard were filled with Old Believers, he recognized that this was an opportunity to strike out at all the major forces of conservative opposition within his realm, to crush aristocrats, Russian nationalists, and reactionary churchmen at one blow. As reported by the Austrian ambassador, Peter, with his own hands, tortured and killed the first five of the condemned rebels and required that each of his principal officials should personally kill a given number. About a thousand brutal executions followed as the full fury of the tsar became manifest. During the course of this blood bath Peter issued an edict which, although trivial at first sight, revealed the depth of his passion for westernization and modernization: he ordered that no one should enter his presence wearing a beard, he levied a tax on beards, and he personally shaved the beards of five of his lieutenants. At the same time, Peter took steps to outlaw the long robes which, like the beard, had been a part of traditional Russian garb. Discussing the tsar's motives, Kluchevsky has written:

He would attach the more importance to these trifles because of the impressions gathered during his boyhood, gathered during the period when trifles of the sort had figured exclusively on streletsy and Old Believers—on persons, that is to say, in rebellion against the State. Yes, that must have been the reason why he came so instinctively to view the old-established Russian beard as something beyond a mere physical feature of the masculine countenance, and to class it with the pristine long-skirted habit as a sign, as a mark, of a certain political attitude, of opposition to the State’s authority.  

It is no exaggeration to say that Peter’s ultimate aim was the alteration of the very ethos of the Russian people, the eradication of every vestige of their old way of life. Clearly,  

Kluchevsky, *op. cit.*, IV, 225.
such a transformation was beyond the power of any man; but it must be added that Peter the Great came perhaps as close to success as was humanly possible. His heroic efforts stirred Russian society to its depths and created tensions and conflicts that have not been resolved to this day.

The suppression of the strei ts was a vivid illustration of the negative aspect of the Petrine reforms; more important in the long run were the tsar's positive, constructive policies. Since Peter's model was always the west, these policies did not differ in substance from those of the great state-builders whose work we have already discussed. For this reason, and also because the period of the greatest reforms (roughly, 1715–1725) falls outside the scope of this book, it is not our intention to describe in detail the steps by which the political, economic, and military institutions of the modern state were created in Russia. Spurred on by the disastrous battle of Narva (November 1700), in which 40,000 Russian troops were crushed by 8,500 Swedes under his archenemy, Charles XII, Peter personally supervised the recruitment and training of an army of 100,000 men, rendered "immortal" by a regular system of conscription, as well as the building and outfitting of an effective fleet in the Baltic Sea. Recognizing that an extensive and efficient military establishment depends upon a smoothly functioning political bureaucracy and a fruitful revenue system, he first extemporized by carrying on with the numerous prikazi (bureaus) to handle the affairs of government and then regularized this system, first by the institution of a ten-man administrative senate and then by the creation of ministerial "colleges," modeled after those of Sweden, which had been recommended to him by Leibniz. Financial necessity, and specifically the need for increased revenue to
support his military ventures, led to Peter's reform of the systems of taxation and municipal government. Elected officials, called burmistrzi after the burgomasters of Germany, were intended both to weaken the power of the traditional nobility and to improve the collection of taxes in their towns. Similar reforms in the church, in industry, and in every part of the life of Russia, considerably enhanced the power of the central government, which was the power of the tsar, to order the life of his subjects.

If the substance of Peter's reforms was essentially similar to that which emerged in the west during the seventeenth century, the manner in which these reforms were carried out was distinctively Russian. Impressive though they were, the autocracies of the west never approached the thoroughness, the rigor, or the ruthlessness of Peter's despotism. One example will suffice to illustrate this difference. It will be recalled that mercantilism was an integral part of the process of state-building in the west and that the deliberate fostering of native industries was a distinctive feature of mercantilism. The monarchs of the west, however, were generally content to establish a royal company, to manipulate tariffs to its advantage, to give it loans and perhaps tax exemptions, to grant it a monopoly, and to appoint officials to see that it maintained certain standards in its operation. Forced labor was rare. All of this Peter did too, and on a magnificent scale, but his unique position and his extraordinary character made it possible for him to do more. For example, he was able to provide the managers of his state enterprises with an unfailing supply of cheap labor simply by giving them absolute power over the lives of the peasants in their locality. Despising the luxury of a Versailles, the tsar traveled tirelessly through the provinces of his realm.
living when necessary in peasants’ huts, supervising the work of his servants, and applying his great technical skills to improve their efficiency. In the words of a recent historian, “Peter was first of all a mechanician. His first toys were pieces of machinery. He not only shaved his courtiers’ beards; he was his own court dentist and kept in a little bag the teeth which he had extracted; but the object to which he applied all his technical knowledge was the possession and extension of power.”

For Peter, as for his contemporaries in the west, power was measured above all by the standard of success or failure in the great arena of international politics. More specifically, Peter’s goal of establishing Russia as a great European power involved wresting control of the Baltic from Sweden and access to the Black Sea from the Turks. The counterpoint between these two objectives characterizes the diplomacy and warfare of his reign. Briefly, Peter had inherited from his predecessors a war with Turkey. Having captured Azov in 1696, and having failed to gain western support for the continuation of this war, he concluded peace with the Turks in 1700, on terms which allowed Russia to retain Azov. On the very next day—August 18, 1700—Peter declared war against the Swedes under their able leader Charles XII, having first secured guarantees of support from Saxony and Denmark, later joined by Poland (1704). Undiscouraged by his initial defeat at Narva, Peter won one of the decisive battles of Russian history at Poltava in 1709, a victory which finally destroyed the power of Sweden in the north and guaranteed Russia’s position as mistress of the Baltic.

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The Great Northern War, as it was called, dragged on for twelve more years until, by the terms of the Treaty of Nystadt (1721), Russia gained Livonia, Estonia, Ingernland, part of Karelia, and a number of Baltic islands. Meanwhile, after the victory of Poltava, the war with Turkey had been renewed, largely due to French diplomacy and the machinations of Charles XII, who had fled to Turkey. Peter's army of 40,000 men was surrounded by a vastly superior Turkish force on the River Pruth, and the tsar was fortunate to negotiate a treaty, the Treaty of Pruth (July 1711), which limited his losses to the surrender of Azov. Not until the reign of Catherine the Great was it to be recovered by Russia. In conclusion, then, it may be said that Peter succeeded in fulfilling half of his ambition; he had won mastery in the north but had been stalemated in the south. Actually, his achievement was infinitely greater than such a statement would suggest. With his "window on the west" in the Baltic, Peter had won the prize that he most desired. From that time down to the present day, Russia has been a force to reckon with in the councils of Europe. By a truly superhuman effort Peter the Great had, in fact, transformed his isolated, backward, disorderly land into a modern state and a great European power.

The Hapsburgs and the Ottoman Empire

Peter the Great was not the only European monarch of the seventeenth century whose ambitions brought him into conflict with the forces of the still powerful Ottoman Empire. During the entire latter half of our period the lands of southeastern Europe, known now as the Balkans, were the scene of almost unceasing wars, fought chiefly by the Austrian Hapsburgs and the Turks. The major arena of this
conflict, as well as its chief prize, was Hungary, and particularly its eastern portion, the independent kingdom of Transylvania, of which the Hapsburgs were hereditary kings. In the course of time, however, what had begun as a local war fought for territorial objectives became increasingly entangled in the great European alliance systems of the age of Louis XIV and eventually culminated as the last of the crusades of Christendom against Islam. The story of these complex developments, a story which illustrates once again the growing unity of European politics, can only be sketched briefly here.

The policies of the Austrian Hapsburgs, and of their able and tenacious emperor Leopold I (1640–1705), were to a great extent dictated by geographical considerations. Located as they were in the very heart of Europe, the domains of the Austrian Hapsburgs, like the two-headed eagle of their crest, faced both east and west. As a result, the emperor was constantly, and understandably, concerned to avoid involvement in a war on two fronts, while his enemies, with equal logic, sought to maneuver him into precisely this position. More specifically, Austria’s interests in Germany and the Netherlands made her look with fear upon the aggressive designs of Louis XIV, while at the same time her hereditary claims in Hungary were threatened by the policies of the vigorous Turkish viziers of the Kuprili family, who virtually ruled the country after 1656. During the years 1661–1664, while Louis was still occupied with the task of consolidating his power within his own realm, the Austrians and Turks fought an indecisive war, terminated by the twenty-year Truce of Vasvár. Despite the brilliant successes of his general, Count Montecuccoli,
Leopold accepted at Vaszár terms that included the surrender to Turkey of some Hungarian territory. The reason for this concession, characteristically, was Leopold's fear of prolonged involvement in the east in the face of the deteriorating international situation in the west. Angered by what they considered to be a betrayal at the hands of their putative defender, the nobles of Hungary looked first to France and then to Turkey for support against the emperor. Needless to say, both Louis XIV and the Kuprili viziers were delighted by this opportunity to foster revolt among the emperor's subjects.

By 1682, in spite of years of diplomatic efforts to prevent it, Leopold faced the very situation that he most feared. In the west, and notably in the Rhineland, Louis XIV had embarked upon the policies of aggrandizement that were to lead eventually to the War of the League of Augsburg.² In the east, Kara Mustafa (vizier from 1676 to 1683) had gathered a vast army of some 200,000 men and, at the urging of the French ambassador and the nobles of Hungary, was preparing to march up the valley of the Danube River toward Hungary and Austria. Hopelessly outnumbered, the imperial army under Charles of Lorraine fell back before the Turks, and on July 14, 1683, Kara Mustafa laid siege to the city of Vienna. For two months the population of the city held out despite frightful hardships; the heroic garrison under Rüdiger von Stahremberg repulsed the Turks time and again. Finally on September 12, just as the limit of their endurance had been reached, the citizens saw in the distance the vanguard of a great German-Polish relief army, led by Charles of Lorraine and John Sobieski (1624–

² See below, pp. 181–182.
1696), the king of Poland. After the high drama of the siege and the arrival of the army of liberation, the hasty withdrawal of the Turks came as a distinct anticlimax.

The siege of Vienna awakened Europe to the danger of the resurgent forces of Islam. Leopold concluded that the future of his state depended upon the final expulsion of the Turks from Hungary. If this were achieved, he reasoned, Austria could once more become a great power capable of opposing the designs of Louis XIV; if not, she would remain perpetually harried by threats from two directions and unable to meet either. Acting on this conviction, Leopold determined to make peace with France in order to have a free hand in the east. In August 1684 a truce was signed at Regensburg between the temporarily satiated Louis XIV and the Hapsburg rulers of Austria and of Spain. Meanwhile, the great Odescalchi pope, Innocent XI (1611–1689), had inspired (and financed) the formation of a Holy League dedicated to driving the Turks from Europe. Although the treaty that formed the League (March 1684) was couched in religious terms, it is quite clear that its chief members—Austria, Poland, and Venice—sought more mundane, territorial rewards. Conspicuous by his absence was Louis XIV, whose policies of “reason of state” had earned for him the not undeserved title of “the most Christian Turk of Versailles.” The forces of the Holy League, swelled by volunteers from every country of Europe, pressed forward relentlessly, retaking Budapest (1685) and Belgrade (1688). Finally, in September 1697, with the end of the War of the League of Augsburg which had absorbed Austrian energies for almost ten years, Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736) virtually annihilated the Turkish army in the great battle
of Zenta. Although the war dragged on for several months thereafter, the might of the Ottoman Empire had been broken at Zenta. By the terms of the Treaty of Karlowitz (January 1699), Austria was granted all of Hungary, Transylvania, Croatia, and Slavonia; Venice and Poland too were handsomely repaid, at the expense of the Turks, for their participation in this great crusade. With the destruction of Turkish power in Europe, the focus of international politics turned once more to the west, to the France of Louis XIV.

The Wars of Louis XIV

The Thirty Years' War in Germany, the wars of the Fronde in France, and the English civil wars of 1642–1648 had signaled the emergence of the modern state as the characteristic political institution of western Europe. It was inevitable that such a truly revolutionary development in domestic politics should have far-reaching repercussions in the realm of international politics. On the one hand, as we have noted, the declining importance of dynastic and religious questions created a situation in which sheer power came increasingly to dominate the relations among states. On the other hand, the centralized bureaucratic institutions of the modern state placed in the hands of monarchs and parliaments alike new techniques—economic, diplomatic, and military—which were peculiarly appropriate to the pursuit of their states' interests in the international "war of all against all." Nowhere are these parallel forces more vividly illustrated than in the history of the reckless expansionism of Louis and the opposition which it aroused during the last fifty years of our period. Here, in the so-called
"wars of Louis XIV," were established the basic patterns that have characterized international relations down to our own century.

The wars whose collective title stands as a fitting monument to the aggressive designs of the Sun King were four in number: the War of Devolution (1667–1668), concluded by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle; the Dutch War (1672–1678), concluded by the Treaty of Nimwegen; the War of the League of Augsburg (1688–1697), concluded by the Treaty of Ryswick; and, finally, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), concluded by the Peace of Utrecht and the Treaty of Rastadt and Baden. Together, these wars filled more than thirty of the fifty-five years of Louis’ personal reign, bankrupting his kingdom and causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of his subjects—in a single battle (Malplaquet in 1709) the French suffered more than 12,000 casualties. A generation brought up on socioeconomic or geopolitical explanations of the phenomenon of war may well view with suspicion any attempt to argue that these wars were in fact the direct consequence of the megalomania of a single man, urged on by an ambitious minister and by his own insatiable ambition. A brief examination of the wars themselves, and of the events leading to them, however, may perhaps provide evidence in support of just this argument.

The international position of France at the beginning of the period of Louis XIV’s personal rule was defined by two recently concluded treaties: by the terms of the Peace of Westphalia (1648) her eastern frontier was established on the Rhine, a bastion against the alleged hostile designs of the Hapsburg emperor and (more realistically) a conven-

8 Spelled also Nijmegen, Nijmegen, and Nimwegen.
ient base for further operations in Germany; under the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659) she received territories in the Spanish Netherlands, and, more important, she demonstrated her ascendancy over the Spanish Hapsburgs, symbolized by the marriage between Louis XIV and the eldest daughter of Philip IV, Maria Theresa. Thus, in 1661 the territories of France stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rhine, from Flanders to the Pyrenees; rich in natural resources and with a population far exceeding that of her neighbors, she was the unquestioned mistress of western Europe. To contemporaries, and notably to her ruler, there seemed to be no limits to the greatness which she might achieve.

Louis' first opportunity for positive action came with the death of his wife's father, Philip IV of Spain, in 1665. Previously, his role in the Anglo-Dutch commercial war of 1665-1667—in which the British seized the city of New Amsterdam and renamed it New York—had been ambiguous in the extreme. Although bound to the Dutch by an alliance (1662), and actually providing them with troops, he concluded a secret treaty with Charles II of England in 1667, under which he promised to withhold all naval assistance from the Dutch. The fact is that Louis was interested in this war only as a prelude to the fulfillment of his own designs in the Spanish Netherlands. It will be recalled that, upon her marriage to Louis XIV, Maria Theresa of Spain had renounced all claim to her Spanish inheritance, upon condition that Louis was to receive a dowry of 500,000 crowns from Spain. The dowry had never been paid, and now in 1665 Louis published his claim to all Spanish possessions in the Belgian provinces; this claim he justified in terms of a provision of private law known as the "right of
devolution,” by which the daughters of a first marriage had priority over the sons of a second. When the Spanish refused to accept his demands, Louis coolly proceeded with the military occupation of all the territories in question; by May of 1667, as a result of the skill of Turenne and the overwhelming superiority of the French armies, all of the Spanish Netherlands lay open to the Sun King. Confronted with so formidable a threat, the states of western Europe began, characteristically, to forget the differences that divided them. The war between the English and the Dutch was replaced by an alliance, which was soon joined by the Swedes—the Triple Alliance of 1668. Negotiations were at the same time begun between Spain and Portugal, with a view to freeing the Spanish for action against France. Louis’ immediate response to the formidable coalition that was being formed against him was an attempt to conciliate the Dutch by turning his attention eastward. Having successfully occupied the Spanish territory of Franche-Comté, on the Swiss border, he then announced his willingness to negotiate a settlement of the war. By the terms of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (May 1668), he restored Franche-Comté to the Spanish but was allowed to retain twelve fortified towns in the Netherlands. The events of the brief, inconclusive War of Devolution are of particular interest for three reasons: (1) they represent the first of Louis XIV’s attempts to extend the frontiers of France by any and all available means, legalistic, diplomatic, or military; (2) the Triple Alliance was the first instance of a combination of traditionally hostile European powers on the basis simply of their common fear of French power; (3) by ordering the destruction of all fortifications in Franche-Comté before returning it to Spain, by insisting on the
retention of fortresses in the Netherlands, and by concluding a secret treaty with the emperor Leopold for the future division of Spanish territories (January 1668), Louis XIV gave clear indication that he regarded the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle as no more than a temporary truce. Thus, while the War of Devolution was still in progress, the Sun King was already laying his plans for the next war.

Quite apart from his continuing determination to win the Spanish Netherlands, Louis was now motivated by a profound hatred of the Dutch, who had frustrated his ambitions in 1668. He immediately set about to achieve the diplomatic isolation of Holland, concluding treaties with England (1670) and Sweden (1672); as French gold was used to buy English neutrality in the forthcoming war, so too it was used to buy active German support in the cities of Cologne and Münster. The years between 1668 and 1672 were years of preparation which Lionne, the secretary of state, spent laboring with all his might to secure allies, Colbert to find money, and Louvois to raise soldiers for Louis. By May of 1672 the preparations were complete and French armies were once more loosed upon the United Provinces. Again they met with immediate and overwhelming success; only the opening of the dikes saved Amsterdam from capture. In August an enraged mob murdered the brothers John and Cornelius De Witt, leaders of the Dutch aristocratic republican party; William III (1650–1702), prince of the House of Orange, the future king of England, took over the leadership of the United Provinces and in time became the chief organizer of European resistance to France. Almost immediately the fortunes of the Dutch improved; alliances with the Great Elector, with the em-

9 The secret Treaty of Dover; see above, page 138.
peror, and with Spain ended their position of diplomatic and military isolation, so carefully created by Louis XIV. As the French squandered their initial advantage through their passion for siege warfare, the conquest of the Netherlands became an ever more remote possibility. Once again, Louis' eyes turned toward the east: he personally led the force that recaptured Franche-Comté, while Turenne waged a campaign of stunning brilliance in the Palatinate and along the upper Rhine. For years the war dragged on, marked by stiffening opposition—diplomatic and military—to the designs of France. Finally, in 1678 and 1679, a series of treaties among the participants brought the war to a close. The results of the Franco-Dutch War were strikingly similar to those of the War of Devolution: once again Louis had failed to win the Spanish Netherlands; once again his actions had stimulated the formation of an anti-French coalition, this time under the extremely able leadership of William of Orange; and once again his chief gains were on France's eastern border, this time including Franche-Comté. Although largely unseen by the participants, a continuing pattern was beginning to emerge in the relations among the states of western Europe.

The Treaty of Nimwegen is often said to mark the zenith of the power of Louis XIV and the nadir of that of his enemies. This being the case, it is clear that even at the height of his success the Sun King was unable to achieve the objects of his ambition, while from this time forward his fortunes could only decline. Like most men of overweening pride and ambition, Louis was the architect of his own destruction.

By 1678 the French monarch had learned that overt aggression was not an entirely satisfactory means of achieving
his aims; for the next four years he pursued a brilliantly conceived and skillfully executed policy of diplomatic and quasi-legal aggrandizement. By the treaties of Westphalia, the Pyrenees, Aix-la-Chapelle, and Nimwegen, France had acquired during the past thirty years a great number of towns and territories along her borders. Louis now announced that any territories that had in the past belonged to any of these newly acquired possessions should rightfully belong to France. A number of French courts, known as Chambers of Reunion, were established to investigate these claims, and their “findings”—inevitably pro-French—were executed by the armies of France. By a combination of this highly dubious “legal” proceeding and a judicious use of military power, Saarbrücken, Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Alsace and Lorraine (to name only the most important territories) were “reunited” into the kingdom of France. The climax of the success of this policy came in August of 1684 when the emperor Leopold, weakened by his struggle against the Turks, signed the Truce of Ratisbon (Regensburg), acknowledging French possession of all territories gained by the process of “reunion” prior to August 1, 1681. Soon, however, the fortunes of diplomacy were to turn against the Sun King.

The seizure of Strasbourg (1681), and even more the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) and the subsequent persecution of French Protestants, aroused European opinion against Louis XIV as never before. Under the leadership of William of Orange, the explicitly anti-French League of Augsburg was formed in July 1686; its signatories were the emperor, the kings of Sweden and Spain, and the electors of Saxony, Bavaria, and the Palatinate. When the Glorious Revolution placed William on the Eng-
lish throne, England too became associated with the League, as did Holland and Savoy. Although the war which followed originally broke out over the question of the succession to the electorship of the Palatinate and the archbishopric of Cologne, it was actually fought on five fronts: the Netherlands, the Rhine valley, the Pyrenees, Savoy, and Ireland. Apart from his ambitions along the Rhine, Louis had two chief aims: to hold the territories which he had previously taken in Flanders, and to restore James II to the English throne. Considering the cost to France of ten years of war (1688–1697), his gains were at best modest. Standing virtually alone against all of Europe, he managed to retain what he had gained at Nimwegen, as well as both Alsace and Strasbourg. On the other hand, he was forced to return to Spain and the empire the vast bulk of the territories won by “reunion” and by conquest since Nimwegen; he was obliged to acknowledge William III as king of England; and he was made to renounce the claims of his candidate for the see of Cologne. Although he arrogantly claimed to have written the terms of the Treaty of Ryswick, it is clear that these very terms placed severe limitations on the ambitions of Louis XIV. The strengthened position of the emperor and the increasing unification of Protestant Europe made it almost inevitable that in the years to come his attention would be focused on the possessions of the Spanish Hapsburgs.

The succession to the Spanish throne of the sickly, impotent Charles II in 1665 had raised political and diplomatic issues of the first importance for all of Europe. By the time of the Treaty of Ryswick it was apparent to all that this mentally and physically feeble monarch had not many years to live; the inheritance of his vast territories was gen-
erally recognized as a problem that demanded an international solution. In purely dynastic terms, there were three contenders for the Spanish succession: (1) Louis XIV claimed the right of inheritance through both his mother and his wife, the eldest daughters respectively of Philip III and Philip IV, both of whom, however, had explicitly renounced all rights to the Spanish throne; (2) the emperor Leopold claimed the right through his mother and his wife who, although younger daughters of Philip III and Philip IV, had never renounced their rights; (3) Joseph Ferdinand, the electoral prince of Bavaria, put forward his claim as great-grandson of Philip IV and grandson of the sister of Charles II. In addition to the dynastic aspect of the question, however, there was the further fact that neither Holland nor England, the two great naval powers of Europe, was prepared to allow the unification of the Spanish possessions with those of France or the Austrian Hapsburgs. Largely for this reason, Louis XIV put forward his claim in the name of his grandson, Philip of Anjou, while the emperor claimed on behalf of his second son, Charles.

In the year 1698, while Charles II of Spain was still living, the powers of Europe met to arrange the division of his possessions upon his death. By the Treaty of Partition of that year it was agreed: (1) that the bulk of the inheritance—Spain, the Indies, and the Netherlands—would go to the electoral prince of Bavaria; (2) that Naples, Sicily, and various other Italian territories would go to the son of Louis XIV; (3) that the duchy of Milan would go to the emperor's second son, the archduke Charles. This rather highhanded proceeding enraged the dying Charles II, who thereupon bequeathed the entire inheritance to the elector of Bavaria, then a child of seven; this attempt to punish both
Louis XIV and the emperor met with the approval of England and Holland, since it tended to maintain the balance of power on the continent. No sooner had this acceptable settlement been achieved than the prince elector of Bavaria died (February 1699), opening the entire vexing question afresh. Once again negotiations among the powers were opened and, in March 1700, a second Treaty of Partition was written. By its terms, Spain, the Netherlands, and the Indies were to be given to the archduke Charles; Naples, Sicily, and the duchy of Lorraine went to the dauphin; and Milan was given to the duke of Lorraine in compensation for the loss of his duchy. With the balancing “third force” of Bavaria removed, agreement proved more difficult to achieve in 1700 than it had been in 1698. The terms of the second Treaty of Partition were rejected by both the emperor, who greedily claimed the entire inheritance for his son, and Charles II, who proceeded to bequeath all his possessions to Philip of Anjou, the grandson of Louis XIV. Louis now found himself in an odd position: he was a party to a treaty which divided the Spanish inheritance, but he was also the grandfather of the chosen heir to the entire inheritance. What was he to do? Characteristically, he decided to scrap the treaty and support the claims of Philip of Anjou. It must be added, however, that he was motivated less by the desire to gain the Spanish possessions for the House of Bourbon than by the fear that any other policy would cause Charles II to change his will and make the archduke his sole heir. Foreseeing that war with Austria was inevitable, he realistically preferred to have Spain on his side and hoped that the naval powers would remain neutral. On November 1, 1700, Charles II died and Philip of Anjou was proclaimed as Philip V of Spain. The stage
was set for an international collision of unequaled magnitude.

Once again, despite his skillful maneuvers to assure the neutrality of England and Holland, Louis XIV’s ambition and arrogance soon united the great powers in opposition to his designs. In February 1701 he sent French troops into the Spanish Netherlands, immediately arousing the suspicions of England and the United Provinces. His announcement that this was done simply to protect the Netherlands until Spain should be able to take over did nothing to allay these suspicions. When the French began systematically to undermine the colonial trade of England and Holland, and when Louis negotiated an alliance between Spain, Portugal, and France (June 1701), the immediate response was the formation of a Grand Alliance of England, Holland, and Austria (September 1701), later joined by Prussia, Portugal, and Savoy. Although his opposition to the Austrian Hapsburgs was originally viewed with sympathy by England and Holland, Louis had made the fatal mistake of threatening both the commercial interests of the maritime powers and the continental balance of power, which they viewed as essential to their security. During the next fifteen years France was to pay heavily for this mistake.

The War of the Spanish Succession began in 1701, with the invasion of Italy by the imperial general, Prince Eugene of Savoy. The strategy of Louis XIV was to hold the English and the Dutch in the Netherlands, while he proceeded to attack Eugene and march on to Vienna. This plan was frustrated by the great English general, the duke of Marlborough (born John Churchill), who brought his army safely from the lower Rhine to the upper Danube, where he joined Eugene in time to meet the combined French
and Bavarian forces at Blenheim; the battle of Blenheim (August 13, 1704) was the first great allied victory of the war. It was soon followed by others, as the tide turned definitely against France: in Flanders, Marlborough defeated the duc de Villeroi at Ramillies (May 1706), Marlborough and Eugene bested both Vendôme and the duke of Burgundy at Oudenarde (July 1708), and, in the bloodiest battle of the war, Marlborough and Eugene won a Pyrrhic victory at Malplaquet (September 1709); in Spain, Philip V was twice driven from Madrid by British, Portuguese, and Austrian forces; in Italy, an Austro-Prussian army under Eugene won a victory at Turin (September 1706) that effectively broke French power in the entire country.

By 1708, when peace negotiations began, Louis XIV was prepared to make great concessions. He was willing to recognize Charles of Austria as king of Spain, to surrender the border fortresses of the Netherlands to Holland, to restore the empire to the state prevailing at the Peace of Westphalia, and to accept the succession of Anne to the English throne. Unfortunately, the allies insisted upon one further condition: they demanded that Louis should send French armies to drive his grandson from the Spanish throne. Although virtually exhausted militarily, economically, and diplomatically, Louis still retained his pride, and this last ignominious demand proved too much for him to swallow. Rallying his people with a magnificent appeal to the glorious memories of French power, he determined to continue the war. Again in 1709, after the holocaust of Malplaquet, negotiations were opened. At this time Louis went so far as to offer to pay mercenary troops to fight against his
grandson in Spain, but again the allies insisted that French soldiers should be used, and again hostilities were renewed. This time, however, the tide began to run against Louis’ enemies. One is tempted to say that fate had stepped in to punish them for their arrogance, but in any case three events occurred which upset the existing political and military balance of Europe, vastly improving the position and the bargaining power of Louis XIV. In August 1710 the Whig government of England was overthrown—partly as a reaction against the slaughter of troops at Malplaquet—in the first regular and peaceful change of government under the new English party system; the Tory government that came to power was made up of Marlborough’s enemies. In 1711 the archduke Charles, the allies’ candidate for the Spanish throne, inherited the throne of Austria, creating a situation in which allied victory would unite all the Hapsburg territories, an event quite unacceptable to the other powers of Europe. Finally, in 1712, the French general Villars won a signal victory over Lord Albemarle at Denain. As a result of these three events, negotiations were again reopened, this time on a much more even footing.

The terms of the settlements reached at Utrecht (1713) and at Rastadt (1714) can hardly be described as a victory for either side in the war. Philip of Anjou was recognized as king of Spain at the price of renouncing all claims to the French throne and surrendering to England Gibraltar, Minorca, and certain trading rights in Latin America (the Asiento). The Spanish Netherlands, Milan, Sardinia, and Naples were given to Austria, despite the emperor’s refusal to recognize Philip V. France ceded Newfoundland, Acadia (Nova Scotia), and the Hudson’s Bay territory to England,
but was allowed to maintain its frontiers intact; Louis recognized the Hanoverian succession in England and gave up his championship of the Stuart pretenders.

Certain things, however, can be said about the settlements reached at Utrecht and Rastadt. At the very least, they clearly represented the final shattering of Louis XIV's dream of European hegemony. When Louis died in 1715, his country was internally weakened to the point of bankruptcy and externally confined by the new European balance of power. It was the creation of this balance, involving all the states of Europe, and through them all the colonial areas of the world, that represented the final achievement of international politics in the seventeenth century. Wrought on the battlefields of Flanders, Germany, and Italy, this complex pattern of relations among independent, bureaucratically organized states persisted through two centuries until its destruction by the cataclysmic events of our own age.