

Treaty of Westphalia

The **Peace of Westphalia**, also known as the **Treaty of Münster** and the **Treaty of Osnabrück**, refers to a pair of treaties that ended the Thirty Years' War and officially recognized the Dutch Republic and Swiss Confederation.

- The Spanish treaty that ended the Thirty Years' War was signed on January 30, 1648.
- A treaty between the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III, the other German princes and the representatives from the Dutch Republic, France and Sweden was signed on October 24, 1648.
- The Treaty of the Pyrenees, signed in 1659, ending the war between France and Spain, is also often considered part of this treaty.

The Peace of Westphalia is the first international agreement to acknowledge a country's sovereignty and is thus thought to mark the beginning of the modern system of nation-states (Westphalian states).

The majority of the treaty's terms can be attributed to the work of Cardinal Mazarin, the *de facto* leader of France at the time (the King, Louis XIV, was still a child). France came out of the war in a far better position than any of the other powers and was able to dictate much of the treaty.

The results of the treaty were wide ranging. Among other things, the Netherlands now officially gained independence from Spain, ending the Eighty Years' War, and Sweden gained Pomerania, Wismar, Bremen and Verden. The power of the Holy Roman Emperor was broken and the rulers of the German states were again able to determine the religion of their lands. The treaty also gave Calvinists legal recognition. Three new great powers arose from this peace: Sweden, the Dutch Republic and France.

Another important result of the treaty was that it laid to rest to the idea of the Holy Roman Empire having secular dominion over the entire Christian world. The nation-state would be the highest level of government, subservient to no others.

Tenets

These are main tenets of the Peace of Westphalia:

- All parties recognize the Peace of Augsburg of 1555, by which each prince would have the right to determine the religion of his own state, the options being Catholicism, Lutheranism and now Calvinism.
- Christians living in principalities where their denomination was *not* the established church were guaranteed the right to practise their faith in public during allotted hours and in private.

These were the territorial adjustments:

- France won control of the Bishopricks of Metz, Toul, Verdun in Lorraine, the

Habsburg lands in Alsace (the Sundgau) and the cities of the Décapole in Alsace (but not Strasbourg, the Bishopric of Strasbourg, or Mulhouse).

- Sweden received an indemnity as well as control of Western Pomerania and the Prince-Bishoprics of Bremen and Verden. It thus won control of the mouth of the Oder, Elbe and Weser Rivers, and it acquired three voices in the Council of Princes of the German Reichstag.
- Bavaria retained the Palatinate's vote in the Imperial Council of Electors to elect the Holy Roman Emperor, which it had been granted by the ban on the Elector Palatine Frederick V in 1623. The Prince Palatine, Frederick's son, was given a new, eighth electoral vote.
- Brandenburg (later Prussia) received Farther Pomerania and the Bishoprics of Magdeburg, Halberstadt, Kammin and Minden.
- The succession to the Dukes of Jülich-Cleves-Berg, who had died out in 1609, was clarified. Jülich, Berg and Ravenstein were given to the Count Palatine of Neuburg, while Cleves, Mark and Ravensberg went to Brandenburg.
- It was agreed that the Prince-Bishopric of Osnabrück would alternate between Protestant and Catholic holders, with the Protestant bishops chosen from cadets of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg.
- The independence of the city of Bremen was clarified.
- The hundreds of German principalities were given the right to ratify treaties with foreign states independently, with the exception of any treaty that would negatively affect the Holy Roman Empire.
- The Palatinate was divided between the re-established Elector Palatine Charles Louis (son and heir of Frederick V) and Elector-Duke Maximilian of Bavaria, and thus between the Protestants and Catholics. Charles Louis obtained the Lower Palatinate, along the Rhine, while Maximilian kept the Upper Palatinate, to the north of Bavaria.
- Barriers to trade and commerce erected during the war were abolished and navigation rights were established on the Rhine.

Adapted from Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia, *Peace of Westphalia*, posted at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Westphalia (Accessed October 2007).