

II. EUROPE: 1600–1700

The seventeenth century proved to be one of the most crucial eras in early European history. It was a period of complicated and continuous conflict and change for continental Europe and the world at large. Religious differences remained as causes of or excuses for bloody wars and repression. The theological conflicts that began with the Reformation in the sixteenth century were often blurred with the political, social, and economic issues of the seventeenth.

Over the course of the century the drive for order and centralized power culminated in the creation of three different types of states represented by England, France, and Russia. The balance of power was significantly altered in continental Europe as well. The once great power of Spain was considerably diminished as was that of the Austrian Habsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire. The outcome of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) determined that Germany would not emerge as a unified state.

The Thirty Years' War epitomized the dynastic, religious, and territorial issues of the century. The Habsburgs sought to retain control over Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia and increase their authority in Germany. Catholic-Protestant tensions were extremely high in this area also. The war went through several destructive phases as various states reacted to the threat of Habsburg resurgence. Bohemia and Denmark entered the conflict with support from the Dutch on the sea. The Swedes and then the French joined the struggle in their fears over Habsburg or Counter-Reformation gains in the 1620s. The Swedes' interests in the Baltic and, of course, Protestantism gave them strong motivation against the Habsburgs. Swedish armies moved into Germany and the Dutch put pressure on the Spanish territories in The Netherlands. The French meanwhile abandoned any religious pretense and opened the final phase of the struggle against the Habsburgs. They supported the Dutch and Swedes, covered their borders with Spain and sent troops into Germany. Much of Germany was laid waste in battle after battle until the Imperial armies were finally defeated. Peace negotiations dragged on until 1648 and, in the case of the French and the Spanish, until 1659.

The political and religious results of the war were unquestionably profound and far-reaching. The German states—there were over three hundred separate autonomous principalities, bishoprics, and free cities—were to be free and independent in domestic politics and foreign affairs. It was agreed that the subjects would follow the religion of their prince. The issue of religion, a pretext for the war, was settled in a standoff between Protestantism and Catholicism. This brought a close to a militant Counter Reformation. The idea of a unified Catholic Europe under a Holy Roman Emperor was finished. The emperors were effectively weakened by the Imperial Diet and the Habsburgs concentrated on their territories in Bohemia, Austria, and subsequently in Hungary in Eastern Europe. Vienna became the center of administration. These Eastern European regions increasingly turned to an agricultural economy with work performed by a heavily exploited peasantry, many of whom were forced into serfdom.

Catholic Spain failed to remain competitive during the seventeenth century. It lost territory in The Netherlands. Portugal became independent. On the high seas Spain was successfully challenged by the Dutch and the English. Internally Spain faced fiscal and political crises as income from the overseas empire dropped and revolt developed in Catalonia. In the Mediterranean, Sicily and Naples also revolted against Spanish rule.

Overall the Portuguese proved the most successful in challenging Spanish authority. With French backing and money from their own sugar operations in Brazil the Portuguese were able to gain independence in 1668.

The final settlement between Spain and France in the Treaty of the Pyrenees acknowledged Spain's much diminished role as a great power.

In the Dutch Republic, which was made up of seven separate units, Holland with the port city of Amsterdam emerged as a major world power. In shipping, commerce, finance, and political life the Dutch excelled even during the worst of the continental wars. They were able to compete in the Baltic with Sweden, in the East Indian spice trade with France, and with England in the New World. However, for all its strengths, the Dutch Republic was too small in territory and population (two million). In the latter half of the seventeenth century they were outstripped by the English and French.

In the long run the national monarchies of France and England proved to be powerful and effective political systems. Sweden was a major power in the Baltic Sea region. Until the death of Charles XII (1718), Sweden competed successfully with Denmark, Poland, Brandenburg, and Russia. Sweden had been successful in the Thirty Years' War and under Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII it created a strong monarchy. Ultimately Sweden was not able to muster and sustain the resources required for a world power and was eventually overshadowed by Russia. Under Peter the Great (1682–1725) Russia came to be the dominant power in the Baltic region.

EXERCISE 2
EUROPE: 1600–1700

I. MAKING THE MAP

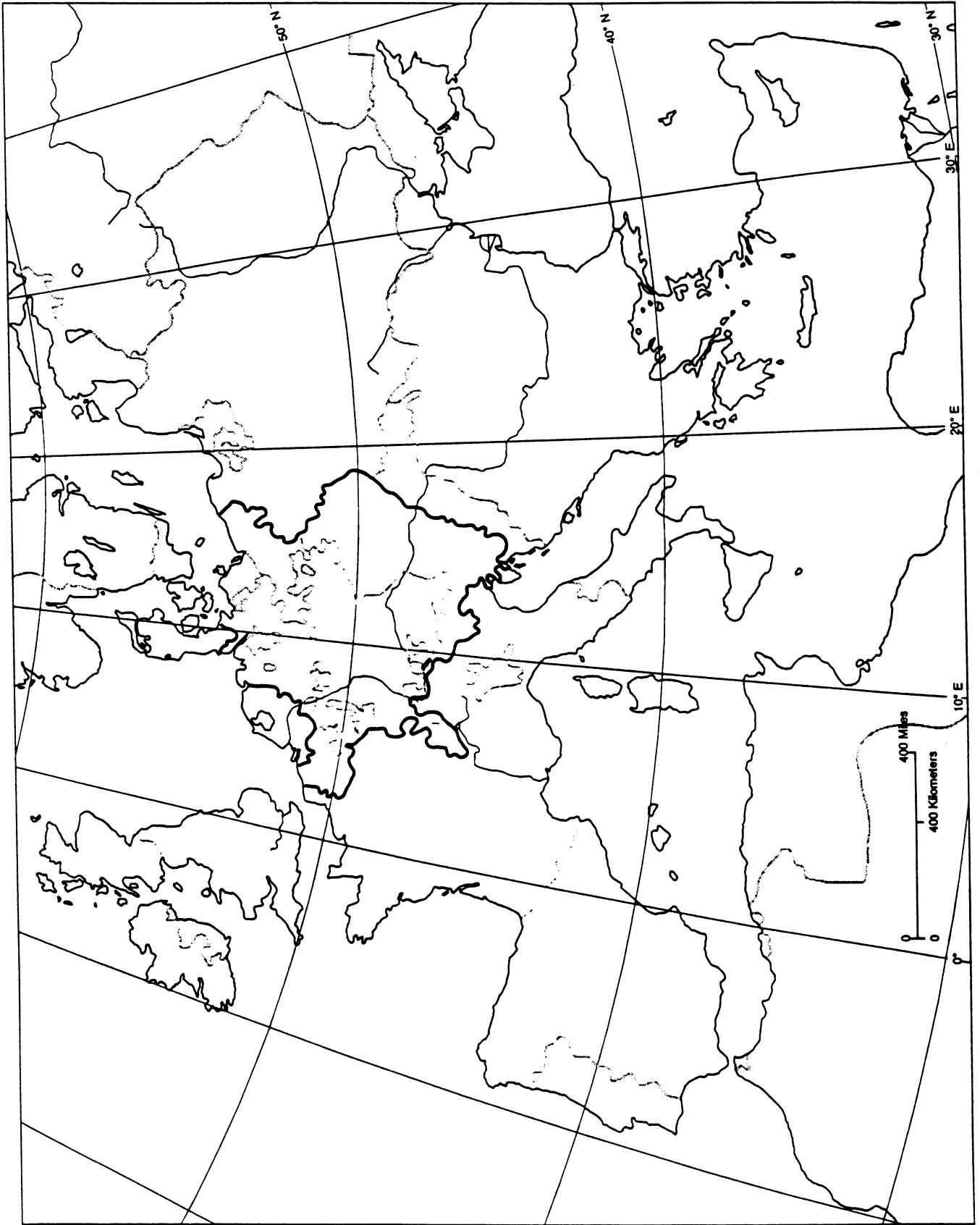
1. Locate and label the Atlantic Ocean, the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the North Sea, the English Channel.
2. Locate and label the Rhine River, the Rhone River, the Danube River.
3. Show the borders of the Holy Roman Empire as of 1648 (Peace of Westphalia).
4. Show in red the territory of the United Netherlands.
5. Locate and label the area of Saxony, Prussia, Brandenburg, Bavaria, Bohemia, Austria.
6. Locate with a black dot and label Gdansk, Stockholm, London, Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Prague.
7. Color in yellow the European regions ruled by the Ottoman Empire *ca.* 1600.
8. Locate and label Spain, France, England, the Papal States, Hungary, Sweden, Russia.

II. READING THE MAP

1. The major power which controlled much of southeastern Europe in the seventeenth century was the _____ Empire with its capital at _____.
2. The new independent political formation which emerged to the north of Italy was _____.
3. In Western Europe the _____ Netherlands and the _____ Netherlands were effectively separated from the Holy Roman Empire by 1700.
4. The three major states of Scandinavia were _____, _____, and _____.
5. The three regions of the British Isles *ca.* 1700 were _____, _____, and _____.
6. In the early eighteenth century _____ replaced Sweden as the major power in the Baltic Sea region.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE MAP

1. What region of Europe was the main battleground of the Thirty Years' War?
2. Name the major powers in the final phase of the Thirty Years' War.
3. In the mid seventeenth century the Spanish were forced to recognize the independence of what territory to their west on the Iberian Peninsula?
4. Overall the power of Spain was seriously challenged by what European states in the seventeenth century?
5. Name the province of the Netherlands which became the world's greatest commercial power from the latter half of the sixteenth century to the mid seventeenth?
6. Austrian Habsburg lands were threatened by what power in the latter part of the seventeenth century?



Exercise 2: Europe, 1600-1700

