



INTRODUCTION

From Westphalia to Enlightened Peace, 1648–1815

STELLA GHERVAS AND DAVID ARMITAGE

Beati pacifici. Cedant arma togae.

—William Penn, 1693¹

This quotation placed at the start of William Penn's *Essay towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe* (1693) fused two cultures: the first part ("blessed are the peacemakers") belonged to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament (Matthew 5:9); the second came from Cicero's *On Duties* ("let arms yield to the toga") and referred to the custom of Roman generals removing their armor and wearing a toga before entering the City. Penn amalgamated the sacred and the classical to make a metaphorical appeal for European states to abandon their habit of settling disputes by the force of arms and to replace it by *justice*, by which Penn meant embassies bringing pleas from the wronged party. In other words, it advocated a negotiated settlement of differences. Penn's statement can, indeed, serve as an apt summary of what the cultural idea of peace would become during the European Enlightenment.

It is a commonplace among scholars to take the two dates of 1648 and 1815 as historical milestones, the markers of a "Classical period" of statehood, sovereignty and international relations with global implications well beyond Europe. Though this interpretation has largely lost its dogmatic value, it can still be used with some profit. The year 1648 stands for the Peace of Westphalia, the series of treaties closing the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) that had drenched the Holy Roman Empire in blood, over a rather intricate question: the prerogatives of the Holy Roman Emperor versus the rights of the German states, all set against a backdrop of religious wars between Catholics and Protestants.² Similarly, 1815 marks the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna and other treaties signed in that year, as the tail end of a time of troubles that had started with the French Revolutionary Wars, and swiftly proceeded with the conquest of Europe by Emperor Napoleon's armies.³ In between these two dates, we find a movement known as the Enlightenment, a ferment of intellectual activity that was so intense it came to shape the culture of a time and, in due course, the social and political organization of the European states. Such a chronology is, needless to say, purely schematic and, like all such frames, somewhat artificial. It is grounded, however, in the self-understanding of the period itself, for which peace became a supreme cultural value that informed the Enlightenment, both as a process and as an intellectual movement. The waxing and waning of peace can therefore be taken as a good index for this historical epoch, which is bounded by two peace settlements with profound cultural repercussions in their own times and long afterwards.



WHY A *CULTURAL* HISTORY OF PEACE?

What we understand here by a *cultural* history of peace is distinct from (but tied to) its diplomatic or political history. For the latter, the focus has traditionally been on short-term decisions and events, for example, negotiations and treaties; the main characters have been those individuals or great powers that made or broke peace treaties. In this volume, individuals—philosophers, jurists, theologians, political economists, poets, artists and others—appear on their own, sometimes as original contributors to the intellectual history of Europe; but rarely did they leave the political situation fundamentally changed immediately after their work was published. Cultural influence often takes time to manifest itself: the shared representations of peace (which are the central focus of our cultural history of peace) tend to move slowly. A cultural history, then, studies how these were born and how they permeated European educated societies, eventually to influence them in new directions. It can also show how those originally European ideas went global and hybridized with other traditions of peace, far beyond the Atlantic world of Europe and the Americas that is delimited by the traditional definitions of Enlightenment (see Conrad 2012).

By taking such a cultural approach, the volume diverges from one traditional approach to international relations, which has sought to identify seemingly permanent, abstract scientific objects that transcend time and culture. We will consider here peace as a human product, an intellectual or cultural construct with all its connotations and representations, not as some immortal object of political science floating across time like a mythical Nicolas Flamel or Count Saint Germain. As scholars from Sir Henry Sumner Maine in the nineteenth century to Sir Michael Howard at the end of the twentieth noted, peace was not a discovery but an invention, and hence a human achievement (Maine 1888; Howard 2000). The ideal of peace evolved and aged with human communities, naturally influenced by the course of events; and it frequently perished miserably in war, only to be reborn in new forms. It is only the inbred and tenacious impulse of many human cultures toward a sense of “brotherhood” among human beings (perceived, for example, as *ubuntu* among the peoples of southern Africa), despite all the apparent reasons to believe in the supremacy of brute force, which compels us to acknowledge that some natural law is at play in humanity. Immanuel Kant famously wrote in 1795 that:

Since the narrower or wider community of the peoples of the earth has developed so far that a violation of rights in one place is felt throughout the world, the idea of a law of world citizenship is no high-flown or exaggerated notion.

—Kant [1795] 2006: 84–85

Whereas there might seem to be a universal aspiration of humans toward peace, what forms and procedures peace takes definitely owes much to the culture of a time and place. Indeed, Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries evolved a very elaborate protocol around the conclusion of peace after war: called *l'art de la paix* (the Art of Peace), that was complete with embassies, congresses, and treaties (Bély 2007). And while each new avatar of peace after war may have been recognizable as belonging to the same species *pax*—it is definitely not the same individual. Peace, during that epoch, was part of the great canvas of shared mental representations: not only as the counterpart to war but also as the ideal condition of a state; and it generally invited a sense of ordering reason, safety of rights and prosperity (see Spinoza [1677] 2000, ch. V). Peace among states was thus not merely an intellectual construct: it was also a yearning, represented in visual arts



FIGURE 0.1: Johann Gottlieb Becker, *Immanuel Kant* (1724–1804). Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach am Neckar, Germany. Bridgeman Images.

from architecture to painting, either as the portraits of peacemakers orderly assembled in a fashion evoking concord, or as allegories such as Peace and Justice kissing each other, often complete with a dove and olive branch⁴—as well as in music where it was traditionally associated, as in G. F. Handel’s *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* for the peace of Utrecht (1713), with the emotions of pomp, joy, and gratitude. Peace, in that cultural sense, was first and foremost a perpetual quest for a safer and quieter state of affairs for human society (Milam in this volume).

As will be readily seen in each of the various contributions to this book, the time frame of a cultural narrative is thus necessarily larger than a political one—it spans decades, even centuries. While the Peace of Westphalia could be said to have heralded the collapse of cultural foundations that had framed Latin Christianity—notably the ideal of an imperial unity, both political and religious—it is during the Enlightenment that we witness the birth of innovative reflections that would shape the cultural representations of peace in following eras. Political events formed, of course, the background and the counterpoint of this evolution, and they provide us helpful signposts to understand the context; but what matters here is the slow percolation of conceptions of peace and of the European “order,” from the educated elites of the continent to political leaders, to societies at large and even to other continents. In fact, we might venture to say that it is during the Enlightenment that peace first became definitively and irreversibly a cultural force in



FIGURE 0.2: Theodor van Thulden, *Allegory of Peace and Justice after the Thirty Years' War*. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (DHM). Bridgeman Images.

itself: that is, a central value with its own representations, institutions and norms, and with a constructed history as well as a constructive future. This slow movement of transformation between Westphalia and Vienna, which identified a whole culture with peace and rendered peace a cultural goal in its own right, led to forms of peace and peace-making that are recognizable up to our own time (Ghervas 2014b).

BEYOND PRECONCEPTIONS: TOWARD A NEW HISTORY OF PEACE

And yet the reader should be warned that our attempt to rediscover past cultural conceptions of the political order of Europe, particularly of “peace,” also needs to be a process of “unlearning”: it might require us to relinquish some of our own cultural conceptions, at least momentarily. This difficulty manifests itself in two ways. The first is that approaching the written sources of the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is doubly treacherous, even compared to earlier ones. First, the European languages had already developed to be deceptively close to those of our times, but they are definitely not identical. It is too easy for us to fool ourselves by misinterpreting the terms used by authors; texts of the eighteenth century are strewn with many “false friends” that can cause us to trip by unwittingly projecting our definitions and thereby missing their point. Even sources written in Latin—such as the treaties of Westphalia—do not save us from that hazard, since most of us rely on translations into modern languages. We will thus have to forget, for a moment, the canonical terms of political science that we all learnt at school (“state,” “sovereignty,” etc.) to dive instead into a bygone era of absolute monarchies, aristocratic republics and a Holy Roman Empire. And where we use modern

terminology, we should at least make sure that it will not interfere with our understanding of the primary sources.

The second issue is that even if vocabulary was crystal clear, our own cultural (pre-) conceptions of the early twenty-first century could still get in the way. Anglophone societies, among others, are still somewhat influenced by popular narratives relying on a “historical teleology,” i.e. the belief that the succession of events of human history is going toward some “manifest destiny.” This is understandable, as it is a side-effect of the meteoric rise of European states during the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, which led historians to view Western culture as somehow exceptional or superior to others. We have all been exposed to various beliefs, such as the “triumph of science,” the “unstoppable machine of progress,” not to mention the nineteenth century’s “civilizing mission to the world,” Marx’s “struggle of the classes,” all the way to Francis Fukuyama’s premature “end of history” as the victory of American liberal democracy (Fukuyama 1992); and perhaps even Steven Pinker’s over-optimistic account of the triumph of the “better angels of our nature” (Pinker 2011). By contrast, many recent historians would dismiss these hypothetical grand designs (which they consider as the reflection of long cherished but now obsolete societal conceptions) as self-centered fallacies. By the same token, no self-respecting historian would today endorse the idea that the history of the European great powers of the seventeenth century represents the totality of human history; European history telling is thus “provincializing” itself in its own estimation (Hobson 2009). As a result, we would encourage the reader not to read any cosmic significance into this broadened “Enlightenment era of peace” framed by the dates of 1648 and 1815. It was merely a practical way of dividing eras of the history of Europe, among other possible ones, within the constraints of a multi-volume collection covering the cultural history of peace over more than two millennia.

Our warning about the hazards of teleology applies in particular to the Peace of Westphalia. After the Second World War, its importance grew so much in Western culture, to the point that it was reinvented as the origin point of all states in existence today—the “Westphalian states,” with sovereignty supposedly the *ne plus ultra* of political evolution and the ultimate impulse inherent to any modern state. That “sovereignty” is, however, a modern character, whose birth can even be traced to a precise year: 1948 on the third centenary of the Peace of Westphalia, in the context of the military and ideological contest of the US against Stalin’s USSR during the Cold War. This event takes place in the first years of the United Nations (in reality, a club of states, not nations) and the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Gross 1948). By contrast, the real historical character of 1648, the Latin *superioritas*, was not a gift from the Platonic realm of ideas; it was rather a catchall phrase that synthesized the particular claims of a myriad of German states toward the Holy Roman Empire. In their capacity of members of that political formation, those states were obviously not “sovereign” as we would understand that notion today.

We can, furthermore, notice two additional logical issues with the “cultural” belief that modern sovereignty was born in Westphalia. The first is that the signatories of the treaties had never hoped for or even conceived of such a glorious remote posterity, three full centuries after the events. Indeed, the political and geographical scope of that peace agreement was limited to the Holy Roman Empire (a geographical area spanning from the North Sea to Northern Italy), and it was designed to put an end to political and institutional disputes that were specific to a time and place: “Discords and Civil Divisions being stir’d up in the Roman Empire, which increas’d to such a degree, that not only all Germany, but



FIGURE 0.3: Gerard ter Borch, *The Ratification of the Treaty of Münster* (1648). Reproduced with the kind permission of the National Gallery, London, UK.

also the neighbouring Kingdoms, and France particularly, have been involv'd in the Disorders of a long and cruel War" ("Treaty of Münster" 1648, Preamble and Art. 1). One could perhaps be deceived by the stated aim of the agreement to establish a "Christian and universal peace, and a perpetual, true and sincere amity," but that was a standard rhetorical device used in most treaties of the time (*ibid.*). But what historical sovereignty may lose in mythical prestige, it gains in authenticity, detail, and interest.

The second issue is that the motivations for keeping alive the myth of the "Peace of Westphalia" may no longer exist in the early twenty-first century.⁵ The doctrine of "absolute sovereignty" (a core tenet of the post-war realist school of International Relations associated in the post-War period with Hans Morgenthau and others) has been put into question as a long-term survival strategy. Indeed, several of the largest and most powerful political formations on Earth today are federations, notably the United States of America; and most of the European powers of old seem to have gone this way since 1950, and are now part of a European Union. It is, also, particularly ironic that "sovereignty," in the post-Second World War era, had been of such little succor to the German states that had benefited from the Peace of Westphalia: their number had already been whittled down by Napoleon's "mediatization" in 1812–14, then progressively reduced to only two after warlike Prussia rose to prominence and a Second German Reich was formed in 1871; then summarily fused into one, when the Third German Reich militarily annexed Austria with the Anschluss of 1939. After the Second World War, it was set to naught as the occupied Third Reich ceased to exist as a sovereign state. If there had indeed been a Grand Designer of a "principle of sovereignty," it stands to reason that they would have

been kinder to the many German states that had been the first to gather and follow it. In that order of things, a Principality of Münster would have been sitting as a member of the United Nations Assembly in 1948; instead, the constitution of Germany evolved once again toward a federal state. We will thus ask the reader to bear with the authors and consider the cultural manifestations of peace from 1648 to 1815, in themselves and as themselves, *not necessarily as the prelude to our modern political order*.

With such historical myths and absolutes out of the way and with due regard to the cultural context, there is something to be said about important peace treaties or territorial settlements as temporal signposts in a *longue durée* history of peace: they brought a formal end to the periods of violent organized fighting between states, known as wars. Such has long been, after all, a most basic and legal meaning of the term *peace* in European culture: as a treaty, a document putting an end to the state of war, and the resulting political state. “Peace,” in that restricted sense, was a condition beneficial to commerce and prosperity. It was alas transient, even though peace treaties were labeled as “perpetual” or “eternal,” seemingly as a countercharm. In the period under consideration, *peace treaties* thus appeared to the eyes of contemporaries as welcome pauses to disorders. For today’s historians, they serve as useful milestones for a meaningful chronology of peace (Arcidiacono 2011; Ghervas 2020a).

1648: THE END OF A CONVENTIONAL ORDER OF LATIN CHRISTIANITY?

Let us now turn briefly to this “historical” Peace of Westphalia: it came as the result of a victory for German states in general and setbacks for the Austrian Habsburg dynasty in particular. It also brought relative stability to Germany and, by extension, to the lands west of it. The name of Westphalia derives from the name of the German state that hosted the negotiations and is a generalization, because the “peace” is really a series of treaties signed in 1648: Münster (30 January) between Spain and the Dutch Republics, and more importantly, Münster (24 October) between the Holy Roman Empire and France and allies, and Osnabrück (24 October) between the Holy Roman Empire and Sweden. To capture its essence, we can turn to Voltaire a century later:

This Peace of Westphalia, finally signed in Münster and Osnabrück on 14 October 1648, was agreed, granted and received *as a fundamental and perpetual law*: these are the very terms of the treaty. It must serve as the basis for imperial capitulations [commitments made by a newly elected emperor]. It is also received law, as sacred until now as the Golden Bull [of 1356], and far superior to it by the detail of all the diverse interests that this treaty covers, by all the rights it ensures and by the changes introduced into civil status and religion.

—Voltaire 1827: 319

By settling the relations of the German states with the Holy Roman Empire—as well as Austria—and by severing the link of the Dutch Republic and Switzerland from it, the peace of Westphalia created a regional order that was less monolithic, generally more disposed to compromise and therefore to peace, and in consequence less susceptible to attract foreign powers in search of territorial acquisitions.⁶

From an intellectual or cultural perspective, the stipulations appear however less as a beginning than an end: they mark a break from the top-down dogma of the *alliance of the throne and the altar* (namely the Emperor and the Pope) that had dominated Western

Europe, the land of Latin Christianity, during the late Middle Ages. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire at the end of the Fifth Century, Western Europe had been an anarchy of states. This fact had, paradoxically, allowed the Patriarchate of Rome to emerge as a unifying factor, both religiously and politically. When, in the year 799, Pope Leo III crowned the Frankish King Charlemagne as *Emperor of the Romans* mostly to create a counterweight to the Roman Empire of Constantinople, a particular politico-religious configuration was inaugurated in Western Europe whereby the Pope became the spiritual suzerain of all monarchs. The cultural paradigm was that a benevolent Augustus would impose peace and unity once again for the benefit of humankind, as in the Ancient Roman Empire, but this time he would do so with the caution and blessing of the highest religious figure of Christianity.

There was a wide stretch, of course, from the ideal to practice. For the Holy Roman Empire (which was—in the famous words of Voltaire—neither holy, Roman nor an empire), the alleged “alliance of the altar and the throne” was actually a contrived and glorified confederation, where coexistence was not straightforward and was even a cause of occasional wars. Furthermore, kingdoms such as France, Spain, England, and Poland were not part of it and did not recognize its supremacy. Yet, for all its awkward mismatch with reality, the Holy Roman Empire provided a solid mental and legal framework that held together the lands between Germany and Northern Italy for eight centuries (Stollberg-Rilinger 2013). The figure of the Pope even rose during the Middle Ages to become the arbiter of the affairs of Europe. The inextricable interconnection between the spiritual and the secular, with the spiritual constantly seeking to gain or maintain the upper hand, was undoubtedly a dominant trait of Latin Christianity.

This balance changed at the the turn of the sixteenth century, when European powers started to influence Africa, Asia and the Americas, in what came to be known (at least in Europe), as the “Great Discoveries.” On the continent itself, a powerful German–Spanish Empire rose in Western Europe under Charles V. At the very moment when it seemed that Latin Christianity would be finally united politically in an explosion of grandeur, its structure started to crack apart because of the Protestant Reformation and its aftermath. With its rejection of the clerical intermediation with God and its distrust of Church hierarchies, Protestantism had also strong implications for the social and political order: by rejecting the divine right of monarchs and by ultimately supporting the prerogatives of parliaments, Protestantism led to the birth of a new form of secular state, quite different from the top-down paradigm of Catholic inspiration. It is not coincidental that seminal philosophers of European political thought, such as the English Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) (on whom see Christov in this volume) and the Dutch Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), hailed from countries that had adopted the Protestant strain of Reformation. They would be later canonized as “theorists of sovereignty” alongside the Frenchman Jean Bodin (1530–1596), a figure from the other side of the confessional divide, but who shared their critique of papal power.

Change tends, however, to break the peace if it is resisted too hard against, or fought too fervently for. The “Religious Wars” of the sixteenth and seventeenth century in Europe were less about theology than about two radically opposed conceptions of society and the role of the individual in it. The incumbent Catholic powers, Spain and Austria, considered the reformed states of the Holy Roman Empire (first of which were the Dutch Republic and Prussia), as existential threats to their way of life, and assigned themselves a mission to restore what they considered as the natural order. Conversely, Protestant states were willing to defend, to the last breath, both their existence and their own conception of a natural



FIGURE 0.4: Delft, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Dutch Jurist and Politician. Interfoto. Alamy Stock Photo.

society where individuals would have a direct relationship with God and their political rulers. This opposition of two sides which both considered that far more was at stake than interests of power, money, or influence, were conducive to a conflict of the worst kind: a war of mutual annihilation (which is the proper meaning of *internecine* war) (Armitage 2017: 93–120). The shocking cruelty and the human cost of the wars of religion in Germany—some five million deaths in the name of the love of Christ—can only be explained as the instinctive reaction of two mutually incompatible factions that both contemplated oblivion. The political war between states thus doubled as a *civil war* among the states of Latin Christianity, not to mention the frequent occurrence of acts of civil war (in a proper sense) between communities of the two confessions, outside of any public control (Armitage 2017). Barbarism was thus the consequence of the states' angst of an impending collapse of their social order, or the result of the actual collapse of said social order. The literature of the time, seeking signs of God's anger in natural phenomena, turned as a precedent to Jeremiah's lamentations for the destruction of Jerusalem by the Persians in the sixth century BCE (Theibault 1994). Those prophecies of doom were, alas, self-fulfilling.

"Peace" in 1648, after the Thirty Years' War, was thus not a mere termination of "war," which Grotius might have described as a public duel between states: it was first and foremost the relinquishment of deep-rooted hatreds, a lesson in mutual tolerance, the mending of political and societal rifts that had threatened to rip the fabric of Western

Europe (Lesaffer 2002; Asch 2004). This explains the painstaking detail (the second treaty of Münster has 128 articles) with which the peace stipulations sought to settle each jurisdictional and territorial dispute from the North Sea to the Adriatic, without referring to dogmatic notions. It was a diplomatic triumph, not of lofty principles but of the common sense of negotiators seeking to address each and every particular situation in itself and by itself. Of course, posterity can discern a few general principles that implicitly emerged from this catalogue: notably the affirmation of the *superioritas* of each state of the Holy Empire, with its prerogatives and duties; and, most importantly, the exclusion of religious beliefs as a legitimate motive for waging war (Te Brake 2017: 44–90). The fundamental association between religious toleration—the mutual accommodation of confessional difference—with peace both internal (*concordia*) and external (*pax*) would define the self-image of Enlightenment. There is thus a case to be made, at least in the cultural sphere, for tracing one basic strain of Enlightenment back to 1648—to the beginnings of what might even perhaps be called a “Westphalian Enlightenment.”

Let us note, however, that those stipulations aimed at leveling the playing field, by enforcing *negative* rights for the German states: in other words, they made peace possible by prohibiting encroachments from the Holy Roman Empire and foreign powers. That was undoubtedly removing a thorny issue, but they did not set either positive principles or any rules for how European states should treat each other in the future, in order to *maintain the peace*. Nor did they provide guidelines for how monarchs should deal with religious dissent within their own borders. The Peace of Westphalia, “the last Christian peace” as it has been called, signaled the end of a feudal epoch based on imperial-religious suzerainty (Croxtton 2013). It was however “Christian” only in an abstract, ecumenical sense. Significantly, Pope Innocent X’s bull “Zelo Domus Dei” (1650), condemned those articles of the 1648 peace treaties detrimental to the Catholic religion, but this fell on deaf ears and he had to accept the new German order as a *fait accompli*. The Papacy’s role in the Holy Roman Empire would henceforth be theoretical—and in practice minimal, since episcopal states did not answer to the Pope for their internal affairs; and furthermore, the last papal coronation of an emperor had been that of Charles V in 1530.

For all this, it was not yet the start of a putatively “modern” world: states were still a highly patrimonial affair, with territories shifting from one dynasty to another according to marriages, inheritances, purchases, or barter. This time-honored tradition, descended from the Middle Ages, had long been a guarantee of safe and orderly transition of political power in Europe, but it was now becoming unsustainable because it was an ever-increasing source of territorial contentions: dynastic wars periodically broke the peace in the Three Kingdoms of Britain and Ireland and on the European Continent. There had to be better ways to ensure both orderly succession and a peaceful coexistence of states. The effort to find such means would consume much intellectual and institutional energy over the following two centuries.

THE “ENGLISH TURN” TO THE BALANCE OF POWER

For European states in the latter half of the seventeenth century, learning new ways of dealing with other states—preferably without recourse to military force—would thus be a next big challenge. It was especially true with a Western power dangerously on the rise: a resurgent France under Louis XIV *le Roi Soleil* (the Sun King). Louis XIV’s House of Bourbon had been the historical enemy of the House of Habsburg; but this was of little relief to the states of the Holy Roman Empire on the west bank of the Rhine, as well as

to the Dutch Republic, which were now the next targets for his appetite for self-aggrandizement. It was, in fact, fortunate that Spain was firmly holding on to its Flanders dominions (roughly today's Belgium), and thus served as a bulwark against the French threat of invasion. Indeed, the Protestant Dutch Republic and Catholic Spain were forced into a rapprochement during the Dutch Wars (1672–78). This war saw enemies of yesteryear now united against Louis XIV, who nevertheless won the day.

Upon this European war fought for territorial reasons, a second, colonial one was superposed, which opposed England and the Netherlands for control over the seas. Protestant England and Catholic France thus became allied in a war of opportunity. Yet another war was being fought on the East, between a Danish–German coalition and the Kingdom of Sweden on the defensive. All in all, the intricate game of political interests and diplomacy had it so that the complex pattern of European states was drifting into a configuration of two coalitions: France, Sweden, and England on one hand, and Spain, Austria, and the rest of Europe on the other. Or, to simplify it further, the French House of Bourbon and the Spanish/Austrian House of Habsburg became the main components of two opposed military blocs. At this stage, the fates of armies and navies in battle, not diplomats, were still the arbiters of Europe.

The final great upheaval of the old feudal order of Europe occurred when the last Habsburg king of Spain, Charles II, died in 1700 without an heir, bequeathing his kingdom to a Bourbon prince, Philip of Anjou, who happened to be none other than the grandson of Louis XIV. While the prospect of a reunion of the French and Spanish colonial empires was frightening enough for the English, the bulwark of Spanish Flanders, now in French hands, was suddenly turned into a rear guard for military offensives into the heart of Germany: this spelled disaster for the Dutch Republic as well as the minor states on the western bank of the Rhine.

It is, paradoxically, in that very moment that European powers took a turn toward recognizably “modern” cultural conceptions of peace. The impulse came from the one state that was not looking for territorial aggrandizement on the continent but exclusively at the development of her commerce and the conquest of overseas dominions: England. The Stuart King Charles II, while a Catholic at heart, had restored peace in his kingdoms around a sound tolerance policy that acknowledged the country's preference for Anglicanism, and he gained much popular appreciation for it. When his openly Catholic heir James II was deposed in the Glorious Revolution (1688–89), sheer necessity demanded that the government set aside both religious disputes and strict adherence to dynastic principles, to follow a sensible course of action.

England turned toward an unorthodox candidate, but a not unsurprising one in view of the rise of France: a scion of the one family that had given many leaders to the Dutch Republic, the house of Orange. For the English political class, commercial competition from Dutch maritime power had long been a serious but manageable nuisance, even better if an accommodation could be found. By contrast, the prospect of England facing alone the French Sun King commandeering the three combined fleets of France, Spain and the Netherlands would have been infinitely worse. It logically followed that once Spain had switched sides over to the Bourbon faction in 1700, England had to turn around and join forces with the Netherlands to defend their existence as Protestant, trade nations; and that both had to ally without remorse with the Catholic Habsburg of Austria.

From these quite particular circumstances, higher interpretations had to emerge. In England, this was the rise of the *balance of power* as a governing principle of foreign

policy: it stipulated that in order to preserve its freedom and peace, the kingdom should side militarily, in any situation, with the less powerful European alliance so as to re-establish an equilibrium. In this sense, “balance” was to be understood literally, as the scales used to weigh merchandise at the market (Ghervas 2017: 407–08). The assumption here was that the European states would always divide into two opposed military alliances; and as long as those alliances would be matched in strength, the continent would not fall prey to a universal monarchy—or a pan-continental empire, in modern terms (Bosbach 1988). And, indeed, France under Louis XIV was edging dangerously close to such a universal monarchy, as contemporary British observers noted with alarm. In this vein, Charles Davenant, a writer and member of Parliament classically wrote in 1701 that “the post of England is to hold the balance of power” (Davenant [1701] 1771: 302–05). This is, after all, exactly what it did in the following year, by declaring war on both France and Spain and starting the War of Spanish Succession. By 1710, the Balance of Power had become a household concept in the political parlance of London and it would have a long and influential afterlife (see Ghervas 2017).

PEACE IN THE ENLIGHTENMENT: BOLD THEORIES, STABLE PRACTICES

After over a decade of indecisive conflict without winners or losers, the European powers decided to come to an agreement, with the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). What England “proposed and insisted upon” on that occasion, quite unsurprisingly, was a solemn relinquishing by the Bourbon Kings of France and Spain of any future claims on each other’s throne. The novelty lay in the motivation of “securing for ever the universal good and quiet of Europe, by an equal weight of power, so that many being united in one, the balance of the equality desired, might not turn to the advantage of one, and the danger and hazard of the rest” (Treaty of Utrecht 1713, Art. II). On the continent, the construct of the Balance of Power started to seep into political vocabulary: witness the fact French and German writers later used it quite confidently, while acknowledging the role of England in its development (Sheehan 1996: 97–120; Dhondt 2015). They understood it as a prescription for how to maintain the peace by the preservation of the *status quo ante*: according to which, the patrimonial rights of the ruling families had to give way to the collective interest of a continental community of states. The political configuration of Europe was indeed a bipolar one: two perpetually opposed military alliances, organized around the Austrian House of Habsburg on one hand and the French House of Bourbon on the other (Ahn and Whatmore in this volume). While peace was a desirable object, wars would still be frequent, because preserving the balance of power was more important as a safeguard against universal monarchy.

While Latin Christianity was falling into the background as the dominant cultural reference for peace, a secular “European Republic of States” was emerging, complete with its own Law of Nations and a cultural identity increasingly defined by enlightened values of internal and external peace: indeed, this has been called with justice by J. G. A. Pocock the “Utrecht Enlightenment” (Pocock 1999: 7–9). By mid-century, the Law of Nations was formalized by authors such as the hugely influential Swiss jurist Emer de Vattel (1714–1767), who understood it as a way to better integrate this republic of states according to the prescriptions of natural law and human reason (Vattel 2008). The conclusion of peace, with its armistices or capitulations, as well as its treaties, obeys rituals that may seem self-evident today, but they are the product of a long evolution,



FIGURE 0.5: Delff, *The Signing of the Treaty of Utrecht on 11th April 1713*. Private Collection. Bridgeman Images.

as well as codification. Conversely, it may seem counter-intuitive that war, by nature a chaotic activity where nothing is certain beyond the fact that it has been declared, would become such a ritualized duel between states. War and peace, under the inspiration of philosophers and lawyers, thus became legal constructs with their *modus operandi*, regulations and norms, which were generally respected by belligerents (Koskenniemi in this volume). In the end, the only purpose of the law of nations was to bring more order in the interrelations of states on the continent and, as such, it was a factor contributing to peace on the continent—or at least to attempt to make wars less cruel.

To paraphrase Immanuel Kant, “the age of Enlightenment was not an enlightened age,” and that applies also to political history (Kant [1784] 2006).⁷ While established churches did their best to contain and channel the torrent of new ideas—especially those ideas that could call the social order into question—the eighteenth century had its plentiful supply of conflicts. Military deterrence, with Europe divided into two alliances, continued to be the foundation of the European “system.” When mixed with dynastic rights and the legal cavils of succession, the logic of the balance of power actually made for new conflagrations, such as the War of Polish Succession (1733–38) and the War of Austrian Succession (1740–48). Nonetheless, the periods of peace were occasions for considerable development of commerce by sea (with the increase of colonial shipping) and by land (with the generalized improvement of roads on the continent).

By contrast, the new economic demands made it desirable for wars to be as short as possible, as well as less destructive, so as to cause minimal disruption to the flows of colonial imports and manufactured goods. This led the rise of the intellectual construct that Montesquieu called *doux commerce* (“sweet commerce”), as an alternative to war between states (Montesquieu 1989: IV, XX, 1 and 2; Terjanian 2013; Kapossy, Nakhimovsky, and Whatmore, eds. 2017). Replacing military conflicts by trade competition was certainly an improvement—yet attaching the adjective “sweet” to commerce may sound, from our horizon of experience, as an oxymoron for a period marked by brutal colonial conquests, the slave trade, and commerce-raiding under letters of marque. At least, the absence of religious fanaticism reduced European wars of the Age of Enlightenment to public duels for settling disputes between monarchies. Conflicts became less cruel to the point of being called *la guerre en dentelles* (“lace wars” or “soft war”) at the time of the French Revolutionary Wars (Bély 2007: 581–602).⁸ This catchy metaphor is misleading, however, since only officers—that is a fraction of the combatants—could afford to wear lace; and, furthermore, this adornment might have provided relief to aristocratic egos, never to the wounds caused by bullets, cannon shot, or bayonets.

It would be incorrect, however, to assume that Christianity disappeared from intellectual reflections or from the cultural representations of peace. The relative reconciliation between the Catholic and Protestant factions allowed the perception to re-emerge of a community of civilization founded on a common heritage of Europe (Idris in this volume). With the entry of Russia in the European political arena from the reign of Peter the Great, Eastern Christianity and the heritage of Constantinople also had to be taken into consideration. While organized peace movements are really a feature of the nineteenth century, and the word “pacifism” is only attached to the early twentieth, grassroots movements aimed at preventing or banning war did exist in the period we are considering, with dissenting Protestant denominations at the forefront of criticism against war. Quakers left a particularly strong imprint on the European peace tradition; among them was William Penn who, with his *Essay toward Present and Future Peace of Europe* (1693), was possibly the first to have conceived a Grand Design for uniting the states of the continent under a single banner (Conway in this volume).

Most importantly, the Enlightenment was a moment when new conceptions of European unification saw the light, starting with the *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe* (“Plan for making peace perpetual in Europe”) by the French Abbé de Saint-Pierre ([1713] 1986), which may indeed have drawn upon Penn. This idea was later republished and re-proposed as an *Extrait* (“Excerpt”) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1761) and finally conceptualized and transcended by Immanuel Kant in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795) (Pagden in this volume; Rousseau 2008a). Whereas Saint-Pierre proposed an ecumenical European Union, which initially included the Ottoman Empire as well, Rousseau held that Christianity was the civilizational bond of Europe, and argued that the common cultural heritage would be a key asset for reaching peace (Spector 2008: 230–32; Ghervas 2014a: 55–57).

Nevertheless, philosophers of the eighteenth century (among them Rousseau himself) were always skeptical of those plans for European unification, for the simple reason that there was no incentive for monarchs to adopt them: whereas the political system of enlightened Europe born at Utrecht was failing at making peace perpetual, it was at least sufficiently dynamic to take its own changes in stride. In particular, England’s policy of counteracting the movements of the balance of power by switching sides did have a dampening effect in practice; and other powers took the cue from England. Indeed, the

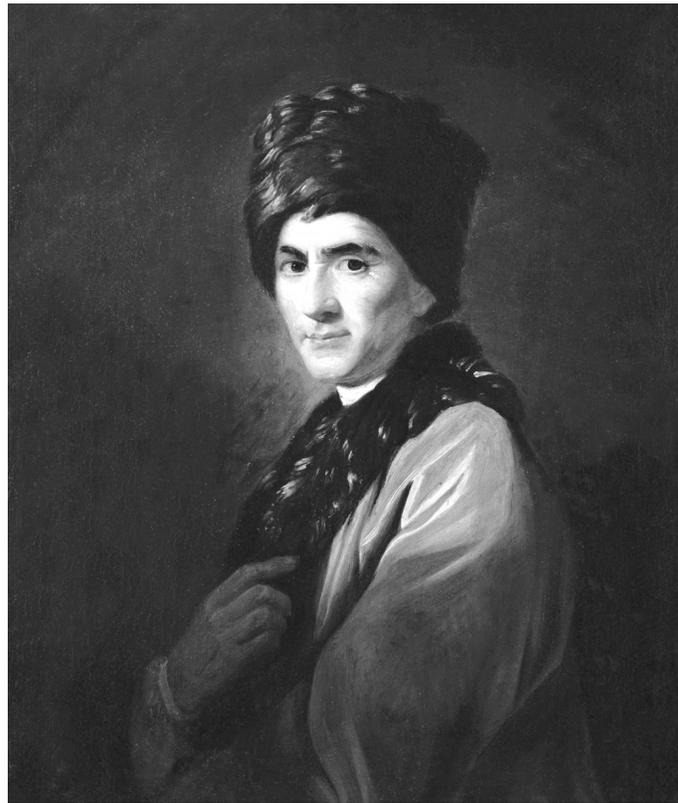


FIGURE 0.6: Allan Ramsay, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1712–78). Chateau de Coppet, Paris, France. Bridgeman Images.

spectacular reversal of alliances of the War of Austrian Succession (where the French Bourbons and Austrian Habsburg houses allied for the first time) as well as the rise of Prussia as major power in the Seven Years' War (1756–63) introduced changes to the European balance of power, though neither fundamentally put its validity into question. With economies on the rise, and sciences in full development, there is little doubt the future must have seemed bright for the European cultured elites, for a common civilization on the path to Enlightenment and therefore to peace.

It should not be forgotten, however, that war and peace were mostly made by *men* and that most philosophers we have quoted (foremost among them Rousseau and Kant) held rather disparaging views on the ability of women to assume political roles (Tomaselli in this volume). Conversely, women like the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) did express their views on an increased role of women in society. They were the exception in political offices, yet in the period we are considering, female rulers paradoxically became a staple of European monarchies. It was, however, only the accidental product of the logic of succession, which preferred women to hold the power than relinquishing it out of the family. In England, Mary II (reigned 1688–1694) and Anne (1702–1714), and in Austria the Empress Maria Theresa (1740–1780) successfully wrestled her throne in the War of Austrian Succession; for Russia, Catherine I (1724–1727), Anna Ivanovna (1730–1740), Elizabeth (1741–1762) and finally Catherine II

(1762–1796) are still remembered as among the most prestigious rulers in Russian history. Royalty was, however, a circle apart from the rest of society, where another set of conventions and morals applied. Nevertheless, the fact that a few of these female rulers actually shined in their political role may have started to introduce some rebuttal to the European cultural prejudice against women in public life.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE COLLAPSE OF SHARED BELIEFS ON PEACE

Unfortunately, the well-oiled political balance of Europe started to creak and jam with the French Revolution. This major political experiment had two faces: a positive and peaceful one, applauded by most enlightened elites of Europe, as a welcome liberalization of the kingdom of France and generally a modernization of its institutions. Indeed, the country turned momentarily its back to colonial wars, and the Constituent Assembly passed, on 22 May 1790, a “Decree of Peace Declaration to the World,” which was really an attempt to prevent France from entering wars by subjecting declarations of war to parliament, in a context of colonial disputes between Spain and Britain.⁹ The second, uglier face of the Revolution progressively came to light in the second half of 1791, after the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and the King of Prussia jointly declared that they considered the internal affairs of France as a matter of their own concern: this encroachment on sovereignty (“The Declaration of Pillnitz” 1791) prodigiously angered the parliament of that country and put the French royal family under suspicion of being traitors to the nation. The darker side then came into full view when France declared war against Austria in April 1792, paving the way to the fall of the monarchy and the decapitation of King Louis XVI; and the invention of the systematic repression policy known as Terror, led by merciless men such as Jean-Paul Marat or Maximilien de Robespierre (Kolla 2017).

Warfare—at least on the French side—was set back to the Wars of Religion, as the republican armies fought with desperate energy for the survival of their societal conceptions. With ideology, fear and hatred added into the equation, the same causes led to the same effects, with the increase of wanton violence and casualties. This deleterious effect was compounded by demographic increase, which made for armies much larger than a few decades earlier. It seemed that peace between the two mutually incompatible conceptions of the social order in Europe would be impossible once again, unless one side won militarily over the others. Surprisingly, the ragtag columns of the French Republic started not only winning defensive battles against the monarchies, but they proceeded to bring war over into the lands of Prussia and Austria. After Napoleon Bonaparte, crowned Emperor in 1802, gave discipline, first-rate equipment and brilliant generalship to the French popular army, it became the instrument of a new conquering Empire; it soon forced most states of continental Europe into subjection, including the old Habsburg imperial dynasty of Austria; and arguably it inaugurated the earliest instance of “total war” (Bell 2007).

The balance of power, completely jammed, had failed this time to prevent the rise of a universal monarchy; this terrifying fact shook the societal certainties of the European aristocratic classes, even more than the decapitation of Louis XVI. By contrast, the sudden but enforced unification of the continent later gave birth to the myth of a *Pax Napoleonica*, in a Europe coalesced under a single regime and the cancellation of custom barriers (Ghervas 2015, 2019: 99–102). Unfortunately, the United Kingdom and Russia refused to be part of it and the British Navy kept a painful blockade; and with Napoleon’s

unquenched lust for conquest, peace was at best a lure. A whole generation, from 1792 onwards, was raised in conditions of perpetual war: treaties signed by the French Empire such as Amiens with Britain (1802) or Tilsit with Russia (1807) were only armed truces. At worst, for the occupied populations of Germany and Spain, this imperial peace was a sham that motivated insurrection and the rise of a national identity.

CONCLUSION: ENLIGHTENED PEACE AT LAST?

It is thus that Europe went full circle, from the Peace of Westphalia that closed the religious wars to the Napoleonic wars, from one set of brutal wars to another; and from the Habsburg imperial threat to state “sovereignty” to the Napoleonic one. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) had brought—in practice though not in theory—an end to the political supremacy of the elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, who also happened often to be a Habsburg. The prohibitions it created for the Holy Roman Empire (and the corresponding negative rights for the German states) generally leveled the playing field in Europe; but it did not provide yet any positive prescriptions on how the European states should deal with each other. It would take another half a century before the doctrine of the balance of power emerged in England, and then it was reinterpreted and adopted on the continent with the peace of Utrecht (1713) as a device for preventing the establishment of universal monarchy. It was arguably a limited and imperfect system and not a “system of peace” but a “system of war,” as Abbé de Saint-Pierre almost immediately argued; yet it worked sufficiently well for the needs of the time (Ghervas 2017: 411–12). After the

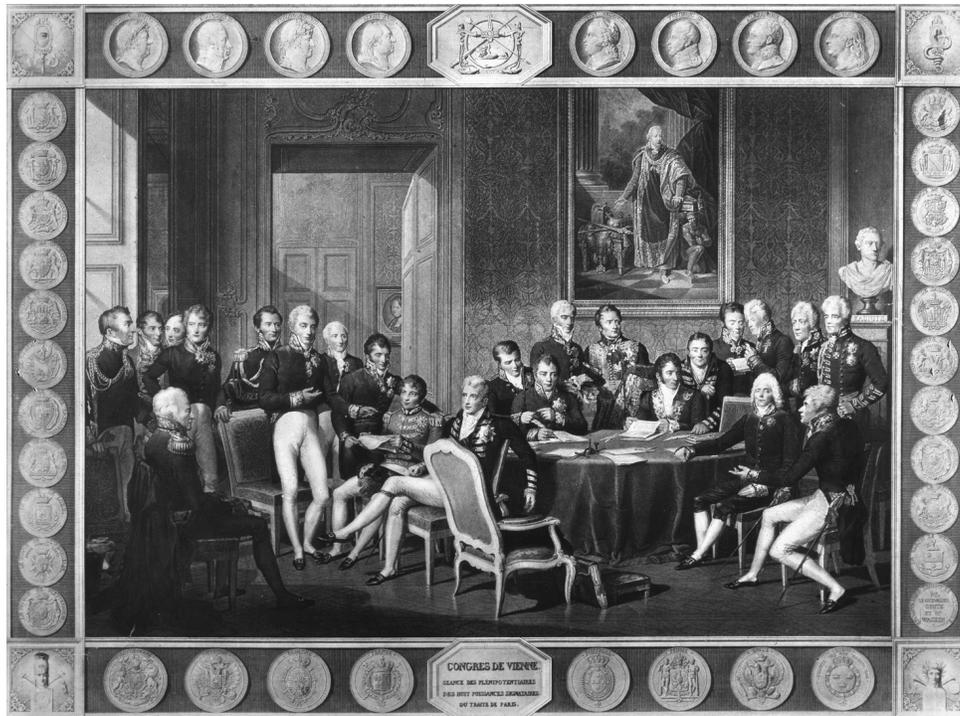


FIGURE 0.7: *The Congress of Vienna* (1815). PRISMA ARCHIVO. Alamy Stock Photo.

Revolutionary Wars, the crushing supremacy of the French Empire was the last blow that jammed the balance of power, discrediting it as the cure-all that would preserve peace. Between Utrecht (1713) and the start of the Revolutionary Wars (1792), the parenthesis of Enlightenment thus stands not as a period of peace, but as one of dynamic equilibrium where wars were contained within acceptable limits.

How European peace had to be completely reinvented at the Congress of Vienna after the Napoleonic Empire met with disaster in the Russian campaign of 1812, and the defeats of 1813–14 is another story (Ghervas 2020b: 24–25). Obviously, the next iteration of peace would heavily draw from the argumentation and proposals generated by the critics of the now disesteemed balance of power. Indeed, both the Russian tsar Alexander I and the Austrian Chancellor Klemens von Metternich came to the negotiation table having read the argumentation of writers on perpetual peace. Furthermore, the four victorious powers—namely Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia—decided to meet regularly to discuss important matters of Europe, inaugurating the “Congress System” (1815–1823), the ancestor of our modern system of international conferences. While this was definitely not the European federation imagined by Saint-Pierre, it did aim at replacing “the principle of equilibrium, or more accurately of counterweights formed by separate alliances which . . . had too often troubled and bloodied Europe [by] a principle of general union” (Gentz [1818] 1876: 354–55). And it did so to the accompaniment of a profusion of celebratory cultural forms, from balls and fireworks to paintings and works by composers from Beethoven to Rossini (Cavazzocca Mazzanti 1923; Fuchs 2002; Even and Nathan 2015). The Vienna order saw the culmination of idiomatically Enlightened debates on peace, as well as their fusion with artistic expressions of peace as both ideal and practice. It is here that we really find the cultural origins of the modern conceptions of peace.