

Treaty of Westphalia (1648)

Semester 4 MJC10

The Treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648, marked a pivotal shift in international relations, shaping modern state sovereignty and global politics.

Background:

- Thirty Years' War (1618-1648): Devastating conflict involving European powers (Habsburgs vs. Protestants, France, Sweden).
- Treaties: Peace of Münster (Spain-Dutch Republic) & Treaty of Osnabrück (Holy Roman Empire-Sweden, France).

Key Provisions:

1. Sovereignty: Established principle of state sovereignty; states recognized each other's territorial integrity.
2. Non-Interference: Norm of non-intervention in internal affairs of other states.
3. Balance of Power: Recognized multiple powers in Europe, reducing Habsburg dominance.
4. Religious Tolerance: Allowed rulers to determine their state's religion (*cuius regio, eius religio*).

Impact:

- Nation-State System: Birth of modern international system based on sovereign states.
- International Law: Laid groundwork for modern diplomacy and treaties.
- Secular Governance: Shift from religious to secular

authority in politics.

Criticisms & Evolution:

- Limitations: Didn't apply to colonies; reinforced European-centric world order.
- Modern Challenges: Globalization, human rights, and non-state actors test Westphalian norms.

The Treaty of Westphalia is seen as a cornerstone of international relations, influencing concepts of sovereignty and statehood.