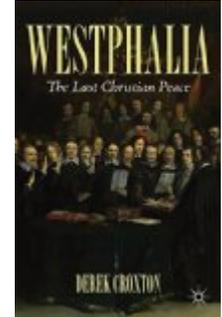


**Derek Croxton.** *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. xiv + 452 pp. \$115.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-137-33332-2.



**Reviewed by** Robert Tiegs

**Published on** H-War (June, 2014)

**Commissioned by** Margaret Sankey (Air University)

The Thirty Years' War is often regarded as one of the most complex events of European history because religious, dynastic, and military issues all coalesced into a tangled web of overlapping and sometimes contradictory motivations and concerns. In this regard, it is not surprising that the Peace of Westphalia, which attempted to unravel this web, would be a similarly thorny and drawn-out affair. In the end, the talks at Westphalia lasted five years (arguably), and places of singular general conferences occurred simultaneously in the towns of Münster and Osnabrück, which in theory allowed the French and Swedish to negotiate independently while also coordinating their talks. The reasoning behind these convoluted decisions taken (and not taken) at these negotiations form the core of Derek Croxton's ambitious work. His underlying goal is to place the peace talks in their baroque context, amply describing all the reasoning and permutations behind the various discussions. Additionally, he hopes that placing Westphalia within its own mi-

lieu will help shorn some misconceptions that have filled the historiography.

The work is divided into three sections covering the background, negotiations, and conclusions. The background section is the largest, containing five chapters that detail the course of the Thirty Years' War, origins of the Congress of Westphalia, and a description of the participants at the congress and their goals. The fifth chapter, entitled simply "Structures," is undoubtedly the highlight of the work. Here, Croxton superbly places the negotiations in their baroque setting, showing how issues of precedence, prestige, gift giving, and logistics all affected the talks. This chapter is filled with great details, such as an estimation of the amount of wine consumed (the French alone shipped in thirty thousand liters in 1644 [p. 138]), to a description of Franz Wilhelm von Wartenburg's luxurious living quarters filled with Albrecht Dürer portraits and tapestries designed by Peter Paul Rubens. In a nutshell, this chapter demonstrates all that is great about this book.

The second section, covering the negotiations, examines the difficult conversations between the various ambassadors. In addition to attempting to resolve contentious religious issues, they also wrangled over the representation of imperial estates at the congress, territorial compensation (specifically in Alsace and Pomerania), the formal independence of the United Provinces, and arrears for the Swedish soldiers. The underlying difficulty was that it was nearly impossible to settle any issue independently, and negotiations became a matter of brinkmanship. For instance, France and Sweden both portrayed themselves as champions of the liberty of German estates and wanted them at the conference because it strengthened their position. Simultaneously, however, they both demanded territorial compensation, specifically in Alsace and Pomerania respectively. How could France reconcile its role as protector and conqueror of imperial states? The answer is that it largely avoided the issue, as the French ambassador did not make territorial demands until over a year into the conference.

In the final section on consequences, Croxton takes aim at perceived errors in the historiography. Specifically, he wants to place the focus back on the religious dimensions of negotiations, as the opening lines of the treaty clearly stated, "Let there be a Christian peace" (p. 343). He believes that the notion of Westphalia as the foundation of modern diplomacy between independent sovereign states is erroneous. Alsace again provides a good example, as he points to the fact that the negotiations led to the curious situation where it was part of both the French crown and the empire. As this case makes clear, internal and external issues were not clear cut post-1648, thus European states were not independent and discrete sovereign units. In fact, he goes on to argue that Westphalia probably had the opposite effect, specifically "the continuation of the idea of mutual interference of states in each other's internal affairs" (p. 354).

A general highlight of the work is that throughout Croxton adroitly employs analogies to the United States and other contemporary examples in order to clarify confusing points. The best example is shown in the bizarre Franco-imperial agreement where the empire could support Spain in future wars, so long as they were outside of the empire. As Croxton demonstrates, this strange settlement is akin to the hypothetical situation, where if Canada and Russia were at war and fighting in Alaska, then the United States could support Canada anywhere in the world *except* Alaska. Examples such as these will undoubtedly help the readers better understand the material.

The work is not without its faults, however, as Croxton could have been better served by his publishers. There are several awkward sentence constructions, and more important several significant issues and terms are not given their proper introduction. For instance, in his conclusion, he begins using the acronym IPO and discussing its importance without noting that this refers to the *Instrumentum Pacis Osnabrugensis* (i.e., the Treaty of Osnabrück) (p. 343). Similarly, a bit more context regarding the "normal year" concerning the transfer of Catholic Church property in the Empire would have been useful as it was a significant sticking point for Catholic-Protestant negotiations (p. 278). Nevertheless, these critiques should not detract from what is on the whole a great work of scholarship. Croxton's ability to synthesize enormous amounts of secondary literature, contrast it, and provide a memorable example from primary sources is a great feature of the work.

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**Citation:** Robert Tiegs. Review of Croxton, Derek. *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. June, 2014.

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