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⇒ How important was the Peace of Westphalia to formation of modern int'l order?

Outline

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3. Counterarguments to Westphalian Peace's importance
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5. Then why ~~was~~ 1648 so important?
6. Conclusion.

1. The Peace of Westphalia is taken as origin point of the modern international system. Its main feature was an establishment of sovereignty as a principle of non-intervention (especially on account of religious beliefs) in the internal affairs of nation-states. Going by Realist school, as ^{where} states are the cornerstone of the international system, it indeed was an

inflection point for the modern international system. However, some scholars point to the context of the Treaty and extent of its impact. But as such, together with associated advances in travel and communication pace, 1648 turns out to be the year of current birth of the current international world.

2. Before the Peace Treaty, there was no notion of fixed territory, let alone sovereignty of the yet in-existent, at least ill defined, states. It was in the context of 30 years religious war, Eighty years war and the Roman Empire ruling the roost in Western Europe. Religion was the order of the day and religious tensions, especially the violently incompatible Catholic-Protestant binary. Invoking those religious biases and bases, the empire could invade any territory since there existed no such a notion of sovereignty. Against this background and with the two essential ingredients of a state missing - the Treaty was signed in 1648. In addition to establishing peace after onslaught of 30 years, it progeny promulgated the conception of sovereignty and thereby non-interference in affairs of defined, fixed territories. Its importance as basis of modern international system is thus lucidly manifest in creating definite political units.

3.1 On the contrary, it is argued that this treaty phenomenon and its impacts were localized, confined only to parts of Western Europe spanning France, Germany, Sweden and other parts. Then how come it be classified as being a forerunner to the modern international system? It was even confined to a small part of one continent, not to zoom out to include the ~~rest~~ six ~~can~~ - in fact, seven - continents that factor in the int'l system.

3.2 Surprisingly, those critics point to the 1555 Augsburg Treaty and say that the 1648 Treaty, in actuality, curtailed sovereignty endowed in the Augsburg Treaty. It is a serious challenge to the importance of Westphalian system. However, it does not stand the light of facts since Augsburg Treaty was subsumed in the latter treaty. Moreover, the Augsburg Treaty did nothing to influence the start of the religious war and ensuring the non-violence of the principal of sovereignty.

3.3 Moreover, the claim that the Westphalian system laid basis of independence and non-intervention principal is debated. Even after the Treaty was signed and enforced, German principality remained answerable to the imperial court of the European Roman Empire similar to the European Union. In this regard, the assertion that it was a crucial juncture in ~~late~~ erecting the principal of sovereignty is rather deflated.

4. As an alternate candidate, Sumer city-states dated to 3500 BCE is often quoted. After the agricultural revolution, the citizens of Sumer surpassed the subsistence level of produce. The surplus led to two developments: First, it facilitated the barter trade system in the civilized world, establishing outside contacts. Second, it caught the eye of barbarian hordes. This threat galvanized the Sumerians to divide people into political units to better organize government and defend the people and produce from external advances. This laying basis of embryonic international system based on city-states.

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Another candidate is the Greek city-state system, Athens being the most developed.

5. But for all the short-comings associated with the Westphalian system, it is recognized a reasonably good critically juncture. "1648" is considered crucial in international system not only because of one Peace Treaty but also due partly to the technological developments that took place at that time such as more ingenious travel and pace that with which different parts connected with each other. Moreover, it was a point when religion started getting secondary importance as sovereignty of God was replaced with sovereignty of people - counter claims notwithstanding.

6. Concludingly, it is 1648 that is more important in evolution of beginning of evolution of

international system, in which many phenomenon took place, distinctively the Westphalian phase Peace. Thus, the Peace Treaty was indeed one important development, even if not the most important.

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