eGUIDE//History

Historical Conflict and Change
Unit AS 2
Option 2: The Ascendancy of France in Europe 1660–1714

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Introduction

In this option, students focus on the growing ascendancy of France under the rule of Louis XIV. Students analyse Louis’ successes in strengthening the power and position of France between 1660 and 1689 and the extent to which France’s actions caused the outbreak of the Nine Years’ War. They also explore how the Peace of Ryswick failed to resolve the tensions in Europe and how a second major conflict soon erupted. Students also examine how the War of the Spanish Succession saw the Grand Alliance, under the inspirational leadership of the Duke of Marlborough, outperform France and its allies and weaken the position of France.

Assessment for this option consists of a written examination that includes both short response and extended questions. Each question tests the Assessment Objective AO1: the candidate’s ability to demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding, to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance. Part (ii) tests the same assessment objective.

For ease of consultation, the following study is divided into four sections:
1. The Growing Power of France between 1660 and 1689 and the Outbreak of the Nine Years’ War
2. The Nine Years’ War 1688–97
3. The Problem of the Spanish Succession 1697–1702
4. The War of the Spanish Succession 1702–14
The Growing Power of France between 1660 and 1689 and the Outbreak of the Nine Years’ War

Louis XIV was king of France from 1643 until 1715. He had advisers until 1661 when he decided to rule France alone. In 1648–49 there had been revolts in the area of the Fronde, which had caused him to fear the strength of Parliament, and led to his determination to rule alone and provide a strong monarchy and government. Louis was committed to establishing absolutist rule, justifying his action in statements such as:

‘The only means by which we (sovereigns) can be really independent of and superior to other men is by doing nothing, whether publicly or in private, for which they (the people) can legitimately blame us’.

‘In working for the State, a King is working for himself. The good of one is the glory of the other. When the State is prosperous, famous, and powerful, the King who is the cause of it is glorious; and he ought in consequence to have a larger share than others do of all that is most agreeable in life’.

Web Video

Watch the first 21 minutes of the documentary The Journeys of Louis XIV for an insight into the early reign of France’s ‘Sun King’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCqwN88_BAY&list=PLcUrGtttEfYI2EWQhnqQxrHL-EuugqrFR
(b) The contribution of Jean-Baptiste Colbert

Colbert was the architect of a revived French economy between 1661 and 1683. He has been viewed as a formidable and efficient administrator, though more recent studies have led to criticism of his policies. Colbert was promoted under Mazarin and after the latter’s death, he manipulated his way into a position whereby he became chief adviser to Louis. He believed that it was his duty to find the finance for the King’s policies. As Louis was focused on war and foreign policy, revenue-raising became of the utmost importance. Colbert became Comptroller-General of Finances in 1665 and Secretary of the Navy and royal household in 1669.

Web Article

For a detailed study of Colbert’s contribution to the growing power of France, both economically and militarily, see the Encyclopaedia Britannica:
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Baptiste-Colbert

(c) Military and naval expansion

Between 1660 and 1689, the French army went through a major expansion in size while substantial organisational improvements also took place, with Colbert providing the necessary finance. Le Tellier and his son, Louvois, improved the administration of the Army and a number of specific reforms were introduced. For example, commissions were phased out, arsenals were established and marching in step was introduced. The series of military reforms introduced under Louis had arguably created the first modern, standing army. Corruption had been significantly reduced and some degree of promotion on merit was implemented. The infantry was reorganised and competition between regiments was encouraged. The science of fortification was enhanced, particularly under Vauban. The Navy was also significantly expanded and reformed, including the development of the bomb ketch. Under Colbert, a vast programme of shipbuilding was inaugurated. By the 1680s France had gained a position of military ascendancy in Europe.

Web Article

Again, the Encyclopaedia Britannica provides useful information on the contribution if Louvois to the growing military power of France under Louis XIV:
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francois-Michel-Le-Tellier-marquis-de-Louvois

(d) The foreign policy of Louis XIV

Louis has been accused of fighting to gain natural frontiers, a term not recognised at that time. The Spanish Succession has been seen as the focus of his policy, though it was not an issue until later in his reign. Between 1660 and 1689 the initiative in European affairs had passed to France. The Dutch were still a powerful force but they needed alliances to provide an effective balance to French influence. Spain was a spent force. Austria was preoccupied with its struggle with the Turks on its eastern frontier. Sweden was preoccupied with its struggle for Baltic supremacy, while England, recovering from the instability of the Interregnum and with a monarchy perennially short of money, was forced to take a subordinate role.
France had done well out of the Thirty Years’ War under the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, and with Spain under the Treaty of the Pyrenees of 1659, though it still had some unresolved issues over territories in the Spanish Netherlands and the Rhineland area of Germany. Like his predecessors, Louis was concerned about Habsburg encirclement. The Spanish Hapsburgs owned land to the south (Spain), to the east (Franche-Comté) and north (Spanish Netherlands); and further east the Austrian Hapsburgs dominated Germany. The Spanish Empire included Spain, Milan, Naples, Sicily, Franche-Comté and the Spanish Netherlands. Beyond Europe it took in Central America, most of South America, some of North America and the Philippines.

In 1660 Louis married the eldest daughter of Philip IV, but it was Philip’s son, Carlos II, who inherited the Spanish Empire in 1665. He was not expected to live long and would have no heirs. Louis believed that his own son – a grandson of Philip IV – should inherit. Louis was motivated by a concept of family honour and reputation which led him to aim for a glorious inheritance for his successors.

(e) The War of Devolution 1667–68

Following the accession of Carlos II, in 1665, Louis decided to invade the Spanish Netherlands. His lawyers advised him that, according to distinctive local laws in some provinces in the Spanish Netherlands, the daughter of a first marriage retained her inheritance rights even when a son was born to a father by a second marriage. Property ‘devolved’ upon her. Louis thus claimed that his wife Maria Theresa had inheritance rights in more than half a dozen such provinces in the Spanish Netherlands and a third of Franche-Comté and a quarter of Luxembourg. Legally the claims were weak, as what applied to property ownership within these territories did not apply to the sovereignty of the territories themselves. Besides, Maria Theresa had renounced any claim to Spanish property upon her marriage (though Louis claimed that as her dowry was never paid, the renunciation did not count).

In 1667, 35,000 French troops under Turenne crossed into the Spanish Netherlands. They took frontier towns, including Charleroi, Donau and Lille. Europe was alarmed. Holland was most threatened and in 1668 it negotiated the Triple Alliance between England, Sweden and Holland. In 1668, 15,000 French troops entered Franche-Comté, conquering it and an area south-west of Alsace.

Using a combination of diplomacy and military strength, Louis got enough from the campaign to call it off in 1668. Having gained peace, he hoped to split the Triple Alliance. By the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, France, although returning Franche-Comté and Lorraine, acquired twelve key fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands and a promise, from the Emperor of Austria, of a partition of the Spanish Empire in the event of the death of Carlos II without heirs. Louis regarded this as a truce and decided not to press his military superiority to the point of provoking a coalition against him.

Teaching and Learning Activity
Short response question:

Explain the causes of the War of Devolution of 1667–68.
(f) The Dutch War 1672–78

Louis XIV disliked many features of the Dutch: their republicanism, their Protestantism, their trading ethos (the Dutch merchant navy dominated the carrying trade in the Baltic, Levant and the Atlantic) and the difficulties that they had caused him in the War of Devolution – during the campaign they had formed a Triple Alliance with Sweden and England (1668) pledged to resist any further French advances. He believed that Dutch action had prevented him gaining the Spanish Netherlands and so Louis’ biographer, Bluche, called this war ‘inevitable’.

Louis had prepared diplomatically and militarily against the Dutch. Louvois strengthened the army, while both Louis and Lionne (diplomat) sought to neutralise Holland’s likely allies. The negotiations led to the Treaty of Dover of 1670, in which Charles II agreed to leave the Triple Alliance and join France in a war against the Dutch in return for a subsidy. In 1672, Sweden left the Triple Alliance to support France and the neutrality of the Rhine Princes (Bavaria and Saxony) was also obtained by the French.

By February 1672, Louis had 140,000 soldiers and six months’ reserves of food and munitions stored at Kaiserwerth, Dorsten, Liege, Charleroi and Mezieries. In May, Louis crossed the river Meuse and river Rhine, reaching Utrecht within a few weeks. In an attempt to slow his progress, the Dutch opened their dykes, but Louis succeeded in occupying three Dutch provinces. Brandenburg sympathised with the Dutch and following Louis’s attack on the Duchy of Lorraine promised to add 20,000 troops to the Dutch defence.

By 1675, France had lost its generals Turenne and Conde and Brandenburg had defeated Sweden at Fehrbellin and the financial strain was beginning to show. Louis wanted to make a peace. As a response to the unpopular French alliance, England had agreed a marriage alliance between Mary (Charles II’s niece) and William, Prince of Orange, the emergent leader of the Dutch (1677). It seemed possible that England would join France’s enemies.

In 1678 the Treaty of Nymegen confirmed France’s possession of Franche-Comté, Lorraine, conquered towns in Alsace, Freiburg and fortresses on the frontier with the Spanish Netherlands. But the northernmost towns in the Spanish Netherlands along with Maastricht, were surrendered by Louis.

(g) The Reunion policies and the War of Reunions 1678–84

Louis created six courts (Chambres de Reunion) to investigate French claims to districts on France’s north-eastern and eastern frontiers. The intention was to stabilise frontiers and remove the ambiguity of previous treaties such as Westphalia. Expansion occurred particularly in Alsace due to long-standing confusion about territorial claims from which
Louis wished to benefit, but not enough to include Strasbourg, so it was annexed by force in 1681. By these actions, Louis antagonised France’s traditional German allies and even Sweden, which owned some of the land involved. Spain was forced to declare war in 1683, but lost Luxembourg in 1684 and was unable to persuade its ally, Austria, to join the war; Austria was busy defending itself from attacks by the Hungarians and Turks.

The Truce of Ratisbon was signed in 1684, with Austria, the German Princes and Spain accepting France’s acquisition of Lorraine, the Reunion lands, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. This marked the zenith of French ascendancy in Europe: not only was it militarily dominant on the continent – as well as expanding its influence in Asia, West Africa, the West Indies, the Mississippi, Louisiana and Canada – but French food, clothes, art and architecture were admired everywhere.

Web Video

Watch the BBC documentary *Versailles: The Dream of a King* for an account of the rise of France and its larger-than-life monarch: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lLgt5Zfq-Ul](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lLgt5Zfq-Ul)

Teaching and Learning Activity

Short response question:

Explain how the reunion policies affected the position of France in Europe.

**(h) Formation of the League of Augsburg 1686**

A defensive alliance began to form in 1686, provoked by Louis’ expansionism since the late 1660s, but especially his most recent pursuit of *gloire* and acquisition of territory in the War of Reunions, which had included the seizure of the free Protestant city of Strasbourg and land previously held by traditional allies of France. By 1688, the League of Augsburg consisted of the Holy Roman Empire, Holland, Sweden, Brandenburg, Savoy, Saxony and Lorraine.

**(i) Causes of the Nine Years’ War**

(i) **Revocation of the Edict of Nantes**

The Edict of Nantes (1598) had granted freedom of worship and other civil and military privileges to French Protestants (Huguenots). The Edict was notable in that it was recognition that two religions could be tolerated within one state. On 22 October 1685, Louis revoked the Edict of Nantes. He enforced the destruction of Protestant places of worship, banishment of ministers and the cessation of religious practices by Protestants. The Pope condemned Louis’ actions as being against the spirit of the Church and Louis’ violence towards the Protestants was seen as bringing the Church into disrepute.

The flight of some 200,000 Protestant refugees (10% of the Huguenot population) boosted the economies of the Netherlands and England. The Revocation also had a very serious impact on French foreign policy. Protestant powers were alarmed and the anti-Catholic propaganda spread by Huguenot refugees helped to bring about the overthrow of the
Catholic James II in England and his replacement by William of Orange as William III of England. This meant that the two most powerful economies and navies in Europe were controlled by the man who had a strong personal hatred of Louis. William found it much easier to build a coalition against France as the propaganda of Protestant exiles marked a turning point in other countries’ views of the French monarchy, which was now increasingly identified with tyranny and oppression. Protestant Europe united against Louis and France.

Web Article

For detailed consideration of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, visit the Virtual Museum of Protestantism and take the ‘tour’ on the subject: http://www.museeprotestant.org/en/parcours/la-revocation-de-ledit-de-nantes-et-ses-consequences/

(ii) Louis’ clash with the papacy

A further critical stage in the build-up to the Nine Years’ War was a serious deterioration in Louis’ relations with the papacy. As noted above, the Pope had disapproved of Louis’ persecution of the Huguenots, and he was further antagonised by the French king’s refusal to cooperate with the Vatican in relation to the problems of criminals seeking to escape justice by claiming diplomatic immunity. As a result, Louis’ ambassador to Rome was excommunicated and it was hinted that the same fate awaited Louis. In retaliation France seized the papal state of Avignon.

Louis had little time to enjoy the success at Ratisbon. Austria was dealing successfully with the Turks, and Louis knew that it would turn to the West as soon as the Turkish threat was removed. Leopold was already getting Brandenburg and Bavaria to side with Austria against France. To protect himself against the emerging opposition, Louis was interested in two main territories: the Archbishopric-Electorate of Cologne and the Electorate of the Palatinate.

(iii) Cologne dispute 1688

Cologne was a Catholic outpost in a Protestant region of Germany and a base to threaten the Dutch (Louis had used it as a base in 1672). The state of Cologne controlled the Bishopric of Liege, which as the centre of the coal and iron industries, was vital for arms and munitions. It also included the strategic fortress towns of Bonn, Rheinberg and Kaiserwerth.

When the Archbishop of Cologne died in 1688 Louis wanted his candidate, Joseph von Fürstenberg to be appointed. The Elector of Bavaria proposed his brother, Joseph-Clement, for the position. The matter was referred to arbitration by the Pope, Innocent XI. Despite Louis’ threats to invade Rome, the Pope granted the vacancy to the Bavarian claimant who was supported by the Emperor and William of Orange.

(iv) Invasion of the Palatinate

Louis now quickly moved to a war footing, sending forces both to Cologne and into the Palatinate to seize Phillippsburg. Like Cologne, the electorate of the Palatinate had also been vacant, though it was claimed by William of Neuburg. Like Cologne, it was strategically important, both politically and geographically.
Louis was forced to withdraw, practising a scorched earth policy to ensure that the Palatine could not be used as a base by those countries that had now become an offensive anti-French Alliance. Not content with destroying crops, he ordered the sacking of cities such as Heidelberg, Mannheim and Speyer and several thousands died at the hands of French troops, as well as from starvation.

**(v)** Actions of William of Orange

The French campaign in the Rhineland diverted Louis from William’s invasion of England and the overthrow of his ally, James II, in the Glorious Revolution. This was perhaps the turning point in the European situation. Holland was already a member of the League of Augsburg, and now, as joint monarch of England (with his wife Mary), William was able to harness the wealth and war resources of England to transform that defensive pact into the offensive Grand Alliance.

**(vi)** The formation of the Grand Alliance

**Austria**

In 1687 Austria had defeated the Turks in the Battle of Mohács. Transylvania and Hungary were cleared of Turks and Belgrade was in European hands. This had been Austria’s top priority but had resulted in a loss of influence in Germany. France had taken advantage, but now Leopold I intended to stop the French expansion and establish his claim to the Spanish throne.

**Brandenburg/Saxony/Bavaria**

William’s preparations to go to England were supported by Brandenburg which wanted a royal title over Brandenburg-Prussia. Bavaria wanted the Elector’s brother to be given the Archbishopric of Cologne. It was angry at the devastation of the Palatinate.

**Holland**

It was still vulnerable and feared another invasion by France. Commercial competition was fierce in the West Indies, India and New France. Holland declared war in February 1689 when the Dutch commander Waldeck led a Dutch army into the Spanish Netherlands to show support for Spain.

**Spain**

Spain had lost many fortress towns in the Spanish Netherlands, Franche-Comté and Luxembourg. That Louis wanted more was evident when he declared war on Spain in April 1689.

**England**

The immediate consequence of the accession of William to the English throne was a declaration of war against France on 7 May 1689. As a principal member of the European coalition opposed to Louis XIV, William’s main aim was to curb and contain French power, which had almost destroyed Dutch independence in 1672. He wished for a balance of power and perpetual separation of the crowns of France and Spain. England wanted to safeguard its commercial markets, sea routes, sources of supply and colonies. It was also paramount to the English that a Protestant succession to the throne be established and protected.

A Treaty of a Grand Alliance was signed in May 1689, with the official war aims declared to be the restoration of the frontiers established by the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 and the Treaty of the Pyrenees of 1659: in effect, a reversal of all French gains since 1668.
2. The Nine Years’ War 1688–97

(a) Main theatres of conflict

(i) Ireland

James II was sent by Louis XIV to Ireland where he was to distract William and allow Louis to pursue his European ambitions but also pursue his own objective of recovering the English throne. James landed at Kinsale in March 1689.

In the first half of 1689, the Siege and relief of Derry boosted the Williamites, as did a victory at Enniskillen. William came to Ireland in June 1690 and moved south to confront James. In July they fought at the Boyne where William’s success gave the Williamite forces eastern Ireland and offset losses at Beachy Head and Fleurus.

For the campaign in Ireland, two BBC documentaries that can be recommended are The Siege, about events in Londonderry in 1688–89, and the episode on the Boyne from the War Walks series with historian Richard Holmes:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYXPMYS9hPA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BonPJjakc4s

In January 1691, St Ruth arrived with French reinforcements and in June the second siege of Athlone returned the town to the Williamites. The final blow to the Jacobites was delivered at the Battle of Aughrim in July 1691, followed by the surrender of Limerick after the second siege.
(ii) Spanish Netherlands
In June 1689, Waldeck moved from Tienen to Fleurus, camping near Walcourt on 25 August. They were attacked but, despite heavy casualties, Waldeck released a double attack with Slangenberg (Dutch) on the left and Churchill on the right. The French withdrew but the Allies could not follow up their success, and retired to winter quarters. On 1 July 1690, Waldeck was defeated at Fleurus by the Duke of Luxembourg. In 1691, Vauban successfully laid siege to Mons, and by 1692 had laid siege to Namur. William was unsuccessful in 1692 at Steenkirk, and Luxembourg again defeated the Allies at Neerwinden in 1693. However, William recovered Namur in 1695.

(iii) At sea
On 10 July 1690 the French, under the command of de Tourville, defeated the Allied navy at Beachy Head, theoretically isolating William in Ireland. The English gained control again in 1692 at the Battle of La Hogue, in which fifteen French ships were destroyed and afterwards a blockade established, which brought famine to parts of France. Between 1694 and 1695 part of the English fleet wintered in the Mediterranean, restricting French activity.

(iv) Spain
French troops invaded Catalonia and almost took Barcelona but for Admiral Russell’s timely relief from the sea. In 1697 de Tourville escaped from an Allied blockade of Toulon to assist in a successful attack on Barcelona.

(v) Italy
French troops crossed the Alps and defeated Victor Amadeus of Savoy at Staffarda in 1690. The Savoyards rallied under Prince Eugene and invaded Dauphiné but were defeated in 1693 at Marsnglia when the Emperor had withdrawn Eugene for service in the Danube.

(vi) The Rhine
The French lost Mainz and Bonn but the Allies could not force their way into Alsace and Lorraine. France was more than holding its own against the rest of Europe but it was not enough to secure Cologne and the Palatinate.

Web Article
For an overview of the Nine Years’ War, or as it is referred to on this website, the War of the Grand Alliance, consult the Encyclopaedia Britannica:
https://www.britannica.com/event/War-of-the-Grand-Alliance

(b) The Peace of Ryswick 1697
The cost of fighting on so many fronts meant a desperate shortage of money for France and a succession of bad harvests caused widespread distress. France decided to seek peace and 1696 negotiated the Treaty of Turin with Savoy. The terms included the return of Pignerol and Casale to Victor Amadeus and the marriage of Louis’ grandson, the Duke of Burgundy, to a Savoyard princess. This treaty paved the way for the Peace of Ryswick.

(i) The principal terms of the treaty:
• William of Neuburg secured the Palatinate – French defeat.
• Clement of Bavaria becomes Archbishop Elector of Cologne – French defeat.
• Louis recognised the succession of William III to the English throne – French defeat.
• Louis withdrew support from James II – French defeat.
• Lorraine was returned to the grandson of Charles IV of Lorraine after 30 years of occupation – French defeat.
• Spain gained the barrier towns of Luxembourg, Charleroi and Mons and recovered Catalonia – French defeat.
• The Dutch were given barrier fortresses, including Namur and Ypres – French defeat.
• France surrendered Freiburg, Breisach and Philippsburg to the Holy Roman Empire – French defeat.
• France retained Strasbourg and Alsace, as well as Metz, Toulon, Verdun and Franche-Comté – French gain.
• France was granted Saint Dominique and regained Acadia and Pondicherry (paying the Dutch 16,000 pagodas for the latter) – French gain.
• Having concluded peace, Louis now able to focus on the question of the Spanish Succession – French gain?

**Teaching and Learning Activity**

Essay question

How far did the Peace of Ryswick of 1697 satisfy France’s opponents in the Nine Years’ War?
3. The Problem of the Spanish Succession 1697–1702

King Carlos II of Spain had no heirs. His Empire was both large and lucrative. It included Spain, Milan, Naples, Sicily, the Spanish Netherlands, the Tuscan Ports, the Canary Islands, Central America, much of South America, the Philippines, Morocco and parts of North Africa, some of North America and some Caribbean Islands.

There were two almost identical claimants – France and Austria. Louis XIV was the grandson of Philip III. His mother was Anne, Philip III’s daughter. He was therefore a cousin of King Carlos II of Spain. In 1660, Louis married Maria Theresa, the daughter of Philip IV of Spain. She had renounced her rights to the Spanish throne on her marriage but Louis claimed the dowry had not been paid and, by default, her claim had not therefore been renounced. Louis realised the Spanish would never countenance the throne going to the French king, but he campaigned on behalf of his grandson, Philip, Duc d’Anjou. Alternatively, if the Spanish Empire was to be divided, Louis proposed that the French share should go to the Dauphin, heir to the French throne.

The Austrian claim was almost identical. The Emperor Leopold was a grandson of Philip III. He too was King Carlos’ cousin. He had married a daughter of Philip IV, King of Spain, Margaret Theresa. She had never renounced her inheritance. Leopold arranged that his daughter, Maria Antonia, renounce her rights to the Spanish throne when she married the Elector of Bavaria. This meant that the claim could go to Leopold’s youngest son, Charles. By promoting the Archduke Charles, he was recognising that the Spanish would not want their Empire going to an Austrian king. The Austrian claim appeared weaker as it passed through the youngest daughters.

Neither France nor Austria was prepared to let the other gain the Spanish Empire. The compromise candidate was the seven-year-old Prince of Bavaria, Joseph Ferdinand. He was a grandson of Leopold and Maria Theresa. A partition agreement, which included him, might be acceptable to both France and the Empire.

Neither England nor Holland was prepared to allow France to gain any section of the Spanish Empire as they believed that whoever inherited it would be forced to follow the wishes of Louis XIV, upsetting the balance of power in Europe. French merchants would benefit, perhaps even gaining a monopoly of Spanish trade. They feared that the Spanish Netherlands would fall into the hands of a hostile power, and that if France gained Spain, Sicily or Naples, it would turn the Mediterranean into a ‘French lake’.

(a) The First Partition Treaty October 1698

- Joseph Ferdinand to gain Spain, the Spanish Netherlands, Sardinia and the New World
- Austria to receive Milan
- The Dauphin was to gain Naples, Sicily, the Tuscan ports and the Basque province of Guipuzcoa.
This Treaty was made between Louis XIV and William III. Neither Spain nor Austria was consulted. However, the young Joseph Ferdinand died of smallpox in February 1699 making the Treaty void.

(b) The Second Partition Treaty June 1699

Again this treaty was drawn up between Louis XIV and William III, but this time the details were not kept secret.

- The Archduke Charles would gain the Spanish throne, the Spanish Netherlands and all the colonies in the New World. He was to renounce all ties with Austria
- The Dauphin would gain all Spanish possessions in Italy. It was hoped that he would be able to exchange Naples and Sicily for Savoy and Piedmont.

Again, Spain was not consulted and when it became aware, it produced a will for King Carlos II, who was to die in November 1700.

Teaching and Learning Activity
Short response question:

Explain the terms of the First and Second Partition Treaties.

(c) The Will of King Carlos II

Feeble as he was, King Carlos II was determined that the Spanish Empire should not be divided, and he therefore decided to bequeath the whole Empire to the grandson of Louis XIV on condition that the French and Spanish thrones should never be united. His decision was also influenced by his belief that only France was strong enough to ensure that the Spanish Empire remained intact.

When Carlos died in November 1700, the acceptance of his will by Louis XIV did not in itself mean war, but other European powers had learnt not to trust Louis. For Louis, rejection of the will and acceptance of the Partition Treaty could still mean war with Austria (possibly assisted by Spain) and might not prevent war with England and the Dutch. Accepting the Will could still result in war with Austria, but France would have the support of Spain. While William III and Leopold were opposed to the will, England and Holland did eventually recognise Philip d’Anjou as king of Spain. English public opinion was against further involvement in European affairs.

(d) Louis’ misjudged actions

- Louis XIV declared that his grandson remained in line of succession to the French throne, apparently an open breach of the will of King Carlos II. However, Louis intended that Philip should only inherit the French throne if all other legitimate heirs had died, in which case he would have to give up the Spanish throne. Nonetheless, had set Europe on edge
- In February 1701, Louis took control of 20 fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands held by the Dutch as part of an agreement with Carlos II in 1698. Louis was acting on the invitation of Philip, but he also calculated that England would not want to risk a
possible war by intervening. However, his action was a direct violation of the Treaty of Ryswick of 1697

- In August 1701, France received the Asiento from Spain (the monopoly of supplying negro slaves to the Spanish colonies). This was particularly offensive to the two great trading powers of England and Holland, which also had colonial interests in the New World
- Perhaps, most critically, Louis publically recognised the son of James II, ‘James III’, or the ‘Old Pretender’, as the rightful heir to the English throne on 16 September 1701, James II having died on 6 September. This was yet another, and most blatant, breach of the Treaty of Ryswick. Furthermore, it helped galvanise support for William, as Louis’ actions also disregarded the Protestant succession as laid down in the Act of Settlement of 1701.

(e) Re-formation of the Grand Alliance

Even before Louis XIV had completed all of his ‘blunders’, William had been making preparations for war. On 31 May 1701, Marlborough was appointed as Commander of the English Foot in Holland and on 28 June, 1701 he was made Ambassador – both extraordinary and plenipotentiary – with the right to negotiate treaties. In July, William and Marlborough went to Holland to secure the safety of William’s homeland, peacefully if possible, and gain the support of Portugal.

To form a war alliance, Marlborough had to:
- Make it acceptable to the Tories and House of Commons
- Safeguard English trading interests and not involve too many English troops
- Satisfy the cautious Dutch whose focus was almost exclusively on Flanders
- Persuade Leopold to withdraw his claim to the Spanish throne.

Other European countries had their own objectives:
- Brandenburg-Prussia wanted confirmation of the title King of Prussia
- Denmark wanted security against Charles XII of Sweden
- All wanted subsidies to pay their troops.
Thus the second Grand Alliance was formed on 7 September 1701.

William was anxious for the safety of Holland and laid plans with Marlborough for the forthcoming war. They envisaged an English continental strategy, rejecting the Tory idea of a war at sea (blue water strategy) with a token land commitment.

William dissolved Parliament and a new one met in January 1702, which was Tory dominated. However, the European situation prevented infighting and the Tories called for a denouncement of James III’s claim to the English Crown. In March 1702, William died due to complications following a riding accident, to be succeeded by his sister-in-law, Anne, but the new monarch did not stray from the course William had charted. On 15 May 1702, England declared war on France.

Teaching and Learning Activity

Essay question

‘Louis XIV’s acceptance of Carlos II’s will was the most important reason for the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession’. How far would you accept this statement?
4. The War of the Spanish Succession 1702–14

The Grand Alliance comprised England, Holland, Austria, Denmark, Prussia, Hanover, the Palatinate and other German states, controlling two navies and 250,000 men.

France was supported by Spain, Bavaria, Savoy (until 1703). It had a poor navy and 200,000 men.

MAP OF EUROPE 1700

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The Allied position in Germany was weak. The French were in a position to threaten Vienna, and the revolt in Hungary reduced availability of Imperial troops. The French General Marsin and the Elector of Bavaria were on the Danube, Tallard was on the Upper Rhine, and Vendome could be brought from northern Italy. In the Netherlands, Villeroi could pin down the Allies.

Marlborough decided that the Allies should move into Germany and, in April 1704, he was persuaded by the Austrian Ambassador in London to undertake a Danube campaign to help Vienna. His conditions were that it be kept secret and Prince Eugene be sent to help him. It was necessary to break the deadlock before war weariness dissolved the Alliance. Louis had time on his side. The Allies had to take offensive action. Heinsius persuaded a reluctant States General to allow Marlborough to leave the Netherlands to carry out this secret venture.

The march to the Danube was a formidable logistical undertaking:
- A 250 mile march with exposed communications along the Rhine
- Problems of supply: how to feed, water and shelter 40,000 men
- Vital stores and cannon were carried by river barges as far as possible, and then in specially designed carts
- Boots were brought up so that, by the time the army reached the Danube, it had been reshod
- Everything was paid for in cash to ensure maximum local cooperation
- Marlborough left in May marching along the Rhine shadowed by Villeroi.
(i) Schellenberg 2 July 1704
Marlborough and Eugene chose Donauwörth as the place for a bridgehead over the Danube to secure new supply lines. It was protected by the fortress of Schellenberg, and speed was essential before Marsin and the Elector moved from Dillingen. They attacked at 6.15 pm. Marlborough led an onslaught to the east, enabling Baden to enter from the west almost unopposed. Now they had the bridgehead secured from which an attack on Bavaria could begin.

The Franco-Bavarian army moved to Blenheim. Marlborough and Eugene observed them from a clock tower at Tapfheim and the Allied leaders decided to attack the French lines.

(ii) Blenheim 13 August 1704
The French had good reasons not to expect an attack:
- They were in a good position, the right flank protected by the Danube, the left flank by the woods at Lutzingen
- Their front lines were protected by the Nebel stream and marsh land for 3–4 miles
- The villages of Blenheim, Oberglau and Lutzingen were all potential fortresses
- Tallard had 56,000 soldiers, the Allies had 52,000.

Web Article
This link takes you to a full account of the Battle of Blenheim with maps detailing hourly activity:
http://www.spanishsuccession.nl/blenheim.html

(iii) The significance of Marlborough’s leadership at Blenheim
- Use of surprise, and his willingness to attack at all: few responsible officers in the Allied army would have dared to attack the French in such a strong position
- His decision to go on the offensive enabled him to choose where the fighting took place and to dispose of his forces to the best advantage
- He had firm control over the battle and was able to relax an attack where it was proving expensive and to collect local reinforcements to resist counter attacks without weakening his main effort
- Brilliant planning: there were two containing actions, one in the north and the other in the south, which weakened the French centre and led to the breakthrough there
- Good use of infantry, cavalry and artillery. Note the combined action of all three.
Superior cavalry tactics, charging at a brisk trot, platoon firing of infantry and good use of the artillery which had been placed with care

- Marlborough’s ubiquity (right place at the right time). He was at Blenheim to save Cutts from destroying his men and later rallied troops at Oberglau
- His own courage had a good effect on morale
- He had good subordinate generals, and worked well with Eugene
- He exploited the victory, moving west to capture Trier and Trabach, preparing the way for the invasion of France along the Moselle in the next campaign.

(iv) The importance of Blenheim

- It destroyed the myth of French invincibility, their first defeat for two generations. It increased Allied morale and damaged French morale
- It was a major blow to Louis’ plans to dominate Europe and a major turning point in the war: henceforth the French were fighting to avoid defeat
- The Habsburg Empire was saved and the Grand Alliance preserved from collapse. Vienna was saved
- The Bavarian Army was decimated
- It was a blow to the House of Stuart: only if the French won the war had they any real hope of restoration to the English throne
- It opened the way for the invasion of France along the Moselle
- It did not, however, affect Spanish Italy or the Spanish Netherlands.

Web Video

Watch Earl Spencer’s excellent History Channel documentary Blenheim: Battle for Europe:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OkTtKirZvE

(b) Battle of Ramillies 1706

Villeroi’s troops occupied an area near the Great and Little Geete on 22 May. The Allied scout, Cadogan, spotted them on 23 May and informed Marlborough. He joined Cadogan and, having surveyed the situation, decided to attack. His plan was to feint an attack across the Little Geete and force the French to reinforce their left wing. He would then transfer most of his own men using a valley behind him, which was not visible to the French, and give the Allies superiority in the open country south of Ramillies.

Villeroi withdrew forces from his centre to reinforce his left flank. Meanwhile, Marlborough recalled Orkney from the Allied right wing where they were having success, sending several messages to ensure no misunderstanding, and left a thin line of troops on the hill to fool Villeroi into thinking Orkney’s force was still present and a significant threat. The transferred troops gave Marlborough a 5:3 advantage in the centre, while Villeroi’s left flank was no longer actively involved in the battle, occupying about 30% of French forces. The French began to give way in the centre and a frantic effort by Villeroi to send reserves failed. The French retreat became a rout. French losses amounted to 13,000 killed and wounded; Allied losses totalled 4,000 killed and wounded.
For more detailed studies of the Battle of Ramillies, visit the British Battles and Spanish succession websites:
http://www.spanishsuccession.nl/ramillies.html

As a consequence of Ramillies, the chief Belgian towns surrendered with little resistance and by August Marlborough had reached the French frontier. One aim of the Grand Alliance had been achieved – the French were driven from the Spanish Netherlands.

Ramillies had an equally drastic effect on French fortunes in Germany. Villars' hopes of invading Germany were dispelled as many of his troops had been drafted to the Spanish Netherlands. France was never again in a position to mount a full-scale offensive in Germany. Ramillies also affected French fortunes in Italy: Louis called Vendome and reinforcements from Italy to the Spanish Netherlands, while Eugene's victory over the French at Turin in September 1706 effectively neutralised the French in Italy.

(c) Battle of Oudenarde 1708

The French had achieved a line of defence marked by the River Scheldt and the Bruges canal. They had the opportunity to be masters of Flanders, except around Ostende. They had to consolidate this position. An Allied garrison occupied the town of Oudenarde guarding one crossing point on the Scheldt. The French had to take this town. Vendome headed to the crossing at Lessines, about 15 miles from Oudenarde. Vendome had in effect broken the strategic deadlock and the Allies could react.

Marlborough anticipated the French move and no longer had to wait for reinforcements as the armies were on the move. He now decided to make a rapid advance to Oudenarde and prevent the French taking the town. Marlborough's men covered 50 miles in 60 hours. Biron had clashes with Cadogan and sent word to Vendome that Marlborough's army was approaching. Vendome reacted with surprise: 'If they are there, the devil must have taken them'.

Oudenarde was to differ from Blenheim and Ramillies. This was not a 'set' battle: it grew as forces were fed into the line – an encounter action. In addition, the French command was not in full agreement as to its planned action. Burgundy was waiting for a signal to join in the main battle from a position on the Huysse Heights, while Vendome was in action on the plain below. At 5.00 pm, Vendome asked Burgundy to reinforce on the French left, but Burgundy decided that the ground was not suitable, too swampy for cavalry action, and remained on the Huysse Heights. The officer sent to inform Vendome of this decision must have been killed, as the message never arrived. At 5.30 pm, Vendome launched a major attack in the belief Burgundy was taking complementary action on the left. He could not understand why Burgundy watched the battle and was 'merely looking on as though watching the opera from a box in the third tier'.

From 5.00 pm to 8.00 pm a fierce infantry struggle developed on an ever-widening front. Marlborough's army was in constant danger of being overlapped by the French, and fresh troops were continually fed into the line.
By 6.00 pm the shape of the victory began to emerge. Eugene was in charge of the right flank and Marlborough was in the centre. Overkirk and the Dutch army were ordered to come through the town of Oudenarde, using a hidden road, as a great outflanking movement against the French right. Hemmed in on both sides, the net began to close around the French Army and only darkness prevented the complete success of the operation. At 9.00 pm, Marlborough ordered a ceasefire lest the battalions of the encircling army fired on one another. Vendome tried to regroup and his troops were instructed to make their way through the Allied lines, around 7,000 being taken prisoner.

Again, the Spanish Succession website provides a thorough account of the Battle of Oudenarde, with accompanying maps and illustrations:

http://www.spanishsuccession.nl/oudenaarde.html

An even more detailed study, with a wider focus, is provided by the website Battlefield Anomalies:

http://battlefieldanomalies.com/the-battle-of-oudenarde/

(d) **France seeks peace 1709**

The French began the year 1709 by indicating to the Dutch that they would be willing to renounce Philip V’s inheritance, an indication of the economic, social and military burden this war had become for Louis XIV. Britain wanted undivided succession to the Archduke Charles. He was to be known in Spain as Carlos III and was to become Emperor Charles V in 1711. The British were determined that the Dutch would not make a separate treaty with the French that would jeopardise their ambitions. Britain therefore aimed to ensure that the Dutch remained within the Alliance.

Louis XIV sent Torcy to negotiate, which some saw as a sign that France was eager for peace. The negotiations ultimately failed by June. France prepared for a continuation of the war, as did the Allies. However, the war no longer had national backing in England and the Ministry was almost entirely Whig, with strong Tory opposition.

(e) **Battle of Malplaquet 1709**

The 1709 campaign began late due to the peace negotiations.
The Allies could contest any move by Villars, yet he could prevent the Allies moving west. The two armies drew up at the gap of Malplaquet. The French drew up with flanks protected by the woods and the centre protected by the flanks.

The Allies drew up and expected reinforcements to arrive under the command of Withers. However, as Withers was still on his way, to wait for him would result in the French having another day to entrench and the element of surprise being lost. Marlborough decided to delay and then placed Withers on the right flank, which was already strong.

At 8:00 am the Allies began an attack on the Wood of Sars on the French left flank. By 8:30 am the Dutch attacked Villars’ right flank in the Wood of Lanieres. This followed the normal Allied practice of containment on the flanks, reducing the French opportunity to strengthen the centre if under attack. The French had prepared three lines of fortifications and the Allies were forced back before they reached the second line. There were three assaults on the French right resulting in massive loss of life.

By 10.00 am Marlborough issued orders for the Dutch to stop their attack, contain the French and defend. He sent reinforcements to help the shattered infantry. On the French left flank, Withers was steadily pushing them back. Villars began to pull men away from the centre to reinforce this left flank.

It was not until 1.30 that Marlborough launched an attack in the centre under the command of Orkney. The French resisted well and launched a series of counter-charges by the cavalry, but eventually the French commander Boufflers launched a final charge to provide cover for the French to withdraw.

The French withdrew to the Lines of La Basse, leaving Mons to the Allies. Allied losses were between 16,000 and 18,000 compared to French losses of 11,000, leading to the French claiming the battle as their victory. The Allied claim of victory was based on the fact that the French left the field of battle. This battle shows that where two armies of equal strength meet and neither makes a bad decision, a decisive victory is not guaranteed.

Here are two studies of the Battle of Malplaquet, the first from the Weapons and Warfare website:
https://weaponsandwarfare.com/2016/02/03/the-battle-of-malplaquet/

The second and more detailed study, with a wider focus, is provided by the website Battlefield Anomalies:
http://battlefieldanomalies.com/the-battle-of-malplaquet/

The immediate consequence of Malplaquet was the siege and capture of Mons, but overall the campaign of 1710 was disappointing. There were difficulties providing for the Allied armies in a zone dominated by fortresses and devastated by warfare. A few long and costly sieges resulted in the capture of Douai, Bethune, St. Venant and Aire.

In England the war was becoming more unpopular. Bad harvests had resulted in the raising of corn prices. There was heavy taxation, an inherent dislike of a standing army and resentment at compulsory recruiting of the unemployed. A reaction set in towards the Whigs who were now regarded as a War Party. In October 1710 a general election resulted
in a massive Tory majority and a change in government. Marlborough was dismissed from his offices in December 1711 and he went into voluntary exile in 1712.

(f) Peace Treaties 1713–14

(i) Treaty of Utrecht 1713

**France and Britain**
- France recognised the Hanoverian succession
- Pretender was never to re-enter France
- Fortifications at Dunkirk to be dismantled
- France ceded Hudson's Bay, Newfoundland and St Kitts to Britain
- France was allowed to dry fish in Newfoundland
- French tariffs against English goods to be lowered to the 1684 level
- English tariffs against French goods to be the same as other countries
- Crowns of France and Spain never to be united.

**France and the United Provinces**
- Dutch obtained a formidable barrier which included Ghent
- France retained Furnes, Lille, Ypres, Aire, Menin, Bethune, Tournai, St Venant, Mons, Charleroi and Namur
- France did not receive Liege, Huy and Bonn, which had been promised in 1709.

**France and Savoy**
- France returned Nice and Savoy
- Victor Amadeus obtained the throne of Sicily
- Victor Amadeus obtained the right to succeed to Spain if Philip's line failed.

**France and Portugal**
- Portugal obtained French territory on the frontier of Brazil and French Guiana.

**France and Prussia**
- Elector became King of Prussia
- Prussia obtained Spanish Gelderland.

(ii) Anglo-Spanish Treaty 1713

- Britain obtained Gibraltar and Menorca
- Philip agreed that Sicily should go to Savoy
- Britain obtained the Asiento
- Commercial treaty to be negotiated later.

(iii) Treaty of Radstatt 1714

- Elector of Bavaria restored to his possessions
- Elector of Cologne restored
- France retained Alsace and Strasbourg
- France recognised the Austrian possession of Naples, Milan, Sardinia and the Spanish Netherlands
- France gave up all conquests on the right bank of the Rhine.
Teaching and Learning Activity
Essay questions

Consider the following essay titles and draw up detailed plans for each.
1. How far do you agree with Lord Oxford's claim that the Peace of Utrecht was 'an honourable and advantageous peace' for Britain?
2. 'A triumph for France at Spain's expense'. How far would you accept this judgement on the treaties made at Utrecht and Radstadt?
3. 'The Dutch had most reason to be satisfied with the terms of the peace treaties at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession'. To what extent would you agree with this statement?