

# Spain's Empire and European Absolutism

## CONNECT TO NC COMPETENCY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.01** Trace the political and social development of monarchies and empires . . . .
- 3.03** Trace social, political, economic, and cultural changes associated with the Renaissance, the Reformation, the rise of nation-states, and absolutism.

## TERMS & NAMES

- Philip II
- absolute monarch
- divine right

**SETTING THE STAGE** As you learned in Chapter 18, from 1520 to 1566, Suleyman I exercised great power as sultan of the Ottoman Empire. A European monarch of the same period, Charles V, came close to matching Suleyman's power. As the Hapsburg king, Charles inherited Spain, Spain's American colonies, parts of Italy, and lands in Austria and the Netherlands. As the elected Holy Roman emperor, he ruled much of Germany. It was the first time since Charlemagne that a European ruler controlled so much territory.

## A Powerful Spanish Empire

A devout Catholic, Charles not only fought Muslims but also opposed Lutherans. In 1555, he unwillingly agreed to the Peace of Augsburg, which allowed German princes to choose the religion for their territory. The following year, Charles V divided his immense empire and retired to a monastery. To his brother Ferdinand, he left Austria and the Holy Roman Empire. His son, **Philip II**, inherited Spain, the Spanish Netherlands, and the American colonies.

**Philip II's Empire** Philip was shy, serious, and—like his father—deeply religious. He was also very hard working. Yet Philip would not allow anyone to help him. Deeply suspicious, he trusted no one for long. As his own court historian wrote, “His smile and his dagger were very close.”

Perhaps above all, Philip could be aggressive for the sake of his empire. In 1580, the king of Portugal died without an heir. Because Philip was the king's nephew, he seized the Portuguese kingdom. Counting Portuguese strongholds in Africa, India, and the East Indies, he now had an empire that circled the globe.

Philip's empire provided him with incredible wealth. By 1600, American mines had supplied Spain with an estimated 339,000 pounds of gold. Between 1550 and 1650, roughly 16,000 tons of silver bullion were unloaded from Spanish galleons, or ships. The king of Spain claimed between a fourth and a fifth of every shipload of treasure as his royal share. With this wealth, Spain was able to support a large standing army of about 50,000 soldiers.

**Defender of Catholicism** When Philip assumed the throne, Europe was experiencing religious wars caused by the Reformation. However, religious conflict was not new to Spain. The Reconquista, the campaign to drive Muslims from Spain, had been completed only 64 years before. In addition, Philip's great-grandparents

## TAKING NOTES

**Clarifying** Use a chart to list the conditions that allowed European monarchs to gain power.

