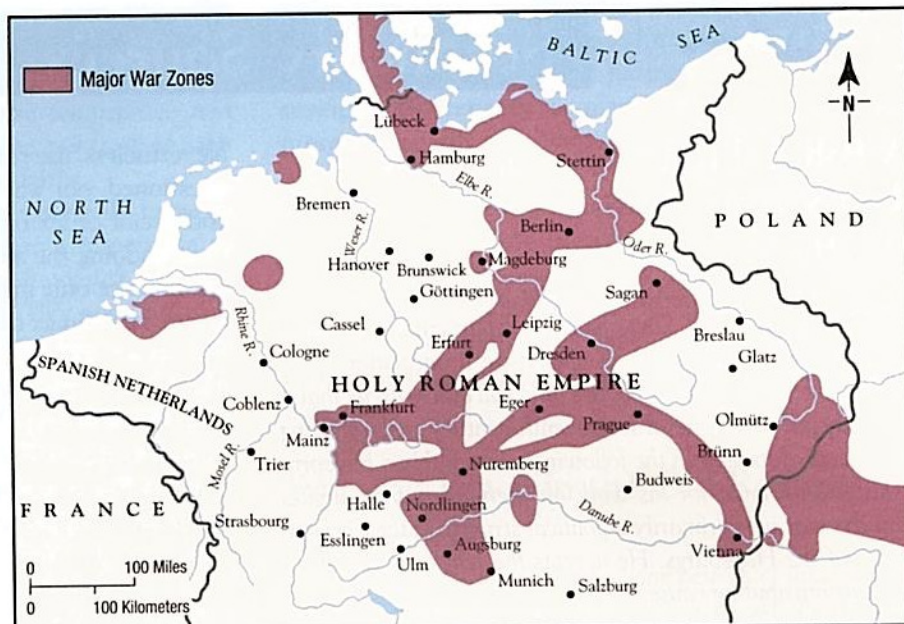




Directions: Generate a list of causes for the Thirty Years' War and then have a small group discussion regarding how the causes changed over the “phases” of the war.

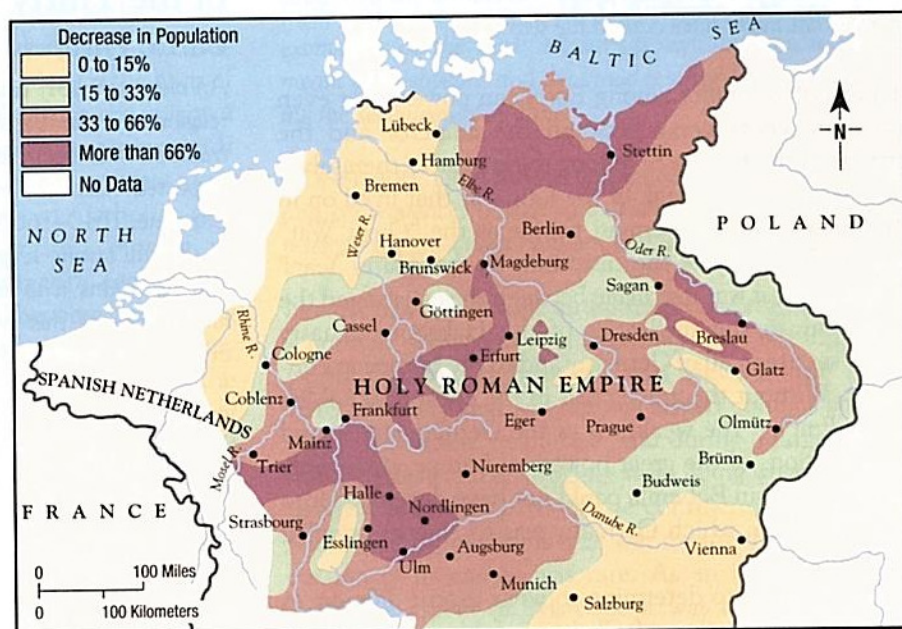


MAP 15.2 Main War Zones

Thirty Years' War

These maps center on circumstances in Germany during the Thirty Years' War. The first (map 15.1) shows the approximate political and religious divisions at the beginning of the war. This map is simplified for clarity in a number of ways. It does not show areas of minority religious allegiance or areas where Protestant sects other than Calvinists or Lutherans made up substantial proportions of the population. It denotes only some of the political divisions, which numbered close to three hundred in this area. The second map (map 15.2) shows the main areas of battle during the Thirty Years' War. Map 15.3 indicates the changes in population, primarily due to war and plague, between 1618 and 1648.

Together, these maps reveal some of the political and religious problems facing Germany. Despite the theoretical existence of the Holy Roman Empire, Germany was in reality the most politically and religiously divided area in seventeenth-century Europe. It is thus not surprising that historians find it difficult to determine the political and religious factors causing this war and the responsibility for its long continuation. Some of the demographic effects are indicated



MAP 15.3 Population Change: 1618–1648

through a comparison of the main areas of battle and changes in population. Indeed, the continued political and religious division of Germany after this war, along with such massive destruction of the area and the population, helps explain Germany's weakness and inability to unify for the following two centuries.

CONSIDER: In what ways the geopolitical and religious divisions of Germany explain the duration and extent of damages of the Thirty Years' War; how historians might use these maps to support their interpretations of the causes and significance of the Thirty Years' War.



Secondary Sources

A Political Interpretation of the Thirty Years' War

Hajo Holborn

Historians have long disagreed about the essential causes of the Thirty Years' War. Some focus on a particular area, such as Germany or Spain; others emphasize a particular set of causes, such as religion or politics; and still others argue that it was only part of a general seventeenth-century crisis affecting all aspects of society. In the following selection Hajo Holborn, a historian known for his work on German history, argues that the war was primarily a political struggle in the German states of the Hapsburgs. He accepts the religious issue as at most a contributing cause.

CONSIDER: *The role religion played in the conflict even though it may not have been primary in causing the war; other factors that might have caused the war.*

It was not a conflict among European powers, not even an acute controversy between the emperor and the princes of the Empire or among these princes themselves that led to the outbreak of the long war that lived on in the memory of the German people as the "Great War" and in the books of the historians as the Thirty Years' War. Rather, it was a struggle between the estates and the monarchy in the territories of the Habsburg dynasty which set fire to all of Germany and to the European continent. Without the grave crisis in the constitutional life of the Empire, the weakness of the German states, and the ambitions of the great powers of Europe, the events that occurred in Bohemia could not have developed into a disaster from which Germany was to emerge crippled and mutilated.

It is difficult to determine to what extent differences in the interpretation of Christian faith were a direct cause of the catastrophe. There is no doubt but that religious motivation was strong in the lives of individuals and societies, and even in the relations among states and nations, in this age. But the confessional war started at a time when enthusiasm for the religious revivals, both Protestant and Catholic, had lost much of its original force and religious ideas had again become conventionalized. Frank skepticism was rare in Germany, but ever larger groups of people had ceased to find in religious ideals the full satisfaction of their human aspirations.

SOURCE: Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany: The Reformation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. 305–306.

Nevertheless, the reality of heaven and hell was nowhere questioned, nor was the necessity of basing the political and social order on principles that would keep Satan from undoing the work of God. Religious zeal found expression not only in the ghastly fury of witch trials, which reached its climax during these years, but also in the care with which all governments attended to the direction of church life in their dominions. Yet while on the one hand religion deteriorated into superstition, on the other it tended to become formalized and to lose genuineness. Every political action was publicly cloaked in religious terms, but religion seemed to be used more and more to rationalize actions motivated by secular interests.

A Religious Interpretation of the Thirty Years' War

Carl J. Friedrich

*An older scholarly tradition attributes primary importance to religion in explaining the causes of the Thirty Years' War. This tradition has been revived by Carl J. Friedrich, a highly respected historian from Harvard. In *The Age of the Baroque, 1610–1660*, Friedrich places the war in the context of the still strong religious assumptions of the time, arguing that historians who emphasize political causes overlook the importance of this religious context. The following is an excerpt from that work.*

CONSIDER: *The evidence Friedrich uses to support his argument; why, according to Friedrich, many historians have rejected the religious interpretation of the war; how Holborn might criticize this argument.*

It has been the fashion to minimize the religious aspect of the great wars which raged in the heart of Europe, over the territory of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Not only the calculating statecraft of Richelieu and Mazarin, but even Pope Urban VIII's own insistence lent support to such a view in a later age which had come to look upon religion and politics as fairly well separated fields of thought and action. Liberal historians found it difficult to perceive that for baroque man religion and politics were cut from the same cloth, indeed that the most intensely political issues were precisely the religious ones. Gone was the neopaganism of the renaissance, with

SOURCE: Excerpts from *The Age of the Baroque* by Carl J. Friedrich. Copyright 1952 by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

its preoccupation with self-fulfillment here and now. Once again, and for the last time, life was seen as meaningful in religious, even theological, terms, and the greater insight into power which the renaissance had brought served merely to deepen the political passion brought to the struggle over religious faiths.

Without a full appreciation of the close links between secular and religious issues, it becomes impossible to comprehend the Thirty Years' War. Frederick, the unlucky Palatine, as well as Ferdinand, Tilly and Gustavus Adolphus, Maximilian of Bavaria and John George of Saxony, they all must be considered fools unless their religious motivation is understood as the quintessential core of their politics. Time and again, they appear to have done the "wrong thing," if their actions are viewed in a strictly secular perspective. To be sure, men became increasingly sophisticated as the war dragged on; but even after peace was finally concluded in 1648, the religious controversies continued. Ever since the Diet of Augsburg (1555) had adopted the callous position that a man must confess the religion of those who had authority over the territory he lived in—a view which came to be known under the slogan of "*cujus regio, ejus religio*"—the intimate tie of religion and government had been the basis of the Holy Empire's tenuous peace. Born of the spirit of its time—Lutheran otherworldliness combining with Humanistic indifferentism—this doctrine was no more than an unstable compromise between Catholics and Lutherans, the Calvinists being entirely outside its protective sphere. But in the seventeenth century not only the Calvinists, who by 1618 had become the fighting protagonists of Protestantism, but likewise the more ardent Catholics, inspired by the Council of Trent, by the Jesuits and Capuchins, backed by the power of Spain and filled with the ardor of the Counter Reformation, had come to look upon this doctrine as wicked and contrary to their deepest convictions.

When Ferdinand, after claiming the crown of Bohemia by heredity, proceeded to push the work of counter reformation, his strongest motivation was religious; so was the resistance offered by the Bohemian people, as well as Frederick's acceptance of the crown of Bohemia on the basis of an election. Dynastic and national sentiments played their part, surely, but they reinforced the basic religious urge. The same concurrence of religious with dynastic, political, even economic motives persisted throughout the protracted struggle, but the religious did not cease to be the all-pervasive feeling; baroque man, far from being bothered by the contradictions, experienced these polarities as inescapable.

If religion played a vital role in persuading Ferdinand II to dismiss his victorious general, it was even more decisive in inspiring Gustavus Adolphus to enter the war against both the emperor and the League. The

nineteenth century, incapable of feeling the religious passions which stirred baroque humanity and much impressed with the solidified national states which the seventeenth century bequeathed to posterity, was prone to magnify the dynastic and often Machiavellian policies adopted by rulers who professed to be deeply religious, and the twentieth century has largely followed suit in denying the religious character of these wars. But it is precisely this capacity to regard the statesman as the champion of religion, to live and act the drama of man's dual dependence upon faith and power that constituted the quintessence of the baroque.

War and Peace in the Old Regime

M. S. Anderson

Western societies rarely went for long periods of time without becoming involved in wars. However, war was particularly prevalent and destructive in the period between 1618 and 1660. Historians have long debated the causes for these wars. In the following selection, M. S. Anderson, who has written extensively on the Early Modern period, analyzes what war meant to Europeans and the broader significance of war during the seventeenth century.

CONSIDER: *How Europeans perceived the causes, nature, and consequences of war; the distinctions between war and peace; the connections between war and politics.*

In early modern Europe almost everyone regarded war as a normal, perhaps even a necessary, part of human life. Events seemed to bear out this view; in the period 1618–60 every year saw serious armed conflict between states somewhere in Europe, and during a large proportion of it destructive struggles were being waged simultaneously in several parts of the continent. The ubiquity and apparent inevitability of war meant that serious discussion of its causes was rare. As an integral and unavoidable aspect of existence it was received like bad weather or epidemics, as something clearly beyond the power of the ordinary man to avert, something demanding acceptance rather than analysis. Luther's dictum that "war is as necessary as eating, drinking or any other business" reflects in typically blunt terms this matter-of-fact and fatalistic attitude. Nor was there much grasp of the deeper and more lasting effects it might sometimes have. It was only too obvious that in the short term it meant for many death, destruction and loss. But against this was put the venerable and well-established argument that

SOURCE: M. S. Anderson. *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime, 1618–1789*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 13–15.

prolonged peace weakened the moral fibre of a society, making it lax, slothful, even corrupt, whereas war focused and mobilized energies, called forth many of the better qualities of man, and had a generally tonic and purifying effect. It was clear also that a successful war could heighten the personal prestige of a ruler; the vindication of claims put forward by monarchs to disputed territories, to alleged hereditary rights, even merely to precedence over rivals or to specific symbols of such precedence, were by far the most common ostensible causes of conflict. Occasionally it was realized that war might have important long-term economic results, that it might foster the trade of a victorious state against that of its defeated enemies and that economic rivalry might be one of its causes. Struggles inspired simply or even mainly by this kind of material rivalry were not frequent in this period but they did take place. . . . However the idea that war might, through the demands it made on societies and the impetus it gave to the growth of powerful central governments, help fundamentally to change these societies, was still a strange one. . . .

Finally, a clear-cut distinction between war and peace, a dividing line whose crossing was instantly recognizable, was something which was only beginning to emerge. The position of neutrals was still ambiguous, their status poorly guaranteed by embryonic international law and liable to frequent infringements. There was a general belief that a belligerent had some right to march its forces across neutral territory if it made good any damage they caused in the process (the right of *transitus innoxius*). Frontiers were still poorly defined, zones of contact between neighbouring powers rather than lines clearly demarcated. The hold of central governments over officials and commanders in border areas was often still incomplete, so that in these areas locally inspired acts of oppression and outright violence could frequently occur, though usually without involving the states concerned in formal conflict. In this violent age incidents of this kind formed a sort of grumbling undertone to international relations, seldom actively menacing peace between states but always a potential threat. . . .

Armed conflict in early seventeenth-century Europe, therefore, ramified into every aspect of life and was able to do this because it was still in many ways badly defined, because the boundary between peace and war was still fuzzy. But lack of clear definition did nothing to reduce its importance. Most of the governments of Europe were first and foremost, as they had been for generations, machines for waging war. Both the scale on which they fought and the effective control they could exert over their fighting forces were to increase markedly during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The Causes of the English Civil War

Conrad Russell

The civil war in England, which broke out in the middle of the seventeenth century, is even more controversial among historians than the Thirty Years' War. At the heart of the controversy are two related issues: first, what the balance of religious, political, economic, and social forces was in causing the civil war; second, what groups or classes can be said to have supported each side. In the following selection Conrad Russell argues that the civil war resulted from a conjunction of three causes of instability: the problem of multiple kingdoms (England and Scotland), the problem of religious division, and the financial pressures on the crown.

CONSIDER: How Russell's three causes worked together; why Charles' attempt to enforce English religion on Scotland in 1637 was so important.

[The English Civil War] was the result of three long-term causes of instability, all of them well established before Charles came to the throne, and all of them ones which can be observed to have troubled European, as well as British, monarchies. There is nothing peculiarly British (still less English) about any of them: they were not even exceptionally acute in England. What is peculiar to the two cases of England and the Netherlands is that all of them came to a head at the same time. These three long-term causes were the problem of multiple kingdoms, the problem of religious division, and the breakdown of a financial and political system in the face of inflation and the rising cost of war.

The problem of multiple kingdoms was always a likely cause of instability from 1603 onwards. The temptation to press for greater harmonization was always there, and was always likely to produce serious troubles. In 1603 England encountered . . . the shock of subjection to a supranational authority. . . . [T]he English . . . wished to treat both James and Charles as if they were only kings of a single nation-state called England. Since this was patently not the case, and the kings could not help knowing it, the English were always likely to misread royal actions, and in particular to press their kings to do things which, in British terms, they could not do. When, as in 1637, a British king fell victim to a similar misapprehension, and attempted to govern all Britain as king of England, he found this was something he could not do. . . .

England's basic error in 1603 was the failure to absorb that what had taken place was the union of two sovereign, and therefore legally equal, states. Not even James

could really turn Scotland into “North Britain.” It was a state with institutions, law, and culture of its own, and one determined to insist that any resulting relationship must be a legally equal partnership. . . .

[T]he problem of religious division . . . derived its explosive force from the belief that religion ought to be enforced. It was a problem of a society which had carried on the assumptions appropriate to a society with a single church into one which had many churches. . . .

But August 1640, when the Scottish army, by entering England, merged the religious problem with the British problem, was too early for it to have cooled enough. One might say of the English Calvinists what Machiavelli said of the Pope in Italy: they were too weak to unite the country, but too strong to allow anyone else to do so. When the Scots entered England, they were able to join forces with a large group of people who preferred Scottish religion to what was coming to be taken for their own.

The strains caused for monarchies by the combination of inflation with the massive increases in the cost of war known collectively as “the military revolution” is also a European theme. The financial difficulties faced, after the conclusion of the long wars of the 1590s, by James VI and I, Philip III of Spain, and Henri IV of France have too much in common to be entirely coincidental. The changes following the regular use of gunpowder, especially the trend to larger-scale fortifications and to larger armies, much increased the economic drain of war. The resulting financial pressures put strain on the principle of consent to taxation everywhere in Europe, and perhaps only the Netherlands, with the advantage of a visible enemy at the gate, were able to combine consent with the levying of taxes on the scale needed. England, because the principle of consent to taxation was so particularly well entrenched, was perhaps put under more constitutional strain by this process than some other powers. . . .

No one, or even two, of these forces was in the event enough: it took the conjunction of all three to drive England into civil war. . . . Both the religious and the financial problem had been plainly visible by the 1550s, and they had not created civil war in ninety years since then. England in 1637 was, no doubt, a country with plenty of discontents, some of them potentially serious, but it was also still a very stable and peaceful one, and one which does not show many visible signs of being on the edge of a major upheaval. . . . The attempt which Charles made in 1637 to enforce English religion on Scotland, was thus by far the likeliest reason for a merging of these three long-term causes of instability. It is difficult to argue that Charles took this risk with his eyes open. It is equally difficult to see what action a king could have taken which would have been better designed to precipitate an English civil war.

The Devil's Handmaid: Women in the Age of Reformations

William Monter

As indicated by the document The Hammer of Witches, beliefs in witchcraft were widespread during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and authoritative sources supported the belief that most witches were women. Many people were also accused of killing their children (infanticide). For both witchcraft and infanticide, the vast majority of those accused were women. In this selection, William Monter, a historian specializing in the Reformation era, analyzes why witchcraft and infanticide seemed to grow in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.

CONSIDER: Which three developments best explain the growing prosecutions for witchcraft and infanticide during this period; which groups of women were most affected and why.

Three key developments combined and interacted to shape the male hysteria about witchcraft and infanticide in Reformation Europe. First and foremost, public institutions—state and church alike—were increasingly interfering in daily life. Throughout Protestant and Catholic Europe, the state enforced attendance at church; church officials preached obedience to the state; and both increasingly tried to regulate everyone's behavior. Ecclesiastical courts such as Catholic inquisitions or Calvinist consistories depended heavily on state enforcement of their policies; states like England or France relied on clergymen to provide records of baptisms or to proclaim government edicts from the pulpit.

Secondly, these increasingly active public authorities inhabited a fear-ridden world. Most Protestant and Catholic Europeans still peered at their neighbors from walled towns and fortified castles; Luther's greatest hymn begins, “A Mighty Fortress is our God.” We cannot find many material reasons for such pervasive fears at this time; bubonic plague, the great killer of pre-industrial Europe, did most of its damage either before or after the age of reformations. The reformers of Protestant and Catholic Europe, determined to attack all forms of “superstition” (including, of course, witchcraft), reduced the influence of benevolent magic, like exorcisms or special prayers, but provided nothing to replace them. Modern science did not yet exist; official medicine often had no

SOURCE: William Monter, “Protestant Wives, Catholic Saints, and the Devil's Handmaid: Women in the Age of Reformations,” in Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, and Susan Stuard, eds., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, First and Second Editions, copyright © 1977 & 1987 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Used with permission.

explanations (and worse, no effective remedies) for many illnesses. Under such conditions, Protestant and Catholic reformers imposed the “Triumph of Lent” on unwed mothers of stillborns, and made old women with deviant dreams into scapegoats for sixteenth-century Christianity’s obsession with the Devil.

Finally, the patriarchal theories of late-Renaissance Europe played an important role in determining which groups of women became victims of these obsessions. Accused witches were disproportionately widows, while infanticide defendants were single women; both groups lived outside direct male supervision in this age of reinforced patriarchal nuclear families. Their “unnatural” position aroused suspicion and sometimes fear; neighborhood enmities did the rest.

CHAPTER QUESTIONS

1. Clearly, there were both political and religious aspects to the turmoil between 1560 and 1660. On balance, which do you think were most important? On what evidence have you based your answer? What argument can be formulated that admits the importance of both aspects?
2. How might the themes in this chapter be related to the political and religious developments from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries that were the focus of the two preceding chapters?
3. How might the rise of monarchical absolutism be related to the turmoil of this period?