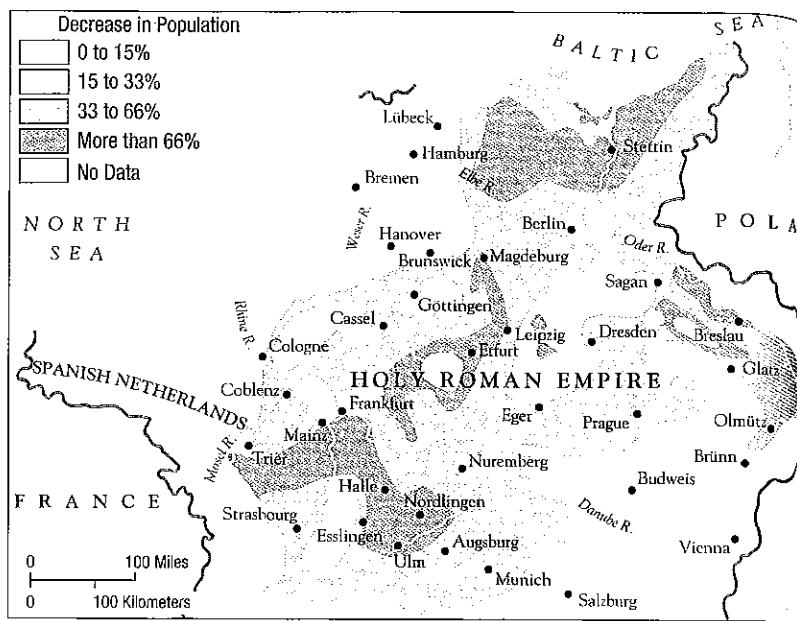


theoretical existence of the Holy Roman Empire, Germany was in reality the most politically and religiously divided area in seventeenth-century Europe. It is thus not surprising that historians find it difficult to determine the political and religious factors causing this war and the responsibility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

MAP 4-3 POPULATION CHANGE: 1618-1648



## 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"

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

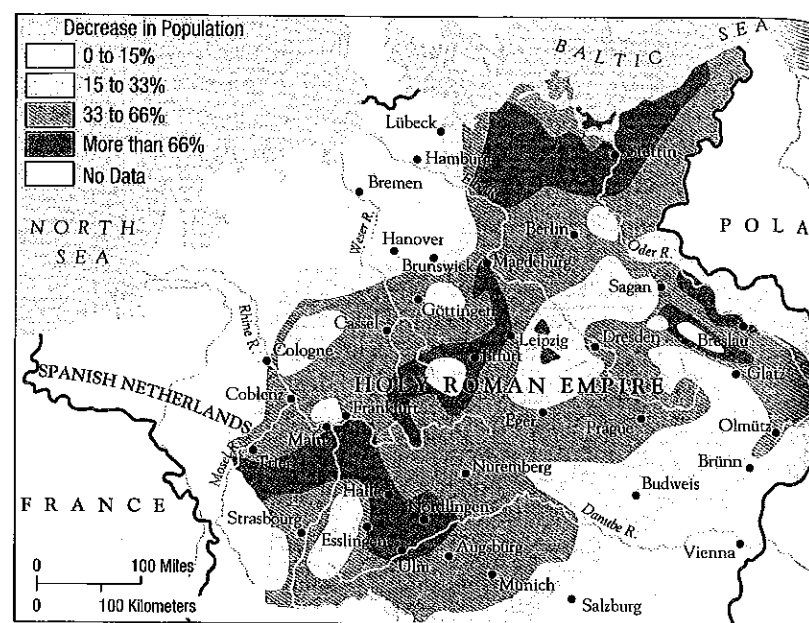
and in the books of the historians as the Thirty Years' War. Rather, it was a struggle between the estates and the monarchy in the territories of the Habsburg dynasty which set fire to all of Germany and to the European continent. Without the grave crisis in the constitutional life of the Empire, the 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. 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

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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 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 un-

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.

lucky 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 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*

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.