

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Thirty Years War 1618-48: A Quartercentenary Perspective

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Courage and Grief: Women and Sweden's Thirty Years War. By Mary Elizabeth Ailes. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2018. vii +225pp. (hardback) £44.00

Der grausame Komet: Himmelszeichen und Weltgeschehen im Dreißigjährigen Krieg. By Andreas Bähr. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt. 2017. 303pp. (hardback) EUR 19.95

Der Krieg der Kriege: Eine neue Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Krieges. By Johannes Burkhardt. Stuttgart: Klett Cotta. 2018. 295pp. (hardback) EUR 19.99

Der Wege in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges. Die Krisendekade 1608-1618. By Heinz Duchhardt. Munich: Piper. 2017. 254pp. (hardback) EUR 24.00

Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Facetten einer folgenreichen Epoche. Edited by Peter Claus Hartmann and Florina Schuller. Second edition. Regensburg: Pustet. 2018. 214pp. (paperback). EUR 19.95

Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Eine Einführung. By Axel Gotthard. Cologne: Böhlau. 2016. 390pp. (paperback) EUR 24.99

Von Nördlingen bis Jankau. Kaiserliche Strategie und Kriegführung 1635-1645. By Lothar Höbelt. Vienna: Heeresgeschichtliches Museum. 2016. 501pp. (hardback) EUR 19.90

Würzburg unter schwedischer Herrschaft 1631-1633. Die 'Summarische Beschreibung' des Joachim Ganzhorn. Edited by Christian Leo. Würzburg: Echter Verlag. 2017. 489pp. (hardback) EUR 39.00

Die schwedische Belagerung der Reichsstadt Lindau 1647. By Otto Mayr. Lindau: Allitera Verlag. 2016. 320pp. (hardback) EUR 19.90

Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Zeugnisse vom Leben mit Gewalt. By Hans Medick. Göttingen: Wallstein. 2018. 448pp. (hardback) EUR 29.90

Der Dreißigjährige Krieg in der deutschen Barockliteratur. By Volker Meid. Stuttgart: Reclam. 2017. 261pp. (hardback) EUR 24.00

Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Leben und Überleben im konfessionellen Zeitalter. By Hans-Joachim Müller. Stuttgart: Reclam. 2015. 159pp. (paperback) EUR 5.00

Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Europäische Katastrophe, deutsches Trauma 1618-1648. By Herfried Münkler. Berlin: Rowohlt. 2017. 976pp. (hardback). EUR 39.95

Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Als Deutschland in Flammen stand. By Christian Panthe. Berlin: Propyläen. 2017. 365pp. (paperback) EUR 18.00

1618. Der Beginn des Dreißigjährigen Krieges. Edited by Robert Rebitsch. Vienna: Böhlau. 2017. 229pp. (hardback). EUR 24.00

1648: Kriegführung und Friedensverhandlungen. Prag und das Ende des Dreißigjährigen Krieges. By Robert Rebitsch, Jenny Öhman, Jan Kilián. Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press. 2018. 385pp. (paperback). EUR 34.90

Die Reiter der Apokalypse: Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Krieges. By Georg Schmidt. Munich: C.H. Beck. 2018. 810pp. (hardback) EUR 32.00

The past few years have produced a cluster of important historical anniversaries, the most prominent of which has been the centenary of the First World War which is only now drawing to a close. The bicentenary of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era saw a prolonged cycle of events between 1989 and 2015, while 2017 saw the centenary of the Russian Revolution. Earlier history has also been remembered, most notably with an entire decade dedicated to the Reformation culminating in the Luther Year of 2017, as well as the tercentenaries of the births of Frederick II of Prussia (2012) and the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa (2017). Each has proved a valuable impetus for fresh research, as well as providing opportunities to reflect on changing interpretations and to assess the impact of new historical scholarship.

The response to the 400th anniversary of the outbreak of the Thirty Years War belies Herfried Münkler's claim that this conflict has slipped from the German consciousness.¹ A five-part docu-drama, *Glauben, Leben, Sterben*, by Stefan Ludwig has been shown on ARD1, with other TV productions syndicated across German, French, Austria and Czech channels, in addition to coverage on ZDF's main arts and cultural programme, *aspekte*, as well as various radio broadcasts. *Tyll*, a transposition of the Till Eulenspiegel story to the Thirty Years War by the Austrian novelist Daniel Kehlmann, topped the best-seller lists in 2017. Five northern Saxon museums staged a collaborative exhibition, as well as other more local events across Germany.² The founding of a national Thirty Years War Museum in Wittstock, as well as the well-publicised discoveries of mass graves at several battle sites, have undoubtedly helped stimulate interest ahead of the anniversary year.³ The slew of fresh popular works is further evidence for the continued interest in the war,⁴ while the German Federal Agency for Civic Education devoted a special issue of its journal to disseminating new research to a wider audience.⁵ Older histories remain in print or have been reissued for the anniversary.⁶

¹ H. Münkler, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Europäische Katastrophe, deutsches Trauma 1618-1648* (Berlin, 2017), pp.16-19.

² <https://www.leipzig.travel/de/medien/medieninformationen/pressemitteilungen/newsdetail/news/infos//sonderausstellungen-in-nordsachsen-zum-jubilaum-2018/>; <https://www.rothenburg.de/welcome/art-culture/reichsstaedte-1618/>

³ S. Eickhoff/F. Schopper (eds.), *1636. Ihre Letzte Schlacht. Leben im Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (Zossen, 2012); N. Nicklisch et al, 'The face of war: Trauma analysis of a mass grave from the Battle of Lützen (1632)', *PLOS ONE*, (May 2017), 1-30 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0178252>

⁴ In addition to Christian Panthe's book reviewed here, others intended for a popular audience include Frauke Adrians, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Zerstörung und Neuanfang in Europa* (Berlin, 2017), and Klaus-Rüdiger Mai, *Glaube, Liebe, Krieg. Schlachtfeld Europa 1618-1648. Der Dreißigjährige Krieg aus einzigartigen Quellen erzählt* (Munich, 2018). The works by Axel Gotthard and Hans Joachim Müller, included in this review, are intended for university and high school students respectively.

⁵ *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 69 (2018), issue 30-31.

⁶ These include G. Barudio, *Der Teutsche Krieg 1618-1648* (Frankfurt, 2017; 1st 1998); S.R. Gardner, *The Thirty Years War* (New York, 2015; 1st 1902), and the well-known books by C.V. Wedgwood, Friedrich Schiller, and Anton Gindely which are all available in English-language reprints.

Under review here are a mix of new general histories and specialist studies, virtually all of which are in German.⁷ The general studies divide broadly into two groups. Johannes Burkhardt and Axel Gotthard present clear, individual arguments, whereas Georg Schmidt, Herfried Münkler, Hans Medick and Christian Panthe largely subsume their interpretations within longer, more detailed narratives. The collection edited by Peter Claus Hartmann and Florian Schuller, reissued for the anniversary, also offers general coverage, though is not as comprehensive as that provided by a similar volume edited by Olaf Asbach and Peter Schröder.⁸ Despite important differences, when assessed together with other specialist studies, these works indicate that the field has shifted substantially from the position in 1998 when the 350th anniversary of the Peace of Westphalia.⁹ The linguistically-inflected new cultural history is now more clearly visible in the prominence given to everyday experience and perceptions in general accounts, as well as in explaining events and their impact. More attention is being paid to the latter half of the war, at least in specialist studies, as well as to some aspects of its conduct. However, there are still significant gaps in our knowledge and several established questions remain hotly contested.

The following discussion highlights six major areas of current interest. The first concerns the long-standing issues of the war's causes which is related to how it is defined in relation to other European conflicts. The second issue is that of religion which features in explanations for why war broke out, as well as why it proved so destructive and difficult to end. Within this there is a subset of debates surrounding the Bohemian Revolt which formed the war's initial phase between 1618 and 1621. The third aspect is why it proved impossible to defuse the revolt or at least prevent its spread from Bohemia to other parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The discussion of why the war continued leads to the fourth issue of how it was fought, given the new research linking military strategy to political decisions. Fifthly, the recent work on the history of experience and personal testimonies will be examined, before a brief appraisal of the scholarship on the Peace of Westphalia and its potential relevance to contemporary peace-making in the Middle East.

Causes and Scope

Controversy is most obvious around the thorny problem of the war's causes and whether it was inevitable. These issues are complicated by the related difficulty of defining the Thirty Years War in spatial and temporal terms. Consensus has at least emerged on the latter point, with all authors treating this as a conflict which began with the Defenestration of Prague on 23 May 1618 and ended with the dual treaties signed in the Westphalian towns of Münster and Osnabrück on 24 October 1648, even if it took a further two years to demobilise the armies. There is less agreement on the spatial aspects, with Volker Meid echoing the established view of it as 'a European war fought on German soil'.¹⁰ Münkler and Gotthard see it as having begun in the Holy Roman Empire and then progressively Europeanised through the intervention of Spain, Denmark, Sweden, France and other powers, though Gotthard sees imperial issues as remaining important in the final stages. This question is not simply 'academic', since the belief that 'Germany' was a victim of rampaging foreign

⁷ Relatively little new work has appeared in other languages, though there is extended treatment of the war in Claire Gantet/Christine Lebeau, *Le saint empire 1500-1800* (Paris, 2018), pp.59-72, and conferences were held in London, Nottingham, St Louis, Zagreb and elsewhere outside Germany in 2018.

⁸ *Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years War* (Farnham, 2014).

⁹ For reviews of the 1998 anniversary publications see H. Neuhaus, 'Westfälischer Frieden und Dreißigjährigen Krieg', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 82 (2000), 455-75; J. Arndt, 'Ein europäisches Jubiläum: 350 Jahre Westfälischer Friede', *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte*, 1 (2000), 137-58, and the major stock-take of research in K. Bussmann/H. Schilling (eds.), *1648: Krieg und Frieden in Europa* (3 vols., Münster, 1998).

¹⁰ *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg in der deutschen Barockliteratur* (Stuttgart, 2017), p.17. Similar arguments advanced by J. Arndt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg* (Stuttgart, 2009), p.12, and in slightly different form by C. Kampmann, *Europa und das Reich im Dreißigjährigen Krieg. Geschichte eines europäischen Konflikts* (Stuttgart, 2008).

armies remains deeply embedded in the public memory, as indeed it was already by the mid-seventeenth century as Meid's study of German baroque literature indicates.

By contrast, Georg Schmidt terms it a 'German war', explicitly refuting Münkler's claim regarding the importance of foreign intervention.¹¹ While Schmidt is right to point to the contemporary use of terms like *bellum Germanicum* and *teutscher Krieg*, what 'German' meant in this context is debatable. The war is German for Schmidt because he interprets the Holy Roman Empire as the first German nation state; a view he has advanced in numerous publications since the early 1990s.¹² His approach tends to treat the Austrian Habsburg monarchy as a separate entity, reducing the Empire to the German principalities, and downplaying the continued significance of Bohemia, the Spanish Netherlands (Burgundy) and imperial (northern) Italy. His arguments become more convincing if we accept that 'German' was generally a contemporary synonym for 'imperial' and, as he indeed argues, the programme of 'German freedom' (*teutsche Freiheit*) was political, not cultural or ethnic, and referred to the constitutional rights of the electors, princes, lords and cities collectively constituting the imperial Estates (Reichstände). Though religious privileges were an important part of these rights, all imperial Estates – regardless of confession – saw an over-mighty emperor as a threat. Thus, the war 'was a constitutional conflict which escaped control, which centred on the form of the Habsburgs' emperorship'.¹³

The scale of the Thirty Years War has encouraged historians to frame their explanations for its causes in equally expansive terms. Johannes Burkhardt presents it as the largest of several 'state-building wars' which reshaped early modern Europe from a loose, hierarchical order into one based more clearly on sovereign national states.¹⁴ The latter emerged slowly as a more consolidated, intermediary level of political authority between the concentered but localised power of lords and communities, and the pretensions to universal hegemony advanced most notably by the Habsburgs. Burkhardt's main point is to illuminate long-term structural change, rather than claim that the war was structurally determined, and his discussion of the events leading to the outbreak of hostilities in 1618 stresses contingency and the role of individual actors.

Michael Rohrschneider is equally wary of structural determination in his survey of Europe's 'neuralgic zones' in Robert Rebitsch's edited volume on the crisis year of 1618.¹⁵ Like Burkhardt, he sees Europe as undergoing a profound transformation from an essentially hierarchical order towards a more multi-polar system; a process which produced what Johannes Arndt has also identified as a series of regional 'conflict zones'.¹⁶ Similar to Burkhardt, Rohrschneider argues that this inherently unstable situation contributed to conflict by fostering a sense of anxiety, but it did not necessarily prompt decisions for war and could encourage peace-making, such as the truce between the Habsburgs and Ottomans in 1606.

¹¹ Schmidt, *Die Reiter der Apokalypse*, pp.688-9. Similar arguments in the revised edition of his popular textbook *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg* (9th edition, Munich, 2018, 1st 1995), pp.10-11, 98-102.

¹² The most important of these is *Geschichte des Alten Reiches. Staat und Nation in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 1999).

¹³ Schmidt, *Die Reiter der Apokalypse*, p.689.

¹⁴ *Der Krieg der Kriege: Eine neue Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Stuttgart, 2018), pp.89-107.

Burkhardt presents more condensed versions of his argument in his chapter on the Bohemian Revolt in the Hartmann/Schuller collection, and as 'Die These vom Staatsbildungskrieg im Widerstreit der Forschung', in M. Rohrschneider/ A. Tischer (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg (1618-1648) als Faktor der Wandlungsprozesses des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Münster, 2018), pp.71-92. A short version is available in English as 'The Thirty Years War', in R. Po-Chia Hsia (ed.), *A companion to the Reformation world* (Oxford, 2004), pp.272-90.

¹⁵ 'Ein Ensemble neuralgischer Zonen. Europäische Konfliktfelder um 1600', in R. Rebitsch (ed.), *1618. Der Beginn des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Vienna, 2017), pp.19-46.

¹⁶ *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.16-17.

Structural determinism features more obviously in the concept of a 'General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century', first advanced in the 1950s under the influence of Marxist stadial history, and subsequently increasingly modified as a global phenomenon allegedly caused by climate change.¹⁷ Echoes of the older socio-economic explanation based on a perceived shift from feudalism to capitalism can be found in Hans-Joachim Müller's brief synthesis which places the war in the broad sweep of German history from the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 to that of Westphalia in 1648.¹⁸ However, several of the works reviewed here show the impact of the linguistic-cultural historical 'turn'. Rather than emphasising either climate, or socio-economic development as changing material conditions, German scholars are increasingly focusing on contemporaries' perceptions of such changes as sources of anxiety and fear.

This approach is most clearly set out in Heinz Duchhardt's study of what he terms the 'crisis decade' framed politically by the collapse of the 1608 session of the Reichstag (imperial diet) and the Defenestration of Prague ten years later. He sets out Europe's various structural problems, some of which are those also discussed by Burkhardt and Rohrschneider, as well as the climatic, demographic, and socio-economic issues associated with the General Crisis, and the Empire's religious controversies which feature prominently in all accounts of the Thirty Years War. This is followed by an assessment of Europe's monarchs, princes and their advisors, most of whom are found lacking in the vision or ability to see beyond immediate problems. His survey of individual states likewise stresses mounting difficulties, culminating in the book's final section which argues that a deep fear of impending war pervaded all levels of European society.

The sense of unease encouraged millenarian and apocalyptic beliefs, as well as efforts to interpret cosmic signs, most notably the winter comet in November 1618 which is the subject of Andreas Bähr's detailed, yet lively study. The major strength of this work is that it treats its protagonists – a diverse array of astronomers, clerics, and literate commoners – as fully-rounded individuals who were often confused by what they saw and struggled to interpret it in ways that were both theologically sound and politically prudent. Bähr's key point is that all were concerned to distinguish between the proper fear of God that stemmed from true faith, and a false fear stemming from overliteral misinterpretation of portends. Thus, portends were a source of inner anxiety as much warnings of actual impending doom.¹⁹ At times, however, Bähr is a little too close to his subjects, particularly as each chapter is built around one or two key eyewitnesses. There were comets in 1577, 1580, 1582, 1596, and 1607 without European political leaders being frightened into opening major wars. The most telling contemporary statement about the comet Bähr cites is that by Andreas Kothen, a Catholic town councillor, who wrote in 1648 that 'if I had known then that it signalled a thirty years war, I would have arranged my affairs differently'.²⁰ Contemporary interpretations of the 1618 comet were retrospective, since even those made before it disappeared from view in December occurred six months after the Bohemian Revolt had broken out. The famous engraving by Matthias Merian which is reprinted in many books on the war, was not published until 1635. Like the aurora borealis observed around the time of Gustavus Adolphus' landing in Pomerania in 1630, portends served to make sense of what had happened, as much as what might occur. By 1730, it had become an established trope to open general histories of the war with the story of the comet, since this served the master narrative of the war as inevitable.

¹⁷ G. Parker, *Global crisis: War, climate change and catastrophe in the seventeenth century* (New haven, 2013).

¹⁸ H.J. Müller, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Leben und Überleben im konfessionellen Zeitalter* (Stuttgart, 2015), pp.14-51.

¹⁹ These arguments match those of Holger Berg's superb study of Erfurt during the war which Bähr has not consulted: *Military occupation under the eyes of the lord* (Göttingen, 2010).

²⁰ A. Bähr, *Der grausame Komet: Himmelszeichen und Weltgeschehen im Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 2017), p.95.

The Role of Religion

A major element in arguments for inevitability has been the belief that the war stemmed from the failure of the Peace of Augsburg of 1555 to preserve the balance between Catholics and Protestants in the Empire. Axel Gotthard is the leading exponent of this interpretation, and his general study of the war offers the clearest statement yet of his argument that progressive confessional polarisation split the Empire into two camps by 1608 whose inability to communicate led to war a decade later.²¹ He argues that the Peace of Augsburg was ahead of its time in attempting a political peace when contemporaries still clung to the belief that religious truth was singular and universal. The treaty dissimulated this contradiction through deliberately ambiguous terms. This legal framework created a vocabulary that Catholics and Protestants felt obliged to use for tactical reasons as they disputed the fate of the Catholic church lands, freedom for dissenters and the position of Calvinists who emerged as an additional confessional group in the Empire during the 1560s. The impasse allegedly stemmed from contemporaries' fear that concessions on legal or political grounds would endanger their souls.²²

Münkler is less prepared to interpret this as a religious war, instead seeing religion as an 'accelerator' exacerbating political issues.²³ However, he also follows the general line by presenting the years preceding 1618 as a succession of mounting crises. Helmut Neuhaus shares Gotthard's view that the imperial constitution was unable to stem confessional polarisation after 1608.²⁴ The most obvious manifestation of this was the formation of the Protestant Union by the elector Palatine in 1608, followed by the Catholic League founded by Duke Maximilian of Bavaria a year later. However, opinion is divided over how far these organisations contributed to the outbreak of war, with Gotthard believing their formation ushered in a 'pre-war' decade.²⁵ Michael Kaiser argues in his contribution to the Rebitsch volume that Maximilian and his League allies were indeed motivated by fear, but that this also made them cautious. Maximilian Lanzinner stresses Duke Maximilian's concern for honour and his ability to distinguish ends from means, arguing that we should see his meeting with Elector Palatine Frederick V in February 1618 as a serious attempt to defuse tension.²⁶

Stefan Ehrenpreis points to serious divisions in the Union's leadership and the Palatinate's selfish manipulation of the membership's fears, all of which led to the organisation's collapse by 1621 without ever having formally fought its Catholic rival.²⁷ Though he does not make it explicit, his discussion contradicts Gotthard's contribution in the same edited volume by revealing the Union's complete inability to agree a common policy. Not only did the Union fail to recruit the majority of Lutheran imperial Estates, but it was forced to include a plea in its founding charter that Lutheran and Calvinist clergy should not foster mutual hatred amongst their parishioners. Most of the weaker members regarded the Union as an insurance policy in case war broke out and had no desire to seek

²¹ His arguments also appear in more condensed form as 'Die Ursachen des Dreißigjährigen Krieges', in Rebitsch (ed.), *1618*, pp.47-76, and 'Der deutsche Konfessionskrieg seit 1619', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 122 (2002), 141-72.

²² A. Gotthard, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Eine Einführung* (Cologne, 2016), pp.32, 43, 44-5, 58-9.

²³ *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Europäische Katastrophe, deutsches Trauma 1618-1648* (Berlin, 2017), p.823. See also pp.75-101.

²⁴ 'Europa um 1600: das Heilige Römische Reich und die europäische Mächtekonstellation', in Hartmann/Schuller (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.10-22. Arndt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p.44 speaks of a 'chain reaction of the moments of crisis for the imperial constitution' after 1600.

²⁵ Gotthard, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.60-5.

²⁶ 'Maximilian I. von Bayern: Ein deutscher Fürst und der Krieg', in Hartmann/Schuller (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.80-93.

²⁷ 'Die protestantische Union 1608-21: Ein regionales Verteidigungs- oder antikaiserliches Offensivbündnis?', in Rebitsch (ed.), *1618*, pp.77-100.

a conflict.²⁸ In reality, the two organisations were as much vehicles for the dynastic interests of the rival Palatine and Bavarian branches of the Wittelsbachs, as they were for confessional interests.²⁹

The Bohemian Revolt, forming the war's opening phase, had its own dynamic as Jan Kilián's brief summary makes clear.³⁰ One important factor was the division within the Austrian Habsburgs, known subsequently as the Brothers' Quarrel, which not only weakened the dynasty, but caused factionalism within the Estates (*Landstände*) of their numerous provinces. Lothar Höbelt aptly terms the violent removal of Cardinal Klesl, Emperor Matthias' chief advisor, by Archduke Ferdinand on 20 July 1618 as a coup constituting the final act in this debilitating inter-familial conflict.³¹

The Defenestration of Prague is widely interpreted as 'the spark' that exploded the 'powder barrel' in the Empire.³² Refuting this interpretation is the main focus of Johannes Burkhardt's new book which, unlike his earlier engagement with the historiography on the war, concentrates primarily on why a war on this scale developed.³³ He argues that authors wishing to make this analogy 'should check whether the powder was dry'.³⁴ The book offers a lively and engaged critique of the 'legends' of constitutional breakdown and inevitable religious war. The central argument is that claims for the war's inevitability rest on a teleology which ignores or underplays all counter-trends, such as the meeting between Frederick and Maximilian discussed by Lanzinner, and the numerous other examples indicating that the Empire's elite (and indeed most of its population) were perfectly able to communicate with each other, despite the formation of more confessionalised world views around 1600. Even Gotthard is forced repeatedly to admit that most of the main actors were unprepared, undecided and unwilling to become involved in a major war.³⁵ Georg Schmidt is much more inclined to allow for contingency, including Emperor Matthias' death in March 1619 amidst talks to defuse the Bohemian Revolt; an incident given a prominent place in Burkhardt's argument. Schmidt strikes a middle position in the debate, arguing that the 'mass psychosis' of millenarianism neither caused the war, nor kept reigniting it, but 'the crisis management completely failed, because each party believed God was on their side and trusted that the other would give way [first]'.³⁶

The persistence of the notion of the Thirty Years War as a religious war is undoubtedly due to the appeal of this deceptively simple explanation for what was an extremely complex and messy sequence of events, as well as (we shall see below) the parallels drawn by Münkler, a host of journalists and much of the wider public between seventeenth-century Europe and today's Middle East. It was clear at the time that religion was central to the war, but the idea of it as a struggle between Protestants and Catholics was largely confined to the realm of polemics and the commentary of those far from the actual fighting. The classic religious war interpretation developed

²⁸ A point also made by C.W. Close, 'From a matter of religion to one of region: The Protestant Union and the start of the Thirty Years War', paper presented at the 8th Frühe Neuzeit Interdisziplinär conference, St Louis, 9 March 2018.

²⁹ P.H. Wilson, 'The Stuarts, the Palatinate, and the Thirty Years War', in Sara Wolfson/Valentina Caldari (eds.), *Marriage Diplomacy: Early Stuart Dynastic Politics in their European Context, c.1604-1630* (Woodbridge, 2018), pp.141-56.

³⁰ 'Religiös-politische Unruhen in Böhmen und der (dritte) Prager Fenstersturz', in Rebitsch (ed.), *1618*, pp.149-68.

³¹ "Schlimmer noch als die Böhmen..." Der Putsch vom 20. Juli als letzter Akt des Bruderzwists', in Rebitsch (ed.), *1618*, pp.128-48.

³² These terms are used by Gotthard, 'Ursachen', pp.59-60, 68, and *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p.55; Panthe, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Als Deutschland in Flammen stand* (Berlin, 2017), p.21; Duchhardt, *Der Wege in die Katastrophe*, p.230.

³³ Burkhardt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992).

³⁴ Burkhardt, *Der Krieg der Kriege*, p.73.

³⁵ Gotthard, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.78-81, 89-90.

³⁶ Schmidt, *Die Reiter der Apokalypse*, p.690.

relatively quickly in the half century following the Peace of Westphalia when it was articulated primarily by Protestant authors. The prominence of Protestants amongst the first three generations of professional historians during the nineteenth century helped entrench this within scholarship and school education.³⁷

Escalation and Duration

Why the war escalated and lasted so long forms another set of issues tackled by the new works. Most authors endorse the classic four-phase model, even if they (like Schmidt) do not explicitly use it to structure their discussions.³⁸ This sees the war expanding outwards in concentric circles from German to European war, with each phase defined by the intervention of a succession of increasingly more powerful actors: Bohemian-Palatine phase 1618-24; Danish phase 1625-9; Swedish phase 1630-5; French (or Franco-Swedish) phase 1635-48. This structure supports the argument that events slipped from the direction of the original belligerents whose interests were pushed aside by great power politics. It is highly selective in the range of those powers chosen to define each period, since all were members of the anti-Habsburg coalition whose Spanish backers are omitted from the list, as are the Transylvanians who pursued their own objectives in loose alliance with the Habsburgs' enemies in 1618-24 and 1644-5. It distracts attention from the short, but important periods when hostilities largely ceased (1623-5, 1629-30), as well as the Habsburgs' admittedly partisan distinction between the conflict before 1629, which they classed as a rebellion, and that after 1630 which was interpreted as a new war begun by the Swedish invasion.

Unfortunately, all the general surveys under review share the long-persisting problem of neglecting the second half of the war after 1635. Christian Panthe compares favourably with the rest by devoting around a third of the space spent on the war itself to the years after 1635. The others range from around a seventh (Schmidt, Münkler) to a fifth (Burkhardt, Gotthard), broadly in line with treatment in the classic studies of the conflict, for example those by C.V. Wedgwood and Geoffrey Parker.³⁹ Most authors seem to suffer from fatigue as their accounts reach the Peace of Prague in 1635, by when most of the war's best-known personalities were dead: Gustavus Adolphus, Frederick V, and the Catholic League general Jean T'serclaes de Tilly (all 1632); Wallenstein (1634), followed soon by Ferdinand II (February 1637). The palpable sense of exhaustion often feeds into the explanations for why the war finally ended, with the presumption that the mounting destruction and the supposedly growing inability of rulers to control their armies forced all parties to make peace.⁴⁰

These long-established assumptions are increasingly being challenged by new work. One of the key findings is the close correlation between military operations and diplomacy. All belligerents remained within the prevailing early modern conception of war as an extension of a legal dispute, in which force was applied to oblige opponents to make an honourable settlement, not exterminate them. These findings challenge the religious war argument, especially in the way it has been employed to explain the level of violence, as well as indicating the continued ability of the contending parties to talk to each other, despite years of conflict. Frank Kleinehagenbrock provides a useful summary of this, even if his analysis is framed by the conventional four-phase model of the

³⁷ Christian Mühling, 'Wie der Dreißigjährige Krieg zum Religionskrieg wurde', in Rohrschneider/Tischer (eds.), *Dynamik durch Gewalt?*, pp.93-118; K. Cramer, *The Thirty Years War and German memory in the nineteenth century* (Lincoln, 2007). Further discussion of the debate on whether it was a religious war in C. Gantet, 'Guerre de Trente Ans et Paix de Westphalie: Un bilan historiographique', *Dix-septième siècle*, 277 (2017), 645-66 at 646-9, 651-3; P.H. Wilson, 'Dynasty, constitution and confession: The role of religion in the Thirty Years War', *International History Review*, 30 (2008), 473-514.

³⁸ For example: Müller, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p.66; Schmidt, *Die Reiter der Apokalypse*, p.689; Arndt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.59-175; Burkhardt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p.16.

³⁹ C.V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (London, 1938); G. Parker (ed.), *The Thirty Years War* (London, 1987).

⁴⁰ For example, Münkler argues the war ended by mutual exhaustion: *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p.36.

war's development and is based on work published before 2010.⁴¹ Since then, we are fortunate in having two substantial studies devoted to different parts of the period after the Peace of Prague that directly engage with the debates over the relationship between war and diplomacy and why the conflict finally ended.

Lothar Höbelt draws on the rich resources of the Viennese military archives to build a detailed discussion, from the Habsburg perspective, of the war between the great imperial victory at Nördlingen (1634), which brought Ferdinand II to the cusp of winning the war in the Peace of Prague, to the crushing defeat at Jankau (1645) which forced his son and successor, Ferdinand III, to open serious talks at the Westphalian congress.⁴² The subsidiary archival basis for Höbelt's study in the papers of Habsburg generals scattered in numerous Czech archives sheds an interesting light on the important, but surprisingly neglected question of who won the war: the current location of these documents testifies to the longevity of the gains made by the dynasty and its closest supporters at the expense of their domestic opponents within the Bohemian and Austrian elites. Holding onto the lands they had seized after the imperial victory over Frederick V and the Bohemians at White Mountain (1620) was a key factor behind the Habsburgs' grim determination to fight on, even after 1642 as hopes steadily evaporated that the Peace of Prague would last.

Höbelt's study is shaped by his proximity to the sources and explicit intention to follow Ranke and write history 'as it actually was'.⁴³ However, the detail is balanced by clear, incisive commentary at the end of each chapter, and the reader's comprehension is assisted through the inclusion of useful situation maps, as well as lavish colour illustrations. As the subtitle suggests, his primary focus is on the connections between policy and strategy, rather than battles, tactics or the inner workings of the imperial army. There is a heavy emphasis on the Habsburgs' financial and logistical problems, leading to some important insights. First, he rebuts the customary verdict that the conflict 'seemed to escape from rational control; to cease indeed to be "war" in the sense of politically-motivated use of force by generally recognised authorities, and to degenerate instead into universal, anarchic, and self-perpetuating violence' in which 'the soldiers alone ruled' and 'ragged bands were scattered across Germany, caring nothing for the cause, knowing nothing of any planned strategy, their chief care to scratch nourishment out of the soil and to avoid serious fighting. They fought only their competitors for food, of whatever party'.⁴⁴ Instead, as he argues, policy continued to dictate strategy, and the Habsburgs' decision to parcel out their inadequate resources was determined by the need to consider their remaining German allies, notably Bavaria, as well as to counter the threats posed by the increasingly effective Franco-Swedish coalition.

Second, Höbelt's detailed reconstruction of Habsburg resource allocation and strategic decisions challenges some of the claims made about the importance of external involvement in the war. France's decision to intervene openly in 1635 had only a limited impact in the short term, because the main French military effort was directed against Spain, while other than the 1635-6 campaign, the imperial army continued to be preoccupied with fighting the Swedes. The situation remained in balance into 1642, with the Swedes courting disaster on several occasions, notably during the imperial offensive of 1640-1. Sweden's decision to fight a separate war against Denmark 1643-5 initially offset greater French involvement after 1644, but the coincidence of Denmark's defeat and the Swedish victory over the imperial army at Jankau in 1645 represented a major setback for the emperor whose own territory was invaded for the first time since 1627.

⁴¹ 'Das Alte Reich als europäisches Schlachtfeld: der Schwedisch-Französische Krieg (1635-1648)', in Hartmann/Schuller (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.128-45.

⁴² *Von Nördlingen bis Jankau. Kaiserliche Strategie und Kriegführung 1635-1645* (Vienna, 2016).

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.7.

⁴⁴ Quotations from M. Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford, 1976), p.37 and Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War*, p.362, 383.

Robert Rebitsch, Jenny Öhman and Jan Kilián set out to extend Höbelt's study by covering the rest of the war to the climatic Swedish siege and partial sack of Prague in 1648.⁴⁵ Like Höbelt, they are concerned with a question of inevitability which mirrors the debate on the war's causes, but which until recently, has received comparatively little attention. The general view has been that the war ended through mutual exhaustion and that the Habsburgs were clearly losing when peace was finally made. These assumptions were first seriously challenged by Ernst Höfer, a former German army officer, who published a detailed and insightful account of the final campaigns of 1647-8 from the Habsburg perspective.⁴⁶ Rebitsch, Öhman and Kilián confirm Höfer's verdict that the military situation remained in flux when peace was signed in Westphalia. Piccolomini, the imperial commander, had achieved his objective of forcing the main Franco-Swedish army to evacuate Bavaria and, thus, had rescued the emperor's most important remaining ally. Like Höbelt, they stress the ongoing problems within the Franco-Swedish alliance that repeatedly opened opportunities for the imperial army to make limited, but nonetheless still important local gains; a point also made by Derek Croxton in his superb analysis of Franco-Swedish military and diplomatic coordination.⁴⁷ The real sticking point in Westphalia was France's insistence that Austria desist from aiding Spain should that power refuse to agree peace. The departure of the Spanish ambassador from the congress in June 1648, followed by news of the French victory over Spain's main army at Lens in August, increased the hand of the French delegation, and finally convinced Ferdinand III to agree terms.⁴⁸

However, the three authors contest Höbelt's claim that the Swedish assault on Prague was 'the drop that brought the barrel to spill over' and forced Ferdinand's hand.⁴⁹ Certainly, the Swedes' ability to plunder the Little Side, or western third of the city, hit the Habsburg elite hard as their town houses were looted. However, Ferdinand endorsed Piccolomini's strategy of attrition, accepting that Prague's suffering was a price worth paying to concentrate imperial resources to save Bavaria. Importantly, in view of the idea that the emperor faced inevitable defeat, Rebitsch, Öhman and Kilián indicate that the Swedish diplomats broke ranks with their French partners and refused to capitalise on Prague's predicament as an opportunity to increase their demands. They recognised that no clear victory was in sight and that their country's straightened finances meant that they could not end the war without assistance. The imperial Estates' offer of cash to demobilise the Swedish army was supplemented by an additional, secret promise of money from the Habsburgs, which was just too good to be refused.⁵⁰

Consideration of these financial aspects adds to the conclusion that peace followed rational, political calculations, rather than was forced on the signatories by material necessity. Höbelt estimates that the loot from Prague matched the 5 million talers paid by the imperial Estates 1648-50 to disband the Swedish army. The Swedish capture of Bregenz in January 1647 netted another 4 million florins (about 2.7 million talers), while other sums were being extracted by all belligerents through their occupation of vast swathes of territory.⁵¹ While all parties were aware of the dangerous level of

⁴⁵ *1648: Kriegführung und Friedensverhandlungen. Prag und das Ende des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Innsbruck, 2018).

⁴⁶ *Das Ende des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Cologne, 1997).

⁴⁷ D. Croxton, *Peacemaking in early modern Europe: Cardinal Mazarin and the congress of Westphalia, 1643-1648* (Selinsgrove, 1999).

⁴⁸ Rebitsch/Öhman/Kilián (eds.), *1648: Kriegführung und Friedensverhandlungen*, pp.253, 272, 281-92. Their study confirms the findings of Michael Rohrschneider's study of Spanish diplomacy at the peace congress: *Der gescheitete Frieden von Münster. Spaniens Ringen mit Frankreich auf dem Westfälischen Friedenskongress (1643-1649)* (Münster, 2007).

⁴⁹ Höbelt, *Von Nördlingen bis Jankau*, p.434.

⁵⁰ Rebitsch/Öhman/Kilián (eds.), *1648: Kriegführung und Friedensverhandlungen*, pp.266-7, 271-4.

⁵¹ Höbelt, *Von Nördlingen bis Jankau*, p.434; P. Broucek, *Die Eroberung von Bregenz am 4. Jänner 1647* (Vienna, 1981), p.12.

destruction and the urgency of peace, they had the means to continue fighting if they had wished. This opens an important question so far largely untouched by historians. Research has focused on formal revenue raising through the model of the Fiscal-Military State and studies of Estates, assemblies and other representative bodies which bargained with rulers over the size of taxation and the means to raise it. While studies of government borrowing and debts naturally touch on wider, public wealth, relatively little attention has been paid to hoarded wealth and the potential fiscal value of assets like art collections, libraries, furniture and other valuables held by the church and secular elite. This issue could tell us much about the political balance between rulers and ruled. It seems clear that, even when they faced existential crises like foreign invasion, early modern governments found it hard to compel their wealthiest subjects to contribute to defence. Addressing this question would help us understand early modern attitudes to 'opportunity cost' in a similar manner to that explored by Rebitsch, Öhman and Kilián's assessment of Ferdinand III's dilemma of whether to allocate his limited military resources to save Prague or Bavaria. War often forced early modern Europeans to decide between paying the taxman or enemy soldiers. Investigating this would reveal much about questions of political trust and attitudes to risk.

The Swedes held Prague's Little Side for over three months, continuing their efforts to capture the rest of the city until 8 November, five days after hearing news that peace had been signed in Westphalia. Jenny Öhman's chapter in the collected monograph investigates the prolonged plundering as a violent form of cultural transfer. Queen Christina was notorious for ordering her generals to raid Catholic monastic libraries to add to her own book collection in Stockholm.⁵² While Öhman does consider the cultural significance to the Swedes of their loot, her discussion remains broadly within the boundaries of conventional art history, focusing on identifying what was taken and tracing its subsequent fate. Overall, the volume is a little disjointed, with Rebitsch covering operations from the imperial perspective, Öhman providing the Swedish view and Kilián narrating the siege of Prague, leading to some overlap between chapters.

The War's Military History

Together with Höbelt's book, these two works extend our understanding of the war's second half and demonstrate the ability of military history to help address important, broader questions. The same is true for the campaigns in northern Italy, which are regarded as part of the Thirty Years War as defined as a general European conflict.⁵³ Nonetheless, much of the war's military history remains to be written. In addition to the clichés about mercenary armies out of control, already mentioned, others also persist, such as the belief that the Union and League were already armed before the war broke out.⁵⁴ Though some of their larger members organised militias, both organisations lacked permanent armies, and simply had arrangements to mobilise common forces in emergencies. Rebitsch contributes a short overview of military operations in Bohemia in 1618-20 in his own edited volume, while a few studies of individual battles have appeared, aimed mainly at the popular military history market.⁵⁵ There is a short study of the Bavarian army, framed by conventional

⁵² See the insightful study by E. Hagström-Mohlin, *Krigsbyttets biografi. Byten i riksarkivet, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek och Skokloster Slott under 1600-talet* (Göteborg, 2015).

⁵³ G. Hanlon, *Italy 1636: Cemetery of armies* (Oxford, 2016), and his *The hero of Italy: Odoardo Farnese, Duke of Parma, his soldiers, and his subjects in the Thirty Years War* (Oxford, 2014); D. Maffi, *En defensa del imperio: Los ejércitos de Felipe IV y la guerra por la hegemonía europea (1635-1659)* (Madrid, 2014); G. Ongaro, *Peasants and soldiers: the management of the Venetian military structure in the mainland dominion between the 16th and 17th centuries* (London, 2017).

⁵⁴ As asserted, for example, by Duchhardt, *Der Wege in die Katastrophe*, p.156.

⁵⁵ L. Spring, *The battle of White Mountain 1620 and the Bohemian Revolt 1618-1620* (Solihull, 2018), and lavishly illustrated books on White Mountain, Fleurus (1622), Tuttlingen (1643) and the Spanish infantry in the 1630s in the series *Guerreros y Batallas* by the Madrid-based publisher Almena. Spanish intervention in support of the emperor is also covered by H.A. Cañete, *Los Tercios de Flandres en Alemania: La Guerra del*

institutional and operational history, providing a useful compendium of information marred unfortunately by sloppy copy-editing. The Saxon army has received similar, if rather fuller and lavishly illustrated treatment.⁵⁶ The archival sources for both armies are very rich and offer considerable potential for further research.

One important area of continued interest has been the role of 'military enterprisers' who raised and commanded troops. The field shifted recently with David Parrott's seminal study which argued for the importance of political and cultural factors alongside the emphasis on socio-economic factors which have dominated explanations since Fritz Redlich's pioneering study in the 1960s.⁵⁷ Not all senior officers fit the archetype. Tilly only received his own regiment in 1624, 14 years after becoming commander of the Bavarian army and about 46 years into his military career. Marcus Junkelmann offers an incisive, thoughtful assessment of Tilly, arguing his reputation was permanently blackened by the unintended sack of Magdeburg by his army and his crushing defeat four months later at Breitenfeld in September 1631.⁵⁸ In contrast to Tilly's relatively uncomplicated personality, Wallenstein remains an ambiguous character whose motives cannot be determined fully, as argued by Christoph Kampmann. The recent research has unravelled the complex historiographical threads and revealed their connections to Wallenstein's place in literature and drama but has not added much to the assessment of him as a general or his place in military history.⁵⁹

As with battles, the importance of individual sieges has long been noted, and all general accounts of the war dwell at length on the sack of Magdeburg in May 1631.⁶⁰ The cost of constructing, defending and attacking fortified towns is well-known, as are matters of fortress design and their impact on the urban environment. However, several authors have called for a systematic study of the role of fortified places in the broader conduct of the war and its wider impact on society, economy and culture.⁶¹ For example, we do not yet know whether fortresses were cost effective, in terms of protecting inhabitants and territory. Some well-fortified cities, like Hamburg and Cologne, escaped serious attacks, whereas others, like Magdeburg and Würzburg were sites of death and serious destruction.

Palatinado 1620-1623 (Malaga, 2014). See also P.H. Wilson, *Lützen* (Oxford, 2018) for further discussion of the historiography.

⁵⁶ L. Spring, *The Bavarian army during the Thirty Years War: The backbone of the Catholic League* (Solihull, 2017); R. Sennwald, *Das kursächsische Heer im Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (2 vols., Berlin, 2013).

⁵⁷ D. Parrott, *The business of war: Military enterprise and military revolution in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2012); F. Redlich, *The German military enterpriser and his workforce* (2 vols., Wiesbaden, 1964-5). See also A. Ackermann, 'Vom Feldherrn zum regierenden Fürsten? Optionen im Reich und in Europa für Herzog Bernhard von Weimar und die Ernstiner', in Rohrschneider/Tischer (eds.), *Dynamik durch Gewalt?*, pp.207-28.

⁵⁸ M. Junkelmann, 'Tilly: Eine Karriere im Zeitalter der Religionskriege und der "Militärischen Revolution"', in Hartmann/Schuller (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.58-79.

⁵⁹ C. Kampmann, 'Albrecht von Wallenstein: Mythos und Geschichte eines Kriegsunternehmers', in Hartmann/Schuller (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.108-27; J. Bahlcke/C. Kampmann (eds.), *Wallensteinbilder im Widerstreit* (Cologne, 2011); H. Mannigel, *Wallenstein in Weimar, Wien und Berlin. Das Urteil über Albrecht von Wallenstein in der deutschen Historiographie von Friedrich Schiller bis Leopold von Ranke* (Husum, 2003); G. Mortimer, *Wallenstein. The Enigma of the Thirty Years War* (Basingstoke, 2010); S. Davies, *The Wallenstein Figure in German Literature and Historiography* (Leeds, 2010).

⁶⁰ For example, H. Medick, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Zeugnisse vom Leben mit Gewalt* (Göttingen, 2018), pp.205-22, 247-51; Schmidt, *Die Reiter der Apokalypse*, pp.364-70, and notably Münkler, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.464-85.

⁶¹ Höbelt, *Von Nördlingen bis Jankau*, p.449; Rebitsch/Öhman/Kilián (eds.), *1648: Kriegführung und Friedensverhandlungen*, p.71n216.

Otto Mayr provides detailed coverage of the siege of the imperial city of Lindau on Lake Constance in January-March 1647.⁶² The Swedes captured the imperial gunboat flotilla which they used to support their attack on Lindau which is situated on an island. Eventually, the Swedish commander decided it was not worth risking the lives of his men to assault the city and withdrew. Coverage of these dramatic events accounts for only about a seventh of Mayr's book which examines the city's experience since riots stirred by inflammatory preaching prompted the emperor to impose a garrison in 1628.⁶³ Although Mayr adopts a narrative approach and does not offer comparisons with other cities, his work offers rich insight into the realm of 'little war', or the small-scale operations that spread across the Empire and accounted for much of the war's material and demographic impact, but which rarely feature prominently in conventional military history or general accounts. In addition to fascinating detail on espionage, he rightly stresses the importance of individual personalities in influencing how war affected the civilian population, noting the very different character of the imperial occupation under the controversial and headstrong Colonel Peter König and his conciliatory and pragmatic successor, Colonel Augustin von Vitzthum.

Lindau was a Protestant city held more-or-less against its will by imperial troops, whereas Würzburg was capital of one of the most important Catholic League members and was defending by its own forces when it fell to a Swedish assault in October 1631. Its experience is recounted at length by Joachim Ganzhorn who acted as the de facto head of the city and episcopal government during the Swedish occupation 1631-4. Ganzhorn is, to a considerable extent, an unsympathetic figure in modern eyes, having removed the judicial immunity of clergy to execute 48 priests accused of witchcraft in 1627-9. His account has been known before, but Christian Leo has compiled the complete text and provides a model scholarly edition which not only reconstructs Ganzhorn's family history but offers a lucid synthesis of Würzburg's experience of assault, sack and military occupation. The city's defenders were well-aware of Madgeburg's fate only five months before, and the Swedes exploited this both to intimidate them and to excuse their own bad behaviour once they had broken through the wall.⁶⁴

The Experience of War

The publication of Ganzhorn's account adds to the growing number of eyewitness documents easily available to researchers. Personal testimonies are now a major field of study, rather than simply being mined for anecdotal examples to illustrate more general accounts or to corroborate what can be found in conventional textual sources, like administrative documents. Hans Medick, a leading exponent of this 'history from below', provides a useful overview of the challenges and benefits of historicising personal experience as part of a wider history of the war.⁶⁵ The potential and limits of this approach are evident in Medick's new book which offers 'an episodic documentary micro history' of the war.⁶⁶ The eight chapters cover the Defenestration of Prague, the role of religion, violence in everyday life, plague and hunger, mass death through warfare, media responses to the deaths of Gustavus Adolphus and Wallenstein, the Westphalian peace, and the execution of its terms through the Nuremberg congress. After a brief historiographical discussion, each chapter focuses on selected eyewitness accounts and contemporary images which are reproduced in some

⁶² *Die schwedische Belagerung der Reichsstadt Lindau 1647* (Lindau, 2016).

⁶³ Mayr misses Johannes Wolfart's study of these riots and their background: *Religion, Government and Political Culture in Early Modern Germany: Lindau 1520-1628* (Basingstoke, 2002), esp. pp.109-13, 121-71.

⁶⁴ C. Leo (ed.), *Würzburg unter schwedischer Herrschaft 1631-1633. Die 'Summarische Beschreibung' des Joachim Ganzhorn* (Würzburg, 2017), pp.281-4, 288, 293, 297. On this point, see also P.H. Wilson, 'Atrocities in the Thirty Years War', in Micheal O'Siochrú/ Jane Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Ireland 1641. Context and Reactions* (Manchester University Press, 2013) pp.153-75.

⁶⁵ 'Der Dreißigjährige Krieg als Erfahrung und Memoria', in Hartmann/Schuller (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.158-72.

⁶⁶ Medick, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p.14.

length. The core argument is that the war primarily took place 'in the home' where the military and civilian 'lifeworlds' violently intersected through billeting and requisitioning. How far this really constitutes an 'alternative history' is open to question, since the micro-historical perspective relies on the reader already being familiar with the broader sweep of events.

The impact of this approach on mainstream historiography can be gauged from Christian Pantle's new history of the war aimed at a general readership.⁶⁷ He still provides a conventional framework, covering the war's causes, course and consequences, but shifts to perspective to how the war was experienced. The result is an engaging discussion which tackles thematic issues, such as military organisation and logistics, as well as the key events. Alongside Maurus Friesenegger, prior of the Catholic monastery of Andechs, Pantle's chief witness is the anonymous soldier, now identified as Peter Hagendorf through correlation of the biographical information in his handwritten diary and that found in parish registers. Hagendorf has replaced Hans Jakob Grimmelshausen as the most widely cited 'voice of the people' in all recent writing on the war. While Grimmelshausen grew up during the war and served as a soldier, his writings were all works of fiction, most notably *Simplicissimus* and *Mother Courage*. By contrast, Hagendorf left a voluminous chronicle of his service in the Bavarian and Swedish armies, written in a direct, if laconic style.⁶⁸ Hagendorf's diary is both ordinary, in terms of his social background and the nature of his military service, and exceptional in that it is the only known extant personal testimony of this length from a low-ranking soldier. There is a risk that, like Grimmelshausen before him, Hagendorf become the archetype from which broad generalisations are made.⁶⁹

A good way to avoid this is through a comparative approach, as adopted by Volker Meid's study of the imprint of the war on German baroque literature.⁷⁰ Meid includes Hagendorf, because he broadens the definition of his subject matter beyond the usual suspects, like Grimmelshausen and the famous poets Martin Opitz and Andreas Gryphius, to include songs, the texts of printed broadsheets and a host of lesser-known writers. This disparate body of work was united by its didactic concern to promote morality, as well as its literary style. All the writers engaged with the horrors of war and yearnings for peace, but Meid argues this was also a highly creative period that gave German poetry its language and form. His work is structured roughly chronologically, with the first part covering the war's causes and first half, the second dealing with responses to the experience of war, and the third covering hopes for peace and the post-war critique of violence. Like Schmidt, Meid sees evidence for the growing articulation of German national sentiment.⁷¹ He also argues that the experience of war heightened the traditional sense of the transitory nature of earthly existence by demonstrating daily just how precarious life was.

Bernd Roeck has recently reiterated his argument that people's faith in the supposed stability and eternal character of the divine enabled them to cope psychologically with the trauma of the war.⁷² The Reformation Christianised the population which embraced the belief in the soul's immortality, and that the pious would be rewarded with entry to heaven while sinners would go to hell. The war

⁶⁷ *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Als Deutschland in Flammen stand* (Berlin, 2017).

⁶⁸ First published in 1994, this has appeared as a new edition edited by Jan Peters, *Peter Hagendorf: Tagebuch eines Söldners aus dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (Göttingen, 2012).

⁶⁹ For instance, he features prominently in Müller, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.80-99, and is the only military figure among the five people selected to structure the five-part ARD1 docu-drama on the war.

⁷⁰ *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg in der deutschen Barockliteratur* (Stuttgart, 2017).

⁷¹ *Ibid*, pp.161-83. On this aspect, see also A. Lasarewa, "'O Teutschland, wach doch auf!': Der Dreißigjährige Krieg und die deutsche Nationsbildung', in Rohrschneider/Tischer (eds.), *Dynamik durch Gewalt?*, pp.291-313.

⁷² 'Der Dreißigjährige Krieg und die Menschen im Reich: Überlegungen zu Formen psychischer Krisenbewältigung in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts', in Hartmann/Schuller (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.146-57. This argument appeared first in his study of Augsburg: *Eine Stadt in Krieg und Frieden* (Göttingen, 1989).

was certainly presented by all clergy as divine punishment, but as Otto Ulbricht has pointed out, 'in their everyday life, such a theological explanation was much too general to be of any use – except perhaps to the very pious'.⁷³ Nonetheless, Roeck raises a useful point that scholars have yet to address adequately: in contrast to other late medieval crises, there was no significant breakdown of society, despite the long duration of the Thirty Years War.

Mary Elizabeth Ailes examines the gender aspects of experience in her study of Swedish women in the war, seeking to illuminate their 'crucial role' in Sweden's military effort, as well as the war's impact on their lives.⁷⁴ She notes that Sweden was unique amongst the major belligerents in being ruled by a woman, Queen Christina after 1644, while the nature of its involvement meant that there were distinct home and war fronts as the conflict was outside the country.⁷⁵ She examines women on campaign, women's place in Sweden's conscription system, officers' wives on the home front and Queen Christina's influence on the direction of war and peace negotiations at the Westphalian congress. The discussion is full of rich detail, much of it drawn from the kind of personal testimonies that are being used to study the war in the Empire. Sweden's extraordinarily full parish records make it possible to reconstruct individual stories in far more detail than is generally possible for most of early modern Europe, and the inclusion of some family trees would have helped the reader follow some of the detailed cases Ailes recounts. The general conclusion that women were important to the war effort is not that novel in the light of recent work on early modern European warfare,⁷⁶ and it is a pity that the engagement with the broader historiography and comparisons which appear in the introduction are not followed up consistently throughout the book.

The Peace of Westphalia and its Significance

All the new general studies of the war naturally cover the Peace of Westphalia, with Schmidt offering the fullest account, while Heinz Duchhardt has published a broader study of the year 1648 which mirrors his new book on 1608-18 as the 'crisis decade'.⁷⁷ Franz Brendle provides a succinct overview of the peacemakers' intentions and how far they were achieved.⁷⁸ Johannes Burkhardt interprets the peace through his thesis of the conflict as a 'state-building war', arguing that Westphalia's long-term significance derives from that fact that it marked the point when the division of Europe into sovereign states became an irreversible process.⁷⁹

Discussion of the peace has moved recently beyond being a scholarly issue to one of current politics, as several individuals and organisations have called for 'A Westphalia for the Middle East' to settle the wars in that region.⁸⁰ This discussion has broadened into a debate on the contemporary relevance of the Thirty Years War as a possible paradigm to understand current conflicts and global geo-political changes. Most authors caution against ahistorical comparisons, whilst noting some resonance. Pantle sees the Thirty Years War's contemporary relevance in serving as a warning to today's states not to intervene in other peoples' wars, notably that in the Ukraine.⁸¹ Schmidt sees a

⁷³ 'The experience of violence during the Thirty Years War', in J. Canning et al (eds.), *Power, violence and mass death* (Aldershot, 2004), pp.97-127 at 121.

⁷⁴ *Courage and Grief: Women and Sweden's Thirty Years War* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 2018), p.5.

⁷⁵ Hessen-Kassel was also under female rule after 1637: T. Helfferich, *The Iron Princess: Amelia Elisabeth and the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge, MA., 2013).

⁷⁶ Notably J.A. Lynn, *Women, Armies and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2008).

⁷⁷ H. Duchhardt, *1648: Das Jahr der Schlagzeilen. Europa zwischen Krieg und Frieden* (Vienna, 2015).

⁷⁸ 'Der Westfälische Frieden als Kompromiss', in Hartmann/Schuller (eds.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.173-83.

⁷⁹ 'Bedeutung und Wirkung des Westfälischen Friedens', in *ibid*, pp.184-93.

⁸⁰ Most notably, the German foreign minister in 2015. For some of this, see the *New Statesman*, 22-28 June 2016, pp.22-6 and P. Milton/M. Axworthy/B. Simms, *Towards a Westphalia for the Middle East* (London, 2018).

⁸¹ Pantle, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.341-3.

parallel between the Thirty Years War and current Middle Eastern conflicts in how participants saw themselves as summoned by God to fight, but otherwise disputes any analogies.⁸²

By contrast, the main purpose behind Münkler's general history is to stress the value of using the war to understand current and future conflicts, as well as to warn the German public about the futility of relying on international law to stabilise the world. He sharply criticises historians for historicising the Thirty Years War and, with rather less foundation, for failing to provide any general histories since that of C.V. Wedgwood.⁸³ He identifies many structural parallels between the Thirty Years War and today's conflicts, chiefly those in the Middle East. These include the role of violent non-state actors, notably warlords, and the absence of clearly-defined belligerents or sharp distinctions between soldiers and civilians, as well as prolonged hostilities which drag on without a clearly foreseeable conclusion and which are marked by all-pervasive violence and waves of religious refugees. These parallels suggest that today's world is more closely aligned structurally with the era of the Thirty Years War than with the more recent past. Münkler's core argument is that era of 'Westphalian system' of sovereign states has ended and that the world faces a return to pre-Westphalian political and military conditions.

These arguments are open to serious questions and Schmidt has already pointed out that 'there were confessionalised states and condottieri in Central Europe, but no state of God and no warlords', while the Empire cannot be classed as a 'failed state' since it continued to function effectively after 1648.⁸⁴ It is unfortunate, given his stated purpose for writing, that Münkler confines his discussion of the war's relevance to his introductory and concluding chapter and otherwise offers a conventional history primarily concerned with high politics and major battles. His brief reminder that actors always have a range of possible choices despite structural constraints is an important challenge to those who have presented the war as inevitable.⁸⁵ It is perhaps best conclude by concurring with Gotthard's assessment of the contemporary relevance of studying the Thirty Years War lies not in providing answers but in prompting people to ask better questions about the problems of today's world.⁸⁶

Conclusions

Established debates on the war's causes, course and consequences continue to dominate research, with questions of its supposed inevitability, the role of religion, and explanations for its escalation and conclusion all remaining contested. Within this broad continuity, it is possible to detect some important shifts. Foremost is the move away from structural approaches emphasising socio-economic and environmental factors in favour of explanations stressing perceptions, and notably the idea that the war's origins lay in a pre-war climate of fear. Whether this sense of anxiety led directly to war remains disputed. While undoubtedly related to the general linguistic-cultural turn in Western scholarship since about 1990, the current preoccupation with perceptions at least pays more attention to the role of human agency, and thus offers a way in which conventional political history – in the form of diplomacy and state policy – can be combined with studies of the broader population and its anxieties.

Current work on the war all shows the beneficial impact of the history of mentalities, as well as other new methodologies, like battlefield archaeology and the study of material culture. Combined, this work provides a fuller picture of how the war was experienced, as well as how and why the war was remembered as a spasm of seemingly uncontrolled violence. The second half of the conflict is

⁸² Schmidt, *Die Reiter der Apokalypse*, pp.693-4.

⁸³ Münkler, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p.21, 36.

⁸⁴ Schmidt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p.107, and his *Die Reiter der Apokalypse*, pp.694.

⁸⁵ Münkler, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp.837-9.

⁸⁶ Gotthard, 'Die Vorgeschichte', p.45.

finally receiving the attention it deserves, and this is providing a much clearer explanation for why the conflict lasted so long, as well as why it ended when it did, rather than continuing. The history of war finance, political decision-making and the linkage between strategy and military operations are all moving more sharply into focus. Nonetheless, much remains to be done. We still know far more about the armies of the first half of the war than those fighting after 1635, while our knowledge of how they were recruited, financed and commanded remains patchy. There is an over-emphasis on famous battles, with insufficient regard paid to sieges and especially the 'little war' of raids, outposts and minor operations. Meanwhile, studies of the war's impact remain guided by the long-established patterns of regional and local history, with insufficient comparative work. Above all, we need to find better ways to link micro and macro approaches, rather than simply piling up more studies of individual communities or small groups of individuals. Given the way that anniversaries of other major historical events have stimulated research, there are good reasons to believe the study of the Thirty Years War will similarly benefit from the renewed interest.