

## The Swedish Intervention: How the Thirty Years War Became International

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*“The Swedish Intervention” examines the international implications of Sweden’s involvement in the Thirty Years War in 1630. The article argues that the Swedish intervention clearly marked the Thirty Years War’s transition from an internal conflict to a continental war. The diplomacy that allowed Sweden to launch a campaign into Germany without fear for its Baltic territories is particularly important to this argument; since, it was not motivated by religion and betrayed a wide international interest in the war. Sweden’s policy of expansion in the Baltic region suggests that the kingdom may have been looking for an excuse to invade Germany, and France’s long-running rivalry with the Holy Roman Empire made its involvement all but certain. The first twelve years of the war involved German principalities almost to the exclusion of all others, but the last half of the war saw Germany turned into Europe’s battlefield as Swedish, French, Spanish, and German armies fought each other to a bloody stalemate.*

Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden believed that his kingdom’s intervention in the Thirty Years War, an ostensibly internal religious war of the Holy Roman Empire, was necessary to ensure Sweden’s security. After the Swedish nobility broke away from the Kalmar Union (the union of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden created by the ascension of Margaret I to the thrones of all three kingdoms) and established Sweden as an independent Protestant monarchy under Gustavus I Vasa in 1523, Denmark and Russia threatened Sweden on three sides. Denmark retained the southwestern tip of the Swedish mainland and Norway, and Russia held territory to the east and south of Swedish Finland. Swedish control of Estonia and Charles IX’s usurpation of the Swedish throne from his nephew Sigismund, the newly elected king of Poland, created an enemy of Poland by the year 1600.<sup>1</sup> With the defeat of the Danish army in 1626, Imperial armies occupied much of the German Baltic coast and all of Jutland. The proximity of Imperial forces to the Swedish mainland with only a beaten kingdom of Denmark clinging to a few Baltic islands as a buffer, and the beginning of the construction of an Imperial Baltic fleet presented a clear danger to Sweden’s security from invasion.<sup>2</sup> Thus, politics, national security, and fear of an aggressive Catholic power attempting to return Sweden to the Catholic fold motivated Gustavus Adolphus to invade Germany in 1630, and he used religious rhetoric to generate support of his intervention in Germany both in Sweden and in Germany. Until the intervention, only one of Sweden’s enemies was Catholic, and none of Sweden’s wars were over confessional differences but over territory. When Sweden invaded Germany in 1630, Gustavus did so to protect Protestantism, but his intervention represented something far more important than the salvation of German

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden* (London: English Universities Press, 1973), 11-18. Charles IX and his supporters argued that Sigismund was unfit to rule Sweden because he converted to Catholicism in order to be elected king of Poland.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-67.

Protestantism. The Swedish Intervention, with the open aid of France, signaled the end of the internal religious war and the beginning of an international political war.

Understanding the Swedish Intervention requires an understanding of the Thirty Years War and the war's origins. Indeed, one historiographical school of thought negates my thesis entirely. Thus, an understanding of the merits and faults of the major theses regarding the origin of the war is imperative. Historians generally describe the origins of the Thirty Years War by three historiographical models. First, nineteenth century German nationalists argued that the war was an internal struggle, as the crumbling Holy Roman Empire ruled by Ferdinand II desperately held on to the Medieval past in opposition to Germany's future as a united nation under the rule of the Hohenzollern dynasty of Prussia.<sup>3</sup> The second school of thought is the international war theory which changed dramatically, as historians developed their own ideas of how the Thirty Years War fit into the wider conflicts of seventeenth century Europe. V.C. Wedgewood simply contended that the war was an out-growth of the Franco-Hapsburg rivalry which began in the late fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Sigfrid Henry Steinberg specified that the antecedents of the war lay in the disputed succession of the Duchies of Jülich and Cleves in 1609 when Spain and Austria supported a Catholic claimant and France and the Netherlands supported a Protestant claimant as Jülich and Cleves were important to both sides because the Spanish Road which was the main route of supply, and reinforcements for Spanish armies in the Netherlands ran through the duchies. France wished to hinder Spain's efforts in the Netherlands; while, Austria wished to help its dynastic ally stamp out Dutch independence. Steinberg lost some credibility when he claimed that the destruction caused by the Thirty Years War was limited and that the German population rose during the war, but his argument that the war was inextricably tied to the conflict between Spain and the Netherlands remained an integral part of the international war theory. Indeed, Geoffrey Parker argued that the Bohemian Revolt merely anticipated the revival of the Spanish-Dutch war in 1621 when a twelve-year truce expired. The theory progressed to the point that adherents of the idea argued the war was of minor concern to the western European states until Sweden and France became involved in the war in 1630 after which foreigners "settled their differences at the Emperor's expense." Such arguments also tend to minimize the intervention of non-western states such as Denmark.<sup>5</sup> But, Nicola Sutherland took the international war theory to an extreme conclusion. She argued that the Thirty Years War was just one more facet of the long-running rivalry between France and the Hapsburg dynasty by including it as part of "the phase of the Franco-Hapsburg struggle" which she dated from 1598 to 1659. Furthermore, she "stress[ed] ... the resumption of the Hispano-Dutch war in 1621" as the beginning to the war rather than the traditional date of 1618 when the Defenestration of Prague and the Bohemian Revolt occurred." Wilson argues that Sutherland took the international war theory to its natural conclusion when she "stress[ed] the relatively seamless nature of international conflict, claiming that 'contemporaries

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<sup>3</sup> Peter H. Wilson, "The Causes of the Thirty Years War 1618-48" *The English Historical Review* 123, no. 502 (2008): 554-86, accessed February 16, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20108541>. pp. 556-557.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 557.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 557-558.

did not distinguish clearly between peace and war. They rather perceived continuous, evolving fluctuating conflicts within shifting foci and theaters of activity."<sup>6</sup> Supporters of the internal war model and the international war theory agree, however, on the inevitability of the war. Both schools of thought generally hold that the Peace of Augsburg was a temporary solution which only delayed war because neither side wished to fight openly in 1555. Most historians tend to describe the decades after the Peace of Augsburg in terms of building pressure within the Empire until the formation of confessional alliances in 1608 and 1609. However, international war theorists argue that the war was delayed for another decade because France, England, Spain, and the Netherlands were still recovering from the wars of the sixteenth century, and they were not yet ready to fight, again citing the Hispano-Dutch Twelve Year Truce which "dampened international tensions precisely when the Germans were forming their confessional alliances."<sup>7</sup> Johannes Burkhardt presents a third theory. He argues that the Thirty Years War was a "state-building war" caused by the rivalry between France and the Hapsburgs for preeminence within Christendom, as France chafed at the Hapsburg dynasty's status, as the inheritors of the Roman Empire and by unrest within such provinces as Bohemia forced the states involved in the conflict to at least begin the process of transforming themselves into modern states. Burkhardt's argument includes elements of both the international and internal war theories. His state-building war theory is often criticized by post-modernists for "impos[ing] a false coherence on the past" because it relies on the idea that rulers make rational decisions about war and peace. Post-modernists rarely offer alternative explanations for the war; though, they do often contribute to understanding how historical figures legitimized their actions.<sup>8</sup> Though historians throughout the last two hundred years have not agreed on the nature of the war, each of these theories suggests a different facet to the problem. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were centuries of near constant warfare throughout Europe. Perhaps, this atmosphere of belligerence made a general war more likely, as it inclined heads of state to bellicose rather than diplomatic solutions though the idea that foreign states caused the war is just a bit too much of a stretch in logic. The Holy Roman Empire was certainly beginning to crumble. So, it is reasonable to conclude that the German principalities took advantage of the Empire's weakness, but it was not the inevitable precursor to the ascendance of Prussia, as so many of the Internal War theorists seem to argue. The war certainly did force participants to modernize the structures of their governments and militaries to varying degrees, but they likely did not recognize it as some radical change.

With such varying arguments about the origin of the war, one can hardly be surprised if historians do not agree on the reasons why Sweden intervened in the war, either. The general historiographical trend regarding the Swedish Intervention seems to be that while earlier historical studies asserted that Gustavus Adolphus led Sweden into the Thirty Years War out of a desire to aid his Protestant neighbors in Germany, more recent works have adopted the argument that Gustavus II invaded Germany for both religious reasons and to secure his kingdom. Some

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 559-560.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 558-559.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 562-568.

historians even go as far as to claim that he had no religious motivation at all. Historian Veronica Wedgwood argues that Gustavus invaded Germany to protect German Protestants from Catholic “crusading zeal” while suggesting the possibility of some economic or imperial motives, but her cynical impressions of World War I and the rise of fascism skew her interpretation of the Thirty Years War.<sup>9</sup> Then the argument gradually shifts to a more nuanced approach with historian John Paas arguing a greater confessional aspect to the invasion than Pärtel Piirimäe and Michael Roberts. Piirimäe’s<sup>10</sup> and Roberts’s<sup>11</sup> arguments assert a strong confessional motive with an economic and national security agenda. Gustavus Adolphus was motivated by both security concerns and by confessional concerns. This seems to be the most reasonable approach since the mid sixteenth century through the first half of the seventeenth century was rife with religious wars after the Protestant Reform movements broke away from the Catholic Church. That was the environment in which Gustavus Adolphus and his contemporaries lived. In the most recent work examined here, Peter Wilson seems to ignore the confessional aspect of Sweden’s intervention in the Thirty Years War. This seems to be a mistake. Religion was an integral part of politics and international relations during the seventeenth century, and ignoring it when discussing what began as a religious war would be detrimental to a solid argument. Overall, the recent history of the Swedish Intervention is reasonable, and even the earlier work is not rife with hero worship or other bias, only a mild anti-militarism. However, the available scholarly books and articles on the subject do not sufficiently emphasize the transformation of the war from an internal Imperial conflict to an international war.

In the early seventeenth century, Sweden’s geography made it practically impossible to prevent an invasion of the Swedish mainland by any one of Sweden’s enemies. Denmark still controlled the southwestern tip of the Swedish peninsula as well as Norway, thus they could easily invade Sweden from the southwest or the northwest without a navy. Denmark controlled the only route into the Baltic Sea from the North Sea and Western Europe, and they could cut off Swedish trade at any time. Sweden attempted to remedy this issue by constructing a port on the short stretch of coast that it retained between Norway and the rest of the Danish territories; however, this port was connected to the rest of Sweden by a very narrow strip of territory that could be easily seized by Danish forces. Sweden built several forts to defend its only port outside the Baltic Sea, but the kingdom’s trade with Western Europe remained in a precarious position.<sup>12</sup> The unreliability of trade to the west forced Sweden to look eastwards for markets for its raw materials including timber and copper. Yet even within the Baltic, Denmark maintained naval bases on Bornholm, Gotland, and Ösel, allowing the kingdom to keep watch on Swedish trade with the Hanseatic towns of the German Baltic coast. Furthermore, tolls extracted from all shipping in the three straits that

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<sup>9</sup> C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), 264-269.

<sup>10</sup> Pärtel Piirimäe. "Just War in Theory and Practice: The Legitimizing of Swedish Intervention in the Thirty Years War," *The Historical Journal* Vol. 45, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), 504-514, accessed February 17, 2016, <http://jstor.org/stable/3133494>.

<sup>11</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

connect the Baltic with the North Sea which Denmark claimed were streams flowing through its territory funded Denmark's powerful navy.<sup>13</sup> These numerous enemies made the possibility of war on two fronts almost unavoidable. In the seventeenth century, Sweden was almost constantly at war with any one of the kingdom's enemies and subject to have war break out with any of its other enemies at any time. To maintain the large army necessary to defend Sweden's territories and interests, Sweden needed a much larger income than could be supplied by its Scandinavian territories. This geopolitical landscape alone does much to explain the rise of the Swedish Empire and Sweden's decision to invade Germany.

The collapse of the Livonian Knights (one of the Eastern European crusading) in the sixteenth century gave Sweden its chance to break out of the economic grip of the Hanseatic League (an alliance of German trading cities and guilds which controlled trade with Russia and the eastern most parts of Europe) and to avoid the threat of complete encirclement by its enemies. When the Livonian Knights collapsed, the city of Reval, unwilling to become a Polish, Russian, or Danish possession, offered to place itself under Sweden's protection. This at once gave Sweden an economic boost by opening direct trade to Eastern Europe and created an economic drain by initiating one hundred and sixty years of intermittent war with Russia and Poland. The annexation of Reval in 1560 gave Sweden its first imperial territory, fueled Swedish ambitions to control trade in the Baltic, and placed the kingdom in direct conflict with Denmark, Poland, and Russia, each of which wanted all or a large degree of control over Baltic trade.<sup>14</sup>

The Baltic coast was the most populous (and wealthy) region of Sweden, as well as the location of the kingdom's capital. This was dangerous if a major naval power rose in the Baltic region. A strong navy would allow a hostile country to land an army nearly anywhere in the most important Swedish lands. Wilson's argument that the threat of an Imperial navy being built in the Baltic had faded by the time Gustavus Adolphus landed in Pomerania has merit, but one can hardly expect the king of a country with as many enemies as Sweden to only plan in the short term. The fact that the Imperial navy was not completed was due to the Catholic Imperial princes' fears of Imperial aggrandizement at the expense of their own power rather than the termination of Imperial ambitions in the Baltic. A king could hardly be expected to depend on Imperial princes' jealousy for his kingdom's future security. A strong Emperor with a relatively peaceful Empire could easily resume the construction of an Imperial navy, seize Sweden's ports in Eastern Europe, and threaten Sweden itself. Furthermore, the reduction of the army under the extremely successful Imperial general Wallenstein, rather than making intervention unnecessary, encouraged the Swedish intervention by making it more likely to succeed. In the time it would take the Emperor to recall Wallenstein to service and Wallenstein to rebuild his army, Gustavus Adolphus could secure territories and make alliances with the Protestant German princes. If Sweden could take control of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 12. The three straits, according to Bing Maps, are Øresund which forms the current border between Denmark and Sweden and is the eastern most strait, Storæbelt (Great Belt) which is the middle strait, and Lillebælt (Little Belt) which is the western strait.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

the principal north German ports, it would place much of the Baltic trade and Baltic shipbuilding under Sweden's control with the attendant trade revenue that was critical to continuing the war.<sup>15</sup>

For nearly one hundred years, Sweden's foreign policy was one of securing territories outside the Swedish mainland before her enemies could take control of them and expanding these territories to make them defensible. The effect was the creation of a buffer on the eastern Baltic coast which precipitated conflict with Poland and Russia allowing Sweden to fight them in Estonia and Prussia rather than in Finland and on the Swedish mainland. The Swedish intervention in Germany and Sweden's seizure of several territories on the north German coast created the same type of buffer against the Holy Roman Empire and other powerful German states.

The Thirty Years War began as a religious war between many of the Protestant Imperial princes and the Catholic forces of the Emperor and the Catholic princes. The war began in Bohemia when Protestant nobles opposed the establishment of the Catholic prince Ferdinand Hapsburg as the King of Bohemia and formed the Bohemian Confederation in 1619. After Ferdinand's election to the Imperial crown in 1619, the Bohemian Confederation elected Frederick V of the Palatinate as the King of Bohemia. Most of the other German princes refused to support the Bohemian Confederation under Frederick V. More fighting broke out in 1620 culminating in the Battle of White Mountain on November 8th near Prague where a combined Imperial and Catholic League army routed Frederick V's forces and marched on to Prague which surrendered immediately; despite being well supplied and defended by a fairly large force that would have allowed the city to hold out until winter, they forced the Catholic armies to break off the siege. The Bohemian Confederation collapsed, but Frederick V's stubborn insistence that Ferdinand II "confirm the [Bohemian] Confederation, grant full religious liberty, assume all of Frederick's Bohemian debts, and refund Palatine military expenses" inspired Ferdinand to place Frederick and three other leaders "under the imperial ban on 29 January 1621, paving the way for the confiscation of their lands and titles." Hostilities continued as Frederick and Ferdinand refused to compromise on a peace, as Frederick's Transylvanian ally, Belthen Gabor, continued to attack the Hapsburgs in Austria and Bohemia. Protestant German princes slowly began to support Frederick V's struggle to remain the Elector of the Palatinate. The Imperial and Catholic League forces gradually defeated their Protestant opponents, as the war shifted from the southeastern and central eastern parts of the Empire to the western and northwestern provinces. Spanish troops held parts of western Germany for the Emperor; while, the Dutch gave some aid to the Protestants. The ascendant Imperial and Catholic League's program of "re-Catholicization" contributed greatly to the religious character of the Thirty Years War, as it affected areas of the Empire that had been Protestant for the inhabitants' entire lives, and the Pope and influential Jesuits pressured the Emperor to use force to extract conversions from the populace. Ferdinand's policies began to equate Catholicism with loyalty and Protestantism with disloyalty or, at best, unreliability.<sup>16</sup> As the Emperor instituted a policy of pressuring nobles and residents of the subdued territories to convert, the deposed Frederick and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>16</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2009), 269-361.

his supporters began to view the war as a campaign to return Germany to Catholicism. This created tension and persuaded more princes to resist the Emperor's efforts; while, the Edict of Restitution in 1629 further deepened the confessional divide in Germany.<sup>17</sup>

By 1630, however, the confessional aspect of the war began to fade somewhat. Conflict between the Hapsburgs of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire supported by their Italian allies and Italian cities supported by Bourbon France flared up in 1625. The old conflict over European supremacy between Valois/Bourbon France and the Hapsburg dynasty in Spain and the Empire remained viable after more than a hundred years. As Italy had been in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Germany became the battleground in the renewed Hapsburg-Valois/Bourbon rivalry. France needed a powerful ally in Germany; after Denmark failed in its intervention, France turned to Sweden. Cardinal Richelieu's representative helped negotiate a truce between Sweden and Poland to allow Sweden to invade Germany.<sup>18</sup> Thus, a Catholic power forged a truce between a Protestant kingdom and a Catholic kingdom to allow the Protestant kingdom to attack another Catholic power indicating the growing international political impact of the war. As the war expanded into a truly European conflict, politics began to supplant religion as the main motivation in alliances. The growing conflict between France and the Hapsburg dynasties of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire was the catalyst for the shift of the Thirty Years War from an internal Holy Roman Imperial matter to an international conflict.

The Swedish intervention laid the foundation for the end of religious warfare in Europe, but Sweden continued to use religion to motivate support for the war. Gustavus Adolphus and his chancellor, Axel Oxenstierna, used religion to motivate the Swedish Estates to support the war and tried to use religion to build alliances in Germany.<sup>19</sup> However, Gustavus and Oxenstierna conveyed a different message to non-Protestant audiences. His public justification for intervening in the war was based on claims that the Empire threatened Sweden's economic interests and aided her enemies to avoid alienating France.<sup>20</sup> Even his message to the Swedish Estates was not built solely on religion, since he cited personal insults from the Emperor; he also claimed that Imperial military aid to Poland meant that Sweden and the Holy Roman Empire were, in fact, already at war.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the economic and military threat that a victorious Holy Roman Empire would pose to Sweden, the Empire would also pose a religious threat to Sweden. Sweden was Lutheran; if the Emperor and the Catholic League were successful in subjugating the Protestant German

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 453. The Edict of Restitution required Protestant rulers to return all Catholic land seized after 1552 (the Peace of Augsburg of 1555 acquiesced to the seizure of Catholic Church lands before 1552) and declared that Calvinism was not protected under the Peace of Augsburg.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 433.

<sup>19</sup> John Roger Paas, "The Changing Image of Gustavus Adolphus on German Broadsheets, 1630-3," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 59 (1996), 207-219, accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/751404>, 209.

<sup>20</sup> Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2009), 99-103.

<sup>21</sup> Paas, *Image*, 209.

states, the Catholic forces might force the reinstatement of Catholicism in Protestant Germany. If Catholicism was reinstated across all of Germany, the Emperor might have proceeded to attempt to force Denmark and Sweden to revert to Catholicism. The Catholic forces of Germany had already all but destroyed Denmark; with the addition of the north German states, the Holy Roman Empire would be able to pose a serious threat of invasion to Sweden; while Poland would undoubtedly renew its attacks on Swedish lands in Estonia. Granted, the Imperial princes, Catholic and Protestant, would have likely allied against the Emperor before allowing the Imperial crown to gain that much power; once again, a responsible king could hardly trust the political and religious security of his kingdom to the jealousy of foreign princes. It is likely that, whatever his convictions about aiding his co-religionists, Gustavus Adolphus would have considered it wiser to attack the threat while it was still relatively weak and divided than hoping that it would get even weaker and more divided.

Gustavus Adolphus avoided calling his intervention a war to avoid being classed as a foreign invader that might allow Ferdinand II to rally the Protestant princes to expel him. As it was, many Protestant princes considered Gustavus to be an interloper.<sup>22</sup> John George of Saxony built a neutral Protestant alliance to take a middle road between supporting the Emperor and supporting Gustavus. The Emperor's refusal to make a compromise with the moderate Protestants caused several to consider openly aiding Gustavus. Some raised small armies and blocked supply shipments to Imperial and Catholic League garrisons, and the Regent of Württemberg, Julius Friedrich, sent his relatives to safety and "began evicting imperial garrisons." However, most of the princes remained inactive. They waited for John George to take the lead and for the Swedish army to prove that it could defeat the Catholics.<sup>23</sup>

Sweden's French alliances transformed the conflict into an international political war. As discussed previously, France was instrumental in negotiating the Truce of Altmark between Poland and Sweden on September 26, 1629. Following the Truce of Altmark, Cardinal Richelieu's envoy, Charnacé, continued negotiations with Gustavus Adolphus to create a treaty whereby Sweden would invade Germany and occupy Ferdinand II's attention to prevent him from aiding the Philip IV's Spanish forces in Italy and the Netherlands. The negotiations culminated in the Treaty of Bärwalde on January 23, 1631 declaring "liberty of trade and the mutual protection of France and Sweden" and stipulating that France would fund or partially fund an army of at least "thirty thousand foot and six hundred horse" and supply Sweden with "twenty thousand imperial talers" every six months. In return for French subsidies, Gustavus Adolphus agreed to protect Catholics' right to worship, respect the neutrality of the Catholic League (unless the Catholic League took military action against Sweden or its allies), and include France at any peace negotiations with the Emperor in the next five years. Gustavus insisted the treaty be public. Wedgwood makes the interesting point that by insisting that the treaty be made public Gustavus ensured that he was not viewed as a junior partner of the alliance drawing on the analogy proposed by Sir Thomas Roe (an

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<sup>22</sup> Paas, *Images*, 210.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 465-467.

English diplomat at the time of the treaty) that Richelieu, in agreeing to a public treaty, built the bridge for Gustavus to cross his Rubicon and win success in Germany.<sup>24</sup> It also gave the Catholic princes of the Catholic League an excuse to remain neutral with the clause prohibiting Sweden from attacking Catholic League territories and forces unless they attacked Gustavus' forces first.<sup>25</sup> The important element to this argument is that it was a public treaty between two independent kingdoms arranging for one of the kingdoms to financially support the other's invasion of a third state. Furthermore, it was open to any other German ruler who wanted to join Sweden against the Emperor.<sup>26</sup>

The Siege of Magdeburg was a turning point of German princes' support for the Swedish Intervention. Magdeburg was the only German city or principality to willingly ally with Gustavus Adolphus in 1631.<sup>27</sup>—Stralsund requested aid in 1628, and Danish troops arrived just in time to prevent the city from falling to the Imperial besiegers.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Stralsund became the landing place for Gustavus' army and an official Swedish protectorate in 1630. Gustavus also "effectively... annexed" Pomerania (the territory which held Stralsund) only a few months after the landing.<sup>29</sup>—Magdeburg allied with Sweden because it was an opportunity for the exiled administrator, Christian Wilhelm, to regain his city. To that end, Christian Wilhelm snuck back into the city with a few supporters and took back control of the town. Gustavus Adolphus sent one of his officers, Colonel Falkenberg, to oversee the defense as Imperial troops already gathered outside the city walls.<sup>30</sup> Gustavus attempted to relieve the city, but the moderate Protestant electors of Brandenburg and Saxony blocked his route to the city until it was too late. The city fell to the Imperial general, Count Tilly, on May 10th.<sup>31</sup> The Imperial sack of the town (sometimes called the Destruction of Magdeburg) galvanized support for Gustavus Adolphus from several German princes; though, he was forced to compel George William of Brandenburg to agree to the alliance by training the Swedish artillery on the Elector's palace in Berlin. The greatest boost to Gustavus' efforts came when Ferdinand II attempted to coerce support from John George of Saxony by ordering Tilly to invade Saxony. The Elector of Saxony had raised eighteen thousand troops by the time of the Imperial invasion; when he allied with Gustavus Adolphus, the Swedish army joined his forces north of the Saxon capital of Leipzig. The combined armies, under the command

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<sup>24</sup> Wedgewood, *The Thirty Years War*, 268. Wilson totals the entire French subsidies at 400,000 Imperial talers which would include the money France was bound to pay to maintain the Swedish army in Germany (Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 464.).

<sup>25</sup> Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 467.

<sup>26</sup> Wedgewood, *The Thirty Years War*, 269.

<sup>27</sup> Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 467.

<sup>28</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 70. After Imperial and Catholic League forces overran Jutland and began preparing a navy in the Baltic, Gustavus Adolphus and Christian IV of Denmark arranged an uneasy alliance whereby Sweden was prepared to aid Denmark with men and ships if the Imperial armies threatened the Danish islands in the Baltic Sea. So, Denmark sent soldiers to Stralsund in 1630 to hold off the Imperial besiegers until Swedish reinforcements arrived. Once the Swedes arrived, the Danes remained in the city for a short period then gradually withdrew when the Stralsund civic government preferred a Swedish garrison.

<sup>29</sup> Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 463.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 467.

<sup>31</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 136-137.

of Gustavus Adolphus, met the Imperial army at a field near the village of Breitenfeld. Gustavus' combined army outnumbered and outgunned the Imperial army by one thousand men and twenty-nine cannons. The result was a spectacular victory for the Gustavus Adolphus, made even more spectacular by the fact that the Saxons fled the battle at the first Imperial attack leaving Gustavus' army (with about one thousand Saxons who joined the Swedish cavalry after the rest routed) to defeat the Tilly on its own. This victory inspired more German princes to support the Swedes, as the more militant members of the Protestant society cheered the victory as God's punishment on the Imperials for Magdeburg.<sup>32</sup>

Negotiations continued throughout the fighting. John George joined the Swedish faction mostly to force Ferdinand to negotiate. The Saxon Elector hoped to be able to extract concessions from Ferdinand such as the revocation of the Edict of Restitution or at least a mild interpretation of it. If John George could negotiate a peace while the Protestants were ascendant, he could persuade other Protestant leaders to accept any concessions he made as "magnanimous gestures" to encourage the Emperor to accept the peace agreement.<sup>33</sup> This willingness to negotiate a peace agreement with the Emperor indicates the lack of theological concerns that might have been present earlier in the war. William V of Hesse-Kassel supported the Swedish faction because he hoped to be raised to the rank of elector. Charles I of England sent six thousand troops to aid the Swedes as a half measure to placate his sister who was married to the exiled Frederick V of the Palatinate and to avoid making too much trouble with the Hapsburgs while he tried to improve relations with Spain. The Dutch welcomed the Swedish Intervention because it distracted Ferdinand from aiding his Spanish relatives against the Dutch Republic, but they opposed the idea of a religious war (which the Thirty Years War no longer was at this point though no one would admit it at the time). The Dutch also sent small payments to Sweden to persuade "Gustavus to drop plans to monopolize the Baltic grain trade." Further evidence of the political nature of Gustavus' intervention lies in his terms for restoring Frederick to the Palatinate. In January of 1632, the Dutch paid Frederick V's expenses to travel to Gustavus' camp; the Swedish king was only willing to commit to restoring Frederick to the Palatinate if England sent twelve thousand more men and subsidies of "£235,000 a month" and Frederick agreed to hold the Palatinate lands as "fiefs of the Swedish crown." Frederick V rejected the terms, and he died in Mainz at the end of December.<sup>34</sup>

The major goal of the Swedish after 1631 was to secure its control of key sections of the German Baltic coast. With the Imperial withdrawal from Jutland, Sweden's interests shifted from ensuring that Denmark was not conquered to ensuring that Denmark could not expand. To that end, Gustavus allied with the administrator of Bremen to evict the Catholic League troops from the city and prevent the Danes from taking control of the territory since the city exerted control

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<sup>32</sup> Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 470-475. Wilson cites a census in February of 1632 that showed only four hundred and forty-nine inhabitants in the city out of a population of around twenty thousand people at the time of the attack.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 477.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 478-480. Out of the English force of six thousand, there were only five hundred left four months after the army arrived due to disease, starvation, and desertion. Charles' decision to send men to fight for Gustavus Adolphus in Germany only antagonized the Hapsburgs, and the army was too small to accomplish very much towards the goal of reinstating Frederick V to the Palatinate and melted away too quickly to be of any use anyway.

over the Weser and the Elbe rivers. If Sweden controlled Bremen, Denmark could not expand to the south. The death of the administrator complicated Gustavus' plans, and Sweden was not able to take control of Bremen and the territory of Verden to the south of Bremen for several years. Gustavus secured the territories that his armies cleared of Imperial and Catholic League forces (Catholic League troops had skirmished with Swedish troops between the Siege of Magdeburg and the Battle of Breitenfeld releasing Gustavus of his obligation in the Treaty of Bärwalde to observe Catholic League princes' neutrality) by establishing garrisons in fortresses and fortified towns in the conquered territories. The conquered territories were mostly Catholic; while Gustavus did expel some priests and other Catholics fled of their own accord, he left many Catholic churches alone and left most Catholic officials in their offices partially out of respect for the provisions of the Treaty of Bärwalde and partially because he lacked experienced Protestants to fill the offices.<sup>35</sup> This also lends evidence to the idea that Gustavus' intervention was more political than religious; although, few would have recognized a difference between politics and religion in the seventeenth century.

During the fall of 1631 and into 1632, Sweden advanced nearly unopposed through many parts of the Holy Roman Empire. Hostile populations prevented attacks on the hereditary Hapsburg lands in Austria, but Gustavus established bases in numerous other Catholic territories. The rapid Swedish advance compelled such powerful princes as Maximilian of Bavaria to look to princes and states outside the Empire for assistance as the Imperial and Catholic League forces had proven unable to halt the Swedes and their allies. The Bavarian Elector's first choice was Duke Charles IV of Lorraine (which was a highly autonomous territory of the Holy Roman Empire), but the Duke's attempt to seize control of the Bishopric of Metz sparked conflict with the bishopric's protector, France. When Imperial soldiers seized the small towns of Vic and Moyenvic, which belonged to the Bishopric of Metz, Cardinal Richelieu feared that it was the beginning of an Imperial invasion and gathered an army in Champagne. The Duke of Lorraine and Gaston d'Orleans (the dissatisfied brother of Louis XIII of France) began to gather armies, but the Duke of Lorraine became worried that the French army in Champagne would invade. To avoid appearing as a threat to the French, Duke Charles IV led his army of about fifteen thousand men across the Rhine deeper into the Empire to fight the Swedes. Disease wiped out most of the army which failed to defend the Lower Palatinate from a Swedish army, but their absence allowed the French army to invade and remove the Imperial garrisons from Vic and Moyenvic. A second French invasion a short time later, in response to another "attempt to remove French influence," ended in the Treaty of Liverdun which ceded key towns and bridges to France allowing French troops access to France's territory of Alsace. This military access to Alsace allowed France to offer assistance to Maximilian. This was part of a continuing French effort to draw Bavaria away from the Emperor and place it under French influence. It failed when Maximilian decided that French influence was not enough to obtain a more lenient peace agreement with Sweden, and Maximilian acquiesced to the reinstatement of Wallenstein as the commander of the Imperial army. Maximilian's demonstration

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 480-481.

of loyalty to the Emperor dashed France's hopes for control of Bavaria.<sup>36</sup> As European conflicts outside Germany multiplied, external interference in the Thirty Years War increased, and the combatants within Germany grew increasingly dependent on foreign financial support since the war devastated Germany and reduced its territories' abilities to support armies.

After Gustavus Adolphus was killed at the Battle of Lützen on November 16, 1632, Sweden's armies and alliances weakened. France considered switching support to Saxony instead of Sweden, and many of the German regiments and soldiers serving in the Swedish army mutinied or refused to follow orders from Chancellor Oxenstierna or the Swedish generals. A further complication was that the Swedish armies became somewhat decentralized with the king's death. Oxenstierna held strategic command and designated the armies' objectives, but he was not an experienced general and did not have the reputation that Gustavus had. Sweden did not begin negotiations with Ferdinand or the Catholic League after Lützen, since that might have indicated that Swedish strength was based solely on Gustavus Adolphus, but Oxenstierna did change Sweden's goals. He concentrated on defending the territories which Sweden held in North Germany, particularly Pomerania and Mecklenburg, and retained garrisons in Bremen, Verden, and Mainz hoping to obtain these lands in any peace settlement thus placing all the German Baltic coast and the mouths of the Elbe and Weser Rivers in Swedish hands. Oxenstierna called a meeting of Protestant princes in Heilbronn in March 1633 to establish "Gustavus's planned *corpus politicorum*" (a Protestant political body) to motivate France to continue to support Sweden (France ceased paying subsidies to Sweden after Gustavus's death). It worked. Richelieu's representative renewed the Treaty of Bärwalde and, critically, agreed to continue subsidies to Sweden rather than to the new Heilbronn League cementing Sweden as the leader of the League. The Heilbronn League adopted the goal of forcing the Emperor to return "the Empire to its pre-war condition" as its "official... negotiating position;" while, Sweden led the League, demanding "proper" compensation for [Sweden's] efforts." Brandenburg allied with Sweden and France but refused to join the Heilbronn League because it agreed to give Pomerania to Sweden.<sup>37</sup> The renewal of the Treaty of Bärwalde and the coalescing of Swedish territorial demands highlight the growing international scope of the war only three years after the Gustavus landed in Pomerania.

In addition to the renewal of French support for Sweden in Germany, French and Spanish/Imperial conflict continued to the west of the Empire. A French army marched to remove Spanish forces from Trier in May 1632 (after invading the nominally Imperial Duchy of Lorraine), as France continued to pursue a policy of thwarting the Hapsburgs without provoking full-scale war with Spain. The French army "cooperated with Swedish troops to capture the Ehrenbreistein fortress" on the Rhine. With French and Swedish forces near each other and a Dutch army advancing against Spanish held territory (France still secretly supported the Dutch against Spain),<sup>38</sup> the Thirty Years War continued to gain international repercussions. Richelieu discovered

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 487-492.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 507-517. Brandenburg held a claim to Pomerania if its ruler died without an heir.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 519-520. Trier was occupied by Spanish troops, but, as far as I can tell, Spain did not officially claim it. Territorial claims get extremely confusing in seventeenth century Central Europe.

that Spain was sending another army to Alsace in 1633. This forced Richelieu to arrange to take over Lorraine; he did this by maneuvering the Duke of Lorraine into rejecting France's demand that he accept French over-lordship for his duchy of Bar. This allowed Richelieu to declare Charles of Lorraine a rebel and invade Lorraine once the duke's army was destroyed as it tried to relieve the Swedish siege of Hagenau (the second time the French used the Swedes to destroy the Lorraine army and pave the way for a French invasion of the duchy).<sup>39</sup> This blocked Spanish access to Alsace, since France could refuse to allow the army to pass through French territory. This prompted Spain to order the Spanish governor of Milan, Feria, to march an army through the Alps to re-exert Spanish influence over the Rhineland which had collapsed after the French conquest of Lorraine. Once the army crossed the Alps, it joined with an Imperial army to repel the Swedish siege of Konstanz (the Swedish army intended to take the town and thus "block the exit from the Tirolean passes into south-west Germany"). The Spanish further intervened with subsidies to Bavaria. In 1634, Spain sent more soldiers into Germany. Spanish troops were instrumental in the Swedish defeat at Nördlingen comprising almost half of the combined Imperial/Spanish/Bavarian army. Following the defeat, the Imperial, Bavarian, and Spanish armies drove the Swedes out of southern Germany. Sweden's German allies wavered in their support, and France seized the opportunity.

By 1634, Sweden faced a renewed war with Poland once the Truce of Altmark expired the next year (the Ottomans agreed to a truce with Poland in order to pursue a war with Persia). The German members of the Heilbronn League began to see France as a better ally than Sweden since France proposed a neutral, inter-confessional alliance to pursue an end to the war. France undermined Sweden's leadership, by agreeing to pay a five hundred thousand livre subsidy directly to the Heilbronn League instead of paying subsidies only to Sweden. Furthermore, Richelieu promised to send twelve thousand non-French soldiers to aid the Heilbronn League. Richelieu specified non-French troops to avoid open war with the Emperor. In return for France's aid, "the [Heilbronn] League would restore Catholic worship throughout its remaining conquests" and "provide appropriate 'satisfaction' for France's efforts in the form of Austrian parts of Alsace, Breisach, Konstanz, and all the Rhine forts in between." At the end of 1634 and the beginning of 1635, Imperial forces recaptured parts of Alsace from France prompting Richelieu to divert soldiers from reinforcing the Dutch to reinforce the French army which marched into Alsace and struggled to drive the Imperials back out.<sup>40</sup> The direct intervention of Spain and France was the direct result of France's policy of thwarting the Hapsburgs in any way possible. Sweden was already considering invading Germany before France arranged the truce with Poland. Indeed, the Secret Committee of the Diet (established to allow the Swedish Diet to authorize action without

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 521-522. The French gained all of Lorraine after the duke's brother refused terms giving Richelieu an excuse to occupy the rest of the duchy. By 1634, the Rhinelanders conceded "Mömpelgard, Hagenau, the bishopric of Basel, and the Alsatian possessions of the count of Hagenau.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 551-553. The Imperial army in Alsace was led by the dispossessed Duke Charles IV of Lorraine who wished to recover his duchy. The Heilbronn League congress in Worms broke up without resolving difficulties between Lutherans and Calvinists "effectively dissolving the League. Finally, Oxenstierna personally met with Richelieu but was unable to obtain more than a "vague treaty of friendship."

discussing delicate issues in public) agreed in January of 1628 with Gustavus's assertion that intervention in Germany was necessary to preserve Sweden's security.<sup>41</sup> Richelieu was an extremely intelligent political figure; he was aware of Sweden's policy in Estonia of securing territory to control trade ports, and he had no reason to expect Sweden to change its policy in Germany. Richelieu may have planned to use Sweden to make the German Protestants more open to an alliance with France to restore peace. Such an argument depends entirely on how much information Richelieu had about the German princes' views on foreign intervention and on Richelieu expecting Sweden to be much more successful than Denmark. So, the idea is a stretch, but the important fact is that France eventually did intervene openly lending even more credence to the idea that, whether the German combatants thought about it or not, the war became a tool of international foreign policy after the Swedish Intervention.

Tension between Spain and France culminated in war in April of 1635. The French declaration of war forced Ferdinand II to cooperate with Spanish military operations against the French and Dutch; however, Ferdinand avoided declaring war on France and hoped that the war would end quickly because Imperial forces were still embroiled in the war in Germany. Bavarian and Imperial troops aided Spanish forces in fighting the French along the Rhine River. However, Spanish, Imperial, and Bavarian troops also continued offensives against the remaining Swedish garrisons in the Rhineland. The Peace of Prague in 1635 represented the Emperor's attempt to restore peace to the Empire by relaxing the Edict of Restitution and uniting against the foreign invaders (Sweden and France were the foreign invaders not Spain). The treaty would also isolate the more radical princes who still supported Sweden and France. It drove Sweden and France into closer cooperation supported by several princes whom Ferdinand excluded from his offer of amnesty. It "dissolved the [Catholic League] and all alliances [within the Empire and between Imperial princes and foreign states], except for that between the electors who were still allowed to meet on their own initiative." And, it compelled a number of princes to make separate peace agreements with the Empire. The more moderate Protestant princes like John George of Saxony and George William of Brandenburg joined the treaty; although, Brandenburg tried to maintain neutrality due to its proximity to Swedish forces. The Peace of Prague consolidated much of Germany (Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic princes alike) against France and Sweden, finally stripping away the last vestiges of religious conflict. However, the agreement collapsed almost immediately because it did not offer amnesty to all of the German princes. The war continued as Swedish and French propaganda touted their fight as one to restore German liberties, but it was not effective.<sup>42</sup>

The war continued for another decade until 1648 when the Peace of Westphalia finally established a settlement acceptable to all the parties involved in the war. The Peace of Westphalia involved settlements with Sweden and the German principalities as well as the Holy Roman Emperor in the Peace of Osnabrück; while, the Peace of Münster was signed to resolve the issues

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<sup>41</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 68-69.

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 555-574.

between the France and the Holy Roman Empire (including the German princes). These treaties also resolved the Spanish-Dutch wars with Spain recognizing Dutch independence, but they did not resolve the issue of the French occupation of Lorraine. Sweden received several German territories such as Western Pomerania, the Archbishopric of Bremen, the Bishopric of Verden, and the Port of Wismar. The scope of the Westphalian treaties embraced international issues and internal Imperial issues. While the war might have been concluded with a peace which resolved only the internal problems of the Empire before 1630, after the Swedish Intervention, any treaty which successfully ended the war had to address the broad international political issues that involved France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and England in the war, such as Dutch independence, control of territories along the Rhine, and northern Italian territorial disputes.