Mortimer, G. Eyewitness Accounts . . . 30 yrs War, 2002.

~~inactivity, during which Imperial fears grew about Wallenstein's ambitions, intentions and suspect contacts with the Saxons and Swedes. These culminated in a strange half-rebellion and counter-rebellion at Pilsen and Eger, in western Bohemia, ending with the Imperially sanctioned assassination of Wallenstein in February 1634. At the end of the following campaigning season the fortunes of war changed, and forces under the emperor's son, the later Emperor Ferdinand III, inflicted a devastating defeat on the Swedes at Nördlingen in September 1634.~~

~~From here the conflict drifted into the fourth and final phase of general European war. Swedish reverses led to the defection of her main allies in the spring of 1635, as first Saxony and then Brandenburg came to terms with the emperor through the peace of Prague. Ferdinand II was forced in return to suspend the Edict of Restitution for 40 years, a face-saving formula for its abandonment, and he died two years later, in February 1637. Meanwhile France was gradually forced into direct involvement in the war against Habsburg power, which she had long sought to pursue in surrogate manner through financial support of the Dutch against the Spanish and of the Swedes against the emperor. In May 1635 France declared war on Habsburg Spain, and in March of the following year the Habsburg emperor declared war on France. This wider conflict continued for a further 12 years, during which most of the fighting took place in Germany and troops were frequently recruited there or marched through to support campaigning in the adjoining areas of France, Italy and the Netherlands. In this period mercenary armies marched and countermarched across Germany in a confusing series of campaigns and changes of fortune, even after peace negotiations had begun in Westphalia in 1643. The peace conference dragged on for over five years, as each military success or defeat shifted bargaining positions, but the tide of war turned gradually but decisively against the Imperial party. After successive defeats in 1645 by the Swedes at Jankov and the French at Allerheim the emperor finally recognised the inevitability of making such concessions as were necessary to end the war, but even so the peace of Westphalia was not signed until 24 October 1648.~~

~~Apart from short breaks and winter pauses in campaigning there was military activity somewhere in Germany, sometimes localised and sometimes widespread, throughout the period from 1618 to 1648, whereas for some time before 1618 and for some time after 1648 there was relative peace, or at least absence of open warfare on a significant scale. The Thirty Years War is thus very much a German concept. Other wars which became interlinked with it began earlier, like the Dutch struggle with Spain, or went on long afterwards, like the Franco-Spanish war. Poland too was at war for much of the period, with the Swedes, the Turks or the Russians, but these conflicts were largely independent of the war in Germany. Conversely the Transylvanian attacks on the emperor in the east, first under Bethlen Gabor and later under Rákóczi, were made in nominal alliances with the various Protestant forces, although the Transylvanians proved fickle allies. France and Spain, before open war between them began in 1635, had long confronted each other at one remove in northern Italy and the Swiss cantons, in the wars over the succession to the dukedoms of Mantua and in the long struggle for control of the Val Telline, the strategic link in the military route from Spain via Spanish Italy to the Spanish Netherlands. Habsburg connections involved the emperor in these southern conflicts, just as Spain was diplomatically, financially and often militarily involved in the emperor's wars with his Protestant opponents. Conversely Protestant solidarity never extended to real cooperation between the Baltic powers of Sweden and Denmark, whose long-standing rivalry led to war in 1643–45. All these were linked with the war in Germany, as the various parties sought by means of subsidies and shifting alliances to turn the battles of others to their own advantage. All have to be considered in a comprehensive political and military history of what is, as much for convenience as for any other reason, termed the Thirty Years War. This is the basis for Steinberg's argument that it was not a single war, and that by extension it did not last for just 30 years, although viewed in a purely German context the name is demonstrably valid and appropriate.~~

The issues

If the political and military history of the war is complicated, the underlying issues are no less complex and interrelated, while individual participants all had their own, often mixed, motives for involvement. The most obvious starting point is religion. The ostensible issue underlying the revolt in Bohemia was religious freedom, or at least the freedoms of the largely Protestant nobility and gentry which had been wrung from Emperor Matthias following his de facto supersession of his brother Rudolf II in 1608, concessions which Matthias confirmed in a Letter of Majesty of July 1609. Attempts to claw back these concessions in the last years of Matthias's life, which would have effectively revoked these Protestant freedoms, precipitated the crisis which found its most dramatic expression in the defenestration which initiated open revolt.

By the early seventeenth century the Reformation had penetrated much further into many of the Habsburg and neighbouring lands than their subsequent solidly Catholic history suggests. Protestants of various persuasions were either a majority or a substantial and influential minority, particularly among the nobility, not only in Bohemia but also in Hungary, Transylvania and much of north Italy. Worse still from the Habsburg point of view, the same was true in much, if not most, of their hereditary lands centred around Austria. For some time the Catholic religion and the Catholic emperors had been on the defensive, as indicated by Matthias's concessions in Bohemia. Ferdinand, however, was not disposed towards religious compromise. Personally devout and heavily influenced by his Jesuit education, advisers and confessor, he saw it as not only his duty but also his route to personal salvation to win back lost ground for Catholicism in his domains. Ferdinand had amply demonstrated his zeal for the Counter-Reformation in his capacity as archduke of Styria before his designation as successor to his cousin Matthias, and his accession to the Imperial throne was viewed with apprehension by Protestants throughout the Empire, particularly in lands under direct Habsburg rule such as Bohemia.

Despite this, during the first phase the war was not overtly one of religion, but at least technically a matter of suppression of rebellion against a legitimate Habsburg ruler in Bohemia. Religion was of course used as a rallying cry, with the Protestants looking to their co-religionists for help, and such allies as Frederick, the elector Palatine and temporary king of Bohemia, was able to mobilise were essentially Protestant. Nevertheless the staunchly Lutheran but equally staunchly constitutionalist elector of Saxony, Johann Georg I, not only did not support him but joined in the military campaign against him, for which the emperor gave him a lien on the neighbouring Imperial territory of Lusatia as a guarantee for his expenses. The religious element in the war increased in the second phase, with the entry of Christian IV of Denmark as the self-appointed defender of Protestantism against the Imperial threat. Even so only some minor Protestant German princes joined him; the more significant ones, notably Saxony and Brandenburg, did not. What really placed religion in the forefront was Ferdinand's exploitation of his strong position after the defeat of Christian IV to impose his Edict of Restitution upon the Empire in 1629. This inevitably drove the leading Protestant princes into opposition and made them natural, although still hesitant, allies when Gustavus Adolphus in turn invaded Germany in 1630. Although he may also have had other motives, Gustavus was personally devout and committed to the Protestant cause, and during the two years when he led one party and Ferdinand the other religion was close to the centre of the issue. After Gustavus's death Swedish political interests superseded religious motives, and although the Catholic–Protestant divide remained through to 1648 international politics increasingly governed the war, while territorial and financial questions dominated the peace negotiations.

It is sometimes thought that the troops fought for their faith while the leaders fought for their own advantage. This is certainly unduly charitable to the majority of the troops, most of whom were mercenaries and many of whom were not unduly fussy about which side they fought for. Wallenstein was notably tolerant about the private religion of his soldiers, but few of the commanders made much distinction in practice, and it was normal after a successful engagement to recruit, usually compulsorily, as many of the defeated enemy's men as possible, irrespective of their nationality or religion. Most of the soldiers, like most of their officers, seem to have fought for a living and for the prospect of booty. Arguably many of the leading political

figures did much the same, although it is not necessary to be too cynical about the sincerity of their faith simply because they were often able to make their religious and material objectives coincide. The most embarrassing position throughout the war was that of France, for whom religion and politics pulled in opposite directions. Because she was confronted by and feared being surrounded by Spanish and Imperial, albeit Catholic, Habsburg power, which also limited her own expansionist ambitions, Catholic France was forced to support the Protestant party, entering into an alliance and providing financial support for the militantly Protestant Gustavus Adolphus and eventually having to fight for many years alongside the Swedes in Germany.

Material advantage (or fear of material loss) was certainly a major consideration for participants in the war. Whatever Gustavus's original motives for invading Germany may have been, after his death the Swedes were determined to secure adequate compensation for their efforts in the form of territory in Germany as the price for peace. This determination, and the fact that anything given to the Swedes had to be taken from a prince of the Empire, who then had to be compensated elsewhere, was long an obstacle to the commencement of serious peace talks, and then a major cause of their protracted nature. But the Swedes were far from alone. Christian IV's Protestant zeal did not preclude ambitions to acquire the secularised bishoprics of Bremen, Verden and Osnabrück for his sons, which indeed he partially achieved before his invasion of 1625. France too, combining security considerations with expansionist aims, took advantage of the opportunity to lay hold of Alsace and a number of other nearby Imperial territories, gains which were confirmed by the peace of Westphalia. German princes were as eager as foreigners to take what they could get. Johann Georg of Saxony gained a permanent hold on Lusatia, as the emperor's dire finances never allowed him to pay the expenses against which he had pledged it early in the war. Maximilian of Bavaria similarly secured possession of the Upper Palatinate (in north-eastern Bavaria, physically remote from but then belonging to the Rhineland principality), although since the lands in question were confiscated from the elector Palatine rather than being an Imperial fief the transfer was more dubious. Much of Maximilian's political manoeuvring over many years, which considerably complicated the course of the war, was centred on his determination not to be parted from his gains. As well as land these included the new dignity of an elector of the Holy Roman Empire, which Ferdinand II was induced, in abuse if not in excess of his Imperial powers, to confer upon him. The elector of Brandenburg's designs on Pomerania, to which he had at least the basis of a legal claim on the death of the last duke, were obstructed by Swedish ambitions; the eventual result was a compromise, Pomerania being divided and Brandenburg gaining a mixed bag of territories spread across north Germany as far as Cleves, on the Dutch border. Even the emperor, ultimately the biggest loser, was on the lookout for opportunities when circumstances permitted.

Although the main motivation for the Edict of Restitution was religious, Ferdinand was by no means blind to the opportunity which the restored bishoprics and their associated temporalities would provide for suitable scions of the house of Habsburg.

The military men too were on the make. Colourful independent generals were a feature of the war, among the most notable being the perennial mercenary Ernst von Mansfeld, the quixotic aristocrat Christian of Brunswick, known as the mad Halberstadter, and the resolute soldier and ally of the Swedes Bernard of Weimar. Their ambitions to carve personal principalities from the toils of war were never realised, whereas the most remarkable, Wallenstein, achieved princely status and possessions before succumbing to intrigue and death. In addition to the vast estates in northern Bohemia which he bought up in dubious circumstances and from which he drew his title of duke of Friedland, Wallenstein secured the duchy of Sagan in Silesia and the immensely valuable duchy of Mecklenburg, together with the status of a prince of the Empire, as rewards and repayments of debt from Ferdinand II. Mecklenburg was lost again in the changing fortunes of war, but most of the remainder of Wallenstein's estates were later distributed to those of his generals who had helped to secure his downfall and death. Tilly, in contrast, rather pathetically complained that despite a lifetime of loyal military service he had never managed to acquire an appanage for himself.

Material ambitions spread all the way through the ranks. The colonels were the key men, entering into contracts with one side or the other to raise regiments which were then their personal property, and from whose pay, provisioning, equipping and employment they expected to make a personal profit. The prospect of booty was an attraction at all levels, but at its most basic the war became the only means of livelihood for many, officers and men alike, who had few possessions and few other skills to offer. As an issue in the war this should not be under-estimated. For a man like Mansfeld, his army was his principality, and it could only exist as long as he could find employment for it, so that his need provided the opportunity for others to pursue their war aims. Such generals and the colonels below them were careful with their key possessions, and were reluctant to expose their forces to the chance of battle unless absolutely necessary, and preferably then only when they had achieved significant numerical superiority. This is one reason for the endless marching, countermarching and manoeuvring for position which dominated the Thirty Years War, while major battles were relatively few and far between over this long period. Moreover the very existence of armies created the need for constant campaigning, to keep them on the move so that they could live off the land, while the need to garrison and control territory in order to extract 'contributions' from the populace, the ultimate means by which the war was financed, created a vicious circle in which ever more troops were needed. Campaigning was determined as much by supplies as by strategy, particularly in winter, when the aim was to quarter the armies on enemy rather than friendly territory in view of the economic damage they would cause. Thus the existence and material needs of the armies fed and prolonged the war, and indeed the peace conference too; the question of how to achieve and finance demobilisation was a major issue in negotiations, and required two years' effort after the peace treaty to resolve.

Underlying all the politics of the Thirty Years War was the question of Imperial power. Internally this was a matter of the balance between the so-called German liberties of the princes of the Empire, who were becoming increasingly absolutist in their own territories, and the central authority of the Imperial crown, which was in theory elective but which had become almost hereditary in the house of Habsburg. For the rest of Europe a weak Empire with power diffused among a large number of principalities was much preferable to a stronger Imperial authority which might create sufficient unity for Germany to become a threat to its neighbours. Gustavus Adolphus had already experienced Imperial involvement against him in his war with Poland before he decided to invade Germany. With Wallenstein becoming duke of Mecklenburg and his army besieging Stralsund in 1628 Gustavus may have had good cause to see Sweden's security threatened by Imperial control extending to the Baltic coast. For France, with Spain to the south and the Spanish Netherlands to the north, any growth of Imperial power in Germany increased the prospect of Habsburg encirclement, although she would not have been happy to see a strong Germany even without a Habsburg emperor, and certainly not one under Protestant Swedish control. French policy was effectively, if not intentionally, directed as much at keeping the war going and preventing either side from gaining a clear advantage as at assisting her nominal allies, partly explaining some apparently mutually incompatible manoeuvres and her maintenance of close contact with Maximilian of Bavaria throughout her period of alliance with the Swedes.

Maximilian, who like Johann Georg of Saxony was one of the few rulers in power throughout the war, also provides the best example of the resistance inside the Empire to extensions of Imperial power. In view of Ferdinand's religious policy the concerns of the Protestant princes are easy to understand, but while Maximilian too favoured the Catholic Counter-Reformation, although through less confrontational means than the Edict of Restitution, he was equally anxious to ensure that the German liberties and princely powers – his liberties and his powers – were not eroded by the emperor. This was the basis of his hostility to Wallenstein and the Imperial army, as he much preferred Catholic policy to be underpinned by the armies of the Catholic League, controlled by the princes rather than by the emperor, particularly as he himself stood at the head of the League. It does not necessarily invalidate this general attitude that Maximilian was only too ready to benefit directly from Ferdinand's arguably *ultra vires* actions in ceding him the Upper Palatinate and electoral status; the unifying thread in the twists and turns of his policy over the years was his desire to ensure that the emperor did not emerge constitutionally or politically strengthened in relation to the princes. The other leading secular princes shared this attitude, although some of the ecclesiastics, several of whom were Habsburg relatives or nominees, were more amenable. Significantly, only the Catholic electors were present in person at the electoral meeting in Regensburg in 1630, and it was they who curbed Ferdinand at the peak of his military success, forcing the dismissal of Wallenstein and the partial disbandment of the Imperial army just as Gustavus invaded.

Whether Ferdinand actually aimed at such an extension of Imperial power is a different question. Pursuit of religious objectives seems to have been his primary consideration, and to have motivated his most high-handed action, the Edict of Restitution. His confiscations of Mecklenburg and the Upper Palatinate in order to confer them respectively upon Wallenstein and Maximilian, along with the electoral title, can be interpreted as practical responses to difficult, even desperate, political and financial situations rather than as calculated arrogation of power to the person of the emperor. Nevertheless neither Ferdinand nor his advisers can have been blind to the implications of these moves, and certainly the princes were not slow in pointing out their impolitic, if not illegal, nature. Here perception is important. Whatever was actually the case, princes inside and beyond the Empire thought that the emperor might be trying to extend his powers and to move the Empire towards the more unified nation-state structure which France and Spain had achieved. Preventing this was one of the motives for the conflict, and ruling it out for the foreseeable future was one of the consequences of the peace of Westphalia.

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Sources, Authors and Texts

Eyewitness personal accounts, written for private purposes rather than for the authorities, and not (with a few exceptions) intended for publication, provide a direct link with individual experience and perception of the Thirty Years War. Further definition is necessary, however, as potentially relevant sources extend from a limited number of quite specific accounts of the author's experience of the war to a much larger number of wider-ranging contemporary texts in which the war is occasionally mentioned or some isolated incident is described. Krusenstjern's invaluable bibliographic register of personal writing from the age of the Thirty Years War spans this range and lists over 230 examples (Krusenstjern, 1997). A limited number of these cover the whole war period, but most deal with only a part and some with only a few months, while many commence years or decades before the war began or extend correspondingly far beyond its end. For present purposes the preferred texts are those which can meaningfully be described – even if not fully defined – as eyewitness personal accounts of the war.

The terms 'eyewitness' and 'personal account' are important criteria, although not ones to be drawn too narrowly. The essential question is whether the author wrote from direct experience and personal knowledge, rather than deriving information from the press, from his own research, or from the reports of others, particularly others not well known to him. This does not imply that the writer need have witnessed every incident reported (although there is an important distinction between such direct testimony and even the most local hearsay) but that he should have had a clear link, close in space and time, to the source of the information. There is an obvious difference between including a neighbour's report of being robbed outside the village and incorporating rumours of events in distant cities. Many writers do introduce such extraneous information but the point is that this should be digression rather than the substance if their texts are to be useful. The concept of a personal account thus derives from the writer's standpoint in relation to his material rather than implying that he is himself the central figure in the narrative, which may indeed be quite impersonal in style and