Structural Inadequacies, Poorly Crafted Legislation, Eroding Imperial Authority, Escalating Confessional Conflict and the Eventual Intractability of Two Ruling Princes, Caused the Thirty Years War

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I. ABSTRACT:

Europe in the 16th Century was experiencing radical social, political and economic change. Technological development was apparent in all aspects of society. Most noteworthy was the invention of the printing press which enabled rapid dissemination of information to a rapidly increasingly literate general population. Towns, the development of trades and the provision of specialized services were rapidly evolving. European commerce was changing from a feudal structure to a money based economy. That is, currency in return for goods and services was replacing a structure of peasants providing life essentials protected by aristocratic nobility. The centralized, complicated, hierarchical feudal political structure was rapidly becoming obsolete.

Dynamic social, political and economic change is stressful. Century old practices and paradigms were being replaced. Europe may have made the change from feudalism to early-modernity without bloodshed if the essentially important religious structures of Europe were stable. The Catholic Church, however, was rife with corruption, absurd practices and greed facilitated by the organized confiscation of wealth in the form of tithes. The Church had lost the confidence and earned the contempt of tens of thousands of the faithful it was presumably organized to serve. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses, urging Church reform, on a German church door. His views gained rapid acceptance. In less than 40 years, Lutheranism was the second well established and powerful religion in the Holy Roman Empire. In less than 40 more years, Calvinism would become the third.

The new Protestant religions eschewed the need for priests to act as intermediaries with God, the need for Church administered sacraments to gain redemption and – perhaps most importantly – the need to fund a centralized, corrupt and abusive Church structure. This new,
revolutionary thinking easily extended to politics. It called into question the antiquated, irrelevant, complicated and inefficient structures of the Holy Roman Empire.

Historians disagree whether The Thirty Years War was a religious war extending to politics, or a political war extending to religion. There is, however, no disagreement that religion was a powerful catalyst for dynamic stressful change that led to war. This paper posits that there were seven principal causes for the outbreak of the Bohemian War, the first of a series of wars which became known as the Thirty Years War:

- The Treaty of Augsburg;
- The constant threat posed by the Ottoman Turks in the east and the Empire’s inadequate political structure to effectively deal with it;
- The Hapsburg’s deliberately self-imposed weakening of Imperial authority and prestige;
- The Brothers’ Quarrel;
- The damaging, inconsistent and arbitrary application of Imperial policy and power;
- The cumulative effect of 63 years of ever increasing political and confessionally charged tensions and conflicts that culminated in two warring camps – one led by Catholic Ferdinand II and the other led by Frederick V; and
- The Bohemian Revolt itself.

In 1620, The Bohemian War ended with the crushing defeat of the Rebels by Imperial forces at White Mountain, Bohemia. Emperor Ferdinand II could have then ended the war, but chose to widen it into Germany in order to press his newly won military advantage and to press his Catholic and Imperial agendas. A series of subsequent wars ensued that ultimately involved almost all of Europe. The War ended with the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia and the codification of early-modern political structures.

II. SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND:

The name Thirty Years War is a misnomer. The War was a series of armed conflicts or wars, between varying combatants internal and external to Germany.\(^1\) From the outbreak of hostilities in 1618, to their end with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the War, directly or
indirectly, involved every state-like political structure in Europe with the exception of Russia. Historian Peter Wilson chronicles the Thirty Years War as four successive and related conflicts: 1) Commencing in 1618, the Bohemian War against the Catholic Hapsburgs; 2) The Palatine War for the years after the Bohemian’s defeat and the War's movement to western and southern Germany; 3) Spain's active participation in the War after the expiration of the Dutch/Spanish 12 years truce in 1621, and 4) the Danish (1625-29), Swedish (1630-34) and French (1635-48) phases inclusively. This paper addresses issues that caused the war solely within the context of the political, religious and economic structures and events in 16th and early 17th Century Germany and Eastern Europe, and the Holy Roman Empire up to the outbreak of the 1618 Bohemian Revolt.

For the reader unfamiliar with European history of this period, and the War’s history, it is important to understand the rapid social, political and economic change taking place at this time. Dynamic change provided an environment that enabled the eventual outbreak of war. Heretofore, land and power were governed by landed aristocracy. Europe was evolving into a money economy replacing the land economy. A money economy provides diversified goods and services in return for a commonly accepted medium of exchange. Political authority still resided in the hands of aristocratic lords, but without the resources to exercise their will. The evolving merchant class had increasing capital, but no authority. The feudal hierarchical system, with the peasants as vassals of the landlord – and the landlord responsible for the serfs' security – was becoming obsolete. New duties were devolving to local authorities. Slow transportation, bad communication and lack of resources required the centralized authorities of Church and State to delegate responsibility to local institutions – churches and nobles – essential to govern. The
obsolete system was no longer justified by the underlying economics, which in turn weakened central authority and eroded its governing credibility.³

At the core of the 16th Century Empire were millions of peasants and commoners living in 2,200 towns and 150,000 villages. The population also dwelled in convents, monasteries and other communities across Europe.⁴ Churches were prominent fixtures in each settlement. Small towns would have four or more, each serving as community focal points.⁵ The ubiquity of these buildings was reflective not only of faith, but the economic muscle of organized religion.⁶

Life spans were short and living conditions horrific. Discomfort was ubiquitous with prevailing inadequate housing and sanitation. Rotting bodies on gibbets were a common sight. One traveler recorded that on the road from Dresden to Prague he counted "above seven score gallowes (sic) and wheels, where thieves were hanged, some fresh and some half rotten, and the carcasses of murderers broken limb after limb on the wheels."⁷

Today we view Europe as a small continent and Germany as a geographically small country. This was not the view of a 16th Century European. Crossing Germany and the Empire required days of travel that involved physical and societal obstacles. Governments were ill-organized and the diplomatic tempo was limited to the speed of horse traffic and the vagaries of weather. The faulty transmission of news altered political judgments. Armed conflicts generally brought about no general immediate upheaval because they were largely fought by small professional armies. Bloodshed, rape, robbery, torture, famine and disease were all common even in times of peace. Torture was commonplace in criminal trials and gruesome executions were performed before large public audiences.⁸ The squalid existence of the average European was salved by hope, and hope was provided primarily by the beliefs promulgated by the Catholic Church. Karl Marx later described this organizationally provided hope as an opiate.
Historian Georges Pages tells his readers that during the 16th Century, and the start of the 17th Century, Germany was not really a nation at all. The inhabitants spoke different dialects with regional differences so strong that they still endure today. Consequently, there was no consensus of German nationalism other than a general disdain for foreigners. There were so many regional independent governing institutions that hardly anyone can remember them all. Loyalties were regional, to an immediate lord and religious confession and not to any concept of a nation, although some sense of nationhood was growing. Germany in the 16th and 17th Centuries lacked the essential conditions necessary for national unity. There were no real national institutions. There was an Emperor – something like a king, and an assembly – something like a representative body, but both were inadequate to establish true nationhood.

The political structure of the 16th and 17th Century Holy Roman Empire that governed Europe and Germany has been described as a monstrosity. The Empire was a slow moving, intricate, elaborate system of institutional weights and counterweights. It is questionable whether the Empire was a monarchy or a hybrid alliance of principalities. The immediate vassals of the Empire acted as almost independent sovereigns, and their vassals could only reach the Emperor through them. A further structural weakness was that primogeniture was not an established practice in the Empire. Consequently, authority became generationally diluted. Moreover, there were free cities, free villages, Church lands, abbeys, and price-bishoprics. There were free knights and counts who considered themselves independent. Thus, a total population of 21 million was governed by more than two thousand separate authorities. This political quagmire served hierarchical feudalism but was inadequate to serve the emerging forces of modernism.
In the middle of the 15th Century, there was an effort to introduce a system of assemblies to avoid anarchy. But these bodies provided for no individual representation. Today’s concept of the individual, endowed with rights, did not exist in theory or practice. The secular and ecclesiastical Princes, counts and cities were happy to control land they held under the Emperor, but were careful not to give him any real authority. Consequently, indirect Imperial power was weak. By the mid 16th Century, the settlements of the Empire were governed and bound by a series of hierarchical, overlapping jurisdictions.

In the second half of the 16th Century, the Hapsburgs collectively were the greatest power in Europe. The Austrian House owned Austria, the Tyrol, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, most of Hungary, Silesia, Moravia, Lusatia, and Bohemia, west Burgundy, and parts of Alsace. The Spanish House owned, or claimed, the Low Countries, the fiefs of Finale and Piombino, and the kingdom of Naples, Sicily and Sardinia. The Spaniards were kings of Spain and Portugal and controlled Chile, Peru, Brazil and Mexico. But the newly bifurcated Spanish Kingdom and Empire were spread thin. The Hapsburgs, moreover, were zealous in absolutism and the primacy of the Catholic Church.

The Empire was symbolic of the medieval concept of a single Christendom. But this concept was about to abruptly change. The Emperor held the imperial title and this positioned him above all other European crowns. Conceptually, the Empire was the direct continuation of ancient Rome and the last of the great monarchies prophesied in the Book of Daniel. But the reality was that the Emperor, other than fiefs under his direct domain, ruled indirectly through an array of Princes and lords bound as vassals. These were immediate (Reichsunmittelbar) and mediate lords subject to the Reichsunmittelbar. Immediate lords possessed imperial fiefs (Rechtslehen). All of the Empire operated in this or some subset of this hierarchy. Sometimes
authorities overlapped. The Church embodied ecclesiastical lords and they considered themselves as the Imperial Church (*Reichskirche*), with vast land holdings.

All these lords had rights acquired by inheritance; there were 50-60,000 noble families in the Empire. By 1521, power had coalesced into three layers. The most senior were the seven Imperial Electors who held fiefs mandated by the Golden Bull of 1356. They had the exclusive right to elect each Emperor. Three were Catholic clergy, responsible for praying for the salvation of all the Empire's souls and consequently, they were the First Estate. These were: the Archbishops of Mainz, Cologne and Trier. The secular Estates were the King of Bohemia, an independent kingdom entitled to a vote, but not part of the Empire and the duchies of Brandenburg, Saxony and the strategically important Palatinate.

The Hapsburgs dominated the Imperial landscape, but importantly they did not own it, nor did they exclusively control it. They had to negotiate with the Electors to gain acceptance. The Emperor had broad discretionary powers, many of which were left vaguely defined. Many facets of government were, however, clearly defined and administered through an array of cumbersome and complicated systems. Tax collection determined which territories could be represented in the *Reichstag* and be recognized as an Imperial Estate (*Reichsstand*). The *Reichskammergericht*, more commonly referred to as the *Reichstag*, consisted of three layers or colleges: the Electors, the Princes and the Cities. The Emperor proposed topics for debate. Each college took a vote determined by a majority. The colleges then conferred in pairs, Electors to Princes and Princes to Cities. The concluding document was referred to the Emperor who could accept or reject it. In 1495, the *Reichstag* agreed to terms for a Permanent Peace. Disputes were to be submitted to the then new Supreme Court, the *Reichskammergericht* designed to mediate compromise. The Emperor also could also avail himself of the *Reichshofrat*, a separate court
that dealt with Imperial prerogatives. Since these were vague, the Reichshofrat offered a venue to ultimately resolve disputes not settled by the Reichstag. Decisions of the Imperial courts were enforced by ten circles or Kreises. They acted independently or in conjunction with other Kreises. Each had its own independent diet or assembly and a great deal of autonomy. Fiscal and military organization was vested in the ten circles such that, theoretically in concert with each other, it was possible for one half of the Empire to be engaged in warfare without any responsibility to the Emperor. Taxation was primarily to finance wars; social use of taxes was non-existent. This was the situation in the German part of the Empire. The Emperor lacked direct access to resources and was dependent on his minions for revenues.

Most of the imperial fiefs were both Estates and Kreis Estates with representation in the Reichstag and their regional assemblies. In this paper, Princes are defined as personages with Estate status and power. All the Kreises, moreover, were tied together through inter-marriage. The Emperor, however, only had direct control over those vassals that lived in his own dynastic lands. He had no direct rule over the vast majority of the Empire’s inhabitants which lived under territorial lords. Hence, the concept of German Freedom evolved. This was an aggregation of perceived rights and privileges. The Empire was a corporate collective with each piece of the Empire mutually dependent on others. The Kreises (or Circles) of the Empire in the 16th and early 17th Century were: Austria, Burgundy (special in status and virtually exempt from Imperial jurisdiction), Electoral Principalities along the Rhine, Franconia, Swabia, Upper Rhine, Lower Rhine and Westphalia, Upper Saxony and Lower Saxony.

The Holy Roman Emperors had little direct power over domains ruled by the Estates, but as Kings, like Princes, they ruled lands where they had direct dominion. Until 1555, the Emperor was King of Spain and the New World, parts of Italy, Sicily and Sardinia, French
Compte and the Netherlands. The Emperor’s vast foreign power made him powerful in Germany. But his power base was not Protestant Germany (Exhibit I). This became more of a problem for Ferdinand I, Charles V’s successor in Vienna. In 1555, when Charles V abdicated he split the Empire. His brother Ferdinand I ruled the Austrian House as a now territorially diluted Holy Roman Emperor, and nephew Philip II ruled the Spanish House as King of Spain. Consequently, Ferdinand I no longer enjoyed the benefit of his predecessors’ global power and influence. Ferdinand I’s relationship with Philip II was indeed a close one, and the Spanish King could and did help Ferdinand I, but he was not Ferdinand I’s to command as a vassal. Philip II was also fully occupied with his own problems relating to the revolt in the Netherlands. The conflict between the minority German Protestant Princes (and a vast German Protestant majority population) and the majority Catholic Princes backed by a Catholic Emperor of foreign stock, made civil unrest a natural result.

Europe in the 16th Century was steadily, progressively changing from a dysfunctional, obsolete feudal structure to an early modern, money based society. The dynamic pace of the social, political and economic development was also strongly affected by confessional or religious changes occurring in the Empire. This catalyst for accelerated change commenced on October 31, 1517, with Martin Luther’s public posting of his Ninety-Five Theses. This event marked the start of what would become the Protestant Revolution. Just as it is important to understand the social political and economic changes occurring in 16th Century Europe, it is essential to understand the changes in the religious structures in Europe. These structures provided the promise of eventual relief from temporal misery. The profound changes brought about by the Protestant Reformation would have a profound destabilizing effect on Europe and Germany.
III. CONFESSIONAL BACKGROUND:

The subsequent rise of conflicting religious confessions impaired the functioning of the Imperial government, and contributed significantly to the eventual breakout of war in 1618. In 1517, there was one Catholic religion. Luther’s teaching prompted the establishment of a second Lutheran confession which took root in the first half of the 16th Century. Calvinism, based on the teachings of John Calvin, emerged in the second half of the 16th Century as the Empire’s third religion. By 1618, all three confessions were solidly established, politically powerful and conflicting ideologies. Catholics represented centralized authority personified by the Pope and the Emperor. Lutherans stressed the primacy of doctrine – the Bible being the one true source of religious interpretation. The Calvinists, who believed that they represented the further evolution of concepts embraced by the Lutherans, represented the primacy of individual religious practice.27

In today’s secular environment, it is difficult for most to understand the powerful and driving importance of the promise of a metaphysical after-life in the lives of 16th Century Europeans. Religion was arguably more important than any social, political or economic influence. The parties to the Thirty Years War may have used confessional changes and tensions to their benefit, but they were deep believers. Modern secular hypocrisy, as it pertains to organized religion, is not evident in the historical accounts of the period. Religion was a critically important part of life.

Historian C. V. Wedgwood, in her article "The Futile and Meaningless War," contends that the German generation preceding the War was more devout than its successors. Spiritual revival penetrated to the roots of society and was a reality to a population to whom politics was meaningless. Theological readings and debates were ubiquitous. For Catholics, the Cult of the
Saints reached epic proportions among the peasants and the educated alike. Belief in the miraculous provided hope to a population experiencing extreme hardship, the breakdown of traditions and the erosion of the effectiveness of institutions. Practice of the occult flourished. Rosicrucianism, the belief in a secret, hidden complete scientific explanation of everything, gained traction in Germany and France. Devil worship and Black Magic were practiced throughout Europe. The general populace was miserable and anxious, and all sorts of gruesome fears were inflamed by the publication of pamphlets that reported, exploited and magnified any strange event. Astrology was commonplace and was professionally practiced by no less than the famous astronomer Johannes Kepler.

The newly invented printing press allowed Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses wide distribution throughout Germany and set Europe ablaze with theological controversy. Luther initially set out to reform the Church, not replace it. He published the Bible in German as the source of all truth, and his teaching removed the need for a priest as intermediary between the faithful and God.

In 1520, Luther published Sermon on Good Works. In it, Luther contended that salvation was gained by faith alone and debunked the Catholic belief that the power to forgive sins resided in the sacraments administered by the Church. In To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Respecting the Reformation of the Christian Estate, he called on Princes to correct abuses in the church, strip bishops and abbots of their wealth and create a de facto German Church. He further called for the destruction of what he described as the three false walls erected by the Church that caused suffering among the faithful: 1) Popes, priests, bishops, monks in superior position to the laity and the exemption of clergy from the jurisdiction of civil authority; 2) the Papal claim to have the exclusive right to interpret the Scriptures; and 3) the use of Imperial
authority to summon councils to reinforce their ecclesiastical authority. Luther attacked the papacy for depriving the individual Christian of his freedom to approach God directly by faith. Priests were not necessary and four of the seven sacraments were superfluous.

In December 1520, the Pope excommunicated Luther and turned him over to Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, for execution. Frederick protected Luther instead. Young Emperor Charles V was now faced with overriding Frederick the Wise and facing the wrath of a quickly growing Protestant movement. On May 21, 1521, The Diet of Worms gave Luther 21 days to recant or face Imperial Banishment. Luther responded by founding the Lutheran Church laying the foundation, backed by powerful German Princes, that would soon lead to violence.

Subsequent to the Diet of Worms, Germany witnessed 23 years of intermittent warfare as the confessional parties sought to consolidate power. The 1526 Diet of Speyer decided that no one should be punished for past offenses against the Diet of Worms and that each state should live, rule and comport itself as though it could answer to God and the Emperor. The Protestants interpreted this as the sanctioning of the establishment of Lutheran Churches. The Catholics continued to reject these assumptions.

In February 1529, Charles V ordered a reconvening of the Diet of Speyer. It rescinded its Recess Order and passed a decree permitting Lutheran services in Lutheran Principalities but requiring the toleration of Catholic services in Lutheran states. It forbade Lutheran preaching in Catholic states. At the same time, the religious and political situation in Germany was a mess. The Diet of Speyer forbade the further progress of Protestantism; the Protestants were divided amongst themselves. The whole Empire was menaced by the Turks under Suleiman, which was at the peak of its power. At the same time, the Diet of Augsburg convened, at which the Protestants put forth their beliefs in writing and how it differed from Catholic doctrine. This
document became known as the Augsburg Confession, regarded as the official Lutheran religious position.\textsuperscript{35}

The Protestant Revolution gave birth to the tenets of political Revolution in Germany: 1) the Bible was the basis of Faith which is personal; 2) it was necessary to break the clerical and academic monopoly of the priesthood by use of the vernacular; 3) salvation was a gift from God received by faith alone, not the Church; 4) and there was no functional distinction between laity and clergy. These ideas easily translated to civil society and brought to question the need for the central authority of the Church and the Empire.\textsuperscript{36} Changes and challenges to the traditional, long established confessional dogma, combined with social, political and economic change, resulted in an unstable environment conducive to a violent but stabilizing solution.

The Princes chose to back Luther for his doctrinal teachings because of its doctrinal appeal. His teachings also served the Princes’ political and economic purposes, and rendered obsolete the onerous and ceaseless necessity to fund the Vatican. Also, a reasonable deduction from Luther’s teachings was absolute regional sovereignty and the Princes’ right to appoint church officials within their own realms. Luther’s doctrine provided the basis for political independence from the Catholic Church. The abuses of the Catholic Church, its absurd doctrines, its incessant financial demands coupled with Lutheranism’s implied independent thinking, made the new religion very attractive to the German Princes.\textsuperscript{37} Many of the Princes desired control over their own churches and dominion over church lands. This was a direct challenge to central monarchal and ecclesiastic authority.\textsuperscript{38} Ultimately, what the Protestant Princes were not able to achieve through negotiation they were prepared to take by force.

Also in 1529, the \textit{Reichstag} took further measures to check perceived heresy. In 1530, this action prompted the publication of the above mentioned Augsburg Confession which defined
Lutheran beliefs. The resulting softening of the role of the priest and Church continued to have profound implications as a challenge to the centralized control of the Church and by political extension, to the Empire. With the devolution of control to converted Lutheran Princes, there was also a change in control of Church-owned properties that lay in the converted Princes’ jurisdictions. This control change became known as Secularization. Secularization would become perhaps the most contentious issue that would eventually lead to war.

Threats of prosecution by the Reichstag prompted the Elector of Saxony, the Landgrave of Hessen and other Lutheran Princes to form the Schalkaldic League in 1531. This was also a very significant event in our narrative leading toward war because it set the precedent for the later formation of armed defensive associations outside the scope of the Imperial Constitution. 

Like today’s British Constitution, the Imperial version was an unwritten, but well known and accepted understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the ruling elites of the Empire.

Luther's teaching was embraced partly because it freed local power from interference by the Pope. It flourished because European kings protected it and merchants facilitated it. The result was the erosion of the unity of Catholic Christendom. The polarization of Europe was further facilitated by Calvin in 1536, with his publication of Christianae Religionis Institutio and Ignatius Loyola in 1534, with the founding of the Jesuits. Calvin argued that the fate of each soul, salvation or damnation was predetermined by God. This was not just theology; it was radical new political theory. Priests were not necessary in this new paradigm. Hierarchy was replaced by the individual in relationship to his community and vice versa. This was a rival political formation to Imperial Rule. 

We shall see that the establishment of zealous Calvinism and the formation of the equally zealous Society of Jesus gave root to powerful antagonistic political and confessional forces.
Catholics contended that the Protestants were intransigent and unwilling to reconcile all their differences, which prompted Emperor Charles V to order the Protestants to submit to Papal authority. Subsequent conferences between Protestants and Catholics in 1540 and 1541 failed to bring peace. The Emperor then took steps to eliminate Protestantism and restore Imperial obedience. In the ensuing war in 1547, the Schalkaldic League was soundly defeated but the Lutheran religion was still spreading rapidly throughout Germany. In 1552, war broke out again and the Protestants, aided by France, defeated Emperor Charles V. In 1555, Charles V convened the parties which resulted in the Peace of Augsburg. The real winners of the Peace would be the German Princes. But the Peace of Augsburg arguably would work reasonably well until the early 17th Century when religious alliances became more political and polarized.

The Church was rife with corruption and practices that Luther contended did not have a basis in scripture; his views continued to spread rapidly. The Council of Trent, convened by the Pope in 1545-63, was intended to put forth political and theological Church reforms. It was also intended to provide counter-measures to the wave of Protestantism sweeping the Empire. The Council’s final decrees redefined Catholicism and supplied a program to eliminate heresy by a renewal of Catholic Life. They provided the basis for what would become known as the Counter-Reformation. Moreover, Spain’s concurrent victory over France gave Spain control of the Italian lands surrounding the Papal States thereby strengthening the bonds between the Church and the Hapsburgs.

In 1546, Martin Luther's death created a crisis for Lutherans which would fracture the new religion and facilitate the birth of Calvinism. Now, within the span of thirty years, instead of One True Church, there would be three. Lutheran pragmatists followed his disciple Philipp Melanchthon, who represented the Erasmus humanist strand of Lutheranism. Opponents styled
themselves *Gnesio* Lutherans or the Real Thing. The defeat of the Schalkaldic League at the Battle of Muhlberg resulted in an Interim Treaty pending papal approval. The *Gnesio* regarded the Interim as the first step toward their eradication and rejected the more moderate Philippist hope of reconciliation within the Church. They would become associated with the works of John Calvin. The growth of Calvinism in the Empire was driven by the conversion of Princes, not the general population. In 1560, the conversion of the Elector of the Palatine gave Calvinism real momentum.\footnote{43}

Metaphysical beliefs had a profound influence in 16\textsuperscript{th} and early 17\textsuperscript{th} Century Europe. The erosion of the Catholic Church’s ecclesiastic standing provided fertile ground for Luther’s and Calvin’s revolutionary teachings. Religious beliefs are deeply emotionally seated. The Protestant Reformation introduced religious passion to an already dynamically changing social, economic and political environment. The Reformation, and the Catholic Counter-Reformation, accelerated change in the Empire and contributed strongly to the eventual outbreak of the Thirty Years War.

**IV. HISTORIANS’ ATTRIBUTIONS OF THE VARIOUS CAUSES OF THE THIRTY YEARS WAR:**

The history of events and circumstances surrounding the Thirty Years War has been a subject of intense scrutiny by historians up to the present day. Over time, historians have traditionally viewed The Thirty Years War as a religious conflict that degenerated into a political one or a political conflict disguised as a religious conflict.\footnote{44}

Jesuit Robert Bireley believes that the ambiguities of the Peace of Augsburg led to the Thirty Years War. In the 1580's, a generation after the Peace, conflicting interpretations provoked prolonged litigation, political conflict and finally, violence. In 1559, the Palatinate became Calvinist. In 1583, the Archbishop Elector of Cologne announced he was converting to
Protestantism and intended to take his bishopric with him. Duke William of Bavaria militarily intervened to keep the Electoral majority Catholic. The militant Protestant majority refused to accept the authority of the Reichstag and the Reichshofrat which resulted in political paralysis. In 1607, the Imperial City of Donauwörth became a contentious issue. Minority Catholics revived processions that were disrupted by the majority Protestants. The Reichshofrat placed the city under Imperial Ban and sent Maximilian of Bavaria to occupy it. He eventually incorporated it into Catholic Bavaria.45

S. H. Steinberg tells his readers that the popular concept of the Thirty Years War as solely a religious war is simplistic. Religious schism coincided with political, constitutional and economic issues.46 He adds that the reason for the numerous conflicts that comprised the Thirty Years War were constitutional issues that festered for over fifty years. On one hand, the Hapsburg Emperors undertook efforts to transform a loose confederation of hundreds of principalities and free cities into a homogeneous unit under Imperial authority. On the other hand, most of the Princes, the Emperors included, attempted to establish absolute monarchical authority within the principalities they ruled.47

Theodore Rabb disagrees somewhat and tells his readers that it is customary to see the War as the last of the religious wars and its causes as the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. As the War progressed, political, dynastic and other motives came into play. Nonetheless, the fundamental issue that caused the War was religion.48

Samuel Rawson Gardiner believed that the dispute over the Augsburg Treaty concerning the status of Protestant Administrators, not Bishops and Secularized lands, was the principal cause of the Thirty Years War. Gardiner, moreover, believed that the lack of any governing institutions to reflect the thinking of the general population eliminated any possibility for
compromise. There was, he contends, no trace of any mutual hostility between Catholic and Protestant districts apart from their rulers.49

Franz Mehring, in his article “The Marxist View: Economic Causation,” agreed that the Spiritual Restriction in the Treaty of Augsburg was a problem causing deep resentment for Protestants. Every spiritual Prince, Elector, Arch-Bishop, Bishop or Abbot who deserted Catholicism would be deprived of office. The Lutherans objected because it deprived them of the most convenient way to acquire Church property.50

Georges Pages tells his readers that the Peace of Augsburg did not resolve the religious conflict it was tasked with. Instead, it marked the beginning of a cold-war which finally ignited in 1618.

C. V. Wedgwood contends that in the first years of the Reformation the weakness of Catholic Princes forced them to make concessions to their Lutheran subjects. This created a sense of danger in Catholics; any imposition of an infringement of Protestant liberties caused deep resentment with Protestants. In Germany, Catholics continued to be a ruling minority linked inexorably to the Austrian House of Hapsburg.51 Wedgewood asserts that the Thirty Years War was the last major religious conflict in Europe.

George Grayling has his own thoughts. He contends that the war originated, as is all too often with wars, with a peace treaty. In this case, it was the Peace of Augsburg.52 He adds that that the war was not primarily religious. Grayling, however, concedes that there can be no dispute, that the Reformation and Counter-Reformation profoundly influenced events that led to the War.53

Distinguished historian Peter Wilson disagrees:

As you will have gathered from my book, I believe the 1555 peace was remarkably successful and that the Empire did have the capacity to defuse
tensions—certainly more effectively than in the contemporary Netherlands or France. However, a vacuum opened up after 1600 due to the Habsburgs’ own problems and this created space for rival parties led by the two branches of the Wittelsbachs.\textsuperscript{54}

Wilson adds that conflict was not inevitable. In 1618-20 there was no desire for a major war. After the start of hostilities, all the parties continued to negotiate for peace up to the end of the War in 1648.

Ronald G. Asch, in *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe 1618-1648*, argues that tension over religious beliefs and their political affiliations were the primary cause in igniting The Thirty Years War.\textsuperscript{55}

All these eminent historians are correct depending on how The Thirty Years War is viewed. In any context, the antiquated, wholly inadequate political institutions in 16\textsuperscript{th} Century Germany and the Empire were insufficient to cope with the evolving powerful trends toward modernity. Germany, however, might have struggled through inevitable changes without bloodshed. But the Protestant Revolution, starting with Luther and stridently evolving with Calvinism, coupled with ardent Catholic orthodoxy of the Counter-Reformation, eventually rendered a peaceful outcome impossible. This brings us to the causes of the War.

**V. STRUCTURAL INADEQUACIES, POORLY CRAFTED LEGISLATION, ERODING IMPERIAL AUTHORITY, ESCALATING CONFESSIONAL CONFLICT, AND THE EVENTUAL INTRACTABILITY OF TWO RULING PRINCES CAUSED THE THIRTY YEARS WAR:**

The outbreak of the Thirty Years was not the result of a new set of causal circumstances but the continuation of old unsettled conflicts.\textsuperscript{56} The War’s genesis was in the Empire’s outdated social, political and economic structures. The religious Revolution, moreover, not only changed the form of worship and the conception of mortal destiny. It fostered new notions of Princely independence, new attitudes concerning the use of the vernacular and changed attitudes toward
the living of life itself. This provided the philosophical and theological justification for the formation of new political structures and the German Princes’ rationale for breaking with Roman Catholicism and increasing their own power. The political landscape of Germany was permanently altered.\textsuperscript{57} With the rise of spiritual unrest in the early 16\textsuperscript{th} Century, European Princes sought to control their own national churches and resented not having control over Church lands. They became more challenging to Rome’s authority.\textsuperscript{58}

The ensuing series of wars – The Thirty Years War – the first of which was the 1618 Bohemian Revolt and its resulting crushing defeat by the Empire were due to a series of reinforcing, cascading, snowballing events. The Treaty of Augsburg – the so-called Religious Peace – recognized Lutheranism as an official religion but ignored Calvinism. Its terms on key issues were deliberately vague and subject to ongoing varying interpretations by the affected parties. Resolution of differences was left to be adjudicated in the Imperial courts. The Peace, nonetheless, held until 1618. Germany would not experience war for 63 years – the longest period of uninterrupted peace in Germany until after WWII. But 63 years, especially in terms of the harsh living conditions in the 16\textsuperscript{th} Century, was a long time – perhaps three to four generations. The terms of the Peace were inelastic and Confessional momentum favored the Protestants. The vagaries and ambiguities of the Treaty eventually resulted in escalating, insolvable conflicts.

The Imperial structure of the Empire minimized the power of the Emperor to unilaterally confront an ever present threat of the Islamic Ottomans on its Eastern border. The political structure of the Empire required that the Princes finance the Imperial defense. They, in turn, exacted ever increasing confessional and political concessions in return for their financial
support. This progressively increased the power of the Protestant Princes and decreased the power of the Emperor.

In 1564, subsequent to the death of Ferdinand I, the Hapsburgs were in disarray. The political structure of the Empire arguably contributed to the Emperors’ funding their office with debt. To repay their indebtedness, the Hapsburgs diluted the Emperor’s concentrated power and granted concession after concession to the Protestant Princes. In 1576, after the death of Ferdinand I’s son, Maximilian II, the Hapsburgs became embroiled in an intense family struggle for power and Imperial succession which became known as The Brothers’ Quarrel. This Hapsburg family battle largely revolved around events in the eastern part of the Empire. The Brothers purchased improvements in their respective positions by significantly increasing their concessions to the Princes. The Hapsburgs also squandered political capital with their heavy handed use of self-serving solutions to succeeding political crises in Germany.

For decades, the Hapsburgs continuously diluted Imperial power historically vested in the Emperor. The Hapsburg’s also were inconsistent in the application of Imperial policy. The continuous policy of concessions emboldened the Protestant Princes; the arbitrary and capricious application of Imperial power enflamed them. The centralized power of the Church and Empire was on a collision course with the ever increasingly decentralized power of the Protestant Estates.

The avoidable drift toward the start of The Thirty Years War became unavoidable when new, young opposing political and confessional principals assumed power in the early 17th Century. Staunch Calvinist Frederick V, the young Palatine Elector, usurped the Bohemian Crown from the equally zealous Catholic new Emperor Ferdinand II. The slide toward war culminated with Ferdinand II’s crushing defeat of Frederick V. Ferdinand II could have ended
hostilities at that point. Instead he expanded The Bohemian war westward and southward into Germany. It would eventually expand into a Pan-European conflict – The Thirty Years War. War would rage in Europe until the transformational Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The Westphalia Peace terms would transition Europe toward sovereign states and modernity.

**A. The Peace of Augsburg and the Council of Trent:**

Historians differ as to the degree of the Treaty of Augsburg’s causal influence for the Thirty Years War. Wilson, in particular, contends that the Treaty worked reasonably well until the political turmoil in the late 16th Century. Supporters of the Treaty positively cite its longevity. Several, however, cite the Peace as a primary reason for the War, and all acknowledge the Treaty’s importance. The Treaty of Augsburg significantly influenced the events that led to the War.

In 1555, at the direction of the Emperor Charles V, and soon to be Emperor Ferdinand I, an assembly of the affected parties convened in Augsburg with the purpose of reconciling religious differences. This resulted in the Treaty of Augsburg, or The Religious Peace. The 1555 Treaty of Augsburg consisted of two parts: the religious peace and the executive regulation. Both were unsatisfactory compromises. Steinberg contends that the main weakness of the Treaty was the absence of any effective means for interpretation of its ambiguous clauses and effective enforcement mechanisms.59

The Treaty of Augsburg intentionally did not define faith. The Peace was intended to bring opposing confessions together through the same legal framework. The framers of the Augsburg Peace deliberately blurred religious distinctions to maintain the old and perhaps obsolete universal concept of a single Christendom.60 Lutherans were defined as "adherents to the Confession of Augsburg" but the Treaty did not define what that meant.61 The Treaty
forbade the enforcement of heresy laws against Lutherans and obligated both confessions to arbitrate their differences though the Reichstag. This provision put the religious settlement within the domain of the Imperial Peace of 1495.\textsuperscript{62} Recall that the Reichstag had then agreed to terms of a Permanent Peace.

The deliberate vagaries of the Treaty of Augsburg became known as the Three Dubia or differing interpretations of three key terms:

1. The fate of immediate ecclesiastical lands or the legal status of clerical Imperial Estates controlled by Lutherans after 1552. Ferdinand I allowed the Lutheran Princes license to practice their religion, but these Princes were unwilling to cede ecclesiastical control of properties they controlled. Ferdinand I skirted this major issue by pronouncing the occupying Princes as administrators, not clerics. After 1582, this pronouncement would become a major problem when the number of Estates administered by Lutherans threatened the Catholic majority in the Reichstag. The major continuing issue of the Treaty was the ownership of Church assets. Article 19 of the Peace fixed the Peace of Passau 1552 as the Normative Year, the benchmark for the determination of asset ownership. Protestants could keep the lands Secularized by that date, and this was accepted as part of the General Peace. But in order to appease Catholics, Ferdinand I unilaterally inserted Article 18, The Ecclesiastical Reservation, into the Treaty.\textsuperscript{63}

The Reservation provided that if Protestants acquired Church properties after 1552, they had administrative but no clerical rights. The intent and effect of this provision was to guarantee Church dominance in Imperial institutions. Lutherans continuously and assiduously argued that the Ecclesiastical Reservation was not part of the Peace because they never agreed to it. Consequently, they believed that a converted Protestant Cathedral Chapter could and should appoint a Protestant cleric as a bishop, with all attendant rights.\textsuperscript{64} The Ecclesiastical Reservation
was a primary cause of the War. Its effects would be felt long after the Protestant defeat in the Bohemian Revolution. Indeed, this clause would later be embraced and enforced by Emperor Ferdinand II and served to invite the intervention of foreign powers later in the War. The Ecclesiastical Reservation was not only a cause of the War, it served to prolong it.

2. The status of mediate ecclesiastical property within the jurisdiction of Lutherans after 1552. Recall that immediate lords possessed Imperial fiefs (*Reichslehen*) and mediate lords did not, and they were subordinated to immediate lords. Sometimes it was not clear whether properties were an Imperial Estate or mediate holdings.

3. The status of territories wherein Catholic majorities outnumbered the Lutherans in which Catholics claimed the right to expel dissenters. Lutherans believed that the exercise of religion was a voluntary freedom. After the 1570s, this issue became a bigger problem when Catholic rulers made religion a litmus test for political loyalty. The Treaty recognized the legality of the two confessions at the territorial level. The Treaty of Augsburg also provided for what would later be termed *cuius regio, eius religio*, or he who rules a territory has the right to determine his subjects’ religion. Recall that the concept of individual rights was non-existent. The right to reform the Church (*ius reformandi*), was deemed to be a prerogative of the Princes like any other religious right. But it was not the framers’ intent to divide on this issue because they still had hope for religious reconciliation. The treaty also provided for *ius emigrandi*, or the right to emigrate, to every person to a territory consistent with his or her religion. This right in reality was illusory given the socio-economic structure prevailing in 16th Century Germany. Instead of unifying, the Treaty provided a vehicle for increased separation in the Empire. The Peace gave Lutherans legal equality but insured that Catholics would maintain a political majority.
In addition to its structural vagueness, the Treaty only recognized the Lutheran religion as stated in the Confession of Augsburg 1530. It did not recognize Calvinism. In 1555, Calvin had only just begun to evangelize France. After the Augsburg Peace, Catholic and Lutheran rulers were troubled as they watched Calvinism establish a foothold in Germany.\textsuperscript{67}

The Peace of 1555 was intended to freeze the position of the two churches that year. But the Lutheran religion continued to grow and evolve, and the Catholic Church would soon mount an effective Counter-Reformation. By extension the Ecclesiastical Reservation had a powerful effect. If a Prince of the Church turned Protestant, he could not avail himself of\textit{ cuius regio sius religio} on his subjects and had to renounce his religious and property rights. The second important point of dispute was whether free cities had the right of \textit{ius reformandi} affirmed by Protestants and denied by Catholics.

At the core of the differing interpretations were differing views of the Peace, similar to the current political positions in the United States concerning the interpretation of the American Constitution. Catholics believed that the Treaty was to be interpreted by the clear letter (\textit{Klare Buchstabe}) of the law and to check any further spread of Lutheranism. Lutherans believed that 1555 was the start of a continuing reformation effort, not the end. Calvinists thought they should be included because they were evolved Lutherans. Not so, said the Catholics and Lutherans. Many Lutherans had more problems with the Calvinists then they did with Catholics. Calvinists were more likely to use extra-constitutional means of resistance. This would later result in an escalation of tensions as Calvinism grew in acceptance.\textsuperscript{68} Moderate Catholics saw the Peace as a concession that left the Lutherans as a tolerated minority within a common legal framework. Militant Catholics believed in the rigid Jesuit interpretation: The Peace of 1555 merely
suspended the ban of Protestants in 1521. The Peace would last only until the two parties could resolve their differences. Thus, the Treaty became a time bomb.

There was nothing elastic about the legislation. It did not adopt the majority religion as the religion of the land and it not adopt the principle of individual religious liberty. Both sides of the aristocracy jealously protected their rights without regard to the social and economic evolution of Germany. As we have seen, Germany was dynamically changing. The Treaty, moreover, was religiously narrow and made no provision for any Protestant belief other than Lutheran. The commonality between the religions was that Princes determined the religion of their subjects. This suited the Emperor but put many of the Catholic Princes in a contradictory position to their majority Lutheran subjects.

The Treaty created new problems. Ecclesiastical Princes ruled vast territory along the Rhine, and Franconia and Northern Germany. They also controlled about half of the second of the three councils of the Reichstag. The Ecclesiastical Reservation provided that all Ecclesiastical properties acquired by the Protestants after the treaty would lose their political power. The reservatum ecclesiasticum – the Religious Reservation – was intended to leave political power in the hands of Catholic regardless of the ever-increasing Lutheran religion in Germany. Frederick Schiller, therefore, contends that the treaty was not a peace "but a truce between a sovereign and unconquered rebels." The Reservation would cause irreconcilable problems as the Protestants did not believe it to be valid or legal, and the Catholics considered it a binding part of the Religious Peace.

But the Peace of Augsburg was a milestone; for the first time, Lutheranism was acknowledged as a legal religion. The real winners of the Augsburg Peace were the German Princes, for each became de facto head of his own church. They were territorially superior to the
Emperor and ecclesiastically supreme in the Church. Thus, the Treaty was politically divisive, contrary to a national unifying effect and antithetical to the centralized strength of the Emperor. This notwithstanding, the Peace of Augsburg arguably worked reasonably well for decades, but by the early 1600's, religious alliances became more and more political and the Treaty less tenable. The Peace gave Lutherans legal equality but left the Catholics with a political majority; Catholics controlled the legal system. The Protestants eventually could only defend their positions by paralyzing the constitution. In 1601, they refused to acknowledge the decision of the Imperial tribunal. In 1608, they walked out of the Reichstag which would not re-assemble until 1640, well after the outbreak of the War.

By 1618, Calvinism became a powerful component of Europe’s diverse confessional picture. Unanimity of Protestant belief may have prolonged the peace, but Calvinism prospered in Geneva and soon spread to Germany, serving to divide the Protestants among themselves. The Reformation was evolving and the terms of the Augsburg Treaty arguably served the interests of those seeking to arrest its spread, not accommodate it. The continuing evolution of Protestantism and the opposing measures of the Catholics also served to keep the parties at odds with each other. The interpretation of the Treaty would remain in constant dispute. Historian Ronald G. Ash points out that the Peace of Augsburg increased religious tensions. Catholics and Protestants remained convinced that theirs was the true religion. Both sides would appeal to the courts for resolution of local affairs. But as years passed, the Empire's legal effectiveness eroded into paralysis.

To varying degrees, historians Robert Bireley, Samuel Gardiner, Franz Mehring and George Grayling contend that the weakness of the Treaty of Augsburg was a significant cause of the Thirty Years War. Peter Wilson, who believes that the Treaty insured the peace and worked
reasonably well until the turn of the 17th Century, concedes the problems associated with the Treaty provided a cause for war after 1618.\textsuperscript{81} All the cited historians, however, acknowledge that the Treaty, to some degree, had a causal effect.

In 1563, The Council of Trent established new dogma and condemned all Protestant innovations.\textsuperscript{82} Heretofore, the Catholic Church in Protestant domains was obsolete. It was only with the establishment of the Jesuit Order in 1534 that an effective Counter-Reformation truly began. The Jesuits were a zealous, spiritual, military-like order bound by unquestioning obedience to their superiors. When the Council of Trent concluded, the Church now had the weapon to wage spiritual war. Organizationally, the Jesuits were structured like an army – their goal was to eradicate Protestantism and restore the primacy of the Church. The order was politically motivated; the Jesuits became confessors to many crowns in Europe and exercised profound political influence. Jesuit Martin Began was Emperor’s Ferdinand II confessor during the Thirty Years War. The Order expanded rapidly from 1,000 at the time of its founder Ignatius Loyola's death in 1556 to 13,000 in 1615. The Jesuits also spearheaded education. By 1618, there were 22 Jesuit colleges in the Rhineland, 20 in south Germany and 23 in Austria and Bohemia. They quickly became a powerful and polarizing religious force.\textsuperscript{83}

The Calvinists, on the other hand, were the most militant of the Protestants. They were not unified, but rather a heterogeneous mass of scattered communities with no central government. Arguably an extension of a new Lutheran Confession, the Calvinists already had a Protestant Church structure. They simply entrusted the structure with new tasks. The Calvinists established a system of mutual monitoring in which parishioners and ministers reported on each other's doctrinal conformity and moral standards. This decentralized structure was directly at
odds with the centralized authority of the Church and Empire. Protestants lacked cohesiveness due to disagreements over doctrine in addition to the other omnipresent political dynamics.

Two distinct Protestant groups emerged. Saxony led the more moderate Lutherans which favored working within the framework of the Religious Peace of 1555. The more radical Calvinists, led by the Palatinate, sought constitutional change through confrontation. The Jesuits were organized, and although the Calvinists were not, they were radical and hated the Lutherans almost as much as they hated the Catholics. These were powerful destabilizing forces. A common faith had alone given unity to a disintegrating Empire. When Protestant ascendancy blunted institutions, and Princes sought to take advantage of it, the governing concepts of 500 years evaporated.

The Treaty of Augsburg saved the theory of religious unity for each Estate but destroyed it for the Empire. Lutherans and Catholics still hoped for reconciliation, but the rise of Calvinism within a decade after the Treaty destroyed that chance. The Calvinists, outside the sphere of the Peace, became the fighting protagonists of Protestantism. The Jesuits dismissed Calvinism as wicked and contrary to their deepest beliefs. They consequently considered it their sacred mission to destroy it. The implementation of the outcomes of the Council of Trent served to exacerbate political and confessional tensions that would eventually lead to war.

B. The Islamic Ottoman Turks and the Empire:

The Imperial Constitution mandated that the Princes, not the Emperor, were responsible for funding the defense of the Empire. The debilitating effect of this structural inadequacy was a cause of the Thirty Years War.

In the late 16th Century, the power and prestige of the Emperor had eroded significantly. This was a result of the continuing Ottoman threat in the east, constitutional weakness of the
Emperor and strife over Imperial succession. The Emperor did not have monarchical power. When elected, each emperor had to consent to concessions, or Wahlcapitulation. This was a contract that guaranteed Electors’ independence and their continued pre-eminence in Europe. Each Emperor, consequently, was individually dependent upon the Electors for his power. He had to consult with the Electors on matters of war and peace, foreign policy, taxes, and alliances.\textsuperscript{89} The Emperor also depended on the Estates – both Protestant and Catholic – to provide almost sole financial support against the ever-threatening Turks. The Protestant Estates exploited this dependence to extract continuous political and confessional concessions.\textsuperscript{90}

The Islamic Turks were an ever-present threat to the Empire. In June 1593, the Austrians soundly defeated the Turks at the battle of Sissek. The Turks subsequently declared war on the Empire, “The Long Turkish War,” which lasted until 1606.\textsuperscript{91} The Ottoman Sultan reluctantly agreed to the War as the Ottoman Turks had been involved in a series of lengthy and expensive conflicts for decades. The Sultan consented only at the urging of his Grand Vizier to escalate to a general war.\textsuperscript{92} The Sultan’s concern was prescient. The outbreak of war between the Ottomans and the Empire brought about significant political and economic change. Initially, militancy on the Catholic and Protestant sides of the Imperial political spectrum was muted as the Moslem threat united all the Estates and the Empire. However, the inability to make significant progress in the war eventually bred increasing discontent.

The war indeed was costly. Worsening financial problems prevented the coordination of Imperial armies with some Walloon and French units defecting to the Turks. The situation was equally difficult for the Ottomans, who faced revolts in five provinces. In 1604, Sultan Mehmet died and was succeeded by his 13-year-old son. The Sunni Ottoman’s enemies in the East, the Shiite Persians, attacked. Some things never change. Faced with a two front war, Sultan Ahmet
opened peace talks.\textsuperscript{93} The situation became more strained as Ferdinand of Stryia, later to become Emperor Ferdinand II and a pivotal figure in the Thirty Years War, and Archduke Matthias and Emperor Rudolf II, sought to intensify their Counter-Reformation measures in the parts of the Empire they controlled. The Hapsburgs used the lull in fighting as an opportunity to try to repress Protestantism in Transylvania and Upper Hungary through the seizure of properties and the forced conversion of towns.

The policy shift was intended to restrict regional political authority and was at odds with concessionary Imperial policies. With the Turkish War still in progress, this policy change was foolish, and the Protestants successfully resisted it vigorously.\textsuperscript{94} Soon the Hapsburg position was on the verge of collapse. Calvinist Istvan Bocskay was acclaimed Prince of Transylvania on February 22, 1605, and two months later as ruler of Hungary. Bocskay’s position was solidified when the Sultan designated the territories as Turkish fiefs. Hostilities then spilled over into Ferdinand’s Styria.

These developments alarmed Archduke Matthias, close ally Bavarian Archduke and Wittelsbach family member Maximilian, and soon to be Emperor Ferdinand II, all of whom questioned Emperor Rudolf II's ability to govern. Rudolf II authorized his brother Matthias to negotiate with the Turks and Bocskay. And Matthias recognized that he would have to make major political and religious concessions to the Hungarians.\textsuperscript{95} On June 23, 1606, the Hungarian and Transylvanian nobility and Matthias concluded the Treaty of Vienna. Lutherans and Calvinists received formal toleration. Hungarian financial independence was achieved by its recognition as a palatinate which provided Hungary more sovereign privileges. Hungarians replaced German troops on the frontier. Transylvanian autonomy was also enhanced. Bocskay was declared king but not crowned. The Habsburgs, moreover, ceded another five Upper
The success of the Hungarians set a most important precedent. The Hungarians and Transylvanians had created and implemented a viable military alliance. The Imperial imposition of militant Catholicism was reversed by Protestant armed force. The Bohemians took note. In 1618, they would follow the Hungarian and Transylvanian example.

The Peace of Vienna, however, cleared the way for Matthias to end debilitating conflicts with the Ottomans with the Treaty of Zsitva Torok on November 11, 1606. That Peace was a compromise with both sides recognizing each other as equals. The arrangement would last for 20 years removing the chronic financial pressure on the Hapsburgs to fund the military at the cost of concessions to the Protestants. It is especially noteworthy that The Treaty of Zsitva Torok would eventually free future Emperor Ferdinand II to focus his attention and energy on the Protestants in Germany during the looming European conflict. But The Long Turkish War, with its financial costs and political consequences, was another in the causal cascade of events that contributed to the Thirty Years War.

The Long Turkish War weakened the Empire and the Emperor. By 1609, Archduke Matthias emerged with domestic power gains in Austria, Moravia and Hungary (Exhibit II). The gains, however, were made at the cost of significantly improving the Protestant Estates' position. Emperor Rudolf II also granted steep concessions to the Bohemians and Silesians in his Letter of Majesty, essentially empowering local government at the expense of Imperial control. The results of 16 years of international and civil war required Archduke Matthias to grant more significant concessions to the Protestant Princes and to enter into a less than desirable peace with the Ottomans. In addition to the continuous foreign Turkish threat, the domestic political situation in the Empire continued to deteriorate in the late 16th Century. The deterioration escalated in the next century, largely due to a Hapsburg Family power struggle.
C. The Brothers’ Quarrel:

The Hapsburgs were fortunate that the Turkish War abated due to the Sultan’s problems with the Persians, but almost immediately the Imperial political focus turned inward with what became known as the Brothers’ Quarrel. The Hapsburgs would needlessly squander political capital in a power struggle in which arguably all family parties lost. The unintended result of the Brothers’ Quarrel was the across-the-board strengthening of the Protestant Princes’ position and the significant erosion of Hapsburg control and strength in Eastern Europe. This somewhat complicated series of events is important because they are demonstrative of the serial deterioration of Imperial power. Consequently, the Brothers’ Quarrel would be a cause of The Thirty Years War.

To understand the genesis of the Brothers’ Quarrel, it is helpful to understand the Imperial Family history from 1555, the benchmark date of the Treaty of Augsburg and Emperor Charles V’s abdication (Exhibit III). Over the later part of the 16th Century, developments in the Hapsburg family continually weakened the power of the Emperor. Arguably, the Emperor’s biggest strength was his reach throughout the Empire and the concentration of Imperial power in one person. The Empire had been initially weakened with the abdication of Charles V. Charles was a consummate soldier and a commanding figure. He was indeed repressive, but his subjects identified with him. When Charles V abdicated in 1555, he split the Empire leaving his brother Ferdinand I with the eastern, Austrian-based half and the Emperor’s title. Ferdinand I’s nephew King Philip II of Spain was a close ally, but not a vassal, and was fully occupied with problems of his own in the Netherlands. Charles V’s partition of the Empire between Spain and Austria geographically halved the Empire and it also halved its power. Although Spain and the Hapsburgs were aligned they were no longer unified.
Ferdinand I was faced with pressing problems that would vex him and his successors in Hungary and Transylvania, as well as the ongoing Turkish threat. It was in Ferdinand’s interest to have support from the Catholics and the Protestants. The structure of the Imperial Constitution, as we have seen, necessitated his reliance on the Estate holders for funding. His indulgence of the Protestants, however, was a step toward their increasing power and the diminishing power of the Emperor.104

When Ferdinand I died in 1564, the Austrian state debt had risen fivefold to ten million florins.105 Annual debt service, moreover, was 1.5 million florins a year and the defense of the frontier required and additional 1.0 million florins. Ferdinand’s personal debt was 1.5 million florins. The Emperor’s solution to this problem was embodied in his last will and testament. He entrusted succeeding Imperial governance to a senior line of his six sons and established two junior branches for others. The effect was to spread the debt, but it also spread power, and again the beneficiaries were the Protestant Estates.106 Ferdinand I’s son, Maximilian II, largely followed his father’s policies until his death in 1576. Peter Wilson believes that the problems facing the Austrian Hapsburgs explain both the initial Bohemia Revolt and the spread of the War. They stemmed from the dynastic weakness following Charles V’s separation of Spain and its possessions from the Empire and later, after Ferdinand I’s death, the internal partition of Austria in 1564 into three sub-branches.107

Faced with an ever mounting Protestant population and mounting debt, the Hapsburgs continually had to compromise. Upper and Lower Austria obtained the Religious Assurance (Assecuation) in 1568 and 1571 respectively, gaining religious freedoms in return for the payment of 2.5 million florins of Hapsburg debt. In 1572, Inner Austria paid off another 1.0 million for similar freedoms. In 1578, the concessions were consolidated into the The
Pacification of Bruck (*Brucker Libell*), granted in return for regular tax payments to maintain border defenses against the Turks.

The Austrian Protestant Princes paid dearly for their religious freedoms and would not give them up easily.\textsuperscript{108} By 1585, Catholicism was under severe pressure. Nine in ten Lower Austrian nobles had embraced Lutheranism, as had 85% in Upper Austria where 75% of urbanites and half the peasants were Protestants. In Inner Austria, 70% had abandoned Rome and only five of 135 Styrian nobles were Catholic. By 1572, 16 of 22 Styrian (Inner or Central Austrian) towns were Lutheran. Protestant nobles continuously lobbied through the Estates for concessions from the Hapsburgs.\textsuperscript{109}

The Catholic nobility’s eventual response to this string of Imperial concessions was a policy of entrenchment. Rather than revoking privileges granted, they fiercely resisted any new ones. The implementation of any new privileges allowed would be subject to their strict interpretation of the terms and conditions under which they were granted. The Catholics believed that the Protestant Estates were a necessary evil. After all, the Empire depended on their funding. Governmentally, however, Catholics were nearly always favored and promoted over their Protestant rivals.\textsuperscript{110}

In 1576, Maximilian II’s eldest son and Ferdinand I’s grandson, Rudolf II succeeded him. Rudolf II and his immediately younger brother Archduke Matthias were the antagonists in the family fight. Rudolf II was an introvert. He did not like ruling the Empire, and in governance, the Jesuits and the Spanish Court influenced him heavily.\textsuperscript{111} Intelligent but inept and eccentric, Rudolf II began to show signs of mental illness. He devoted all his time to a coterie of painters, philosophers, scientists, writers, magicians and hangers on. Rudolf II loved
astronomy, natural history, chemistry and antiquities and surrounded himself with natural philosophers to indulge his interests; he became increasingly reclusive.

His brother Archduke Matthias urged Rudolf II to proclaim him King of the Romans. The title King of the Romans designated the presumptive heir to the Imperial throne. When Rudolf II rejected the proposition, Matthias connived with young Ferdinand of Stryia and eventual Emperor and Archduke Maximilian. Archduke Maximilian ruled Catholic Bavaria. He could and would raise armies and was a powerful ally of Matthias and young Ferdinand. If Emperor Rudolf II died without an heir, the Protestant Electors of Palatine and Saxony would serve as Imperial Vicars. Consequently, the possibility of a Protestant Emperor was not a far reach. This resulted in the soap opera like, high stakes family intramurals, which became known as the Bruderzwist (the Brothers Quarrel).

In January, 1608, Emperor Rudolf II convened a Diet in Regensburg. Its purpose was to provide funding for continuing efforts against the Turks. The Protestant Estates demanded that the issue of the Ecclesiastical Reservation of the Treaty of Augsburg be debated as part of the Diet’s agenda. Recall that the Treaty provided that if a cleric converted to Protestantism, all his rights, territories and privileges would be forfeit. Charged by Rudolf II with administering the Diet, young future Emperor Ferdinand’s primary goal was to obtain funding for 24,000 Imperial troops necessary to defend against the Turks. The Protestants, however, would not approve the funds without concessions to the Religious Peace.

Independently, Archduke Matthias then formed an alliance with Hungary and Upper and Lower Austria to keep the peace with the Turks, and began to organize an army to confront Rudolf II. Emperor Rudolf II accused Matthias and his allies of rebellion. Young Ferdinand was
caught between the conflicting Brothers and did his best to stay neutral as the Brothers jockeyed for political position. Perhaps a better name for this struggle is The Brothers’ Battle.

Young Ferdinand continued in his efforts to convince the Protestant Estates to approve military funding. In yet another bout over the Ecclesiastical Reservation, they refused unless the Diet agreed to allow the recognition of the Protestant confiscation of Church property after 1552. Young Ferdinand stood with Archduke Maximilian in enforcing the hard line against the Protestants on the Religious Peace. This, in conjunction with the continuing strife with the Hapsburg house, caused the Diet to collapse. The 1608 Diet of Regensburg was a total failure. Imperial troops were not funded and no progress was made on religious differences. The failed Diet increased distrust and suspicions on both sides. The Brothers’ Quarrel further weakened the Empire by leading Protestant Princes to believe that violent confrontation would result in advancing their political and religious goals. The Protestant case for armed rebellion, and all its consequences, was gaining momentum.

Rudolf II's erratic behavior convinced the Archdukes that they needed to act, and they agreed to accept Matthias as sole successor to Rudolf II. But Rudolf II’s determined resistance deterred the Electors from open support of Matthias while Rudolf II lived. The Hapsburg family feud ended the hope of settling succession issues without recourse to further concessions to the Protestant Estates.

The Brothers would become involved in a series of trade-offs to cement their positions. The rights of the Protestant Princes and the spread of the Reformation were ascending; Rudolph II's Imperial power was deteriorating. Fearful of Rudolf II's impotency, his brothers met and assigned all their powers to Matthias. The House of Hapsburg was now in tacit revolt against the Emperor, and the Protestants quickly embraced the accommodating Matthias.
On June 25, 1608, hostility was avoided between the Brothers with the signing of the Treaty of Lieben. The Treaty granted near Imperial status to Matthias in the eastern part of the Empire. Rudolf II was compelled to surrender the Hungarian Crown of Saint Stephen to Matthias and recognize him as ruler of Moravia and Upper and Lower Austria. The Moravians received greater autonomy from Bohemia. The Austrians, Moravians and Hungarians forged their own alliance.\(^\text{119}\)

The Austrians were under the leadership of Baron Tschernaembl. As a Calvinist, he was a minority in opposition to the Hapsburgs, but argued that Rudolf II's renunciation of his Austrian authority created an interregnum. On October 3, 1608, the assembled radicals declared their formal secession from the Empire and established an alternative government in Upper and Lower Austria. Matthias rushed to dissuade them, but the Austrians refused to grant him recognition unless he made more religious concessions, and Matthias complied.\(^\text{120}\) On March 19, 1609, Matthias further mollified the Austrians by halting Catholic reform and providing a verbal assurance of support to freedom of religion in Austrian towns. Young Ferdinand was bitterly opposed to these concessions, calling them “vexing and scornful.”\(^\text{121}\) The Catholic gains of the prior 30 years were swept aside.

The Bohemians remained under the rule of Rudolf II with the understanding that Mathias would succeed him. On July 9, 1609, in return for their recognition, Rudolf II signed the infamous Letter of Majesty establishing equality between the Emperor and the adherents to the Confession Bohemica – that is the Ultraquists, Bohemian Brethren, Lutherans and Calvinists. The confessional adherents were allowed to appoint pastors, control the university, and name a committee of Defensors independent of the king. They were also allowed to build churches and schools on royal lands.\(^\text{122}\) Rudolf II’s concessions exceeded those granted the Austrians by
Matthias, and the Bohemian Catholics were cast aside. On August 20, 1609, the Silesians extracted a similar Letter.

Matthias won the Brothers’ Quarrel but it was a Pyrrhic victory. In 1611, Rudolf II was stripped of his authority and remained Emperor only in title. Matthias became King of Bohemia, but his crown came with further costs. The Bohemians demanded the free exercise of religion and elected 30 Defensors empowered to raise an army. In response, Matthias capitulated and signed Rudolf’s Letter of Majesty. The Bohemian Protestants were given control of the University of Prague and granted a Consistory, (or Church Court) independent of the Archbishop. Bohemia became a *quasi* republic. Imperial power was reduced to figurehead status. The German Protestant Princes took note; the power of the Protestant Estates continued to strengthen. On May 23, 1611, only after granting these concessions including recognition of the Letter of Majesty, Matthias was crowned King of Bohemia.

Rudolf II was effectively no longer in power but the formal issue of Imperial succession was still undecided. In December 1611, a family conference was held in Vienna. Present were Matthias, Archdukes Ferdinand, Maximilian, young Ferdinand's son Johann Carl, the Spanish ambassador representing King Philip III, and a representative of Archduke Albert. They decided to support Matthias for King of the Romans and heir apparent. Matthias had opposition from Catholics who credibly believed that he was too eager to appease the Protestants, but some were softening. The soon to be elevated to Cardinal Klesl, close advisor to Matthias, had initially opposed Matthias' concessions but modified his position because they were *politique*. That is, they were necessary for the greater good. Only with Protestant support could the Turks be held at bay. Ever consistent, young Ferdinand remained in bitter opposition.
On January 26, 1612, Rudolf II died and on June 13, Mathias succeeded him as Emperor. On August 13, 1613, in a continuing effort to finance the military and resolve religious issues, another Imperial Diet was assembled. It met with the same entrenched positions of the parties. On October 22, Emperor Mathias prolonged the Diet to May 1, 1614, but it never reconvened.\textsuperscript{127} Time after time, the Protestant Princes confronted a succession of Hapsburg Emperors. Time after time, the Emperors agreed to major concessions. The cumulative effect of these actions was the erosion of the Emperor’s power and prestige and another cause of The Thirty Years War.

D. German Political Crises and Increasing Confessional Tensions:

The Brothers’ Quarrel was focused not on Germany but primarily on events in the eastern kingdoms of the Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Important and concurrent with the significant events in the eastern Empire, tensions rose in Germany. The political fortunes of the Calvinists and the Hapsburgs continued to ebb and flow. In the early 17th Century there were two regional crises, one of which threatened the Empire with foreign intervention.

The Donauwörth Incident added fuel to an already combustible situation. In 1606, the Protestant city council forbade the Catholic minority from a public display of faith, and the Catholics rioted. Emperor Rudolf II placed the city under Imperial Ban, revoked its privileges and replaced Lutheran administrators with Catholics. He removed Donauwörth from the Protestant Swabian Circle and placed it within the Catholic Bavarian Circle.\textsuperscript{128} In 1607, Bavarian Archduke Maximilian enforced the Ban and seized the city as payment for his services to the Empire. He then reinstated Catholicism and repressed Protestantism with tacit Imperial approval. The Protestant Princes viewed the Donauwörth incident as a pure and simple Imperial power grab. This Imperial action contributed to the ruin of the Diet of 1608, and the Protestant’s walkout from it.\textsuperscript{129} On May 12, 1608, after the failure of the 1608 Diet, an alliance of Protestant
states headed by the Elector Palatine, Wüttenberg, Baden-Durlach, Ansbach, Lulmbach, Newburg, Hessen-Kassel, Zweibraken, Brandenburg and a number of southern German cities formed the Protestant Union. The Protestants designed the Union as a defense against any aggression from the Catholics, but it was an organization empowered to raise an army.

A subsequent chain of events in Germany nearly led to Pan-European war. Jülich-Cleves was of strategic importance as it straddled the Spanish Road – the supply line from Italy to the Netherlands. Spain maintained a major military presence in the Italian territories under its control. The Spanish Road was so named because it was the only viable land route to the Spanish Netherlands through Switzerland and Germany. Consequently, it was of vital strategic importance. Any political issues associated with it directly involved Spanish and French, as well as Imperial interests. The Jülich-Cleves Crisis commenced when Duke John William died without an heir on March 25, 1609. This gave Emperor Rudolf II an opportunity to assert his power. He appointed his cousin Archduke Leopold, Bishop of Passau and Strasbourg, as Imperial Commissioner to take possession of the territory. This action was hotly contested by a host of conflicting parties. When Leopold seized the fortress at Jülich, Brandenburg and Neuburg agreed that the city would be jointly occupied. Netherland’s Maurice of Orange, reinforced by English troops, then expelled Leopold and occupied the city with Dutch troops. The French, under King Henry IV, were allied with the English and Dutch. Only Henry’s assassination on May 14, 1610, and the overthrow of Rudolf II and his subsequent death, prevented the outbreak of a European conflict. War was avoided, but the crisis contributed significantly to political destabilization. Protestant Princes started fortifying towns and building defense works. The Imperial parochial actions further inflamed the Protestants.
In 1609, the Catholics responded to the Protestant League with their own confederation, the Catholic League (Liga), led by Bavaria's Archduke Maximilian. The Liga initially consisted of seven Catholic Bishoprics. Subsequently, Bamberg and 19 Swabian prelates were recruited. This group constituted the southern directory of the Liga. A second Rhenish directory was led by Mainz and included Cologne, Trier and the bishoprics of Speyer and Worms. Like the Union, the Liga proposed to operate under the Imperial Constitution. But as opposed confessional organizations, capable of raising taxes and armies, the formation of the Union and the Liga represented political structures capable of waging war with each other. Both the Protestant and Catholic Confessions now had institutions capable of independently organized violence.

The Union and the Liga were provisional military arrangements formed as offsets against each other. The Arrangements were ultimately dissolved after the Jülich-Cleves Crisis without conflict. But it is noteworthy that the Protestant and Catholic Confessions were now independently capable of arming and engaging in armed conflict outside the purview of the Emperor.

The Jülich-Cleves dispute hardened Protestant and Catholic positions and highlighted the reliance of both sides on outside financial and military support. Cardinal Klesl, chief advisor to Emperor Mathias, sought to exploit the situation by forming a conciliatory Composition of the religious factions to consolidate the Emperor's position as an arbiter. But despite some bilateral support, neither the Liga nor the Union was willing to compromise.

Grayling tells his readers that none of the emperors in the decades before 1618 managed to establish unitary control over all the Empire. The Donauwörth and the Jülich-Cleves crises are important because they highlight that the Hapsburgs’ eroding fortunes spanned the entire Empire. The Imperial House alternated between strong-arm tactics at Donauwörth and a major
concession by Rudolf II in his Letter of Majesty to the Bohemians. The conflicting tactics weakened Imperial strength, credibility and prestige. The continual Imperial softness and willingness to buckle to Protestant Estates’ demands contributed to the eventual outbreak of war. The cumulative damaging effects of the Augsburg Treaty, the Hapsburg’s purposeful dilution of Imperial power, its penchant for concessions, its family dysfunction, and its willingness to act capriciously were moving the Empire and Europe toward tragic conflict. It was entirely reasonable for the Protestant Estates to believe that their fortunes were on the rise, but they completely and tragically underestimated the soon to be Emperor Ferdinand II.\textsuperscript{138}

**E. The Bohemian Revolt – Ferdinand elected and deposed as King of Bavaria and succeeded by Frederick – Ferdinand elected Holy Roman Emperor:**

The ultimate cause of the start of the War was the Bohemian Revolt. Powerful antagonists, Catholic Ferdinand II and Protestant Frederick V and their actions, ignited the conflict. In 1603, the Landgrave of Hessen converted to Calvinism. In 1613, the Elector Brandenburg followed.\textsuperscript{139} The Protestant conversion of Germany accelerated. Catholic centralized power in the Empire increasingly struggled against the power of the Protestant Estates. This coincided with Catholic fear and hatred of the Calvinists and the spread of Calvinist influence in the Estates and the cities.\textsuperscript{140} Since 1526, when the Hapsburgs gained control of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Lusatia, the territories had been governed by a group of Catholic aristocrats. They were in permanent conflict with the interests of the Protestant nobility jealous of their ancient feudal rights.\textsuperscript{141}

In Bohemia, the religious spectrum was diverse and by 1600, Catholics were reduced to only 15% of the population. The political situation was complicated; the Estates believed that their freedoms were God-given and not subject to mortal authority. Crown and Estates disputes were to be settled by bilateral, mutually advantageous arrangements, fluid and subject to ongoing
compromise. These sentiments were deeply entrenched in Bohemian culture.\footnote{142} The Kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary were heavily majority Protestant, and the kingdoms were also exempt from \textit{regio eius religio}. Consequently, the Hapsburgs could not force Catholicism on their subjects.

These monarchies, moreover, were elected offices. Each new king had to agree to concessions to the majority upon election. Consequently, resistance to the Counter-Reformation was stubborn and effective. In 1609, the Estates of Bohemia, Silesia, and Lusatia mobilized an army and forced Emperor Rudolf II to sign The Letter of Majesty. This letter allowed Bohemians to practice Catholicism or any creed of the Bohemian Confession. It gave nobles, knights, and towns the right to build churches, even on royal lands. These results proved to the Bohemian Estates that violent resistance was effective.\footnote{143}

The Bohemian nobles exploited the family rift between the Hapsburgs by forming Confederations with the Estates of Austria, Moravia, Hungary and Silesia. Matthias had to buy allegiance from Austria, Hungary and Moravia with far-reaching concessions to local interests which essentially transformed these countries into aristocratic republics. On May 23, 1611, Matthias was elected King, confirmed the Letter and offered more concessions.\footnote{144}

The Bohemian Protestants understood that their protections under the Letter of Majesty were provisional. They sought alliances in the form of contributions for a new Protestant Church in the Old Town of Prague. Contributors were James I of England, and the Protestant Electors of Brunswick, Hesse and Wüttenberg. Young Ferdinand held the Bohemian Calvinists responsible. He believed that the nobles of the region had been indoctrinated into a state of rebellion and opposition to lawful authority.\footnote{145} The Protestants also erected a new church in the little town of Klostergrab. The lawfulness of the construction was contested by Emperor Matthias, the church
was demolished and its most vigorous supporters imprisoned. The Protestant opposition now known as the The Defensors, under the leadership of Count Thurn, vigorously objected. The Emperor stood his ground and denounced their conduct as illegal and rebellious. With the closure of a church in Braunau, in addition to razing the church in Klostergrab, Emperor Matthias demonstrated his willingness to work against the Letter of Majesty. This was in spite of his agreement to adhere to it. His church actions presented another Imperial mixed message to the Protestants.

The Bohemian Protestant Estates were determined not to give back any concessions that they had gained. Emperor Matthias, moreover, angered his Bohemian subjects by appointing Catholics to leadership positions on the Council of Regents in Prague. The Regents then insisted on the restoration of Catholic properties. In turn, the Protestants sent a letter to the Emperor demanding autonomy and that only Protestants could occupy governing positions. Emperor Matthias rejected their appeal and banned them from any further meetings.

In early 1617, Emperor Mathias took ill. This prompted concerns about succession in Bohemia. On June 5th in Prague, Emperor Mathias, young Ferdinand, Maximilian and Cardinal Klesl greeted the Bohemian Estates. Mathias proposed Ferdinand because of his comparative young age; Archdukes Maximilian and Albert renounced their claims. The next day the Bohemian Estates were called to vote as individual members, not representatives of corporate entities, knights, cities, etc. All voted to accept Ferdinand except Count Thurn. This was a major error by the Protestants. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for the Protestant Bohemian Estates to justify revolt one year later after they had formally accepted Ferdinand as King.
The Bohemian violent revolution actually began well after the designation of Ferdinand as the successor to Mathias as King of Bohemia. As a condition of Ferdinand’s coronation, the Bohemian Estates demanded that Ferdinand confirm all their rights including the Letter of Majesty. He complied, and on June, 29, 1617, he was crowned. But after Ferdinand's election, pro-Catholic policies expanded and restrictions were placed on the Prague press. After imposing these policies, Emperor Matthias and Ferdinand left ten Regents in their stead to govern and departed Prague for Vienna.

On May 23, 1618, members of the Estates Royal, led by Count Thurn, went to the royal castle in Prague to declare Emperor Matthias' and King Ferdinand’s Regents public enemies. They confronted two Catholic Regents and a secretary and threw them out a third story window. Somehow they survived. This event became known as the Defenestration of Prague. The Protestants seized control of the government and expelled the hated Jesuits. Bohemia was now in rebellion, and this date is generally acknowledged by historians as the beginning of the Thirty Years War. The Bohemian Revolt would be the last attempt of feudal nobility to preserve and extend their prerogatives against centralized Imperial authority.

The Bohemians had crossed the Rubicon. Their actions could not be ignored as they would most certainly inspire similar uprisings throughout the Empire. Ferdinand, soon to be Emperor, and the crowned King of Bohemia, congratulated Emperor Matthias on the event: "Disobedience, lawlessness and insurrection went always hand-in-hand with Protestantism." He added that all the concessions granted by the Emperor had been abused, served to increase Protestant demands and targeted Imperial authority. Security for the Catholic Faith and the Empire required eradication by force. Ferdinand’s statements were a harbinger of things to come. After some infighting at the Imperial Court in Vienna, Ferdinand was charged with
Imperial responsibility for the affairs of Bohemia with final decisions to be made by Emperor Matthias. Ferdinand was left with no recourse initially but to adopt a moderate policy. He simply did not have the resources to put down the rebellion.157

Ferdinand, however, maneuvered in the background to strengthen his position. Matthias preferred to negotiate; Ferdinand preferred to fight. Ferdinand regarded himself as the successor to the childless Matthias for the Imperial Crown and those of Austria, Bohemia and Hungary. Members of the Hapsburg house were alarmed. They were concerned because of his close and constant association with the Jesuits and their staunch, zealous and uncompromising Catholic orthodoxy. If the Hapsburgs were alarmed, the Protestants were terrified.158 Previously, in August 1614, Matthias had endorsed Ferdinand as his successor. But now Ferdinand faced serious opposition. The Spanish Crown had a claim to the Emperor’s Throne.

Ferdinand secretly negotiated with the Spanish, and they agreed to recognize him as Matthias’ successor.159 On March 20, 1617, Ferdinand agreed to give up Alsace and two associated territories of Hagenau and Ortenau to Spain. Ferdinand would also receive a payment one million talers.160 In return, the Spanish Crown would renounce its claim.161 This unconstitutional arrangement freed Ferdinand to pursue his Bohemian agenda.

Matthias’ powerful advisor Cardinal Klesl also opposed Ferdinand. Klesl was determined to restore Imperial prestige, and restoring faith in Imperial justice was essential. He sought to achieve this through Amicabilis Composition, or a friendly compromise on religion negotiated outside the formal Imperial framework. Klesl hoped to accomplish this through a bipartisan committee of equal numbered Catholics and Protestants. The committee would resolve contentious issues separately, so as not to disrupt Imperial institutions. Klesl also perhaps correctly believed that Catholicism would never fully recover and he accepted the
erosion of the Imperial Church as inevitable. Ferdinand’s zealous Counter-Reformation stance represented an obstacle to Klesl’s policy’s implementation. Klesl thus delayed succession resolution from 1615 to 1617 in an effort to achieve the Protestant and Catholic alliance.

Ferdinand’s next step in his consolidation of power was to prevent Matthias from negotiating with the Bohemians. In June 1616, Archduke Maximilian and Ferdinand decided to rid themselves of Cardinal Klesl and commenced planning to do so. Ferdinand arranged for Klesl to be permanently removed from the scene. On July 29, 2018, Klesl was kidnapped and placed under close confinement; Emperor Matthias reluctantly agreed to his removal. Had Klesl been successful in arranging his *Amicabilis Compositio* between the confessions, political tensions may have abated and the march toward war averted. Ferdinand then persuaded Matthias to take up arms against the Bohemians. Matthias, despite a general lack of support, raised an Army under Flemish General Bucquoy to attack Prague.

On March 20, 1619, Emperor Matthias died. One week later, Ferdinand offered the Bohemians *quasi* independence, indemnity and reconfirmation of their constitutional privileges if they laid down their arms and sued for mercy. They declined. Ferdinand suggested another round of negotiations. They again declined. Then, under the leadership of Count Thurn, Bohemia invaded Moravia with 8,000 men and annexed it. Then he invaded Austria.

All Ferdinand's proposals to the Bohemian rebels were rejected. Count Thurn marched to the gates of Vienna where Ferdinand was protected by only a handful of troops. Sixteen Protestant Austrian nobles forced their way into Ferdinand's chambers and insisted that he sign a Confederation with the Bohemians. One grabbed Ferdinand by his tunic and demanded his signature. Ferdinand realized that his capitulation would be the end of his authority, and that fleeing the Imperial Capitol would mean the end of the Empire. He refused to sign. If Ferdinand
had capitulated, Imperial authority probably would have been permanently blunted, perhaps to
the point that war could have been averted.

At this moment, Schiller tells his readers, a friendly regiment of heavy cavalry, followed
by infantry, marched into the city to defend the Emperor. Coincident with this, news arrived that
Ferdinand’s Flemish General Bucquoy had defeated the Protestants under Count Mansfield at
Budweiss and was marching on Prague. Count Thurn withdrew literally from the gates of
Vienna and moved to protect his Bohemian Capitol. It is not hard to understand that Ferdinand
viewed these events as a Divine intervention. The road, literally and figuratively, was now
opened for Ferdinand's coronation as Holy Roman Emperor.

After Emperor Matthias’ death, the Elector of Mainz called upon the Electors to meet in
Frankfort on July 20, 1619, to elect a new emperor. Despite the existing political turmoil, Mainz
felt that more liberal Imperial concessions would facilitate the electoral process. Militant
Protestant Palatine Elector Frederick V pressured for a postponement. We shall see that he
becomes a key figure in the upcoming conflict. Frederick V objected to the Throne being a
Hapsburg heritable right and to the Jesuit’s influence with Ferdinand and his ardent Catholicism.
Mainz rejected his arguments, and the other Electors complied with Mainz’ position. The
conduct of the Hapsburgs during the Jülich-Cleves Crisis and Ferdinand's position on the
Bohemian question had convinced Frederick V that the Hapsburgs were a serious threat to the
Constitution and Protestant religious liberty.

Frederick V favored Maximilian of Austria as Emperor, as Maximilian was a fellow
member of the Wittelsbach family. Maximilian, however, was a staunch Catholic and closely
aligned with Ferdinand. But Maximilian was family and Frederick V believed that Maximilian
could be elected, as Maximilian's brother was the Cologne Elector. If Frederick V could get
Elector Brandenburg and Saxony to go along, Maximilian would be elected. Since 1616, Frederick V had lobbied this position.

Frederick V chose not to attend the election but sent a delegation. Its instructions were to stall. They were to attempt to persuade the Electors of Trier, Cologne, Saxony and Brandenburg that the greatest threat to the Empire was the hereditary right to the Throne by the Hapsburgs. He also wanted breathing room for negotiations on Bohemia.\textsuperscript{172} Frederick V’s delegation was ordered to pressure Saxony’s Lutheran Elector John George. They warned him "how irresponsible it would be against God, the other Protestant Estates, and worthy posterity, when, at this election, one had set and given himself and all Protestantism wholly into the opponent's will and power, so to speak."\textsuperscript{173} During the election, Frederick V demonstrated his tendency to believe what he wished and to expect what he hoped for. Indeed, he wished God's blessing on Ferdinand because he believed that Ferdinand had the good fortune to be hated by everyone.\textsuperscript{174} Frederick V, if nothing else, was consistent.

On August 28, four Imperial Electors and three Elector delegations convened in the Election Chapel, and the Duke of Cologne announced that Maximilian would not stand for election. In the ensuing vote, as sitting King of Bohemia, Ferdinand voted for himself. The three ecclesiastic Catholic Electors also voted for him. His election assured, Protestant Saxony and Brandenburg followed suit. Frederick V's delegation had no choice but to concur or be viewed as obstructionists, which indeed they were. Soon to be deposed of the Crown of Bohemia, Ferdinand was now soon to be the Holy Roman Emperor.\textsuperscript{175} Frederick V's delegation then pressed for concessions, and Emperor-Elect Ferdinand II, in his required Capitulation, agreed to almost all the demands. He agreed to uphold the Golden Bull, the Peace of Augsburg
and the Imperial Liberties. Ferdinand also agreed to make no foreign alliances or bring foreign troops into the Empire.¹⁷⁶

Meanwhile, Bohemian efforts to gain allies met with little success. Almost every Protestant Prince denied support. The Bohemian crisis might have been another in a series of serious but local issues, but Palatine Elector Frederic V provided the Bohemians with immediate recognition and assistance. Frederick V sent his Grand Chamberlain to dissuade the rebels from making peace. He offered support from the Protestant Union. He sent an army of 4,000 men to Bohemia to fight the Emperor, which strengthened Bohemian resolve.¹⁷⁷

The Estates of all the lands of the Bohemian Crown formed a Confederation. They were: Moravia, Silesia, Upper and Lower Lusatia and Bohemia proper. They deposed Ferdinand II and on August 26, 1619 elected Frederick V King. Frederick V’s acceptance as Ferdinand II’s successor all but guaranteed the spread of hostilities into the heart of Europe. The Estates of Upper and Lower Austria, moreover, allied with the rebels. The Bohemians also coordinated military efforts with Bethlen Gabor, Prince of Transylvania and a minion of the Turks.¹⁷⁸ The rebels sought to renew confederation with the Silesian and Lusatian Estates and the Moravian and Austrian Estates. They were anxious to ally with the United Provinces, England, Sweden and the Protestant Union to mobilize the whole of anti-Hapsburg Europe. They failed.

A minority of the rebel leaders wished to establish a republic on the Dutch or Swiss model. The majority wanted a nominal head of state. The German Princes were horrified. So were James I of England and Louis XIII of France. Protestants Charles Emmanuel of Savoy and John George of Saxony withdrew support. All this notwithstanding, the rebels declared King Ferdinand deposed and elected Frederick V to replace him. It would prove to be a disastrous mistake.
In support of the new Emperor Ferdinand II, the Grand-Duke of Tuscany sent money; Archduke Maximilian of Bavaria pledged an army of 30,000 men. The King of Spain, Philip III, funded an army in the Spanish Netherlands to attack the Palatinate. Protestant Elector John George of Saxony subjugated Lusatia and Silesia. On July 3, 1620, under pressure from the French and English, the Protestant Union declared its neutrality. The Empire’s only remaining dangerous adversary was Bethlen of Transylvania. With the permission of his overlord the Sultan, Bethlen occupied large portions of Hungary and was the elected King. But Bethlen was bought off as the Sultan needed to address his interests in Poland and respond to a Persian advance into Mesopotamia. Nothing of any substance now stood in Ferdinand II’s way.

Maximilian’s General Tilly occupied Upper Austria. The Spanish General Spinola invaded the Palatinate. On November 8, 1620, Tilly and Bucquoy marched into Bohemia and crushed the Bohemian rebels at the Battle of White Mountain. The Bohemian government immediately collapsed.¹⁷⁹

Historian Josef Polisensky did not believe that religion was the cause of the Bohemian Rebellion. He saw it as a conflict between two socio-economic structures. The Bohemian Estates fought "not for the ideals of religious, social and national radicalism, but for the order of Estates against that of a revived feudalism, for the idea of a Bohemian State against that of the all-embracing monarchy, for religious tolerance against dogmatic bigotry."¹⁸⁰ They did not so much want to change the monarchy as its religious policy.¹⁸¹ The Bohemian War was the start of and the ultimate causal event of The Thirty Years War. There were many opportunities to avoid the War’s outbreak. These chances, however, became impossible when the irresistible force represented by Ferdinand II, collided with the immovable object, Frederick V.
F. The Prince of Styria and eventual Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II:

Frederich Schiller, however, believed that all significant events in early modern Germany either originated in or became associated with questions of religion. The House of Hapsburg directed its powers almost exclusively against the Reformation.\textsuperscript{182} We have seen that after the 1555 Augsburg Peace, Hapsburg power and influence steadily eroded, as the Protestant Reformation swept over Europe. For the next 63 years, the Imperial House made concession after concession to the ascending Protestant Princes. In 1618, parts of the Empire were effectively divorced from the central power of the Catholic Church and Imperial Rule. The tide of change clearly favored the decentralized Protestants. All this would abruptly change under the rule of Ferdinand II.

Hapsburg Emperor and staunch Catholic, Ferdinand II was a crucial figure in the Thirty Years War. He reinvigorated the office of Holy Roman Emperor after its decline under predecessors.\textsuperscript{183} Ferdinand’s inflexible Catholic zeal and application of Jesuit inspired Counter-Reformation policies, would lead to a personal, Princely confrontation with Frederick V. That confrontation would result in the start of the War.

Ferdinand's father was the Archduke Carl II of Carniola, Carinthia and Styria and the youngest brother of Maximilian II.\textsuperscript{184} Ferdinand's mother was the formidable Wittelsbach Maria of Bavaria. Her marriage to Hapsburg Archduke Carl united the rival houses.\textsuperscript{185} In 1578, Carl agreed to the Pacification of Bruck. The Pacification agreed to the recognition of free exercise of religion for nobility and allowed for the maintenance of Protestant preachers. Protestant churches were allowed in Graz, Langenfurt, Ljubljana and Judenburg. In what was becoming an all too familiar scenario, Carl consented because he was desperate for funds.\textsuperscript{186} The Pacification
of Bruck struck alarm in Rome as it was feared it would lead to the advance of Protestantism in Gorizia, Triest and Fiume, and from there into Italy. The Pope excommunicated the Archduke. Despite his excommunication, Carl sought the dispatch of Jesuits to his city of Gratz and indicated his intention to restore Catholicism in his territories.\textsuperscript{187}

In his will, Carl called for the disinheretance of his children if they converted to Protestantism and required them to maintain the Catholic faith in their lands. He also stressed that his heirs were not bound by the Pacification of Bruck. Ferdinand was 12 when Carl died.\textsuperscript{188} Carl named four guardians for Ferdinand: Emperor Rudolf II, his brother Archduke Ferdinand Governor of The Tyrol and Anterior Austria, his brother-in-law Duke William of Bavaria and his wife and Ferdinand's mother Maria. Ferdinand would not rule until he reached his majority on his 18th birthday.\textsuperscript{189}

The Jesuits accepted Archduke Carl's invitation and established a college in Graz. The Jesuits became Carl's strong allies in an effort to maintain the Catholic Church in Inner Austria. When the college was elevated to the status of a university, eight-year-old Ferdinand was the first student to have his name inscribed in the book of matriculation. In 1590, the year of his father's death, Ferdinand moved to the Jesuit University in Ingolstadt, Bavaria. He studied there for five years. Ferdinand considered the Jesuits essential for the defense and propagation of the faith. He stated in his last will and testament on May 10, 1621:

\begin{quote}
In the first place, with special concern we earnestly commend to you the well-deserving Society of Jesus and its priests. . . . In this ungrateful and perverse world they encounter more hatred and persecution than others and so are more in need of protection, help and assistance.\textsuperscript{190}
\end{quote}
In addition to his Jesuit education, Ferdinand was raised in the Court of William, Duke of Bavaria. There he was taught that the perceived liberal attitude of the Empire was due to the Protestants who were the source of all political difficulties.  

Ferdinand was raised as a devout Catholic at Court and at Ingolstadt in Bavaria where his mother's brother, Duke William oversaw his education. Duke William counseled Ferdinand to always and foremost look out for the welfare of the Church. He was taught not to approve any measure that would weaken the Church but also to recover all that had been lost. Ferdinand should select Catholic officials, always have a Catholic confessor and remain close to the Jesuits. All members of his household should be made to make an open confession of Catholicism. His military should be Catholic. The defense and advance of Catholicism, and allegiance to the Jesuits should always be his first priorities.

Ferdinand's five years at Ingolstadt purposely isolated him from Protestants. King Philip IV of Spain, King Louis XIII of France, King Charles I of England, and King Gustav Adolf of Sweden never studied at a university or college. They all were educated at court by tutors. Ferdinand’s Ingolstadt years had a profound impression on him. In his farewell address, he declared that he would always have in his heart the interests of the college and the Society of Jesus.

In 1598, Jesuit Count Girolama Portia accompanied Ferdinand on a journey to Italy. The Count had previously served as Rector at the Jesuit College at Olmutz, led the Austrian Provence of the Jesuits as Provincial and was later Rector of the new university at Graz. Until 1619, he was Ferdinand's confessor. The importance and the influence of a devout Jesuit with daily access to the future Holy Roman Emperor cannot be overstated. On his Italian trip Ferdinand visited the Catholic sacred Shrine of Loreto. There it is reported that Ferdinand vowed to God,
under the patronage of the Virgin Mary, to drive the Protestants out of Inner Austria and restore Catholicism.197

In December 1596, Ferdinand was installed as ruler of Inner Austria. He firmly resisted any discussion of religious matters until the Estates swore allegiance. Implicitly, he rejected the Pacification of Bruck, but neither Ferdinand nor the Protestant Estates were yet ready for confrontation. Part of the reason for the submission of the Estates may well have been the continuing Turkish threat.198 In the months following the investiture of Ferdinand, he took some repressive steps, which were met with strong resistance in the Styrian towns of Aussee, Mitterndorf and Radkersberg. But strong Counter-Reformation measures did not increase until after Ferdinand returned from his Italian trip.199

At age 18, Ferdinand assumed governance of his hereditary domains in Inner Austria. Before swearing allegiance the Estates of Cmiola, Carinthia, and Styria demanded a guarantee for religious freedom. Ferdinand told them that religion had nothing to do with allegiance. Their oaths were to be unconditional. In receipt of the apostolic benediction of Clement VIII, Ferdinand set about the task of eliminating Protestantism from his realms. Without arousing chaos, he suppressed the Protestants in town after town and, to the astonishment of many, Protestantism was gone. Catholics revered him as a champion; Protestants began to acknowledge him as their most dangerous enemy.200 As a youth, Ferdinand had witnessed the struggle of his parents against the Protestant Styrian Estates. After he assumed power, he rigorously enforced the Counter-Reformation. His deputies enforced adherence to the Catholic Church. Those subjects who refused to comply were exiled.201

After several incidents of conflict between Catholics and Protestants, Ferdinand opted to move against the Protestants. His first measures were to provide efficient government and to
then start removing Protestant preachers, the disturbers of the peace. On September 13, 1598, he ordered the closure of the Protestant schools and churches in Graz, Judenber and all the other cities and towns of Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola, and ordered the preachers to leave within 14 days. He based his authority on his position as Archduke. Ferdinand's Counter-Reformation measures were relentless. Perceived heresy was not tolerated. Between 1598 and 1605 it is estimated 11,000 left the region. Concurrently, Catholic evangelization of the population intensified. On August 8, 1600, 10,000 Protestant books were publicly burned.

A meeting of the Estate Princes took place on January 10, 1599. The Protestant Estates threatened to withhold homage to Ferdinand and to withhold taxes in support of the defense against the Turks. Ferdinand informed them that they had no say in the matter and added that they would be considered rebels and enemies in any attempt to withhold taxes. He followed with another decree expelling Protestant preachers. Ferdinand restricted debate to military and political matters, particularly the Turks.

Ferdinand then waited until after the Protestant Princes returned home. In July he acted. He began by asserting that the Estates sinned when they used hot, immoderate, sharp or irritating words when addressing him. Refusal to approve stipends, moreover, aided the Turks and other enemies. He added that the Estates did not speak for all his subjects as they excluded prelates and most Catholics. Most importantly, he claimed absolutum et merum imperium in his territory not imperium modificatum. That is, his authority was absolute. On February 24, 1600, in Graz, the Estates formally responded and capitulated. They denied that their refusal to cooperate was aid for the Turks. They acknowledged that Ferdinand was their natural and absolute Prince. But they argued that when Ferdinand ascended as Archduke that he was bound to the Pacification of Bruck agreed to by his father. Ferdinand ignored them. By the end of July,
the last 150 non-Catholic men in Graz were expelled. Ferdinand would continue to negotiate with the Estates, but he had demonstrated, beyond any doubt, that he was in control.  

Ferdinand by direct lineage was removed from his Hapsburg predecessors. Rudolph II and Matthias were sons of Emperor Maximilian II. The much younger Ferdinand was the son of Carl II, Maximilian II’s youngest brother. Ferdinand was a Jesuit educated, young, energetic, shrewd, zealous Catholic. In the events leading to the upcoming war, he would become the Catholic Confession’s irresistible force. He assiduously defended his offices of Emperor, and King of Bohemia. Under his reign, the Protestant Reformation and the steady ascent of its adherents would be brought to a halt. His collision with the immovable object, equally zealous Calvinist Frederic V would result in war.

G. Palatine Elector Frederick V and eventual King of Bohemia:

The ascent of the Reformation and Calvinism was especially strong in the strategically important Palatine. The Elector Palatine had control of territory comparable to France, Spain or England. The Palatine courts were almost totally independent from the Emperor. The Elector also had control of a 15,000 man army over which he was Commander-in-Chief; he controlled the churches. By 1618, the University of Heidelberg was a haven for Calvinist theologians and had been for nearly a half-century.

The Calvinist emergence in the Palatine moved Protestant tactics toward confrontation. Its adoption of the Reformation in the 1540’s distanced the Palatine from the Ecclesiastical Electors and other former allies in the Imperial Church. In 1556 and 1557, The Palatine assumed the role of Protestant militancy first expressed at the Reichstag after the Augsburg settlement. They presented a series of escalating demands that continued up to 1618. The Palatine Calvinists sought to circumvent the Catholic majority by splitting the Reichstag along confessional lines.
The confessions, they believed, should debate issues separately and then convene as equals to reach common agreement. This became known as *itio in partes*. The Palatine also insisted that Protestant grievances (*Gravamina*) be treated under the Protestant interpretation of the Augsburg Peace. It was a policy proposal that reflected Cardinal Klesl’s position. The implementation of the policy may have prevented war.

To achieve these goals the Palatine consistently supported the withholding of funding the Turkish War and blocking the election of King of the Romans, the heir apparent to the Holy Roman Emperor. Recall that the Augsburg Peace attempted to defuse tensions by taking doctrine out of politics but did nothing to integrate the political factions into the Reichstag or other Imperial institutions.²⁰⁶

Calvinism also continued to gain strength elsewhere in the Empire. In 1610, the Hohenzollern Elector of Brandenburg joined the Protestant Union and in 1613 converted to Calvinism. In 1616, he married his son to Palatine Elector Frederick V's wife's sister, strengthening Frederick V's already strong political position.²⁰⁷

Historian Brennan Purcell, among others, believes that Palatine Elector Frederick V personally was a principal cause of the outbreak of the Thirty Years War. Frederick V’s character, values and beliefs shaped his political policy. He was devoutly religious and a constitutionalist.²⁰⁸ Based on Frederick V’s writings, some called him a mystic because he believed that it was possible to understand God and his will through insight, intuition, prayer or some other form of experience. He was a zealous Calvinist.²⁰⁹ He was also driven by his belief that German Liberty was threatened by the ruling, Catholic, Hapsburg monarchy.²¹⁰ Frederick was a potent foe of the Hapsburgs, and his refusal to come to terms with them stymied peace attempts. Fredericks V's papers are replete with references to his belief that the Austrian and
Spanish Hapsburgs were conspiring to transform Bohemia and the Empire into Hapsburg heritable monarchies. He also believed that they sought to extirpate Protestantism.211

Frederick was also strongly driven by his sense of honor. In early modern Germany, honor was a measure of personal, social and political worth. Honor drove assertive, competitive and aggressive behavior in all ranks of society, but especially in the nobility. An assault on one's honor was usually redressed with violence. Perceived honor violations were legitimate causes of war, peace and revolution. During the course of events running up to the war, and after its outbreak, Frederick's refusal to compromise his honor prevented him from renouncing alliances, breaking confidences, and reneging on promises. This inflexibility rendered him nearly incapable of making peace on anyone's terms but his own. Up to the outbreak of the War, Frederick V was the most powerful and prominent Calvinist Prince in the Empire.212

Frederick V's strong beliefs lead some scholars to believe that he was reckless, inflexible and belligerent. Frederick V's conscience told him that God was with him and that his personal honor was at stake in the resolution of constitutional issues. His intransigent behavior would contribute significantly to the transformation of the Bohemian rebellion into a European civil war. Frederick V also made every effort to embroil foreign powers in the conflict. His obstructive positions, policies and relentless use of force would expand the conflict despite multi-confessional attempts to establish peace. Despite repeated setbacks, Frederick V's faith and obsession with his honor enabled him to resist capitulation and prolong the conflict. He was absolutely convinced that the Catholics were determined to corrupt the constitution. All his decisions, he believed, were predicated on the preservation of the Imperial Constitution and the guarantee of religious freedoms for Protestants.213 In July 1614, when he reached legal age, the
Palatine Regents handed over control of the Palatinate to Frederick V. His motto was: “Rule me, Lord, according to your word.” His firm Calvinist beliefs convinced him of the righteousness of his cause and an unmistakable belief in victory.

All of the Emperors were dependent upon the Electors for their power; they had to consult with the Electors on matters of war and peace, foreign policy, taxes, alliances. The Electors were powerful, and Frederick was the most powerful among equals. In 1618, Frederick was 22 years old, and arguably recklessly self-assured as only a 22 year-old can be. As Elector Palatine, he had the highest ceremonial prestige in the Empire, second only to the Emperor himself. The Palatine Elector was the only Prince who could sit in judgment of an emperor. According to the Golden Bull, an Emperor accused of a violation of law was required to answer to the Palatine Elector in the Imperial Diet. Frederick was also one of the two Imperial Vicars who would share Imperial power during periods of Interregnum. Despite his youth and inexperience, Frederick possessed enormous power.

In Prague, the rebelling Bohemian Protestant Estates remained terrified of Ferdinand II and declared the Bohemian Throne vacant. On August 19, 1619, the Directors of Bohemia met and decided that Ferdinand II would be deposed as King. "On the 26, of August, they met againe (sic), and after prayers . . . Frederike (sic) Elector Palatine . . . was chosen and proclaimed King of Bohemia.”

On August 23 or 24, Frederick V learned of the Bohemian Directors’ decision to oust Ferdinand II. Almost immediately thereafter, the Bohemian Estates elected Frederick V King. It was his 23rd birthday. Frederick V received advice from his father-in-law James I of England, the Protestant Union and his own councilors. They all discouraged him from accepting the
Bohemian’s invitation. James I of England feared a dangerous monarchial precedent. If The Holy Roman Emperor could be unseated as King of Bavaria, so could the King of England.

Despite all his shortcomings, Frederick V was a constitutional legalist, and he regarded Imperial Law as his guiding principle in politics. He sought legal opinions concerning the Bohemian’s right to elect a King. He inquired into Imperial abuses of Bohemian constitutional privileges. He knew that accepting the Crown would bring on war. He enquired about the strength of the Bohemian army, its officers, its supplies and the strategic terrain. He fully understood the consequences of his accepting the Crown.

Frederick V’s appeal to James I was based on constitutional grounds. Frederick V believed that the uprising was in defense of Bohemian rights, not a rebellion against the monarchy. The hated, zealous Jesuits were the problem. The Bohemians were just defending their lives, liberty, religious freedom and, most importantly, their honor. Frederick V asked James I to take an active military defensive stance. After all, the papists were intent on extirpating Protestantism. But James I wanted no part of an English intervention in Europe.

Detractors pointed out that if he accepted the Crown, Ferdinand II would label him a criminal, and substantive help could not be expected from within or outside the Empire. The most powerful reason not to accept the Crown was that it would embroil Europe in a religious war that neither side could win. In the end, Frederick V accepted the Crown because he firmly believed that God had preordained it. It would prove to be a foolish and catastrophic decision for Europe.

There is, however, documentary evidence that Frederick V wanted peace, but the peace had to be on his terms, favorable to the Protestant Estates and subject to the Letter of Majesty. Factoring into the now remote possibility for peace was Frederick’s total distrust of the
Hapsburgs. He regarded their intentions as malicious, their promises worthless and behavior reprehensible.222

On July 31, 1619, the Bohemian Confederation met. It consisted of the directors, regents and councilors of the Confederation, and represented the three Estates of the Kingdom. The following excerpt from the Bohemian’s declaration is illustrative of the passion of the Protestants. The preamble of the meeting’s minutes states that its actions were directed to upholding its "freedoms" in the face of "evil people" intent on undermining them. They proclaimed 100 “terms” which, in total, were tantamount to a declaration of independence and the establishment of an independent government. The publication was, is essence, an ultimatum which was sure to be rejected by the Emperor. The first ten summarized terms reflect the tone and scope of the document:

1. God has given his grace and blessing to the Confederation solely in defense of religion.
2. The Confederation will include the King provided he pays attention to the privileges, Letters of Majesty, concessions and terms of the Confederation.
3. The King should not take advice from Jesuits or foreigners.
4. The Jesuits are banned from the Kingdom.
5. There will be no new religious orders in the Kingdom.
6. Abandoned Church properties are property of the Estates.
7. The King must conform without any exception or restriction to both the Letters of Majesty and religious concessions.
8. All churches in Protestant hands will remain so in perpetuity.
9. Moravia, Upper and Lower Lusatia which do not have a Letter of Majesty will be treated as a party to it.
10. Terms of the Augsburg and Bohemian Confessions are extended to every man and women in all the territories, as is (sic) the construction of churches, schools and other institutions and the appointment of pastors and teachers.223

Frederick V’s concurrence with the Bohemian Confederation and the depth of his vehemence toward the Hapsburgs are reflected in his “Open Letter from Frederick V Regarding His Acceptance of the Bohemian Crown, November 7, 1619”:
We, Frederick, by the grace of God king of Bohemia, count Palatine and elector. [etc.] . . . declare: That we have no doubt that everyone (sic) without and beyond (sic) the Empire is sufficiently aware of the wretched and angerous (sic) state into the ancient and worthy kingdom of Bohmia (sic) . . . has fallen . . . and what suffering, tribulation and hostilities have been occurring for some time with unceasing robbery, murder, arson and ruination of the territory . . . hacking of suckling babes and the like inhuman, barbarous excesses, maliciousness and atrocities.224

The Bohemians’ offer of the Crown to Frederick V appeared attractive because they believed that it likely assured them of international Protestant support. But religious zeal inclined the Bohemian and Palatine leadership to underestimate the risks that they were taking. Acceptance of the Crown by Frederick V and deposing Ferdinand II challenged the core of the Hapsburgs’ domestic power and international standing. Armed conflict in Bohemia became inevitable, but it was assumed that the coming conflict would be regionally contained.225

The reaction in Europe's Courts was horror and condemnation. James I said he "was most afflicted . . . and this war had become a war of religion."226 Pope Paul V said that Frederick had entered “a filthy labyrinth” in which he would meet his ruin. The other Electors begged him to reconsider. Others proposed that he defuse the situation and become "Protector" but refuse the Crown.227

Like James I, the Protestant Union decided to recognize and observe the Protestant Rebellion as a cause of concern. But they resolved not to fight. Consequently, Bohemia had little tangible military support.228 In the end, the Protestant Union provided neither troops nor financial assistance. They only agreed to defend the Palatine in the event of invasion. This was of no help whatsoever to the Bohemian cause.229

The most powerful Princes of the Empire implored Frederick V to abdicate. In March 1620, a meeting of the Electors of Mainz, Cologne, Trier and Saxony, joined by Maximilian and the Landgrave of Hessen, condemned the Bohemian election and resolved to support the new
Emperor. Emperor Ferdinand II then publicly threatened Frederick. If Frederick V did not relinquish the Crown by June 1, 1620, he would be declared an outlaw and be subject to the Imperial Ban. Recall that a Ban deprived the accused of any legal protections, vacated titles and property and forbade assistance of any kind within the Empire. Ferdinand II also issued an edict to nullify the Bohemian election of Frederick V. Frederick V ignored both.230

These challenges notwithstanding, Frederick V's new regime had a chance for survival. Ever since The Augsburg Peace in 1555, the Emperors consistently had yielded to pressure. Recent events in Bohemia, moreover, had always resulted in concessions from the Hapsburgs. Also, from a military perspective, it is easier to defend then attack.231 The regime’s downfall was the result of two weaknesses: its inability to force the Estates to make financial contributions and ineffective diplomacy. There was no unified Protestant resolve to assure that the regime survived. To the contrary, the Protestants were persuaded not to support Frederick and the Bohemians had to face the force of the Empire alone. Ferdinand II, on the other hand, had the support of Spain, and more importantly, the support of Maximilian of Bavaria and his military muscle.232

Brennan Purcell argues that Frederick V's Calvinism had little to do with his acceptance of the Bohemian Crown. Frederick V’s motives were legally and militarily predictable. He calculated the risks and rewards and took the chance. It was a big mistake. Ferdinand II was now Emperor and the deposed King of Bohemia. There was no alternative for the two juxtaposed Princes. It would be war.233

In addition to the direct challenge to Ferdinand II’s Imperial authority, there was a more subtle, but real motivation for the Hapsburgs to crush the Bohemian Rebellion. In theory, the seven Electors were advisors to the Emperor whom they alone elected. In fact, they were agents
standing against the consolidation of Imperial power. Recall that the three ecclesiastical Electors, the archbishops of Mainz, Cologne and Trier were Catholic. Three of the Estate Electors, Saxony, Brandenburg and Palatinate were Protestant. The seventh Elector was the King of Bohemia. Frederick's agreement to accept the Bohemian Crown, at the expense of Ferdinand, would upset the balance of Electoral power in favor of the Protestants. The specter of Frederick V as Elector King of Bohemia, and Elector Palatine, made a Protestant Emperor a real possibility. Frederick V, with the other Protestant Electors, would have the majority necessary to elect Ferdinand II's successor.

Ferdinand II promised Catholic Maximilian the supreme command of the Empire's army, to be raised by Maximilian, and control of Upper Austria if Maximilian successfully crushed the rebellion. Most importantly, Maximilian could keep any Palatine land he conquered and would assume the position of Elector Palatine. The battle lines were drawn. Both Maximilian and Frederick II were willing to risk a general war. In vain, Frederick V appealed to Maximilian to remain neutral. Maximilian responded that a decision to keep the Bohemian Crown would mean war. Frederick V’s zealously inspired obstinacy rendered him the metaphorical “immovable object” in the face of Ferdinand II as the “irresistible force.” Frederick V too was a cause of The Thirty Years War.

On November 8, 1620, Maximilian’s Imperial Army, under the command of Johann Tserclaes von Tilly, crushed the Bohemians at White Mountain, outside of Prague. Frederick V literally ran for his life leaving behind the crown, scepter, royal orb of Bohemia and his jewel-encrusted Order of the Garter. Worse, he left behind documents including correspondence between Bohemia and enemies of the Hapsburgs. Ferdinand II and Maximilian regarded the
victory as proof of God's grace and will.\textsuperscript{237} For his role in the Thirty Years War, Frederick V was afforded the disdainful title: "Winter King."\textsuperscript{238}

After the victory at White Mountain, Ferdinand II's lieutenants established programs of persecution and reorganization. All the active participants in the rebellion were liquidated. Calvinists and Lutheran ministers were expelled. Protestant towns were closely supervised. Ferdinand II was consistently, religiously passionate in crushing the Bohemian Protestants. He steadfastly believed that heresy was the root cause of insubordination and his resolve was to eradicate it.\textsuperscript{239}

Ferdinand II could have stopped the spread of conflict with the subjugation of Bohemia. Subsequently, however, Imperial troops drove the Protestants out of the Upper and Lower Palatine. Frederick V was banned from the Empire by Ferdinand II and driven into exile in the Dutch Netherlands. Maximilian was vested as Elector in Frederick's place.\textsuperscript{240} The Thirty Years War, in its later variations, would continue for 28 more years.

\textbf{CONCLUSION:}

In 1519, Charles V became Holy Roman Emperor. Invention, discovery, and political change characterized much of Europe at this time. Mariners used the compass to enable global nautical exploration. The use of gun powder revolutionized war by providing less powerful opponents with an equalizer, and printing provided a medium to dispense knowledge. National identities, local languages, culture, laws and institutions evolved.\textsuperscript{241} It was a period of industrial and commercial development and the evolution of towns. Patriotism, use of the vernacular, scientific knowledge, and national churches developed and along with it growing opposition to the established centralized system of church and imperial governance.\textsuperscript{242} This period marked the rise and consolidation of nation-states over the power of feudalism.\textsuperscript{243}
The social, political and economic landscape was undergoing profound change. Arguably, had there been no change in the Catholic Church’s monopoly on religion, the European movement toward modernity was inevitable and could have occurred without bloodshed. The centralized authority of the Catholic Church, however, was weakening and decadent. The prelates had lost contact with their clergy and people. The Popes, as temporal rulers, became immersed in politics and power and abdicated their Episcopal authority. The centralized power of church and state in many ways overlapped. The system was stretched thin and decay was apparent.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses on a German church door. The recently invented printing press and increasing mass literacy insured that the Theses received rapid and extensive distribution. Europe was ripe for confessional change. In just 38 years, Lutheranism would become the second legally recognized religion in the Empire. In the second half of the 16th Century, the works of John Calvin, to become known as Calvinism would become the Empire’s third strongly rooted religion. Historians disagree whether the Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation were causes of the Thirty Years War. There is no disagreement that confessional differences were a powerful catalyst facilitating conflict.

The causes of the War are myriad and debatable. But there is no debate that the Thirty Years War began with the Bohemian Revolt in 1618. This paper posits that the principal causes for the War were: 1) The Treaty of Augsburg; 2) the constant threat posed by the Ottoman Turks in the east and the Empire’s inadequate political structures to effectively deal with it; 3) the Hapsburg’s deliberately self-imposed weakening of Imperial authority and prestige; 4) the Brothers’ Quarrel; 5) the damaging, inconsistent and arbitrary application of Imperial policy and power; 6) the cumulative effect of 63 years of ever increasing political and confessionally
charged tensions and conflicts that culminated in two warring camps – one led by Catholic Ferdinand II and the other led by Frederick V; and 7) the Bohemian Revolt itself.

In 1555, Charles V abdicated and split the Empire. His brother Ferdinand I ruled as Holy Roman Emperor in Vienna. His son, Philip II ruled as King of Spain, the Netherlands, parts of Italy and the New World. The geographic split also halved the power and prestige of the Emperor. The Empire’s constitutional structure also contributed to the erosion of Imperial authority. The execution of Ferdinand I’s will further diluted the Emperor’s authority by granting separate authorities to his sons.

The Hapsburgs then sold concessions and privileges to the Princes to liquidate Imperial debt. For decades, the Imperial House resorted to political and economic concessions to mollify the increasingly powerful Protestant Estates. The power, prestige and influence of the Estates increased, and the power, prestige and influence of the Emperor weakened. This power shift contributed to the eventual outbreak of war.

In 1576, Rudolf II succeeded Frederick I’s son Maximilian II as Emperor. Rudolf II was philosophically motivated and surrounded himself with an eclectic array of like minded people. He did not like the details of governing, was increasingly reclusive and alleged to suffer from mental illness. Rudolf II’s disposition prompted his brother Matthias’s bid, with the support of the Hapsburg family, to supplant him. This clash became known as the Brothers’ Quarrel. The Brothers vied for political position by buying influence with the Protestant Princes with ever escalating political and confessional concessions. The result was the *quasi* independence of several Imperial Eastern dominions. The Quarrel was resolved with the ousting and subsequent death of Rudolf II and the coronation of Emperor Matthias. But the damage had been done. The Imperial House was further weakened and the Empire was further down the road to civil war.
Concurrent with the Brothers’ Quarrel, there were two significant crises in Germany that threatened war. The Jülich-Cleves crises stemmed from a succession issue. The Donauwörth crisis resulted from a Catholic and Protestant conflict over the public exercise of religion. The Empire arbitrarily and capriciously intervened in both, to the benefit of the Hapsburgs and their Catholic allies. War was eventually averted, but the Protestant Estates were further outraged and needlessly disaffected. The increasingly heated political environment was a facilitating step toward hostilities.

In the early 17th Century, two powerful Princes came of age. Ferdinand II brought a renewed perspective to Imperial rule. He was Jesuit educated and influenced, and a shrewd, devout, staunch Catholic. He was intent on restoring the power and prestige of the Imperial House and the primacy of the Catholic Church. Frederick V was the young, devout, doctrinaire Calvinist Elector Palatine. Frederick V’s power and authority were only second to those of the Emperor. War became inevitable when Frederick V usurped the Bohemian Crown of Ferdinand II. The Thirty Years War started because of Frederick V’s and Ferdinand II’s actions.

The final cause of the Thirty Years War was the Bohemian Revolt itself. It represented the climactic result of all the War’s precedent causes. The Bohemian Protestant Princes were justified in their belief that they would prevail. After all, they enjoyed an overwhelming confessional majority. The Hapsburgs, moreover, had always resolved conflict with concessions. If conflict came, Bohemia had the military capacity to defend itself. Certainly, the rising tides of Protestantism and decentralized authority would continue to prevail. Clearly, the powerful Protestant Estates and Protestant Crowned Heads of Europe would support them. They were wrong, dead wrong. Emperor Ferdinand II crushed them.
The Bohemian War was over. Ferdinand II could have proclaimed victory and dissolved the Imperial Army. Instead the soon to be Thirty Years War was extended into the Palatine and other parts of the Empire. In 1648, the successive wars that constituted the War would end with the Treaty of Westphalia. Feudalism in Europe would end, and the era of nation-states and early modernity would begin. The steep price for this transition was the Thirty Years War, Europe’s tragedy.

“On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work.”

– Arthur N. Traver
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Exhibit II

Exhibit III

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