

Viewing Today's Middle East Conflict
Through the Prism of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648)

by

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Introduction

In December 2006, Andrew Sullivan and David Brooks, two internationally-prominent newspaper columnists, both concluded that events taking place in the Middle East at that time were beginning to resemble characteristics of the Thirty Years War which took place in Europe from roughly 1618 to 1648.¹ This analogy was not entirely new, given that for years (if not decades); many historians, analysts and commentators had talked of an Islamic Reformation, on the model of the Protestant Reformation, whose lasting political effect was ensured by the Peace of Westphalia at the end of the Thirty Years War.

Events of 2006, however, threw into sharp relief that the Middle Eastern interplay of complex group conflict and the trends of sectarian rivalry were now beginning to bear a structural likeness to how things played out nearly 400 years ago in Europe. Most notably, the rise of sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq appeared to closely mirror Protestant-Catholic fighting in Germany during the Thirty Years War. In addition, however, the emergence of the militia/political party/terrorist group Hezbollah in Iran showed that a non-state Shiite group could command the loyalty of Arab masses, inspire fear in ruling Sunni Arab monarchs and Western interested parties, and coordinate action (unwittingly or tacitly) with Sunni terrorist groups (such as Hamas). The rise of Iran as a regional power with influence in Iraq and nuclear ambitions led to concerns over the rise of a Shia crescent necessitating countermoves from US-backed Sunni regimes in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states.

The idea of writing a detailed study based on this analogy had already crossed the author's mind when he read Sullivan's and Brooks' columns. The question this paper explores is whether the analogy stands up to an in-depth examination, and, if so, what implications the analogy has on how to deal with the current problems in the Middle East. A detailed study has many advantages over short editorial pieces, but chiefly affords the opportunity for a methodical approach to the subject, allowing both the author and the reader to go over the myriad of causes, actors, trends, and unforeseen course changes from both cases to determine whether the superficial similarities can indeed stand up to further scrutiny.

Interestingly, both Sullivan and Brooks bring up the Thirty Years War using Iraq as its presupposed starting point, when in fact ample evidence exists to hint that events in the Middle East are much further along. An important question to address, if the Thirty Years War analogy to current events is indeed appropriate, is when the beginning of the hostilities in the Middle East can be said to have taken place. Addressing this question has major implications for figuring out the likelihood of the time and manner of its eventual resolution.

Even more important, however, it has major implications for characterizing the fundamental nature of the conflict. Is it at bottom a struggle for power among the various states, nations, religious sects, families and other groups within the Islamic Middle East, or is it Huntington's "clash of civilizations," a much larger struggle involving the West and other world cultures against Islam? Or, is it at all possible to make such a hair-splitting determination? The Thirty Years War started out as one thing (a struggle over religion and imperial rule in a relatively self-contained German-speaking geographical area) but by the end of the fighting, its constituent parts had become difficult to disentangle. Historian Andrew Fix points out that the Thirty Years War had elements of a religious war, a civil war and an international war.² The degree to which any one type of conflict predominated changed during the course of the war, with the end featuring a much more internationalized conflict. Knowing the starting point of the troubles in the Middle East could help isolate the root causes of the conflict, while also allowing analysts to plot a trajectory based on the Thirty Years War ("TYW") analogy to pinpoint similarities and differences more precisely.

The author put the question regarding the starting point of the current conflict in the Middle East to an undergraduate class he helps teach at the School of International Service at American University in Washington, DC. There were almost as many answers as there were students. Most differed from the standard American answer that the current troubles began with the events of September 11, 2001. Some dated the beginning from the pullout of British forces from Palestine in 1947-48. Others went even further back, looking at historical divides between the West and the Islamic world.

The categorization of conflict is the quintessential example of why history matters. How historians label conflict and package it affects how future generations understand the development of conflicts, and, in turn, influences how future conflicts will begin, unfold and end. Therefore, it is not surprising that coming to an authoritative consensus on the starting point or the nature of an ongoing war can be tricky and contentious. In their textbook, *Politics of the Middle East*, Michael G. Roskin and James J. Coyle thematically link the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent ten years, and 9/11 and its aftermath, calling them “The Gulf Wars.”³

This author agrees with Roskin and Coyle in locating the beginning of the current Middle East conflict with the Iranian Revolution, because of the substantive ideological and geopolitical changes that the event hatched throughout the region. Yet, the author would go even further than Roskin and Coyle in stating that the Iranian Revolution did not simply start a long conflict in the Gulf region, but one that has raged throughout the Middle East since, and continues to do so. Indeed, armed conflict and political struggle within and among countries could easily be termed a civil war. At stake is no less than the power and privilege to define the nature of political society in the Middle East, and, since Islam is much less separable from politics there than in Western society, even to a large degree Islam itself.

This struggle has played itself out in virtually every Islamic nation in the Middle East and North Africa, notably Lebanon, Algeria, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Palestinian Territories, and, of course, Iraq. While each of the situations must be examined according to its own circumstances, it is foolish to ignore the commonalities that link them, which point up basic region-wide trends that can be linked to common historical and cultural experiences. What Sullivan and Brooks, among others, now recognize is that it is becoming increasingly impossible to ignore the interrelated nature of developments in these states, even if these developments are superficially domestic or bilateral in character. The issues political actors were hopeful they could separate and resolve one-by-one have become almost hopelessly entwined, leading to a certain despair that diplomacy, which has problems resolving the narrowest of disagreements, has no chance to comprehensively settle the problems occurring right now. Which leads to the presumption that only the ruthlessness and randomness of war will be able to decide among the competing desires of the many parties involved.

Likewise, the TYW began as a group of seemingly isolated issues occurring concurrently or closely on the heels of one another within the various duchies and principalities of Germany. It was only when it was well underway that the people of the time understood that these discrete conflicts, while demanding particularized understanding, nevertheless also needed to be seen as part of a larger whole, and that the entire problem needed to be addressed if its constituent parts had any hope of being solved.

Thesis and Importance of Analogy

The thesis of this paper is that the striking similarities between the TYW and the current troubles in the Middle East are sufficient for the TYW to be used as a predictor of basic trends that can be expected as the Middle East crisis develops further. While these trends may not be particularly useful to forecast the action of a particular actor or actors at any given time, they at least point to the probability of the type of eventual settlement that will occur in the Middle East. It is unlikely that the conclusions drawn will satisfy or hearten anyone on all counts. Much as the Peace of Westphalia institutionalized German confessionalism—the system by which each local ruler was empowered to determine the religion of his particular realm—and solidified the notion of existing principalities as sovereign entities, the eventual resolution to current Middle East problems will likely involve a more permanent acceptance of the postcolonial boundaries of the states within the region. In this respect, the fact that Westphalia did not fundamentally depart from the basic principles of German confessional coexistence laid down nearly a century earlier in 1555 at Augsburg provides clues that the Middle Eastern map is less likely to undergo a major transformation than many have supposed earlier and even still suppose to a certain degree.

What the TYW teaches, and thus hints at with respect to the Middle East is that the road from Augsburg to Westphalia ends with a sincere (if grudging) acceptance that the beginning point more or less represents the most practicable solution for all sides. After Augsburg, as with the Middle East in the years after Sykes-Picot, key actors believed that the existing system either was undesirable, or should ideally be clarified according to their respective interpretations of the system's fundamental constitution. In addition, these actors believed they possessed the means to alter existing circumstances to make the situation better reflect their desires, and were willing to take the risks inherent in forcing the issue.

In both cases, dominant actors within the systems used their privileged status within the system to shut other actors out. In the TYW, the Calvinists emerged as a significant group following Augsburg, but were not accepted by the Catholics and Lutherans who sought to maintain their own status relative to other groups seeking participation in the overall system. In addition, Catholics never accepted the presence of the “upstart” Lutherans as permanent. They looked upon the Peace of Augsburg as a temporary expedient to protect their position until favorable circumstances allowed them to roll back Protestant gains.

Similarly, following the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which represented the end of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Shiites and Kurds, and even Sunni fundamentalists, among other groups, had nearly no effective say in how Middle Eastern states were governed or defined. Sunni elites (and, in Iran, Shia elites) with ties to the Western world comprised the postcolonial governing class. In fact, much of the postcolonial period dealt with the various Sunni elites and clans maneuvering for the privilege to transcend the state borders internally perceived as artificial, and unite at least the Arabic-speaking Muslim countries politically as well as culturally. Posturing for leadership of the Muslim world became more intense and complicated following the Iranian Revolution because of the threat the emergence of the Shiite alternative posed to traditional Sunni leadership. The example of an Islamist revolution from within a country galvanized parallel Sunni movements, and al Qaeda, Hamas and political Islamists who range from moderate to extreme from Algeria to Egypt to Pakistan have now made known their aspirations to have a say in the affairs of the Middle East, with considerable approbation from their populations.

Westphalia stands for the proposition that powerful actors are less capable of changing the system than they believe, particularly with respect to keeping emerging groups from having some sort of participation in how the system runs. At the end of the TYW, the confessional system remained more or less as it was before the war began, except that at that point the parties (including

the Catholics) looked at it as a permanent resolution, and it acknowledged the existence of significant Calvinist actors as part of the governing system.

The importance of the TYW analogy to the current situation in the Middle East does not stop with observing and analyzing trends, like weathermen. The ultimate value in drawing conclusions from the analogy exists in determining the implications of various strategic and tactical policy choices by the actors currently involved in the Middle East. If lessons from the TYW teach that these policies are ill-advised, whether due to their moral reprehensibility or their likelihood of failure, perhaps the actors involved can avoid such policies and work on new ones directed to resolving the current conflict in as expeditious and prudent a manner possible.

Clearly, one of the most important things for analysts to consider when trying to visualize desirable outcomes to the current conflict in the Middle East (the “MEC”) is whether the outcomes achieved at the end of the TYW are worth emulating. However, it is essential not to jump ahead too quickly in one’s analysis to Westphalia and the international system it established, but also to dwell on the cost of blood, treasure, time and effort that it took for the actors involved in the TYW to reach Westphalia.

Implications for International Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies

This study has important implications for peace and conflict resolution studies because it deals with themes and questions that are central to the debate in today’s world over how best to eradicate conflict and to create a just and peaceful society in which laws are obeyed and inequalities are not institutionalized. Most important among these themes is the idea that a balance must be worked out between the centralization and the devolution of power. Certainly, concentration of power in the hands of the few or the one is not a good idea within a society – that is totalitarianism. Yet, a greater toleration for rule by the few exists within the international system because of its anarchic nature. Other nations accept, and even invite the powerful few to create and maintain a stable order within regions and throughout the international system as a whole.

The thesis of this study, however, shows that major voices which exist in a particular society, region, or international system, as anathema as these voices may be to the powers that be, cannot be silenced. The Calvinists eventually were accepted in 17th Century Germany, just as some involvement of Shias, Sunni fundamentalists, secular democrats and the state of Israel in shaping the future of the Middle East is ultimately likely to be accepted by all parties to the MEC.

On an international scale, the West will almost certainly have to accept a globally involved Islam which advocates and projects different values throughout the Middle East, and even to other regions of the world (particularly where Muslims predominate – South and East Asia, and, increasingly, Europe). The variety of social and political systems in the Islamic world will likely embrace some notion of free markets, and, to a more limited extent, the concept of constitutional republicanism. Nonetheless, its value systems will present Muslim communitarian alternatives to the traditional Western-style models of secular democracy, which claim to separate ideology from the processes of government and finance.

The open questions to be discussed in the paper are as follows. First, whether the balance that is eventually struck between centralization of power (personified in the Middle East by dynastic elites, and in the international system by the West, and, specifically, the US) and devolution of power will resemble the balance struck in the Westphalian order. That is, will the eventual resolution consist mainly of a few updates to the Sykes-Picot state-centered outcome, much as Westphalia updated Augsburg in a very organized and delimited fashion, or will the outcome maintain a loose flexibility because of the continuing and increasing importance of non-state actors and forces (ideological and technological) that emphasize the power of the individual? Would such a looseness

engender chaos, thus endangering the stability so intrinsically important to a Westphalian-style conflict settlement?

Second, what is the best way for the various actors involved in the MEC to influence the outcome? Particularly, for the US and other Western actors, does it make sense to seek a primary role in the resolution (military or otherwise) of the problems? Is it possible that the greater the level of involvement of the Western nations, the more both Western and Muslim observers discern a clash between civilizations, and, consequently, the greater the likelihood is for Muslim nations to insist upon an oppositional stance to the West on the international stage? For reasons of legitimacy, is it even possible for Western actors to do more to promote their interests in the region than to provide understated support for authentic Middle Eastern actors which represent their best chance for cultivating good relations with them in the long run?

The post-Westphalian system, as David Blaney and others explain, demonstrated that the resolution of the TYW placed limitations on the devolution of power. In some ways, particularly respecting the establishment of stability which created zones of peace, leading to Europe's great prosperity, these limits can be seen as an advantage. In others, particularly when considering the nationalistic and ideological European wars of the 18th-20th centuries, Westphalia can be seen merely as a means of transforming differences on the basis of religious sectarianism into differences on the basis of nationality or some non-religious but equally faith-based ideological belief.⁴ This pessimistic interpretation lends a skeptical light to any sort of top-down, power-sharing arrangement that could be engineered to stop the killing in the MEC, because it implies that the killing will start again at some point in the indeterminate future, positing that societal differentiation is not eliminated, only changed in its superficial aspects. For example, perhaps Sunni-Shia violence will stop, but violence between Middle East nations or between the Middle East region and other world regions is likely to break out on other grounds.

Yet, the Blaney argument could be interpreted in a more positive light. Westphalia put a lid on full-blown European wars for a long time, and gave people an opportunity to focus their energies on thought, art and invention. Although Europe progressed in a way that eventually led to large nationalistic and ideological wars, perhaps this was an idiosyncratic path based on choices Europeans made that had little to do with how the TYW was resolved. Thus, one could conclude that a Westphalian-type solution to the MEC would not doom the actors involved to future conflict, but would in fact buy them time to plot a future of their own course. This argument is particularly resonant when one considers the lack of opportunity the people of the Middle East currently have to build a future because of the backbreaking uncertainty they face due to the constant specter of conflict.

The notion of a pure abolition of difference as the only way to successfully resolve conflict, as opposed to a more incrementalist approach, is a difficult one to advocate when faced with the reality that hope flourishes best when outward conditions of conflict cease. Ultimately then, some attention should be paid to intangible aspects of the morale, strength, and fortitude of the people involved in the conflict when trying to map its trends and prescribe policies for managing or ending it.

Finally, the question of whether ideology should be sacrificed to geopolitical stability is one that Westphalia raises. Namely, will the inhabitants of the earth suffer the death of something more important than their lives if the MEC and other similar conflicts down the road are resolved through compromises based on power accommodations for large or particularly vociferous actors – namely their beliefs? Does Westphalia represent the blunting of the motivation that truly animates us, and is that motivation (namely a Wilsonian, universalistic Christianity) now swimming under the radar of Western civilization, even though it remains the main imperative for the actions Western nations take? Would a similar de-Islamization of the Middle East really be effective, or simply lead to a

displacement of the universalistic beliefs of Muslims on to some other ideology that still leads them into conflict with the West? Most tragically, will the future conflicts of the world be fought by people who do not even understand what they are fighting for, fueled largely by materialistic motives (resources, economic growth, power) which exacerbate religious differences that might have been played down had the doctrinal considerations of the religions (focused on spirituality and coexistence) been brought to the fore?

The TYW Analogy as Unique

One of the tricky things about analogy is its malleability. It is incredibly easy to argue that two different phenomena are similar because they have overlapping characteristics. Yet, the level of preponderance of shared characteristics that is necessary for the phenomena to have true, fundamental similarity in their root causes and trends can be difficult to discern. For that reason, several opposing analogies are often forwarded by those seeking to understand or explain a particular phenomenon.

In the case studied here, the phenomenon we are trying to understand better is the MEC. Everyone loves analogies about wars, because there is something in the human condition that finds comfort in knowing that strengths and weaknesses of character can be found in our predecessors, and they managed to continue on without annihilating the species. So, particularly since the events of 9/11 and the subsequent US invasion of Iraq, there has been a profusion of attempts to analogize the MEC to various conflicts from the past.

As discussed earlier, the thesis of this paper is that the TYW goes a long way in explaining many of the fundamental components of the MEC—certainly enough to make the case that a detailed study of the TYW will be helpful in finding ways to understand the direction of the MEC, and hopefully also to bring a lasting end to the MEC in such a manner that an even larger problem does not arise soon thereafter. Therefore, an important corollary to establishing the important narrative role of the TYW analogy is to establish that other analogies are not equally applicable. Some of these analogies are constructive in explaining isolated aspects of the MEC, but only the TYW comes close to capturing the complexity and the spirit of the dynamics embodied in the MEC.

The most common habit employed in analogy is to look to the most recent wars in one's past for lessons in explaining the current war. Thus, Western analysts, particularly those in the US, are especially fixated on the Vietnam War, the Cold War and World War II when mining for insights to help them explain actors' motivations and the likelihood of success of various courses of action. Although the Vietnam War could technically be argued to be part of the Cold War, it has resonance apart from the Cold War that demands it to be treated separately for purposes of this analysis.

Vietnam is easily the war most commonly discussed by Americans when referring to the war in Iraq. It is hard to deny some of the parallels. Both conflicts featured a heavily politicized justification for American troops to be mobilized against adversaries that arguably presented little, if any, imminent threat to US national security. Both also featured large-scale insurrections by native populations, who employed inventive means of guerrilla and terrorist attacks to deny full control of the security situation to a far better-trained and equipped US force. Both featured increasingly desperate US efforts to install a self-sufficient government plagued by mounting opposition at home, undermined by a lack of preparation for cultural and social realities of the nation occupied.

Yet, the nearly-constant references to Vietnam point up the narrow perspective that most Americans employ in looking at the dynamics of the MEC. Understandably, Americans are focused most on where their troops are located, but to look at Iraq and Afghanistan as the exclusive theaters of the MEC overlooks the region-wide ripple effects and tensions that clearly exist. The Middle East region today plays a much greater part in the interests of the US and the Western world,

because of its economic importance and the greater mobility of its migrants and its terrorists, than did Southeast Asia in the 1960s.

Also, the US never really accomplished any of its political objectives in Vietnam. Conversely, the primary political objective of its mission in Iraq succeeded extremely quickly—namely, the deposition of Saddam Hussein. Reasonable people can disagree on whether this success is outweighed by the chaos that has ensued in its aftermath, which is different from the undeniable fact that shortly after the US withdrawal from Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh took control of the entire country.

Thus, although Vietnam and Iraq share many characteristics, US fixation on Vietnam points up the US preoccupation with itself, instead of a greater appreciation of each situation as culturally and geopolitically unique, with its own set of regional and historical challenges. Dismissing Iraq as Vietnam, then, is an overly simplistic way of saying that neither is worth US effort, that both are better off left alone. In Iraq, this analogy avoids any acceptance of the responsibility some believe the US has as an occupying power following Hussein's overthrow to establish stability before vacating.

The Cold War and World War II analogies are also spurious. They are often used together, and begin by reference to the rise of Nazism and communism, those twin evils that are inherently opposed to liberty. Those who employ these analogies believe that Islamism is the next version of these anti-freedom ideologies—Nazism 3.0, if you will—and thus must be dealt with in the same manner—complete eradication, whether through direct confrontation or containment.

There is an element of truth in these analogies, but the scope of the worldwide threat Islamism poses is currently far more particularized than either Nazism or communism. The Germans boasted the most advanced and powerful army on the earth's most consequential continent. The Soviets controlled the largest country in the world, with the largest standing army and a nuclear arsenal that could wipe out civilization. While the evil intent of Osama bin Laden and his ilk against world civilization is hard to doubt, the capacity of the Islamists to accomplish their objectives is far less developed. Their ambitions to rule are much more regionally localized, and can often be interpreted as an outgrowth of an overdeveloped sense of victimhood instead of an assertion of power.⁵ Many believe that their aim is mainly to get the US and the West to leave the Middle East alone. And yet their incendiary words and brutal deeds hint at the possibility of a reign of terror throughout the region if the West is to back down.

The World War II and Cold War analogies are also used to demonstrate the viability of changing societies through violence or threats of violence.⁶ Yet Germany, Eastern Europe and Russia share common Christian cultural heritages with other Western nations. Japan, as a self-contained island nation with a long unified history, faced none of the overlapping identity problems that plague the Muslim Middle East. Without discounting the great struggles that were necessary to transform those societies (and in Russia's case, the effort may not have worked very well), the opportunities for their transformation by the West were always more credible than a similar transformation of Middle Eastern society.

Finally, more nuanced students of foreign policy often resort to World War I to make their analogies with the MEC. After all, World War I featured an incredibly convoluted interplay of alliances and interests during a period of unprecedented globalization. Long large-scale war was supposed to be impossible. The complexity of actors and their motives, along with the false assurances that nations were too rational to engage in direct, protracted conflict, but would ensure that conflict remained on the fringes of civilization, sounds eerily familiar today.

Yet, clearly there is more going on in the MEC. World War I featured neither seething ideological differences nor troublemaking non-state actors. The TYW, although technically well before the advent of non-state actors, could also be said to feature several pre-state actors. Indeed,

so many small German principalities and duchies were involved, the dynamic was lent a much more chaotic feel, similar to concerns over devolution of power that animate the MEC today.

Thus, none of these other oft-used wars is as compelling as an analogy to the MEC as is the TYW, for the following reasons, which will be discussed in greater detail throughout the paper. Like the MEC, the TYW was fought over sprawling, imperfectly defined geographical areas which shared common historical and cultural ties but were divided politically, largely among competing dynastic lines. Also, like the MEC, the TYW can be seen as the direct consequence and reaction to the establishment of an imperfect power-sharing arrangement which occurred nearly a century earlier. In contrast to the other wars used as analogies, the TYW had a distinctly religious component. Sectarian animus played a large role in the conflict. Representatives of the sect which had represented orthodox thought in the region for centuries used their established wealth and power to counter perceived upstarts and pretenders, first ideologically, then militarily. Finally, one of the most important dynamics of the TYW, which also runs through the MEC, was the ever-shifting loyalties of its participants, which would change particularly in response to concerns that one of the actors involved was becoming too powerful and thus needed to be countered. The world's superpower during the TYW became considerably weaker as a result of the conflict, setting the stage for the rise of a competing power. A similar development could take place as a result of the MEC.

Cautionary Note on Analogy – Limitations of Study

Any study based on analogy is fraught with its own set of weaknesses and limitations. Chief among these is the tendency to try to make the analogy a perfect one, when finding an absolute correlation between two different historical events, particularly from different times and geographical regions, is impossible. Indeed, much of the usefulness of the analogy depends on clearly denoting the aspects of disagreement between the two things being compared, so that an accurate picture of the degree of agreement between the two can be formed, and, consequently, proper conclusions can be drawn.

Certain major differences between the 17th Century and the 21st Century make a side-by-side comparison of the TYW and the MEC problematic. One vast difference is in global connectivity, given recent dramatic advances in transportation and communication. Another is the exponentially more destructive nature of today's weaponry. Tamping down the intensity and scale of conflict in the Middle East, as the TYW was wound down slowly and gradually following the Peace of Prague in 1635, may not improve matters, if, as retired US Army General Barry McCaffrey (along with many others) has stated, it is likely that Iran will have functioning nuclear weapons within a few years and that Sunni-led nations will develop nuclear weapons in response.⁷ Other factors that militate against the analogy's usefulness are the difference between modern societies and 17th Century ones (urban/rural split, literacy, level of involvement in public life) and possible variations between how religion, religious beliefs and religious adherents were defined then and now (on the basis of doctrine, residence, or nationality).

The fact that today's Middle East is much more vulnerable to the machinations of outside actors than was 17th Century Europe may also be a differentiating factor. The unique set of challenges posed by the state of Israel is unmatched by any actor from the TYW, although perhaps a case could be made to argue that the Ottoman Empire fulfilled a somewhat similar role as an actor against whom the disparate actors of Europe could unite.

Also, differences between Christianity and Islam should not be overlooked. Lutheran Protestantism, for example, had a decidedly different view of the deference to be accorded to properly constituted political authority than did Khomeini's or Qutb's ideas, which merged notions of church and state. A simple way to summarize the difference is to say that Europeans allowed and

even encouraged political actors to order religious identity, while in the Muslim Middle East, Islamist thought focuses on religious truth driving political action. Thus, even though the TYW was a stunning example of the devolution of authority based on religious difference, this conflict remained highly formal in nature, as opposed to the haphazard organizational, even shadowy qualities that characterize, and often define the Islamists in the MEC. This difference highlights the challenge that Islamists continue to face in coming up with a program for governance that goes beyond a rejectionist outcry against current governments.

On the whole, though, despite the limitations, the TYW-MEC analogy retains considerable power, both from the perspective of the insight it affords into the historical background and causes of both conflicts, and the predictive power it is capable of providing policymakers in the MEC. The task for analysts is to continually revisit the analogy as the MEC progresses to decide to what degree comparisons with the TYW bring greater clarity to their analysis of the MEC.

Structure and Design of the Study

The study will proceed very simply. The first step will be a basic retelling of the events of the TYW, along with descriptions of the important actors and places involved. Then it will follow an analogical framework, based on some of the key parallels between the TYW and MEC highlighted earlier. The events of the MEC will not be related in the same linear narrative form as those of the TYW, because they are more commonly known to the readers of the study than are the events of the TYW. Nevertheless, aspects of the MEC pertinent to the analogical framework will be described and analyzed in detail in support of the thesis.

The sources used for information on the TYW are, primarily, authoritative books by Geoffrey Parker and Ronald Asch, major scholarly articles, and extended academic lectures on the subject.⁸ Because of the changing nature of analysis on the MEC, more quickly accessible sources are used to support the analogy—mainly reports and essays from periodicals. A few books providing much-needed big-picture analysis and context are also used, most notably the Roskin and Coyle text and excerpts from Vali Nasr's *The Shia Revival*.

The Thirty Years War – Retold

Reformation, Augsburg and Counter-Reformation

Any analysis of the TYW must begin with the Protestant Reformation. Without it, any attempt at coming to terms with the historical and ideological roots of the conflict that both motivated its participants and fueled its dynamics would be in vain. As most students of history know, Martin Luther, first unintentionally, and then with full purpose, used the political division so strikingly characteristic of Germany to transform a protest against certain practices of the Catholic Church into a full-scale break from the Church during the 1520s. Behind the political protection from his Saxon sponsors, Luther's writing and preaching rocked the whole of Europe, but particularly the areas of the Holy Roman Empire (which were predominantly German-speaking), the Netherlands, Scandinavia and parts of France. The precedent was set for others such as Calvin and Zwingli to present their own alternatives to Catholic and Lutheran thought, and the new doctrines spread like wildfire within these areas.

Because religious and secular authority had been so intertwined in medieval Europe, the undermining of religious authority had profound political repercussions. For practical purposes, the Reformation thrived best in geographical areas such as Germany and Switzerland where a multiplicity of small duchies and fiefdoms abounded. In order for new doctrines to be taught in

safety, the advocates of non-Catholic Christianity had either to be tolerated or actively promoted by the presiding power of the land.

Because there was no absolute unity of rule in German-speaking lands, princes were more subject to the tremendous popular pressure that militated against the perceived corruption and powermongering of the Catholic Church, and therefore logic dictated that many rulers would embrace the Reformation. Some did so because they too sympathized with the need for a less authoritarian and accessible form of religion, others because they recognized their political ambitions or survival could be aided by such a stance. Scandinavian countries, which shared several non-Roman historical and cultural characteristics with Germans, were able to embrace Lutheranism largely because the geographical buffer between them and the Catholic centers of power in the Mediterranean allowed them to do so without facing military consequences.

On the other hand, most of the centrally-ruled monarchies of Europe had a more difficult time accepting Reformation teachings. Although many in France were affected by the spirit of the times, France faced a powerful, ultra-Catholic Spain on its southern border. Even after Henry VIII of England defected from the pope over his marital issues, French stability depended on maintaining an official pro-Catholic stance, and maintaining such a stance required militant prosecution of the new “heretics,” who in France were known as Huguenots.

Tensions escalated in Germany because the patchwork quality of its feudal lands meant that Catholics and Lutherans were in close proximity, and princes of differing religions but with similar territorial ambition faced down one another. Given the inherent instability that exists when so many actors are vying for primacy in a relatively small geographical area, conflict was bound to arise out of mutual feelings of insecurity. So the so-called “wars of religion” broke out. As the 1540s gave way to the 1550s, there seemed to be no clear victor on the horizon. Centuries-old authority and old money had not been able to crush the fresh zeal that abounded in the land, but at the same time, the Protestants lacked the organizational cohesion to surmount a serious threat to continued Catholic dominance where it was entrenched (particularly in those areas where the local prince was in fact the Catholic bishop).

So it was that in 1555, the Catholic and Lutheran princes of Germany agreed to the Peace of Augsburg. The central principle of this conflict settlement was that of *cuius regio, eius religio*, which held that in each German territory, the religion of the ruler would determine the religion for all the inhabitants of that land.⁹ Those who differed from the ruler’s religion were granted the right to emigrate to a territory ruled by a ruler of the same religion. Only in a few “free cities” of the Holy Roman Empire were Lutherans and Catholics officially able to coexist.¹⁰

As is the case with so many conflict resolutions, the foundational principle of the Peace of Augsburg planted the seeds for future conflict, and probably aggravated the initial grounds for the conflict by further polarizing the parties. Although the *cuius regio, eius religio* solution provided clarity to a muddled situation, it caused Catholic and Lutheran camps to band together ever more tightly, without addressing the security dilemma and geographical closeness that was likely to lead to renewed conflict in the event that one or more rulers decided they needed to take action either to aggrandize their position or preempt an attack from an opponent. The separation afforded both groups the opportunity of demonizing one another, because they were not faced with everyday contact. At the same time, the boundaries created were insufficient to stop either side from quietly nursing its grudges and biding its time until an opportune moment arrived to tip the balance in its favor.

The Catholics, in particular, came away from Augsburg feeling resentful. As the more established party, the Catholics only grudgingly accepted the peace, because they knew Lutherans would interpret it as a legitimization of their own right to exist as a separate religious and identity group. Not having been properly prepared for the powerful appeal Protestantism had in Germany,

the Catholics felt as though they had been unjustly forced to defend lands and prerogatives that were rightfully theirs by reason of established custom and historical precedent. Lacking any sort of political, educational or informational mechanism to compete with Luther's message for the masses, the Catholics were compelled to use financial and military means, accept a peace when they felt they could not materially improve their position, then go back to their corner, lick their wounds, and come up with a more thought-out plan for countering Protestantism. From such a viewpoint, Augsburg was seen by the Catholics as a temporary expedient that bought them time to come up with a solution that would right everything, ultimately allowing them to do away with the opposition once and for all.

In that light, the territorial concessions the Catholics made at Augsburg cut two ways. On one hand, they meant very little, because there was a feeling that Lutheranism would not last long enough for the repercussions to be felt. On the other, it fed the feelings of injustice and resentment that would motivate the Catholics to prepare in the coming generations for conflict with Protestants both on ideological and material levels. When this conflict came during the TYW, one sees the clear intent of the Catholic participants to use the war as a repudiation of Augsburg. Specifically abhorrent to them were *cuius regio, eius religio*, and the concession which said that all ecclesiastical lands seized by Protestants prior to 1552 would not be returned to the Church.¹¹

Although Protestants were less scarred than Catholics by the indecisive nature of the Peace of Augsburg, because of their greater willingness to accept small gains, the settlement had enough to create lasting grudges for them as well. Foremost among these concerns was the so-called *reservatum ecclesiasticum*.¹² Pursuant to the peace, if a Lutheran acceded to the rulership of a traditionally Catholic territory, that territory would immediately become Lutheran. However, the *reservatum* carved out an exception by which ecclesiastically-ruled territories could not be transformed by reason of a non-Catholic acceding to power or the conversion of the ruling bishop or abbot. Particularly galling to Lutherans was the fact that this provision of the Augsburg settlement was not agreed to by the Protestant negotiators, but instead was established by imperial decree.¹³

Although the 63 years following Augsburg were certainly not conflict-free, it is somewhat surprising that the disputes that did erupt as a result of rulers' conversions or challenges to provisions of the peace agreement generally remained localized and subsided without drawing in other parties.¹⁴ This curious and uneasy quiet between Protestants and Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire persisted for so long for three main reasons—one found within Catholicism, another within Protestantism, and a final one within the nature of European geopolitics.

First, the Catholics were not eager to return to conflict immediately following Augsburg because they realized they needed to spend time on two objectives key to a struggle for European supremacy: (1) presenting the Church and its message in a more favorable way to the people of Europe and (2) consolidating their strength in core Catholic lands (such as Bavaria, Austria and key centers in the Rhineland). The Counter-Reformation, highlighted by the Council of Trent, demonstrated that the Church had learned from the Reformation that it needed to purge itself of corruption and complacency that had come from holding a monopoly on religious practice and spiritual authority for so long.

Perhaps even more importantly, Catholics learned that they needed to turn Luther's arsenal—Biblical interpretation and argument, rigorous intellectual training of clerics, accessible people skills and charismatic speaking styles—against the Protestants. They needed to actively search for and create legions of Catholics who mirrored Protestants in their zeal, but could articulate a coherent and appealing opposing argument. A special German College was established in Rome in 1552 to train priests for service in German-speaking lands.¹⁵ The perfect missionary mechanism to carry forward the teachings of the Counter-Reformation, however, was Ignatius Loyola's Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). This highly-disciplined order brought militant zeal to the spread of Catholic

orthodoxy, along with a keen focus on using education to establish and maintain Catholic strongholds.

The steady tide of the Reformation, which had continued since its inception to attract large numbers of adherents, began to be turned by the Catholics in the 1570s and 1580s. Much credit for the success of the Counter-Reformation, as Cambridge historian Geoffrey Parker writes, goes to the coordination of efforts among the various Catholic lands of Europe. In response to the threat of Protestant incursion into traditionally Catholic areas, Parker says, "In 1579, the archdukes of Tyrol and Styria [in present-day Austria] held a secret meeting at Munich with the duke of Bavaria at which it was decided...to restore a Catholic monopoly, not with sound and fury, but surreptitiously and slowly;...not with words but with deeds."¹⁶ As Parker further relates, "The spearhead of the Catholic offensive was formed by the colleges run by the Jesuit Order, of which there were four in the Habsburg lands by 1561, and some fifty by 1650."¹⁷ Of course, the consolidation of Catholic control included plenty of repression, exile, and forced conversion of Protestants. Indeed, several families which produced pivotal Catholic actors in the TYW turned back to Catholicism from Protestantism less than 30 years before the conflict began.¹⁸

The second factor militating against the immediate renewal of conflict between Catholics and Protestants shortly after Augsburg was the rise of Calvinism within German lands. Although Calvinism had been present before 1555, its influence had been mostly confined to Switzerland, the Netherlands and parts of France. For that reason, Calvinism was not recognized as a legitimate religious option for territorial rulers and their subjects in the Peace of Augsburg.

Following Augsburg, however, Calvinism's appeal spread to various parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The most notable Calvinist conversion was by Frederick III of the Palatinate (Heidelberg and its surroundings) in 1559-60, followed by the Elector of Brandenburg in 1613.¹⁹ However, Calvinism made significant inroads in the eastern imperial lands as well. Its rise put Lutherans in the strange position of being on the defensive after having so recently been the upstarts themselves. The Protestant infighting prevented any clear crystallization of Protestant-Catholic battle lines until Lutherans and Calvinists could begin to understand their respective places within German society. However, the substantial amount of time Calvinists had to solidify their status within the Empire made conflict more inevitable because it became increasingly clear that the practical reality of Calvinist power within Germany put pressure on the viability of an Augsburg system which lent no formal recognition to Calvinists.

The third factor behind a protracted period of calm before the TYW was European geopolitics. Because of the incredible level of political division within the Holy Roman Empire, virtually no one prince or ruler was capable of marshaling the territorial, financial or manpower resources necessary to inaugurate a military campaign to impose its will on others within the Empire. Economics dictated that Catholics and Protestants alike would need to seek sponsors for a religious war. Because economics favored coastal powers with strong navies, the Spanish, Dutch, French and British, along with the Danes and the Swedes, at that moment in history flexed the most economic and military muscle. However, these major powers tended to be preoccupied with one another or with their own internal stability during the last half of the 16th Century. The Spanish were in a desperate struggle to maintain control over the prosperous Netherlands, the French and the British were struggling with internal succession and legitimacy issues and posturing with one another, and the Swedes and Danes were more concerned about primacy in their own spheres than on the continent proper.

The Run-Up to War

However, developments both within and without Germany changed matters in the 17th Century, bringing the eyes of Europe back to its heartland. What the Germans did not fully

comprehend was that by inviting aid and sponsorship of their sectarian causes by major European powers, they set in motion a chain of events that would virtually ensure the need for major power intervention to secure their interests in the outcome of the internal and sectarian conflict.

From 1607-10, a swirl of events occurred that set the stage for the outbreak of conflict in 1618. The first step occurred when Catholic troops sent by Maximilian of Bavaria at the order of Emperor Rudolf seized control of the free city of Donauwoerth, ostensibly to protect the rights of its small Catholic population. Yet Maximilian overstepped his territorial authority, and Protestant suspicions of Catholic motives were further heightened when Rudolf ordered that Donauwoerth be annexed to Bavaria and thus transformed from a free city into a wholly Catholic one.²⁰ The Donauwoerth incident doomed prospects for Protestant-Catholic cooperation at the 1608 Imperial Diet, and shortly thereafter, Frederick IV of the Palatinate and his ally Christian of Anhalt organized a largely Calvinist Protestant Union intended to deter future acts of Catholic aggression.²¹

The next major crisis, over the succession to the religiously-divided lands of Cleves-Juelich, led to the forcible establishment of the Protestant Union's preferred successor by a combined Union, Dutch, English and French army. Predictably, the Catholic rulers of Germany responded to the crisis by forming an alliance of their own, the Catholic League, in 1609.²² With the hardening of allegiances along sectarian lines, battle lines had been drawn.

Two developments that cut both ways were the Twelve Years' Truce to the Spanish-Dutch war and the assassination of Henry IV of France. The Twelve Years' Truce of 1609 freed Spanish attentions to focus on happenings in the Holy Roman Empire. The Spanish monarchy had a keen interest in German affairs due not only to its interest in helping fellow Catholics push back Protestant gains, but also to its close family relationship with the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperors. On the other hand, the Spanish resisted immediately involving itself in German sectarian disputes, because its involvement would have likely precipitated Dutch involvement on the other side.²³ Only after Spain had had time to regroup, closer to the end of the truce, would it consider sponsoring the Emperor militarily.

Henry IV of France had been very active in seeking a way both to counter the unchecked spread of Habsburg and Catholic power, which implicated French territorial interests, and to prevent the over-idealistic Protestant Union from unnecessarily provoking a conflict. His assassination in 1610 may have removed the one outside personality forceful enough to keep the lid on the sectarian tensions.²⁴ It forced the French to disengage from international politics and to look inward to ensure their own stability, which may have caused the Germans and the other major European powers to underestimate France's long-term ability to project power internationally. Only after the TYW was well underway did France once again take steps to intervene, and it eventually played a decisive role.

The issue of imperial succession and rule in the Habsburg lands was the catalyst for the TYW. In 1618, Bohemia (the center of the present-day Czech Republic) had a proud tradition of questioning Catholic authority and boasted a large Calvinist population. Yet in the preceding decade, the Emperor Matthias consolidated the Habsburg hereditary ruling claims to Bohemia, and arranged for the smooth succession of Ferdinand of Styria.

This arrangement was all the more significant because the King of Bohemia was one of the seven electors constitutionally entitled to elect the Holy Roman Emperor and to provide counsel on other weighty Imperial matters. The Empire more or less included the territory of all German-speaking peoples, along with Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and parts of Hungary, and although the Empire did not allow the Emperor direct control over most territorial rulers, his pronouncements and prestige nevertheless held substantial sway. The electors were evenly divided among Catholic and Protestant lines, and Bohemia tipped the balance. The prospect of having Ferdinand, a zealously Catholic, Jesuit-educated, young Habsburg, as king for a generation was devastating to

several key Bohemian nobles who feared for the future of Bohemian independence of thought and action, given the iron hand with which the Habsburgs had consolidated Catholic control in their core hereditary lands.

Outbreak of War

The first salvo in the TYW was a largely symbolic one. Known as the Defenestration of Prague, it occurred in 1618 when two Catholic regents were thrown out the window of an imperial palace in response to Emperor Matthias' dissolution of the Prague assembly, and signified Bohemian rebellion against the Habsburgs.²⁵ The Bohemians sought and gained membership in the Protestant Union, and joined Protestant and Transylvanian armies in a siege of Vienna.²⁶ This threat to Habsburg and imperial power startled not only the Catholics and their Spanish ally, but also the fence-sitting Protestant territorial rulers of Germany. The other European powers ominously noted that the religious conflict they had feared was at hand.²⁷

In the midst of this uncertainty, the Emperor Matthias died in 1619. To demonstrate their commitment to the reestablishment of stability, the seven imperial electors unanimously elected Ferdinand as Matthias' successor.²⁸ Despite the rebellion, Ferdinand still laid claim to the kingship of Bohemia.²⁹ Yet, the Bohemian rebels had offered their crown to Frederick of the Palatinate, and he accepted it out of an obligation to assist his Protestant brethren in defending their religious liberties.³⁰ This was the catalyst for transforming the conflict from a fairly intense squabble over Habsburg hereditary lands to an Empire-wide and larger European war.

Alarmed at the threat posed by Frederick, one of the seven electors, to Ferdinand's authority, and therefore to the safety of Catholicism in central and southern Europe, the Spanish quickly cemented an alliance with Ferdinand and Maximilian of Bavaria.³¹ On one hand, the Spanish had not wanted to get involved in the German conflict, because it would destroy all chances of extending their truce with the Dutch and would force them to spread their resources over long distances to provide for their commitments in the Netherlands and in Germany. However, the strategic threat the Spanish discerned in the Bohemian matter ultimately outweighed its concerns regarding renewed conflict with the Dutch.³²

Although Ferdinand nominally directed the defense of the Empire, he relied heavily on Spanish strategic know-how and resources and on Maximilian's wealth and advantageous geographical position. Under the Spanish-proposed Catholic plan, Maximilian organized and deployed a Catholic League army under the command of Count Tilly to relieve Vienna and to retake Bohemia for the Emperor. In return for Maximilian's cooperation, Ferdinand promised Maximilian territorial possession of the Palatinate, and even more important, Frederick's electoral privilege.³³ Spanish troops from the Netherlands, aided by Tilly's army following the reconquest of Bohemia, would then conquer the Palatinate.³⁴ The plan worked like clockwork, particularly because it occurred so swiftly that no outside European power (England, France or even the Netherlands) felt comfortable intervening because they did not know the Catholics' plans extended beyond a defense of Habsburg lands to a punitive campaign against Frederick. At White Mountain just outside Prague, Tilly crushed the Bohemian revolt in 1620, and by 1622 the Palatinate was under Catholic control and Frederick had been exiled to the Netherlands.³⁵ That point in the conflict marked the end of the existential threat to the Habsburgs' own hereditary lands. From then on, much of the Catholic strategy was based on a desire to solidify their own position by rolling back the Protestant presence and influence elsewhere in German lands.

The Catholics Push Their Advantage Too Far

When word of Emperor Ferdinand's electoral promise to Maximilian of Bavaria circulated around Europe, the crowned heads realized that some sort of coordination of effort was necessary

to counter the Emperor's ambitions to redraw the religiopolitical balance of Germany.³⁶ The existing Protestant armies received backing for an effort to take back the Palatinate, the Dutch renewed their war with the Spanish, and the French began a minor, almost diversionary, cat-and-mouse campaign with the Spanish and the Habsburgs in Alpine and Italian lands.³⁷ Yet, the Catholics benefited from the fact that their rivals quarreled over who should lead (and thus bear the brunt of) a counterattack, and could not agree on whether to limit the scope of their opposition in Germany to the Palatinate or to acknowledge the existence of a conflict throughout the Imperial lands.

Ultimately, the Danish king Christian IV volunteered to take up the banner for Protestantism. The intervention of a prominent foreign leader on behalf of the Protestant cause irretrievably escalated the stakes of the conflict to one for strategic control of the character of the lands of the Empire. Unfortunately for Christian, his efforts were doomed even before they began by the rise of a new imperial army, commanded by the Bohemian noble Wallenstein, which added greatly to the strength of Tilly's Catholic forces.³⁸ Between them, the two Catholic armies constituted a demolition mechanism of unprecedented power. Wallenstein in particular pioneered the distinctly modern characteristic of armies to pillage and plunder the surrounding countryside in order to subsist. This practice gave the Catholics a distinct advantage in maintaining their positions without having to rely on periodic refreshment and reinforcement.

Recognizing Christian's untenable position, the other anti-Habsburg conspirators abandoned him to his fate. The Catholics used Christian's challenge as a justification to march through and occupy northern Germany—a traditional Protestant stronghold. Emperor Ferdinand persisted in his attempts to control the goings-on in local imperial territories by transferring the northern German duchy of Mecklenburg to Wallenstein as punishment for its alliance with Christian.³⁹ Such ambition set the stage for several Protestant territorial rulers who had heretofore remained neutral to rally to the anti-Habsburg side.

Two developments solidified anti-Habsburg and anti-Catholic sentiment among Protestants both within and outside of the Empire to a sufficient degree that they were willing to take truly concerted action. The first was territorial overreach. Ferdinand originally demanded the Jutland peninsula as the price for peace with Christian, but it became clear that a Catholic projection of power into a non-German realm was not going to be tolerated by other Protestant powers, and that the Catholic forces were stretched too thin to accomplish that objective.⁴⁰

The second development was the Edict of Restitution issued by Emperor Ferdinand in 1629, at the high water mark of Catholic supremacy in Germany. It represented the Emperor's attempt to formalize the military gains Catholic armies had won in the previous decade, but can also be perceived as the Emperor's desperate attempt to reinterpret and even redefine the Peace of Augsburg because of a concern that Catholic occupation could not be sustained long in Protestant lands given the resentment which the armies attracted.

The Edict demanded a strict adherence to the 1552 cutoff for secularization of lands contained in Augsburg.⁴¹ Since then, Lutherans and Calvinists had gained *de facto* control over a large array of territory, and Ferdinand sought the return of those lands to Catholic control. The Edict's specification that Calvinists were to remain totally excluded from the imperial power structure was a lightning rod. Ferdinand's only hope was that the neutral Lutheran princes would remain loyal to the empire.

The Protestants Push Back

This did not happen. Fears that once Ferdinand had consolidated gains, he would seek further dispossession of all Protestants, combined with the basic security concerns raised by the large armies on the soil of northern Germany, led the strategically crucial Elector of Saxony to

oppose Ferdinand. He helped mobilize the electors to compel Ferdinand to dismiss Wallenstein, whose tactics had been as hated by Ferdinand's Protestant subjects as they had been ruthlessly effective.⁴² At the same time, the Protestant princes united with outside European powers to support the invasion of Germany by the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus in 1630.

Gustavus quickly demonstrated his great battlefield talents. His fresh armies routed Tilly's Catholic League armies and quickly headed into Catholic mainstays in the Rhineland and Bavaria.⁴³ Dismayed at the sudden reversal of fortune, in 1631 Ferdinand summoned Wallenstein back to his command.⁴⁴ Although Gustavus continued to display tactical superiority, Wallenstein pushed his forces back into northern Germany, and Gustavus was killed in battle in 1632.⁴⁵ The consequent loss in Swedish morale rendered the Swedes less terrifying to the Catholics, although they remained formidable, and the two sides engaged in a long war of attrition.

Transforming the War from One of Ideology to One of Accommodation

The 1635 Peace of Prague represented a coup for Ferdinand. He was able to regain the loyalties of the Elector of Saxony and even the Calvinist Elector of Brandenburg.⁴⁶ His hope was that by mobilizing support of the major Protestant princes of northern Germany, he could salvage some of the gains of the 1620s without having to give a full hearing to the less powerful Protestants in the west and south.

His gambit did not work because the outside European powers, particularly France and Sweden, believed their own interests to be sufficiently invested in the German outcome to insist on having a part in its resolution. Thus, the French on the west, and the Swedes in the north and east, continued to apply pressure on the Catholic forces. With Ferdinand's death, signs of weakness from the Habsburgs' Spanish protectors because of continued conflict with the Dutch and undeniable gains on Spanish European supremacy by the French, the Empire realized that its strategy of maintaining stalemate would harm it more than its opponents. Plus, the supporters of the Imperial coalition from within began making separate peaces (Saxony with Sweden) or signaling the need to discontinue their active involvement (Bavaria).⁴⁷

The entry of the Swedes transformed the dynamics of the conflict from a primarily German one, fueled by ideological motives, into a full-fledged European war. The entrance by the French into the war in 1635, and their determined prosecution of the war until Ferdinand's son agreed to negotiations in the mid-1640s, guaranteed that a stable peace accommodating all interested parties had become necessary.

The settlements at Muenster and Osnabrueck, later known as the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, cemented the *cuius regio, eius religio* principle as the dominant mode for harmonizing religious confessionality with political rule in Germany. The two key differences with Augsburg were, first, that Calvinists were finally included in the power structure. Ferdinand's attempt in the 1620s to forever exclude Calvinists was decisively refuted.⁴⁸

Secondly, unlike Augsburg, the Peace of Westphalia was considered by all parties to be a permanent, lasting settlement. The reasons for this are many, but probably mainly revolve around the fact that the extended conflict had taught all sides that large-scale attempts to impose one sect on all German-speaking lands could not realistically withstand the inevitable resistance they would encounter, both from native populations and from surrounding European powers which had a stake in preventing the physical spread of conflict from Germany to within their borders, and in preventing copycat wars of ideology from rending the stability of their own nations.

Westphalia also set definite limitations on the extent of the Emperor's power. By creating a system in which each territorial prince had a nearly absolute right to conduct its own relations with other powers, it ensured that the interference in critical matters of succession and control, which

Ferdinand attempted to effect with respect to the Palatinate and Mecklenburg, could not occur going forward.⁴⁹

Yet, a logical consequence of limits on the Emperor's ability to project power was a renewed focus on consolidated power over the Habsburg hereditary lands. This same principle applied with other princes and dukes throughout Germany. With external threats removed, or at least greatly reduced, they could concentrate on pursuing ideological goals within their own territories. Repression and coercion on the basis of religion or other characteristics, therefore, were not stamped out, but simply approved within particularized bounds.

The TYW-MEC Analogy

Political Divisions within a Single Homeland

Having provided a basic narrative of the TYW, the paper will now proceed to a discussion of the similarities and differences between the actors, events and dynamics of the TYW and those of the MEC. 17th Century Germany, like today's Muslim Middle East, could be seen as many lands in one. Certain basic cultural and historic characteristics are held in common between both peoples, leading to a sense of shared identity, yet both are beset by yawning divisions over political control.

The Germans, although united under the auspices of the Holy Roman Empire, maintained the loosest of allegiances to the imperial confederation, and more or less pursued competing agendas. Indeed, perhaps the dominant characteristic of Germany from medieval times until the late 19th Century was the militant insistence by the individual territorial rulers that they be allowed to maintain their power and respective spheres of influence. This was the case even though the Germanic tribes shared similarities in their linguistic and cultural traditions, which only took partly from the Roman tradition because most German lands had remained free from conquest. The unity that resulted from the imperial reign of Charlemagne gave them a sense of brotherhood, fused further by the animating force of Christianity. These shared characteristics helped Germans feel brotherhood toward one another despite the devolved power structures of medieval feudalism.

Yet, Germans faced a challenge when the Protestant Reformation arose. Since imperial cohesion remained weak, divisions in sectarian loyalty posed a threat to German notions of cultural unity. Augsburg in 1555 was intended to keep the decentralizing force of the Reformation from spinning out of control—by allowing Catholics and Lutherans independent spheres of existence while maintaining a commitment to the imperial umbrella, Germans hoped they had found a way to resolve this dilemma. The continued conflict over the meaning of Augsburg, and the emergence of pivotal actors such as the Calvinists who were excluded from the peace, assured that major war was inevitable if the important parties could not agree on revisiting Augsburg, but instead either insisted on strict adherence to it, or on revising it through imposition.

In the Muslim Middle East, Islam has been the primary unifying force for centuries. Because there existed a period of time in the late 7th and early 8th centuries in which the Middle Eastern heartland was unified both religiously and politically, the most compelling historical and cultural narrative in the region is that of the Golden Age of Islam, when rightly-guided caliphs oversaw the continual expansion of Islamic lands until Islamic rule, along with its innovative and inclusive culture, spread from Spain to India. This narrative, while true in many respects, ignores the fact that the Arabization and Islamization of the Middle East did not change the fundamentally decentralized and tribal nature of rule in the region. In many ways similar to the Germans who maintained their tribes while unified by an imperial and a religious bond, the Muslims in North Africa, the Arab heartland, the Levant, Mesopotamia and parts of Iran had compartmentalized loyalties that were configured to conflict in the event one challenged the others.

In intervening years following the Muslim Empire, other powers, mostly Muslims themselves, began carving out areas of rule and influence within the region. Most notable among these powers were the Ottoman Turks, who ruled most of the historic Middle East for over 400 years. As Ottoman influence waned, European powers came in as colonizers or resource exploiters. Interestingly, Middle Easterners weathered these changes without too much tumult because of their continued reliance on rule at the local level. The Europeans were sufficiently clever to utilize native proxies, as had the Romans and the Ottomans, and to allow the unfettered practice of Islam.

Ironically, it was in the process of decolonization that the seeds of conflict were sown. Following World War I, Middle Eastern expectations of self-rule were raised, with proclamations such as Wilson's 14 Points trumpeting self-determination for all peoples. Yet, Wilson himself allowed his allies in victory, Britain and France, to carve out spheres of quasi-colonial influence in the Middle East. These borders, which were drawn to facilitate colonial administration by creating large territorial units that transcended tribal ties and dividing many culturally similar peoples, so as to minimize the threat of organized rebellion to Britain and France, were defined by the Sykes-Picot Treaty.

As history marches on, Sykes-Picot begins to look more like Augsburg. In both cases, arbitrary conclusions were reached based on the power of the various interest groups involved. Also, several interested parties agreed or acquiesced to the deal because they secretly nurtured plans to maximize their own position within or outside of the deal's parameters as soon as the opportunity presented itself. Many Middle Easterners believed, rightly as it turns out, that European control would fade away in a matter of years, and that they would be the ones to finally determine the post-colonial boundaries of their region.

The problem was that Sykes-Picot created an entrenched self-interested Middle Eastern elite that would not easily give up the reins of power. So, as with the post-Augsburg years, conflict came in fits and starts in individual countries over succession issues. As with Cleves-Juelich in Germany, many succession conflicts were anticipated for several years, and depended greatly on the personal strength and legitimacy of dynastic rulers in holding their realms together. Shortly after the departures of Faisal of Iraq and Reza Shah of Iran from their respective scenes, their countries' monarchies were overthrown or seriously endangered. Similar occurrences took place in Egypt and Syria. Many spoke of pan-Arabism, yet squabbled over the right to lead such a multi-national coalition. Even though many of the countries shed the formal trappings of monarchy, the authoritarian nature of the state persisted, and the leaders found it difficult, if not impossible, to transcend Sykes-Picot and find some sort of solution for bringing about a measure of unity among the political units governing the region. A large portion of the people coped with the changes by retaining their old tribal and religious loyalties. As a result, opportunists with a keen understanding of these loyalties had the chance to use them to mount a threat to the Sykes-Picot paradigm.

Those who acquired power in the 20th Century Middle East were either Sunni elites or those who appealed to Sunni elites for their legitimacy (such as the Alawites in Syria). The lone exception was Shia Iran, which was ruled by the largely secular Mohammed Reza Shah. These elites, naturally, sought to grow the power of the state at the expense of the decentralizing forces of tribalism and religion. Though these leaders professed their Islamic credentials, many ardent Muslims felt as though religious purity was being compromised by the consolidation of power. Theorists on both the Sunni and Shia sides began coming up with a new idea of Islamic rule that both challenged the status quo of the secular ruling elite and provided a blueprint for uniting the old Islamic lands under one flag. The appeal of breaking out of the Sykes-Picot cycle and at the same time resurrecting the Golden Age of Islam had irresistible appeal to many Muslims.

Those who were motivated to act on this ideology were those who felt most marginalized under the current system. Since Shia minorities were largely shut out of the ruling structure in countries such as Iraq, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, and Shias in Iran felt unrepresented by the Shah, Shias were understandably more willing to challenge the Sykes-Picot system than most. There is more than coincidence to the fact that Frederick of the Palatinate, a Calvinist whose place in the German ruling elite was never formally recognized under Augsburg, was the main catalyst of the fight against the entrenched imperial and Catholic order; and that the main catalysts behind the beginning of the MEC were those who were excluded from the existing power structure.

The Ayatollah Khomeini took Iran by storm in 1978-79. His theory of governance depended quite simply on Shia theocratic guidance to deliver the society from corruptions both external and internal. The Ayatollah's influence carried a great deal beyond its effect on the Iranian power structure. Indeed, a proper historical retelling of the MEC begins with the Iranian Revolution because it, like the Bohemian/Palatinate rebellion of 1618, was the spark for everything that followed it, even if the inspiration of Iran's example cannot be said to have an exclusive or even a direct connection to these events. The assassination of Anwar Sadat a few years later, the rise of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Islamist threat in Algeria in the 1990s, even the rise of fundamentalist Sunni groups with political agendas such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and al Qaeda, which leads to the present struggle—all these became possible because of what occurred in Iran.

Although each sect has its own brand of Islamist political thought, Khomeinism was the first practical realization of Islamism. Even though Sunni and Shia Islamists are pitted against one another in the MEC, the Sunnis are indebted to the Shias for their very existence and, paradoxically, receive inspiration from their example. Fundamentally, Sunni Islamists believe that the ruling Sunni elite are heretics and thus do not represent them or their faith properly. When making a parallel to Augsburg, then, Sunni Islamists could also identify with the excluded Calvinists because they feel as though their faith is improperly represented in the power structure by imposters. Although tribalism *per se* is not a significant force in the MEC, Islamist movements appeal to tribal loyalties and project them on to the conflict at large—identifying the Muslim *ummah* as a single tribe engaged in spiritual and physical struggle (*jihad*) against those who would thwart them—in order to win adherents and encourage zeal among them.

The Sectarian Component

The sectarian nature of the conflict in the MEC has some eerily similar aspects to those of the TYW. The TYW featured the champions of the more traditional, orthodox sect of Christianity, personified by the tripartite alliance of the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, and the Catholic League of German princes. Following Augsburg, these powers aided the papacy in countering the upstart Protestants in a very methodical way. The keystone to their efforts lay in their devotion to forwarding a message that could reliably win over the vast majority of inhabitants of the core Catholic areas in Germany.

Similarly, one of the significant features of the MEC has been the fight over the right to define Islam. As Iranian-American scholar Vali Nasr points out, another consequence of the Iranian Revolution was a strikingly strong reaction to counter its effects, and thus the appeal of Shi'ism throughout the region, by Sunni powers. Most people focused on the military countermoves, most notably Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran in 1981 which started the eight-year Iran-Iraq War. Yet, perhaps even more noteworthy was the profuse sponsorship of fundamentalist Sunni learning centers in countries potentially threatened by a Shia upsurge.

Undoubtedly, the ringleader in this Sunni “counter-reformation” was the oil-rich Saudi kingdom, which poured millions of dollars into madrassahs at home and abroad. Significantly, the Saudis provided both financial and inspirational assistance to the Deobandi Islamic schools of Pakistan, which gave rise to the Taliban movement that ruled Afghanistan for several years.⁵⁰ Afghanistan not only represented an opportunity for Muslims to eject the “godless communists” of the Soviet Union, but simultaneously to bring about the conditions for Sunni fundamentalist rule that could contain Iran on its eastern border. Little wonder that al Qaeda and the Taliban were and remain so closely linked in their outposts and hideaways in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or that Iran was willing to provide assistance to the 2001-2002 US-led effort to remove the Taliban from power.

The Shias are much more established in the Middle East than were the Protestants of the 16th and 17th Century, having been around for hundreds of years. So the Salafists and Deobandis, unlike the Jesuits with the Protestants, do not expect to completely roll back Shi’ism, only to keep it on the margins and away from power. They have therefore structured their societal rules and educational systems to promote their brand of Sunnism as the true Islam, dismissing all others as pretenders. Unfortunately for the Sunnis, they do not have a single source of authority akin to the Catholic Church for orthodox Christianity, so sometimes the defenders of orthodoxy fall into infighting.

Examples of the anti-Shia movement have been very visible in recent years and today, particularly as the dynamics of the MEC have strengthened Iran’s position within the region. Of course, the single-most significant event for Shias was the deposition of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, which empowered the majority Shias to lead the Iraqi government for the first time in its history, after years of marginalization and repression. The second-most significant event has been the reemergence of Hezbollah in Lebanon and its claims to represent the Shias of Lebanon, who are now the most populous identity group in the country. A less prominent but nevertheless significant factor is the large Shia population in eastern Saudi Arabia, where the richest oil fields are located. The Saudi government knows that a Shia rebellion has the potential to destabilize its main source of revenue. The Asad family, which rules Syria, is from a Shia sect known as the Alawites. Although the Asads are allied with Iran, their ability to govern depends to a large extent on their legitimacy with the overwhelmingly Sunni majority of Syria.

Thus, one hears renewed discussion of an emerging “Shia crescent” from the established Sunni leaders in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the small Persian Gulf states.⁵¹ Their rejection of the post-Saddam situation in Iraq stems largely from the dominance wielded by Shias over its current government. The subtext to their complaints is the concern that they will have to accommodate Shia modes of religious and political thought into the future of the Middle East, and possibly the future of their own countries as well. This concern, along with the related concern that any departure from orthodoxy threatens the very system that has previously allowed Middle East leaders to demand loyalty from their citizens, explains their willingness to tolerate and even in some instances support Sunni Islamists who fight Shias, even though the Sunni Islamists also represent a threat to the elites’ position. The elites desire, at minimum, the result the Habsburgs achieved in Austria and its other hereditary dominions—complete consolidation of control in their main spheres of power.

Nasr points out that this same Shia crescent argument was used during the 1980s by Sunni-dominated countries to obtain US and Western assistance to counter Iran.⁵² He questions the wisdom of the US in pursuing a similar strategy today. The TYW teaches that Nasr may have a point in that the forces of orthodoxy are in denial and have little chance at keeping the “upstart” Shias (who constitute 40% of the population of the Muslim Middle East, and almost double that percentage of the population of the oil-rich Persian Gulf nations) out of the power structure on a long-term basis. US and Western decisionmakers, in addition to more realistically appraising the

likelihood of success of countering a rise in Shia influence, would also be well-advised to consider whether suppressing Shia involvement in the Middle East is either in their own interests or defensible on grounds of morality and justice (both for these grounds' own sake and in the sense that these concerns animate world public opinion on the issue). Nasr's main point, of which it is hard to lose sight because of its significance, is that the US backing of anti-Shia forces aided the rise of the Sunni extremism that brought about the impetus for the post-9/11 War on Terror, and that Westerners should not expect a different result from providing the same type of assistance to these anti-Shia forces at this point in history.

The Dynamics of Conflict and Anti-Hegemonic Equilibrium

Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned for students of the MEC from the TYW is the importance of observing the dynamics of conflict and how parties to a conflict react in given situations, because there are key similarities in the nature of the actors and the dynamics of the two conflicts. The TYW presents a situation where an initial rebellion against the forces of orthodoxy was checked. These forces, which included the world superpower, then sought to extend ideological control over a politically divided region by the projection of power, and redefine the orthodox order on its own terms, appearing to gain the upper hand for a brief moment. However, several forces then combined to thwart the champions of orthodoxy, showing their vulnerability. Realizing that they had overreached, the orthodox forces sought an avenue to end the conflict without having to cede its initial gains. At that point, though, too many actors had a vested interest in the outcome to allow early withdrawal. The only solution had to accommodate all the material actors in the region—the forces of orthodoxy lost their ability to selectively exclude major players from a solution because of ideological undesirability. These orthodox actors took comfort in a renewed emphasis on the firm control over their core domains.

Many of these dynamics transfer almost exactly to the MEC. The orthodoxy of the MEC is the Sykes-Picot order of Western-backed Sunni elitism. When challenged by the Iranian Revolution and its aftershocks, Sunni elitism and its Western backers began an ideological and military struggle against upstart Islamists. Using proxies of convenience (corrupt dictators such as Saddam Hussein, and opposing Islamists) to counter Islamist threats, the orthodox forces appeared safe, even after the Gulf War, an incident in which one of the orthodox proxies broke away from his handlers. Yet, the marginalized Islamists managed to strike the West in such a way (9/11) that it provoked a reaction which increased direct Western involvement in the region, thus reigniting the same conflicts of loyalty against which the forces of orthodoxy had originally mobilized.

The Sunni elites' dependence on Western forces was inherently problematic because it drained them of legitimacy and allowed non-state actors to emerge and attract the loyalties of a public yearning for a tribalist Islam of the golden age. Thus, even as the forces of orthodoxy appeared close to remaking the region's political map, their come-uppance was close at hand. Iraq was to the Sunni elite/Western cause in the MEC as the occupation of northern Germany and the Edict of Restitution was to the imperial/Spanish/Catholic cause in the TYW. It was an outrage of sufficient magnitude to people within and outside of the region to lead them to conclude that the forces of orthodoxy were overreaching. In the MEC, it was perhaps a bit more complicated, because the Sunni elite only reluctantly suffered the US-led invasion, hoping it would end the 9/11 payback and re-enthroned stability, while the US and its Western allies hoped a new stability would arise based on an acceptance of fully secularized rule. Thus, in some ways, modern secular democracy can be seen as an article of faith—its own sect—in the conflict.

Still, the basic dynamic of the MEC remains on the TYW track—forces of orthodoxy (including the world superpower) working together to counter threats from previously marginalized voices (both Shia and Sunni Islamists). The tricky part about the MEC is that the mechanisms by

which Islamism is suppressed or encouraged among the populace are incredibly complex and difficult to isolate, given the modernities of information warfare and the power that resides in informal groups who have access to weapons caches and logistical technology. Yet, the orthodox powers still believe that conventional means of attacking these forces (invasions not so conceptually different from TYW conflicts) are the primary ways to counter them.

The problems with remaining stuck in this mentality are clear enough. The insurgency in Iraq, backed by al Qaeda, Iran and even Sunni elites who want to play both sides in order to curry favor with the Islamists in the event they gain power, is aided by huge worldwide public opposition to the US-led presence. Although the resistance may not be as outwardly formidable as was the combined Swedish-French action against the Catholics in the TYW, the principle is the same. Sunni elite hegemony in the region, and US world hegemony, is being challenged because of the perception that both groups of orthodox actors have overreached. The rap on the Sunni elite is that it continues to ally itself with the US, while at the same time resisting the participation of Shias in the larger Middle East system of regional governance (ironically, doing so by opposing Shia power in Iraq actually thwarts US objectives in stabilizing the country).

The dynamics of the TYW portend a difficult and prolonged extrication process for the US from Iraq and repeated failures for the West and Sunni elites in holding back the participation of supposed rogue states (such as Iran and Syria) and terrorist groups (such as Hamas, Hezbollah and al Qaeda), until a role commensurate with these actors' natural prominence in the region is offered. The big question is whether one or more powers, such as China, Russia, or even the European Union, will emerge to counter the US (militarily, economically or politically) either in the Middle East or another region, drawing off its resources and forcing it to de-escalate. Signs of this are already occurring on the global trade and financial front, and changes in global credibility and prestige are following.⁵³

The most probable scenario is the emergence of two concert-of-powers systems (one involving the big international powers, the other involving the regional powers) that work to guarantee the stability of the system. For global legitimacy reasons, this idea sounds appealing to those who have soured on US paternalism, but from a structural standpoint, the involvement of more actors almost certainly will increase the difficulty in avoiding a conflict down the road because of the complications that ensue from having more major actors involved. As an example, Westphalia can be seen as having rigidified the European balance-of-power system in such a way that inevitably led to the Napoleonic wars and the two World Wars.

The other possibility is the emergence of China as a dominant power, either by itself or in a bipolar system with the US. Unipolar China could provide stability because of a clear willingness to subordinate ideological concerns to material cooperation with the Middle East—something with which the West struggled. Yet, a Chinese obliviousness to questions of justice could lead to even greater troubles in a Middle Eastern region steeped in authoritarian and repressive tradition. A Cold War-like system with the US and China vying for supremacy is likely to lead to greater exploitation of the parties involved, much as the Cold War's lack of focus on regional theaters in many ways facilitated the rise in the level of danger the Middle East poses to itself and to the rest of the world.

Another question is whether the West and Sunni elites will recognize the trajectory of the conflict now, and seek to secure their own Peace of Prague, thereby reducing the number and scope of the adversaries (winning the neutrality of key swing actors in the Shia or Sunni Islamist sphere, such as Syria, Hezbollah and the Palestinians—much as the Electors of Brandenburg and Saxony were key actors in the Protestant sphere) they face, preparing themselves for the ultimate accommodation of the forces of Islamism that Westphalia teaches is probably around the corner. If they fail to do this, it is very possible that Islamist forces backed by al Qaeda and Iran could themselves win major victories, swinging the conflict pendulum the other way and compelling the

forces of orthodoxy into a greatly marginalized position that requires either abject surrender or highly destructive attritional fighting.

A willingness for the US and its Western allies to embrace diplomacy to greatly reduce the tensions of the conflict could spell the difference between a difficult situation with lingering difficulties between Islam and the West, which seems unavoidable, and the long-feared clash of civilizations. This clash remains avoidable if the US empowers and encourages Middle Eastern actors to solve Iraq with only limited outside involvement, and begins realizing that allowing the participation of undesirables is necessary, but does not require agreement with their agendas. Renowned Harvard international relations scholar Joseph Nye has written that “the struggle against extreme Islamist terrorism is not a ‘clash of civilizations’ but a civil war within Islam...[Thus an] important [factor] will be whether western policies towards the Middle East satisfy mainstream Muslims or reinforce the radicals’ narrative of a war against Islam.”⁵⁴ Princeton scholar and current US National Security Council member Michael Scott Doran similarly cautioned, in a seminal article published just after 9/11, that “Washington is not a primary actor [in the war], because it is an outsider in cultural affairs and has only a limited ability to define for believers the role of Islam in public life.”⁵⁵

Olivier Roy, a prominent French scholar and author on militant Islam, recently wrote in strikingly broad terms over what is at stake in Middle Eastern diplomatic efforts, and did not mince words in advocating the need for the West to peel away at least some of the “swing” actors from cooperation with its core adversaries:

If the west wishes to counter the synergy between Arab nationalism, Sunni militancy and the Shia crescent, which will link battlefields from Afghanistan to Lebanon, it must draw Islamist movements such as Hamas and Hizbollah further into the mainstream. This means encouraging a proper settlement in Lebanon involving all Lebanese actors without interference from Syria or Iran; supporting democratization of Syria and negotiating with Hamas.⁵⁶

This is a warning note clearly telling the West that although the conflict may have started out as a civil war for the right to define Islam within the Muslim Middle East, it has already started to and could easily continue to morph into the long-dreaded “clash of civilizations” if current trends are not reversed.

Roy’s advice for modern Western nations echoes historian Myron Gutmann’s analysis of the TYW. Gutmann lamented the fact that one or more actors did not act forcefully enough to resolve the tensions that led to the outbreak of conflict. For him, resolving the dilemma without conflict depended on “demonstrating the existence of new patterns of power.”⁵⁷ Yet, Gutmann’s analysis is too unrealistic, relying on the vantage point of hindsight to craft an artificially tidy solution to a problem that needed to explode into conflict in order for the parties to recognize the seriousness of the situation. Perhaps Gutmann’s criticism would have been better aimed at the failure of the parties in the 1620s to prevent the rapid and widespread escalation of the war after the initial Bohemia and Palatinate campaigns. In that respect, it would have been more analogous to the situation that Roy observes in the MEC—the US and other Western powers have seen enough of conflict to get an inkling (if not a very keen understanding) of the new patterns of power making themselves known, and in many respects knowingly opt for a dangerous game when refusing recognition and a proverbial seat at the table to the actors who are deemed objectionable because their continued existence and their objectives frustrate the agenda of the status quo powers.

The hardest thing for nations accustomed to exercising power and controlling the international system is to tolerate changes to the power structure, even when in the long run, such changes will actually help those nations retain more power than if they fight against the changes.

Part of it is due to the difficulty established powers have in discerning between their real and imagined powers (which can lead to an overestimation of their ability to affect the system), part of it is due to these powers' conflating their power and well-being with the well-being of the system (which often leads them to interpret any animosity manifested toward them as a threat to civilization—and in some cases, such animosity may truly be such a threat), and part of it is due to the conception of power as relative and zero-sum (if someone gains, I lose—leading established powers to treat any change to a system favorable to them as suspect at best, catastrophic at worst).

As the TYW demonstrated with the Catholic forces of orthodoxy, and as is on display in the MEC, usually the established powers need to go through the mill of conflict before learning that accommodations must be made. The question is then when, and to what extent, are these accommodations made? The answer can have major implications for the well-being of the entire world, as it not only pertains to the continuance or cessation of fighting (and the wretched consequences that follow from fighting), but also to the system that will emerge once the fighting has ceased.

Conclusion: Where Do We Go from Here?

One of the chief lessons the TYW has for the MEC is the need for the current system of powers and elites to expand and include other consequential actors. The TYW resolved this problem by making slight modifications to the Augsburg system at Westphalia—increasing the power of the territorial German rulers relative to the Emperor, and recognizing the legitimacy of Calvinism.

The question for the MEC is how will similar accommodations be made? At what point should the actors involved draw the line and say that certain actors should have a formal role in the system, and others should not? The answer is crucial, because a solution that excludes a significant power base will not last long. At the same time, a settlement that is too inclusive will lack the structure that is necessary for self-sufficient zones of peace and prosperity to emerge from the MEC as they did in Europe four centuries ago. Perhaps the biggest problem faced today is the fluidity of identity and absence of true accountability in the Middle East, best personified by non- or quasi-state actors that have elements of statehood, but lack one or more critical components. Can the international system's norms prevail upon the Muslim Middle East so that they by and large discontinue transient, tribal squabbling in the interest of establishing societies where conflict and injustice may remain, but an ethic of coexistence transcends everything else?

The biggest challenge to the Sykes-Picot order is occurring in Iraq. Answers to the questions of where the sectarian lines will settle, and whether the country will remain united, or will fracture into three (if not more) states, will likely be a harbinger of what is to come elsewhere in the Middle East. The TYW teaches that there is a strong predilection in human society to consolidate in some form, and Washington scholar Edward Luttwak may have a point with the following assertion: “The sooner the Kurds, Sunni, Shiites, Turkmen and smaller minorities can define their own natural and stable boundaries within which they feel safe, the sooner the violence will come to an end.”⁵⁸

Oxford scholar Hussein Agha gives an even better description of the main dynamic at play now in Iraq:

Inside Iraq, this is a period of consolidation for most political groups. They are building up their political and military capabilities, cultivating and forging alliances, clarifying political objectives and preparing for impending challenges....No group has the confidence or capacity decisively to confront rivals within its own community or across communal lines. Equally, no party is genuinely interested in a

serious process of national reconciliation when they feel they can improve their position later on.⁵⁹

It thus falls to the status quo powers to figure out what will motivate the parties to engage in a process of national reconciliation without keeping an option open to renege on it. Most likely, such motivation can only come from concerted diplomacy that offers major international and/or regional guarantees of the safety of the various sects. Of course, the complication with such an arrangement is its built-in potential to lead to a region-wide war along sectarian lines. So, if Iran cannot come together with Saudi Arabia and Jordan and the West to guarantee some sort of peace, the Iraqi sects will fight it out and come to an eventual resolution on their own (and, even then, with international proxy participation, there is no guarantee that the war will not spread across the region). It does not bode well for the Middle East that no true precedent exists in which its nations have come together to guarantee the peace of one of their neighbors. That is why for such an arrangement to work this time, there must be substantial international involvement (US, Europe, China, Russia, at least).

Although Iraq may be the most extreme example of sectarianism, others in the region are quite concerned over the implications of its example. Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, told Seymour Hersh in an interview that he is convinced the US wants Lebanon and Syria to be shattered into multiple confessional states (Druze, Christian, Sunni, Alawite), possibly in order to prevent Shias from rising to power.⁶⁰ Although this is almost certainly not the case, Nasrallah is probably correct in believing that the status quo powers would be willing to alter Sykes-Picot boundaries to prevent an actor objectionable to them from taking power in a divided society such as Lebanon.

Most Middle Eastern nations will probably eventually see a governance model that maintains the Sykes-Picot status quo, with perhaps an adjustment for Iraq, depending on how its civil war plays out. The mainly Sunni-led nations will further consolidate their power and the loyalty of their citizens in their core areas. Provincial areas such as the Shia districts of Saudi Arabia will function to a greater or lesser extent as independent societies, largely organized along tribal lines (but that does not preclude a more modern amalgamation of tribal-style rule). Lebanon could go the way of Iraq, or it could decide on a large umbrella government with a confederation of sub-states or *de facto* states.

The two biggest question marks that will likely determine the outcome of the MEC are (1) the role played by the “moderate” or “fence-sitting” Muslim masses and (2) the unique nature of the relationship between Islam and politics. Many, such as Nye, believe that the MEC will be settled once the people finally decide to throw in their lot with one side over the other. Undoubtedly, although no Middle Eastern country could be characterized as a democracy, public opinion (as seen in Lebanon in 2005) can be an incredibly powerful force and rule the day. Yet, based on a strong custom in the region to obey the constituted authority, regardless of its origins, there is good reason to believe that, like the TYW, this war will continue to be contested between a vanguard of elites and sectarian and/or tribal leaders, and whoever emerges successfully will in large part carry the people's loyalty, or, at least, their grudging subservience—mainly because the people will choose not to exercise their power from the bottom up to affect the outcome.

Islam and politics is a trickier matter. On the surface, this relationship represents a major difference with the TYW—legitimacy in an Islamic context translates into how well the religious principles can be translated into the laws and mechanisms of political governance, while in Christian Europe a ruler's faith was less punctiliously applied to how he ruled his territory (in fact, through his own style he could often define the mode of religious worship for his subjects). The consequence of this difference is that Islam may be less amenable to being submerged below the structures and functions of Middle Eastern states. Many Westerners carp about the need for an Islamic

Reformation, and probably would expect an article comparing the TYW and the MEC to feature this as its main point. Yet, Islam has never had centralization akin to that of Catholic Christianity (or at least since the time of the rightly-guided caliphs about 1300 years ago), and thus a massive reorienting of its orthodox tendencies is actually more problematic as a consequence.

What seems more likely is a pragmatic submerging of the insistence on Islamic purity in government, even by Islamists in power. All Islamist groups who have taken power, be it in Iran, Turkey or the Palestinian Territories, have ultimately proven to be creatures of the political system. The positive consequence of this fact is that the practical outcome in the Muslim Middle East could in fact approach or equal what many Westerners have in mind when they talk of a Reformation. These Westerners are less concerned with religion than with the notion that religion plays less of a factor in government. While Islamic and Islamist rhetoric will likely never go away from Middle East politics, once the MEC is settled, the lure of stability and prosperity could lead to the submerging of Islam within a more materialistic culture. Signs have already been seen in over just a few generations that Middle East elites have quickly become more worldly and sophisticated in adjustment to their oil wealth and strategic importance.

The danger in all this is the same danger that beset Europe after Westphalia. It tried to convince itself that it had reached a stage of enlightenment, in which religious differences were subsumed by a rational pursuit of self-interest. Therefore, Europeans' continued prosperity was supposedly secure, and no one would dare risk the destruction of the system by bringing on conflict. The problem was that its Christianity was not eradicated, but simply projected onto different superficial modes—nationalism, Marxism, fascism. By convincing themselves that their ideological faith was somehow more rational than religious faith, the Europeans forgot their own essence, and the resulting misperceptions played a key factor in leading to the European conflicts witnessed and experienced up through the Cold War.

If a similar displacement of religious faith occurs in Islam, then conflict will likely come either within the region or between the region and the rest of the world. However, as the example of the TYW and Europe shows, if a settlement such as Westphalia allows general peace and prosperity to intervene for a few hundred years between eruptions of conflict, the overall benefits from a cultural, economic and political renaissance may outweigh the dangers of eventual war, particularly if Muslims and the West can suspend their suspicions of one another, and concentrate on making the next century one in which major actors in the international system need not discard or submerge their ideologies in order to be accommodating. Henry Kissinger, in hearkening back to the TYW, makes this comparable point in summation:

Three centuries ago, the nations of Europe tore themselves apart in a religious war until they organized an international conference to set rules of international order. Europe was left prostrate and drained. The world has a comparable challenge today. Will it seize it while it still has a margin of decision through diplomacy, or must it wait until exhaustion and despair leave no alternative?^{61 62}

Endnotes

- ¹ Sullivan, Andrew. "The Thirty Years' War Brewing in the Middle East." *The Times (London)*. December 17, 2006; Brooks, David. "After the Fall." *The New York Times*. December 10, 2006.
- ² Fix, Andrew C. "The Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Rise of Nations" (Lecture on CD). Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2005.
- ³ Roskin, Michael G. and James J. Coyle. *Politics of the Middle East: Cultures and Conflicts*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.
- ⁴ Blaney, David L. and Naeem Inayatullah. "The Westphalian Deferral." *International Studies Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Continuity and Change in the Westphalian Order. Summer 2000, 39.
- ⁵ On this subject, Ray Takeyh, an Iran expert from the Council on Foreign Relations, recently wrote: "[T]he Islamic Republic is not Nazi Germany. It is an opportunistic power seeking to assert predominance in its immediate neighborhood without recourse to war." "Time for Détente with Iran." *Foreign Affairs*. March/April 2007, 21. Similar arguments can be made about other Islamist forces in the region (including al Qaeda), although their willingness to resort to war is perhaps more debatable.
- ⁶ Rachman, Gideon. "Second World War Nostalgia Led America Astray in Iraq." *Financial Times*. May 15, 2007.
- ⁷ Robberson, Tod. "U.S. in 'Strategic Peril,' Retired General Warns." *Dallas Morning News*. April 12, 2007.
- ⁸ Although I do not make specific cites to the lectures, much of my background knowledge on the Thirty Years War is from the Fix lecture and the following lecture: Sreenivasan, Govind. "Europe and the Wars of Religion (1500-1700)" (Lecture on CD). Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2005.
- ⁹ Parker, Geoffrey. *The Thirty Years' War*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, 18.
- ¹⁰ Ibid 18-19.
- ¹¹ Ibid 19.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid 20.
- ¹⁶ Ibid 6.
- ¹⁷ Ibid 7.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid xx, 21.
- ²⁰ Ibid 23.
- ²¹ Ibid 24.
- ²² Ibid 29-31.
- ²³ Ibid 28, 30.
- ²⁴ Ibid 30.
- ²⁵ Ibid 48-49.
- ²⁶ Ibid 51.
- ²⁷ Ibid 55.
- ²⁸ Ibid 56.
- ²⁹ Ibid 55.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid 57.
- ³² Asch, Ronald G. *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe, 1618-1648*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 58-59.
- ³³ Parker 56-57.
- ³⁴ Ibid 58.
- ³⁵ Ibid 64-65.
- ³⁶ Ibid 67-69.
- ³⁷ Ibid 70-71, 74.
- ³⁸ Ibid 75-76.
- ³⁹ Ibid 79.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Ibid 97-98.
- ⁴² Ibid 112.

⁴³ Ibid 125-130.

⁴⁴ Ibid 130.

⁴⁵ Ibid 131.

⁴⁶ Ibid xxxvi.

⁴⁷ Asch 134.

⁴⁸ Ibid 142-145.

⁴⁹ Ibid 141.

⁵⁰ Hersh, Seymour M. "The Redirection." *The New Yorker*. March 5, 2007.

⁵¹ Shadid, Anthony. "Across Arab World, a Widening Rift." *The Washington Post*. February 12, 2007. Shadid writes: "In recent years, some of the most provocative comments have come from America's allies in the region: Egypt's president questioned Shiites' loyalty to their countries, Jordan's king warned of a coming Shiite crescent from Iran to Lebanon, and last month King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia denounced what he called Shiite proselytizing."

⁵² Hersh.

⁵³ Mann, James. "A Shining Model of Wealth Without Liberty." *The Washington Post*. May 20, 2007. Mann writes: "The Iraq war isn't over, but one thing's already clear: China won."

⁵⁴ Nye, Joseph. "The Long View on China, Political Islam and American Power." *Financial Times*. February 16, 2007.

⁵⁵ Doran, Michael Scott, "Somebody Else's Civil War." *Foreign Affairs*. January/February 2002.

⁵⁶ Roy, Olivier. "Hizbollah Has Redrawn the Middle East." *Financial Times*. August 17, 2006.

⁵⁷ Gutmann, Myron P. "The Origins of the Thirty Years' War." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars. Spring 1988, 750-751.

⁵⁸ Luttwak, Edward N. "Will Civil War Bring Lasting Peace to Iraq?" *Los Angeles Times*. June 2, 2006.

⁵⁹ Agha, Hussein. "The Last Thing the Middle East's Main Players Want Is US Troops to Leave Iraq." *The Guardian*. April 25, 2007.

⁶⁰ Hersh.

⁶¹ Kissinger, Henry A. "What an International Conference Can Do." *The Washington Post*. March 1, 2007.

⁶² I wanted to end with Dr. Kissinger's quote, but felt obliged to bring up some recommendations for additional research related to my paper. My detailed comparison of the two conflicts is pretty novel, and this novelty could lead to a richness of follow-up work on the subject. Most intriguing, since my work was basically a big-picture analysis of how the MEC relates to the TYW, would be up-close analyses of various sub-conflicts within the MEC (which runs from the Iranian Revolution up to now) that examine whether the analogy holds up when one drills down to a more detailed level. Another key aspect that I did not explore is the impact of Israel on the MEC, and whether it is a differentiating factor from the TYW, or perhaps a similarity (given the fact that the Ottomans sometimes provided the common enemy against which the European Christians united). Some other factors to consider: the potentially differentiating effects between the TYW and the MEC of modern phenomena such as secularizing globalization and mass culture, the destructiveness of weaponry (which was mentioned briefly early in the paper), massive urbanized populations, the impact of public opinion and democratic/republican polities (discussed a little bit in the concluding section). One final thing to consider (so obvious that it almost escapes recognition): the relative merit between the ideas of the Reformers and Counter-Reformers and those of Islamists and their more moderate Islamic contemporaries. Is it possible that this entire analogy gets exploded if you conclude that the ideas of one group had greater (or worse merit) than the others (thus leading to a unique political reaction based on the uniqueness of the ideas). For example, someone who thinks Luther and Lutheran princes more correctly captured the spirit of religion and truth than Khomeini and other Islamists, based on comparison with religious thinkers from history, may conclude that the MEC is less likely to end on a positive note because the ideas animating the "new patterns of power" (Guttman's phrase) and the new actors clawing for a place at the negotiating table are less edifying and productive for society. The reverse conclusion, of course, is also possible.