

## **The English-Language Military Historiography of Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War, 1900-Present**

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With his ascension to the throne in 1611, following the death of his father Charles IX, Gustavus Adolphus began one of the greatest reigns of any Swedish sovereign. The military exploits of Gustavus helped to ensure the establishment of a Swedish empire and Swedish prominence as a great European power. During his reign of twenty-one years Gustavus instituted significant reforms of the Swedish military. He defeated, in separate wars, Denmark, Poland, and Russia, gaining from the latter two the provinces of Ingria and Livonia. He embarked upon his greatest campaign through Germany, from 1630 to his death at the Battle of Lützen in 1632, during the Thirty Years' War. Though Gustavus' achievements against Denmark, Russia, and Poland did much in establishing a Swedish Baltic empire, it was his exploits during the Thirty Years' War that has drawn the most attention among historians. It was in the Thirty Years' War that Sweden came to be directly involved in the dealings of the rest of Europe, breaking from its usual preference for staying in the periphery. It was through this involved action that Sweden gained its place among the great powers of Europe.

There is much to be said by historians on the military endeavors of Gustavus Adolphus and his role in the Thirty Years' War. An overwhelming majority of the studies on Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War have been written in German, Swedish, Danish, Russian, Polish, or numerous other European languages. Surprisingly, English literature on this topic is lacking compared to that of other

languages despite the impact Gustavus Adolphus and the Thirty Years' War had in the political, military, and religious realms during the seventeenth century and onward.<sup>1</sup>

The impact Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War had on the broader contexts of the conflict between Catholics and Protestants, European power politics and the European balance of power, and the new style of warfare introduced by Gustavus made the conflict much more than the regional topic it has been treated as by historians. It is the aforementioned aspects that make the limited number of works by English-language historians so disappointing. This essay is meant to provide a historiographical analysis of the English-language histories, from 1900 to the present, written on Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War. In the historiographical analysis, the problems addressed in the English-language works will be addressed according to the importance of the discussions within the literature examined.<sup>2</sup> The historical schools of the historians and how their approaches have affected their assumptions will be discussed last.

### **The “Military Revolution” Debate<sup>3</sup>**

The most important historiographical debate pertaining to Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War is, in fact, one that is not even discussed until 1955—the “military revolution” debate. Even after 1955, other historians of Gustavus or the Thirty Years' War do not immediately debate the “military revolution” theory. Though the debate finds its roots in the discussion of the military reforms implemented by Gustavus, over the past several decades it has expanded to involve discussion on numerous countries, time periods, methods of war, technologies, and many other aspects. This section is by no means intended to be a historiographical discussion of the entire debate. Such a discussion would be an entirely separate work in itself. Instead, this section will focus on providing a synopsis of a

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<sup>1</sup> Trevor Nevitt Dupuy blames this on “Anglo-Saxon insularity.” See Trevor Nevitt Dupuy, foreword to *The Military Life of Gustavus Adolphus: Father of Modern War* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1969), xi.

<sup>2</sup> The importance of the discussions is based on the personal judgment of the author on the basis of the amount of discussion on each topic within the examined literature.

<sup>3</sup> Also referred to as the “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA) debate.

prominent debate within military history, which spawned from the discussion of Gustavus Adolphus and his military reforms.

Michael Roberts first proposed the idea of a “military revolution” in a lecture presented at Queen’s University of Belfast on January 21, 1955 – a revision of which was published in 1967 in Roberts’ *Essays on Swedish History*. The concept proposed by Roberts was that the tactical reforms of Maurice of Orange and Gustavus Adolphus brought about far reaching implications such as the rise of large, disciplined, well-trained, standing national armies, increased authority of the state, and economic and social shifts across Europe, i.e. a “revolution” originating from military reforms, but having far-reaching consequences in areas of state and society beyond the military.<sup>4</sup> In essence, the military reforms, discussed below,<sup>5</sup> are only part of the “military revolution” theory. However, Roberts’ thesis, based upon the reforms, created an entirely new school of thought in the field of military history. Roberts’ argument received wide acceptance among fellow historians and did not receive any form of criticism for nearly twenty years.

The first critique of the “military revolution” theory came in 1976 when Geoffrey Parker’s article, “The “Military Revolution,” 1560-1660 – A Myth?” appeared in the *The Journal of Modern History*. Though Parker accepted Roberts’ theory, he disputed the focus on the reforms of Maurice of Orange and Gustavus Adolphus from 1560-1660 as too narrow, both geographically and chronologically. Parker expanded the time period to 1530-1710 and concentrated on the tactical reforms occurring in Spain during this period. The expanding of the time period was due to the fact that Parker argued the trend of the increasing size of armies preceded both Maurice and Gustavus and was rooted in the adoption of the *trace italienne* fortifications.<sup>6</sup> Also, the fact that Parker specializes in early modern Spain certainly may help to explain why Parker would shift the “military revolution” focus towards Spanish military developments.

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<sup>4</sup> See Michael Roberts, “The Military Revolution, 1560-1660,” in *Essays on Swedish History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> See below, “Gustavus’ Military Reforms.”

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Parker, “The “Military Revolution,” 1560-1660 – A Myth?,” *The Journal of Modern History* 48, no. 2 (Jun. 1976): 195-214.

Since Parker's critique of the "military revolution" theory there have been many notable historians who have thrown their hat into the debate. The sides that have emerged are those historians who accept the "military revolution" theory and those who argue whether the various innovations described as "revolutionary" are fitting of the word. More specifically, critics of the "military revolution" theory confront "military revolution" historians for their loose use of the word "revolution." The critics maintain that the term "revolution" cannot be applied to a process that occurs over several centuries and that, if anything, these processes are evolutionary.<sup>7</sup>

### **Intervention in the Thirty Years' War**

Behind the "military revolution" debate, the most prominent issue in the histories on Gustavus Adolphus is why he chose to intervene in Germany during the Thirty Years' War. The nature of the Thirty Years' War, though largely considered a religious conflict, had much to do with territorial and dynastic power between the belligerents. The different interpretations on this issue can be divided into three prominent camps: those who claim religion as the catalyst, those who argue state defense reasons, and those who have created a hybrid of both arguments.

#### *Religion*

The religious argument for the Swedish entrance to the Thirty Years' War could be considered as having its beginnings in the contemporary propaganda during the war. However, historians largely recognized it as being most prominent beginning with the early histories of the Thirty Years' War and Gustavus Adolphus in the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Despite the aged popularity of this argument, some historians continued to maintain this point into the 1900s. Marjorie Bowen, in her 1928 essay "Gustavus Adolphus: Elected King of Sweden and of the Goths and Vandals," presented an argument that Sweden's

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<sup>7</sup> For a more in-depth treatment of the "Military Revolution" debate, see Clifford J. Rogers, ed., *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest, and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years' War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19-21. Ringmar uses the historiographical work of Swedish historian Sverker Oredsson, which looks at a span of nearly 350 years and 166 different works in Swedish, English, Danish, German, French, Russian, and Latin pertaining to Gustavus Adolphus and the Thirty Years' War. This work would be of immense value to English-language scholars if translated to English.

intervention in the Thirty Years' War was brought about in order to protect Sweden and Protestantism from the growing threat of the Austrian Habsburgs and Catholicism. Bowen contended, in an overly hagiographic fashion, that Gustavus Adolphus was bound, by the exploits of the earlier Vasa kings,<sup>9</sup> to protect Protestantism against the Counter Reformation.<sup>10</sup> In 1954, Carl J. Friedrich claimed that religion was the *only* way in which to understand Gustavus' intervention in Germany. Friedrich remarks, "they [the separate rulers involved in the Thirty Years' War] all must be considered fools unless their religious motivation is understood as the quintessential core of their politics."<sup>11</sup>

### *State Defense*

A direct counter to the religious argument is that of the state defense argument. This thesis was first presented by the Prussian scholar Gustaf Droysen around 1870. Droysen argued, "the conflict between Sweden and Austria concerned the military hegemony over the Baltic and nothing else."<sup>12</sup> Droysen's theory was of great historiographical importance for it broke from the long-held religious argument and opened historians to alternative explanations. Since Droysen's original argument, the state defense argument has become, by far, the most prominent argument presented by historians writing on Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War. In the early twentieth century, historians such as Francis Watson presented arguments following the line of Droysen.<sup>13</sup> S. H. Steinberg carries on the state defense argument in the second half of the 1900's. Steinberg refuted any religious reasons for Sweden's

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<sup>9</sup> The House of Vasa, as the royal house of Sweden, began with Gustavus Adolphus' grandfather, Gustav Vasa, who was elected king in 1523 during Sweden's struggle to become independent from Denmark-Norway (Union of Kalmar). See Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden, 1523-1611* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> Marjorie Bowen, "Gustavus Adolphus: Elected King of Sweden and of the Goths and Vandals," in *Sundry Great Gentlemen: Some Essays in Historical Biography* (1928; repr., Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1968) 171.

<sup>11</sup> Carl Friedrich, "The Religious Motive Reaffirmed," in *The Thirty Years' War: Problems of Motive, Extent, and Effect*, ed. by Theodore K. Rabb (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1964), 33.

<sup>12</sup> Ringmar, *Identity, Interest, and Action*, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Francis Watson, *Wallenstein: Soldier Under Saturn* (1938; repr., Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1969), 255.

intervention on the grounds that such aims would have offended France.<sup>14</sup> Czech historian J. V. Polišenský agreed with Steinberg's conclusions, yet he added that the prospect of preemptively gaining and occupying the province of Silesia, as a means of neutralizing Polish hostility towards Sweden, helped to bring Gustavus into the war as well.<sup>15</sup>

More recent scholarship using the Droysen argument has presented the state defense thesis in an altered manner. In his 1988 article, "The Origins of the Thirty Years' War," Myron P. Gutmann argued that the Thirty Years' War provided the opportunity for Gustavus to seize the German Baltic coast, which improved Sweden's position in ongoing struggles with Denmark, Poland, and Russia over control of the Baltic.<sup>16</sup> Other alterations to Droysen's approach claim Gustavus' intervention was to defend Sweden's reputation and dignity in light of Imperial injustices. Also, that Sweden, being a military state and due to its economic poverty, could only defend itself through aggressive actions on foreign soil so as to make war pay for itself.<sup>17</sup>

### *A Mixed Approach*

Due to the multiple characteristics of the Thirty Years' War, it seems only natural that historians would take a mixed approach, considering both the older religious argument alongside Droysen's state defense argument. It is difficult to determine when this mixed approach was first presented, but it is logical to assume such arguments would have begun to develop sometime after Droysen introduced his thesis. Since 1900, the mixed religious/political argument has become prominent among historical works on Gustavus and the Thirty Years' War. However, within this approach there is disagreement between the historians who argue a combination of religion, state defense, or other issues, influenced Gustavus'

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<sup>14</sup> S.H. Steinberg, *The Thirty Years War and the Conflict for European Hegemony, 1600-1660* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc, 1966).

<sup>15</sup> J. V. Polišenský, *The Thirty Years War*, trans. Robert Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 207.

<sup>16</sup> Myron P. Gutmann, "The Origins of the Thirty Years' War," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 749,757-8.

<sup>17</sup> Ringmar, *Identity, Interest, and Action*, 186; Robert I. Frost, *The Northern Wars: War, State and Society in Northeastern Europe, 1558-1721* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 117-118; Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002), 207-208.

actions in separate ways and historians who argue that the religious and state defense issues are to be considered as one in the same due to the close ties of church and state during the seventeenth century.

Among the former group of historians was notable English military historian B.H. Liddell Hart, who claimed Gustavus was “spurred” by his religious sentiments but, “above all, he appreciated the danger to Sweden of an Imperial hold on the Baltic.”<sup>18</sup> Other early twentieth century historians who present this thesis include George MacMunn, who, in his exceedingly hagiographic presentation of Gustavus, accepts Gustavus’ reasons for intervening as presented in his *Manifesto*, and French historian Georges Pagès, who condemns other French historians for playing up France’s role in bringing Sweden into the war.<sup>19</sup> Historians who have followed Liddell Hart, MacMunn, and Pagès have largely either agreed with the dual concept of religion and state defense reasons or have altered the approach by replacing one reason or the other with alternate reasons, nonetheless, the arguments have stayed within the concept of multiple, separate factors determining Gustavus’ intervention.<sup>20</sup>

The latter historians of this camp have argued that religious and national reasons for Gustavus intervening cannot be separated due to the close affiliation between church and state during the seventeenth century. This argument shows up as early as 1919 in Samuel Rawson Gardiner’s, *The Thirty Years’ War, 1618-1648*, in which Gardiner wrote: “To extend the power of Sweden, to support the

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<sup>18</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart, *Great Captains Unveiled* (1928; repr, Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries Press, Inc., 1967), 88-89.

<sup>19</sup> George MacMunn, *Gustavus Adolphus: The Lion of the North* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1931), 137; Georges Pagès, *The Thirty Years’ War, 1618-1648*, trans. David Maland and John Hooper (1939; repr., New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 117.

<sup>20</sup> See David Maland, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century* (London: MacMillan, 1966), 129-130; Stewart Oakley, *A Short History of Sweden* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 92-93; Dupuy, 68-69; Golo Mann, *Wallenstein: His Life Narrated* (1971; repr., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 338-339; Irene Scobbie, *Sweden* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1972), 42-43; Geoffrey Parker, ed., *The Thirty Years’ War* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 123; Gunther E. Rothenburg, “Maurice of Nassau, Gustavus Adolphus, Raimondo Montecuccoli, and the “Military Revolution” of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 49; Phillip Haythornthwaite, *Invincible Generals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 33; Michael Lee Lanning, *The Military 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Military Leaders of all Time* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1996), 26; Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling, eds., *Events that Changed the World in the Seventeenth Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 70; Richard Brzezinski, *Lützen 1632: Climax of the Thirty Years War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 15; Gary Dean Peterson, *Warrior Kings of Sweden: The Rise of an Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 155; and Jeremy Black, *Great Military Leaders and Their Campaigns* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2008), 134.

princes of Germany against the Emperor's encroachments, to give a firm and unassailable standing ground to German Protestantism, were all to him [Gustavus] parts of one great work, scarcely even in thought to be separated from one another."<sup>21</sup> The fact that Gardiner presented this argument in 1919, years before Bowen and MacMunn—and decades before Schneider—presented their religious arguments goes to show the lengthy transition period where the religious argument slowly declined. David Ogg argued, "to Gustavus and seventeenth-century opinion they [religion and state] were inseparable, for religious security could be maintained only by landed possession."<sup>22</sup> Swedish historian Nils Ahnlund also argued along this line, stating that Gustavus Adolphus "strove to bring the interests of Sweden into harmony with the general interests of Protestantism."<sup>23</sup>

During the 1950's the torch passed on to Michael Roberts who has come to dominate the English-language history of Gustavus Adolphus and Sweden, most notably for his definitive, two volume work, *Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden, 1611-1632*. Roberts' works greatly advanced the historiography of Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War as Roberts investigated the topic on an extensively broader basis than anyone had done before him. In his numerous works on the topics of Gustavus Adolphus and Sweden, Roberts argued that religion and state were one in the same and that the growing power and presence of Catholic Imperial forces on the southern coast of the Baltic was just as much a religious threat as a political.<sup>24</sup> In *Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden, 1611-1632*

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *The Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648* (1919, New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 81.

<sup>22</sup> David Ogg, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century* (1925; repr., London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), 152.

<sup>23</sup> Nils Ahnlund, *Gustav Adolf the Great*, trans. Michael Roberts (1932; repr., New York: History Book Club, 1999), 267. See also, Michael Roberts, "The Political Objectives of Gustavus Adolphus in Germany, 1630-2," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., 7 (1957): 19-46.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Roberts, "The Political Objectives of Gustav Adolf in Germany, 1630-2" in *Essays in Swedish History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), 84; idem, *Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden, 1611-1632*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, 1958), 419-420; idem, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden* (London: The English Universities Press Ltd., 1973), 54-55; idem, *The Swedish Imperial Experience, 1560-1718* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 15-16; and Ronald Asch, *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe, 1618-1648* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1997), 104.



especially, the extensive listing of Ahnlund's works in Roberts' bibliography suggests Ahnlund influenced Roberts' thesis.<sup>25</sup>

### **Gustavus' Military Reforms**

Just as Gustavus Adolphus is synonymous with the Thirty Years' War, such is the same with Gustavus and his military reforms. Few historians who have dealt with Gustavus have done so without examining the reforms he enacted upon the Swedish military during his reign. Historians have largely attempted to review Gustavus' military reforms in general, the part his reforms played in his victories during the Thirty Years' War, and the role the reforms played in the advancement of the military art.

Early twentieth century historians, such as Gardiner, Ogg, Bowen, Liddell Hart, and MacMunn portrayed Gustavus as an "innovator in the art of war." The innovations the aforementioned historians emphasize include improvement of the weight of the Swedish muskets, emphasis on mobility of all arms, increased rate of fire of Swedish musketeers, the light columns and shallow lines of the infantry formations, emphasis on infantry as the leading arm, standardized uniforms, return to shock cavalry tactics, and the overall improved training and discipline.<sup>26</sup> Of these early historians, however, Liddell Hart and MacMunn provide the most thorough analysis of Gustavus' innovations, as well as the implications of these innovations in the context of seventeenth century warfare and warfare in general.

Liddell Hart reasoned Gustavus' "dramatic successes were due rather to the new pattern instrument of war he created than to any revolutionary developments in strategy."<sup>27</sup> This new pattern instrument was an army, which broke from the standard, short-term, army-for-hire of the period, and instead was a standing army entirely supported by the state. Liddell Hart posits that Gustavus was not responsible for the creation of the modern standing army—an argument also presented by MacMunn—

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*.

<sup>26</sup> Gardiner, *The Thirty Years' War*, 138-139; Ogg, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 150; Bowen, "Gustavus Adolphus," 200-202, 209; Liddell Hart, *Great Captains Unveiled*, 114-124; MacMunn, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 88-93; See also United States Military Academy, *Great Captains Before Napoleon* (West Point, NY: Department of Military Art & Engineering, United States Military Academy, 1943), 54-55.

<sup>27</sup> Liddell Hart, *Great Captains Unveiled*, 95.

but was responsible for being the first to “develop it systematically ... building up a true regular army and national military organization.”<sup>28</sup>

In dealing with Gustavus’ tactical reforms, Liddell Hart argued that Gustavus was the first to recognize infantry firepower as the future, and that this realization was the reason for his reforms increasing the number of musketeers and refitting them for better mobility. Liddell Hart also believes Gustavus to be the “father of infantry mobility” for his implementation of entire regiments of musketeers accompanying cavalry on raids.<sup>29</sup> He claims that Gustavus’ emphasis of support between infantry, cavalry, and artillery was the foundation of combined tactics and when combined with the permanence and discipline created the “first real war-machine” with which the rigid armies of the Empire could not compete.<sup>30</sup>

Nils Ahnlund agreed with much of what Liddell Hart said. Ahnlund contends that the reform of the army by Gustavus was “one of the most profoundly influential achievements” of Gustavus’ reign.<sup>31</sup> Ahnlund says that Gustavus’ reforms were based on, not copies of, those of Maurice of Orange and that his implementation of these reforms brought about the new system of fighting in line. It is interesting that, at least in the English-language histories, Ahnlund appears to have been the first historian to draw a connection between the military reforms of Maurice of Orange and those of Gustavus Adolphus.

The significance of Ahnlund’s connection between the military reforms of Maurice of Orange and Gustavus can be realized in Michael Roberts’ article, “The Military Revolution, 1560-1660.”<sup>32</sup> In fact, Roberts’ “military revolution” argument can be considered an expanded version of the argument he presented in his article “Gustav Adolf and the Art of War” which was presented the same year as “The Military Revolution.”<sup>33</sup> In his “Military Revolution” article, Roberts argued that the military reforms of Maurice of Orange, of putting infantry into shallow lines, was further developed and perfected by

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<sup>28</sup> Liddell Hart, *Great Captains Unveiled*, 103; See also MacMunn, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 89-93.

<sup>29</sup> Liddell Hart, *Great Captains Unveiled*, 115.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>31</sup> Ahnlund, *Gustav Adolph the Great*, 149.

<sup>32</sup> The role this article plays in the “military revolution” debate is discussed above, in “The ‘Military Revolution’ Debate.”

<sup>33</sup> See Roberts, “Gustav Adolf.”

Gustavus Adolphus by applying Maurice's formations to offensive maneuvers, restoring cavalry to the shock charge, and arming his units with light and maneuverable cannon allowing for close artillery support. Furthermore, Roberts indicated that these tactical reforms "were indeed the efficient causes of changes which were really revolutionary" such as: new standards in training and discipline in the military, standing national armies, larger armies, increased authority of the state, and social and economic changes across Europe.<sup>34</sup> It is this "military revolution" that Roberts argued paved the way "broad and straight, to the abyss of the twentieth century."<sup>35</sup>

When looking at Roberts' argument compared to earlier historians, the one historian who sticks out is B. H. Liddell Hart. Though no direct evidence of influence can be shown between the two historians, as Roberts does not cite Liddell Hart, it is interesting to note the subtle parallels between the two. There is a revolutionary facet in Liddell Hart's argument that foreshadows Roberts' theory. Though Liddell Hart does not openly refer to Gustavus' reforms as revolutionary, his use of titles such as the "Father of Modern Warfare" and "Father of Combined Tactics," have revolutionary implications. These terms also imply that Gustavus' actions had an effect on later generations in the military; a point that Roberts also makes. Such revolutionary implications would be expected of Liddell Hart considering his practice of providing historical examples of military leaders who embraced and utilized new concepts in warfare, as a means of influencing change in the British military command following the devastation of the First World War.

Despite Roberts' revolutionary thesis, historians writing on Gustavus and the Thirty Years' War, for the most part, returned to the basic narration of what the reforms consisted of and their success in Germany. All argue – if an argument was provided with the narrative – that Gustavus was the premier commander, tactician, and strategist of his day because of the reforms he implemented and the success he gained through the utilization of his reformed military. Some of the historians, such as Trevor Nevitt Dupuy and Michael Lee Lanning, follow Liddell Hart's argument that Gustavus was the "Father of

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<sup>34</sup> Roberts, "The Military Revolution," 217.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 218.

Modern Warfare.” It is interesting that only a few of these historians note the connection between Maurice of Orange and Gustavus and only one, Geoffrey Parker, mentions the “revolutionary” aspects of the reforms as depicted by Roberts.<sup>36</sup>

Even Roberts himself does not press his “military revolution” thesis in his later works.<sup>37</sup> However, a particularly interesting aspect of Roberts’ later works – *Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden* and *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden* – is the fact that he not only discusses the reforms Gustavus enacted upon the army, but he also addresses Gustavus’ actions with the navy. The naval aspect is entirely ignored by any of the other historians, with the exception of Gary Dean Peterson who draws heavily from Roberts in his work. Roberts postulated that Gustavus’ expansion of and reforms to the Swedish navy were essential for the maintenance of the Swedish empire. That being a maritime empire, a strong and efficient navy was needed to protect the sea-lanes of the Baltic, the coast of Sweden, and to keep in check the navies of Sweden’s Baltic rivals. Roberts also adds that the navy played a key role in Gustavus’ campaigns by keeping the sea lanes open and delivering supplies and reinforcements to the army and that the Swedish navy was just as important as the army in Sweden’s ascent as a great power.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Battle of Breitenfeld**

Fought on September 17, 1631,<sup>39</sup> the Battle of Breitenfeld is of great importance when discussing Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years’ War, as it was the first major engagement between Gustavus’ army and an Imperial army. Not only was the battle significant for the aforementioned reason, but it was also the first major battle in which the newly reformed army of Gustavus was matched against an army

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson, *A History of Sweden*, 167; Maland, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 387; Oakley, *A Short History of Sweden*, 91; Steinberg, *Thirty Years War*, 53; Dupuy, *Military Life of Gustavus Adolphus*, 54-67; Mann, *Wallenstein*, 606; Parker, *Thirty Years’ War*, 206-208; Rothenburg, “Maurice of Nassaue,” 45-46; Haythornthwaite, *Invincible Generals*, 15-22; Lanning, *Military 100*, 27-28; Frost, *Northern Wars*, 104-105; Brzezinski, *Lützen 1632*, 21; and Peterson, *Warrior Kings*, 136-137.

<sup>37</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 198-271; idem, *Rise of Sweden*, 104-112.

<sup>38</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 272-304; idem, *Rise of Sweden*, 99-102; See also Peterson, *Warrior Kings*, 132.

<sup>39</sup> Some historians mark the date as September 7, 1631 depending on which calendar is used.

using the long accepted tactical school of the Spanish *tercio*.<sup>40</sup> With unreliable allies, whose flight from the field left him outnumbered with an exposed flank, Gustavus was able to defeat the Imperial army of Johann Tzerclaes, the Count of Tilly,<sup>41</sup> and secure his position in Germany.

The prominent points of dialogue on the Battle of Breitenfeld have been of the unreliability of the Saxon troops assisting Gustavus, the Swedish ability to respond to their opened flank after the flight of the Saxons, and the significance of Gustavus' reformed army and tactics versus the Spanish *tercio* employed by Tilly. On the discussion of the Saxon allies, historians have only varied in the tone with which they speak of the Saxon troops. The various tones range from simply explaining the Saxons as not being battle tested to more scathing treatments, such as David Ogg's, who described the Saxons as, "valueless, as they deserted by whole companies as soon as they were put into action, but at least Gustavus was no longer hampered by the hostility of co-religionaries."<sup>42</sup>

Discussion of the Swedish response to their exposed flank, as a result of the failure of the Saxon troops, occasionally diverges on whether the quick action of securing the flank is credited to Gustavus himself or to his underling, Gustav Horn, whose regiment's flank was directly exposed as a result of the broken Saxon formations. Despite this minor discrepancy, historians have agreed that it was the previously unheard of maneuverability and efficiency of Gustavus' order of battle and troop formations, as well as the efficient training of the Swedish troops that allowed for the securing of the army's exposed flank, a point which leads directly to the final uncontested conclusion on the Battle of Breitenfeld, that of the victory of Gustavus' reformed army over Tilly's army of the Spanish school.

Though most historians have simply identified that it was the efficiency and maneuverability of Gustavus' new formations that triumphed over the slow and cumbersome *tercio* employed by Tilly, the most thorough examination and explanation of this conclusion is that of Michael Roberts. As pointed out earlier, Roberts has come to dominate the English-language landscape of Gustavus Adolphus due to the scope and depth of his study. Roberts argued that the ability of Horn to form front to his exposed flank in

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<sup>40</sup> For discussion of the reforms of Gustavus, see above, "Gustavus' Military Reforms."

<sup>41</sup> In the majority of works, Tzerclaes is simply referred to as Tilly.

<sup>42</sup> Ogg, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 155.

the middle of the battle was unheard of at that time and can only be attributed to “the nature of Gustav Adolf’s order of battle, and by the training and discipline of his army.” Furthermore, the saving of the Swedish position also relied on the ability to quickly bring up reinforcements so as to bring increased fire on the Imperial formations and to counter-attack before the *tercios* could reform to press their advantage.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Battle of Lützen**

Just as Breitenfeld receives attention as being Gustavus’ first major victory in Germany, the Battle of Lützen receives attention from historians for being Gustavus’ last, as it was at Lützen that the king was killed in battle. It is, in fact, the death of Gustavus at Lützen that is the most contended aspect of the battle. The reason for this being due to the obvious chaos of battle coupled with the noted fog which plagued the battlefield allowing for no clear eyewitnesses of how exactly the king was killed. Since 1900, however, historians have all presented, in one form or another, that Gustavus was leading a cavalry charge in support of the foundering Swedish center, became detached from his main cavalry corps, and ran into a corps of Imperial cuirassiers by which he was killed by several shots or a combination of shot and rapier thrusts.

As for historians’ positions pertaining to the actual battle, most of the historians simply describe the battle in a narrative fashion providing little analysis. However, Michael Roberts and Golo Mann have presented analysis of the opposing forces and the advantages or disadvantages of each. Roberts and Mann have claimed that Wallenstein’s forces were more capable than before in dealing with the maneuverability of the Swedish formations, as Wallenstein had begun to incorporate Swedish tactics among his own formations. In addition, Roberts notes that the Swedish army was at a disadvantage for it was without several of its most capable commanders who were occupied elsewhere.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, v. 2, 263.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Roberts, “Gustav Adolf and the Art of War,” in *Essays in Swedish History*, 71; idem, *Gustavus Adolphus*, v. 2, 766-767; Mann, *Wallenstein*, 651-654.

## **Gustavus as a Commander**

When discussing Gustavus as a commander, there is a consensus among historians. All have presented Gustavus as a brilliant commander whose demeanor and personal exploits inspired confidence among his troops and respect among his adversaries. Liddell Hart argued that Gustavus' emphasis on reconnaissance is one of many reasons why he should be considered the "Father of Modern Warfare" and quotes Gustavus as saying: "It is my nature not to believe well done except what I do myself: it is also necessary that I see everything by my own eyes."<sup>45</sup> It was this aspect of Gustavus' character that most historians attribute as the reason for him being killed at Lützen, both for the reason that his disdain for danger led him into the thick of battle, as well as for the reason that the same disdain had given him the wound, received in Poland, which made it uncomfortable for him to wear his armor. Nonetheless, historians recognize him not only as an excellent leader of troops but also as a brilliant tactician and strategist.<sup>46</sup>

## **The Destruction of Magdeburg**

Early in his expedition, while Gustavus was still searching for willing allies among the German princes, the Protestant city of Magdeburg rose in support of Gustavus. The city had been on uneasy terms with the Empire since the issuance of the Edict of Restitution. Gustavus had dispatched a small detachment to assist in the defense of the city, which was laid siege to in November 1630 by the Imperial army of Gottfried Heinrich Graf zu Pappenheim. In the spring of 1631 the siege was joined by the army of Tilly and the city's defense began to deteriorate. A request for aid was sent to Gustavus; however, he was unable to move to assist because the electors of Brandenburg and Saxony were not willing to grant him free passage across their lands. The city was taken by storm on May 20 and, for reasons unclear, the

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<sup>45</sup> Liddell Hart, *Great Captains*, 96-97.

<sup>46</sup> See Ahlund, *Gustav Adolf*, 121; Dupuy, *Military Life of Gustavus Adolphus*, 75; Roberts, *Rise of Sweden*, 166; Mann, *Wallenstein*, 606-607.

city was set fire to and the inhabitants massacred by Imperial troops leaving only some 5,000 citizens alive out of nearly 30,000.

Exactly who is to blame for the destruction of Magdeburg was a heavily contested debate among earlier historians with sides drawn largely along religious lines—Catholics blaming Protestants and vice versa.<sup>47</sup> Within historical works since 1900 the debate seems to have cooled down as only a few writers have pointed a finger while others have not passed judgment and simply acknowledge the devastation of the city. Gardiner places the blame not on a single person, but imperial policy as a whole. Gardiner writes, “He [Tilly] had nothing to gain by the destruction of Magdeburg. He had everything to gain by saving it as a basis of operations for his army.” Instead, “he and his masters were responsible for the policy that made the siege possible. That the right of the clergy and the church might be maintained, all the homes and dwellings of men in Germany were to be laid waste, all the social and political arrangements to which they had attached themselves were to be dashed into ruin.”<sup>48</sup>

Watson takes a tone that can be expected from someone writing a biography on Gustavus’ key opponent—Wallenstein. Watson implies Gustavus used Magdeburg as a political tool, writing, “Gustavus could have saved Magdeburg, and failed to do so. The result of his failure was the conclusion of the Saxon compact that he had ardently desired. That he should be accused of deliberately withholding his support for this callous purpose was natural in the circumstances. But it was not justifiable. He was guilty of a serious error in judgment, but not of a wanton crime.”<sup>49</sup>

In his keystone work, Michael Roberts provides an extensive breakdown—when compared to other works—of the Magdeburg discussion. Roberts states, “It is common ground that he [Gustavus] must bear the main responsibility for the original revolt.” It was his “renown” that had led the people of Magdeburg to rise in support of him.<sup>50</sup> Roberts follows this up saying, “but it is generally agreed that the citizens were misled, not by Gustav Adolf nor even by Christian William, but by the unauthorized

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<sup>47</sup> See Ogg, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 155n.

<sup>48</sup> Gardiner, *Thirty Years’ War*, 134.

<sup>49</sup> Watson, *Wallenstein*, 327.

<sup>50</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, v. 2, 496.



expectation held out by Dr. Stallman.”<sup>51</sup> Roberts contends that Gustavus was aware of his responsibility to fulfill the promises he made to the city, but he had also explained, “that a promise of immediate military assistance must be interpreted in the context of the existing military situation.”<sup>52</sup> Roberts also writes, in response to critics of Gustavus’ maneuvers elsewhere during the siege, of the “incontrovertible fact that Magdeburg was in no serious danger until the end of March,” when the supply of gunpowder was suddenly exhausted.<sup>53</sup>

Historians writing after Roberts tend to be more concerned with providing logical causes for the destruction of Magdeburg or pointing out who is *not* to blame rather than dealing with who *is* to blame. Steinberg writes that Pappenheim set fire to houses in an attempt to incline the citizens to stop fighting in order to extinguish the fires, but Pappenheim’s men “took this as a license to add arson to pillage.”<sup>54</sup> Steinberg adds “the one man undoubtedly guiltless was Tilly,” for Tilly had nothing to gain by destroying Magdeburg and, by its destruction, lost the ability to use the city as a base for his campaign.<sup>55</sup> He also implies that Gustavus is not guiltless when he writes that the destruction of Magdeburg was “a godsent opportunity to gloss over Gustavus’ failure to relieve Magdeburg.”<sup>56</sup> Stewart Oakley and Ronald G. Asch also take the stance that Gustavus shares the blame due to his failure to relieve the city.<sup>57</sup>

One historian who does lay blame is David Maland, who claims the destruction of Magdeburg as being caused “indirectly from Wallenstein’s dismissal.” Maland bases this on the grounds that “His [Wallenstein] army had passed into Tilly’s hands, but not the granaries and storehouses which supplied it,” which resulted in the poor status of the besieging armies provisions leading to the sacking and destruction of the city.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, v. 2, 498.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 499.

<sup>54</sup> Steinberg, *Thirty Years’ War*, 56.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 56-57; See also Dupuy, *Military Life of Gustavus Adolphus*, 90.

<sup>56</sup> Steinberg, *Thirty Years’ War*, 57.

<sup>57</sup> Asch, *Thirty Years War*, 106; Oakley, *Short History of Sweden*, 94.

<sup>58</sup> Maland, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 131.

## **Gustavus' Actions Following Breitenfeld**

Following the defeat of Tilly's Imperial army at Breitenfeld, Gustavus was left with a free hand in respect to where he could continue his campaign. The majority of Germany lay open to his army, as well as the way to Vienna and the Habsburg dynastic lands. His decision to advance into Franconia and Thuringia drew immediate fire from his contemporaries and since then historians have presented several different theories attempting to explain why Gustavus did not march on Vienna. In S.R. Gardiner's 1919 history of the Thirty Years' War, Gardiner refutes the idea that the capture of Vienna would have brought an end to the war on the grounds that "Vienna was not, in the modern sense of the word, a capitol city" with, "no administrative threads controlling the military system." Instead he argued that Gustavus made the correct decision in attacking the military capacity of the Imperial lands in Germany, stating, "Where an army was, there was power; and there would be an army wherever Wallenstein, or some imitator of Wallenstein, might choose to beat his drums." While the aforementioned statement comes across as Gardiner's main argument for Gustavus' decision, Gardiner also mentions the pull of "freeing" the Protestant Palatinate, thereby gaining a more "dependable" base than would be had in Bohemia, as well as the financial draw of the ecclesiastical territories as being part of the decision.<sup>59</sup>

David Ogg, Francis Watson, Marjorie Bowen and George MacMunn carried on Gardiner's main argument—that the capture of Vienna would not have brought about the end of the war—in the two decades following Gardiner. While Ogg, Watson, and MacMunn echo Gardiner in everything but wording, Bowen presents Gardiner's main—military—argument as secondary to Gustavus' "wise and generous decision which does him the greatest honour, to remain in Germany and protect the Protestants there."<sup>60</sup> However, the connection between the argument of Gardiner and those of Ogg, Watson, Bowen, and MacMunn is difficult to determine. Of the four historians, Watson is the only one who references

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<sup>59</sup> Gardiner, *Thirty Years' War*, 143-144.

<sup>60</sup> Ogg, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 156; Watson, *Wallenstein*, 333; MacMunn, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 210; Bowen, "Gustavus Adolphus II," 214.

Gardiner's work.<sup>61</sup> One historian from the first half of the twentieth century who does not share Gardiner's argument is George Pagès. Pagès argued that Gustavus' decision was based upon his distrust in having the unreliable German princes in his rear while he advanced into hostile Bavaria and Austria. Therefore, Pagès argued, Gustavus sent John George and the Saxon army into Bohemia while Gustavus marched towards the Main.<sup>62</sup>

Roberts' analysis of Gustavus' decision not to march on Vienna is more thorough than any of the others and provides both military and political reasons for Gustavus' decision. Militarily, Roberts argued that the military objective was never Vienna but Bavaria for the reason that "the main burden of the enemy's exertions had been borne by Bavaria."<sup>63</sup> Roberts contends that Gustavus' move into Franconia and Thuringia was part of his larger strategy of performing a large right-hand sweep of southern Germany anchored by the Saxon army in Silesia and Bohemia. The execution of such a bold strategy could not be trusted to the Saxons for it entailed the forwarding of Swedish bases from the north, the closing of the Rhine and Alpine passes to Spanish or Imperial reinforcements from the Netherlands, Italy, or Lorraine, and that it ran the greater prospect of receiving resistance by either meeting said reinforcements or by drawing Tilly from northwest Germany.

Politically, Roberts argued that Gustavus did not wish to leave the liberation of southern Germany to John George who might then reclaim the leadership of the Protestant cause, and that by possibly drawing Tilly out of northwest Germany Gustavus might consolidate his position in Germany, as well as several lesser political reasons.<sup>64</sup> Surprisingly, even after Roberts provided his argument for the political reasons of Gustavus' decision, few historians who followed him mention the political aspect.

Historians who wrote in the second half of the century provided arguments combining different aspects of the arguments listed above as well as making additions of their own. Both Dupuy, in his 1969

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<sup>61</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> edition of Ogg's work is used in this study and lists Watson's work on Wallenstein in the bibliography. Due to the inability to access any other editions of Ogg's book, it cannot be determined if Ogg makes the same argument in earlier editions, and if so, what edition does the argument appear in and whether alternative sources are listed in previous editions.

<sup>62</sup> Pagès, *Thirty Years' War*, 130.

<sup>63</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, v. 2, 541.

<sup>64</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, v. 2, 539-547; See also Roberts, *Rise of Sweden*, 143-144.

work, and Phillip J. Haythornthwaite, writing in 1991, provide explanations incorporating the aforementioned arguments. Dupuy, interestingly, criticizes Liddell Hart for his judgment of Gustavus' decision. Dupuy quotes Liddell Hart as saying, "Never again did the imperial power appear so shaken, or its seat so defenseless, as on the morrow of Breitenfeld." Dupuy states, "It is ironic that this critical comment is by Sir Basil H. Liddell Hart, the advocate of "the strategy of the indirect approach." There would seem to be no better example of his indirect strategy thesis (which Gustavus would probably have rejected as a valid theory of warfare) than the Swedish king's controversial decision."<sup>65</sup> This critic of Liddell Hart must be understood in the context of another of Liddell Hart's works simply titled *Strategy*. In *Strategy*, Liddell Hart, in his usual fashion, provides historical examples of the strategic indirect approach, in which Gustavus is not used as an example.

Instead, Dupuy combined Gardiner's argument of there being no advantage to the capture of Vienna and the need to destroy Imperial military capabilities with the distrust of the German princes, both militarily, as Pagès argue, and politically, as Roberts contended.<sup>66</sup> Dupuy, however, does not provide any bibliographical data so a direct connection between the arguments cannot be determined. Haythornthwaite also takes the same line as Gardiner, but adds the ability of Gustavus to resupply his army in the non-devastated lands of the Palatinate and Priest's Alley while at the same time denying those lands to the Imperial forces, severing the lines between Italy and the Netherlands, and keeping a close watch on Tilly.<sup>67</sup>

David Maland and Geoffrey Parker have provided alternative explanations. Maland argued that Gustavus did not trust John George—reflective of Pagès' and Roberts' arguments, however no connection can be determined—and sending him against Bohemia was intended to further commit John George against the Empire. Maland also contends that "as the champion of Protestantism it was a joy to him [Gustavus] to scatter the forces of Catholicism in the area where they had been most affluent and most secure; as the paymaster of the army he welcomed the tribute of the wealthy Rhineland cities, and, as

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<sup>65</sup> Dupuy, *The Military Life*, 108n.

<sup>66</sup> Dupuy, *The Military Life*, 107-109.

<sup>67</sup> Haythornthwaite, *Invincible Generals*, 40-41.

creator of the Swedish empire, he was better placed to control the north German waterways.”<sup>68</sup> Parker argued that with Gustavus’ original intentions being only to secure the southern shore of the Baltic, he had no “contingency plan for a victory on this scale—indeed, he did not even possess any detailed maps covering the lands south of Brandenburg or west of Magdeburg.”<sup>69</sup> Therefore, Parker writes, Gustavus can be “forgiven” for failing to pursue Tilly, and for “preferring instead to lead his tired veterans south westwards into luxurious quarters amid Catholic lands along the Rhine and Main” while sending his allies into Bohemia.<sup>70</sup>

### **Perceptions of Gustavus and his Army**

When looking at how historians have perceived the conduct of Gustavus and his army in Germany, the portrayals in many English-language works have been generally positive. This is especially true of the early twentieth century writers such as Gardiner, Bowen, and MacMunn. These historians presented “the godly army of Gustavus”<sup>71</sup> as “humane, obedient, prudent, austere, and patient,” nothing like the Imperial armies which were “diseased and intoxicated by lawlessness, murder, power, and plunder,”<sup>72</sup> and that Gustavus himself was “the one man who had reached the heart of the [German] nation.”<sup>73</sup> Considering that all three of these historians wrote their works during the inter-war period, there may have been some implied connection between the conduct of the First and Second German Reichs and their armies.

B. H. Liddell Hart, however, attacked historians who portrayed Gustavus and the Swedish army in the aforementioned manner, claiming “Time and the hero-worshipping historian are apt to throw a halo round the noble figures of the past, to depict them as angels rather than human beings, and when there is

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<sup>68</sup> Maland, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 131-132.

<sup>69</sup> Parker, *Thirty Years’ War*, 126

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>71</sup> MacMunn, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 88.

<sup>72</sup> Bowen, “Gustavus Adolphus II,” 201.

<sup>73</sup> Gardiner, *Thirty Years’ War*, 146.

real warrant for admiration this tendency is increased.”<sup>74</sup> Liddell Hart takes a balanced approach to the subject arguing that while the conduct of the Swedish army, in general, was “exemplary” it was just as prone to pillage and other less-than-attractive actions when circumstances were not ideal.<sup>75</sup>

The portrayals discussed above are, however, in marked contrast to the portrayals of a prominent contingent of German historians who have argued Gustavus was one more foreign invader wishing to profit at the expense of Germany. This argument has benefitted the historiography by providing a German perspective to the topic that is not entirely immersed in religion. One such historian of this group who has published in English is Herbert Langer. In his book, *Thirty Years’ War*, Langer argued that the Swedes were “intolerable oppressors” and that “in the appropriation of art treasures, libraries and archives, the Swedish conquerors proved to be past masters,” conducting systematic confiscation of the valuable books, manuscripts, and art of libraries, colleges, monasteries, and schools.<sup>76</sup> This argument, however, may be expected from an East German historian living under Soviet occupation and writing about the social history of Germans under a previous foreign invader. Such views are certainly in marked contrast to the views of Gardiner, Bowen, and MacMunn who, as mentioned above, may have been influenced by the anti-German sentiments of the inter-war period.

### **Gustavus’ Economic Reforms**

Many historians who have written on Gustavus Adolphus and the Thirty Years’ War have discussed Gustavus’ attempts to make the German war pay for itself—the concept that war can support war. However, when considering the initial lack of support for Gustavus after he landed at Peenemünde, no historians had taken into consideration how Gustavus was able to fund his army before he was able to draw from the support of Saxony and Mecklenburg or the rich lands of the “Priest’s Alley.” This may simply be due to the fact that historians wished to focus on the better known or “exciting” aspects of Gustavus Adolphus—his military exploits.

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<sup>74</sup> Liddell Hart, *Great Captains*, 112.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-112.

<sup>76</sup> Herbert Langer, *Thirty Years’ War* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1980), 107, 130-132.

It was not until 1958 that Michael Roberts finally approached this question in the second volume of *Gustavus Adolphus*. Roberts commits some ninety pages to the discussion of the economic and social reforms, which occurred during Gustavus' reign. Furthermore, the fact that he discusses this issue immediately before his sections on the far more popular topic of Gustavus' military implies Roberts' intention that the economic and social changes are necessary for understanding how Gustavus' military was able to achieve what it did.

Roberts argued, "the social and economic development of Sweden under Gustav Adolf... was in one aspect the result of a mobilization of all the state's resources for war."<sup>77</sup> Roberts emphasizes Gustavus' reforms of taxation, establishment of royal monopolies, development of industry [especially iron and copper], Prussian port dues, new trade towns, and pressing for increased trade were all key in providing the financial support for the military, both for the reforms of the military and its campaigns.

After Roberts presented this argument historians began taking notice of his points and began including them in their own studies on Sweden and the Thirty Years' War.<sup>78</sup> In Roberts' later work, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden* and *The Swedish Imperial Experience*, he re-emphasizes his earlier argument and criticizes earlier historians for disregarding economic aspects of Gustavus' reign.

### **Gustavus' Administrative Reforms**

Roberts also brought into consideration the role Gustavus' domestic reforms played in his military achievements, particularly the restructuring of the treasury, judicial system, and the establishment of the ministerial positions. Roberts argued that with Sweden in the middle of three wars when Gustavus came to the throne "any one which might demand the absence of the King from Stockholm for prolonged periods, the desirability of a more ordered administration and more regular forms of business was likely

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<sup>77</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, v. 2, 66.

<sup>78</sup> Maland, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 130; Oakley, *Short History of Sweden*, 124-126; Anderson, *History of Sweden*, 172; Steinberg, *Thirty Years War*, 53; H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, Reformation, and Social Change* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 7-8; and Scobbie, *Sweden*, 41-43.

to be increasingly felt.”<sup>79</sup> As with the economic reforms discussed in the previous section, only after Roberts’ work did other historians begin to take these reforms into consideration as being connected with the military.<sup>80</sup> However, the number of historians who recognize this connection is fewer than those who began to discuss the military implications of the economic reforms following Roberts’ work.

## Historical Schools

With the numerous aspects – economic, religious, political, social, and military – of Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years’ War there have been a variety of historical schools employed by historians in their attempts to interpret the topic. When considering the numerous schools of the historians, there are considerable connections to be drawn between the historians’ school and the conclusions they have drawn on the historiographical topics discussed in this essay. In particular, these connections are most apparent and interesting in the topics, such as Gustavus’ intervention in Germany, where there has been considerable debate amongst historians. Nonetheless, it is just as interesting to note how so many approaches have come to the same conclusion on the topics that have not been matters of debate.

The historical school of the historian plays a significant role in their discussion of Gustavus’ intervention in the Thirty Years’ War.<sup>81</sup> On the religious side of the argument,<sup>82</sup> the hagiographic works of Bowen and MacMunn, which present Gustavus as a saintly figure with only the best intentions in everything he did, make it rather obvious that Gustavus intervened as the “champion” of Protestantism. Such hagiographic depictions of Gustavus certainly locate Bowen and MacMunn within the so-called “Great Man” school of thought—that “great men” are the driving force of history. Friedrich’s religious conclusion, on the other hand, is rather interesting. Firstly, he was making a religious argument when the religious theory had almost completely dissipated as a singular explanation. Secondly, his political

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<sup>79</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, v. 1 (London: Longmans, 1953), 261. Roberts provides a clearer presentation of this argument in *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 84-86.

<sup>80</sup> See Maland, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 41; Peterson, *Warrior Kings*, 130.

<sup>81</sup> See above, “The ‘Military Revolution’ Debate.”

<sup>82</sup> See above, “Religion.”



approach recognizes the ties between state and religion at this time, yet he concludes that religion was the deciding factor of the state's decision.

Those historians who have argued the state defense theory deal not with the man, such as hagiography does, but with the larger contexts.<sup>83</sup> Gutmann presents his argument using an imperialist approach—the attempt to fulfill imperial designs shaped Sweden's actions. Gutmann argued that Sweden was improving its position in the Baltic by expanding its imperial holdings. Robert I. Frost and Jan Glete explain the defense of Sweden upon the approach that economic factors controlled Gustavus' actions. Claiming Sweden could not afford to sustain a war on its own land, therefore needing to defend itself by fighting on foreign land.

The historians who argue multiple reasons for Gustavus' intervention are much like those who argue state defense as the reason. This is because their approach focuses on the broader aspects of the situation.<sup>84</sup> The one exception to this trend is Liddell Hart, who writes in the hagiographic fashion. However, the reason for Liddell Hart's hagiographical approach cannot be fully understood without considering the ulterior motives of his writings. In *Great Captains*, Liddell Hart attempted to present Gustavus as the model for what the ideal military leader should be—one who embraces and encourages innovation and utilizes it effectively. As stated earlier, this approach was Liddell Hart's way of lobbying for change in the British military command.

On the other side of this argument is Roberts, who in his Institutional approach—using institutions in a case-study fashion to find social, economic, and political patterns in history—looks far beyond just the man of Gustavus Adolphus but at the institutions that were part of Gustavus' rule as king of Sweden. The fact that Roberts argued a unity between church and state is understandable when writing as an Institutional for Roberts looks at the institution of the Lutheran Church in Sweden and the role it played during Gustavus' reign. The Institutional approach also explains Roberts' treatment of

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<sup>83</sup> See above, "State Defense."

<sup>84</sup> See above, "A Mixed Approach."

Gustavus' economic and administrative reforms and Roberts' recognition that Gustavus could not have accomplished what he did without the institutions he built around himself.

In the discussion of Gustavus' reforms,<sup>85</sup> Roberts' Institutional approach also plays a significant role in his conclusions. His analysis of the different aspects of the military – army, payroll, organization, administration, training, navy – and how they work within themselves and within the institution of the Swedish state shaped his theory on the significance of Gustavus' reforms. Roberts' Institutional approach may also help to explain his development of the “military revolution” theory. For by taking an Institutional approach to Gustavus' reign Roberts was able to see the wider-reaching results of Gustavus' military reforms. Roberts' broader approach may also have been influenced by the academic shift that occurred with the influx of servicemen entering higher education following World War II. Another significant school, which shows up in the discussion on Gustavus' reforms, is that of the “Great Man” theory – in an altered form. The historians of this school – Dupuy, Lanning, and Haythornthwaite – present Gustavus as a “great man” whose military reforms advanced the military art by creating a new form of fighting.

Unlike the larger historiographical debates of Gustavus' military reforms and intervention in the Thirty Years' War, the less debated issues prove more difficult in ascertaining the impact the historians' historical school may have had on their conclusions. This is largely due to the consistent agreement between historians on the topics. Although there is a large degree of consensus on these lesser topics, there are a few exceptions—Richard Brzezinski's battle narrative of the Battle of Lützen and Herbert Langer's views on Gustavus and his army in Germany. Most obviously, Langer's views can be attributed to his connection with the other German historians who have approached Gustavus as a foreign invader. However, his “history from below” methodology also contributes to his conclusions significantly as he looks at the social aspects of peasant life in Germany during the Thirty Years' War.

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<sup>85</sup> See above, “Intervention in the Thirty Years' War.”

## **Conclusion**

The English-language historiography of Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War contains numerous historical approaches to the different issues that make up the topic. Since 1900, historical interpretations on the topic have varied significantly, moving from the fusion of earlier religious and state defense theories of Gustavus' intervention to the "military revolution" theory of Michael Roberts. Gustavus Adolphus was a great man, and his role in the Thirty Years' War is significant in European history; just as his military reforms are significant in the advancement of warfare. The English-language historiography of Gustavus Adolphus should continue to grow, and may one day match the extent of non-English scholarship on the subject.

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