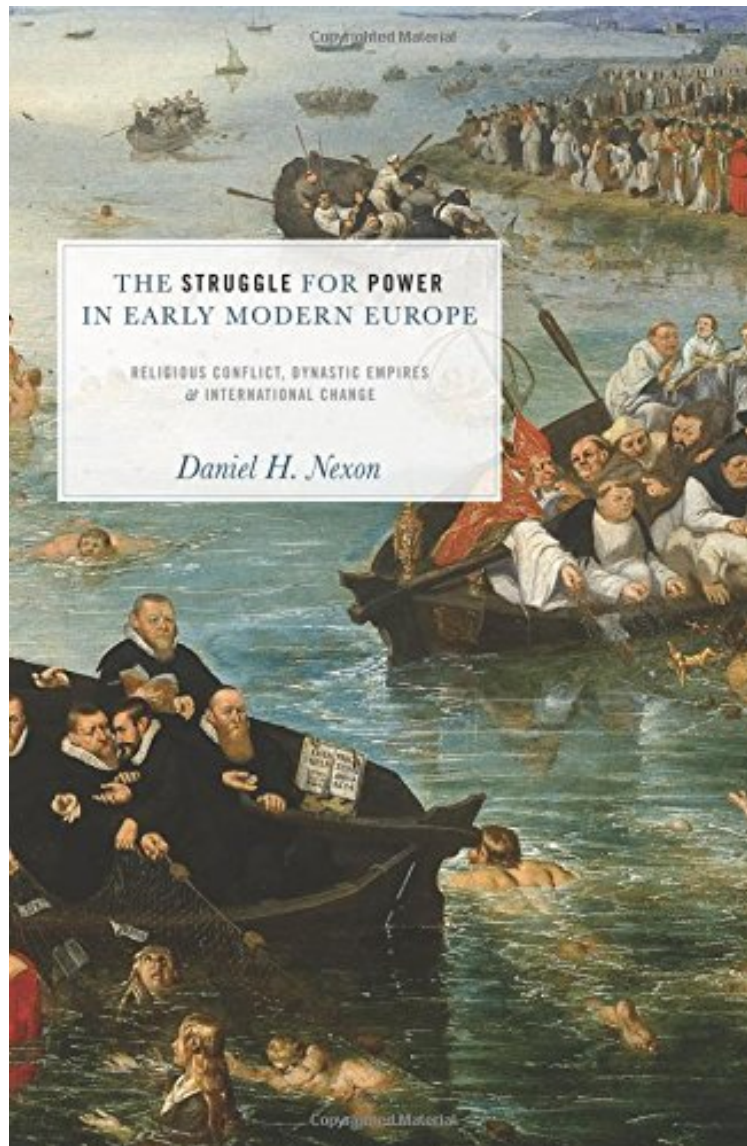


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# The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change (Princeton Studies in International History and Politics)

*Daniel H. Nexon*

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17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. A new reading of "Early Modern" Politics By Jack Donnelly This is a scholarly, not a mass market, book. But if one is looking for a theoretically challenging and empirically innovative look at early modern Europe, seen not as a transition to "modernity" (whatever that might mean) but as a period in its own right, this is the book. Nexon emphasizes the "composite" (decentralized and dynastic) nature of states in this period, not just in the Hapsburg domains but in "France" and "Britain" as well. And he has a nicely balanced account of the role of Protestantism, emphasizing its significance, but only in the context of a great number of other interacting factors. Also distinctive is his look at this period with an equal emphasis on international and national politics -- and their decisive interaction. On top of these virtues, he writes with immense clarity and at many points considerable flair. Once you get started, it really is hard to put this book down!

Scholars have long argued over whether the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which ended more than a century of religious conflict arising from the Protestant Reformations, inaugurated the modern sovereign-state system. But they largely ignore a more fundamental question: why did the emergence of new forms of religious heterodoxy during the Reformations spark such violent upheaval and nearly topple the old political order? In this book, Daniel Nexon demonstrates that the answer lies in understanding how the mobilization of transnational religious movements intersects with--and can destabilize--imperial forms of rule. Taking a fresh look at the pivotal events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries--including the Schmalkaldic War, the Dutch Revolt, and the Thirty Years' War--Nexon argues that early modern "composite" political communities had more in common with empires than with modern states, and introduces a theory of imperial dynamics that explains how religious movements altered Europe's balance of power. He shows how the Reformations gave rise to crosscutting religious networks that undermined the ability of early modern European rulers to divide and contain local resistance to their authority. In doing so, the Reformations produced a series of crises in the European order and crippled the Habsburg bid for hegemony. Nexon's account of these processes provides a theoretical and analytic framework that not only challenges the way international relations scholars think about state formation and international change, but enables us to better understand global politics today.

[I]nvaluable.... the kind of book that is bound to trigger debate and it invites (if not beckons) its readers to pursue further the ideas discussed on its pages. --Emilian R. Kavalski, *Canadian Journal of History* From the Back Cover "With this book, Daniel Nexon brings an assertive and iconoclastic voice to an already vibrant conversation among international relations theorists about how the modern international system took shape in early modern Europe. His stress on the combustible power of religious ideas and his innovative model of power and authority amount to a sophisticated and creative explanation of the international politics of this period and indeed of any period--including, he arrestingly argues, our own."--Daniel Philpott, University of Notre Dame "Daniel Nexon has woven a magisterial account of the impact of the Reformation on international politics. Using network theory and institutionalist analysis, he deftly crafts a composite theory that is relevant not only to the understanding of international change but also to the study of composite polities, empires, and nation-states. His study, furthermore, suggests how religion and institutional change can braid together to produce fundamental challenges to the existing international order. In so doing, he not only provides insights into the past but illuminates contemporary processes as well."--Hendrik Spruyt, Northwestern University "In its depth of theoretical insight and subtlety of reasoning, few recent books in international relations and history rival what Daniel Nexon has accomplished in this impressive piece of scholarship. The book's fresh conceptualization opens new vistas on the past experiences, present conditions, and future trajectories of international relations. No theoretically inclined student can afford bypassing Nexon's challenging ideas."--Peter J. Katzenstein, Cornell University "This is an extremely impressive book. Nexon not only illuminates a crucial and controversial moment in the history of international relations, but he does so in the context of making a vital theoretical and methodological contribution to the field. This is a very important study, and a superb piece of work."--Richard Little, University of Bristol "This book makes a significant contribution not only to international relations theory, but also to comparative politics. Nexon develops an innovative and productive way of viewing changing patterns of international relations, and he helps us to transcend the often-artificial divide between domestic and international politics. He also successfully transcends the debate between materialists and idealists. This book should be of interest to a broad audience."--Mlada Bukovansky, Smith College About the Author Daniel H. Nexon is assistant professor of government and foreign service at Georgetown University.