To 1848

Godsey, William D., and Petr Mat'a, eds. The Habsburg Monarchy as a Fiscal-Military State

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The concept of the Fiscal-Military State (hereafter FMS) posits major changes in the character of the European state after about 1650. Unlike its predecessors, the FMS depended on excise taxes that could be increased without burdening influential subjects. It borrowed money not by short-term bankers' loans but by long-term loans at low rates. The FMS also gained greater central control over a war machine that still depended on great nobles and merchant-contractors. England was the model FMS, while France, the Dutch Republic, and Sweden are part of the discussion, but the Habsburg monarchy is seldom mentioned. Hence, the agenda for the book at hand: to include the monarchy into an ongoing discussion and to sharpen the concept of the FMS (2).

Several chapters discuss Habsburg military organization, largely supported by the estates of the monarchy's "core provinces" (three in Bohemia, five in Austria). István Kenyeres and Géza Pálffy (ch. 4) trace the development, from the 1540s, of the Military Frontier against the Ottomans. They suggest that "rudiments [of the FMS] may clearly be observed" (123) in the 20,000-man garrison army, paid for by the Austrian and Bohemian estates but controlled by the central government.

Hungary's national parliament balked at revenue increases, but, as András Oross shows (ch. 6), magnates stepped into the breach. Military wages were paid by Austrian or Bohemian provinces, but the magnate billeted and provisioned at their expense regiments that often took the names of their patrons.

The duty to defend the Holy Roman Empire was a liability, but, as Peter Rauscher explains (ch. 9), there were benefits as well. In the Ottoman wars, until 1606, the Diet voted hefty subsidies for Hungary. In later conflicts, imperial armies raised in various ways marched to the aid of Vienna. The monarchy also enjoyed privileged access to Germany's recruiting grounds and its urban financial centers.

Army regiments recruited volunteers, while provinces (later cantons) organized conscription. It has been suggested the monarchy had difficulty attracting volunteers, but from an analysis of muster lists for 1740–92, Ilya Berkovich (ch. 13) finds that enlistment remained steady and rose to a peak early in the War of Austrian Succession, when survival of the monarchy "hung in the balance" (313).

Horst Carl (ch. 10) shows how the purchase of a regiment enabled a Swabian knightly family to rise to the rank of an imperial count. The proprietor was not responsible for his regiment's expenses, but reimbursement was slow, and he had to maintain his men in the interim, likely with help from silent partners. The system thus allowed Vienna to draw new lenders into its expanding network of credit.

Several other essays deal with the monarchy's finances. Thomas Winkelbauer (ch. 5) discusses collaboration among the four government agencies that were able to obtain a huge increase in revenue between 1683 and 1718: the Aulic Chamber, the Aulic War Council, and the Bohemian and Austrian Chanceries, responsible for negotiations with the estates. The General War Commissary, an official whose role Winkelbauer brings to light, prepared the agenda for their bi-weekly meetings.

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Veronika Hyden-Hanscho (ch. 11) shows how the former Spanish Netherlands offered a favorable environment for corporate credit. Hainault's estates objected to a transfer of revenue to Vienna but got the transfer reversed in return for a large loan at 3.5 and 4 percent. In Amsterdam or London, Vienna would have paid 5 percent or more.

Petr Mat'a (ch. 8) stresses the transactional character of negotiations with the estates. The government was represented by the agencies mentioned above, and the estates knew how to play one agency off against another. From 1763, Leopold I required heads of the agencies to convene prior to making a request of the estates. Suggested quotas for allotting the burden were not followed, but the discussion of quotas led the provinces "to experience their liabilities as a common onus" (209).

Moravia's estates had no fiscal infrastructure. After 1650, under pressure from the government, they approved a new valuation of serf land, a "chimney tax" for noble properties, and a Provincial Chamber to collect and audit taxes. As Jiŕi David explains (ch. 7), Vienna's demands created new relationships between Vienna and Moravia, and between the estates and the people of Moravia.

From 1706, the Vienna City Bank guaranteed long-term loans for the crown. Maria Theresa relieved the Austrian and Bohemian provinces of the burden of provisioning and billeting troops in return for their consent to much larger Contributions, each extending for ten years. William Godsey (ch. 12) finds that reform of the Contribution enhanced the borrowing capacity of the estates. By 1763, one-third of the monarchy's 285-million-florin debt was in City Bank loans, and another third in long-term loans guaranteed by the provincial estates.

This is an important collection, both for the quality of the essays and for the threads of conversation among the authors about common issues. They make a compelling case that any discussion of Europe's great powers during this period must include the monarchy. But was it an FMS? Hamish Scott (ch. 1) finds parallels between the monarchy and the United Kingdom as an FMS, according to current views—particularly in the shift toward long-term debt backed by corporate credit. If Austria's core provinces played a greater role in military and financial affairs than did the separate realms of the UK, Hyden-Hanscho points out that an FMS need not correspond to a "reified centralized state" (251).

Alternatively, Guy Rowlands (ch. 2) points out that Spain, France, and the Habsburg Netherlands already had forms of long-term debt during the sixteenth century. He prefers to speak of a fiscal-military "constitution" that developed through stages from around 1500 to 1700. For Peter Wilson (ch. 3), one who looks beyond the boundaries of sovereign states sees the limits of the FMS concept. The growing scale of conflict from around 1530 to 1830 was made possible not just by internal development within states but also by a "multipolar system" of mutually recognized states (86).

It is clear that the monarchy was not a centralized state. Wealthy subjects would not have accepted the government loans levied on them if the loans had not been guaranteed by organs of local government (the estates) or a public agency like the City Bank. Some might think of provincial estates as anachronistic in the eighteenth century. But this was not the opinion of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, president of the Aulic Chamber: "with the exception of a few peacetime operations the entire credit of the most serene *Erzhaus* has been grounded on provincial estates or other Puissances intermediares" (267).

To be sure, the estates were under pressure from demands by a well-informed and well-articulated government bureaucracy. There is much to be said for the familiar idea that the peculiar strength of the Habsburg monarchy lay in a habit of what sixteenth-century officials called *Beratschlagung*, or consultation, a painfully slow process by which multiple conflicting interests could often be reconciled—just enough.

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