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The Thirty Years' War, the "General Crisis," and the Origins of a Standing Professional Army in the Habsburg Monarchy

JOHN A. MEARS

ONE of the most striking features of seventeenth-century state building was the formation of standing armies. Kings and princes throughout Europe, responding to conditions of almost constant strife, were compelled to transform ineffective feudal levies and unruly bands of mercenaries into regularized bodies of professional troops, making ever larger and more costly military establishments instruments of rational foreign policy rather than the preserves of the old nobility or freebooting *condottieri*.¹ In building armies of the new type, European monarchs had to surmount determined opposition from two sources: the local representative bodies (estates) which were reluctant to grant rulers the powers of taxation necessary for the maintenance of permanent troops, and the mercenary colonels who were expected to relinquish their rights as independent recruiting masters and subordinate themselves to the state.² By the middle decades of the seventeenth century, various territorial sovereigns were successfully mastering this opposition to their political authority and were able to take an essential step in the direction of true standing armies by routinely keeping strong military forces under their command at the conclusion of a campaign, thereby diminishing their reliance on contingents approved by the provincial estates or soldiers hastily raised by private entrepreneurs to meet specific emergencies.³ In the case of France, which was beginning to set the fashion in European warfare, a small but firmly established army was

1. For a discussion of the characteristics of standing armies and an analysis of the general conditions that provoked their establishment, see John A. Mears, "The Emergence of the Standing Professional Army in Seventeenth-Century Europe," *Social Science Quarterly* 50 (1969): 106-15.

2. Eugen von Frauenholz, *Deutsche Kriegs- und Heeresgeschichte* (Munich, 1927), 98.

3. Hans Meier-Welcker, *Deutsches Heereswesen in Wandel der Zeit* (Frankfurt a.M., 1956), 9.

kept on a permanent war footing by absorbing most of Louis XIV's officers into the gendarmerie and six infantry units that endured after the Peace of the Pyrennes (1659). Because this technique enabled the Sun King to mobilize his field armies swiftly in 1666, it was repeated on a much larger scale at the end of the War of Devolution in 1668.⁴ Concurrently, in England, a standing army emerged out of the remnants of Oliver Cromwell's New Model. With the Restoration of 1660, Charles II was permitted to retain five regiments, totaling about 3,000 men, to serve as royal guards and to garrison his fortresses.⁵

The simultaneous appearance of such practices in the German-speaking world has encouraged historians to view the Thirty Years' War as a critical turning point in the development of the standing professional army throughout Central Europe. Here Brandenburg-Prussia offered an impressive example. With the peace settlement of 1648, the Great Elector managed to retain about 4,000 men under arms, a sufficient number to garrison his fortresses. Then, at the end of the Northern War (1655–60), he preserved a sizeable field force by holding nearly 12,000 common soldiers and many experienced officers in his service.⁶ Understandably, scholars have investigated in detail the origins of the Prussian military system.⁷ They have also examined the establishment of a *miles perpetuus* in a number of other German principalities.⁸ Yet they have written very little on the organization of permanent military forces in the Habsburg monarchy,⁹ a surprising omission given Hajo Holborn's assessment that the Aus-

4. Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegkunst in Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1920), 4: 262, 271. Particular credit for French advances belongs to Michel Le Tellier. See Louis André, *Michel Le Tellier et l'organisation de l'armée monarchique* (Paris, 1906).

5. Colonel Clifford Walton, *History of the British Standing Army, A.D. 1660–1700* (London, 1896), 1–14.

6. Sidney B. Fay, "The Beginning of the Standing Army in Prussia," *American Historical Review* 22 (1917): 768–73.

7. The standard work on the Prussian army is Curt Jany, *Geschichte der königlichen preussischen Armee*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1928–33).

8. An analysis of efforts to organize standing armies in Württemberg, Hesse, Saxony, and Bavaria can be found in F. L. Carsten, *Princes and Parliaments in Germany from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1959), 74–99, 182–83, 239–40, 397–403, 409–10.

9. While few projects have been completed or are even being planned on the Austrian military establishment prior to the reign of Maria Theresa, a number of informative monographs and journal articles have been written by Thomas M. Barker. See his *Double Eagle and Crescent: Vienna's Second Turkish Siege in Its Historical Setting* (Albany, N.Y., 1967), which contains a basic description of the Austrian army in the late seventeenth century; and *Army, Aristocracy, Monarchy: Essays on War, Society and Government in Austria, 1618–1780* (New York, 1982).

trian army had already become by the mid-seventeenth century "the greatest new centralizing institution in the Habsburg realm."¹⁰ Such inattention has been lamentable, even though it can be explained largely in terms of the linguistic and paleographic challenges facing any student of the monarchy which R. J. W. Evans has described as "a complex and subtly-balanced organism, not a 'state' but a mildly centripetal agglutination of bewilderingly heterogeneous elements."¹¹

THE QUESTION OF ORIGINS CONSIDERED

Existing scholarly literature depicts the imperial and royal army as the product of a slow and uneven growth over a period of several centuries.¹² Walter Hummelberger has traced its ultimate origins back to organizational measures implemented by Maximilian I (1493–1519) at the beginning of the sixteenth century,¹³ while Eugen Heischmann argued that the initial moves toward the creation of a standing army in Austria were made soon after 1526.¹⁴ Certainly the idea of such a force appeared as early as the reign of Ferdinand I (1526–64, emperor from 1558), who had about 9,000 men at his disposal in 1564.¹⁵ During Ferdinand's lifetime German princes, influenced by the example of the Turkish janissary corps, had begun to recognize that it would be more efficient and economical to maintain troops over the winter instead of paying them off at the first snowfall. Unable to extract regular financial provisions from either the *Reichstag* or the *Landtage* of their hereditary domains, the Austrian Habsburgs were compelled to recruit fresh troops for each of their campaigns. At last, in 1598, Rudolf II (1576–1612) managed to hold together three regiments of infantry as mid-winter garrison units for key fortifications on his southern frontier.¹⁶ Eager to mount offensive operations during the

10. Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 3 vols. (New York, 1959–69), 2: 47.

11. R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550–1700* (Oxford, 1979), 447. Evans concedes that the army is "a neglected subject," but nonetheless mentions it only briefly in his effort to explain the rise of the Habsburg monarchy. See vii–viii, 149.

12. A three-stage schema—the establishment of basic institutions (1522–1625), the development of the standing army (1625–1743), the era of reform (1744–1815)—has been proposed by Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (Lafayette, Ind., 1976), 1.

13. Walter Hummelberger, "Der Dreissigjährige Krieg und die Entstehung des Kaiserlichen Heeres," in *Unser Heer: 300 Jahre Österreichisches Soldatentum in Krieg und Frieden* (Vienna, 1963), 1, 28, 34. When referring to 300 years, Hummelberger had in mind the period 1618–1918.

14. Eugen Heischmann, *Die Anfänge des stehenden Heeres in Österreich* (Vienna, 1925), 222–23.

15. Oskar Regele, *Der österreichische Hofkriegsrat, 1556–1848* (Vienna, 1949), 17.

16. Major Alphon Freiherrn von Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht*, 5 vols. (Vienna,

months of cold weather when Ottoman field forces typically withdrew from the great Alföld, the flat, open plain of central Hungary, he was then able to support several regiments on a more or less permanent footing in the last years of the Turkish war that ended in 1606 with the Treaty of Zsitva-Torok.¹⁷ From that time until the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618, a few mercenary soldiers were always in the service of the Austrian Habsburgs, even in uneventful years.¹⁸ Yet these troop contingents, usually small in number and supported exclusively by the emperor's own meager resources, did not constitute a genuine standing army. They were retained principally as a defensive measure against the threat of Turkish incursions, and the Habsburgs routinely disbanded existing regiments and recruited new ones as the exigencies of the moment dictated.¹⁹ The practice of feeding replacements into established units remained foreign to the military thinking of the sixteenth century.²⁰ In any case, centralized administrative institutions capable of sustaining an elaborate military establishment had yet to be created in the *Erblande*.

These conditions changed abruptly during the Thirty Years' War, when many German rulers moved beyond personal guards and garrison troops to the formation of standing armies.²¹ Within the Habsburg monarchy, regiments raised by Albrecht von Wallenstein (1583–1634) became after his death the nucleus of a permanent military force. The very length of the war facilitated this transformation by demonstrating the irrationality of dismissing troops each fall when a renewal of fighting would necessitate their recruitment again the following spring. The Austrian Habsburgs had faced similar military requirements when confronted with the Turkish danger at the end of the sixteenth century. But after 1618, the pressure to maintain unprecedented numbers of soldiers in the field for a full three decades compelled the Vienna court to preserve at least a few regiments from one campaigning season to

1898–1905), 1: 30. The Wrede volumes contain a great deal of information about the early history of the Austrian army, although much of it is presented in an undigested form.

17. Heischmann, 222.

18. Jürg Zimmermann, *Militärverwaltung und Heeresaufbringung in Österreich bis 1806*, vol. 3 of *Handbuch zur Deutschen Militärgeschichte, 1648–1939* (Frankfurt a. M., 1965), 47.

19. Wrede, 1: 30; and Hermann Meynert, *Geschichte der k. k. österreichischen Armee*, 4 vols. (Vienna, 1854), 3: 77.

20. Fritz Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser and His Work Force*, Beiheft no. 47 and no. 48 of *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1964–65), 47: 317–18.

21. Meynert, 3: 77.

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the next. These quasi-permanent units formed the basis out of which a genuine standing army could eventually grow. It is significant that several of the regiments organized during the Thirty Years' War continued to exist until the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy, so that the army organized by Wallenstein in the late 1620s was never completely disbanded until 1918.²²

Shortly after the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, Ferdinand III (1637–57) responded to the lessons of the recent past by establishing the first peacetime field army in the history of the monarchy. He issued a decree in 1649 announcing that of the fifty-two regiments raised during the great war, nine of infantry, including both pike and musket, and ten of cavalry (one of dragoons and nine of cuirassiers) were not to be dissolved with the rest, but were to be maintained on an enduring basis.²³ Here was the first official recognition of the principle that a standing army had become essential to the security of the *Erblände*. Not that a systematically organized and disciplined fighting force became an immediate reality. On the contrary, only after determined efforts by the Vienna court's leading generals, most notably Count Raimondo Montecuccoli (1609–80) and Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736), did the Habsburg emperors, confronted simultaneously with the aggressive policies of Louis XIV and a resurgence of the Turkish menace, develop a professional military establishment on a large scale.²⁴ Nonetheless, experts have come to regard 1649—the year of Ferdinand III's timely decree—as the birth date of a standing army in Austria.²⁵

THE “GENERAL CRISIS” THESIS APPLIED

Why did the events of the Thirty Years' War, which precipitated the decree of 1649, prove to be so decisive in shaping the origins of the imperial and royal army? An illuminating context within which to draw together the different facets of this problem has been provided

22. Wrede, 3: 107; and Heischmann, 9, 222. Heischmann stresses the continuity of the k.k. army from 1618 onward.

23. Thomas Fellner and Heinrich Kretschmayr, *Die Österreichische Zentralverwaltung*, 2 parts (Vienna, 1907), pt. 1, vol. 1: 252; and Wrede, 1: 13.

24. E. C. Hellbling, *Österreichische Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsgeschichte* (Vienna, 1956), 246–48; and Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1525–1918* (Berkeley, 1974), 132–33.

25. For a representative sample of opinions, see Rothenberg, 1; Hummelberger, 3; Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, 4; George v. Alten, *Handbuch für Heer und Floote*, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1914), 6: 922; and Anton Graf Bossi Fedrigotti, *Österreichs Blutweg* (Berlin, 1939), 11.

by advocates of what H. R. Trevor-Roper once labeled “the general crisis of the seventeenth century.”²⁶ No question in early modern European historiography has generated more controversy in recent decades than the “crisis” thesis, but a promising attempt to bring order out of chaos has been made by Theodore K. Rabb, who proposed an overview that might serve as the foundation of a viable synthesis.²⁷ Constructing his own chronological and analytical framework for understanding the period from 1500 to 1700, he has pictured the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a time of chronic tension, uncertainty, and conflict induced by the effects of political centralization, overseas exploration, religious rebellion, monetary inflation, and population expansion that became apparent in European civilization in the years around 1500.²⁸

Although Rabb insists that the mounting difficulties of the age were not confined to politics, he views the location of sovereign authority in the various European states as the dominant issue. Long-standing divisions over the balance between central and regional authority, between monarchical power and aristocratic privilege, reached an ultimate crisis in the destructive fury of the Thirty Years’ War, and in the rash of revolts and revolutions that broke out in the 1640s and

26. Consult Professor Trevor-Roper’s article with that title in *Past and Present* 16 (1959): 31–64. See also E. J. Hobsbawm, “The Overall Crisis of the European Economy in the Seventeenth Century,” *Past and Present* 5 (1954): 33–53, for the initial formulation of this concept. A convenient collection of seminal essays is contained in Trevor Aston, ed., *Crisis in Europe, 1560–1660* (London, 1965). To this volume there is a sequel: Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith, eds., *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1978). While spirited debate has encouraged specialists to formulate a variety of provocative theories about the meaning of the seventeenth century, recurring discussion has remained largely inconclusive, sustaining the observations of J. H. Elliott in “Revolution and Continuity in Early Modern Europe,” *Past and Present* 42 (1969): 35–36.

27. Theodore K. Rabb, *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1975). An excellent summary of the historiography related to the “general crisis” controversy can be found in chapters 2 and 3. Representative reviews of Rabb’s book have been written by H. G. Koenigsberger in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 27 Aug. 1976, 1057; and by Geoffrey Parker in *History* 62 (1977): 316–17. Rabb’s discussion of art has received noticeably heavy criticism. See the reaction of Francis Haskell in the *New York Review of Books* 24, no. 4 (17 Mar. 1977): 8–10. Professor Koenigsberger argued that the Rabb volume is weak in answering the question of how the “crisis” ended, but he nonetheless saw Rabb’s approach as “the most ambitious attempt yet made to see the seventeenth century as a whole.”

28. Rabb, 35–37. Here Rabb’s assessments dovetail with those of William H. McNeill, who, in his relentless search for broad patterns, stressed the importance of the decades on either side of 1500 as a fundamental dividing point in European history. See *The Shape of European History* (New York, 1974), 122–27.

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1650s. According to Professor Rabb, the middle third of the seventeenth century was a period of discontinuity when Europe experienced alterations more rapid in pace, more extensive in scope, and more decisive in impact than at any other time between the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution.²⁹ In the aftermath of this brief but tumultuous epoch, the most deep-rooted conflicts over authority were finally resolved as the pervasive atmosphere of bewilderment and upheaval gave way to a sense of comparative stability and resolution that prevailed in the decades just prior to 1700.³⁰

What makes Professor Rabb's approach particularly relevant to the problem at hand is his emphasis upon the place of standing professional armies in the gradual resolution of the seventeenth-century "crisis."³¹ He has recognized the close interrelationship between the consolidation of the centralized state and the formation of permanent military establishments in an age when the cost and scale of warfare were escalating rapidly,³² and suggests that one plausible explanation for the transition to relative tranquility in the mid-seventeenth century can be found in widespread revulsion against the unbridled violence of the Thirty Years' War.³³ Appalled by the excesses of ruthless, though

29. Rabb, 3-4, 32-34, 71-72. The notion of an abrupt shift in direction around the middle of the seventeenth century has been a part of the "crisis" thesis from the very outset. Consider the comments in Trevor-Roper, 31-36. More recently, Lewis W. Spitz, in constructing a case for the internal unity and cohesion of the period 1300-1650, found support in Rabb's formulations for his contention that the mid-seventeenth century stood as the *terminus ad quem* for the age of Renaissance and Reformation. See "Periodization in History: Renaissance and Reformation," in Charles F. Delzell, ed., *The Future of History* (Nashville, 1977), 209.

30. The "struggle for stability" theme parallels William H. McNeill's insightful overview of the seventeenth century. McNeill has depicted the years around 1650 as marking the start of a new era, when "institutions and ideas settled toward an effective equilibrium" through a series of tacit compromises that softened, disguised, or repressed the disruptive conflicts of the Reformation era. See *The Rise of the West* (Chicago, 1963), 654-55, 674-93.

31. Here Rabb has relied heavily upon ideas summarized in Michael Roberts, "The Military Revolution, 1560-1660," in *Essays in Swedish History* (Minneapolis, 1967), 195-225.

32. Rabb, 35, 60-61, 71. The essential element in this process of interaction was the incorporation of the army into the state as a lasting institution which, if it was composed for the most part of foreign mercenaries, nonetheless should be linked firmly to the prince whom it served. The connection between political and military forms was especially close in Brandenburg-Prussia where the needs of the army determined in large part "the institutional framework, economic activity and even social organization," and where, as has often been said, the army made the state. See Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945* (New York, 1964), xiv, 14. But the relationship between the two existed throughout western and Central Europe in the seventeenth century.

33. Rabb, 75-77, 119-21, 124, 145. This hypothesis, when considered by itself, does not seem entirely persuasive, at least as Rabb has presented it in his disappointingly brief concluding observations.

desultory fighting, exhausted by their prolonged and increasingly unproductive conflicts, kings and princes struggled to enhance their bureaucratic control over armed forces operating more or less free from political direction.³⁴ Their success was a primary factor in the moderation of warfare following the Peace of Westphalia, although Rabb has clearly delineated other possible reasons for the abrupt resolution of the “general crisis,” including a decline in religious fervor, the development of bureaucracies as “an irresistible instrument of restraint,” the new political roles and social attitudes of Europe’s aristocracies that brought them into alliance with central governments, and the shifting objectives of interstate relations toward the end of the seventeenth century.³⁵

The military ramifications of the Rabb thesis are clearly illustrated by events in the Habsburg monarchy beginning with the politico-religious crisis that engulfed Central Europe when tensions between centralized and regional authority dating back to the reign of Maximilian I culminated in the outbreak of the Bohemian revolt.³⁶ Initially, Emperor Ferdinand II (1619–37) could not prevent the rebellion of 1618 from spreading to his other lands. In rising against their Habsburg masters, the Bohemian estates (*Stände*) found a ready ally in Bethlen Gabor, the quasi-autonomous prince of Transylvania who successfully occupied royal Hungary in 1620. Meanwhile, to the west, armies raised by the Protestant estates of Upper and Lower Austria fought alongside the Bohemian forces against troops of the ruling house. Suppression of these local revolts in the period 1620–28 eventually redounded to the advantage of the Vienna court, permitting Ferdinand to advance the cause of governmental centralization and Counter-Reformation Catholicism at the expense of the provincial estates in Austria and Bohemia.³⁷

These clashes seem to fit Professor Rabb’s definition of “crisis”—a brief interlude of intensified conflict followed by a gradual easing of persistent tensions and endemic strife. With Ferdinand’s triumph in the *Erblände*, the long-standing struggle between monarchical power

34. For a more extended consideration of this theme, consult Michael Howard, *War in European History* (New York, 1976), 49–55. Also see McNeill, *The Shape of European History*, 145–49.

35. Rabb, 121–24, 148–49.

36. Hermann Wiesflecker, *Kaiser Maximilian I*, 5 vols. (Munich, 1971–86), 2: 175–201; 3: 228–54.

37. Instructive questions about this problem are raised by Hans Sturmberger, especially in his penetrating synthesis entitled *Kaiser Ferdinand II und das Problem des Absolutismus in Österreich* (Vienna, 1957).

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and local sovereignty shifted to the larger stage of the Empire, where the perennial contest between emperor and princes came to a head with the Edict of Restitution, issued in the aftermath of Wallenstein's military victories over Christian IV of Denmark (25 March 1629). Professor Robert Bireley has suggested that the seventeenth-century "crisis" within the Empire occurred during the period 1629–35.³⁸ Taking this perspective a step further, "crisis" then engulfed Europe as a whole, for the time span embracing the final years of the great war (1635–48) was shaped by the contest between Habsburg and Bourbon for continental hegemony as well as that cluster of revolts which have preoccupied leading proponents of the "crisis" theory.

THE IMPACT OF THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR ASSESSED

Events following the initial crisis in Bohemia had dramatized Ferdinand II's military weakness. At the outset of this conflict between ruler and elites, a desperate emperor successfully defended his cause only by relying upon loans and troop contingents provided by Spain and his German allies. When his situation again became critical in the spring of 1625 as a consequence of Denmark's involvement in the war, he reluctantly accepted Wallenstein's proposal to raise an entire army on his behalf, an offer he had turned down the previous year.³⁹ Ferdinand had already subordinated the Bohemian estates to Habsburg authority, placing those lands under the supervision of the Bohemian court chancellor in Vienna. The existence of Wallenstein's army enabled him to legalize the new status of the Bohemian estates through the *Verneuerte Landesordnung* of 1627, a devastating blow to their local privileges. This decree substantially augmented the power of the sovereign, although it failed to simplify existing channels of administration. Article XII strictly prohibited military recruitment without imperial consent, making violations punishable by death, a provision which enabled the Vienna court to protect Wallenstein's potential manpower pool.⁴⁰ Similar ordinances were issued in Silesia in 1630 and Moravia in 1636, allowing Ferdinand to assume direction over all military matters through the *Hofkriegsrat* without being forced to op-

38. Professor Bireley presented this view in an unpublished paper entitled "Ideology and Politics in the Thirty Years' War: The Importance of the Peace of Prague (1635)," which he read at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Dallas, Texas (December 1977).

39. Redlich, 228–29.

40. Fellner and Kretschmayr, pt. 1, vol. 1: 250; Zimmermann, 50.

erate through the provincial estates.⁴¹ While failing to gain comparable control over royal Hungary, the emperor did make the best of his reliance on Wallenstein by significantly reducing the power of the estates in his Austrian domains.⁴²

In moving toward political circumstances supportive of a standing army, Ferdinand II thus had made an indispensable breakthrough, for he and his predecessors had not been the sole military authority in their loosely-jointed possessions. Representatives of the estates in each *Landtag*, whose influence over military affairs reached a peak in the first two decades of the seventeenth century,⁴³ had regulated the enlistment and quartering of troops, and retained extensive police powers within their respective territories. Their rights in this regard had severely hampered the development of a permanent military establishment because, in addition to the recruitment of mercenaries, the only reliable means that the emperors had had to replenish their forces was through the conscription of native soldiers, which had involved the approval of the local estates. The *Landtage* had also acquired the right to raise regiments and commission officers of their own. Hence provincial forces largely independent of centralized control existed alongside those of the sovereign prince.⁴⁴ In the Austrian and Bohemian lands, the estates had been obligated to provide military assistance to the emperor at their own expense whenever he was attacked by a foreign enemy.⁴⁵ But these levies, as well as the Hungarian *insurrectio*, requiring every nobleman to lead his vassals to war in time of need, had proven of limited value because they served for a very short time and only in defense of their own particular lands. The local estates had considered it contrary to their privileges to be compelled to perform military services outside the borders of their own territories or beyond the scope of their defined obligations.⁴⁶ After 1627, Ferdinand utilized the *Verneuerte Landesordnung* to alter decisively the balance of power between the Vienna court and rebellious noblemen by eliminating

41. Harry Schwarz, *The Imperial Privy Council in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1943), 28.

42. For an extensive treatment of the strife in Upper Austria, consult Hans Sturmberger, *Adam Graff Herberstorff: Herrschaft und Freiheit im konfessionellen Zeitalter* (Vienna, 1976), chaps. 3 and 4.

43. A. F. Pribram, "Die niederösterreichischen Stände und die Krone in Zeit Kaiser Leopold I.," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 14 (1893): 595.

44. Fellner and Kretschmayr, pt. 1, vol. 1: 249.

45. Hellbling, 245.

46. Meynert, 3: 42.

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these military prerogatives in Austria and Bohemia, and reserving to the crown the exclusive right to maintain armed forces capable of offensive field action. With reference to his Bohemian lands, the emperor did not hesitate to declare on 11 June 1635 that the “*ius belli ac armorum*” belonged unconditionally to him.⁴⁷

Besides humbling their provincial estates (which retained the right to sanction all direct taxes necessary for the support of permanent troops) the Austrian Habsburgs had to overcome resistance from those mercenary colonels who had grown accustomed to extracting advantageous contracts from the Vienna court. The Habsburgs had always been free to hire soldiers independently of the estates, but with limited financial means available for such purposes, they could only recruit these soldiers in the face of an impending conflict and usually had to disband them as soon as possible. Throughout the sixteenth century, the emperors, like other continental rulers, had relied again and again on experienced *condottieri* who assembled, trained, and paid a fixed number of men according to the terms of their recruiting patents. In return, patent-holders had received a definite sum of money for each battle-ready soldier, and certain privileges, including the right to command their regiments in person and appoint all officers. Such privileges had invariably circumscribed the power of the emperor over the troops raised in his name, and had left the mercenary colonels virtually sovereign in their own regiments.⁴⁸

Just as Wallenstein's successes provided the Austrian Habsburgs with the armed might to diminish the autonomy of provincial estates more inclined than ever before to bargain with the Vienna court because of the anarchic conditions spawned by the Thirty Years' War, so his free-lance methods ultimately limited the independence of the mercenary colonels who had enjoyed unprecedented opportunities throughout the 1620s. Ironically, this gifted soldier of fortune strengthened the military power of the monarchy by bringing the old-fashioned private contract system to a point of ultimate refinement. As a leading exponent of general contracting—the raising and provisioning of whole armies for profit—he managed to subordinate to his will all of his regimental officers, who were no longer essential for troop recruitment and who often commanded units that they

47. Quoted in both Zimmermann, 50, and Fellner and Kretschmayr, pt. 1, vol. 1: 250.

48. Hellbling, 245; Fellner and Kretschmayr, pt. 1, vol. 1: 250–51.

themselves had not actually raised.⁴⁹ Until 1634 Wallenstein's forces were imperial only in name. After his hurried recall to the imperial standard in December 1631, the extraordinary civil and military power that he was able to exercise over his newly organized regiments allowed him to function much like an independent sovereign ally.⁵⁰ Yet the very fact that he possessed unchallenged authority over his men and carefully retained the right of all nominations, in particular the appointment and dismissal of colonels, was important for the future development of the Austrian army. It transformed the relationship between the regiment and its colonel (whose commission was always signed by the emperor). Regiments no longer belonged to their recruiting masters,⁵¹ but to Wallenstein, and they did not invariably disappear when their commanders were killed in battle or dismissed from his service.⁵²

Wallenstein's unwillingness to confine his activities to the military sphere finally proved to be his undoing. Seeking to build his own territorial state, he directly disobeyed the orders of Ferdinand II by negotiating with the Swedes throughout 1633.⁵³ With the murder of the emperor's dangerously self-directed and apparently disloyal field general on 25 February 1634, the Vienna court seized the opportunity to create out of the remnants of his mercenary army some genuinely imperial regiments, using the precedent set by Wallenstein himself in subordinating the colonels to their commander-in-chief.⁵⁴ In 1634 that supreme commander was the young heir to the throne, the future Ferdinand III (1637–57), then King of Hungary, whose official instructions empowered him to dismiss officers for insubordination, and pointedly left the nomination of colonels as well as troop recruitment within the purview of the emperor.⁵⁵ Ferdinand II continued Wallen-

49. Redlich, 226–27. Discussion of the problem of mercenaries and the growth of the modern state can be found in V. G. Kiernan, "Foreign Mercenaries and Absolute Monarchy," in Aston, 140–49.

50. Hans Pirchegger, *Geschichte und Kulturleben Deutschösterreichs*, 3 vols. (Vienna, 1931), 2: 141; and Anton Grindley, "Waldsteins Vertrag mit dem Kaiser bei der Übernahme des Zweiten Generalats," *Abhandlung der Böhmisches Geschichtsverein der Wissenschaft* 7 (1889): 9–10. See also Moriz Ritter, "Das Kontributionssystem Wallensteins," *Historische Zeitschrift* 90 (1903): 193–249; and V. Loewe, *Die Organisation und Verwaltung der Wallensteinischen Heere* (Freiburg i. Br., 1895).

51. For a detailed description of colonels as the proprietors of regiments, see Redlich, 211–21.

52. Meynert, 3: 76–77.

53. Grindley, 264; and Barker, *Army, Aristocracy, Monarchy*, 82.

54. Hellbling, 245; and Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, 167.

55. Peter Broucek, "Erzherzog Leopold Wilhelm und der Oberbefehl über das kaiserliche

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stein's practice of not automatically dismissing a regiment when its colonel resigned or died, but of sometimes appointing a new colonel with all the rights and obligations associated with the position.⁵⁶ Several regiments thus remained in existence for a longer period of time than had previously been the case, and into these standing units the emperor enrolled contingents furnished by the estates, thereby withdrawing them from local influence.⁵⁷

In addition, since general contracting had encouraged multiple ownership, Ferdinand II issued an order in 1634 prohibiting colonels from possessing more than a single regiment. This order was followed in 1643 by an imperial decree stipulating that only officers who actually served in the field could command troop contingents.⁵⁸ By then the relationship between the emperor and his military subordinates had been completely reversed. At the outset of the Thirty Years' War, Ferdinand II had under contract a number of colonels who possessed regiments, while at its conclusion his successor had a number of regiments commanded by colonels who were more responsive than ever before to the will of the Vienna court.⁵⁹ Inspired by the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, Wallenstein had introduced into the imperial service the principles of unconditional subordination and obedience that made possible the development of a hierarchical structure necessary to handle an army of 100,000 men. In so doing, he had moved toward the creation of a modern command system and professional officer corps. Preoccupied with training and discipline, he had instituted rewards for bravery and harsh punishment for disorder, thievery, and cowardice. Small wonder that soldiers like Montecuccoli, who had learned the art of war fighting in the ranks of his army, became the military leaders of the next generation.⁶⁰

Heer im Jahre 1645," in *Aus Drei Jahrhunderten: Beiträge zur österreichischen Heeres- und Kriegsgeschichte*, in *Schriften des Heeresgeschichtlichen Museums in Wien (Militärwissenschaftliches Institut)*, no. 4 (Vienna, 1969), 9.

56. Wrede, 1: 30.

57. Zimmermann, 50.

58. Wrede, 1: 60; and Redlich, 289–90. Motivated by the intensity of the Thirty Years' War in its final stages to place their soldiers on a permanent war footing and subordinate field commanders to centralized direction, princely governments throughout Europe implemented similar regulations after 1634.

59. Wrede, 3: 107.

60. Hummelberger, 37; Meynert, 3: 70, 75–77; and Golo Mann, *Wallenstein: His Life*, trans. Charles Kessler (New York, 1976), 586, 592.

THE POST-CRISIS MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS DESCRIBED

The mercurial Wallenstein, then, lent unintended assistance to the Austrian Habsburgs in their efforts to overcome opposition from the provincial *Landtage* and subdue the mercenary colonels. The resulting stabilization of power within the monarchy did not, however, bring a complete triumph to the Vienna court, for the circumstances that prevailed during the crisis of the Thirty Years' War tended to moderate the demands of subject and ruler alike. Concessions to a partially reconstituted nobility and compromises with local governing bodies stood at the heart of an equipoise that started to coalesce within the Danubian monarchy as early as 1627 and continued to take shape throughout the reign of Leopold I (1657–1705). The emergent power structure was founded upon the socio-economic realities of large landholdings and the hierarchical principles of authority embodied in the ethos of *Herrschaft*. It was tied together politically by a series of arrangements linking aristocracy, church, and crown, and received strong cultural-religious bonding from the distinctive values and world view of a pervasive Counter-Reformation Baroque.⁶¹ With their local preeminence thereby assured and with ample career opportunities in the governmental bureaucracy, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and the military establishment, a persistently loyal *Hofadel* was folded into a dualistic system of power that forged the foundations of monarchical absolutism while preserving the autonomy of each historic territory and the administrative functions of the individual estates. In the military sphere, aristocratic dominance of the *Landtage* prevented the Vienna court from mobilizing adequate financial support for its standing regiments, since the local estates not only retained a role in the recruitment and quartering of troops, but the right to assess, collect, and administer the direct taxes which were included in the *contributio* and intended primarily for the maintenance of the army.⁶² The local estates understandably tried to interfere in the conduct of

61. The best description of the equipoise that emerged within the Habsburg power cluster following the Thirty Years' War can be found in Evans, vii, 109, 169, 447. For brief overviews, see William H. McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500–1800* (Chicago, 1964), 72–75, 126–27, 159–61; and Thomas Barker, "Military Entrepreneurship and Absolutism: Habsburg Models," *Journal of European Studies* 4 (1974): 29–34. This perspective is generally reinforced by Jean Bérenger, *Finances et absolutisme autrichien dans le second moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 1975).

62. Hellbling, 244; and Otto Hintze, "Der österreichische und der preussische Beamtenstaat im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 86 (1901): 406–7.

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those military operations for which they provided financial support; and while they often yielded to the defense needs of the monarchy in emergency situations,⁶³ the *Landtage* occasionally refused to pay taxes even in moments of such evident danger as the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683.⁶⁴

The importance of the provincial estates in financial and military administration nonetheless declined steadily during the second half of the seventeenth century, although they retained more influence in Hungary than elsewhere in the monarchy. In 1654 Leopold I succeeded in depriving the Austrian estates of their most significant vestigial prerogative: the right to refuse the granting of “extraordinary” taxes for military purposes. All that remained to them was the right to bargain over amounts, and to refuse “ordinary” taxes earmarked for court expenditures and the civil administration. In 1693 the provincial war commissioners in all of the Austrian lands except the Tyrol were required to report exclusively to an imperially appointed general war commissioner about the disbursement of funds allocated by the *Landtage* for the payment and provisioning of local troops. In 1697 these officials were forbidden to take an oath of allegiance to the estates, thus depriving provincial notables of meaningful control over their tax grants and ultimately over troops stationed in the Austrian duchies. Leopold normally quartered regiments in their own territories and usually selected his regimental officers from the sons of aristocratic landlords in each region, but he was no longer tied to this practice by the time of the Dutch War (1672). He did not make comparable advances in Hungary until after the reconquest of the Great Alföld at the end of the century, and was not compelled to do so in Bohemia, where the power of the estates had already been emasculated by Ferdinand II.⁶⁵

63. Most authorities underscore the impact of outside pressure, especially the threat of Turkish invasion, rather than internal forces of cohesion, in determining the political pattern of the monarchy and the distinctive character of its army. For an insightful treatment of the seminal connections between military defense and state building in the Inner Austrian duchies, where the threat of Ottoman attack was almost constant, read Winfried Schulze, *Landesdefension und Staatsbildung: Studien zum Kriegswesen des innerösterreichischen Territorialstaates (1564–1619)*, in *Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 60 (Vienna, 1973).

64. Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, 207–8.

65. My understanding of these particular questions has been substantially enhanced by Reynold S. Koppel's unpublished essay entitled “Centralization and Reform Efforts in the Austrian Lands under Leopold I.”

Within the military establishment itself, compromise between the ruling dynasty and influential elites had left intact much of the authority of the colonels, who continued to function as regimental proprietors (*Inhaber*) after the Thirty Years' War.⁶⁶ As the owners of their units, beneficiaries of the *Inhaber* system could buy or sell commissions virtually at will, as long as they possessed no more than one at any given time.⁶⁷ Individual companies as well as entire regiments were purchased by ambitious entrepreneurs, who further enriched themselves by supplying weapons, uniforms, and other equipment to their soldiers. Embezzlement was rife, and lacking both the requisite funds and adequate accounting procedures in its central administration, the Vienna court failed to breach the proprietary rights of its army officers.⁶⁸ But Leopold was able to loosen the relationship between colonel and regiment by exercising his right to name the commanders of units originally recruited by independent *condottieri*. His authority over imperial troops was further augmented by a growing distinction between the regimental owner and the actual field commander. As proprietors ceased leading troops into battle, they gradually gave up the privilege of appointing their immediate subordinates.⁶⁹

66. Professor Barker has demonstrated that of the identifiable colonels who owned regiments in 1683, twenty-six percent stemmed from foreign mercenaries and favorites of the pre-1648 period, twenty-five percent represented large landowning families that had remained loyal to the dynasty during the Thirty Years' War, fourteen percent came from European princely houses, and thirty-five percent were individuals who had entered the Habsburg service following the Westphalian settlement. See "Military Entrepreneurship and Absolutism," 36–37. The presence of so many foreigners undercut the capacity of the army to function as a centripetal force within the monarchy, despite its long-term importance in this regard. See the judgements of Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago, 1960), 491–92; and Z.A.B. Zeman, *The Break-up of the Habsburg Empire* (London, 1961), 39.

67. The riches to be derived from the traffic in military positions is illustrated by Franz Josef Graf Sereni, who paid 50,000 Rhinish Gulden to Philipp Jacob de la Porte for his dragoon regiment in 1693. One Venetian diplomat suggested that a generalship in the Austrian army had the equivalent value of an Italian duchy. Joseph Fiedler, ed., "Die Relationen der Botschafter Venedigs über Deutschland und Österreich im siebzehnten Jahrhundert," *Fontes rerum austriacarum* (Zweite Abtheilung) 27 (1867): 188.

68. Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, 175; and Zimmermann, 50–51. Given the opportunities for promotion offered by the *Inhaber* system, Leopold's army facilitated economic and social advancement during the decades that coincide with Professor Rabb's period of quieting down and settlement, but military service seldom brought with it political influence at the Vienna court. Thomas M. Barker, "Václav Eusebius z Lobkovic (1609–1677): Military Entrepreneurship, Patronage and Grace," *Austrian History Yearbook* 14 (1978): 45–52.

69. Zimmermann, 50–51, 131–32. As a "subject that would repay further investigation," Professor Rabb has pointed to "the mechanism whereby the aristocracy throughout Europe was transformed from an autonomous pressure group, demonstrating its power through its ability

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By demonstrating the drawbacks involved in relying on either provincial levies or large-scale, privately managed mercenary forces, the destructive campaigning of the great war had convinced the Vienna court that certain concessions to the local estates and regimental commanders would be unavoidable if the urgent need for a standing army were to be met in the foreseeable future. Conversely, a growing sense that consolidation of the Danubian power cluster offered the best hope for long-term stability in Central Europe strengthened the emperor's position with his most powerful subjects, whose inclinations to serve the Habsburg dynasty were being reinforced by the triumphs of Baroque Catholicism. In 1648 Ferdinand III had roughly 37,000 soldiers at his disposal,⁷⁰ and in the following year committed himself to "eine essenz von einer guten armada."⁷¹ Although some of his advisers urged radical troop reductions in order to free the *Erblände* of pressing tax burdens, high-ranking officers like Montecuccoli, pointing to unrest in Poland, the threat of Turkish incursions, and the possibility of renewed conflict with Sweden and France, insisted that only visible military strength would guarantee a proper execution of peace arrangements. Ferdinand III, fearing a Swedish attack and unable to persuade the local estates to pay off the arrears of disbanded troops, was still maintaining an army of approximately 25,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry, excluding irregular troops and contingents supplied by inhabitants of the military frontier (*Militärgrenze*), in the summer of 1650.⁷² In order to implement the idea of a standing army while reducing military expenditures, the emperor dissolved about two-thirds of his regiments, dividing officers and men among the remaining units. He was especially careful to preserve in his service a number of specialists in fortifications and siege-craft as well as artillery experts and master gunners. The existence of this veteran fighting force, over-

to withstand a prince or a sovereign, into a force for general control, closely linked with the central authority." Military entrepreneurship, as it has been examined by Thomas Barker, was obviously an integral though by no means dominant part of this process in the Habsburg monarchy; and while "the realignment is usually seen from the center," it involved much more than simply "a series of policies promulgated . . . by Leopold I. . . ." Rabb, 148–49.

70. Phillip Hoyos, "Die Kaiserliche Armee 1648–1650," in *Der Dreissigjährige Krieg: Beiträge zu seiner Geschichte*, in *Schriften des Heeresgeschichtlichen Museums in Wien (Militärwissenschaftliches Institut)*, no. 7 (Vienna, 1976), 171.

71. Quoted in Hoyos, 214.

72. These figures have been accepted by most authorities, including Meynert, 3: 165; Frauenholz, 114; and Hummelberger, "Die Turkenkriege und Prinz Eugen," in *Unser Heer*, 70. For somewhat lower estimates, see Hoyos, 210–11.

whelmingly German in its rank and file, provided Ferdinand III and Leopold I with a core around which they could construct an enduring military establishment.⁷³

The development of such an establishment, however small when compared with the one being built by Le Tellier and Louvois in France, meant added responsibilities for the *Hofkriegsrat*, the imperial agency for commanding the army and administering military matters.⁷⁴ On 10 February 1650, Ferdinand III issued new instructions to that body, reorganizing it into four departments (for arsenals and artillery, supply, recruitment and training, and engineering) and creating a vice president to serve as a deputy to the president. The emperor simultaneously ordered that only the five most experienced advisers were to participate in its sessions, a regulation necessitated by the substantial rise in the number of military councilors during the Thirty Years' War, most of whom merely added confusion to the deliberations and made secrecy difficult to achieve.⁷⁵ Ferdinand also established the *Generalkriegskommissariat*, designed to supervise the monetary affairs of the army and to assist in the coordination of the policies of the *Hofkriegsrat* and the *Hofkammer*, an institution combining the functions of a treasury and a ministry of economic administration.⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the *Generalkriegskommissariat* failed to simplify the slow-moving routine of the *Hofkriegsrat*. It merely made an already cumbersome military administration more complicated by evolving rapidly into a coordinate rather than subordinate agency and increasing the number of hands through which routine business had to pass. Members of the *Hofkammer*, who were usually not well versed in the art of war, retained their influence on military policy whenever economic matters were involved. In addition, all important decisions had to be approved by the emperor after initial consideration in the *Geheime Rat*, the supreme body dealing with state concerns.

With the death in 1657 of Ferdinand III, the only seventeenth-century emperor to display much personal interest in military questions, implementation of the concept of a standing army fell to Mon-

73. Hoyos, 170–83, 190–209, 214. Dr. Hoyos makes a case for the imperial *Generalkriegskommissär*, Ernst von Traun, as the key figure in all questions of army organization at the Vienna court in the immediate aftermath of the Thirty Years' War.

74. Effective state control over the new standing armies evoked administrative reform throughout western Europe. This problem is discussed by Roberts, 204–8.

75. Regele, 19; Zimmermann, 51.

76. Hellbling, 246.

tecuccoli, a pivotal figure in the resolution of the crisis that had overtaken the Habsburg monarchy in 1618. Himself a beneficiary of “the unplanned, unguided apparatus of ascent” through the system of regimental proprietors that had developed after the death of Wallenstein,⁷⁷ this indefatigable champion of a model force capable of protecting the interests of the Vienna court both at home and abroad employed his combined positions as *Generalleutnant*, the highest rank in the imperial service, and president of the *Hofkriegsrat* to assist Leopold I in consolidating the new political and social order by guiding Austrian military policy in the three decades following the Peace of Westphalia, and introducing basic reforms designed to prepare the monarchy for any possible conflict with Sweden, France, or the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁸ Then, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Prince Eugene, who epitomized the class of court nobles that had begun to solidify during the mid-century “crisis,”⁷⁹ made further refinements in the military establishment forged by Montecuccoli, bringing the Austrian army to the heights of its glory.⁸⁰ Both of these reformers owed much to Wallenstein, even though their problems were compounded by the legacy of this brilliant *condottiere*, which made the Vienna court suspi-

77. In Professor Barker's view, Montecuccoli provides a “slightly variant” example of “the speculating, foreign-born professional soldier [who] was an indispensable person in the early absolutist state, which could scarcely have developed without the help of the standing army.” Consult “Military Entrepreneurship and Absolutism,” 41.

78. Convenient assessments of Montecuccoli's career, less familiar than those of Wallenstein and Prince Eugene, can be found in Thomas Barker, *The Military Intellectual and Battle: Raimondo Montecuccoli and the Thirty Years' War* (Albany, 1975), Parts One and Two; and John A. Mears, “Count Raimondo Montecuccoli: Servant of a Dynasty,” *The Historian* 32 (1970): 392–409.

79. See M. D. Feld's discussion in “Review Essay: The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,” *Armed Forces and Society* 6 (1980): 666–69. “The aristocracy's almost universal domination of politics, society and culture in the late seventeenth century, a continent-wide ascent symbolized by the career of Eugene” is mentioned by Rabb, 118. For a thoughtful treatment of changes in the composition of the Bohemian nobility, which brought to the fore “generals and colonels in the Imperial army, military purveyors and entrepreneurs,” see J. V. Polisensky, *War and Society in Europe, 1618–1648* (Cambridge, 1979), chap. 9.

80. Kann, 85. In the War of the Spanish Succession, and again in the first Turkish war of Charles VI's reign, distinguished imperial commanders won spectacular victories of continental import—battlefield triumphs that remained unsurpassed in the annals of Austrian history. Besides the conquests of distinguished generals like Margrave Louis of Baden and Count Guido Starhemberg, these include Eugene's own successes at Luzzara (1702) and Turin (1706) as well as his joint victories with Marlborough at Blenheim (1704), Oudenarde (1708), and Malplaquet (1709).

cious of assertive field commanders until well into the eighteenth century.⁸¹

Although Wallenstein has been viewed as the founder of the standing army in Austria,⁸² some experts like Peter Broucek have doubted the importance of his contributions to the formation of the Habsburg military establishment.⁸³ Such doubts are not without foundation, given the way in which he functioned more like a speculator and businessman than a servant of the state. His violent death was a direct result of tensions in civil-military relations that were being heightened by the extension of centralized control over warfare and that could be resolved only by an acceptance of authority which Professor Rabb has earmarked as essential to the post-Westphalian settlement.⁸⁴ But Wallenstein indisputably helped Ferdinand II to respond to the seventeenth-century “crisis” by raising an immense mercenary force with his own resources. However inadvertent his role, the Duke of Friedland did influence the early development of the imperial and royal army through a career that was itself closely tied to the course of the seventeenth-century “crisis” in Central Europe. That army and that career are thus highly relevant to anyone preoccupied with the scholarly storm clouds whipped up by proponents of the “crisis” thesis more than a quarter-century ago.

81. Gordon A. Craig, “Command and Staff Problems in the Austrian Army, 1740–1866,” in Michael Howard, ed., *The Theory and Practice of War* (New York, 1965), 47, 53.

82. Fellner and Kretschmayr, pt. 1, vol. 2: 25. Similar claims have been made on behalf of Montecuccoli and Prince Eugene. For expressions of such claims from a variety of perspectives, see Barker, *The Military Intellectual and Battle*, 1; Jászai, 141; Zimmermann, 65; McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier*, 160; and Hummelberger, “Die Türkenkriege und Prinz Eugen,” in *Unser Heer*, 68. These disparities in the judgements of leading scholars can be explained by the seventy-five year gap between the decades of the Thirty Years' War, when permanent military establishments began to coalesce throughout western and Central Europe, and the opening decades of the eighteenth century, when the new discipline and uniformity finally gave European armies something approaching a modern character. See John B. Wolf, *The Emergence of the Great Powers, 1685–1715* (New York, 1951), 8.

83. Peter Broucek, “Feldmarschall Bucquoy als Armeekommandant 1618–1620,” *Der Dreissigjährige Krieg*, 25.

84. Rabb, 34, 71–72. See also Barker, *Army, Aristocracy, Monarchy*, 82.