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Professionalism and Training of Army Officers in Britain and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740–90

Second Lieutenant Tobias Roeder, German Army

Abstract: A majority of the army officers from Britain and the Habsburg Monarchy were committed full-time soldiers in the later part of the eighteenth century. For a large portion of the officer corps of infantry and cavalry, initial training was not centralized but conducted in their respective regiments. The special requirements of the technical branches meant new academies for them; the Habsburg Army also created a general military academy, providing a few dozen cadets each year. Although the Habsburg Monarchy followed a path of more proactive professionalization, creating a number of comprehensive regulations and closely monitoring officer discipline, the British public sphere was conducive to a wide discourse on military matters. In the Habsburg Army, military knowledge was considered arcane and confidential. However, in both armies, officers took an active part in improving the Service, including a more humane and empathetic understanding of discipline enforcement toward subordinates.

Keywords: officers, professionalization, British Army, Habsburg Army, military training, education, military academies, public sphere

This article investigates to what extent a sense of professionalism can be distinguished in the officer corps of the armies of Britain and the Habsburg Monarchy from the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–

2dLt Tobias Roeder has studied history at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg and the University of Cambridge. He has recently submitted his PhD dissertation at Clare College, University of Cambridge, on the “Professional Identity of Army Officers in Britain and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740–1790.” His research focuses on various aspects of early modern military and political history. He also holds the rank of second lieutenant of the Reserve in the German Army.

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48) up to the eve of the French Revolutionary Wars (1792–1802). As professionalism is a broad concept, certain indicators will be used to approach it. Service time, training, commitment to the Service, and interest in improving it are all factors to take into account. The treatment of the enlisted men is another issue, which needs to be considered in this context. And apart from the attitude and aptitude of the officers themselves, the efforts by the respective governments to improve training and professionalization of the officer corps is also integral to this question.

To explore the extent to which we can term the officer corps of eighteenth-century Britain and the Habsburg Monarchy a professional elite, it is useful to first consider how long officers served before advancing to a position of greater responsibility. Time in service shows how much experience company captains and field officers had gathered over a career. Indeed, for the British Army, John A. Houlding points out that most officers in the eighteenth century were career soldiers, spending their life in the army, advancing through long distinguished service even when supported by political interest, and acquiring substantial experience. The proprietary colonels also had, on average, served for long periods before they were given command of their regiments. George II and George III in particular made sure that only able and deserving officers were promoted to these positions of power, even if the latter took political interest into greater consideration.¹ James Hayes argues that from the length of time served in the regiments one can conclude that about two-thirds of all line officers around the middle of the eighteenth century may be regarded as career soldiers.²

In the Habsburg Army, we see a similar tendency. With a sample of personal information of officers from 14 regiments created from Austrian muster lists for the years of the Seven Years War, as well as the later 1760s and the 1770s, we can discern that none of their field officers in the 1760s had served for less than 10 years; that two-thirds of the majors had served more than 15 years; and that out of 16 *Obrist Commandanten* (colonel commanding) only 1 had served less than 25 years (with two of unknown service time), half of them for more than 30 years. If we look at the company command, around three-quarters of *Hauptmänner* (infantry captain), *Rittmeister* (cavalry captain), and *Capitain-Lieutenants* had served for more than 15 years. For these numbers, we have to take into account that wartime casualties had led to faster advancement before 1763. Therefore, officers had served less time in each rank they held before the mid-1760s. Slower advancement after the war made long service times even more pronounced in the 1770s.³

It is apparent that both the British and Habsburg officer corps were filled to a large part with men who had made service in the army their actual profession and saw it as their main calling. However, time served and commitment to the Service does not necessarily make a good officer. High service time also meant

increasing age, especially at a time when there was no regulated retirement age. One of the problems of the British Army when it was called to war in 1740 was that a number of veteran officers were obviously unfit for service because of age and illness.⁴ This was due, in part, because the British Army had been reduced in size and was not engaged in much action between the wars of the Spanish and Austrian successions. With an increase to the army's size, new officers were needed, but first they had to gain experience.

The Habsburg Army also was about to be reduced to a new peacetime establishment after the unsuccessful Turkish war of 1737–39. As part of the plan for the reductions, vacant commissions were to be left unfilled.⁵ Fortunately, the long discussions about the right way to carry through these reductions led to them never happening before the death of Charles VI in 1740, and the subsequent outbreak of war then called for an increase in the size of the army.⁶

This leads to the question of how the new officers were trained in both expanding armies; the answer is that they were trained on the job. New officers did not receive formal training, but they had to learn in their units. To become a lieutenant in the British Royal Navy, midshipmen needed to pass an exam, but there were no educational requirements or examinations for British Army officers in the eighteenth century.⁷ Apart from personal teaching from more experienced noncommissioned officers (NCOs), peers, and superiors, military manuals and regulations offered another possibility to gain the necessary knowledge for military leadership.⁸ British and Habsburg officers encountered quite a different set of resources in this case. In Britain, one of the most influential works was that of Lieutenant Colonel Humphrey Bland, a veteran of the war in Flanders and Spain. His concern for the loss of the expertise of experienced senior officers prompted Bland to put together *A Treatise of Military Discipline* in 1727, which was to serve as a compendium of knowledge and advice for military leadership; it succeeded in becoming a standard for the eighteenth century with a great number of reprints.⁹ In 1728, central sections of Bland's work were turned into an official regulation of the British Army by the Board of General Officers and by order of George II, known as *Exercise for the Horse, Dragoons and Foot Forces* or by the shortened title, *1728 Regulations*.¹⁰ Indeed, it was a necessary addition to the drill books of the late-Stuart times, which were still in use. The later *1748 Regulations* under the Duke of Cumberland's captain-generalcy were only concerned with the firings and part of the maneuvers. The *1756 Regulations* introduced new platoon exercises after the regulations of 1728 had already been individually modified by regimental colonels and field officers. The *1757 Regulations* encompassed these, together with all other elements of drill, among them new evolutions and maneuvers. The latter had been devised by Cumberland, the Adjutant General Robert Napier, and Lieutenant Colonel Drury of Cumberland's 1st Foot Guards. Bland's 1727 work was, however, still

needed, as he also offered advice on leadership and instructions on the duty of officers. It was still being read by young officers during the American War of Independence.¹¹ New comprehensive regulations on such topics were only officially issued for the different branches of the British Army in the early 1790s.¹²

The Habsburg Army's leadership was far more active in producing comprehensive regulations. During the early eighteenth century, a variety of regulations had been written by individual regimental proprietors.¹³ Some of those were circulated more widely and used by a number of regiments.¹⁴ The first general infantry regulations had already appeared in 1737, but they were mostly neglected, probably because of the outbreak of the Turkish war in 1736.¹⁵ The War of the Austrian Succession then saw the circulation of "Observationspunkte," short regulations for problems encountered on campaign. A circular by *Feldzeugmeister* (full general) Karl Freiherr von Thüngen in July 1741 takes its lessons from the Battle of Mollwitz, a Habsburg defeat earlier that year, arguing that keeping the formations in order was of primary importance while either retreating or pursuing an enemy. A sufficient number of officers in the fighting units needed to ensure that this well-ordered formation did not deteriorate (as at Mollwitz). There were rarely sufficient numbers of officers due to illness, postings/special orders, and other issues. As a remedy, for example, the *Führer* (a middling NCO rank) was ordered to immediately carry the colors, rather than the *Fähnrich* (ensign), who should be used to supervise and command the subdivisions like platoons.

Discipline among officers seems to have been a general problem, as they were ordered on their honor and reputation (while enlisted men risked summary execution) not to leave their duty post to loot. Further criticism was leveled at absenteeism and a general lack of interest in the day-to-day service, as well as a lack of care for the men. The circular advised them to gain the men's trust and appreciation, partly also by sharing the state of operations with them, in this instance by making them understand why they were fighting. Furthermore, it was recommended that officers should not frequent coffee houses, gambling establishments, or the camp followers' shops at headquarters, but rather keep the company of their peers or superiors.¹⁶

There were clearly grievances to be addressed regarding the officer corps of the War of the Austrian Succession, and Graf Leopold von Daun in particular did not hold back when, in a letter to the Empress of Austria Maria Theresa on 14 December 1750, he wrote that the enlisted men had not been lacking in goodwill and courage, but that many officers had failed in their duty owing to ignorance and tardiness and especially failing in actual leadership of their men.¹⁷ By that time, Daun had already been identified as the man to tackle ignorance and leadership problems and was de facto in charge of putting together an official regulation book for the infantry in 1749. Daun had a rapid military

career, thanks to being the son of *Feldmarschall* (field marshal) Graf Wirich Philipp von Daun as well as his noted proficiency during the recent Turkish war and the War of the Austrian Succession.¹⁸

One of the main issues the regulations were to address was negligence of duty by officers.¹⁹ While part one of the regulations was dedicated to weapons drill and smaller unit maneuvers, the second part laid down the duties of officers, as well as those of NCOs and private soldiers. Among other stipulations, officers were declared responsible for instilling the drill of the first part of the regulations, preserving unity and harmony in the regiment, serving as a moral role model, and monitoring orderliness and cleanliness of all soldiers and their equipment. The *Obrist-Lieutenant* (lieutenant colonel) should visit the companies every couple of weeks and the Obrist Commandant should have the whole regiment drawn out once a month to inspect it, with all officers present with their partisans (or cut-and-thrust polearms, used by Habsburg officers until after the Seven Years War) in hand. Furthermore, it included a highly detailed order of reporting among NCOs and officer ranks. If men were ill or had been injured and were in the field hospital, the *Unter-Lieutenant* (second lieutenant) was supposed to visit them three times a week.²⁰ Care of the common soldiers also included a limit placed on corporal punishment. Physical punishment of soldiers was identified as a source of desertion and was to be limited. Rather, officers should show men their mistakes in a civil manner, without using abusive language, which applied for field officers, officers, and NCOs. If they did not react to this critique, various punishments should be considered before corporal punishment, such as jailing them for a time or giving them additional duties. NCOs and officers were then restricted in how often they were allowed to hit a man. Any graver punishment should only go through the regimental leadership.²¹ Regulations for the cuirassiers and dragoons followed in the same year, the hussars received theirs in 1751, and the field artillery (apart from an earlier exercise manual in 1749) in 1757. A major update followed in 1769 for infantry and in 1769 and 1772 for heavy cavalry.²² When the new regulations were introduced, all majors and drum majors were educated in Vienna concerning the unified movements and drills to transfer this to their regiments. They then assembled all the regimental officers to instruct them, so that these could in turn properly train their companies.²³

Regimental officers were the obvious transmitters and keepers of these new regulations. The regulations were printed, but they were not published and were not publicly available but rather maintained in a highly confidential way. Officers had to make sure the text did not fall into the hands of outsiders, or “unter fremde Hände.”²⁴ This secrecy was even more relevant for *Generalfeldzeugmeister* (full general) Franz Moritz Graf von Lacy’s great project after the Seven Years War, the *Generalreglement* (regulations for general officers and general

staff) of 1769, which regulated general staff work and was a continuation of the *Feld Dienst Regulament* (field service regulations) of 1749, which served as instructions for conducting marches, setting up camps, and employing battle tactics for the general officers.²⁵ While this was clearly Lacy's specialty, he had his draft peer reviewed by other general officers, involving them in the process and making changes according to their suggestions.²⁶

In 1751, Empress Maria Theresa took another step to improve the military education of her officers by establishing the *Militär-Akademie* (military academy) of Wiener Neustadt: "ein Cadetten-Corps von zweyen Compagnien, einer von 100. adelichen—und die zwayte von eben so vielen militar-officers-Kindern, welche das Vierzehende Jahr ihres Alters erreicht haben" (A cadet corps of two companies, one consisting of 100 noblemen—the second of as much officer children, who have reached 14 years of age). In addition, a preparatory *Pflanzschule* (an old German word for preschool) was established in Vienna, where younger children between the ages of seven and nine years could receive a primary education to later be transferred to the *Militär-Akademie*.²⁷ As noble attendance at the Wiener Neustadt and its preparatory school in Vienna was low, an additional academy in the style of the noble knightly academies was established in Vienna, attached to the preparatory school through the personal union of the principal. This, however, turned out to be a failure. Men of noble birth would rather make their way into the military through direct appointment by a proprietary colonel, who could still fill the positions below the field officer ranks.²⁸

The *Militär-Akademie*, however, while not attracting great numbers of nobles, was nonetheless a success. Again, it was Daun who became the first *Generaldirector* of both the *Militär-Akademie* and the *Pflanzschule*. The *Akademie* in Wiener Neustadt was run by an *Unter-Director* (subdirector). The composition of the teaching personnel changed over time, but they generally included officers from field to subaltern level, engineer officers, civilian teachers and instructors, clerics, and servants. The most senior and diligent cadets were awarded NCO ranks during their education.²⁹ As opposed to other military academies, there was from the outset a pedagogical concept in that the cadets would not just stay to be taught for an undefined time, but they would stay for a roughly similar period according to a set curriculum.³⁰ This curriculum encompassed those subjects deemed appropriate to make a good officer: military drill, fencing, dancing, riding, military science (e.g., basics in engineering and artillery application), mathematics, languages, geography, and history.³¹ The training ended according to age and growth, between six and eight years later, if the cadets were fit for duty in regiments. There was no final examination, but there was constant testing of the material learned. In case their progress left something to be desired at that point, they would be sent to the regiments as gen-

tlemen volunteers, possibly until they showed themselves capable of becoming officers.³² While the vast majority of graduates were commissioned in the infantry (85.9 percent in 1755–86), some ended up in cavalry or *Grenzer* (military frontier troops) regiments. A few directly joined the general staff or switched to the technical troops.³³

In 1769, the Militär-Akademie and the Pflanzschule merged to make the curriculum more coherent and useful, with the official name becoming “k.k. Theresianische Militär-Akademie” (Imperial-Royal Military Academy of Maria Theresa).³⁴ Curriculum and teaching methods were further changed and refined over the years.³⁵ In 1778, the new subject of “rasonierende Tactik und Kriegswissenschaft” (contemplated tactics and art of war) was added to the curriculum.³⁶ One year later, Genera Major Franz Joseph Graf Kinsky took over as unter-director and worked to instill a new soldierly spirit (*Soldatengeist*) in the Akademie and its students. He expanded and militarized the riding school by replacing the civilian riding masters with active officers, who were commandeered from cavalry regiments, thereby preparing all prospective graduates for the possibility of serving in cavalry regiments.³⁷

The Akademie had, from the beginning, emphasized the equality of students with noble families and the sons of officers. This was underlined by Maria Theresa in the regulations for the Akademie of 1775, which stipulated that “da man in der Akademie keinen anderen Adel als das Verdienst und eine rechtschaffene Aufführung gelten läßt” (as within the Akademie no other nobility but that of merit and virtuous conduct are recognized), no differences should be made between the cadets from different social backgrounds and no titles or *Prädikate* (noble name particle, e.g., *von*) were to be used in addressing the cadets.³⁸ Joseph II went further and reduced the number of places exclusively reserved for nobles among the 400 students to just 96.³⁹

The academy graduates were not the only officers serving in the Habsburg Army as there was also a “Frequentanten” (visiting student) program, established sometime after the Seven Years War, for normal cadets and young officers from the regiments, who came to be educated in *Militärischen Wissenschaften* (military science) and regulations.⁴⁰

While specialized military education was helpful for officers in infantry and cavalry, it was essential in the technical branches. Therefore, the greatest number of these officers were trained separately. To satisfy the need for trained personnel in artillery and military engineering, Charles VI had already set up partially state-funded academies (*Ingenieur-Akademie*) in Vienna in 1717 and Brussels in 1718. In 1755–56, the Akademie in Vienna was formed into the fully state-run *k.k. Ingenieurschule* (imperial-royal engineering school) from 1760 under the *Prodirektor des Geniewesens* (director of military engineers), or the head of the military engineers. Of the 329 students educated between 1755

and 1765, 79 began their service in the engineer corps, while 223 were commissioned in line regiments.

The school was open to all social tiers and a significant number of the students entering were the sons of officers, NCOs, or even private soldiers. Added to these were sons of civil servants and craftsmen.⁴¹ The prodirektor had been the head of the engineering corps since its reorganization in 1747, when four brigades were formed, one out of an existing brigade in the Netherlands and three out of the officers from the German lands, Hungary, and Italy, with an overall establishment of 98 officers. The brigades were commanded by a colonel who also had to oversee the fortifications in the assigned area of the brigade. Yet, the progress seemed to have been slow, as the Austrians still depended on the help of the French in the Seven Years War and in its aftermath.⁴²

Additionally, a *Sappeur* (sapper) Corps was established in 1760 to provide skilled men as well as officers to lead them in the manual undertaking of the siege works. Three of those officers were awarded *Militär-Maria-Theresienorden* (Maria Theresa military order) after playing a major role in the defense of Schweidnitz in 1762 (out of only 24 officers and men employed there).⁴³

Artillery officers had originally been experienced and distinguished men, raised from the ranks. The social openness, in which it differed from infantry and cavalry, was retained during the century and can be seen from the *Grundbuch* (personnel record book) of the Feldartillerie-Regiment 2 in 1776, where among the three majors, two were non-nobles and about two-thirds of the company officers were non-nobles.⁴⁴

The artillery as a branch underwent its major professionalization process from the War of the Austrian Succession into the interwar period. The man behind all this was Prinz Joseph Wenzel von Liechtenstein. Being of high noble birth, he started out as a cavalry officer and proprietor of a dragoon regiment in 1725. Already a Knight of the Golden Fleece in 1740, he was severely wounded at Chotusitz, Czech Republic, in 1742. His experience in that battle made him realize that Austria needed to modernize its artillery after he had seen the Prussian gunners in action. From then on, he devoted his time and family fortune to the reform of the Austrian artillery, and an impressed Maria Theresa made him general-director of the branch in 1744. He established laboratories and assembled an international team of experts. While the officers had originally been trained in the regiments from among the rank and file, Liechtenstein established the *Artilleriecorpsschule* (artillery corps school) at Bergstadl, near Budweis, in 1747. The professionalization and militarization of the branch already took effect from the beginning of the Seven Years War and led to seven artillery officers being awarded the *Militär-Maria-Theresienorden*.⁴⁵ In 1778, the *Artillerie-Lyzeum* (artillery college) replaced the *Artilleriecorpsschule*, and a few years later in 1786, the newly founded Bombardier Corps absorbed the

Artillerie-Lyzeum to provide an ever more practical and advanced training for officers.⁴⁶

The British military leadership also realized the need for a central training for its artillery officers and engineers at the beginning of our period of interest. Therefore, in 1741, King George II established the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich “for instructing the raw and inexperienced people belonging to the military branch of this office [Master General of the Ordnance], in the several parts of Mathematics necessary to qualify them for the service of the Artillery, and the business of Engineers.”⁴⁷ By 1746, the establishment consisted of 46 cadets between the ages of 12 and 30. After short oral examinations, graduates were able to become artillery officers as vacancies arose. Only from 1761 onward were they commissioned directly as engineers; before then, they had to serve as artillerists for some time. Some also entered the Services of the East India Company or became infantry officers instead.⁴⁸ While discipline seems to have been quite lax in the early days, there had already been a production of special treatises by the professors for the instruction of the cadets “and all concerned in the Art of War, by Land or Sea.”⁴⁹

In 1764, discipline and education were improved by providing a proper staff and through the work of the lieutenant-governor (de facto director on the spot) of the Royal Military Academy, Lieutenant Colonel James Pattison. From that point, only new cadets were educated as opposed to more seasoned NCOs and officers as previously, and the usual age would not be more than 18 years. The official minimum age was fixed at 14 years in 1782, but exceptions occurred. The establishment of the Royal Military Academy rose to 60 cadets in 1782 to satisfy this demand, following the increasing size of the Royal Regiment of Artillery from 29 to 75 officers. It was further raised to 90 cadets in 1793 with the onset of the French Revolutionary Wars. While originally the Master-General of the Ordnance just appointed cadets to the academy, entry examinations testing the basics of mathematics and Latin were introduced in 1774 on Pattison’s urging.⁵⁰ By the end of the period of interest, subjects taught included mathematics, drawing, languages, artillery, fortifications, geography, chemistry, and dancing. An oral examination was held at the end of one’s studies. Graduates of the academy were more than enough to fill the vacancies of artillery and engineers; many actually had to be commissioned in the infantry, especially after the American War of Independence, when the supply of graduates far exceeded the demand for officers in the technical branches.⁵¹

For infantry and cavalry, no state-run military academy for early training was in existence until the establishment of Sandhurst in 1812. Men from a well-to-do background, however, had the option of attending a private military academy, either on the continent or in Britain itself.⁵² Some British officers were even educated at universities in continental Europe or undertook tours visiting

battlefields and serving as volunteers in foreign armies.⁵³ The most renowned and successful institution in Britain was the academy of Lewis Lochée. Located in Little Chelsea, London, it would teach young men—as one advertisement claimed—contemporary languages, foremost French and German, as well as mathematics, mechanics, fortification, artillery, tactics, geography, drawing, law, history, and “all the Military Manouvres.” In addition to theoretical learning, there were practical exercises, such as sports, swimming, riding, fencing, dancing, and weapon drill. Lochée’s academy was not only a school for young gentlemen—to some parents, it also served that purpose—but was also quite distinct in its mixture of theoretical and practical training as well as its emphasis on moral education, setting a relatively strict environment and long training days for its students.⁵⁴ One should not go too far and overestimate its impact, as J. E. O. Screen estimates only some 20–25 students attended in 1771.⁵⁵ Men from wealthy families could, however, get a head start when entering a regiment, a sign that knowledge of the profession was taken seriously. The latter point is underlined by an even more prominent student: Thomas Picton, born in 1758, who was commissioned as an ensign in the 12th Foot in 1772. He first spent two years at the academy and only then joined his regiment at Gibraltar. Picton was to become one of the Duke of Wellington’s most able and courageous commanders before being killed as a lieutenant general leading his division at the Battle of Waterloo.⁵⁶ Other young officers were even given leave after joining their regiments to be educated at private academies, especially Lochée’s. This leave was supported by the crown, which was, of course, responsible for handing out the commissions.⁵⁷ Lochée’s academy proved to be so successful that he was given an annual pension for life by King George III. This led to Lochée adopting the name “Royal Military Academy” for his institution. His success was also supported by his own widely appreciated writings.⁵⁸

Indeed, publications on military subjects are an important source of evidence for the case that a considerable number of British officers took their profession seriously. Officers published a great number and variety of military treatises, or just sent their ideas to the adjutant general, which, as Houlding agrees, showed their zeal for the Service. Like the civilian Lochée, many officers were rewarded for their work with favor and promotions by the sovereign. The subscription and use of these treatises lends further evidence to the professional interest of British Army officers of this period. The treatises helped to preserve customary knowledge and provided those officers without formal training with some theoretical groundwork.⁵⁹

Another popular work, specifically aimed at the instruction of those freshly commissioned, is Captain Thomas Simes’s *The Military Guide, for Young Officers*.⁶⁰ Yet it also has sections that should prepare them for advancing to a command position in which a junior officer could actually quickly find himself

due to casualties in the field. Simes, furthermore, encourages changes to usual practices and innovations in tactics and military order. The very first section is highly interesting as it deals with the importance of military discipline and its proper application. Simes tells the young officer that, while strict discipline and subordination is absolutely necessary, “judgement” and “moderation” is required when “enforcing your authority.” The superior must appear impartial and be clear in giving his orders as well as always enforcing them. Capital punishment for crimes like marauding or desertion is inadvisable, as it makes men—including the officers—look the other way, because they would rather not bring someone to the gallows.⁶¹ This underlines the thesis put forward by Ilya Berkovich that European armies of the eighteenth century did not continuously flog their soldiers into obedience.⁶² Indeed, Simes urges that “in regard to private conversation, politeness should exceed authority, and the Officer subside in the gentleman.”⁶³ Further, he devotes large passages to the duties and proper behavior of all the officers in a regiment.⁶⁴ Some of Simes’s arguments are underlined with quotes of venerated historical commanders, like Marshal Maurice de Saxe and the Habsburg Feldmarschall Graf Raimondo Montecucoli.⁶⁵

Translating the writings of great military leaders was another output of intellectual engagement with their own profession observable in British officers. Lieutenant Colonel William Faucett took it upon himself to translate the *Regulations for the Prussian Infantry* and *Regulations for the Prussian Cavalry* as well as the *Reveries* by Marshal de Saxe. That those were not idle divertissements of the mind is shown by the effort of 300 of Faucett’s fellow officers in financing by subscription the publication of the translated cavalry regulations.⁶⁶ Translations of classical authors also were popular. The writings of Vegetius had been a hallmark of military thought in early modern Europe and still found new translators and readers in the eighteenth century. One of the translators was John Clarke, a lieutenant at the time of the first publication in 1767 and later lieutenant governor of Senegambia, West Africa, at the time of his death in 1778. He provided what was only the second translation in English (the other dating from 1521), which was subsequently widely circulated.⁶⁷

Another military publication abounding in references to Roman and Greek military history is Major Robert Donkin’s *Military Collections and Remarks*. Building his mostly short chapters on defining and commenting on common military terms, he uses examples from the ancient past and explores how they compare to the conditions in contemporary armies, especially, of course, the British Army. Donkin’s publication also had a high number of subscriptions among active officers, which he proudly presented at the beginning of the text.⁶⁸ The discourse on the military profession among British officers happened within the public sphere through publications by, and for, officers.

A quite different picture presents itself in the Habsburg Monarchy. There, we find hardly any publications on military subjects as such, and those that exist are anonymous. This prompted the perception among historians that the the Habsburg Army was an environment hostile to intellectual military thought and academic military professionalism.⁶⁹ One of the apparently anonymous works, however, points to another reason. Appearing in Vienna in 1777, *Die Kriegsschule oder die Theorie eines jungen Kriegsmannes in allen militärischen Unternehmungen* (The school of war or theory of a young warrior in all military undertakings) claimed to be *aus den berühmtesten Kriegsbüchern gezogen und zusammengesetzt von einem kaiser-königlichen Hauptmann der Infanterie* (extracted from famous books on war and assembled by an imperial-royal captain of the infantry).⁷⁰ In fact, as Manfred Rauchensteiner has discovered, it was written by Graf Philipp Georg von Browne (1727–1803), one of the sons of Graf Maximilian Ulysses von Browne. Rauchensteiner claims that its focus on historical examples rather than current military issues as well as its lack of new ideas exhibited the limited intellectualism of the Habsburg officer corps.⁷¹ But as we have seen above, there was still a keen interest among eighteenth-century officers in the study of historical examples and treatises. Rauchensteiner, however, also gives the more important and informative reason for the lack of publications by Habsburg officers on military subjects; the high command, rather than rewarding a discussion of military topics in print, actually discouraged any form of presenting what they thought was arcane military knowledge to the public and, therefore, indirectly to the enemy.⁷² Exemplifying this phenomenon is not only the secret character of disseminated regulations but also the stated goal of the first Habsburg military history commission. It was created by Joseph II in November 1779 with the goal of providing knowledge of recent military operations from the beginning of his mother's reign to provide educational content for the officer corps. This knowledge was to be as practical as possible and more detailed than theoretical and was not to be printed. Ironically, this commission was to be headed by *Feldmarschall-Lieutenant* (lieutenant general) Fabris and none other than *Feldmarschall Lieutenant Graf Philipp Georg von Browne*, whose interest in military history must have been well-known to the emperor.⁷³

A notable treatise, which can truly be called a work of “military enlightenment” discussing humanity and religious tolerance in the army, was that of the long-serving officer Jacob de Cognazzo, who anonymously published his critical account of the Habsburg Army in 1780 as a response to the Westphalian Catholic clergyman Johann Wilhelm von Bourscheid's history of the War of the Bavarian Succession, *Der erste Feldzug im vierten preußischen Kriege* (The first campaign of the Fourth Prussian War). Cognazzo criticizes the latter's all-too-positive account of the Austrian performance and dismissive remarks about Frederick II. He also questions the practicality of parts of the infantry and

cavalry regulations—which were by that time apparently often applied with too much zeal and pedantry—as well as the importance of the secrecy around them, as they would hardly entail any practices that the Prussians did not already know or were actually copied from them. However, he admits that the regulations had done a lot to make the army more effective, especially by making German the general language of command.⁷⁴

Most officers who wished to contribute with their experience and intellectual insight would do this by writing to the *Hofkriegsrat* (Aulic War Council, or HKR) or the sovereign. In his extensive memorandum that Major von Marschal had submitted to the HKR, he not only stated his negative opinion on officers raised from the ranks and immigrated from outside the monarchy, but he also addressed such issues as the management of the regimental funds, recruiting, and which field officers should be on horseback during battle. Furthermore, he talked about the duties of the major and the difficulties his position carries.⁷⁵ Despite his clear views on class distinction and that nobles were more qualified to be officers because of their upbringing, Marschal seems to have been a practical man who was concerned for the good of the Service.

The inherent hierarchical system of an army and the lack of a public forum for military topics did, however, finally mean that innovations could mostly be carried forth by general officers of some reputation like Daun, Liechtenstein, and Lacy. The latter, after becoming *Generalquartiermeister* (quartermaster general, or de facto chief of staff) at the beginning of the Seven Years War, had built an actual general staff of the army from scratch within two months, encompassing two generals and a couple of field officers as well as staff infantry, dragoons, *Jäger* (riflemen with a hunting background), and pioneers at his disposal.⁷⁶

In the British Army, many innovations were born at the regimental level. Even before the alternate fire became regulation by 1764, some regimental officers, like the later General Wolfe, had their men train with it in addition to the regulation platoon fire, as it was thought more effective, especially after it had been used successfully by the Prussians.⁷⁷

Many British military authors at the time also were occupied with the conduct of “petite guerre,” or partisan warfare. This was not so much about light troops fighting in an irregular warfare fashion but rather regular troops operating in independent detachments. According to Guy Chet, the superiority of highly trained regular infantry and their employment enabled the British to prevail in the American wilderness during the Seven Years War, not the adoption of irregular warfare. They, however, also combined regular infantry with lighter auxiliaries. But both Native American allies and freelancing ranger units proved insufficient for this task.⁷⁸ Therefore, with the support of General John Campbell, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage also formed the first light infantry regiment, the 80th Foot, which was a novelty for the British Army. Addi-

tionally, the 60th Foot, the Royal Americans, were taught similar skills at the behest of their commander, Colonel Henry L. Bouquet, in addition to linear maneuvers, even if not officially designated as light infantry. While the concept was not a new one, having been employed earlier in Europe, the initiative still speaks for an active approach to duty by officers like Gage.⁷⁹

British officers made further adjustments to tactics in the American War of Independence by fighting in areas where the concerted movement of larger forces was limited. Different maneuvers, tactics, and formations were employed by commanders as the scenario and environment dictated, occasionally with company captains acting independently of their battalion. The British troops, however, did not at any point adopt a guerrilla or at least concealed fighting style, and both officers and men despised the Americans when they—and later mostly their militia—did so.⁸⁰ And, indeed, under the term *partisan warfare*, most British writers described the detachment of an independently operating unit, reaching in size from small 100-man outposts to (temporarily) self-sustaining brigades, whose task it was to harass the enemy main force while shielding their own forces from enemy partisan activity. According to Roger Stevenson, this required highly competent officers who showed strong leadership and were ready to share the hardships of their men. Both he and Robert Donkin were of the opinion that such an officer should not be prone to keeping female company, to greediness, or to drinking.⁸¹

How could the high command ensure that order, discipline, and a proper application of duty were maintained? Both Britain and the Habsburg Monarchy had a system of reviewing regiments in place. However, in Austria this was mostly used to keep a record of numbers and personal information about their soldiers, especially in case of desertion. In Britain, this was conducted by the reviewing generals, who also inspected and commented on the state of the regiment. Those comments were part of formal reports, which addressed personnel, performance, and equipment. Officers, as a category, could provide information on their arms, their uniforms, their mounts, and whether they saluted well. Some were more detailed and also acknowledged that the officers were “very perfect in their Duty.” The general would include all these remarks in a section for “Complaints” and “In General,” where the general would give his conclusion as to quality and fitness for service of the regiment.⁸² It shows that there was a regular mechanism in place to check on the state of the regiments and their officers. According to Houlding, the reviewing officers usually carried out their duty with the required professionalism and duly reported any deviations or bad performances, even if it reflected badly upon the officers of the regiment. Regiments were able to perform well at the reviews, and this lends evidence to the hard work officers and NCOs must have put into the little training time they had in divisions and even less time training as a whole battalion.⁸³

General officers also undertook performance reviews in Austria, but those seem to have been distinct from the muster reviews. Reviewing generals who did not take their duty seriously could incur scathing criticism from the HKR.⁸⁴ While in Britain, the small numbers of the army, combined with the dislocation of regiments across the country, even of regimental parts, prevented great maneuvers from happening during the eighteenth century. The Habsburg Army held them on a regular basis and the high command did its best to make them useful exercises for the units and the generals, which soon showed favorable results.⁸⁵

At the outset of our period of interest, the *Obrist Inhaber* (proprietary colonel) was still the dominant person in a Habsburg regiment. The regiment was named after its obrist inhaber and ranked on the army list according to the inhaber's rank, usually a general officer rank or member of the imperial-royal household. Obrist inhabers were able to commission and promote their officers to vacant positions, choose the regimental lapel colors, hold judicial authority, and carve out profits from the regimental funds marked for recruitment and equipment. Not all proprietors abused their powers; some sank large sums of money into their regiments and created their own regulations (as shown above). Still others left their regiments in a desolate state or exerted a tyrannical rule over their soldiers.⁸⁶ Therefore, reforms following the War of the Austrian Succession restricted regimental proprietors' rights and powers. In 1748, the obrist inhabers were restricted in their right to impose corporal punishment; in 1766, they lost the right to promote field officers; and in 1767, they lost the right to choose the lapel color of the regimental uniform, both rights being transferred to the Hofkriegsrat. Finally, their name was replaced with a fixed number as the regiment's denomination in 1769, when the opportunities to generate additional perquisites were also restricted. This strengthened the role of the *Obrist Commandant* (colonel commanding), who actually ran the regiment.⁸⁷ The inhaber of a regiment could, however, still exert influence, especially if they kept in close touch with the commandant and commanded his respect, which can be clearly seen from the correspondence of the commandant of the Infanterie-Regiment 4 *Deutschmeister* with the inhaber, the actual *Hoch-und Deutschmeister* (Grand Master of the Teutonic Order), Erzherzog Maximilian Franz, brother to Emperors Joseph II and Leopold II.⁸⁸

While the colonel of a British regiment never had the same rights as in the Habsburg Monarchy, his monetary opportunities were not restricted in the same way. This could lead to fraud, especially with regiments stationed or fighting overseas, as there was less central control of them and their supply of clothing and equipment. Alan Guy states that false musters seemed to have been fairly rare, and if discovered punishments were usually harsh.⁸⁹ It must be noted that some of the colonels needed the additional money they received out of the

usual and fairly legal perquisites—although this still depended on them actually making enough money through good economic management and the right circumstances—as most were general officers and therefore expected to exhibit a much grander appearance than their subordinate officers. At the same time, they were the patron to officers and men of their regiments. Some of those who had greater private funds at their disposal were, in ways similar to the Austrian case, ready to invest their own fortune and even ruin themselves without taking money for favors.⁹⁰ While junior colonels sometimes still served with their regiments, senior regimental colonels, who were also general officers, would usually not serve with their regiments for reasons of age, other responsibilities, and clash of rank with the commanding general as they might be of equal or even superior rank.⁹¹ This seemed to have been similar in the Habsburg Army, where it appears to have been common practice to put the regiment of the inhaber under the command of another general.⁹² Most proprietary colonels took an interest in their regiments and corresponded regularly with their obrist commandant or their lieutenant colonel, respectively.⁹³

Although the proprietary colonels were regularly absent, the same was not the case for their officers. While absence of officers seems to have been a problem in Britain at the beginning of the century, albeit being tackled by the kings and their officials, it was less so in the period of interest. By midcentury, it had been fairly regulated, so that leave of up to three months could be granted by the colonel but any more only by the lord-lieutenant or lord-justices. Responsible colonels also ordered that only a certain number of officers were permitted to be absent at one time—usually around one-third.⁹⁴ On campaign, leave of absence had to be sought from the commanding officers, which for a subaltern had to include the colonel and the commanding general.⁹⁵ Even on duty station in India, only a few officers were absent at any one time, as can be seen from the 39th Foot in 1754–57. Occasional unwarranted absence was usually met with leniency, while those who overdid it could easily be dismissed from the Service.⁹⁶ Since 1764, longer leave of absence requests had to be forwarded to the sovereign or the commander in chief, and officers on active service generally needed permission from the sovereign to leave the country.⁹⁷ New officers were supposed to stay within regimental quarters until they had learned their duties.⁹⁸

In the Habsburg Army, the regulations of 1749 postulated that officers were not allowed to leave their unit or duty post without permission of the obrist commandant.⁹⁹ If one had an adequate reason for longer absence, he could apply to the HKR for an *Absentierungslizenz* (leave of absence).¹⁰⁰ Absence without leave for extended periods could quickly lead to cashiering.¹⁰¹

The Habsburg Army's leadership was also keen to further discipline its officer corps by tackling certain vices deemed detrimental to the Service. The 1749

regulations stipulated, for example, that officers were not allowed to engage in high-stakes gambling; low stakes with no risk to personal fortune were, however, allowed. This was meant to keep officers out of trouble and prevent them from running up debt. And, indeed, incurring debt was given as a reason that could hinder promotion.¹⁰²

To monitor both training and personal conduct, *Conduite-Listen* (conduct reports) were introduced, which the field officers had to fill out for the officers and NCOs under their command.¹⁰³ They listed “natural talents,” ability in exercising the troops, knowledge of military engineering, law, and zeal for the Service (“Eifer und Application”). But the commanding officers were also asked to inform the HKR about their officers’ lifestyle (“Lebensart”), in civil life as well as within the Service and also regarding their behavior toward their subordinates. And under the category of flaws (“Fehler”) the conduct reports described whether an officer was a drinker, ran up debt, or was prone to quarrel with other people. The commanding officers then had space for any other comments and could mark an officer fit or unfit for advancement.¹⁰⁴

Joseph II, especially, took these *Conduite-Listen* very seriously and established a system to punish those with obvious flaws, namely alcoholism, gambling, significant debt, and quarrelling. If officers fell into these categories, without their superiors being able to tell of any recent improvement, they would qualify to forfeit one-third of their pay, even if all their other *conduite* points were positive. For example, *Ober-Lieutenant* (first lieutenant) Anton Hessen of the Grenzer-Regiment (military borderer regiments) Wallachia-Illyria, who in 1781 is described “als Trinker, Spieler und Zänker” (a drinker, gambler, and quarreler).¹⁰⁵ For the notoriously meager pay of company officers, this could be a serious problem, and the field officers of the Grenzer-Regiment Wallachia-Illyria were clearly uncomfortable putting their brother officers into such a precarious situation. The field officers, therefore, wrote a supplication to the HKR asking to take into account that Ober-Lieutenant Hessen and four other officers were actually very able men, who did their duty with passion and diligence, and had served with distinction in the recent War of the Bavarian Succession (1778–79). The intention behind the *Conduite-Listen* was to monitor and encourage an improvement in the officers’ behavior. To this end, the HKR kept a list they used to check on an officer’s progress or lack of it if an officer was recently added to these categories. In extreme cases, where no improvement could be seen during the course of time, this would lead to dismissing the officer from the Service. The field officers of the Grenzer-Regiment Wallachia-Illyria, therefore, added that these officers were by no means set in their faulty ways, but they could be corrected, and that one of them was already on the path to improvement. Some also had families and only their salary and

no other income to support them. For all these reasons, they suggested offering a final warning, instead of cutting their salary right away, and the HKR, indeed, accepted this.¹⁰⁶ This also shows the field officers' sense of duty in reporting truthfully to the HKR, while at the same time caring for the officers under their command.

The Conduite-Listen are a good example of how the Habsburg Monarchy established formalized processes of control but at the same time stayed open to consider special circumstances and cases. In the British Army, such issues were less formalized, but this did not mean that bad officers could not be weeded out. When identifying a pariah bringing shame on the regiment, officers would unite and try to remove him from their midst (e.g., by the means of bringing about a court-martial). Lieutenant John Meredyth of the 93d Foot was apparently quite a disagreeable character and an unruly, brawling drunk who so disaffected all his brother officers that they wanted him out of their mess. Having promised to better himself after arrest, he was given a second chance under the condition that he not misbehave further. When he continued to behave in an atrocious manner, however, he was eventually dismissed, as he was perceived to have brought dishonor to the corps.¹⁰⁷

Finally, another look at treatment of men by their officers appears useful. Indeed, the idea that eighteenth-century officers solely exerted submission of their men by threat of flogging and execution has been corrected.¹⁰⁸ Surely enough, men could still be punished at the regimental level without the need to convene a formal court-martial. Regimental courts-martial in Britain had great leverage and sometimes acted upon cases that should have been brought to a general court-martial, instead.¹⁰⁹ However, for both armies we have seen tendencies in regulations and treatises to make punishments less arbitrary. Even Cognazzo, who views *Kriegszucht* (discipline) as one of the most central elements of a successful army, argues that overly harsh punishments are only warranted in certain cases, but they are otherwise detrimental to discipline and *Menschlichkeit* (humanity), especially if punishments were not meted out in the same way for the higher ranks.¹¹⁰ Christopher Duffy argues that, around the middle of the century, mistreatment of common soldiers had been banned and a significant number of officers, not just the central leadership, acknowledged that the common soldier "was a human being with a brain, a heart and a soul that were capable of grasping the concept of honour."¹¹¹ Such an understanding can be seen in the writings of both Cognazzo and Marschal, even if the latter clearly preferred to keep officers and men socially apart from each other.¹¹²

In the British case, we have an example from the Caribbean island of Dominica after the American War of Independence, where a captain lieutenant was obsessed with punishing trifling mistakes and infringements of his soldiers.

When his brother officers realized this fact, they roundly dismissed his further complaints and attempts to initiate courts-martial against the men.¹¹³ Before bringing a case to a regimental court-martial or applying heavier punishments such as single confinement, misconduct of soldiers could be corrected by reprimands, low-level beating with a rattan stick, or punishments like assigning additional tedious duties according to the extent of the transgression; even public shaming and peer pressure could be used.¹¹⁴ Indeed, there were often caring officers who were appreciated by their men and who looked after them by securing good provisions, ordering new clothing, or visiting ill soldiers.¹¹⁵ Their paternalism earned many officers the appreciation and love of their men.¹¹⁶ As Berkovich points out, good personnel management paid off for the officers, while not demonstrating a decent amount of care could lead to desertions, which cost colonels money and regimental officers career advancement.¹¹⁷

This leaves us with the impression that British and Habsburg officers took their profession seriously. Although wealthy nobles could still find ways to fast-track their careers to a position of relative importance, most were long-serving men who had made the military their primary life commitment. Indeed, both states exerted control over their officers' presence in the regiments and, more so in the Austrian case, their personal behavior and way of life.¹¹⁸

Training of officers was still, to a large part, handled in the regiments, at least for infantry and cavalry officers. Both Britain and Austria had established academies and institutes for the training and improvement of the technical branches, while only the Habsburg Monarchy founded an academy for training infantry and cavalry officers, which could, however, only provide a small number of the young officers needed. The Habsburg Monarchy was also more proactive in generating regulations to instruct officers on their duties, while Britain showed a greater intellectual discourse with the publication of treatises by and for officers, some of which also were specifically directed at the instruction of younger officers. Through those publications, officers were also able to suggest innovations and improvements. In Austria, those were usually put forward through memoranda to the central leadership or enacted directly by able general officers.

Both the British and Habsburg high command monitored the state of discipline and training within regiments through reviews. Diligent officers were able to improve the discipline and effectiveness of their troops, and the performance of men, officers, and generals in the later wars of the period gives some credit to this. While there is no doubt that some officers cared little about reforming their ways, there are significantly positive examples of care and empathy shown toward subordinates, both the men and the more junior officers, creating trust and cohesion.

Notes

Note that the German primary documents cited here do not follow the traditional order of archival sources.

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