

The great strength of Stephan Steiner's book is its deft blending of rigorous archival research and sophisticated social science theory. In addition to being an essential read for those interested in the Habsburg Empire, *Combating the Hydra* deserves a place on the bookshelves of students and scholars of migration history, European history, religious history, and historical theory, in addition to social scientists studying violence, migration, and diversity. There is much to like about this stimulating book.

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## **Iron and Blood: A Military History of the German-Speaking Peoples since 1500**

**By Peter H. Wilson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022.  
Pp. xlix + 913. Cloth \$39.95. ISBN: 978-0674987623.**

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No-one could ever accuse Peter Wilson of taking on only small projects. His impressive record of scholarship compiled over the last decade includes massive works on subjects such as the Holy Roman Empire and the Thirty Years' War. This one is no different in size, and the scope is equally ambitious. Wilson starts off by helpfully explaining how the work is organized and how the term "German-speaking peoples" is defined. With regards to the latter issue, Wilson carefully defines German-speaking peoples as being those populations indigenous to the various states that would later comprise the *Kaiserreich*, Austria, and Switzerland. The book is then divided into five broad sections on the basis of chronology. The first section goes from about 1500 to the end of the Thirty Years' War; the next section covers the age of absolute monarchs, revolving around Frederick the Great; then the French Revolution and Napoleon, followed by the contest between Austria and Prussia; the end of the Wars of Unification and the imperial period to the eve of war in 1914; the final section covers the World Wars and the Cold War, concluding with the aftermath of the Cold War and the early twenty-first century.

Each section is then subdivided into three subsections each. The first subsection is a narrative history of the wars of the period concerned. The second subsection deals with the manner in which war was conducted, including developments in tactics, technology, and organization. The final subsection covers the social and economic impacts on the populations in the various German states.

Given the character of Wilson's earlier works, the best part of the book is clearly the first couple of sections. Wilson expertly covers the Renaissance and the Wars of Religion with clarity and finesse. He is able to make a period marked by often bewildering complexity fairly understandable. Wilson is well-acquainted with the evolving technology and tactics of the early modern period. He also examines the manner in which the various German states paid – or failed to pay – for their military endeavors, and the impact of these developments on society more broadly.

For Wilson, the most aggressive German power in the early modern period was Austria, which willingly used force to attain its territorial objectives, often dragging the other states of the Holy Roman Empire into these conflicts. One critical aspect to Austria's success was its diplomacy, being able to secure military and, more importantly, financial aid, especially

from Britain during Austria's repeated titanic struggles with France during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The struggle between Austria and Prussia for mastery in Germany, Wilson argues, was not necessarily destined to end in Prussia's favor. Rather, there was a great deal of contingency in Prussia's ultimate victory, including Austria being drained by the exertions of 1848-1849 and the Franco-Austrian War in Italy ten years later, as well as Prussia having the right people in the right places at the right time. Prussia's victory also marked the end of the close coordination between diplomacy and war in Germany and Austria-Hungary.

When it comes to the more modern period (after the creation of the *Kaiserreich*), Wilson takes a rather conventional approach. While he rejects the old *Sonderweg* concept in German history, Wilson does accept the idea of a "German way of war," most clearly advanced by Robert Citino in his book of the same title. The divorce between diplomacy and military planning, which actually begins early in the *Kaiserreich*, would ultimately have disastrous consequences in both World Wars. This was particularly true with regard to strategy and the conduct of coalition warfare. Wilson also takes a conventional approach to the German Army's conduct of war, the rise of tanks, aircraft, and other technological advances during the period. He covers naval developments as well.

One of the strengths of the latter part of the book is Wilson's coverage of the post-World War II period. Taking advantage of some recent excellent scholarship on the development of the *Bundeswehr*, Wilson covers both German military establishments created during the Cold War. In this case, the West German establishment was much more successful than its East German counterpart, which in a number of ways was no more than a weak carbon copy of its Soviet patron.

The West German and later the German government after reunification realized that the prior approach to war had led to disastrous defeat in both World Wars and to horrific humanitarian atrocities such as the Holocaust. The German government instead went to a system of civilian control, by which war was renounced as a political instrument. This approach, nested within NATO, allowed Germany, in Wilson's view, to spend much more on defense than Austria and Switzerland.

The book is an excellent example of synthesis in research. A reader relatively new to the subject could pick up a plethora of sources just by perusing Wilson's extensive notes, which run to 74 pages. The experienced German military historian will enjoy Wilson's nuanced judgements, especially for the earlier period. For those who are beginning their exploration of German military history, this work is an indispensable starting point.

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## **Eine Löwin im Kampf gegen Napoleon? Die Konstruktion der Heldin Katharina Lanz**

**By Margareth Lanzinger and Raffaella Sarti. Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau, 2022. Pp. 392. Hardcover €50.00. ISBN: 978-3205206613.**

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It has become an epistemological given that gender is a discursive construct. The authors of *Eine Löwin im Kampf gegen Napoleon?* fully embrace this insight to explore the invention of the