

## Pensions in Switzerland: practices, conflicts, and impact in the sixteenth century

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The development of Swiss power politics around 1500 was remarkable, albeit short-lived. During the Burgundian Wars (1474–1477), Swiss cantons under Bernese leadership skilfully exploited the anti-Burgundian constellation on the European stage to expand their sphere of influence westwards, while in the Milanese Wars (1494–1516) they extended their territory to the south, into Lombardy.<sup>1</sup> Victory over Burgundy in the Battles of Murten (1476), Grandson (1476), and Nancy (1477) and over the French in the Pavia Campaign (1512) and at Novara (1513) established the Old Swiss Confederacy as a military power. Its great power politics came to an abrupt end in 1515, however, as the Confederacy was defeated by the young French King François I in the Battle of Marignano.<sup>2</sup> In the period spanning roughly thirty years between the Burgundian and Milanese Wars, the loose alliance of petty states and microstates in the heart of Europe proved unable to cope with the political, military, and financial demands of great-power politics in a sustainable

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1 Bernhard Stettler, *Die Eidgenossenschaft im 15. Jahrhundert* (Menziken: Markus Widmer-Dean, 2004), pp. 233–256; Walter Schaufelberger, ‘Spätmittelalter’, *Handbuch der Schweizer Geschichte*, vol. 1 (Zurich: Berichthaus, 1972), pp. 239–388 (pp. 336–358).

2 Walter Schaufelberger, *Marignano: Strukturelle Grenzen eidgenössischer Militärmacht zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Schriftenreihe der Gesellschaft für militärhistorische Studienreisen, 11 (Frauenfeld: Huber, 1993); Regula Schmid, ‘Gemein Eitgnossen hattend nie vil gewonnen, über den Gothart zu reisen: Ziele und Zwänge des eidgenössischen Ausgriffs in die Lombardei vor 1516’, in *Marignano 1515: la svolta*, Atti del congresso internazionale, Milano, 13 settembre 2014, ed. by Marino Viganò (Milan: Fondazione Trivulzio, 2015), pp. 17–32.

fashion. But although its infantry's short phase of tactical superiority in the European theatres of war ended at Marignano, as a market for mercenaries and as a guardian of Alpine passes the *Corpus Helveticum* remained a power factor as Spain and France jostled for the predominant position in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the victorious French king sought to form a military alliance with his Swiss enemies as swiftly as possible. And even when he did not initially succeed, he offered his adversaries an Eternal Peace (1516), which he made extremely attractive as a result of generous financial and trade incentives.<sup>4</sup> His expensive investments and his persistence would pay off within a few years when the mercenary alliance of 1521 was established. Regularly renewed, this alliance tied its unequal partners together throughout the entire sixteenth, seventeenth, and well into the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Unusual conventions in diplomatic dealings with foreign powers developed owing to the weakness of the Confederacy's petty states, the lack of a power centre, the coexistence of different constitutions and (following the Reformation) confessions, and the relations of different cantons with other cantons and foreign powers.<sup>6</sup> In the

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3 André Holenstein, *Mitten in Europa: Verflechtung und Abgrenzung in der Schweizer Geschichte*, 2nd ed. (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2015; first published in 2014), pp. 112–124.

4 See *Après Marignan: La paix perpétuelle entre la France et la Suisse, 1516–2016*, ed. by Alexandre Dafflon, Lionel Dorthe, and Claire Gantet, *Mémoires et Documents 4e série*, vol. 14 (Fribourg: Société d'Histoire de la Suisse romande/Archives de l'État de Fribourg, 2018).

5 Andreas Würzler, 'Symbiose ungleicher Partner: Die französisch-eidgenössische Allianz 1516–1798/1815', *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte* 12 (2011), 53–75; Ernst Wüthrich, *Die Vereinigung zwischen Franz I. und 12 eidgen. Orten und deren Zugewandten vom Jahre 1521* (Zurich, 1911).

6 There were five 'democratic' rural cantons (cantonal assemblies), four city cantons with patrician constitutions, and three city cantons with guild constitutions. One canton had both a rural and democratic and a city constitution. Two cantons were divided into two half-cantons. As for confession, after the Reformation, seven cantons remained Catholic, four were Reformed and two were mixed or bi-confessional. The *Corpus Helveticum* comprised the thirteen cantons with full rights involved in the administration of the subject territories (common bailiwicks), as well as allied principalities (the prince-bishopric of Basel, the princely abbey of St Gall, the principality of Neuchâtel), cities (Biel, Rottweil, Mulhouse, St Gall) and republics (Geneva, Valais, Grisons). See Andreas Würzler, 'The League of the Discordant Members' or How the Old Swiss Confederation Operated and How It Managed to Survive for So Long', in *The Republican Alternative:*

sixteenth century, for instance, Confederate embassies at foreign courts were a rarity, and there was no permanent representation by agents or residents.<sup>7</sup> However, foreign royal diplomats abounded in the *Corpus Helveticum* from the last quarter of the fifteenth century onwards, advancing the interests of their respective courts as Spain, Milan, Savoy, or the pope all sought alliances. Obtaining access to the Confederate mercenary markets was the principal aim of these powers. The pensions (payments into official accounts and to individuals) created by princes and kings to this end demonstrate the asymmetry in political relations between the Confederate cantons and their allies from the late fifteenth century onwards.<sup>8</sup>

To support this theory, the present chapter takes a closer look at the pension practices and the friction caused by this flow of money on various levels by focusing on the example of France: conflicts abounded over distribution due to French pensions during the Milanese War, and the relations between the cantons and their western ally were at times severely tested during the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598) because of outstanding pensions. Both

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*The Netherlands and Switzerland Compared*, ed. by André Holenstein, Thomas Maissen, and Maarten Prak (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), pp. 29–50 (pp. 29–35). Up to 1798, one can talk of two spheres of foreign policy: there was internal foreign policy pertaining to relations between the allied cantons and external foreign policy concerning the relations of individual cantons, or all of the cantons, with foreign powers. See Georg Kreis, ‘Außenpolitik’, *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, [www.hls.dhs.dss.ch/textes/d/D26455.php](http://www.hls.dhs.dss.ch/textes/d/D26455.php), accessed 18 September 2017.

7 See Nadir Weber and Philippe Rogger, ‘Unbekannte inmitten Europas? Zur außenpolitischen Kultur der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft’, in *Beobachten, Vernetzen, Verhandeln: Diplomatische Akteure und politische Kulturen in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft*, ed. by Philippe Rogger and Nadir Weber, *Itinera – Beihefte zur Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Geschichte*, 45 (Basel: Schwabe, 2018), pp. 9–44.

8 On the issue of asymmetrical foreign relations, see *Protegierte und Protektoren: Asymmetrische politische Beziehungen zwischen Partnerschaft und Dominanz (16. bis frühes 20. Jahrhundert)*, ed. by Tilman Haug, Nadir Weber, and Christian Windler, *Externa*, 9: *Geschichte der Außenbeziehungen in neuen Perspektiven* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2016), pp. 9–27; Andreas Affolter, *Verhandeln mit Republiken: Die französisch-eidgenössischen Beziehungen im frühen 18. Jahrhundert*, *Externa*, 11: *Geschichte der Außenbeziehungen in neuen Perspektiven* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017); Tilman Haug, *Ungleiche Außenbeziehungen und grenzüberschreitende Patronage. Die französische Krone und die geistlichen Kurfürsten (1648–1679)*, *Externa*, 6 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015); and Würzler, ‘Symbiose’.

examples provide insights into the balance of power and dependencies that developed between the allies following the nascence of the pension system around 1500, dependencies which would be consolidated during the course of the sixteenth century. First, however, we must explain what the term ‘pension’ actually means in the context of the Old Swiss Confederacy.

### Pensions, mercenary dealings, and foreign relations

From the late fifteenth century onwards, a great deal of money poured into the Confederacy from royal treasuries. Unlike German studies, for example, Swiss research literature only very rarely uses the term *subsidies* to denote these payments. The *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS)* contains no entries for the word. In the *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, on the other hand, a specific article defines subsidies as ‘moneys of aid or support’ paid to one power by another by contract, while also noting that the payment of subsidies was a ‘common means of financing wars in the early modern period’.<sup>9</sup> Although the same reference work also contains an entry on pensions and rightly points out the ambiguity of the term, there is no substantial consideration of the significance of pensions as a form of transnational royal money transfer.<sup>10</sup> This lacuna is remarkable, since such pension payments are also documented for the Holy Roman Empire and other territories.<sup>11</sup> This contradiction, the lack of uniform terminology for cross-border money transfers, and the dominance of the term ‘subsidies’ in the German research literature thus demand an explanation of the term ‘pensions’. On which basis were these payments made, what did they achieve, and what was

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9 Michael Busch, ‘Subsidien’, *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit Online*, ed. by Friedrich Jaeger, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2352-0248\\_edn\\_a4205000](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2352-0248_edn_a4205000), accessed 6 September 2017.

10 Josef Ehmer, ‘Pension’, *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit Online*, ed. by Friedrich Jaeger, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2352-0248\\_edn\\_a3186000](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2352-0248_edn_a3186000), accessed 6 September 2017.

11 See Haug, *Ungleiche Außenbeziehungen*, *passim*; Friedrich Edelmayer, *Söldner und Pensionäre: Das Netzwerk Philipps II. im Heiligen Römischen Reich*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur der iberischen und iberamerikanischen Länder, 7 (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 2002), pp. 27–29; and Fritz Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser and His Work Force: A Study in European Economic and Social History*, Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beihefte 47/48, 2 vols (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1964–65), vol. 1, pp. 327–330.

their significance for the political economy of the cantons of the Confederacy?

Pensions first appear as royal payments in the Old Swiss Confederacy in connection to the anti-Burgundian alliances in the last third of the fifteenth century.<sup>12</sup> As noted by historian Valentin Groebner in the *HLS*, they ‘aimed, both as public pensions paid into official accounts and as secret pensions paid to individuals, to influence political decisions and to secure foreign warlords access to the coveted Swiss mercenaries’.<sup>13</sup> The generosity of the European warlords was due, on the one hand, to the Confederacy’s special geopolitical location in the heart of Europe and, on the other hand, to the potency of its markets of violence. The Confederacy bordered on the Free County of Burgundy to the west and the duchy of Milan to the south. Hence, it was positioned in both the Spanish and French spheres of interest, in terms of both geostrategy and trade policy.<sup>14</sup> This special geopolitical position, caught between the might of the Spanish and the French, took on further virulence due to the cantons’ trade in mercenaries. From the late fifteenth century onwards, the Confederacy developed into a prosperous mercenary farm, becoming an important recruitment market. Large sections of the ruling elites made economic and political use of this situation. The leading political and military families enjoyed large profits and prestige as military entrepreneurs and recipients of pensions.<sup>15</sup> While the political-military elite secured and expanded

12 *Fremde Gelder: Pensionen in der Alten Eidgenossenschaft*, ed. by Maud Harivel, Florian Schmitz, and Simona Slanicka (Zurich: Chronos, forthcoming).

13 Valentin Groebner, ‘Pensionen’, *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, [www.hls.dhs.dss.ch/textes/d/D10241.php](http://www.hls.dhs.dss.ch/textes/d/D10241.php), accessed 6 September 2017. See also Valentin Groebner, *Gefährliche Geschenke: Ritual, Politik und die Sprache der Korruption in der Eidgenossenschaft im späten Mittelalter und am Beginn der Neuzeit*, *Konflikte und Kultur – Historische Perspektiven*, 4 (Constance: UVK Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 2000), pp. 159–163, and the same author’s *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts: Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

14 Holenstein, *Mitten in Europa*, p. 113.

15 See the ongoing project of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) led by Prof. André Holenstein at the University of Bern: *Militärunternehmertum und Verflechtung. Strukturen, Interessenlagen und Handlungsräume in den transnationalen Beziehungen des Corpus Helveticum in der frühen Neuzeit*. Projekt A: Philippe Rogger: *Eidgenössisches Militärunternehmertum in der frühen Neuzeit – Strukturen, Handlungsräume und Familieninteressen (1550–1750)*, [www.hist.unibe.ch/forschung/forschungsprojekte/militaerunternehmertum\\_amp\\_verflechtung/index\\_ger.html](http://www.hist.unibe.ch/forschung/forschungsprojekte/militaerunternehmertum_amp_verflechtung/index_ger.html), accessed 6 September 2017.

local power via mercenary service, the risks for the ordinary soldiers were much greater. Nevertheless, these subjects also saw mercenary life as an opportunity and entered the service of foreign masters as military migrant workers for uncertain pay.<sup>16</sup> It is estimated that in the sixteenth century alone, around four hundred thousand Swiss mercenaries went to war for foreign powers.<sup>17</sup> Close to the theatres of war in Italy or France, the Swiss mercenaries had the advantage of rapid availability. ‘The rival powers of Spain and France sought to bind this strategically sensitive space as closely as possible to themselves or to take it from their adversary. The aim was to secure the right to march their own troops through [the territory] and over the Alps, to keep the Swiss mercenary market open and to prevent their rival from gaining a dominant position in the Confederacy.’<sup>18</sup> As the *HLS* definition cited above also indicates, pensions entailed both public and private payments. It is important to make this distinction if we are to outline the conflicts caused by these pensions.

We first encounter pensions as public payments agreed by contract in the treaty of alliance with France of 1474. An annual payment of 20,000 francs was to be divided evenly between the then eight cantons of Zurich, Bern, Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, and Glarus and Freiburg and Solothurn.<sup>19</sup> After military conflict in

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16 Philippe Rogger and Benjamin Hitz, ‘Söldnerlandschaften – räumliche Logiken und Gewaltmärkte in historisch-vergleichender Perspektive: Eine Einführung’, *Söldnerlandschaften: Frühneuzeitliche Gewaltmärkte im Vergleich*, ed. by Philippe Rogger and Benjamin Hitz, *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, Beiheft 49 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2014), 9–43; Philippe Rogger, *Geld, Krieg und Macht: Pensionsherren, Söldner und eidgenössische Politik in den Mailänderkriegen 1494–1516* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2015); Benjamin Hitz, *Kämpfen um Sold: Eine Alltags- und Sozialgeschichte schweizerischer Söldner in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015).

17 Hans Conrad Peyer, ‘Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der fremden Dienste in der Schweiz vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert’, in Hans Conrad Peyer, *Könige, Stadt und Kapital: Aufsätze zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. by Ludwig Schmugge, Roger Sablonier, and Konrad Wanner (Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1982), pp. 219–231 (p. 222); *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative History of Military Labour 1500–2000*, ed. by Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Work Around the Globe*, 1 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013); Rogger and Hitz, ‘Söldnerlandschaften’; André Holenstein, Patrick Kury, and Kristina Schulz, *Schweizer Migrationsgeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2018), pp. 47–59.

18 Holenstein, *Mitten in Europa*, pp. 113–114.

19 Rudolf Thommen, ‘Friedensverträge und Bünde der Eidgenossenschaft mit Frankreich, 1444–1777’, *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und*

northern Italy, France renewed its agreement to pay the cantons enjoying full entitlement 2,000 francs in pensions (or peace payments) in the Eternal Peace of 1516.<sup>20</sup> François I increased the pensions to 3,000 francs in the mercenary alliance of 1521.<sup>21</sup> The king paid this amount, according to the wording of the treaty of 1521, ‘in clear and open recognition of the men, the Confederates concerned [and] the deep love, liberality, obligingness, and fondness of said most Christian king towards Us’.<sup>22</sup> The king of Spain also promised the annual payment of 1,500 crowns to the Catholic cantons (excluding Solothurn) in the mercenary alliance in order to win favour. Felipe II paid the money ‘out of especially graceful good will’ for the purpose of ‘better maintenance of mercenary friendship and alliance’.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the contractually agreed payments were not motivated by the warlords’ tangible interests in recruitment licences; rather, they were a symbol of royal affection and friendship towards their partners in the alliance. Indeed, the two alliances between the cantons and France and Spain combine elements of friendly and military treaties of alliance.<sup>24</sup> Even if the rhetoric of friendship suggests an equal footing, the two parties are anything but equal, as we shall see below.<sup>25</sup>

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*Altertumskunde* 15 (1916), 117–214 (p. 144). There were also provisions for pensions in the treaties of 1495 and 1499. *Ibid.*, 153–160.

20 *Die Eidgenössischen Abschiede aus dem Zeitraume von 1500 bis 1520*, ed. by Anton Philipp Segesser, Amtliche Sammlung der ältern Eidgenössischen Abschiede, vol. 3.2 (Lucerne: Meyer’sche Buchdruckerei, 1869), p. 1409.

21 *Die Eidgenössischen Abschiede aus dem Zeitraume von 1521 bis 1528*, ed. by Johannes Strickler, Amtliche Sammlung der ältern Eidgenössischen Abschiede, vol. 4.1a (Brugg: Fisch, Wild und Comp., 1873), p. 1498.

22 *Abschiede*, vol. 4.1a, p. 1498.

23 *Die Eidgenössischen Abschiede aus dem Zeitraume von 1587 bis 1617*, ed. by Josef Karl Krütli and Jakob Kaiser, Amtliche Sammlung der ältern Eidgenössischen Abschiede, vol. 5.1 (Bern: Wyß’sche Buchdruckerei, 1872), p. 1838; Rudolf Bolzern, *Spanien, Mailand und die katholische Eidgenossenschaft: Militärische, wirtschaftliche und politische Beziehungen zur Zeit des Gesandten Alfonso Casati (1594–1621)*, Luzerner Historische Veröffentlichungen, 16 (Lucerne: Rex 1982), p. 150.

24 Andreas Würzler, ‘Freunde, *amis*, *amici*: Freundschaft in Politik und Diplomatie der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft’, in *Freundschaft oder ‘amitié’: Ein politisch-soziales Konzept der Vormoderne im zwischensprachlichen Vergleich (15.–17. Jahrhundert)*, ed. by Klaus Oschema, Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung, Beiheft 40 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007), 191–210 (p. 195).

25 Tilman Haug, Nadir Weber, and Christian Windler, ‘Einleitung’, pp. 9–27 (p. 12).

Although the articles on pensions contain no mention of the recruitment of mercenaries, the pension payments were motivated not by emotions but by power politics. The contracts provided for mutual military aid in the event of conflicts or the passage of troops and, above all, granted the French or Spanish king the right to recruit mercenaries to defend their territories.<sup>26</sup> While the military alliances with France of 1474, 1495, or 1499 did not stipulate how many soldiers were to be recruited, the treaty of 1521 prescribed a minimum of six thousand and a maximum of sixteen thousand.<sup>27</sup> The 1587 agreement with Spain stipulated a minimum of four thousand and a maximum of thirteen thousand mercenaries.<sup>28</sup> If the pensions were not paid on time, article 16 of the Spanish alliance allowed the cantons to annul the contract.<sup>29</sup> The annulment clause, testifying to the cantons' bad experiences with their allies, demonstrates the essentially commercial nature of these alliances: the deal was mercenaries for pensions.<sup>30</sup> For the cantons – and the Catholic cantons had a special interest in such services – the contractually agreed trade in mercenaries represented an extremely profitable business. From 1510 to 1610, in the Catholic city cantons of Fribourg, Lucerne, and Solothurn, the pensions amounted to 66.5 per cent, 41.2 per cent, and 36.9 per cent of the respective regular income. The figures were somewhat lower in the Reformed city cantons of Zurich (15.2 per cent), Basel (15.7 per cent), and Schaffhausen (32.1 per cent).<sup>31</sup> In the rural cantons, pensions may well have been much more important to state budgets than in the Catholic cantons owing to the weak structure of their economies: in Appenzell, pensions accounted for around 80 per cent in 1582–1583.<sup>32</sup> The alliances,

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26 On the Spanish alliance, see *Abschiede*, vol. 5.1, pp. 1832–1833; Bolzern, *Spanien*, pp. 73–108.

27 Thommen, 'Friedensverträge und Bünde', pp. 144, 154, 158; *Abschiede*, vol. 4.1a, p. 1494.

28 *Ibid.*, vol. 5.1, p. 1839.

29 *Ibid.*, vol. 5.1, p. 1834.

30 Nathalie Büsser, 'Militärunternehmertum, Außenbeziehungen und fremdes Geld', in *Geschichte des Kantons Schwyz*, vol. 3, ed. by Historischer Verein des Kantons Schwyz (Zurich: Chronos, 2012), pp. 69–127 (p. 102).

31 Martin H. Körner, *Solidarités financières suisses au seizième siècle*, Bibliothèque historique vaudoise, 66 (Lausanne: Édition Payot, 1980), p. 112.

32 Christian Windler, "'Ohne Geld keine Schweizer": Pensionen und Söldnerrekrutierung auf den eidgenössischen Patronagemärkten', in *Nähe in der Ferne: Personale Verflechtung in den Außenbeziehungen der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Hillard von Thiessen and Christian Windler, *Zeitschrift für Historische*

especially the close involvement with France in 1516–1521, brought the Confederates not only financial but also trade-related advantages (customs privileges, unrestricted access to trade fairs in Lyon, salt imports, etc.).<sup>33</sup> In terms of security policy, the cantons also profited from the opportunity to recall troops in the event of war, as first established in the provisions of the French alliance of 1521, and later in the Savoy alliance of 1577 and the Spanish military alliance of 1587.<sup>34</sup> A consequence of the recall clause was that the cantons could manage without an expensive standing army and were thus able to keep direct taxation low. As argued by Christian Windler, the ‘successful Confederate model of Early Modernity, “state-building without direct taxation and a standing army”, was only possible thanks to the intensity of external involvement and the extent of the resources that created’.<sup>35</sup> In contrast to the Spanish alliance or the Catholic cantons’ treaties with Savoy in 1560 (renewed in 1577 and 1581) and the pope in 1565, the French alliance included all faiths and united both Catholic and Reformed cantons. The alliance formed with King Henri II in 1549 included the cantons Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Glarus, Basel, Freiburg, Solothurn, Schaffhausen, and Appenzell and the allied cantons of the Abbey and City of St Gall, Grisons, Valais, and Mulhouse.<sup>36</sup> Despite the absence of Zurich in 1521 and the temporary withdrawal from the alliance by Bern in 1529 on account of reformatory opposition to pensions, the alliance with France played an important role in holding together the loose confederacy, since it balanced the tensions between the confessional blocs. It was renewed in the sixteenth century in 1549, 1564, and 1582, each time only with minimal changes, although France finally succeeded in expanding the alliance to include Bern in 1582–1583 and Zurich in 1614.<sup>37</sup> The installation of a permanent embassy in the Confederacy in 1522 and the role of the ambassadors as mediators in internal conflicts underline France’s eminent interest

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Forschung, Beiheft 36 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005), 105–133 (pp. 105–106); Hostenstein, *Mitten in Europa*, pp. 145–146.

33 Würigler, ‘Symbiose’, 69–72; Dafflon, Dorthe, and Gantet, *Mémoires et Documents*.

34 *Abschiede*, vol. 4.1a, pp. 1494–1495, vol. 5.1, p. 1835, and *Die Eidgenössischen Abschiede aus dem Zeitraume von 1556 bis 1586*, ed. by Joseph Karl Krütli, Amtliche Sammlung der ältern Eidgenössischen Abschiede, vol. 4.2 (Bern: C. Rätzer’sche Buchdruckerei, 1861), p. 1545.

35 Windler, “Ohne Geld keine Schweizer”, p. 107.

36 Thommen, ‘Friedensverträge und Bünde’, p. 180.

37 Würigler, ‘Symbiose’, 124–133.

in maintaining good relations with the cantons or a smooth supply of mercenaries from as many cantons as possible.<sup>38</sup> From 1530 onwards, they had a permanent residence in Solothurn, from where they organized the recruitment of mercenaries and advanced the formation of mercenary alliances and capitulations.<sup>39</sup>

Since there was no centre of power comparable to a royal court, the regular Federal Diet (*Tagsatzung*) played only a co-ordinating role in foreign policy, which meant that the Confederacy presented the French, Spanish, and Savoy diplomats with difficulties.<sup>40</sup> Foreign policy was an affair for the sovereign cantons. They alone were responsible for forming alliances, with many decision-makers involved in the political process, be it the councillors in the city cantons or the countryfolk with voting and electoral rights in the rural cantons (*Landsgemeinden*). Occasionally, in city cantons such as Bern, even the subjects were consulted by the authorities on questions of alliances in the form of surveys (*Ämteranfragen*).<sup>41</sup> Given the decentralized political structure and the complex political setting in the polyarchies of the Confederacy, the diplomatic representatives of the European powers relied on personal connections and various communication channels to push their political interests. That was both very time-consuming and very expensive; they corresponded with many actors from different cantons, travelled to diets and conferences, met contacts in the cantons in person, or received them in their places of residence.<sup>42</sup> Drawing on recent insights into the history of diplomacy

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38 Würgler, 'The League', p. 36.

39 Holenstein, *Mitten in Europa*, p. 134; Alexandre Dafflon, *Die Ambassadoren des Königs und Solothurn: Ein 'vierzehnter Kanton' am Ufer der Aare, 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert* (Solothurn: Zentralbibliothek Solothurn, 2014). For Spanish diplomacy, see Bolzern, *Spanien*, and Andreas Behr, *Diplomatie als Familiengeschäft: Die Casati als spanisch-mailändische Gesandte in Luzern und Chur (1660–1700)* (Zurich: Chronos, 2015).

40 Holenstein, *Mitten in Europa*, pp. 133–141; Andreas Würgler, *Die Tagsatzung der Eidgenossen: Politik, Kommunikation und Symbolik einer repräsentativen Institution im europäischen Kontext (1470–1798)*, *Frühneuzeit-Forschungen*, 19 (Epfendorf: Bibliotheca Academia, 2013), pp. 477–484; Weber and Rogger, 'Unbekannte'. On the functioning of the Federal Diet, see Würgler, *Tagsatzung*, and Michael Jucker, *Gesandte, Schreiber, Akten. Politische Kommunikation auf eidgenössischen Tagsatzungen im Spätmittelalter* (Zurich: Chronos, 2004).

41 Sarah Rindlisbacher, 'Zwischen Evangelium und Realpolitik: Der Entscheidungsprozess um die Annahme der französischen Soldallianz in Bern 1564/65 und 1582', *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 75 (2013), 3–39.

42 Würgler, *Tagsatzung*.

inspired by social and cultural history, we know that the Confederacy's transnational connections in the early modern period were achieved via personal networks composed of many different actors, each of whom pursued their own interests and whose loyalty to the polity was occasionally rather weak.<sup>43</sup>

These informal networks were usually formed by the establishment of patron–client relationships.<sup>44</sup> This policy made use of bribes in the form of all kinds of patronage (pensions, captain's ranks, aristocratic titles, etc.), secret payments to select politicians, military entrepreneurs, and trusted individuals playing a very important role. Indeed, towards the end of the sixteenth century, a much larger number of pensions were covertly paid to private individuals from state treasuries. Taking Lucerne as an example, while France in 1475 paid around half (45 per cent) of its pensions to private individuals, about a hundred years later, around 1580, the figure stood at roughly three-quarters. Spain, too, spent 4,000 *scudi* in private pensions per canton and year in 1587, while public pensions, as outlined above, amounted to only 1,500 *scudi*.<sup>45</sup> In the course of the sixteenth century, however, private pensions became more nuanced, with different categories distinguishing between purpose, mode of distribution, and the people dispensing them.<sup>46</sup> Individual

43 *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen: Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. by Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, Externa, 1 (Cologne: Böhlau 2010); *Nähe in der Ferne*, ed. by Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler.

44 Ulrich Pfister, 'Politischer Klientelismus in der frühneuzeitlichen Schweiz', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 42 (1992), 28–68; Windler, "Ohne Geld keine Schweizer", pp. 105–133; *Soldgeschäfte, Klientelismus, Korruption in der Frühen Neuzeit: Zum Soldunternehmertum der Familie Zurlauben im schweizerischen und europäischen Kontext*, ed. by Kaspar von Greyerz, André Hostenstein, and Andreas Würzler, *Herrschaft und soziale Systeme in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 25 (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2018); for research on patronage in general, see Birgit Emich, Nicole Reinhardt, Hillard von Thiesen, and Christian Wieland, 'Stand und Perspektiven der Patronageforschung', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 32 (2005), 233–265.

45 Bolzern, *Spanien*, p. 150; Leonhard Haas, 'Die spanischen Jahrgelder von 1588 und die politischen Faktionen in der Innerschweiz zur Zeit Ludwig Pfyffers', *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Kirchengeschichte* 45 (1952), 81–108, 161–189 (pp. 83–94); Windler, "Ohne Geld keine Schweizer", p. 110; Rogger, *Geld*, pp. 328–329.

46 Haas, 'Die spanischen Jahrgelder', p. 82; Büsser, 'Militärunternehmertum', pp. 90–93; Urs Kälin, 'Salz, Sold und Pensionen: Zum Einfluss Frankreichs auf die politische Struktur der innerschweizerischen Landgemeindedemokratien im 18. Jahrhundert', *Der Geschichtsfreund* 149 (1996), 105–124

pensions, as a resource of patronage, influenced the political culture in the cantons.<sup>47</sup> Regular pensions were used by the French or Spanish king to reward clients for their service in furthering their patron's political goals, procuring mercenaries or supplying important information.<sup>48</sup> The dispensers of pensions, who acted as brokers by organizing the exchange of resources between the patron and his clients, were surrounded by pro-French, pro-Spanish, or pro-Savoy factions jostling for influence on behalf of their patrons.<sup>49</sup> Although we do not claim that there was a simple automatic connection between money and political power, the boundaries of entwinement were determined by the availability – or indeed shortage – of patronage resources.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the development and maintenance of these informal networks were determined not only by political culture but also by confessional circumstances. For instance, Spanish Milan had limited access to Reformed patronage markets.<sup>51</sup> With regard to transfers of resources in connection with mercenary service and pensions, client networks were of inestimable importance for the formation of political elites in the cantons.<sup>52</sup> Hence, it is not surprising

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(pp. 114–119); Gustav Allemann, 'Söldnerwerbungen im Kanton Solothurn von 1600–1723, I. Teil', *Jahrbuch für Solothurnische Geschichte* 18 (1945), 1–122 (pp. 31–41).

- 47 See, for instance, U. Pfister, U. Kälin, C. Windler, and P. Rogger, 'Mit Fürsten und Königen befreundet – Akteure, Praktiken und Konfliktpotential der zentralschweizerischen Pensionennetzwerke um 1500', *Der Geschichtsfreund* 165 (2012), 223–254.
- 48 Pfister, 'Politischer Klientelismus', pp. 29–40; Simon Teuscher, *Bekannte – Klienten – Verwandte: Soziabilität und Politik in der Stadt Bern um 1500*, Norm und Struktur. Studien zum sozialen Wandel in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit, 9 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1998), pp. 135–138; Ulrich Vonrufs, *Die politische Führungsgruppe Zürichs zur Zeit von Hans Waldmann (1450–1489): Struktur, politische Networks und die sozialen Beziehungstypen Verwandtschaft, Freundschaft und Patron-Klient-Beziehung*, Geist und Werk der Zeiten, 94 (Zurich: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 188–190.
- 49 Haas, 'Die spanischen Jahrgelder', pp. 81–108, 161–189; Windler, "Ohne Geld keine Schweizer", p. 115; Kälin, 'Salz, Sold und Pensionen', p. 109; Andreas Würigler, 'Factions and Parties in Early Modern Swiss Conflicts', in *Factional Struggles: Divided Elites in European Cities & Courts (1400–1750)*, ed. by Mathieu Caesar, Rulers & Elites, 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 196–215.
- 50 Behr, *Diplomatie als Familiengeschäft*, pp. 261–318, 322; Windler, "Ohne Geld keine Schweizer", p. 113.
- 51 Behr, *Diplomatie als Familiengeschäft*, pp. 263–291, 296.
- 52 See, for instance, Kurt Messmer and Peter Hoppe, *Luzerner Patriziat: Sozial- und wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Studien zur Entstehung und Entwicklung im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Luzerner Historische Veröffentlichungen,

that, given this opaque flow of resources and the complex mesh of contacts, there was no shortage of contemporary criticism of the pension system. In the sixteenth century, money and gifts were part of the political discourse, and the line between legitimate practice and bribery was hotly debated.<sup>53</sup> As early as 1503, the entire Confederacy reached an agreement forbidding private pensions (the Pensions Letter). Nevertheless, this consensus lasted only until 1508, and it was the work of the Zurich reformer Zwingli – a harsh critic of mercenary service and pensions – that led to private pensions being forbidden in the Reformed city cantons.<sup>54</sup> However, such bans could easily be circumvented, as is shown by the example of Bern where, for a time, salt concessions were instead used as a patronage resource.<sup>55</sup> This criticism of private pensions is the subject of the first case study illustrating how the asymmetry in political relations between powers awarding and powers receiving pensions manifested itself.

### Pensions as a patronage resource: cross-border practices of political influence during the Milanese Wars

The asymmetrical nature of the cantons' foreign relations becomes especially clear when the continental great powers sought to obtain licences to recruit Swiss mercenaries. France, Milan, and the pope regarded the cantons of the Confederacy as patronage markets in which recruitment largely depended on the attractiveness of their offers (pensions, pay, etc.).<sup>56</sup> This was also the case when the cantons began to pursue their own power politics in northern Italy in the early sixteenth century.

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5 (Lucerne: Rex-Verlag, 1976), pp. 77–93; Philippe Rogger, 'Familiale Machtpolitik und Militärunternehmertum im katholischen Vorort: Die Pfyffer von Luzern im Umfeld des Dreissigjährigen Krieges', *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 77 (2015), 122–138; Rogger, *Geld*, pp. 323–343; Büsser, 'Militärunternehmertum', pp. 69–127.

53 Groebner, *Geschenke*; von Greyerz, Holenstein, and Würzler, *Herrschaft und soziale Systeme*; Andreas Suter, 'Korruption oder Patronage? Ausenbeziehungen zwischen Frankreich und der Alten Eidgenossenschaft als Beispiel (16.–18. Jahrhundert)', in *Korruption: Historische Annäherungen an eine Grundfigur politischer Kommunikation*, ed. by Niels Grüne and Simona Slanicka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), pp. 167–203.

54 Groebner, *Geschenke*, pp. 178, 208, 239, 241–246.

55 Windler, "'Ohne Geld keine Schweizer'", pp. 126–133.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

In the last decade of the fifteenth century, Italy became the focus of French and Spanish expansionism. Both countries had already achieved a high degree of monarchic concentration at this time, and dominion over Italy promised the wealth of its trade hubs as well as agricultural production in the north and centre. It would also mean securing a position as the dominant force in the Mediterranean and represented the key to European hegemony. In 1494, the French monarchy had achieved sufficient internal consolidation for Charles VIII to embark on a campaign to Naples. The aim was to realise Angiovinian claims to the rule of the House of Anjou over Naples by military means. Following the conflict between the Valois and the Habsburgs over the Burgundian Succession (1477–1493), the antagonism between the two houses continued on the Apennine peninsula, causing the swift collapse of the fragile Italian state system. The years between the 1494 Naples campaign of Charles VIII and the victory of King François I in Marignano in 1515 were characterized by several military campaigns and shifting coalitions and alliances between the power blocs involved. With the help of the Confederacy's cantons, France conquered the duchy of Milan in 1499 and occupied it in the ensuing years.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the cantons supplied the French king with the mercenaries he urgently needed for his Italian campaigns until 1509. Between 1509 and 1511, however, the Confederacy split with France when the Swiss did not renew the mercenary alliance of 1499 after it expired in 1509. Instead, an alliance was formed with the pope in 1510 and rapprochement was sought with the Holy Roman Emperor (the Hereditary Agreement of 1511).

The Pavia campaign of 1512, pursuing the Confederacy's own designs for power, led to the capitulation of Cremona, Pavia, and Milan. When France was driven out of Lombardy, the conflict over the duchy escalated markedly.<sup>58</sup> On 29 December 1512, the Confederacy made Massimiliano Sforza, the son of Ludovico Sforza and the formal feudal overlord of Milan, duke of the city without considering the interests of the Holy Roman Emperor. Milan thus

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57 Alfred Kohler, *Expansion und Hegemonie: Internationale Beziehungen 1450–1559*, Handbuch der Geschichte der Internationalen Beziehungen, 1 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), pp. 6–7, 327–341; Heinrich Lutz, 'Italien vom Frieden von Lodi bis zum Spanischen Erbfolgekrieg (1454–1700)', in *Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte*, vol. 3, ed. by Theodor Schieder (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1971), pp. 851–901 (pp. 864–871).

58 Schaufelberger, 'Spätmittelalter', pp. 348–358.

became a tributary protectorate of the Confederacy.<sup>59</sup> But the French King Louis XII was by no means inclined to accept the loss of a duchy to which he had declared hereditary claims. It seems as if immediate attempts to reconquer the territory were out of the question following France's bitter defeat. Instead, Louis used diplomatic channels to approach his former allies, turned enemies, in order to regain control over this rich and geopolitically vital duchy, requesting peace negotiations.

Hence, a phase of intensified diplomatic activity in the individual cantons and at the Federal Diet began. From July 1512 onwards, various dynasties offered to serve as mediators between the Confederacy and the French king. Pope Julius II, the greatest beneficiary of the summer of 1512, had no interest in such a development and sternly warned the Confederacy against taking up the offers of Savoy or Lorraine.<sup>60</sup> Outside of official communications, France paved the way for peace talks via informal channels in the hope of gaining access to the Swiss mercenary markets as soon as possible. This explosive political constellation initially required that France proceed covertly. In order to provide safe passage for a French legation, Simon de Courbouson, *Hofmeister* to Philiberta of Luxembourg, was sent as the representative of French interests. To distribute the French pensions, Courbouson relied on a network of various intermediaries in the cantons who had local connections, were familiar with the political situation, and knew who was worth investing in and who was not. In Bern, for example, the innkeeper and member of the *Grossrat* Michel Glaser served as a broker, secretly distributing 1,500 crowns (out of a total of 2,100 crowns) to over 160 individuals without instructions from France. He was rewarded for his risky services with 600 crowns of the French pension payments; 665 crowns went into the pockets of seventeen members of the *Kleinrat*. Thus, over half of the twenty-seven members of the *Kleinrat*, the city-state's most important political body, had secretly received French pensions from Glaser. The remaining money (835 crowns) was primarily distributed between members of the *Grossrat*, mercenary leaders, and guildsmen. The sum of 2,100 crowns was a substantial one – it was the equivalent of roughly half of Bern's state budget. Glaser performed these secret payments

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59 Ernst Gagliardi, *Novara und Dijon: Höhepunkt und Verfall der schweizerischen Grossmacht im 16. Jahrhundert* (Zurich: Leemann, 1907), p. 19; Schaufelberger, 'Spätmittelalter', p. 353.

60 *Abschiede*, vol. 3.2, pp. 647, 651.

partly in person at his inn and partly via third parties. He received assistance from another member of the *Grossrat* and intermediaries in the town's guilds. In Zurich, on the other hand, a member of the *Kleinrat*, a knight, and a member of the Constaffel circle acted as brokers, secretly distributing French pensions (to the tune of 1,000 crowns) with the assistance of twelve sub-brokers to approximately eighty people, many of whom belonged to the diets and guild rooms that held great political influence in the city.<sup>61</sup> Hence, politics often took place outside of the diets intended for that purpose. Indeed, inns, for example, played an important role in the establishment of informal 'pension networks'. As observed by Simon Teuscher, in 'terms of its suitability as a place where political groups could form, the inn can well be termed the counterpart of the town hall, with partially complementary functions'.<sup>62</sup>

Split by political orientations, the urban inns were frequented by pro- or anti-French factions. Around 1500, the pope's supporters met in the Schlüssel tavern, whereas the clients of the French king met for their evening drinks in Gasthaus Sonne, run by the above-mentioned Glaser.<sup>63</sup> Despite the fact that the clients could not stipulate the size of their pensions themselves, the local connection of the pension business provided the elites with a lot of room for manoeuvre. The clamour for the favour of foreign potentates was not so much a matter of political loyalty; the authorities' actions were often

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61 Rogger, *Geld*, pp. 209–232, 255–272. See also Gagliardi, *Novara und Dijon*, pp. 19–38; Teuscher, *Bekannte – Klienten – Verwandte*, pp. 147, 184, 196–197, 199; and Hans Braun, 'Heimliche Pensionen und verbotener Reiselauf: Die Prozesse vom Sommer 1513 im Spiegel von Verhörprotokollen aus dem Berner Staatsarchiv', in *Personen der Geschichte – Geschichte der Personen. Studien zur Kreuzzugs-, Sozial- und Bildungsgeschichte: Festschrift für Rainer Christoph Schwinges zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Christian Hesse, Beat Immenhauser, Oliver Landolt, and Barbara Studer (Basel: Schwabe, 2003), pp. 25–41.

62 Teuscher, *Bekannte – Klienten – Verwandte*, p. 200; see also Pfister, 'Politischer Klientelismus', pp. 32–39; Beat Kümin, *Drinking Matters: Public Houses and Social Exchange in Early Modern Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 83, 126, 130; and Philippe Rogger, 'Solvente Kriegsherren, vernetzte Wirte, empfängliche Politiker: Interessenpolitik auf den eidgenössischen Gewaltmärkten um 1500', *Lobbying: Die Vorräume der Macht*, ed. by Gisela Hürlimann, André Mach, Anja Rathmann-Lutz, and Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte 31 (Zurich: Chronos, 2016), 49–60 (pp. 54–57).

63 Teuscher, *Bekannte – Klienten – Verwandte*, p. 148.

dominated by self-serving motives. The lists of pensions documented in Swiss and foreign archives demonstrate that the diets maintained political contacts with several powers at the same time. Consequently, many Bernese clients were awarded pensions by more than one patron. Regardless of the provenance of these lists, be they from Milan, France, or the Holy Roman Empire, the same names are often encountered. These multiple loyalties on the part of the Confederacy's elites were clearly something their wealthy benefactors were prepared to overlook in the case of influential clients. For the Holy Roman Emperor, merely neutralizing or silencing a supporter of France could be a worthwhile investment.<sup>64</sup>

Such practices, only the subject of rumour, and the fact that France had secretly recruited Swiss mercenaries proved a severe test of political unity in the Confederacy.<sup>65</sup> The legitimacy of the great-power interests in the Confederacy's markets of violence was precarious, as the secret pensions represented more than a whiff of corruptibility and venality.<sup>66</sup> In the summer of 1513, there were violent protests against the pension system undertaken by subjects in the city cantons of Bern, Lucerne, Solothurn, and – two years after a similar incident related to the Battle of Marignano – in Zurich. In the course of these protests, some recipients of pensions were deposed, fined, or sentenced to hand over their French money to the city treasury. Pardons, however, were forthcoming as soon as the riots had ended. The receipt of private pensions was forbidden (with the exception of Solothurn), which had no effect on the clandestine continuation of this lucrative practice.<sup>67</sup> However, the Bernese subjects also demanded an institutionalized say concerning alliance policy. With the exception of Zurich, the cantons upheld the time-honoured rights of their subjects.<sup>68</sup> The real peak of the riots in Bern was the performance of the city's clerk, who took it upon himself to stand before the angry subjects and read out loud the names of everyone who had received secret payments from the French broker Michel Glaser (who was sentenced to death). By theatrically reading out the names and the sums of money they had received, the clerk turned the suspicions concerning individual members of the Diet that had been circulating prior to the riots into certainties. For the audience of rebelling subjects, the links between the Bernese elite

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64 Rogger, *Geld*, pp. 142–151.

65 Braun, 'Heimliche Pensionen', pp. 29, 36–41.

66 Groebner, *Geschenke*, pp. 155–226.

67 Rogger, *Geld*, pp. 55–116.

68 *Ibid.*, pp. 106–112.

and the French king took on the character of a tight network of transnational connections.<sup>69</sup>

The secret transactions were a cause of growing dissatisfaction among the subjects of the city state of Bern, partly because they had come to symbolize immoral politics and partly because they raised the question of who profited the most from the trade in mercenaries and pensions.<sup>70</sup> In Bern, for instance, the subjects, consulted by the authorities on important issues such as the formation of alliances, complained that, as captains, the city elites permanently led 'our flesh and blood' from the land.<sup>71</sup> The rural districts were thus confronted with an increased, uncontrolled exodus of men who were fit for work whenever war was brewing. Given the subjects' great enthusiasm for mercenary service in the early sixteenth century, it can be assumed that especially housefathers (i.e. the rural notables) in their role as farm owners or master craftsmen had a lot to lose financially from the uncontrolled military economic migration. The temporary absence, potential disabling, or death of a mercenary in Italy represented an economic burden for the running of a farm or a trade, quite apart from the emotional drama for his social sphere.<sup>72</sup> The social explosiveness of this setting becomes clear if we consider that only one in three returned unharmed from the battles of 1500.<sup>73</sup> Unlike the simple mercenaries who risked life and limb for uncertain pay in Italy, the city aldermen had nothing to fear in this regard. Far removed from the physical dangers of the battlefield, they determined the political framework of mercenary service and were rewarded with high pensions. The fact that private pensions were forbidden during the pension riots, and that demands were made in Bern in 1514 to the effect that if an alliance was formed part of the pensions should go to the subjects, suggests that the secret payments collided with the popular ideas of appropriate financial dealings – of a moral economy.<sup>74</sup>

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69 *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 215–232.

70 Groebner, *Geschenke*, p. 190.

71 Catherine Schorer, 'Berner Ämterbefragungen: Untertanenrepräsentation und -mentalität im ausgehenden Mittelalter', *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde* 51 (1989), 217–253 (p. 237).

72 Rogger, *Geld*, pp. 323–343.

73 Peyer, *Könige, Stadt und Kapital*, p. 221.

74 Schorer, 'Berner Ämterbefragungen', p. 233; see also Kälin, 'Salz, Sold und Pensionen', p. 115, and Daniel Schläppi, 'Das Staatswesen als kollektives Gut: Gemeinbesitz als Grundlage der politischen Kultur in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft', *Historische Sozialforschung* 32 (2007), 169–202 (p. 179).

## Pensions as promises: France's debt policy during the French Wars of Religion

In 1597, Renward Cysat, the Lucerne city clerk and an outstanding observer of the political situation of his time, wrote a commentary on the transformation in the Lucerne treasury over the course of the previous fourteen years.<sup>75</sup> His remarks in 1574 on the Confederacy's relations with France following the accession of King Henri III are particularly harsh. He accuses the latter of a general inability to keep order in his kingdom and in matters of war, while expressing unveiled criticism of the king's financial policy: where money should have been saved, it was wasted, and where it should have been invested, it was saved.<sup>76</sup> The Swiss also suffered from this policy (especially the Catholic cantons), Cysat asserts, since they always dependably supplied mercenary troops, who were now in a pitiful situation under Henri III. The king's ill-advised policy was not only due to his incompetence, Cysat claims, but was also a political strategy. He deliberately 'introduced all kinds of harmful innovation, discoveries and finances to the detriment of the Confederates'.<sup>77</sup> What is behind this accusation?

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the French crown was undoubtedly confronted by fundamental political challenges. At the same time, the financial situation was extremely tense. Military expenditure during the Wars of Religion caused huge deficits.<sup>78</sup> A debt of 101 million *livres* in 1576 had reached 133 million by 1588.<sup>79</sup> At the end of the century, the state budget was in a desolate state: 'The debts of nearly four decades of war meant that by 1598 the crown was in debt to the tune of 300 million *livres*'.<sup>80</sup> The

75 Renward Cysat, 'Über die Beziehungen der Schweiz zu Frankreich in der Zeit Heinrichs III.', ed. by Theodor von Liebenau, *Anzeiger für schweizerische Geschichte* new series 8 (1898–1901), 457–460; also see Fritz Glauser, 'Cysat, Renward', in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, [www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D11751.php](http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D11751.php), accessed 6 September 2017.

76 '[W]here they should save they have spent, and where they should delve into their pockets they have saved'; Cysat, 'Über die Beziehungen', p. 458.

77 Cysat, 'Über die Beziehungen', 458.

78 James B. Wood, *The King's Army: Warfare, Soldiers, and Society during the Wars of Religion in France, 1562–1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 275–300; Arlette Jouanna, *La France du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1483–1598* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), pp. 566–568.

79 Jouanna, *La France du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 593.

80 Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562–1629*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; first published in 1995), p. 217.

Confederacy's allies were also affected by France's empty coffers; the annual costs of Swiss pensions amounted to 200,000 *livres* between around 1560 and 1574 – almost 4 per cent of the total royal army expenditure in peacetime.<sup>81</sup> And, although the Swiss mercenary contingent was better paid than the French soldiers and generally received preferential treatment, their demands during the Wars of Religion went unmet for months and years.<sup>82</sup> In 1570, for instance, the king owed the Pfyffer and Schiesser regiments alone 800,000 *livres*.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the Swiss regiments were a comparatively large burden for the French budget. The monthly costs of a Swiss mercenary contingent with twenty companies, or six thousand men, stood at around 73,000 *livres*. A single ten-company regiment of French infantry cost only about 20,000 *livres* per month.<sup>84</sup> It is no surprise that the crown could only partially fulfil its obligations given the deficits that grew each year. Cysat reported that outstanding payments to Swiss creditors had reached such a high level under Henri III 'that they cannot be calculated or estimated'.<sup>85</sup> At the Federal Diet in late November 1586, the French debts, consisting of peace payments, pensions, loans, and payment of mercenaries, were declared to amount to 2.5 million crowns, including outstanding interest.<sup>86</sup> In the ensuing years, the figures grew from bad to worse. Around 1600, the outstanding peace payments, public and private pensions, mercenary arrears, loans, and interest are believed to have amounted to 36 million *livres*.<sup>87</sup> It is thus hardly surprising that the outstanding credits in France were permanently on the agenda when the Swiss delegates met.<sup>88</sup> This is well illustrated by the eleven years between 1575 and 1585. During this period, the congresses, which were sometimes divided by confession, tabled the subject of French

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81 Wood, *The King's Army*, p. 282 (tab. 11.1).

82 *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 279.

83 Theodor Müller-Wolfer, 'Der Staatsmann Ludwig Pfyffer und die Hugenottenkriege', *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Geschichte* 8 (1928), 1–63, 113–148, 241–320 (p. 15).

84 Wood, *The King's Army*, p. 283.

85 Cysat, 'Über die Beziehungen', 459.

86 *Abschiede*, vol. 4.2, p. 965.

87 Walter Schmid, *Der Beitritt Zürichs zum französischen Soldbündnis 1614* (Zurich: Gebr. Leemann & Co., 1943), p. 66 (and note 7); Allemann, 'Söldnerwerbungen', p. 111.

88 On the thematic activities of the Federal Diet in the spheres of foreign policy, the administration of the common bailiwicks and internal affairs, see Würgler, *Tagsatzung*, pp. 207–221.

debt around ninety times, as documented by the minutes of the Federal Diet.<sup>89</sup> These records concisely demonstrate the extent of the problem.<sup>90</sup>

Yet it would be a mistake to believe that the diplomatic discord between the cantons and France began with the accession of Henri III in late May 1574, as might be inferred from the report of the Lucerne clerk. As a matter of fact, outstanding pensions and mercenary pay had been a bone of contention since the beginning of the Franco-Confederate alliances in the fifteenth century.<sup>91</sup> The problem of debts was already entrenched before Henri III and was thus mentioned immediately after he ascended to the throne, when the French ambassador appeared before the Federal Diet on 20 June 1574. After he had ended his address and handed over a letter from Catherine de Médicis (of 10 June) to the nine cantons allied with France, the response of these cantons expressed sorrow concerning the death of Charles IX and wished his successor Henri III good fortune. But they also did not miss the opportunity to inform the new king that they expected France to honour its promises regarding the pensions.<sup>92</sup> Just two months later, on 20 August 1574, the French ambassador called a conference of the Catholic cantons in which he related the king's regret that the Catholic cantons had been forced to endure so much stalling regarding pension payments and that some cantons consequently had supplied mercenaries to the king of Spain.<sup>93</sup> To avoid further excursions to other rulers, he would henceforth attempt to 'show his good intentions in every way and even surpass his predecessors in so doing'.<sup>94</sup> But, as Cysat correctly observed, French payment practices did not improve under the new king. As early as June 1575, the cantons allied with France complained

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89 Between 1575 and 1585, the Swiss delegates met on average 25 times per year. The subject of payments is mentioned after the register entries and the list of departures in *Abschiede*, vol. 4.2. On the problem of the registers in the minutes of the Federal Diet, see Würgler, *Tagsatzung*, pp. 63–80, and Jucker, *Gesandte, Schreiber, Akten*, pp. 33–60.

90 See also Allemann, 'Söldnerwerbungen', pp. 107–122; Büsser, 'Militärunternehmertum', pp. 105–107; and Hitz, *Kämpfen um Sold*, pp. 199–211, 247–304.

91 On this point, see the indexes to the following volumes of *Abschiede*.

92 *Abschiede*, vol. 4.2, pp. 541–542. On the presence of the European powers at the Federal Diet and the significance of this institution for diplomacy, see Würgler, *Tagsatzung*, pp. 113–122, 150–160, 347–363.

93 *Abschiede*, vol. 4.2, pp. 548–549, 542.

94 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, p. 548.

to the ambassador about two lapsed pensions, and in 1579 the court was in arrears with four pensions.<sup>95</sup> Consequently, promises were made and deadlines were adhered to.<sup>96</sup> The ambassador was repeatedly asked to take the Swiss issues to the king (which he promised to do), to remind him of the outstanding mercenary payments and pensions, and to see that the money was received as soon as possible.<sup>97</sup> But it was of little use. The ambassador and other French representatives mostly endeavoured to apologize to the Swiss for outstanding payments, make uncertain agreements, gain their confidence and calm them down, or explain why the debts could not be paid this time.<sup>98</sup> In February 1580, for instance, the French ambassador appeared before the Federal Diet once again. His apologetic explanations for the failure to honour the pensions and other promises were not greeted with much sympathy, and the Diet's response was stern. No payments had been received for four years, neither pensions nor other debts. The interest was constantly growing. The Diet wished to know when the peace payments, pensions, etc. would be paid. The ambassador was left with few alternatives but to admit that the king was simply unable to raise such a large sum within a year. Nor was he able to specify a time when the payments would be made. Nevertheless, he promised that he would do everything he could about the matter.<sup>99</sup> It would appear that France proved either unable or unwilling to pay its growing debts, although it repeatedly made substantial partial payments.<sup>100</sup> Occasionally, the king felt the need to act in person and write a letter of apology.<sup>101</sup> The issue of debt sometimes became so urgent that special sessions of the Federal Diet took place.<sup>102</sup> And in order to increase pressure in the negotiations, the cantons repeatedly sought conflict with the king by sending letters containing direct demands – bypassing the ambassador – or, if all else failed, sending costly envoys to the Paris court.<sup>103</sup>

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95 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, pp. 567, 688.

96 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, pp. 603, 652, 710–711, 721, 724, 732, 735, 737, 743, 745, 810.

97 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, pp. 548, 569–570, 574, 575, 581, 584, 590, 688, 904.

98 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, pp. 798, 849, 902, 904, 949–950, 959.

99 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, p. 707.

100 Müller-Wolfer, 'Der Staatsmann Ludwig Pfyffer', 15–16; Allemann, 'Söldnerwerbungen', p. 111.

101 *Abschiede*, vol. 4.2, p. 599.

102 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, pp. 710, 743, 756, 859.

103 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, pp. 613, 753–754, 952.

Despite these conflicts with France and Henri III over outstanding debts, it is remarkable that the Swiss exercised a certain measure of restraint and made the supply of mercenaries conditional upon partial payments and wages, but did not withdraw from the alliance owing to the arrears despite their threat to do so.<sup>104</sup> On the contrary, the alliance with Henri III was renewed with great ceremony in 1582. This is even more astonishing given that not only the king's debt but also his role in the conflict over Geneva, whose protection had been guaranteed between France, Bern, and Solothurn by the Treaty of Solothurn since 1579, had met with firm resistance in the Catholic cantons. This was due to the fact that when Duke Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy took over government affairs following the death of his father Emanuele Filiberto, there was a noticeable intensification of the conflict that had been smouldering between Savoy and Bern concerning the city on the Rhône. Carlo Emanuele left France and the Swiss in no doubt regarding his claim to the economically and politically important centre in the Lake Geneva basin. He was also prepared to use military means to get what he wanted. The Reformed city of Bern had a deep geopolitical interest in Geneva's independence under its own protection, as it served as a western gate to the Confederacy. The Catholic cantons, however, were prepared to offer military support (alliance with Savoy in 1577) if the duke attempted to conquer the site of Calvin's work. A few days after the alliance was ceremonially renewed in Paris on 2 December 1582, various representatives of the Catholic cantons tried to persuade the king himself to relinquish his erstwhile policy concerning Geneva. They demanded an immediate end to French protection for the city. Henri III rejected this demand, partly because Bern's return to the alliance was all but sealed at that point.<sup>105</sup> While the internal tensions between the Swiss confessional blocs intensified (with an alliance between Bern, Zurich, and Geneva in 1584, a special union of the Catholic cantons in the Golden Alliance in 1586), meanwhile the conflict with their French ally escalated when

104 *Ibid.*, vol. 4.2, pp. 588, 600, 719.

105 Peter Stadler, 'Das Zeitalter der Gegenreformation', in *Handbuch der Schweizer Geschichte*, vol. 1 (Zurich: Berichthaus, 1972), pp. 571–672 (pp. 593–595, 601–602); Peter Stadler, *Genf, die grossen Mächte und die eidgenössischen Glaubensparteien 1571–1584*, Zürcher Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 15 (Affoltern am Albis: J. Weiss, 1952); Rindlisbacher, 'Zwischen Evangelium und Realpolitik', pp. 28–32; Müller-Wolfer, 'Der Staatsmann Ludwig Pfyffer', 46–56.

Catholic contingents fought for the Holy League against Henri III in 1585.<sup>106</sup>

One might ask why the Catholic cantons did not split with France completely, at least after forming the Spanish mercenary alliance of 1587. It was not just for religious reasons that Spain was a reliable and potent military partner guaranteeing the Catholic special alliance of 1586; the alliance (excluding Solothurn) with King Felipe II also promised lucrative trade in mercenaries and pensions.<sup>107</sup> Quite apart from that, the Catholic cantons (excluding Solothurn) had maintained profitable business relations with Savoy in the military sphere since 1577.<sup>108</sup> Although there were prospects of at least partially compensating for leaving the alliance with France with Spanish and Savoy pensions, the outstanding credits prevented a break with France – on the contrary, they served to bind the cantons to Henri III. Hence, it is not too far-fetched to argue that the French policy of empty coffers was a useful tool for keeping the Swiss creditors close even during phases of political differences. Cysat, who as a committed Catholic reformer was critical of French policy anyway, appears to have seen through this logic. According to Cysat's report, the French ambassador from 1566 to 1571, Pomponne de Bellièvre, advised Henri III upon entering office to remain heavily in debt to the Swiss. This way, Cysat continued, Henri attempted to 'keep them on a string and in his grip, so if he wanted anything from them, he could force them to do his bidding with their own money, which he still owed them, however little money he had'.<sup>109</sup> Leaving the alliance would undoubtedly have meant losing the outstanding credits. And the Swiss creditors could not afford or indeed want

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106 Stadler, 'Zeitalter', pp. 602–604; Müller-Wolfer, 'Der Staatsmann Ludwig Pfyffer', 114–128; Hitz, *Kämpfen um Sold*, p. 45; *Abschiede*, vol. 4.2, pp. 882–883, 885.

107 Bolzern, *Spanien*, pp. 109–188. The Spanish pensions were, in fact, never paid on time. No payments were made at all for some individual years after 1597. *Ibid.*, pp. 169–188.

108 See the mercenary alliance treaty of 1577 in *Abschiede*, vol. 4.2, pp. 1541–1551. The annual pensions of 300 gold guilders per canton, however, were considerably less than the French or Spanish pensions. *Ibid.*, p. 1550.

109 Cysat, 'Über die Beziehungen', 459. The same conclusion was drawn by the papal nuncio Ladislao d'Aquino (1546–1621) in his official report to Rome in 1612. See [Ladislao d'Aquino,] 'Die päpstliche Nuntiatur in der Schweiz 1612: Information des Cardinals d'Aquino für seinen Amtsnachfolger. Uebersetzt von Prof. Jak. Burkhardt', *Taschenbuch für Geschichte und Alterthum in Süddeutschland* 5 (1846), 223–256 (p. 242).

that, despite the significant differences between the two parties. By remaining loyal to the alliance, they kept alive the chance of one day being paid. In this respect, one might conclude that pensions were an extremely effective instrument of power; withholding payment enabled Henri III to consolidate his position. France's high mercenary and pension debts thus did not have the centrifugal effect one might assume because of the diplomatic tensions they caused; rather, the faltering payments played a large role in stabilizing Franco-Swiss relations in the long term.

### Conclusion

This assessment takes us back to our initial thesis that pensions implied asymmetrical political relations between the Confederacy and its allies. Both conflicts outlined above, brought about by transnational patronage practices and a policy of empty coffers, would seem to support this theory. There was significant dependence on France as a patron power with respect to both private and public pensions. The above-mentioned conflicts concerning the distribution of funds around 1500 document the growing political importance of external involvement and the resources thereby negotiated. They make it clear that the elites with informal connections to France benefited personally from foreign-policy relations. Pensions, captain's ranks, titles, and other patronage resources were fundamental to the accumulation of political power of the ruling elites. The reciprocity of the ruling class's transnational connections and the formation of elites is quite evident.<sup>110</sup> Foreign involvement was thus something of an obligation which no political actor could avoid. However, relations with the French king were of a clientelist nature, meaning that the exchange of resources took place between a socioeconomically superior patron and a client of lower status. The patron's dominant position can be explained, among other things, by the exclusivity of the goods at his disposal and the opportunity to replace his client with another at any time. The patron had his Swiss clients more or less in his pocket.

Similarly, the significance of public pensions for the state treasuries meant that ending the alliance with France was not a realistic option for the cantons of the old Swiss Confederacy, as pensions were not legally recoverable – their payment or non-payment was solely at

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110 See Windler, “Ohne Geld keine Schweizer”, pp. 126–133.

the discretion of the French king. The fact that they never received the full amount they were owed meant that the relationship with France could not be terminated.<sup>111</sup> The picture of pensions painted by the treaties as a sign of royal affection, and the equality suggested by the friendly rhetoric of the military alliances, thus constituted an unconvincing attempt to conceal the asymmetry in Franco-Swiss political relations.

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111 See the general reflections on the economy of social relationships in *Die Ökonomie sozialer Beziehungen: Ressourcenbewirtschaftung als Geben, Nehmen, Investieren, Verschwenden, Haushalten, Horten, Vererben, Schulden*, ed. by Gabriele Jancke and Daniel Schläppi (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2015).