CHAPTER 10

War, Resources and Morality: Sweden 1740–1770

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1 Introduction

In February 1741, the cathedral dean in the diocese of Linköping Andreas Rhyzelius held a sermon at the royal court in Stockholm. In the audience were members of the royal family, councillors of the realm, representatives of the four estates, as well as many government officials. The sermon focused on the devastating effects of disunity in countries, and on how disunity led to war and destruction. In particular, the sermon identified persons who were supporting war as evil since they were malevolent both in their minds and in their actions, and since they were creating division. Anyone who was supporting war was therefore following the desires of the devil and his ambitions in society. Instead of military conflict, every true Christian believer should seek peace and concord both within societies and between states.[1]

[1]Andreas Rhyzelius's sermon 22 February 1741, Biskop A. O. Rhyzelii predikningar, vol. T211:3, Linköpings stifts- och landsbibliotek, Linköping.

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Rhyzelius held his sermon at a time when the relationship between Sweden and Russia was being hotly debated both in the formal halls of power and in Stockholm's informal political arenas such as taverns, gardens and squares. His words therefore became politically explosive (Carlsson 1966; Sennefelt 2008a; Bodensten 2016: 213–242). The main driver behind the rise in opinions for and against war was the government's desire to take advantage of growing opportunities in the European state system following the deaths of Czar Anna in Russia and Emperor Charles VI in Austria. The subsequent wars, commonly known as the Austrian War of Succession and the Anglo-Spanish War, saw hostilities on several fronts and they involved most major European powers. Although Russia was not an active participant in the conflicts, it was important for France to keep Russian forces from intervening on the Austrian side by occupying them elsewhere. The French therefore incited its ally Sweden to initiate a military campaign against Russia. Many in Stockholm hoped that such hostilities, with the financial and political support of France, as well as the backing of the Ottoman Empire, would lead to a successful outcome. By manifesting the realm's military capability against Russia, many also hoped that the government in Versailles would view Sweden as an active and trustworthy ally and that it would reward the Swedish state for its commitment to the French policies at the end of an efficacious campaign (Anderson 1995; Winton 2012a: 49–50).

However, it was not given that the government would receive the necessary political support for the military plans. There were many individuals, like Rhyzelius, who questioned the idea of a military campaign against Russia. Many of these critics held influential positions in the military and in the civil administration, and many were also participating in the meeting of the estates. Since Sweden had a parliamentary political system, which was, dominated by the Diet and its four estates, it was essential that a majority of the estates approved the war plans and supplied the armed forces with the necessary resources before a military campaign could start. No campaign would start if a majority opposed the war. Thus, there was no strong monarch who, like in 1630 before Sweden's entry into the Thirty Years War, could sway the opinion of the estates in one clear direction. Consequently, both sides of the issue mobilised support for their cause by spreading different descriptions of Sweden's position in the European state system. These competing claims constituted a war within where the different actors

were not only negotiating the terms of the interactions between Sweden and the major European powers, but also struggling over the relationship between those who were benefiting from war expenditure and an active foreign policy, and those who were advocating less spending on military campaigns. These wars of words also continued after the military campaigns had ended when the government had to deal with the accumulated debts, and the members of estates evaluated the performance of the military and political leaderships, as well as articulated demands for accountability.

In this chapter, the Swedish state's war efforts in 1741–1743 will be compared with Sweden's participation in the anti-Prussian alliance during the Seven Years' War (1757–1762). More specifically, the chapter will analyse the political discussions before the wars were initiated, but also the actions of the procurement commissions which were set up to oversee the mobilisation of resources before and during the wars. Moreover, the chapter will analyse how the members of the Diet assessed the actions of leading officers, as well as the activities of the political leadership and key administrators during and after the military campaigns. How did members of the procurement commissions and the politicians who scrutinised the actions of the military and political leadership handle issues of accountability? By examining these issues we will not only gain a better understanding of how war was financed by a European middle-ranking power, but also how discourses about the relationships between private and public interests affected how resources were mobilised in such a state.

Previous research on Swedish developments in the eighteenth century has primarily focused on the shift from the era of great power ambitions in the seventeenth century to the realities of a middle-ranking power with much more limited foreign policy goals and a stronger concentration on internal economic cultivation during the eighteenth century. The change in 1719 from royal absolutism to parliamentary rule and the subsequent peace with Russia in 1721, when the Swedish Baltic provinces were lost, have been seen as pivotal events which signalled this transformation of political status and state capacity. In other words, scholars have described the eighteenth century as a period of military and political decline, caused by a lack of resources and unwillingness on part of the elite to commit to long drawn out warfare. Scholars have also emphasised that the major powers exploited this weakness. Thus, that states such as France and Russia were able to sway leading Swedish politicians

by offering them bribes and by financing their political activities. The French government also used subsidies to influence the direction of Sweden's foreign policy (Melkersson 1997: 48–50; Nordin 2000: 182–184; Glete 2007; Lindström and Norrhem 2013).

Another popular topic of analyses has been the internal political developments during the period of parliamentary rule (1719–1772), especially the rise of organised factions or parties. Historians have seen these attempts at coordinating the mobilisation efforts before and during the meetings of the Diet as crucial for the structure of political life and the conflicts that existed during the period. Thus, almost all actions and utterances have been interpreted as expressions of the political affiliation of a member of the Diet to a specific political group. Furthermore, scholars have viewed the issues of foreign policy as driving the conflicts between the parties, mainly because different foreign powers financed their activities. This means that one group, usually termed the Hats, promoted the interests of France, while the other group, usually termed the Caps, supported the interests of Britain and Russia. In this perspective, the wars that Sweden was involved in during the period was a product of the French party winning influence at the Diet.[2]

A much less studied field has been the issue of how the financing of the wars against Russia and Prussia were organised.[3] Most historians have emphasised that the ruling elite planned the military campaigns very poorly and that the army lacked sufficient means to pursue the ambitious goals that some of the leading politicians in Stockholm had set for the campaigns. Some historians have therefore argued that unrealistic assessments of Sweden's military capacity and of the capabilities of the enemy states drove the wars.[4] Undoubtedly, the unsuccessful outcome of the campaigns have influenced the historians' interpretations. The first led to further loss of territory to Russia, and the second resulted in the preservation of the existing borders.

Instead of focusing on the party affiliations of the elite or the perceptions of the Swedish military capacity, it is necessary to examine what type of resources the state used for warfare, and how the state organised these resources during the military campaigns. Furthermore, we need to

[2] See for example Metcalf (1977); Roberts (1986); Ihalainen (2010). For a critical discussion of this perspective, see Winton (2006); Sennefelt (2010).

[3] The only major study is Åmark (1961), esp. pp. 832–844. See also Winton (2012b).

[4] See, for example, Roberts (1986): 19–24; Sjöström (2008).

examine how these fiscal measures affected domestic politics, and how the political system handled issues of accountability. The analyses will show that the state depended on the cooperation of merchants in order to gain access to the necessary military supplies during the two campaigns. Many questioned the merchants' role and their capacity to promote the common good, but it was only after Sweden's participation in the Seven Years' War that these criticisms led to a renegotiation of the link between the state and the merchants.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, we will analyse the discussions and organisational efforts during the 1740s, and then we will focus on the 1750s and 1760s and the deliberations about the Swedish participation in the Seven Years' War. The chapter ends with a conclusion where we will compare the two wars and explore the connections between war finance and accountability.

2 The War Against Russia and the Persistence of the State-Merchant Link

The desire of the political elite to avoid the system of royal absolutism that had existed prior to 1719 structured the political system that was in place in 1741. Many leading actors viewed especially the last years of Charles XII's rule as disastrous. The king's stubborn way of leading the country and mobilising resources without regard for estate privileges during the long drawn out Great Northern War were seen as the primary reason behind the precarious situation the realm was in, and it had to be avoided in the future by dramatically reducing the influence of the monarchy. Controlling the sovereign's maneuverability was therefore the main concern in 1719 when the leading civil servants and military officers created the new political system. Consequently, the ruling king, Frederick I from Hesse, had mainly a symbolic role. He could participate in the meetings of the Council of the Realm where he had two votes, but it was impossible for him to pursue a policy that went against the majority of the council. The king appointed the members of the council, which consisted of 16 noblemen, but he had to choose from a list of individuals nominated by the Diet. The councillors also had to give account for their actions when the Diet convened, and the members of the Diet could dismiss councillors deemed to have made mistakes. Thus, instead of being dependent on the support of the king, like in Denmark or France, the councillors needed to seek the backing of the Diet. This in turn meant

that it was difficult for the council to pursue policies that went against the wishes of the Diet (Roberts 1986: 1–13; Nordin 2011).

The Diet's four estates met on a regular basis in Stockholm and decided on such matters as foreign policy, taxation, government borrowing, legislation and military affairs. Each estate convened separately and for a decision to take effect three estates had to agree on a motion. The estate of the nobility consisted of representatives from the noble families of the realm who had the right to send representatives to Stockholm. The clerical estate consisted of both non-elected and elected representatives since the country's bishops had guaranteed seats at the Diet, while their peers in the dioceses selected the vicars who came to the capital. The burgher estate comprised elected representatives from the country's towns, and the peasant estate consisted of elected representatives from the rural counties (Roberts 1986: 69–70).

Although many politically active individuals argued that the four estates were equal, hierarchies existed between the estates. The estate of the nobility was the most powerful, while the peasant estate faced the greatest challenges in influencing policy. The Secret Committee, which consisted of 100 members from the nobility, the clergy and the burghers, took many crucial decisions. The peasants did not have the right to send representatives to this committee. Since the committee discussed issues such as foreign policy, the allocation of government resources and the governing of the Bank of Sweden, the peasants had a hard time swaying key resolutions. The informal side of politics, where especially leading noblemen organised open tables for members of the Diet and other visitors to Stockholm, also strengthened these hierarchies. The hosts offered food and drink at these events in order to persuade the visitors to be loyal when key political issues were decided. Leading noblemen could also influence political decisions by distributing patronage, such as positions in the state apparatus, to loyal supporters. By these measures, it was possible for a councillor to strengthen his position in the system, and to circumvent some of the political limits set by the constitution (Sennefelt 2008b; Winton 2010).

In the period after the Great Northern War, Swedish foreign policy focused primarily on maintaining peaceful relations with all powers around the Baltic. This was also in line with developments in the rest of Europe where most powers were reorganising their fiscal affairs after the War of Spanish Succession. When tensions between the major powers again rose in the 1730s, especially France and Russia tried to get Sweden on their

side. The Swedish leadership under the auspices of the councillor Arvid Horn tried to take advantage of this interest by negotiating with them without clearly choosing a side. Consequently, Sweden did not join an alliance. Opponents to Arvid Horn in the Council of the Realm and at the Diet argued that it was better and more honorable to commit more clearly to one power, namely France, instead of shamefully and passively trying to adapt to the wishes of several powers. During the meeting of the Diet in 1738/1739, this faction pressured Arvid Horn into resigning from his position and it managed to persuade a majority of the representatives to dismiss five councillors for pursuing a defective foreign policy. Horn's opponents thereby took control of the government, which led to an alliance with France and the payment of French subsidies to the Swedish state. Starting in 1739 the French government transferred around 300,000 silver dalers per year in financial support (Åmark 1961: 162, 835; Roberts 1986: 113–115). The French subsidy payments meant that Sweden became part of the French alliance system, which also included the Republic of Genoa, the Ottoman Empire and Hesse (Dickson 1987: 394).

When the Austrian War of Succession started in 1740, France promised further subsidies if Sweden got more actively involved in the conflict. The government in Versailles was primarily interested in a Swedish military campaign to keep Russian forces occupied in the north. The French framed it as an opportunity for Sweden to retake territory that had been lost at the end of the Great Northern War (Jägerskiöld 1957: 132–143). This is also how the government presented it at the meeting of the Diet in 1740/1741. The supporters of the war—mostly noblemen and burghers—argued that it was necessary to be active militarily in order to promote the country's honor and reliability on the international stage. By taking active steps against the Russian government, Sweden would restore its virtue and its rightful place among the European states while counteracting the malicious plans of Russia. These views, which focused much more on the overarching need for action than the resources available for taking such steps, were articulated in the Secret Committee and other formal political arenas in Stockholm, but they were also presented in several handwritten squibs and pamphlets distributed throughout the capital.[5]

[5] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1740/41, vol. R2737, 10 and 11 February 1741, Swedish National Archives, Stockholm (SNA); Carlsson (1966: 182–271); Bodensten (2016: 196–205).

The opponents to the war plans viewed the rhetoric about the need for activity as dangerous incitement and as a threat against the existing order. Many opponents, especially among the peasants and the clergy, but also from the nobility, argued that seeking peace and concord both within the realm and in relation to other states was better than mobilising for war. Many opponents also questioned if the available resources were sufficient for carrying out a successful military campaign in Finland. They argued that it was necessary first to make sure that the means were in place before any active steps against Russia could take place. Just like the supporters of war, the opponents mobilised through their actions in the Secret Committee and on other political arenas and by the distribution of handwritten pamphlets.[6]

The supporters of the war plans got the upper hand in the Secret Committee where there was a majority for mobilising the troops. When the authorities arrested the nobleman Gustaf Johan Gyllenstierna outside the lodgings of the Russian envoy in Stockholm Michail Bestucheff, it became more difficult for opponents of the war to act. Many accused Gyllenstierna, who was opposed to the war plans and who functioned as the Secret Committee's secretary, of passing on secret information to the Russian government's representative. A commission was quickly set up to investigate the activities of Gyllenstierna and his allies. This new political situation made it very difficult for anyone to criticise the war since the supporters could easily characterise the opponents' opinions as acts of treason. Consequently, the opposition could not prevent the Diet from sending troops to Finland and later declare war on Russia (Carlsson 1966: 349–351; Ryman 1978: 99).

A procurement commission, which administered the war effort, was set up in March 1741. Its role was to administer the specific resources that the commission received from the Diet and to handle all expenditure relating to the war effort. In other words, the commission was to provide the army and the navy with the necessary supplies and to organize the transportation of these supplies to the army in Finland. It acted independently from the ordinary administrative apparatus such as the Admiralty and the War Collegium. The main reason for this arrangement was a wish to reduce administrative hurdles and to expedite shipments

[6]Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1740/41, vol. R2737, 10 and 11 February 1741, SNA; Carlsson (1966: 193–271); Bodensten (2016: 272–314).

of army units and supplies as quickly as possible.[7] Using commissions as an administrative tool was an established practice in the Swedish realm during the seventeenth century, especially as a way for the central government to investigate irregularities in the local administration and to deal with complaints from local residents about the actions of government officials. By using leading public servants, such as councillors of the realm, as members in the commissions, it was believed that they would be able to override any bureaucratic resistance put up by local officials and to strengthen the legitimacy of the commission's work (Lennersand 1999: 58–75). Additionally, similar commissions had been set up in 1719–1721 and in 1739 to procure resources for the army and navy.[8]

One of the first issues that had to be decided on, after it was agreed that it was necessary to set up a commission, was who should serve on it. Following the established practice, the Diet selected a number of leading civil servants and military officers representing different areas of expertise. The head of the commission was the councillor of the realm Gustaf Fredrik von Rosen, who before he became a councillor in 1739 had been a colonel and general in the army. Another member was the admiral Teodor Ankarcrona, who was head of the navy squadron based in Stockholm. He was also knowledgeable in issues relating to trade since he had been a supercargo in the Dutch East India Company. Other members were Gustaf Palmfelt, who was the head of the Chamber Collegium (*Kammarkollegium*), Peter Drufva, who served in the same collegium as Palmfelt, and Gabriel von Seth who worked in the War Collegium. All of these five men were nobles and were supportive of the war plans, but no one questioned their expertise as administrators. However, several members of the committee challenged another suggestion made by the burgher estate. Many burghers expressed the opinion that it was necessary to include a merchant in the commission because of the commission's many purchases. Such transactions required knowledge about prices and various market conditions, which only active traders could provide. Opponents to this idea stressed that the commission should only include civil servants in order for the commission not to

[7] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1740/41, vol. R2737, 10 March 1741, SNA. See also Åmark (1961: 164).

[8] Utredningskommissionen 1719, Protokoll 1719, Swedish Military Archives, Stockholm (SMA); Åmark (1961: 832–833).

become a political committee. Although no one stated it explicitly, it is clear that these opponents viewed the noblemen as serving the interest of the state, while the merchants' motives were murkier in character. Despite these reservations from many members of the Secret Committee, a majority decided that the merchant from Stockholm, Thomas Plomgren should be included in the commission.[9]

In the discussions, many emphasised that the procurement commission should arrange contracts with a number of merchants who agreed to provide supplies to the army and navy for a specific pre-determined price per soldier and sailor. However, Thomas Plomgren pointed out that it could be difficult to get merchants interested in such contracts, because many merchants who had agreed to similar arrangements in the past had not received payment on time and had fallen into royal disfavour after providing the requested resources. The commission should therefore stress that the merchants would receive swift payment and that they would obtain a full discharge as soon as they had fulfilled their commitment to the state.[10]

The representatives in the Secret Committee agreed with Plomgren, but when the commission offered a number of leading merchants to sign contracts with the state, the merchants hesitated. For example, the merchant Johan Clason argued that he had had trouble during the last war and that he had lost money from the arrangements. However, if he received information about the requested quantities he was willing to provide resources to the army and navy. The other merchants also gave similar answers. Although the members of the commission tried to persuade the merchants that the current political system was more trustworthy than the previous one and that they would receive payment on time, they did not manage to sign any broad long-term contracts with a few key merchants.[11] Instead, the commission had to rely on purchasing the necessary resources from a wider array of suppliers than originally planned. Such arrangements reduced the risk for the individual merchant since he or she only had to commit to one transaction with the Crown at

[9] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1740/41, vol. R2737, 10 March 1741, SNA; Utredningskommissionen 1741, Protokoll 1741, 19 March, SMA. On the members of the commission and their political affiliations, see Carlsson (1981: 187, 196, 219, 247–248, 277).

[10] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1740/41, vol. R2737, 10 March 1741, SNA.

[11] Utredningskommissionen 1741, Protokoll 1741, 19 and 21 March, SMA.

a time, but it made the commission's work more complex, both in terms of accounting and in relation to the number of negotiations it had to conduct.[12] Compared with Spain for example, where the Crown mostly negotiated with a single agent, the Swedish system opened up for competition between different suppliers (Torres Sánchez 2014: 281–283, 2016: 97–112).

After the failure of the commission to sign more long-term contracts, the negotiations to purchase foodstuffs and transport capacity from various merchants and other suppliers started and resulted in the signing of several contracts. For example, the merchant Christian Hebbe agreed to 18 contracts in 1741 valued at 236,000 silver dalers, while the merchant Jean Lefebvre signed four contracts valued at 8000 silver dalers. In total around 3.3 million silver dalers were used in 1741 to procure supplies and transport capacity.[13]

One big challenge for the commission as well as the military campaign as a whole was the problem of getting the necessary supplies to the army in Finland. Normally, an army used local resources during the early modern period because of the difficulties in transporting large quantities of food over long distances. This meant that most military campaigns were located in agriculturally rich regions, such as Flanders or Saxony (Parker 1975: 118–156). Finland on the other hand was a relatively poor region with limited grain production and with greater focus on animal husbandry. Consequently, grain had to be imported to cover the demand of the population. It was therefore impossible for the army to depend on local resources (Morell 2013: 71). Instead, it became necessary to ship supplies from Stockholm and other parts of the Baltic region to Finland. Thus, the commission purchased dried peas from Swedish Pomerania, salted beef and pork from Courland and rye from Riga and Wismar.[14]

Although goods did arrive in Finland, it was a challenge to get the supplies to the army, which was inland. The difficult supply lines contributed greatly to the quite passive behaviour of the army, and the army's retreat to Helsinki, where it subsequently surrendered to the Russians, was in large part driven by the need to move where food was available.[15]

[12] Utredningskommissionen 1741, Protokoll 1741, 21 March; Huvudbok 1741, SMA.

[13] Utredningskommissionen 1741, Protokoll 1741, 19 March and 21 March; Huvudbok 1741, SMA.

[14] Utredningskommissionen 1741, Huvudbok 1741, SMA.

[15] On the performance of the army, see Jägerskiöld (1957: 152).

Table 1 Sources of revenue for the procurement commission, 1741–1748

Source	*Sums in silver dalers*	*Percentage*
Loans and gifts from the Bank of Sweden	5,512,000	35.7
French subsidies	3,238,545	21.0
Advances from the government	2,499,792	16.2
Indirect taxes	2,469,912	16.0
Various other sources of revenue	1,731,216	11.1
Total	15,451,465	100.0

Source Karl Åmark, *Sveriges statsfinanser 1719–1809* (Stockholm 1961), p. 838

The resources that the commission utilised to purchase supplies originated from inside and outside the country. As can be seen in Table 1, the largest share of revenue came from loans from the Bank of Sweden. The bank, which had started its operations in 1668, was under the control of the Diet. The nobility, the clergy and the burghers elected the bank's directors, and the directors received instructions from the Secret Committee. The directors were also accountable to the Diet for their actions and the Diet could dismiss directors if they had oversighted their responsibilities. Although the bank's finances were not part of the state's coffers, it was difficult for the bank's directors to decline requests for loans from the state. Thus, in 1741, the bank had agreed to provide credit, and in 1742, when the procurement commission needed more resources, the directors agreed to further loans. The fact that Thomas Plomgren was both a director and a member of the commission simplified these negotiations (Hallendorff 1919: 6–86, 156–164).

The bank's finances were structured around deposits and lending to individuals and institutions. The recipients of loans received notes, which were negotiable and became accepted as equivalent to coin. The bank's metal reserves backed up the notes, but this relationship between notes in circulation and reserves became under pressure due to the war and the bank's involvement in the financing of it. In 1740, the total number of notes in circulation amounted to around 5.5 million silver dalers, while at the end of 1743 the volume had increased by 80% to around 9.9 million. This expansion of liquidity had a negative effect on the exchange rate, since the cost of 100 marks Hamburg banco went up from 103 silver dalers on average in 1740 to 121.78 silver dalers on average in 1744. Because of these pressures, the bank abandoned the convertibility of its

notes and introduced a paper money system in 1745 (Hallendorff 1919: 95–219, 386; Denzel 2010: 344).

Another important source of revenue was subsidies from the French government. The French sent the payments as bills of exchange, and two merchants, Gustaf Kierman and Thomas Plomgren, exchanged them into Swedish currency. This inflow of capital helped to offset some of the negative effects of the expansion of liquidity by the issuing of bank notes. Many argued that the transactions had to be secret and the merchants, who were members of the Secret Committee, were well suited because of their patriotic zeal and their ability to keep secrets. However, it was controversial that Kierman and Plomgren should handle the transactions. According to one critic, the noble officer Lars Åkerhielm, it was difficult to understand why it was important to keep the transactions under wraps because in his mind it was necessary to interact with other actors on the open market in order to get the best exchange rates. Thus, secrecy threatened to make the transactions more complicated and costly.[16]

Two other sources of revenue for the commission were advances from the government (future revenue paid in advance) and a number of extraordinary taxes that the Diet decided on during the meeting in 1741. The peasants were part of the negotiations about these taxes, but the fact that only around 30% of the revenue came from taxes meant that the peasants, who contributed most to this revenue, had a limited influence on the war plans. In other words the loans and the subsidies, which were largely outside the control of the peasants since the Secret Committee and the procurement commission handled them, meant that the elite could command the fiscal process in a more autonomous way.

However, the poor performance of the army in Finland created a new political situation in which critics of the war could voice their disapproval of the handling of the war. It also made it difficult for the elite to keep vital information and key decisions within a limited group of decision-makers. The military situation, as well as the death of the Queen Ulrica Eleonora, meant that the Diet had to convene. In the local elections, it was clear that many peasants were very angry about the war and the elected representatives received clear instructions to promote the peasants' views in Stockholm. The peasants demanded peace and that the generals who had been in command should be held responsible

[16] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1740/41, vol. R2738, 4 August 1741, SNA.

for the outcome of the war and brought to trial. They were also angry with the division of the costs of recruiting and equipping soldiers. They questioned why the peasants should bear a large share of this burden, while the nobility and the clergy paid very little. In order to appease the peasants, the other estates agreed to let the peasants into the Secret Committee when the Diet convened in 1742 (Sennefelt 2004: 189).

Although the military situation was in focus, the procurement commission's activities also attracted some attention. One of the opponents to the war, the vicar Jacob Serenius, argued in the Secret Committee that the commission had too many members and that their remuneration constituted a waste of resources. This thinly vailed critique of the commission's efficiency led to a response from one of its members, the admiral Teodor Ankarcrona. He pointed out that he had not sought the position in the commission and that he was willing to step down. In other words, he stressed that he was not sitting on the commission for personal gain. He then continued by praising the diligence of the members and the troublesome efforts they had made to amass 296 ships and numerous supplies in only 9 weeks' time. He wished that all administrative measures could be so quick and efficient and said that no one could have done a better job.[17]

The issue of the merchants' role in the commission also resurfaced in the discussions. According to the merchant Gustaf Kierman, it was good to include traders in the commission because they had detailed knowledge about prices and market conditions. They could also more easily ensure that the Crown did not receive any poor goods. He also pointed out that the participation of Plomgren in the commission had made it possible to purchase grain at a discount. At the same time it was important for Kierman, just as it had been for Ankarcrona, to stress that he did not wish to become a member of the commission, or that he had profited from selling goods to the commission. A peasant from the county of Östergötland disputed Kierman's claims. The anonymous peasant said that he had been in Stockholm when the supplies were loaded on to the ships and he asserted that they had had such a bad smell, that despite his ability as a peasant to withstand such scents, he had to walk another way.[18]

[17] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1742/43, vol. R2810, 18 November 1742, SNA.

[18] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1742/43, vol. R2811, 20 April 1743, SNA.

All of the claims and counterclaims manifest that many members of the Diet disputed the commission's role in the war effort, and that it was important for the commission's members and their allies to defend their record and their ability to seek the common good. Concurrently, a parliamentary committee consisting of many critics of the war, such as the noblemen Carl Fredrik Piper and Jonas Wulfwenstierna, and the vicar Jacob Serenius, was set up to audit the activities of the commission.[19] They focused on how the commission had utilised the allocated resources and if they could account for all the spending rather than investigating the contracts between the merchants and the state. Thus, they did not look into the prices the commission had paid, or if merchants had misused their market position to the detriment of the state. One reason for the limited audit was the fact that the commission's accountant had not been able to finish the account books due to other more pressing matters. It was therefore difficult for the members of the parliamentary committee to provide the Diet with a complete report on the commission's activities. Consequently, the audit did not lead to anything substantial, which irritated Serenius in particular.[20] Instead it was decided that a new commission should be formed consisting of only noble civil servants who would administer the available resources and who would eventually wind down the operations of the commission. The members of the Diet also decided that the regular auditors within the civil administration would go through the commission's account books when they were completed.[21] These moves clearly depoliticised the issue and amounted to a return to the administrative system that had existed prior to 1741.

Instead of targeting the commission, the Diet blamed the generals Henrik Magnus von Buddenbrock and Charles Emile Lewenhaupt, who had been in command of the army. The authorities arrested

[19] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1742/43, vol. R2810, 14 December 1742, SNA. On the political activities of Piper, Serenius and Wulfwenstierna, see Carlsson (1981: 278, 287, 292–293).

[20] Sekreta utskottets handlingar 1742/43, vol. R2815, Memorial no. 115; Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1742/43, vol. R2810, 18 February 1743; vol. R2811, 10 September 1743, SNA.

[21] Sekreta utskottets handlingar 1742/43, vol. R2815, Memorial no. 115; Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1742/43, vol. R2811, 20 April, 10 September 1743, SNA. See also Åmark (1961: 833).

and later executed the generals for the retreat of the army and subsequent surrender to the Russians. A march of thousands of peasants to Stockholm in 1743 partly influenced this decision. The protesting peasants, who wanted to put pressure on the Diet, demanded peace and that the commanding generals should be held responsible for their actions, but also that the monarchy should be strengthened by the election of a Danish prince as Crown Prince. However, the Diet and the Council of the Realm could not accept an alternative authority in the streets of the capital, so army units met the protestors with military force. Later, the authorities executed six of the peasants' leaders. Around the same time, the government signed a peace treaty with Russia, which resulted in a loss of Finnish territory to the Russian Empire. The Russians also influenced the selection of the new Crown Prince: the Diet picked an obscure German prince named Adolphus Frederick following Russian pressure. The Russians saw this selection as a way to maintain the *status quo* in Sweden (Roberts 1986: 37–38; Sennefelt 2004: 202–203).

The meetings of the Diet in 1740–1741 and 1742–1743 showed the divisions within the political elite concerning the timing and the necessity of mobilising the troops in Finland, and the handling of the poor performance of the army. Raised questions of accountability, especially for merchants taking part in the resource mobilisation process, made it necessary for the merchants to defend their morality and ability to look beyond their own self-interest. However, there was no serious questioning of the war's finances or administration, and there were no interest on the part of disgruntled members of the elite to join forces with the protesting peasants. Instead, the elite defended their joint interests, and the army put down the protests with military means and the state kept its fiscal system intact. Subsequently, the French government soon paid more subsidies to the Swedish state, and the Bank of Sweden continued to expand credit after the war.

3 The Seven Years' War and the Restructuring of the State-Merchant Link

The next war started in 1757 when Austria and France demanded that Sweden took military action against Prussia following Prussia's aggression against Saxony in 1756. Again, France promised to pay large subsidies if Sweden shipped troops to Swedish Pomerania and initiated military operations (Szabo 2008: 36–51). The Council of the Realm

decided to agree to the proposals without summoning the Diet since the councillors argued that it was not a formal declaration of war. Instead, it was just a question of fulfilling terms set in the peace of Westphalia 1648, which Sweden had committed to guarantee. According to the constitution, the king and the council could negotiate treaties and fulfil previous treaty conventions, but committing a large troop contingent without first getting the approval from the Diet risked creating discussions about the council's willingness to follow the Diet's instructions. Part of the reason why the council chose to disregard the political risks was the belief that it would be a swift campaign since Prussia was facing a formidable coalition. Thus, a protracted domestic political process could mean that Sweden missed the opportunity to gain a reward at a future peace conference. The councillors thought that Sweden could regain control of what had been lost to Prussia in the peace of 1720, but also that Sweden could receive a colony in the Caribbean. The councillors especially mentioned the island of Tobago as a potential prize. However, there was no unanimity among the councillors. They did agree that the army should be prepared for war and that troops should be sent to Swedish Pomerania, but there were disagreements about the size of the troop contingent, when the troops should be sent, what they should do once they arrived, and how big the subsidy payments should be. The arguments bore many similarities with the ones expressed in 1741: the advocates for action stressed that committing troops was necessary to protect the country's status as a reliable and reputable power in Europe, while the sceptics pointed out practical issues that had not been resolved, such as the availability of resources and the unclear war aims (Trulsson 1947: 202–212; 242–249; Winton 2012b: 12–15).

The final vote in the council was held on 8 June 1757 and on 28 June, the council decided to set up a procurement commission to organise the transport of 13,000 infantrymen and 4000 cavalrymen to Swedish Pomerania and their subsequent support in the province. Just as had been the case in 1741, the main argument for setting up the commission was the need to reduce administrative hurdles and to expedite shipments of army units and supplies as quickly as possible. The commission consisted of eight men: two councillors of the realm, four top-ranking civil servants, one general and one merchant. One of the councillors, Gustaf Fredrik von Rosen, had been a prominent member of the commission in 1741, which meant that he was well acquainted with the tasks ahead. Other members, such as the general Lars Åkerhielm and the merchant

Gustaf Kierman, had also been active participants in the political discussions during the 1740s. They therefore knew the different aspects of the commission's work. The fact that Kierman was also one of the directors of the Bank of Sweden facilitated contacts between the commission and the bank. Additionally, he was a member of the Exchange Office, which consisted of leading merchants who were purchasing Swedish bills of exchange on the international capital markets at pre-determined exchange rates in order to stabilize the Swedish currency. Since the merchants utilised the incoming French subsidies for the bill operations, Kierman could provide detailed information about the workings of the foreign exchange markets. The other members of the procurement commission, such as the noblemen Carl Ridderstolpe and Johan von Wallwik, were all knowledgeable about the finances of the state and the workings of the state's bureaucracy.[22]

In many ways, the practice of the new commission followed the same patterns established by the previous procurement commission. Thus, instead of negotiating broad long-term contracts with a few merchants, the commission relied on many traders to provide the necessary supplies. Some merchants provided large quantities of foodstuffs, while others delivered amounts that were more limited. Johan Albert Kantzou, for instance, sold victuals to the army for a total sum of almost 1.8 million silver dalers, and Isaac Clason and Hans Wittfoth, sold supplies for over 700,000 silver dalers. Concurrently, the wine merchant Johan Georg Yhlén sold wine for only 4900 silver dalers. Likewise, the procurement commission purchased transport capacity from many sea captains and merchants. For example, the skipper Johan Liedbeck provided services for 1500 silver dalers, while the merchants Isaac Clason and Christian Hebbe sold cargo capacity for around 160,000 silver dalers.[23]

From a victualling perspective, Western Pomerania was a better arena for military campaigns than Finland. Grain and peas for example were available locally, and the commission could easily purchase further supplies on other markets in northern Germany, which reduced the need to transport foodstuffs long distances. However, Prussian army units located their winter quarters in Swedish Pomerania in 1757–1758 and 1758–1759 following the Swedish army's retreat to the town of

[22] Utredningskommissionen 1757, Protokoll 1757, 1 July, SMA. On the activities of Kierman and the Exchange Office, see (Müller 2002).

[23] Utredningskommissionen 1757, Huvudbok 1757–1764, SMA.

Table 2 Sources of revenue for the procurement commission, 1757–1764

Source	*Sums in silver dalers*	*Percentage*
Loans from the Bank of Sweden	24,280,834	44.1
French subsidies	11,186,215	20.3
Royal lottery	5,833,333	10.6
Domestic loans	4,290,319	7.8
Loans from the Debt Office	3,050,000	5.5
Loans and fees from the new East India Company	3,000,000	5.5
External loans	2,403,381	4.4
Various other incomes	991,623	1.8
Total	55,035,705	100.0

Source Swedish Military Archives, Stockholm, Utredningskommissionen 1757, Huvudbok 1757–1764

Stralsund and the Rügen peninsula. This situation made it more difficult for the procurement commission to provide the army with mostly local resources. Instead, it had to transport food and other supplies largely from Sweden, which was more costly. Costs also increased when the army spent so much of its time in Swedish Pomerania rather than on enemy territory.[24]

The revenue that the commission had at its disposal was similar to the revenue in the 1740s. Thus, as can be seen in Table 2, a large share of the resources came from loans provided by the Bank of Sweden. Just as in the 1741–1743 campaign, the loans, in the form of bank notes, increased the number of notes in circulation from 13.8 million silver dalers in 1755 to 44 million in 1763. Such increases in volume resulted in price surges on many goods, and in a deterioration of the value of the Swedish currency on international capital markets. The cost of purchasing 100 marks Hamburg banco increased from around 107 silver dalers on average in 1755 to around 235 silver dalers on average in 1762. The Exchange Office, which was supposed to offset such price movements, could not cope with the severe market conditions and the Diet therefore disbanded it in 1761 (Denzel 2010: 344; Winton 2012: 23). Another source of revenue for the commission was the payment of subsidies from the French government, which constituted around 20% of the revenue or around the same percentage as during the 1741–1743 campaign. A new form of revenue was the introduction of a royal lottery. This scheme,

[24] Utredningskommissionen 1757, Huvudbok 1757–1764, SMA; Winton (2012: 18–19).

which entailed the issuing of over 150,000 lottery tickets, was a reply to the problem of not having access to any extraordinary taxes. Since the Diet did not meet, it was not possible for the King or the council index Council of the Realm to issue new taxes. Instead, the procurement commission had to rely mainly on subsidies, loans from the Bank of Sweden and the royal lottery.

When the Diet convened in 1760, it was clear that the military situation in Western Pomerania and the economic and political effects of the military campaign were at the forefront of the discussions. Many members from all estates were critical of the council's decision to join the anti-Prussian alliance. One of the most vocal critics was the noble colonel Carl Fredrik Pechlin, who had served in Pomerania but who had come home to attend the meeting of the Diet. According to him, the councillors had committed a criminal act when they decided to participate in the war without summoning the Diet first. Many argued that all wars, no matter the circumstances, were adventurous and impossible to predict in advance. When the army and navy were engaged in military activities, the estates should therefore always meet. Many also pointed to the fact that the council, through its decision, had increased the government's debt without consulting the Diet.[25] Thus, the critics focused their criticism on the actions of the councillors rather than the commanding generals or the members of the procurement commission who had implemented the council's decisions.

The councillors had supporters who stressed that the limits of the council's maneuverability in relation to foreign powers were unclear in the constitution and that the councillors had good intentions to promote the realm's honour and improvement. In other words, the councillors had only sought the country's best interest and they had not had any intent to redefine or alter the constitution. The Diet should therefore not punish them. Despite these objections, a majority of members decided to dismiss two councillors from their position because of their active promotion of the war.[26]

[25] Mindre sekreta deputationens protokoll 1760/62, vol. R3169, 30 and 31 January 1761; Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1760/62, vol. R3143, 4 and 5 February 1761, SNA.

[26] Mindre sekreta deputationens protokoll 1760/62, vol. R3169, 30 and 31 January 1761; Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1760/62, vol. R3143, 4 and 5 February 1761, SNA.

At the same time as the Diet discussed the responsibility for the war, the members of the Diet also concentrated on providing more resources to the army in Pomerania, and on different solutions to the problems of inflation and a falling exchange rate. Not only the members of the elite, but also many ordinary citizens, debated the fiscal and monetary issues. A growth of printed newspapers and pamphlets, in which many authors commented on the economic situation, fuelled this surge in political interest. In the discussions, many observers expressed the opinion that the ruling oligarchy and its practices were corrupt (Winton 2012: 27–28). Although no one explicitly criticised the procurement commission and its activities, many questioned the role of the merchants in the resource mobilisation process. Thus, many actors challenged the merchants' capacity to serve the common good in a way that the noble civil servants in the commission did not face. Many commentators also argued that it was necessary to reduce liquidity by curtailing the number of loans issued by the Bank of Sweden. Instead of relying on loans from the bank, there was an attempt to increase domestic bond sales, and to start borrowing on international capital markets. The Diet also decided to increase extraordinary taxation in order to address the deficits created by the war (Winton 2015: 61–68).

The vocal criticism of the leading merchants and their close ties with the state continued after the war against Prussia had ended and after the meeting of the Diet had concluded in 1762. Undoubtedly, the continuation of the economic problems and the subsequent rise of public discussions in printed newspapers and pamphlets about how to interpret the situation and what measures the government should implement to address the economic woes drove the criticism. Especially the author Anders Nordencrantz's pamphlets, in which he questioned the motives and morality of the leading merchants, influenced opinions not just in Stockholm but also all over the realm. Nordencrantz targeted in particular the merchants in charge of the Exchange Office, whom he claimed only served their own interest to the determinant of the state (Nordencrantz 1761a, b). Other authors, such as the chaplain Anders Chydenius from the province of Ostrobothnia, continued on the same theme when he stressed that the realm's powerlessness was caused by wealth being accumulated in the hands of a few. In order to address these problems it was necessary to promote the involvement of everyone in the cultivation of the realm, to remove special economic privileges that

protected powerful interest groups, and to increase transparency in political life (Chydenius 1765a, b).

The negative views on the role of merchants also spread among burghers, especially those who lived in smaller towns and who did not belong to the patrician elite in Stockholm and Gothenburg. These lower ranking burghers demanded an end to the privileged position of the leading merchants and the promotion of more equal economic opportunities for all towns and burghers (Brolin 1953: 403–408). Consequently, there were very few, even among the burgher estate, who tried to defend the role of the leading traders in society. This lack of support became clear during the meeting of the Diet in 1765, when political actors from all estates accused the members of the former Exchange Office of embezzlement of state funds. Subsequently, the Secret Committee summoned the merchants Johan Abraham Grill, Gustaf Kierman, Johan Henrik Lefebvre and Herman Petersen to answer questions about their transactions with the state and with the Bank of Sweden. Many members of the committee were not satisfied with the merchants' replies and demanded that the authorities kept especially Kierman and Lefebure under surveillance and that the Diet should oversee their business activities. The purpose of this was, according to the lieutenant colonel Fredrik Gyllensvaan, to protect the interests of the population against those that had caused a bread shortage among the realm's inhabitants.[27]

Although a large majority of the members of the Secret Committee defined the merchants as immoral and unable to seek the common good, two noblemen and a bishop tried to protect them. According to these actors, the merchants had legally received the resources, and the government had approved the transactions. Moreover, it equaled tyranny to arrest the merchants before the authorities had properly investigated the issues and the accused had an opportunity to reply to the allegations. Thus, it was wrong to define the merchants as criminals before a court had declared them guilty.[28]

The attempts to protect Kierman and Lefebvre were futile since most members of the Diet saw them as culpable villains who should pay large

[27] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1765/66, vol. R3272, 20 March and 21 March 1765, SNA.

[28] Sekreta utskottets protokoll 1765/66, vol. R3272, 21 March 1765, SNA.

financial reparations to the state for their involvement in the Exchange Office. The Diet also imprisoned Gustaf Kierman at the fortress Marstrand where he died less than a year later. This fall from grace was remarkable for a man who had been active in politics since the 1730s and who had served as the speaker of the burgher estate during the meeting of the Diet in 1760/1762 (Müller 2002: 144). The actions were clearly a sign that the close relationship between a number of leading merchants and the state had ended. The Diet also took several steps to remove the secrecy that had surrounded many of the transactions between the state and the merchants when the estates implemented a Freedom of the Press Act in 1766. The act abolished pre-publication control of secular publications, as well as introduced the principle of open access to government documents. The change in legislation led to a dramatic increase in publications, which discussed previously secret arrangements, such as foreign policy considerations, subsidy payments and key fiscal decisions (Skuncke 2011; Nordin 2012: 111–117; Bodensten 2018).

All of these efforts manifest that many members of the political elite as well as many commoners questioned the fiscal system, which had relied on a system of loans from the Bank of Sweden and French subsidies, and the arrangement of power, which had included close cooperation between leading merchants and the state apparatus. Although the war ended without any territorial changes and a majority of the members of the Diet removed several of the responsible councillors from office, it became difficult for the ruling elite to return to the economic and political situation prior to 1757. The fiscal and monetary challenges persisted for several years, which in turn spurred demands from groups outside the elite for greater transparency and influence over government decisions. The war had therefore created a momentum for political change, a momentum that was far greater than in 1743 when the elite joined together to defend the existing system against the peasants' charges. In the 1760s, the number of dissatisfied were greater and their social background was more heterogeneous, which made it more difficult for the elite to re-establish its authority. In other words, the answer to military defeat and economic problems evolved from the 1740s, when the answer was to bring in virtuous nobles who could control the vice of merchants, to the 1760s when the response was the monitoring of government officials through the introduction of transparency.

4 Conclusion

The issue of accountability became a key object of political deliberations after the poor performances of the Swedish army against Russia and Prussia. The men in charge had to give account to the Diet and the Diet assigned blame for the perceived failures. In the 1740s, the commanding generals had to take responsibility for the retreat and surrender of the army, while in the 1760s two of the councillors of the realm had to leave in order to appease the critics. Concurrently, the system of mobilising resources was scrutinised, and it was especially the crucial role of the leading merchants that was tested by members of the Diet by calling into question the merchants' patriotism and ability to set aside their self-interest. In their defence, the merchants argued that they could provide detailed market knowledge, which made the procurement process more efficient and cost-effective. They also argued that they did their best despite facing difficult circumstances.

The structure of the resources the procurement commissions utilised and the subsequent close links between the merchant elite in Stockholm and state institutions contributed to the suspicions that other members of the elite, as well as non-elite groups expressed. The large dependence on French subsidies, which was secret information, and the loans from the Bank of Sweden, which a narrow group of people handled, meant that many, who were not members of the elite, could accuse this small circle of men involved in these transactions of serving only a narrow self-interest rather than the common good. For distrustful members of the Diet, having noble civil servants involved in the transactions was one way to reduce threats of moral hazard. Another strategy, which became crucial in the 1760s, was to increase transparency in the state's financial dealings and to broaden the base of creditors. Thus, the financial challenges during the 1760s led to a restructuring of the fiscal system and to a renegotiation of the relationship between the state and the leading merchants in a way that had not been the case in the 1740s. Unlike the 1740s, when it was mostly the peasants who expressed discontent while the elite closed ranks and defended the political system and the existing fiscal arrangements from rupture, the 1760s saw greater dissatisfaction among broader groups in society and an escalation of tensions between the estates.

Although the role of merchants in the financing of the state became a hot political topic in the 1760s, the Swedish state's reliance on the

contacts and the resources of traders to organise warfare followed a general European pattern in the eighteenth century. As Aaron Graham has argued, entrepreneurial networks were able to "tap additional resources", which the state was unable to mobilise (Graham 2014: 108. Torres Sánchez 2014: 281–283). The strength of such networks also continued to be apparent in Sweden after the fall of parliamentary rule in 1772. When the absolute king Gustavus III organised a war against Russia in 1788–1790, he utilised a procurement commission, like the previous regime, to handle purchases of supplies to the army and the navy. In order for the commission to succeed with their task, its members had to seek the support of merchants. The war was unpopular among many members of the elite, who viewed the conflict as a sign of unrestrained royal power (Åmark 1961: 844–852; Mattsson 2010: 178–223). Thus, the demand for military resources required the Swedish Crown as well as other European states to reproduce the ties with the merchants even when it threatened to draw criticism and to escalate the war within.

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