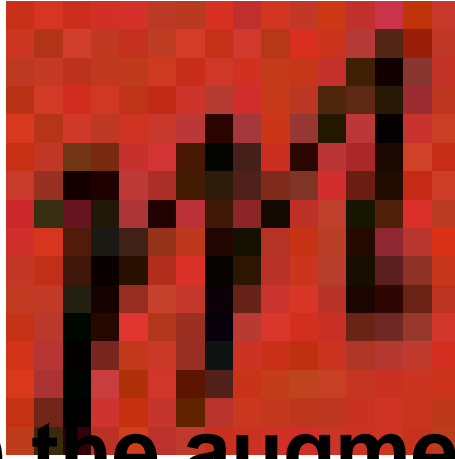


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XIII.17 On the augmentation of troops

- The Spirit of Law - Book XIII. On the relations which the levying of tributes and the magnitude of public revenues have with liberty -

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XIII.17 On the augmentation of troops

A new disease has spread through Europe ; it has seized upon our princes and made them maintain an inordinate number of troops. It has its crises, and it necessarily becomes contagious. For as soon as one state increases what it calls its troops, the others suddenly increase theirs, so nothing is gained thereby except their common ruin. Each monarch keeps standing all the armies he might have if his peoples were in danger of extermination, and this state of effort by everyone against everyone else is called peace. [1] Thus is Europe ruined to the point that if any individuals were in the situation of the three most opulent powers in this part of the world, they would not have enough to live on. We are poor with the wealth and trade of the whole globe, and soon by dint of having soldiers we will have nothing but soldiers, and we will be like the Tartars. [2]

The great princes, not satisfied with buying the troops of the smaller ones, try to purchase alliances on every side, in other words almost always to waste their money.

The consequence of such a situation is the perpetual increase of tributes ; and to the prejudice of all future remedies, no one any longer relies on income but instead wages war with his capital. It is not unheard of for states to mortgage their funds even in peacetime, and employ to ruin themselves means they call extraordinary, and which are so much so that the most turbulent prodigal son can scarcely imagine them.

[1] It is true that it is this state of effort that maintains the balance, because it exhausts the great powers.

[2] All that is needed for that is to valorize the newly established invention of militias almost throughout Europe, and carry them to the same excess as has been done with the regular troops.