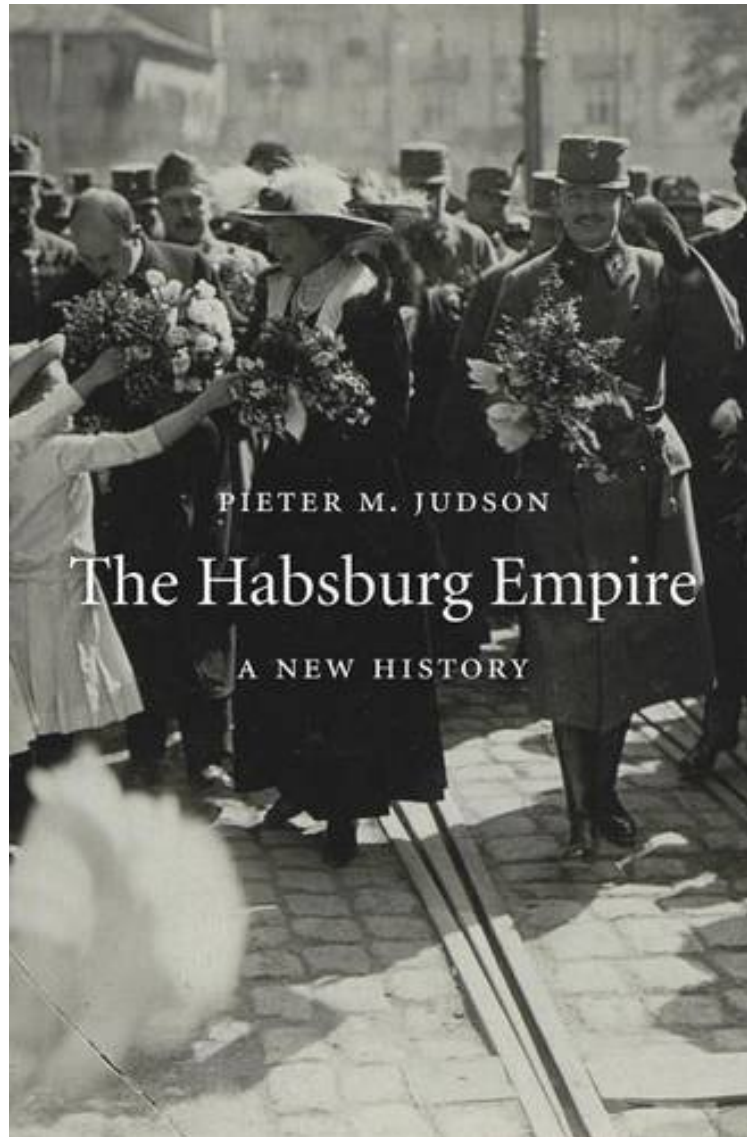


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The Habsburg Empire: A New History

Pieter M. Judson

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Pieter M. Judson : The Habsburg Empire: A New History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Habsburg Empire: A New History:

155 of 159 people found the following review helpful. Competing NationalismsBy John D. CofieldThe Habsburg Empire, also known as the Austrian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or Austria-Hungary, often seems to conjure up a comic-opera image of strutting officials in lavish uniforms, overdressed ladies consuming vast quantities of sweets, and a general air of pomposity, inefficiency, and incompetence. Nearly one hundred years after the Empire's

collapse in 1918, however, Pieter M. Judson's new history makes the case that the Habsburgs and the bureaucracies they created to help them rule their vast territories were more capable and better organized than is generally perceived. This is a lengthy book of some 450 pages, plus another 100 pages of extensive Notes. Divided into eight chapters and an epilogue, it covers the period from Maria Theresa's reign in the eighteenth century through the 1918 collapse and its aftermath. It's a lengthy book with a lot of detail, but it is also well written, with new material and conclusions that challenge long accepted interpretations and hold the reader's interest. The Habsburg Dynasty was one of the world's great success stories. Emerging from a single castle in what is now Switzerland during the Middle Ages, the family managed through an adroit policy of making advantageous marriages and managing inheritances to gain control of much of Central Europe and become Holy Roman Emperors. Judson's history begins with Maria Theresa, only child of Emperor Charles VI. When she succeeded her father in 1740 her territories almost immediately came under attack from rapacious neighbors like Frederick the Great's Prussia. Maria Theresa was intelligent and charismatic, and she was able to rally her subjects and defeat or at least fight to a stalemate most of her enemies. The Empress was responsible for developing a new way of treating the people she ruled: as individual citizens with rights and privileges that were to be guaranteed and protected by the central state. She and her two sons Emperors Joseph II and Leopold II laid the groundwork for a bureaucracy that helped them govern from the center and weaken the power of local landlords and nobles. This process continued under Emperor Francis I, who became Emperor of Austria when the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved by Napoleon in 1806. During the nineteenth century the policy of centralization and bureaucratic rule continued. Emperor Francis Joseph I, who ruled from 1848 to 1916, had to deal with the growth of nationalist impulses that threatened the unity of his multi-ethnic empire. These nationalisms could be based on language, ethnicity, or a combination of both. The Emperor proved to be fairly adroit in playing off competing sides against each other and in balancing demands so that he and the central government kept the upper hand most of the time. When he was forced into allowing the Hungarian section of his territories to become independent, thus creating the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary in 1867, he continued to manage to keep things rumbling along successfully most of the time. At the back of Francis Joseph and his predecessors' plan all along was the commitment to keep the Empire's subjects loyal to the Empire rather than to their specific language or national group. For the most part, during the prosperous late nineteenth century, Francis Joseph succeeded. Railroads, telephones, telegraphs and other technological developments helped tie distant provinces firmly to the capitals of Vienna and Budapest, and most of his subjects saw Francis Joseph as the final guarantor of their rights and freedoms. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 is commonly held to have doomed Austria-Hungary right way. Judson makes the point that the Empire was fairly successful in holding together for the first year or so of the war, but food and supply shortages and high casualty rates placed too much stress on its governing structure. Francis Joseph's death in 1916 and the succession of his great-nephew Emperor Charles seemed to provide a brief burst of new energy and hope, but by the fall of 1918 the end was inevitable. In a several weeks long collapse the different segments of the Empire broke free, and the last Emperor and his family were forced to flee. In the post war period the new nation-states that arose from the ruins of Austria-Hungary tore down imperial emblems and statues but retained many of the Empire's laws and even some of its officials. The new nations were often weak and their governments frequently turned to a fervent new form of nationalism that emphasized specific peoples and languages, rather than continuing the Imperial policy that focused on the unity of disparate peoples under one government. That is probably one of the most important of Judson's insights, especially at a time when new fears of immigration appear to be encouraging new and more strident forms of nationalism in the West.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. it is an easy and enjoyable read
By Robert Reitter
For a book of historical analysis, it is an easy and enjoyable read. Judson's analysis is favorable to the Habsburg dynasty, and he makes a compelling case.

22 of 23 people found the following review helpful. The Habsburg Empire by Dr. Pieter M. Judson is like reading a PH.D dissertation but is readable and wisely informed
By C. M Mills
The Habsburg Empire by Dr. Pieter M. Judson a professor of history in Florence Italy reads like a dense textbook on the explosive region. The period covered begins in the eighteenth century as the Swiss Habsburg Family seized the dynastic reins in Vienna. The Austrian Empire was a stabilizing force in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Strong administration, a good tax system and freedom and liberalization for peasant communities all emerged under the liberal despotic regimes of the formidable Maria Theresa and her sons who followed her in the succession to the throne. There were problems with rebellions in Hungary and far flung areas of the huge empire where over thirty million people lived. The year of 1848 led to the fall of Prince Metternich in Vienna and greater autonomy for the areas and regions controlled from Vienna. Franz Joseph became the emperor in 1848. The Austrian Empire collapsed in 1918 after fighting on the losing side in World War I. The book's main theme is that the Habsburg Empire was basically well governed throughout most of its long history. The volume also gave this reviewer a good overall history of Eastern Europe that is usually omitted from books dealing with European history in the period covered. It is dry reading but contains good information. I wished the author would have humanized his argument with anecdotes but alas he did not.

1 Nevertheless, this is the book to read on the famous Habsburg Dynasty. Well illustrated with copious footnotes in the back of the book.

In a panoramic and pioneering reappraisal, Pieter Judson shows why the Habsburg Empire mattered so much, for so

long, to millions of Central Europeans. Across divides of language, religion, region, and history, ordinary women and men felt a common attachment to their empire, while bureaucrats, soldiers, politicians, and academics devised inventive solutions to the challenges of governing Europe's second largest state. In the decades before and after its dissolution, some observers belittled the Habsburg Empire as a dysfunctional patchwork of hostile ethnic groups and an anachronistic imperial relic. Judson examines their motives and explains just how wrong these rear-guard critics were. Rejecting fragmented histories of nations in the making, this bold revision surveys the shared institutions that bridged difference and distance to bring stability and meaning to the far-flung empire. By supporting new schools, law courts, and railroads, along with scientific and artistic advances, the Habsburg monarchs sought to anchor their authority in the cultures and economies of Central Europe. A rising standard of living throughout the empire deepened the legitimacy of Habsburg rule, as citizens learned to use the empire's administrative machinery to their local advantage. Nationalists developed distinctive ideas about cultural difference in the context of imperial institutions, yet all of them claimed the Habsburg state as their empire. The empire's creative solutions to governing its many lands and peoples as well as the intractable problems it could not solve left an enduring imprint on its successor states in Central Europe. Its lessons remain no less important today.

Pieter M. Judson's book informs and stimulates. If his account of Habsburg achievements, especially in the 18th century, is rather starry-eyed, it is a welcome corrective to the black legend usually presented. Lucid, elegant, full of surprising and illuminating details, it can be warmly recommended to anyone with an interest in modern European history. (Tim Blanning *Wall Street Journal* 2016-06-10) Spectacularly revisionist Judson argues that the empire was a force for progress and modernity. This is a bold and refreshing book. Judson does much to destroy the picture of an ossified regime and state. (A. W. Purdue *Times Higher Education* 2016-05-12) This is an engaging reappraisal of the empire whose legacy, a century after its collapse in 1918, still resonates across the nation-states that replaced it in central Europe. Judson rejects conventional depictions of the Habsburg empire as a hopelessly dysfunctional assemblage of squabbling nationalities and stresses its achievements in law, administration, science and the arts. (Tony Barber *Financial Times* 2016-07-01) Crisply written and nuanced. With invigorating precision, [Judson] analyses how the state was built up by various forces working simultaneously from above and below. His view is not blurred by the unhelpful nostalgia with which so many accounts are suffused. (Adam Zamoyski *Literary Review* 2016-05-01) [A] subtly argued work of deep scholarship. A nuanced scholarly reappraisal of a significant European empire. (Kirkus *Reviews* 2016-02-15) Judson forever banishes images of the Habsburg Empire as a decrepit and declining anachronism. This is the history we have been waiting for since the empire disappeared from Europe's map. (Tara Zahra, author of *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World*) Strongly revisionist and effortlessly wide-ranging, Judson's book offers a strikingly original interpretation of Austria-Hungary as an empire rather than a collection of hostile national groups. This powerful insight should change how we think about European history. (Robert Nemes, author of *Another Hungary: The Nineteenth-Century Provinces in Eight Lives*) A masterpiece of historical rethinking by one of the great Habsburg historians of our age. Judson reminds us of how little we have fully grasped the subtleties and complexities of Habsburg history. (Larry Wolff, author of *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture*) Judson's reflections on nations, states and institutions are of broader interest, not least in the current debate on the future of the European Union after Brexit. Refreshingly, his book also challenges lasting presumptions about differences between Europe east and west, backward and developed, ethnic and civic. His narrative may be one of many possible readings of Habsburg history, as he himself says, yet it is one that is both nuanced and compelling. (Annabelle Chapman *Prospect* 2016-09-01) Indispensable to any serious library. (Simon Heffer *Daily Telegraph* 2016-11-26) About the Author Pieter M. Judson is Professor of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy.