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0521531144 - Funding the Modern American State, 1941-1995: The Rise and Fall of the Era of Easy Finance

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The fiscal crisis faced by the American federal government represents the end of a fiscal regime that began with the financing of World War II. In this volume, an interdisciplinary group of scholars explores the history of American taxation and public finance since 1941 in an attempt to understand the political, social, and economic forces that have shaped the current regime. Specifically, they examine the historical context of earlier tax programs and national crises; explore the ways post-1941 governments used taxation to finance war, social security, and economic stability; analyze the politics of post-1941 tax reform; and apply history to a consideration of the dynamics that are likely to characterize future tax regimes. The contributors recognize both the power of democratic forces outside the federal government and the influence of government institutions—the presidency, congressional leadership, professional experts within government, political partisanship, and constitutional strictures.

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## Foreword

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This volume is a result of a series of Woodrow Wilson Center workshops on the growth of the U.S. national government in the twentieth century. A collaborative scholarly effort, it is intended not only to advance our knowledge of the dynamics of the developments discussed but also to contribute new insights that may be helpful to all those who are involved in today's momentous debates over the size of the federal government and the proper scope of its duties. Here, the starting point for inquiry was the question of how the rise of the modern state had been paid for and justified within the context of the special constraints and opportunities inherent in the nation's traditions of political belief, an interest that led to a broad reexamination of the history of both the thought and the practice of American public finance. All who participated in the project hope that the chapters in this book will contribute something useful for marking out the current state of scholarly understanding on the basic issues involved.

A word of thanks is due not only to those whose work appears in the book but also to those former Woodrow Wilson Center fellows and advisers who helped set up the terms of reference for the workshop and get it under way: Hugh Heclo, Paul Offner, James T. Patterson, Thomas J. Reese, Stanford G. Ross, and Herbert Stein. A special acknowledgment is in order for W. Elliot Brownlee, the volume's editor and principal contributor. His patient leadership was the key throughout.

Michael J. Lacey, *Director*  
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