The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV

The ‘personal rule’ of Louis XIV witnessed a massive increase in the size of the French army and an apparent improvement in the quality of its officers, its men and the War Ministry. However, this is the first book to treat the French army under Louis XIV as a living political, social and economic organism: an institution which reflected the dynastic interests and personal concerns of the king and his privileged subjects.

The book seeks to explain the development of the army between the end of Cardinal Mazarin’s ministry and the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession. During this period the army was reshaped, not simply through the assurance of an adequate money supply, the promulgation of reforming edicts and the imposition of tighter ministerial control. Of even greater significance was the awareness of Louis XIV and his ministers of the need to pay careful attention to the condition of the king’s officers, and to take account of those officers’ military, political, social and cultural aspirations.

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The idea of an ‘early modern’ period of European history from the fifteenth to the late eighteenth century is now widely accepted among historians. The purpose of Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History is to publish monographs and studies which illuminate the character of the period as a whole, and in particular focus attention on a dominant theme within it, the interplay of continuity and change as they are presented by the continuity of medieval ideas, political and social organisation, and by the impact of new ideas, new methods, and new demands on the traditional structure.

For a list of titles published in the series, please see end of the book
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Guy Rowlands
Frontmatter
More information
Maine, the eldest surviving illegitimate son of Louis XIV and the marquise de Montespan, was the king's favourite bastard. Louis installed him as Colonel-General of the Swiss and Grison forces in 1674, prince des Dombes in 1681, governor of Languedoc in 1682, General of the Galleys (1688–94), colonel of the régiment des Carabiniers in 1693, and Grand Master of the Artillery in 1694. With the exception of the Galleys, he held these titles almost without interruption until his death.

The portrait sums up the way in which Maine believed the world should see him: as a soldier and as a sovereign prince of the Dombes, an enclave of disputed status situated north-east of Lyon. The closed crown and the sceptre make that explicit. The title of the engraving (Ludovicus Augustus Dei gratia Dombarum Princeps) also reinforced his claim to sovereignty. But within France there was deep reluctance to see him as anything other than a duke, in spite of the king's steps to create a special legal position in society for Maine and his brother, the comte de Toulouse, who in 1714 were even written into the line of succession to the throne.

In the aftermath of his father's death in 1715, Maine's pretensions were a danger to the stability of the regency for the child-king Louis XV. In particular, Maine's claims to superior status and a share in power within the kingdom, when coupled with the extensive role he played in the army, threatened to undermine the authority of the regent, Philippe II, duc d’Orléans. Because of the closed crown and sceptre, Orléans had the plate of the engraving destroyed. Few examples of it survive, though there could be no better representation of Louis XIV's dynastic approach to the state, nor of the link between politics, social status and the administration of the army.
The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV
Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661–1701

GUY ROWLANDS
Newnham College, Cambridge
To my parents, with love

‘We cannot expect, however able we may be, to correct the natural inclinations of all men to seek their own interest, but it would still be sufficiently glorious for us to arrange so that they can only find it in honest practices, in meritorious actions, and in observing the rules of their profession.’

(Louis XIV, Mémoires, p. 152)
Contents

List of maps xiii
Acknowledgements xiv
List of abbreviations xviii

General introduction: ‘Absolute monarchy’, dynasticism and the standing army 1

PART I ‘Patrimonial bureaucracy’: The Le Tellier dynasty and the Ministry of War

Introduction 27
1 The Secretary of State for War and the dynastic interests of the Le Tellier family 32
2 The ebb and flow of Le Tellier power, 1661–1701 51
3 The use and abuse of servants: the Ministry of War, venality and civilian power in the army 73
4 Financing war: the treasury of the Extraordinaire des Guerres 109
5 Corruption and the pursuit of self-interest in the Ministry of War 135

PART II The forging of the French officer corps and the standing army under Louis XIV

Introduction 153
6 In the name of sustainability: reforming the structure of the standing army and the officer corps 161
7 The business of a regiment 200
8 The pressures and temptations of service 232

PART III The high command of the French armies

Introduction 269
9 The commanders-in-chief and the delegation of royal authority 275
10 The appointment of general officers 296
Maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The French provinces under Louis XIV</td>
<td>xxiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Provinces under the jurisdiction of Louvois, 1689</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Provinces under the jurisdiction of Barbezieux, 1696–7</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Accountancy division within the <em>Extraordinaire des Guerres</em></td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cadet companies, 1688</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Provinces where the governor commanded an army or important corps, 1688–97</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

The research which has culminated in this book began in Oxford when I became a D.Phil. student at the same age as the marquis de Barbezieux had succeeded his father in the post of Secretary of State for War in 1691. Nine years later the book was finished when I was the same age, to the month, as Barbezieux when he died in office five months short of his thirty-third birthday. It has been long in gestation. Indeed, during self-indulgent moments I wondered whether Barbezieux had found it easier to manage Louis XIV’s armies and deal with the French aristocracy than I was finding it to juggle the demands of a social existence, job hunting, research, writing, teaching and even court ceremonial as a Pro-Proctor amid the ancien régime trappings of Oxford University. Unlike Barbezieux, however, I did not take refuge in the bottle or hunting to relieve the pressure, though the finished product might have been better had I done so.

The book which has emerged has been written with the generous help of several institutions and numerous individuals. At Oxford I must thank several host colleges for the financial and moral support they offered during my postgraduate years and my first two posts. Magdalen and Oriel kept the wolf from the postgraduate door with two scholarships and other material support; and the Rector and Fellows of Exeter elected me to a lectureship in early modern history and then a junior research fellowship. Throughout my time as a senior member at Oxford, the Faculty of Modern History made generous contributions to my research expenses. Thanks are also owed to the British Academy for electing me to a postdoctoral fellowship and providing additional funding for a final big push in the archives. Without the Academy this book would never have seen the light of day. Many people in Oxford have shaped my thoughts in discussions formal and informal, assisted me in myriad ways and made the task of research and teaching that much more enjoyable: John Maddicott, Michael Hart, Robin Briggs, Laurence Brockliss, Sir John Elliott, Simon Hodson, Eric Nelson, Robert Evans, Toby Osborne, Tim Watson, Jonathan Powis, Nick Davidson, Nick Dew, Cliff Davies, Felicity Heal, Clive Holmes, Leslie Mitchell, Faramerz Dabhoiwala, Paul Slack and Paul Langford. To my great sadness Angus Macintyre is no longer with us to see this book appear – I hope he would have approved. In the Bodleian Library, Helen, Vera, David and their host of colleagues in the Upper Reading Room passed scores of volumes over the counter to me in a
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The chapters to come are essentially a product of many months of research in France. The staff of the Service Historique de l’Armée de Terre at the château de Vincennes were truly outstanding in the warm welcome and cooperation they extended to an Anglo-Saxon (and one of Huguenot descent, to boot) intent on exploring the reign of the Sun King. Colonel Gilbert Bodinier, Thierry Sarmant and Samuel Gibiat helped me with thorny problems on many occasions and in many ways. Bernard Hamaide repeatedly helped overcome administrative difficulties and rescued me from despair early on in my researches at Vincennes. But the ‘grand croix de l’Ordre de Saint-Louis’ must go to Mme Son Bernard, and the many magasiniers and conscripts who have worked with her over the years, tirelessly labouring to bring me register after register of documents in my obsessive quest to understand the seventeenth-century state. Louis XIV’s motto was ‘Nec Pluribus Impar’ – not unequal to many – but it could just as well describe Mme Bernard.

Elsewhere in France I received excellent treatment in the Salle des Manuscrits of the Bibliothèque Nationale; in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal; in the Bibliothèque Mazarine; in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères at the Foreign Ministry; and in the Archives Condé at the magnificent château de Chantilly. The archives, of course, close in the evenings and at weekends, and many people, whom space does not permit me to mention, helped make my repeated stays in Paris largely enjoyable ones. In particular, it was always good to talk about Louis XIV and the Jacobites with Edward Corp, and Rainer Babel helped with navigating the archives. Rafe Blaufarb proved such a genial companion in and out of the archives, and it was he who first suggested focusing on the high political dimensions of the army. I keenly await his book on the officer corps in the late eighteenth century. David O’Brien and I have pondered the problem of the royal military household for the last eight years, and his work on this subject for the eighteenth century should soon appear. Sarah Chapman and Greg Monahan kindly supplied me with a couple of crucial references. The extended
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No man is an island, though humanities dons working on a foreign country sometimes feel a strong sense of isolation, especially in what are increasingly difficult first years of their career. It is a tribute to all the people I have hitherto mentioned that I rarely felt this way, and while they have in some way or other shaped my thinking they can in no way be blamed for my interpretation of Louis XIV’s army which follows. Naturally, profound contributions have been made by historians of the French army both alive and dead whom I have never met. I emerge from this project with a greater respect for the difficulties they too must have encountered in writing on Louis XIV’s armies. It is in the nature of the British historical profession to engage in robust debate, so I hope those still with us will not be offended if I have challenged them on a number of matters, both here and elsewhere.

Staving off a sense of isolation depends ultimately upon ‘une cercle intime’. Close friends, whose scholarly interests reside a long way from my own and who must be thanked for keeping my feet on the ground, include Philip Carter (who put up with impolite learning in our shared house for three years), Susan Skeddd, Robin Eagles, John Cooper and Suzanne Fagence-Cooper, Matthew Grimley, Roey Sweet, Mark Godfrey and Lewis Baston (a world expert on sleaze). Standing above them all are my nearest and dearest. Bridget Heal has been a tower of strength in some very
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Abbreviations

Archival sources
AA Archives de l’Artillerie (kept in SHAT)
AAE CP Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique
AAE MD Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Mémoires et Documents
ACC Archives Condé, Chantilly
Add. Mss. (BL) Additional Manuscripts
AN Archives Nationales, Paris
Bib Ars Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal
Bib Maz Bibliothèque Mazarine, Institut de France
BL British Library
BMG Bibliothèque du Ministère de la Guerre (part of SHAT)
BNF Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Clair. (BNF) Collection Clairambault
FF (BNF) Fonds Français
NA (ACC) Nouvelles Acquisitions
NAF (BNF) Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises
NLS National Library of Scotland
Saugeon (BMG) Collection Saugeon of royal ordonnances
SHAT Service Historique de l’Armée de Terre, Vincennes

Printed primary sources
DBF Dictionnaire de biographie française, 19 vols. to date (Paris, 1933–)
Abbreviations


Gaya, *L’art de la guerre* L. de Gaya, *L’art de la guerre et la manière dont on la fait à present* (The Hague, 1689 edn)

Hardrée J. Hardrée, ed., *Letters of Louvois* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1949)


Massiac, *Mémoires* M. de Massiac, *Mémoires de ce qui s’est passé de plus considérable pendant la guerre depuis l’an 1688 jusqu’en 1698* (Paris, 1668)


Abbreviations

Noailles, Mémoires
C.-F. X. Millot, Mémoires politiques et militaires, pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV et de Louis XV. Composé sur les pièces originales recueillies par Adrien-Maurice, duc de Noailles, maréchal de France & ministre d'état, 6 vols. (Lausanne, 1778)

Quarré, Mémoires
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Sandras, La conduite de Mars
[G. des Courtilz de Sandras], La conduite de Mars ou l'homme de la guerre (Rouen, 1711 edn)

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André, Michel Le Tellier et Louvois
L. André, Michel Le Tellier et Louvois (Paris, 1943)

Corvisier, Louvois
A. Corvisier, Louvois (Paris, 1983)

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Abbreviations

Lynn, Giant

Parrott, ‘Administration of the French Army’

Rousset
C. Rousset, Histoire de Louvois et de son administration politique et militaire, 4 vols. (Paris, 1862–4)

Rowlands, ‘Power, Authority and Army Administration’
Map 1  The French provinces under Louis XIV.