The Business of War

This is a major new approach to the military revolution and the relationship between warfare and the power of the state in early modern Europe. Whereas previous accounts have emphasized the growth of state-run armies during this period, David Parrott argues instead that the delegation of military responsibility to sophisticated and extensive networks of private enterprise reached unprecedented levels. This included not only the hiring of troops but the provision of equipment, the supply of food and munitions, and the financing of their operations. The book reveals the extraordinary prevalence and capability of private networks of commanders, suppliers, merchants and financiers who managed the conduct of war on land and at sea, challenging the traditional assumption that reliance on mercenaries and the private sector results in corrupt and inefficient military force. In so doing, the book provides essential historical context to contemporary debates about the role of the private sector in warfare.

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The Business of War

*Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe*

David Parrott
To Robert Oresko,
2 January 1947–15 February 2010
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Acknowledgements

This book originates from an invitation by the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge to give the Lees Knowles lectures in autumn 2004. The lecture series, founded by Sir Lees Knowles in 1912, was intended for the promotion of ‘military science’. Seeking a topic that might be wide-ranging enough to appeal to a broad audience of military, political and social historians, and could also meet the Founder’s intention to provide historical lectures with relevance to the practice of war, I chose to develop my interest in early modern military outsourcing and the organization of war through private enterprise. Having given me the motive to explore this subject, the Master and Fellows of Trinity provided me with generous hospitality during the weeks while I was producing and delivering the Lees Knowles lectures. I am extremely grateful not just for this generosity, but for the support and friendship that was offered while I was giving the lectures, in particular by my ever-considerate host at Trinity, Boyd Hilton, and through numerous engaging and helpful conversations with Peter Sarris, William St Clair and many others amongst the Fellowship.

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## Abbreviations

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Currencies

The principal currencies used in the book are Imperial talers and florins (Rhenish), Swedish and Danish riksdalers, Dutch florins, Spanish ducats and escudos, and French livres and écus. Rough conversion rates in the first half of the seventeenth century:

1 Imperial taler = 1.5 German (Rhenish) florins
1 Rhenish florin = 1.7 Dutch florins
2.5 Dutch florins = 1 Imperial taler
1 Spanish escudo = 1.1 Spanish ducats
1.5 Rhenish florins = 1 Spanish escudo
3 French livres = 1 French écu
1 Rhenish florin = 2 French livres (from later 1630s)
3 French livres = 1 Spanish escudo
1 riksdaler (Swedish/Danish) = between 0.7 and 1 Imperial taler