INTRODUCTION

War, government and society in France, 1624–1642

The present book provides an account of the French army during the ministry of the cardinal de Richelieu. No detailed examination has previously been attempted of the military administration at what is widely considered to be a formative moment in French history; Richelieu's army, in contrast to almost every other aspect of his ministry, has not attracted its historians. Even where the organization and deployment of the army is directly relevant to the conduct of foreign policy, the issues have received little detailed attention since the eighteenth century.[1] The conduct of war and the formulation of strategy, the manner in which French armies fought during the Thirty Years War, the means by which supposedly unprecedented numbers of troops were raised, maintained, funded, supplied and controlled, have all received summary treatment in most historical accounts of the ministry. One reason for this neglect is the presence of pervasive assumptions about the broader relationship between the army, government and society in Richelieu's France, assumptions which have created their own generalized image of military organization and its evolution in this period.

The period of conflict upon which Louis XIII and Richelieu embarked from 1629 with the intervention in north Italy, and above all from 1635 when France was committed to open war with the Habsburg powers of Spain and Austria, was marked by an uninterrupted series of campaigns, fought in multiple theatres, and requiring a larger and more sustained military commitment than any previous war in French history. Waging such a war placed great pressure upon the administrative and fiscal capacities of the French state.

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[1] The six-volume biography of Richelieu by G. Hanotaux, completed by the duc de La Force, *L'histoire du cardinal de Richelieu* (6 vols.; Paris, 1893–1947), provides a surprisingly perfunctory account of the waging of war and its relationship to foreign policy. For sustained, detailed, narrative with emphasis on the deployment of military resources, it is necessary to return to M. Le Vassor, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIII* (10 vols.; Amsterdam, 1701–11), or H. Griffet, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIII* (3 vols.; Paris, 1758). Detailed, but narrowly focused, accounts of the war-effort are provided in A.M.R.A. vicomte de Noailles, *Episodes de la Guerre de Trente Ans* (3 vols.: *Bernard de Saxe-Weimar*, *Le cardinal de La Valette* and *Le maréchal de Guébriant*; Paris, 1906–13); another work which provides substantial amounts of detail focused upon particular campaign theatres is G. Fagniez, *Le Père Joseph et Richelieu, 1577–1638* (2 vols.; Paris, 1894). The most comprehensive account of the conduct of war during Richelieu's ministry can probably be obtained from selective reading of the documents collected and published by D.L.M. Avenel (ed.), *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'état du cardinal de Richelieu* (8 vols.; Paris, 1853–76).

Introduction

Traditional interpretations of the ministry have attributed France's capacity to meet the challenge of the struggle with the Habsburgs directly to the will-power and determination of Richelieu. Richelieu's abilities and political vision set him apart from his contemporaries and gave him the relentless energy to pursue an undeviating series of policies for the benefit of France and its monarchy. The war-effort, on which Richelieu recognized the survival and aggrandizement of the Bourbon monarchy would depend, was to be sustained through a strengthening of central government and the crushing of opposition to royal authority – an authority conflated with that of the first minister in these hagiographic interpreta-tions. As with much of the historical picture of Richelieu, the starting point is the cardinal's own writings. The four-fold programme laid out in his *Testament politique* was easily read as a statement both of aims and methods: Richelieu claimed that he had served his king by abasing the power of the Habsburgs and asserting the renown of Louis XIII amongst foreign rulers, by crushing the political and military independence of the Huguenots, by curbing the arrogance and assertiveness of the *grands*, and by reducing all of the king's subjects to due obedience. These achievements contributed, it is implied, to a mutually reinfor-cing scheme, in which the ability to fight effectively in Europe was a direct consequence of reforms at home which had successfully curbed the spirit of unrest and insubordination that had dogged previous French bids to assert her international status.[2] This model of assertive domestic policies justified as a means to facilitate power abroad was adopted by Richelieu's earliest biographers.[3] By the nineteenth century it had become orthodoxy amongst those historians who accepted Richelieu's preeminence as the shaping force in early seventeenth-century French history. Moreover, those aspects of Richelieu's policies concerned to constrain the self-interest and disruptive potential of a society dominated by corporate, local and individual authority were interpreted in a wider context where Richelieu was considered to have enhanced the power of the central state. For Georges d'Avenel, Richelieu was the revolutionary who had destroyed local and institutional independence, the privileges and liberties vested in an essentially aristocratic society, but had done this as a means to create a centralized, powerful state, able to wage large-scale war and to assert France's interests abroad.[4] These views were echoed in the works of numerous administrative historians, for whom

[2] Richelieu, *Testament politique*, ed. F. Hildesheimer, (Paris, 1995), pp. 41–3.
[3] C. Vialart, *Histoire du ministère d'Armand-Jean du Plessis, cardinal duc de Richelieu* (4 vols.; Amsterdam, 1649), I. 2–4 'ces qualitez éminentes qui eslevoient Monsieur le Cardinal au dessus du reste des hommes'; A. Aubery, *Histoire du cardinal duc de Richelieu* (Paris, 1660), pp. 575–618; G. Dugrès, *Life of Richelieu* (London, 1643), p. 45: 'The Cardinal's chiefest end was to make the king of France absolute, glorious and renowned, and his Kingdom to flourish. To obtain it, he removed all the obstacles either at home, or abroad, that could be any hindrance to his proceedings.'
[4] G. d'Avenel, *Richelieu et la monarchie absolue* (4 vols.; Paris, 1884–90), I. 1–165, 'La monarchie traditionelle'; I. 167–247, 'La monarchie absolue': 'La révolution de 1789 était accomplie dans les idées, avant d'être commencée dans les faits; la révolution de 1624 fut exécutée en même temps dans les faits et dans les idées' (I. 186). The psychological ambiguities embedded in Avenel's perceptive

Introduction

the key factor in shaping governmental change and the development of a more powerful administration remained the dynamic and reformist role of *le grand cardinal*.[5] The army is given some attention in these accounts, principally in terms of the challenge which autonomous structures of command and control presented to the ministry and the crown; a number of typical issues are examined, most of which are derived from the classic work of the eighteenth-century Jesuit historian, Père Gabriel Daniel.[6] The conclusions of these works echo the central role allocated to Richelieu in other aspects of government and administration; the concept of *Richelieu's* army, shaped and controlled by the efforts of the cardinal himself, was accepted without serious qualification.[7]

Explanations of political and even social change as the product of an individual's will, though by no means completely rejected, have enjoyed less favour amongst twentieth-century historians. One element contributing to this shift in studies of seventeenth-century France has been a reassessment of the aims and methods of Richelieu. From the omniscient and visionary statesman whose accomplished grasp of France's true interests was weakened only when his policies were misunderstood or misapplied by allies and subordinates, an alternative model has emerged of Richelieu as an essentially expedient and pragmatic politician. The cardinal was seen rather as operating within the same political world as his contemporaries, sharing their motivations and interests, and confronting problems and demands on a day-to-day basis rather than pursuing far-sighted, long-term plans; this picture gave much less support to claims that domestic reform and enhancement of international power were the results of the assertiveness of a strong-willed individual.[8] While Richelieu's political abilities are

and intelligent assessment of Richelieu's ministry would be worthy of study in their own right: a revealing indication of political and social tensions in *fin de siècle* France.

[5] A. Dareste de La Chavanne, *Histoire de l'administration en France* (4 vols.; Paris, 1848), I. 49, II. 310–18; A. Chéruel, *Histoire de l'administration monarchique en France depuis l'avènement de Philippe-Auguste jusqu'à la mort de Louis XIV* (2 vols.; Paris, 1855), I. 295–318; J. Caillet, *De l'administration en France sous le ministère du cardinal de Richelieu* (Paris, 1857): 'Richelieu est l'admirable génie qui tire la France de l'anarchie dans laquelle elle s'épuisait' (p. 129); E. Boutaric, *Les institutions militaires de la France avant les armées permanentes* (Paris, 1863), pp. 341–96; Though the eight volumes of the *Lettres de Richelieu* edited by D.L.M. Avenel in fact yields much material which nuances and corrects this interpretation, the editorial commentary and the principle behind making a collection based solely on Richelieu's active correspondence indicate that the project was conceived within this traditional interpretation of the cardinal's centrality to the political process.

[6] G. Daniel, *Histoire de la milice françoise* (2 vols.; Paris, 1721).

[7] A curious exception to this is provided by Xavier Audoin, whose *Histoire de l'administration de la guerre* (4 vols.; Paris, 1811), II. 142–90, identifies Henri IV as the great military reformer and treats Richelieu's responses to the problems of army administration with dismissive contempt. At the other end of the century, Louis André, in his *Michel Le Tellier et l'organisation de l'armée monarchique* (Paris, 1906), pp. 24–33, gives Richelieu brief credit for reforming intentions, but attributes practical success to Le Tellier's post-1643 administration as *secrétaire d'Etat de la guerre*.

[8] The issue is perceptively discussed in the context of Richelieu's career before 1624 by J. Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu* (New Haven and London, 1991), pp. 1–11. A series of essays in J.H. Elliott and L. Brockliss (eds.), *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven and London, 1999) – notably by Elliott,

Introduction

not denied in these more recent studies, they do emphasize that his decision to challenge the Habsburg powers drew France into decades of warfare which did not form part of any grand project to revolutionize the power of the monarchy. Far from possessing a long-term and skilfully conceived design to sustain the war-effort by an uncompromising assault upon privilege and local autonomy, Richelieu was inclined to avoid confrontation with established interests, and would have preserved the institutional *status quo* so far as possible.[9] On this interpretation, Richelieu's personal achievement lay less in the conscious implementation of institutional reform, more in the articulation and realignment of political ideas which might be used to justify ministerial policies *post facto*. It was Richelieu and his agents' invigoration of theories of *raison d'état*, both in attempting to justify a foreign policy waged on behalf of protestant allies against the Habsburgs and in equating resistance to ministerial authority with resistance to the crown, which represented the clearest contribution of the cardinal to the reshaping of political life in early seventeenth-century France.[10] As historians of other early modern states have emphasized, the impact of such a shift in the ideological underpinnings of royal power should not be underestimated. Yet these accounts also demonstrate that unless an institutional apparatus already exists or comes into being to exploit this ideological shift, it may well remain a potential rather than an actual factor in political life; what might appear to be new ways of thinking about political authority may remain latent within a traditional framework of practical politics and political assumptions.[11] Aside from the articulation of *raison d'état*, Richelieu's temperamental conservatism and an awareness of the risks of a 'revolutionary' reshaping of government both militated against the kind of 'root and branch' institutional reform attributed to him by earlier generations of historians, who seemed unable to resist the concept of a conscious drive towards monarchical 'absolutism'.

A. Feros and Brockliss – locate Richelieu within this wider context of contemporary politics and the maintenance of favour.

[9] The most extreme example of such an interpretation is offered by J.R. Major, whose *Representative Government in Early Modern France* (New Haven and London, 1980), pp. 487–621, presents an improbable dichotomy between Michel de Marillac as the exponent of royal authoritarianism achieved through institutional reform, and Richelieu as the expedient politician, essentially concerned to maintain the war-effort at whatever long-term price to institutional authority.

[10] See especially the classic study by E. Thuau, *Raison d'Etat et pensée politique à l'époque de Richelieu* (Paris, 1966), esp. pp. 351–409; W. Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 173–282; S. Skalweit, 'Richelieu's Staatsidee', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 2 (1962). Recent works have given priority to this development of political theory in a context of wider political pragmatism: F. Hildesheimer, *Richelieu: une certain idée de l'état* (Paris, 1985), pp. 39–47; J.H. Elliott, *Richelieu and Olivares* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 113–42; R.J. Knecht, *Richelieu* (London, 1991), pp. 169–89; R. Bonney, 'Absolutism: what's in a name?', *French History*, 1 (1987), 93–117.

[11] Recent works on early Stuart politics have drawn attention to these distinctions between political practice and potentially 'absolutist' ideology, and have argued that the ideological context needs more nuanced examination in the light of the assumptions of the various political actors: see, for example, J. Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England, 1603–1640* (London, 1986); G. Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven and London, 1996).

Introduction

Yet although it may be accepted that Richelieu himself was not the direct instigator of a political process that reshaped French government and society, this does not end debate about the extent and nature of practical political change in this period. While few twentieth-century historians have suggested that Richelieu's ministry was characterized by a conscious attempt to create a royal 'absolutism', they none the less affirm that the effect of a militant foreign policy pursued from the 1630s was to create a more centralized and authoritarian state. In this, they move from specific historical case studies to general theories of state development. Richelieu's ministry is located within a wider debate about the impact of warfare on the changing relationship between central power and the autonomy, privileges and political identity of the governed in early modern Europe. This debate is strongly influenced by the social sciences, and above all by the state-building models of Max Weber and his successors. As Weber proposed in his *Essays on Sociology* of 1906: 'The bureaucratic tendency has chiefly been influenced by needs arising from the creation of standing armies as determined by power politics and by the development of public finance connected with the military establishment.'[12] Thus in its most general form the debate concerns the role of warfare in the process of political modernization, the means by which a 'medieval' Europe characterized by separatist corporations, local autonomy and private administration is transformed into a 'modern' world of bureaucratic central government.[13]

The underlying assumption is that early modern European rulers and their councillors were constrained by a mass of political and social prejudices within a political culture which inclined them to seek compromise and to work within existing structures of privilege and authority.[14] Even *had* they seen the fiscal or political benefits of challenging these structures, they were no less constrained by the lack of agencies capable of bringing about substantial change in a 'normative' political environment. The forces of regional autonomy, privileged interest and influence were too strongly entrenched in the political system to permit the development of powerful centralizing institutions. War is seen as changing this situation in that it forced rulers and their agents to confront obstruction and resistance with coercion – often deployed by the army itself – and to develop bureaucratic systems which could improve administrative efficiency. Though the mental world of the early modern ruler was shaped by dynastic assumptions about

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[12] M. Weber, 'The presuppositions and causes of bureaucracy', in R.K. Merton (ed.), *A Reader in Bureaucracy* (New York, 1960), pp. 66–7.

[13] The other classic statement of the relationship between war and state building is provided in the 1906 lecture by Otto Hintze, 'Military organization and the organization of the state', introduced and translated by F. Gilbert, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York, 1975), pp. 178–215.

[14] H. Scott (ed.), *The European Nobilities of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (2 vols.; London, 1995), I. 35–52.

Introduction

composite kingdoms, princely sovereignty and aristocratic privilege,[15] warfare when waged for sufficiently high stakes had the capacity to break down this conservative consensus and open the way to change in specific areas of govern-ment vital to military success. Precisely because these areas were narrowly defined and related to the needs of military institutions, it is not necessary to seek any radical and self-conscious blueprint for coherent, centralized government. Yet cumulatively these changes contributed to reshaping the entire structure of power in European states in the direction of centralized monarchies underpinned by effective coercive power and operated by professional administrators. In its fullest form, the thesis extends well beyond issues of administrative change. Heavy emphasis is laid upon existing trends towards territorial, linguistic and legal unity, on the assumption that these will facilitate the necessary changes in political and social organization. Such states have an inbuilt advantage in the race to deploy their military forces most effectively – producing the largest and most powerful armies, able to sustain the lengthiest and most costly wars – and can go on to achieve wider goals in a competitive international environment. Hence, it is argued, the growing power and effectiveness of the European 'nation states', and the weakness or extinction of other forms of political organization – composite monarchies or states in which sovereignty is ambiguous, or consciously dissipated, such as those within the Holy Roman Empire. In other, more recent, accounts these deterministic explanations are played down, and the discussion focuses on the motivation and mechanisms for political change in early modern states: why did developments conducive to more authoritarian or centralized administration occur in some states and not in others, and what explains the chronology of their emergence?

Such recent arguments about the primary role of warfare in transforming political and social relations in European states have been developed with considerable sophistication and a strong awareness of the divergences in the political and organizational paths and chronologies pursued by different states. In some cases the links between war and state development form a central element in the argument, usually incorporated into a wider discussion of factors in state formation.[16] In others it forms the background to a discussion of the distinctive

[15] R. Oresko, G. Gibbs and H. Scott (eds.), *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 5–12.
[16] S. Finer, 'State and nation-building in Europe: the role of the Military', in C. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975), pp. 84–163, and C. Tilly, 'Armies, wars and states', in Tilly (ed.), *Formation of National States*, pp. 73–6; R. Bean, 'War and the birth of the nation state', *Journal of Economic History*, 33 (1973), 203–21; W.H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power. Technology, Armed Force and Society since A.D. 1000* (Oxford, 1982); B. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change. Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, 1992), is explicitly concerned with this theme of the military-driven reshaping of European political systems, and throughout is explicit about the debt to Weber's theories: 'Having benefited from themes in Weber's works, I believe that military organization has been one of the basic building blocks of all civilizations, quite as important to political development as economic

Introduction

path taken by European states and the wider consequences for the exercise of power at both a national and an international level.[17]

All of these works, whether based on wide-ranging sociological theory or the accumulation of historical comparisons, place military organization at the heart of a debate about political change or modernization in early modern Europe. Unlike other variants of 'modernization theory' which located the primary motor for change in economic/agrarian development, industrialization, social conflict or geopolitical factors, the stress on the centrality of warfare and developing structures of military organization has enjoyed steady and relatively uncontroversial acceptance, and has clearly profited from the revival of interest in the role and definition of 'the state' in political theory.[18] A further contribution to the sharpening of the interpretation was the emergence and subsequent elaboration of the theory of an early modern 'military revolution', initially articulated so coherently by Michael Roberts.[19] By linking concepts of state formation with an array of specific military changes, the 'military revolution' has ensured that the adage that 'war made the state' has become a commonplace in thinking about early modern history.

Though much of this argument for war and administrative change would appear to derive from general theories of state development, its essential characteristics have been imported into historical discussion of individual states. And in this respect France in the first half of the seventeenth century represents a paradigmatic case.[20] Most notable amongst the French historians who have argued that

structures' (p. 14); T. Ertman, *The Birth of Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 1–34, provides a wide-ranging introductory discussion of state-building theories; W. Reinhard, 'Power elites, state servants, ruling classes and the growth of state power', in W. Reinhard (ed.), *Power Elites and State Building* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 9–14.

[17] P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500–2000* (London, 1988), pp. 89–91: 'All remarks about the general rise in government spending, or about new organizations for revenue-collecting, or about the changing relationship between kings and estates in early modern Europe, remain abstract until the central importance of military conflict is recalled' (p. 91); M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. I: *A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 453–8, 478–81, 483–90; K. Rasler and W. Thompson, *War and State Making. The Shaping of the Global Powers* (Boston, 1989), pp. 205–19; D. Kaiser, *Politics and War. European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler* (London, 1990), pp. 7–137.

[18] See introductory comments by T. Skocpol in: P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 3–37.

[19] M. Roberts, 'The military revolution, 1560–1660' (Belfast, 1955), reprinted in M. Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History* (London, 1967), pp. 195–225. The 'military revolution' makes explicit appearances in many of the works cited above – for example, McNeill, *Pursuit of Power*, pp. 127–32, and Kennedy, *Great Powers*, pp. 56–7. See also J. Cornette, 'La révolution militaire et l'état moderne', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 41 (1994), 698–709.

[20] Many of the general theorists have supported their arguments by deploying the example of political change in the France of Richelieu and Mazarin: Hintze, 'Military organization', pp. 199–201; S. Finer, 'State and nation-building', pp. 124–34; C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1992* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 26, 75–91; Downing, *Military Revolution*, pp. 121–7.

Introduction

military demands brought about a transformation of the institutions of French government was Roland Mousnier. Mousnier argued forcefully that the nature of *Ancien Régime* government and society was radically transformed by warfare: 'la guerre a été le plus puissant facteur de transformation de 1598 à 1789'.[21] Above all, the demands of war in the first half of the seventeenth century led to the evolution of an administration based upon agents despatched from the centre holding short-term commissions; these commissions provided the authority to override the established proprietary officials who administered the financial and judicial systems but whose compliance with the crown and its ministers remained conditional. The driving force behind this administrative initiative was the conflict into which France was drawn after 1635, and which necessitated massively increased levels of funding, more effective mobilization of military resources and the suppression of resistance.[22]

This model of political change stimulated by France's involvement in the Thirty Years War has been adopted by numerous French historians working in fields such as popular revolt, provincial and institutional studies.[23] Amongst historians outside of France, the development of commissioned *intendants* during the ministries of Richelieu and Mazarin received a definitive treatment from Richard Bonney, while other Anglo–Saxon historians have examined the impact of the war-effort on particular institutions and relations between central and provincial government.[24]

[21] R. Mousnier, *Les institutions de la France sous la monarchie absolue, 1598–1715* (2 vols.; Paris, 1974–80), II. 10.

[22] Mousnier, *Les institutions*, II. 489–96, 574–7; R. Mousnier, 'Etat et commissaire. Recherches sur la création des intendants des provinces (1634–48)', in R. Mousnier, *La plume, la faucille et le marteau. Institutions et société en France du Moyen Age à la Révolution* (Paris, 1970), pp. 179–99; R. Mousnier, 'Les crises intérieures françaises de 1610 à 1659 . . .', in K. Repgen (ed.), *Krieg und Politik 1618–1648* (Munich, 1988), pp. 169–83; R. Mousnier, *L'Homme Rouge ou la vie du cardinal de Richelieu (1585–1642)* (Paris, 1992), pp. 623–33.

[23] G. Pagès, *La monarchie de l'Ancien Régime en France de Henri IV à Louis XIV* (3rd edn, Paris, 1941), pp. 103–10; P. Goubert, *L'Ancien Régime* (2 vols.; Paris, 1973) II. 65–92; E. Esmonin, *Etudes sur la France du XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1964), pp. 13–32; Y.-M. Bercé, *Histoire des croquants. Etude des soulèvements populaires au XVIIe siècle dans le sud-ouest de la France* (2 vols.; Geneva, 1974), I. 83–118; P. Deyon, 'The French nobility and absolute monarchy in the first half of the seventeenth century', in P.J. Coveney (ed.), *France in Crisis, 1620–1675* (London, 1977), pp. 231–46; J.F. Pernot, 'Le rôle de la guerre dans le développement de la théorie de la monarchie moderne', *Revue historique des armées*, 3 (1979), 41–70; Cornette, 'La révolution militaire', 709.

[24] R. Bonney, *Political Change in France under Richelieu and Mazarin, 1624–1661* (Oxford, 1978); D.C. Baxter, *Servants of the Sword. French Intendants of the Army, 1630–1670* (Urbana Il., 1976), pp. 60–85; R. Harding, *Anatomy of a Power Elite. The Provincial Governors of Early Modern France* (New Haven and London, 1978), pp. 191–217; A. Lloyd Moote, *The Revolt of the Judges* (Princeton, 1971), pp. 36–63; S. Kettering, *Judicial Politics and Urban Revolt in Seventeenth-Century France: The Parlement of Aix, 1629–1659* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 51–80; J.H. Kitchens, 'Judicial commissions and the Parlement of Paris', *French Historical Studies*, 12 (1982), 323–50; R. Giesey, 'State-building in early modern France: the role of royal officialdom', *Journal of Modern History*, 55 (1983), 191–207; S. Hanley, *The 'Lit de Justice' of the kings of France: Constitional Ideology in Legend, Ritual and Discourse* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 281–95; D. Hickey, *The Coming of French Absolutism: The Struggle for Tax Reform in the Province of Dauphiné, 1540–1640* (Toronto, 1986), pp. 166–78;

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Introduction

A product of these works is a well-established thesis about the development of the army in the context of administration and politics during Richelieu's ministry. The size of the army was increased from its previous maximum strength of perhaps 50,000–75,000 troops in earlier conflicts up to a post-1635 force of 125,000–150,000 soldiers. The scale of this military activity demanded better systems of troop quartering within France, especially during the winter months, and better networks of supply points for troops moving across the provinces to the campaign theatres. Larger forces hugely increased the problems of recruitment, supply and discipline, and these were handled by a great expansion in the authority and competence of the secretary of state for war and his staff in the *bureau de la guerre*. Beneath this central office extended a network of commissioned administrators, the *intendants d'armée*, granted wide-ranging authority within the individual army-corps to handle matters of finance, supply and discipline. Whereas in the past, major campaign armies had been commanded by the king himself in the presence of senior government ministers, war fought in multiple campaigns required the crown to delegate authority to individual generals. Those senior military offices with the most extensive and dangerous powers were abolished (the *connétable*) or had their authority drastically curtailed (the *colonel général de l'infanterie*), while the corps commanders were subject to supervision by the central agents, the *intendants*.

Little of this change could occur independently of a wider political and social context. A huge increase in the size of the army needed to be paid for, and this in turn drove up the burden of taxation to unprecedented levels. Assessing and collecting revenues in these circumstances revealed the grave weaknesses of a fiscal administration based upon venality of office and steeped in local and corporate self-interest. Moreover, the ever-tightening fiscal vice drove peasants and artisans into violent resistance and incited legal and administrative obstruction from the provincial elites. Unable to forgo revenues on which the war-effort depended, the civil counterparts of the commissioned *intendants d'armée*, the provincial *intendants*, were granted ever-increasing powers to assess taxation, to supervise collection and to repress disorders. The billeting of soldiers in the provinces over the winter months, stockpiling of grain magazines and other food supplies, control of civil-military disorders, supervision of recruitment and the passage of troops, were all also placed under the authority of these provincial *intendants*. The central administration was both better informed about the situation in the provinces, thanks to the steady stream of correspondence from its new provincial agents, and more interventionist in all matters which threatened to disrupt the war-effort. The presence of troops in the frontier provinces gave the crown the practical opportunity to impose its authority in the face of local obstruction or non-

D. Parker, *Class and State in Ancien Régime France. The Road to Modernity?* (London, 1996), pp. 158–67.

cooperation in matters of billeting, payment of taxes or supply. *Raison d'état*, which had hitherto existed as a theoretical concept used by Richelieu's publicists to argue for the legitimacy of war against catholic powers, now provided a justification for an increasingly assertive and authoritarian central regime, based upon the overriding authority of agents acting directly under royal commission.

Such an interpretation of changes in French government and administration brought about by the demands of the war-effort offers a corrective to the improbable view that Richelieu himself could shape policy in accordance with some vision of monarchical absolutism. While not denying that he was more powerful and influential than any other subject of Louis XIII, it is more realistic to recognize that government initiatives – for example, the proliferation of the commissioned *intendants* – owed as much to *ad hoc* decisions and actions by subordinate ministers, or should be seen as pragmatic responses to institutional or provincial pressure. Moreover, challenging the view of Richelieu's political omnicompetence creates awareness that his actions took place in the wider context of a Court in which numerous interests and factions were in play and constantly needed to be taken into account. Richelieu was not a free agent, confident that Louis XIII would identify his policies with the interests of the Bourbon monarchy and the good of France.[25]

Yet this shift in the perception of the ministry's war-effort and its consequences is not wholly satisfactory. At the level of general theory, the assumptions linking the more effective waging of war with bureaucratic rationality and centralization need more scrutiny. There is an obvious danger in adopting a model which was developed to explain the relationship of war to political change in later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European states, and assuming that it can be applied to earlier periods and societies.[26] It is not axiomatic that central control over the funding and organization of the army and over the level of military activity is the most effective method of waging war. It can certainly be contended that decentralization and the contracting out of military functions into the hands of individual commanders or administrator-entrepreneurs may prove a more effi-cient means to manage a war-effort in a state lacking existing, wide-ranging structures of revenue extraction, where administrative office is largely the private property of institutional elites, and where the power and influence of a provincial ruling class is too great easily to challenge or sidestep. Far from evading the 'rational' path towards centralization and institutional modernization, rulers and their councillors may be acting more rationally in working within existing

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[25] A point made by two recent biographies of Louis XIII: P. Chevallier, *Louis XIII, roi cornélien* (Paris, 1979); A. Lloyd Moote, *Louis XIII. The Just* (Berkeley, Calif., 1989).

[26] The extent to which Weber's original linkage between war, military organization and administrative rationalization was extrapolated from historical experience of the Prussian state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been remarked upon by numbers of commentators – cf. Evans, Rueschmeyer and Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, pp. 350–1.