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John Churchill, first duke of Marlborough, was one of the two greatest military commanders in British history and the first subject to achieve and exercise a dominating influence in European affairs. With Wellington and Nelson he is the nearest that Britain has had to a national hero, yet today his reputation has faded. Few, apart from specialists in military history, have any appreciation of the extent of his achievements.

This new study sets Marlborough's career in its contexts: the royal Court of the last Stuart monarchs, the desperate struggle against French attempts to establish hegemony in western Europe and the bitter political strife in Britain between the Whig and the Tory parties. It examines the opportunistic ways in which John Churchill rose from obscurity and poverty to wealth and greatness, his decisive role in the Revolution of 1688 and the circumstances and reasons for his dramatic fall.

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Note on dates

All dates given for events, or correspondence originating, in England are Old Style; for those in Europe New Style. In the seventeenth century the Old Style were ten days behind New Style, adjusted in the eighteenth century to eleven. The years given all begin on 1 January.

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Biographical note

The following works are cited in abbreviated form in the footnotes.

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- Snyder Henry L. Snyder, *The Marlborough–Godolphin Correspondence* (3 vols., Oxford, 1975)
- T'Hoff B. Van T'Hoff, *The Correspondence 1701–1711 of John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough, and Antonie Heinsius Grand Pensionary of Holland* (The Hague, 1951)
- Vault and Pelet F. E. de Vault and J. J. G. Pelet, *Mémoires militaires relatifs à la succession d'Espagne sous Louis XIV* (11 vols., Paris, 1835–62)

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