

# The Military Revolution and the State, 1500-1800 (Exeter Studies in History)

*The Historical Journal*, 36, 4 (1993), pp. 965-975  
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## AN ENGLISH MILITARY REVOLUTION?

*Ships, money and politics. Seafaring and naval enterprise in the reign of Charles I.* By Kenneth R. Andrews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Pp. x + 240. £25.

*The Nine Years' War and the British Army 1688-1697: the operations in the Low Countries.* By John Childs. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. Pp. xii + 372. £40.

*War and government in Britain, 1598-1650.* Edited by Mark Charles Fissel. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. Pp. x + 293. £35.

*The Restoration navy and English foreign trade 1674-1688.* By Sari R. Hornstein. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991. Pp. xviii + 293. £39.50.

The fiscal and military shortcomings of the early Stuart regime have figured prominently in recent historiography, and have formed part of some influential explanations for the outbreak of the civil war. A political crisis arose in part, it has been argued, as a result of this functional incapacity of the state, and yet within years of the outbreak of the civil war mobilization of men and resources for war had been undertaken on an entirely unprecedented scale. Furthermore, the creation of significant armed forces created new political interests: by 1648 the navy had become a significant political interest and in 1648/9 the army made one of the most spectacular political interventions in English history. The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 brought a degree of demilitarization (and certainly a desire for it) but the heightened capacity for military and fiscal mobilization, so apparent between 1642 and 1660, remained. Although restoration politicians remarked (and historians continue to remark) on the shortage of money and the febleness of the military establishment, the later Stuarts had a standing army, a greatly enlarged state navy and a significantly increased capacity to tax their subjects. At the very least, the margin by which they failed to win the Dutch wars was considerably smaller than that by which the military adventures of the 1620s had failed. Leaving aside the question of battlefield tactics (which we will not consider here), we might say that seventeenth-century England exhibits some of the symptoms of a 'military revolution'.

### I

The trauma of the wars between 1642 and 1660 in human terms has been restated recently by Carlton. He has estimated that the population loss in England in those years was 3.7%, that in Scotland 6% and that in Ireland 4.1%. To this must be added the doubtless large numbers of wounded. These are startling figures, even if they are 'guesses' for England, 'inspired guesses' for Scotland and 'miracles of conjecture' for Ireland.<sup>1</sup> More than this though, he has reminded us of the human impact of the experience of soldiering before, during and after battle, and his contribution to the

<sup>1</sup> Charles Carlton, *Going to the wars: The experience of the British civil wars 1638-1651* (London, 1992), pp. 214, 213. These figures are higher than the (evidently provisional) ones given in 'The face of battle in the English civil wars' in Mark Charles Fissel (ed.), *War and government in Britain, 1598-1650* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 240-1.

The Military Revolution and the state, Volume 1 of University of Exeter Department of History and Archaeology Exeter Studies in History. The Military revolution and the state, / edited by Michael Duffy Duffy, Michael, [Exeter] University of Exeter - Exeter studies in history ;., English, Book edition: The Military revolution and the state, / edited by [Exeter]: University of Exeter, Exeter studies in history ; no. 1. Michael Duffy. ISBN: OCLC Number: Description: 90 Seiten mit Tabellen 8. Series Title: Exeter studies in history, 1. The Military Revolution and the State, by Michael Duffy, , available at Book Paperback; Exeter Studies in History English. The Military Revolution and the State, (Exeter studies in history). Book condition: Very Good. Book Description. Paperback. Very Good. The Military Revolution and the State, - Exeter studies in history No 1 (Paperback). Michael Duffy (editor). Sign in to write a review. ? Paperback. All about The Military Revolution and the State, (Exeter Studies in History) by Michael Duffy. LibraryThing is a cataloging and social networking site . Type: Book; Author(s): Duffy, Michael; Date: ; Publisher: University of Exeter; Pub place: [Exeter]; Volume: Exeter studies in history; ISBN Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, Geoffrey Parker military revolution and the state 1500-1800 (Exeter, Exeter studies in history. Catalogue The military revolution and the state, The military Published Exeter: University of Exeter, Series: Exeter studies in history, no Readings On The Military Transformation Of Early Modern Europe Clifford J The Military Revolution and the State, , Exeter Studies in History 1. [PDF] History of France Volume I. The Military Revolution and the State, (Exeter Studies in , English, Book edition: The Military revolution and M. Roberts, The Military Revolution, (Belfast: Queen's University ed ., The Military Revolution and the State (Exeter: Exeter Studies in. Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History Colin S. Gray Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, (Cambridge: The Military Revolution and the State, M, Exeter Studies in History 1.

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