

Merchants of War: Mercenaries, Economy, and Society in the Late Sixteenth-Century Baltic

by

Joseph Thomas Chatto Sproule

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Department of History
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Abstract

The polities of the sixteenth-century Baltic competed and cooperated with one another and with local power groups in fluctuating patterns of rivalry and expedient partnership.

Mercenarism thrived in this context, as early modern governments were seldom equipped with the fiscal and logistical tools or the domestic military resources needed to wholly meet the escalating challenges of warfare, while mercenaries themselves were drawn to a chaotic environment that afforded opportunities for monetary gain and promotion into the still-coalescing political elites of the region's emerging powers.

This study sits, like the mercenary himself, at the intersection of the military, the economic, the social, and the political. Broadly, it is an analysis of mercenaries in Livonian and Swedish service during the so-called Livonian War of 1558 to 1583. Mercenaries are examined as agents of the polities for whom they fought and as actors with goals of their own, ambiguously positioned figures whose outsider status and relative independence presented both opportunities and challenges as they navigated the shifting networks of conflict and allegiance that characterized their fractious world. The aims of this study are threefold. The military efficacy of Western and Central European professional soldiers is assessed in an Eastern

European context, problematizing the notion of Western military superiority in a time of alleged military revolution. The effects of prolonged warfare on Estonian and Livonian society are examined with an eye on interactions between local communities and the foreign soldiery, as well as on the ramifications of increasing participation in military enterprise by segments of the Livonian population. Mercenarism is also analyzed as a key site of the early modern struggle for greater governmental control over the economy and legitimate violence, whether through the cooption of privileges traditionally enjoyed by non-state and local power groups or through partnership between these factions and centralizing governments.

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Introduction

Mercenarism was central to European warfare for substantial portions of the past three thousand years, and the 1500s witnessed the greatest explosion of commercial military activity since Hellenistic antiquity. The sixteenth was a century of transformative violence, characterized by brutal conflicts waged between and within heterogeneous states locked in cycles of dynastic, territorial, sectarian, and economic competition. Longstanding medieval systems of recruitment and military organization based on decentralized feudal governance through socially constituted hierarchies of vassalage proved increasingly incapable of meeting the administrative, technological, demographic, economic, and professional demands of early modern warfare. Most sixteenth-century polities found that their fiscal-military technologies of governance were insufficient for the raising, equipping, training, supply, and pay of standing national armies of the size and professionalism needed to win prolonged conflicts. At the same time, there were important socio-economic changes afoot, as, in virtually every sphere of European life, there was a growing trend toward monetization and professionalization. Military affairs were no exception. The intersection of military transformation, political centralization, attenuation of old feudal hierarchies, growing social mobility, and market forces would give rise to a golden age of private military enterprise, in which Europe's warring potentates depended upon mercenaries to provide a convenient reservoir of professional troops.

The eastern Baltic in the latter half of the sixteenth century met many of the conditions required for a rich mercenary market (see Maps on pages 314-17). Major territorial states like Muscovy, Poland-Lithuania, Sweden, and Denmark sought to expand into the political and economic vacuum left by the decline of two of the region's foremost medieval institutions, the Teutonic Knights and the Hanseatic League, plunging northeastern Europe into a prolonged period of conflict.¹ German lands were a hub of mercenary activity and provided an abundant supply of fighting men to the Scandinavians, Livonians, and Poles, with important centres of civilian commerce like Lübeck and Danzig also serving as mercenary markets whence soldiers

¹ Comparisons may be made with the Italian Wars, which also saw a region long divided between relatively small, mercantile polities invaded by much large, centralizing kingdoms practising new forms of warfare.

could be hired and then shipped between combat zones via established networks of maritime trade.² This trend intensified during the so-called Livonian War – in truth, a series of overlapping wars waged for control of the eastern Baltic littoral – that proved to be one of the defining struggles of sixteenth-century northern Europe. Beginning with Ivan the Terrible’s invasion of Livonia in January of 1558 and ending with the Russo-Swedish Truce of Plussa in August of 1583 (see timeline on pages 308-11), the war drew in not only all of the preeminent powers of the Baltic but also fighting men from as far afield as Tatar and Scotland. Despite its profound implications for several of the major powers of northern Europe, the Livonian War has attracted surprisingly little attention from historians of early modern warfare, particularly in the scholarship of the English-speaking world.³ Further, there have been no substantial studies focused exclusively on mercenary activity during the struggle, something of an oversight given the important part played by these fighters at various stages in its course.⁴ Growing scholarly interest in mercenarism and privatized violence more broadly makes this an opportune moment to examine these topics in the understudied context of early modern northeastern Europe. Mercenaries have often been seen as outsiders, seemingly marginal figures whose motivations are generally unaligned with those of their employers and of society at large, but, rather than rendering them peripheral to our understanding of warfare in the early modern Baltic, these very qualities make them ideal subjects for a study of the period. The Livonian War was a chaotic affair characterized by shifting alliances between deeply self-

² For the sake of consistency and in light of the sources used in the study, German toponyms are used for all locales in Estonia and Livonia and for places with substantial German-speaking populations. In all other cases, the local name is used, unless there is a standard English form. Russian and Tatar names are transliterated. None of these choices reflects any political inclination or national predilection on the part of the author. See gazetteer on pages 250-53.

³ Aleksander Filyushkin has suggested that the war has been “obviously undervalued by historians” and was of European rather than merely regional importance. Alexander Filyushkin, “Livonian War in the Context of European Wars of the 16th Century,” *Russian History* 43 (2016), 21.

⁴ Juhan Kreem’s paper on mercenaries in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Reval is a valuable contribution to the subject but does not encompass the latter half of the sixteenth century. Juhan Kreem, “The Business of War: Mercenary Market and Organisation in Reval in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries,” *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, vol. XLIX, no.2 (2001), 26-42. In his *Bayonets for Hire: Mercenaries at War, 1550-1789*, William Urban draws upon examples from the Livonian War to support his broader arguments. William Urban. *Bayonets for Hire: Mercenaries at War, 1550-1789* (London: Greenhill Books, 2007). In his work on the military organization of Old Livonia, Alexander Senning touched upon aspects of mercenarism, but this was not the focus of his study. Alexander Senning, *Beiträge zur Heeresverfassung und Kriegsführung Alt-Livlands zur Zeit seines Untergangs* (doctoral dissertation) (Jena: Inaugural-Dissertation, 1932). Theodor Schiemann’s brief chapter on Landsknechte stationed in Reval in the 1560s and 1570s provides some interesting anecdotes and observations drawn from that city’s archival sources. Theodor Schiemann, “Revaler Landsknechte zur Zeit der ersten Russennoth,” in *Baltische Monatschrift* XXXII, ed. Friedrich Bienemann (Reval: Kluge, 1885), 227-49.

interested and often inscrutable rulers engaged in a bloody contest for Baltic hegemony. At a time when violence and opportunism were the order of the day, violent and opportunistic men proliferated. The mercenaries, adventurers, and freebooters who saw the upheavals unfolding in the ruins of Livonia as a chance to win advancement and enrichment epitomized the spirit of the age.

The subject of this study is mercenaries in Livonian and Swedish employ in the eastern Baltic between 1558 and 1583. Some aspects of Russian and Polish-Lithuanian military organization are also discussed, but, for a variety of reasons – the scope of the study, linguistic barriers, and the very different political organizations and military systems of those countries – they are not central to the current project. It is hoped that readers will recognize that the focus on Swedish and (especially) Livonian affairs and the comparative neglect of the war's other principal antagonists was a conscious decision reflecting the need to delineate a doctoral project of achievable scale, rather than an oversight stemming from ignorance of the essential parts played by Russia, Poland, Lithuania, and Denmark in the struggle for the eastern Baltic. Geographically, evidence from across the territory that comprised the old Livonian Confederation is considered, although there is something of a focus on Estonia and the city of Reval. Obscure details, minor incidents, and regional specificities are frequently (and enthusiastically) explored to illustrate larger points. However, this is not a microhistory. Rather, the aim is to situate the eastern Baltic in a broader European context and to engage with wider scholarly discussions of early modern mercenarism. Accordingly, the impact and activities of mercenaries are examined at the tactical, strategic, economic, and geopolitical levels, with discussions ranging in scope from minor skirmishes to troop movements across entire regions to the fiscal and military policies of major nations. The methodological approach therefore sits – like the mercenary himself – at the intersection of the military, the economic, the political, and the social. So, while the political and economic costs, benefits, and drawbacks of employing mercenaries are considered from the perspective of the monarchs and governments fighting for control of the eastern Baltic, equal attention is afforded to the social consequences of mercenary activity for the inhabitants of Livonia and for the mercenaries themselves, as well as to more strictly military questions relating to the underexamined

question of the operational performance of these troops in an Eastern European setting. Within this framework, a number of themes in sixteenth-century Baltic mercenarism are explored.

Mercenary identity is defined and problematized in a variety of contexts. Theoretical discussion of what constitutes mercenarism progresses to specific historical examples, such as the case of the *Hofleute* (Baltic German cavalry), with consideration given both to modern, academic understandings and historical, popular conceptions of the profession. Standard criteria such as pay, professionalism, foreignness, and motivation are evaluated. Also considered are the important questions of the degree to which mercenaries could exercise market choice and their ambiguous status as social and political outsiders. The mercenary enjoyed considerable latitude in exercising his ability to strategically assess the potential risks and material opportunities available to him, to choose between competing employers in an international military market, to negotiate the terms of his service, and to refuse service that he found undesirable. These factors set him apart, both from members of socially constituted warrior castes, like the medieval knighthood, and from soldiers compelled to fight through politically mandated forms of service, such as conscription. (Continued operational independence once his service was engaged varied but was usually subject to practical limitations in order to preserve the cohesion of the larger army.)

Socio-political status is more difficult to assess than market choice. The mercenary typically began as politically detached from the conflict in which he was employed (i.e. he fought for personal profit rather than because he had a stake in the outcome of the struggle), and, in some ways at least, he was also socially distinct from the civilian society that hosted him for the duration of his service, whether because he was foreign, because his profession separated him from civilian mores through his participation in a distinctive military (sub)culture with values and customs of its own, or simply because his own fate was not inherently tied to that of the local community. However, the common conception of the archetypal mercenary as supremely selfish and greedy, socially detached, and politically unaligned – a kind of idealized battling *Homo economicus* – is not supported by the historical evidence. The case of sixteenth-century Livonia suggests a messier, more complex picture: mercenaries might arrive in a conflict zone as outsiders who were largely free from complicating political and social ties, but they

frequently inserted themselves into local networks in order to gain leverage and advance their own goals (almost invariably related to pay). That money and plunder, rather than political allegiance or social solidarity, were the prime motives of early modern mercenaries is not in dispute. However, it is suggested that the soldier's mercenary status was more dependent on whether he was able to choose to engage in or to disengage from the social milieu and political concerns of his employer (and his employer's subjects) than on the degree to which he did so in any given situation. The mercenary's political independence, social detachment, and pecuniary motivation did not prevent him from attempting to strategically negotiate the political terrain and social networks around him, nor did it always protect him from being unwillingly drawn into local affairs when he might have preferred to remain at arm's length. Even when mercenaries felt it necessary to emphasize their outsider status, this could itself be a political choice or a statement of social identity. Further, while mercenaries generally signed up for plunder and pay, they were certainly not averse to perks of a less crudely materialistic nature, sometimes surrendering their itinerant independence in return for the prestige afforded by integration into the emerging military-administrative elites of the late sixteenth-century's centralizing states.⁵ Conversely, Livonians with vested social and political interests in the outcome of the war being fought over their homeland sometimes emulated the practices of the mercenaries in order to remain militarily relevant, to forge partnerships with foreign powers, or simply to survive.

A central aim of this study is to examine mercenaries both as agents of the higher powers they served and as actors in their own right. Rather than seeing mercenaries as nothing more than paid hirelings – an essentially statist understanding that delegitimizes the interests of the troops themselves and encourages evaluation centred on how effectively they advanced the goals of their employers – mercenarism is treated as a contractual labour-for-capital exchange between groups or individuals in what might loosely be thought of as the public and private spheres, all of whom had subjectively valid needs and aspirations of their own. Where possible, equal weight is thus given to the Livonian and Swedish authorities' aims and to those of the mercenaries in their service, an approach often requiring that sources reflecting the interests of

⁵ The French mercenary officer Pontus de la Gardie (c.1520-1585), for example, was rewarded with induction into the Swedish aristocracy and went on to sire an influential noble dynasty.

the former be read against the grain to reconstruct the experiences of the latter. All-too-frequent cases of mutiny and desertion, for example, are here reassessed in light of the fact that they were nearly always reactions to the authorities' failure to deliver the pay owed to their troops. When things went awry, it is often less useful to look at mercenaries as unreliable agents whose inappropriate self-interest subverted the legitimate aims of government – a view that frames them as nothing more than loyal or disloyal, effective or ineffective, disciplined or mutinous lackeys of a political authority – than it is to see them as independent actors whose choices, informed by their own ambitions, could have original outcomes beyond merely furthering or confounding the schemes of their employers.

The relationship between mercenary and employer is also explored in terms of the important role of private military enterprise in the creation of early modern fiscal-military states. The author broadly endorses the central claim of the military revolution thesis, that war was a driving force (perhaps even the single most important driving force) in European state formation, although allowance is certainly made for the importance of other factors in this process.⁶ It is argued here that, while the centrality of mercenaries in early modern warfare has long been acknowledged, the sometimes surprising ways in which they influenced local power dynamics and political change remains underexamined. These were exceptionally violent and heavily armed men whose pursuit of profit could undermine government and threaten public order. At the same time, partnering with private military actors allowed early modern states to project power in ways that would otherwise have been impossible given the fiscal, military, and administrative limitations of the day. Traditionally, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been seen as a key period in the emergence of stronger nation states characterized by more centralized governments administered by expanding bureaucracies and eventually

⁶ Charles Tilly's oft-quoted assertion that "war made the state, and the state made war" is representative of more extreme readings of the military revolution thesis. The author's own views are more in line with those of Steven Gunn, David Grummitt, Hans Cools, Wolfgang Reinhard, and others who have argued for multicausal models in which warfare was one of the more important of several factors in state formation. Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 42.; Steven Gunn, David Grummitt, and Hans Cools, "War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Widening the Debate," *War in History* 15 (4) (2008): 371-88.; Wolfgang Reinhard, "Introduction: Power Elites, State Servants, Ruling Classes, and the Growth of State Power," in *Power Elites and State Building*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1-18.; Wolfgang Reinhard, *Geschichte der Staatsgewalt: eine vergleichende Verfassungsgeschichte Europas von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1999).

possessed of standing national armies; a process characterized by the state's suppression of older, medieval forms of power wielded by regional aristocracies, largely autonomous urban centres, and supranational corporate entities like the Hanseatic League, the militant religious orders, and, of course, the Church. There is certainly some truth to this model: clearly, eighteenth-century governments were, for the most part, more centralized and bureaucratic and exercised greater control over both violence and economy (the classic pairing that underlies fiscal-military governance) than were their sixteenth-century antecedents.

However, while broadly acknowledging the gradual trend toward governmental centralization, recent scholarship, with its heightened focus on the minutiae of localized interactions between early modern rulers and traditional power groups, has begun to question the older historiographical emphasis on coercion as the primary means by which medieval powerholders were brought to heel by the burgeoning Leviathans of the early modern world, instead painting a picture of "compromise, consensus and co-operation between rulers and elites."⁷ This reassessment jells with the Baltic experience, where, in the wake of the disintegration of the old Livonian Confederation, neighbouring powers were able to gain piecemeal control over the region through a combination of coercive force and expedient dealmaking with local power groups such as the Livonian bishops, towns, and nobility. The importance of mercenaries in this process, particularly in the pivotal early years of the Livonian War, has not previously been studied. Being both non-state and non-local actors whose clout derived from the brute fact of their strength of arms, mercenaries inserted themselves or were drawn into the oscillating power networks being played out between expanding state authorities and regional powerholders. The interventions of these freelance soldiers had significant consequences for local societies and even for the broader geopolitics of the eastern Baltic. Further, evaluating the extent of mercenary independence – often most obvious when manifested as disobedience – can help to delineate the limited parameters of state and local power. For all of their ostensible sovereignty, early modern monarchs often lacked the means to win wars and regulate violence without recourse to private military enterprisers, and the frequently futile struggles of both

⁷ Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as fiscal-military states, 1500-1660* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1.

national governments and regional authorities to curtail the unruliness of the hired soldiery often highlighted the practical limitations of their authority.

The social implications of mercenary activity in the Baltic are inextricably tied to the military and political situation in the region, and the growth in mercenarism should be seen as an integral part of the general militarization that took place in the decades after 1558. From 1503 to 1558, the Livonian Confederation enjoyed more than half a century of peace, and Ivan the Terrible's invasion found its inhabitants quite unprepared for large scale conflict. Over the following quarter century, Livonia would be transformed from a society in some ways unaccustomed to war into one permeated by violence and organized for warfare at every level. In part, this was the inevitable outcome of the region's invasion by powerful and belligerent enemies whose armies inflicted enormous hardship upon the local population and did catastrophic damage to rural (and some urban) communities. However, the Livonians were not simply passive victims of foreign aggression but actively militarized in order to meet the challenges of war. Mercenarism was central to this process. Experienced and professional fighters such as *Landsknechte* and *Reiter* imported from war-torn central Europe not only fought alongside forces recruited in Livonia itself but influenced how the latter waged war; for example, *Landsknecht* officers were assigned to train local troops, the Livonians quickly took up the mercenaries' practices of raiding and pillaging, and the Baltic German nobility formed their own marauding bands of *Reiter*-style cavalry who served the foreign potentates fighting over their homeland in return for plunder, pay, and promises of protection. Mercenaries also interacted with local civilians amongst whom they were billeted and from whom they purchased, requisitioned, or stole supplies. These exchanges and confrontations could have transformative (as well as straightforwardly destructive) consequences for all concerned. As some foreign mercenaries integrated into Livonian society and many Livonians themselves turned to military enterprise, the region experienced hitherto unprecedented social mobility. The cycle of rural devastation obliterated farms and manors, while plunder became a significant factor in the redistribution of wealth, and the properties of the dead and the displaced were handed out to successful officers as reward for their service. In the towns, peasants fought alongside the sons of burghers and noblemen, and common soldiers married the daughters of respected families. All of this was made possible by the intersection, so

characteristic of early modern life, of violence and money, a coupling epitomized by no figure as wholly as by the mercenary. As Cicero so rightly observed, *nervos belli, pecuniam infinitam*.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of eight chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. In broad terms, Chapters One and Two evaluate the current state of historiography on mercenarism in early modern Europe, Chapters Three and Four address various aspects of the Livonian War, Chapter Five is an analysis of the military situation in the mid-sixteenth-century Baltic, and Chapters Six through Eight are a detailed assessment of mercenary involvement in Livonia in the quarter century lasting from 1558 to 1583.

Chapter One examines the role of mercenaries in the early modern military, political, and fiscal development of European states. Drawing upon the central claim of the highly contested military revolution paradigm that escalating military requirements were a driving force behind the development of increasingly centralized fiscal-military states, it argues that something of a reassessment of the contribution of mercenaries to this process may be in order. Rather than simply forming a disruptive impediment to be overcome on the path to the appearance of modern nation states exercising a Weberian monopoly over the legitimate use of force, early modern mercenaries frequently partnered with aspiring absolutists intent on emancipating themselves from longstanding systems of feudal military organization and decentralized power sharing. The growing sixteenth-century monetization of warfare and proliferation of private military professionals was, in fact, a necessary step toward the emergence of more (although never entirely) absolute forms of government endowed with national armies of professional soldiers. Public and private violence did not, therefore, exist in opposition to one another, but in constantly shifting and often troubled partnership. Prior to the Livonian War, sixteenth-century Livonia possessed many features conducive to the development of a robust mercenary presence – and the Confederation did, indeed, come to rely more and more on mercenaries for its defenses – but it did not undergo the same process of political centralization and military consolidation as other states in the region. It is suggested that the reasons for this discrepancy

lie in the peculiar characteristics of the Livonian Confederation, whose tenaciously defended medieval institutions, ties to supranational organizations like the Hansa and the Teutonic Order, and carefully maintained internal balance of power all ensured that no one faction was capable of uniting the region into a more cohesive nation state. Fiscal-military reforms were undertaken, particularly in the years between Ivan the Terrible's 1558 invasion and the dissolution of the Confederation in 1561, but these proved to be too little and too late to prevent the partitioning of Old Livonia by larger and more dynamic foreign powers. Partition, however, had widely varying effects on the region's traditional powerholders, many of whose absorption into the Swedish and Polish-Lithuanian states was accomplished by means of compromises that left much of their local authority intact (e.g. the Baltic German nobility) or transmuted it into new guises (e.g. Gotthard Kettler's transition from Livonian *Landmeister* to Duke of Courland). The Baltic German nobility were especially effective in their adoption of military enterprise as a means of partnering with foreign potentates.

In Chapter Two, historiographical understandings of mercenarism are explored, beginning with the often reproduced criteria set forth by Yvon Garlan – specialization, statelessness, and pay.⁸ While these qualities prove to be a useful starting point, they are ultimately found to be insufficient for a rigorous (or even a pragmatic) definition of the profession. Discussion then moves to questions of profit motive and market activity; it is suggested that simply receiving pay for fighting, which was expected for nearly all forms of military service from the late Middle Ages onward, is less useful in distinguishing the mercenary from other classes of warrior than are his decision to fight primarily for pay and his ability to negotiate the terms of his service. Much of the remainder of the chapter is devoted to questions of political attachments and social milieu. Consideration of the mercenary's relation to civilian society leads to a brief discussion of military cultures and popular conceptions of soldiering in the early modern Germanic world. Finally, it is suggested that, while there is a substantial literature on the mercenary's relationship with his employer, the question of his relationship to the enemy (or, rather, to his employer's enemy) has until now been overlooked. The chapter ends by proposing that, in assessing the primacy of the profit motive and the mercenary's political disinterest in the conflict in which he fights, it is important to consider not only

⁸ Yvon Garlan, *La Guerre dans l'Antiquité* (Paris: Editions Fernand Nathan, 1972), 67.

whether he has ulterior motives for fighting *for* his employer but also whether he has non-monetary reasons for fighting *against* his employer's adversary.

Chapter Three situates the Livonian War in its historical and historiographical contexts. It argues that the significance of the war has been widely overlooked in broader discussions of early modern European military history, with many of the exceptions being nationally focused works that touch upon the conflict indirectly as a stage in the development of emerging seventeenth-century powers like Russia, Poland, and Sweden. Older Baltic scholarship quite often emphasized the first few years of the war, corresponding to the collapse of the Livonian Confederation and the end of the region's independence in 1561. More recently, a proliferation of publications on the origins of Old Livonia during the Northern Crusades of the thirteenth century has not been echoed by corresponding academic interest in its demise in the sixteenth – the current scholarship being seemingly more interested in themes of medieval crusade, culture clash, and conversion than in the less overtly ideological but more politically complex dynastic and mercantilist struggles of the early modern era. The second half of the chapter focuses on the causes of the war, one of the most debated aspects of the conflict. Broad security and economic concerns of the Baltic powers are taken into account, as are more immediate causes like the failure of Dorpat to deliver tribute to the Tsar and the signing of the Treaty of Pozwol. Ivan the Terrible's decision to invade is considered from a number of angles, as are Lithuanian, Polish, Swedish, and Danish involvement. Chapter Four is a straightforward narrative account of the events of the war, interspersed with commentary on significant trends and events, and with some discussion of the role of mercenaries at key junctures. Chapter Five is a primarily descriptive look at the military organization of five Baltic powers – Muscovy, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, and Livonia – just before the outbreak of the Livonian War. The economic, political, and geographical situations of these nations are discussed in relation to their defensive and offensive potentials, with military capabilities assessed in terms of demographics and manpower, trade and technology transfer, macro-strategic strengths and weaknesses, administration, infrastructure, and morale.

Chapter Six is the first of three consisting of detailed analysis of the contributions and experiences of mercenaries in the Livonian War and their effects on Livonian society. The

chapter focuses on financial and labour aspects of mercenarism, such as recruitment, terms of service, and pay. It begins with a discussion of how and where mercenaries were enlisted, how they reached the combat zones of the eastern Baltic from recruitment centres in northern Germany and elsewhere, the terms under which they were employed, and the circumstances under which they were discharged. Where sources do not exist in the Livonian context, comparisons are made with the situation of similar troops elsewhere in Europe, especially in the German lands from whence a large majority of the troops were recruited for service in Livonia. Attention is given to the perspectives of both employers and the men themselves. The remainder of the chapter examines the costs of mercenary warfare, with a particular emphasis on economic measures undertaken by the Livonian and Swedish authorities in their constant struggles to meet the exorbitant expenses associated with early modern mercenary warfare. The effective fiscal-military system that would allow Stockholm to spend considerable portions of the seventeenth century waging successful wars against more populous enemies was still in its infancy, and the Livonian War is an important context in which to explore the administrative steps and missteps taken by the Vasa kings prior to their apogee during the *Stormaktstid*. The employer's inability or failure to pay the soldiery was by far the most common cause of disputes between mercenary and master, typically leading to mutiny, desertion, or defection by the mercenaries. Often presented both by contemporary observers and by later historians as acts of betrayal on the part of the soldiery, a more balanced approach is taken here. As what amounts to business partners in a labour-for-capital exchange, it is questionable whether mercenaries deserve to be castigated for acts of military insubordination when that insubordination was so often a response to their employers' failure to uphold their end of the bargain.

Chapter Seven begins with a discussion of logistics and strategic coordination. Especially in the early stages of the war, the officers of the Livonian Order, many of whom were militarily inexperienced, struggled to make optimal use of the troops at their disposal, a problem exacerbated by the extreme numerical disadvantage at which they found themselves. Coordination was a multifaceted problem that, at the strategic and tactical levels, involved marshalling conscripts and mercenaries, infantry and cavalry and artillery, and a variety of allied and auxiliary forces, all the while trying to ensure that the various factions of the

Livonian Confederation cooperated with one another on and off the battlefield. These issues were invariably complicated by ongoing negotiations between the authorities, their troops, and foreign powers. It is proposed that, despite being more overtly motivated by raw profit, mercenaries were not necessarily less disciplined or reliable than other troops, and, on a few occasions like the falls of Narva and Dorpat, they arguably displayed greater resolve than did the local authorities. When the troops did fail in their duties it was often in the face of overwhelming odds or when their employers had neglected to pay, supply, or reinforce them. Discussion then moves to the important subject of plunder, which was the early modern army's principal means of supply while in the field and was also the mercenary's greatest opportunity for enrichment. The Livonian War was primarily waged by means of sieges and pillaging, with only a handful of large pitched battles taking place in its entire quarter century duration, and raiding was the most common and destructive activity of the conflict. The military, social, and economic repercussions of this prolonged cycle of quotidian violence, inflicted both by the enemy and by the Livonians' own mercenaries, are examined from the perspective of victims, perpetrators, and the authorities who sometimes attempted to limit plundering and sometimes endorsed it or even participated in it themselves. The chapter ends with an overall assessment of the general military efficacy of central and western European mercenaries in the Livonian War in light of the factors discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. First, the claims advanced by scholars such as Geoffrey Parker, who alleged that the early modern military revolution was characterized by a marked superiority of Western warfare over its Eastern counterparts, are problematized in the context of the Livonian War.⁹ Second, financial aspects of mercenary warfare are addressed in light of broader political and economic developments in the late sixteenth-century Baltic.

The eighth and final chapter focuses on mercenaries as actors, savvy negotiators who, in exercising their agency in pursuit of their own interests, altered the military, political, and social landscape of the Livonian War. Even when motivated purely by pecuniary considerations, military enterprisers frequently proved adept at insinuating themselves into local power structures and social networks in order to gain leverage with which to realize their

⁹ Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

aims. The activities of the *Landsknechte* stationed in the upper (cathedral) city and castle of Reval in the early stages of the war are explored in detail. Mercenary garrisons with no prior affiliations in the region were able to use their strategically advantageous position in the highly defensible city to influence Livonian politics at a municipal and even international level by partnering with members of the local nobility and with foreign elites intent on expanding into Estonia. The results of their interference – motivated, as always, by disputes with their (former) employers over pay – had ramifications for the fate of the city of Reval, which was vacillating between the Livonian Order, Sweden, Denmark, and Poland. In the second portion of the chapter, discussion turns to the so-called *Hofleute* as an example of local Livonians who adopted many of the practices associated with mercenarism as a means of ensuring their survival and continued relevance in the wake of their homeland's destruction. It is suggested that each of these cases – the foreign mercenary who involved himself in local affairs and the local who turned to mercenarism in his own land – muddy the notion of the mercenary as socially and politically detached outsider.

Chapter 1

Mercenaries, Military Revolution, and the State in Early Modern Europe

Although they dominated the battlefields of Europe for long periods of the continent's history – and in times and places as far removed as the Hellenistic Mediterranean and early modern Germany – the significance of mercenaries in the military and political development of Europe has traditionally been downplayed, or at least underestimated, by most historians. The past decade, however, has brought growing recognition that some degree of public-private security partnership between government and what might broadly be termed “military enterprisers” has been the norm for most of the past two and a half millennia.¹⁰ The establishment of national armies and navies and the attempted maintenance of a state-controlled monopoly on legitimate force, long seen as hallmarks of Western statehood, have, at least within Europe, been peculiarities of a relatively short period from the late eighteenth century until the 1960s.¹¹ Nevertheless, Max Weber's famous characterization of the modern state as possessing a “*Monopol legitimen physischen Zwanges*” has continued to frame virtually all discussions of the relationship between the military and the political.¹²

Discussion of the impact of military considerations on the development of the increasingly centralized realms that would become the nations of modern Europe has been central to the historiography of early modern European warfare since the 1950s, when Michael Roberts first proposed the notion of a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century “military revolution”.¹³ According to adherents of this much-debated paradigm, early modern Europe became locked in an arms race in which rival potentates were forced to deploy larger and more sophisticated armies (and

¹⁰ The term is borrowed from Fritz Redlich's classic study *The German Military Enterpriser and His Work Force: A Study in European Economic and Social History* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1964-1965).

¹¹ David Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2.

¹² Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), 29.

¹³ The military revolution debate dominated late twentieth-century military historiography of early modern Europe, especially after its revival by Geoffrey Parker in the 1970s. Roberts, focusing on Sweden, argued for a military revolution in the period from 1560 to 1660, while Parker, concentrating on Spain, Italy, and Austria, placed it somewhat earlier. Clifford J. Rogers has conveniently gathered the most important of the relevant monographs, including Roberts's original paper of 1955 and Parker's 1979 rejoinder in Clifford J. Rogers, ed., *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1995).

navies) in order to compete with one another, bringing about the development of new political and economic systems needed to manage and fund these forces. A number of reasons have been adduced to explain the phenomenon of early modern military escalation: the decline of shock cavalry in favour of massed infantry armed with firearms; the invention of fortifications of the *trace italienne* style and subsequent changes in siege warfare; and the Habsburgs' need to match the awesome manpower of the Ottomans, which in turn required that the French keep pace with the Habsburgs, and so on. Regardless of the details, the central thesis, that the genesis of the modern state is to be found in warfare, should be seen as part of an older tradition in Western thought, advocated most famously by Thomas Hobbes, who, writing in the wake of the European wars of religion and the English Civil War, argued that the origins of political institutions can be traced to "brute facts" about a violent state of nature and that "fury must explain harmonies."¹⁴

One result of this alleged early modern military revolution is widely agreed to have been a shift, accelerating in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, away from military reliance on feudal warrior castes and, eventually, on hired mercenaries toward standing armies of conscripts led by increasingly professional officers under the control of highly centralized governments supported by ever more socially intrusive state bureaucracies.¹⁵ In short, medieval and renaissance political and economic institutions proved incapable of supporting armies of the size and sophistication required by late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century warfare.¹⁶ Those polities that stubbornly held to the old ways or failed to adapt, like the Livonian Confederation, declined or disappeared, while those that embraced fiscal, military, and political reform became the fiscal-military states of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and, ultimately,

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003), 267-9.

¹⁵ Thomas F. Arnold, "War in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Revolution and Renaissance," in *European Warfare 1453-1815, Problems in Focus*, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 23-25.

¹⁶ Matthew Smith Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System 1494-1618* (London: Longman, 1998), 37. The idea of a military revolution beginning in the sixteenth century and giving rise to more centralized governments that did away with or reduced the privileges of old medieval power groups has been challenged by scholars who argue for greater social and institutional continuity from the Middle Ages and/or for military *evolution* rather than a *revolution*. See discussion in Ian Green, "The Development of Monarchies in Western Europe, c.1500-1800," in *The Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context, c.1500-1795*, ed. Richard Butterwick (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 39-57.

the colonial metropolises and great powers of the nineteenth and twentieth.¹⁷ New technologies of governance co-evolved with new methods of waging war and spread in tandem across the European continent and beyond.¹⁸ The financial institutions and taxation practices of the modern state developed, above all, out of the need to pay for increasingly complex, expensive, and total forms of warfare.¹⁹ War, then, has often been seen as the driving force behind the evolution of modern European statehood, as a medieval “society completely permeated by warlike relations was gradually replaced by a State endowed with military institutions.”²⁰ The end result, the modern nation state as conceived in Weberian terms, is characterized by a degree of monopoly over both the legitimate practice of violence and the financial institutions that support the state’s violent agents (the military and the police), leading to societies in which

free use of military weapons is denied the individual and reserved to a central authority

¹⁷ Fiscal and military systems, some of them highly complex, have existed since Antiquity, but the fiscal-military state is a more recent development. Richard Bonney argued that, prior to the nineteenth century, only Britain had fully achieved all of the characteristics generally attributed to the modern fiscal state. Others have found earlier incarnations of the fiscal-military state as far back as the sixteenth century. Jan Glete, for example, identified sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, the Netherlands, and Sweden as early examples of fiscal-military states. Wenkai He’s recent work has expanded the understanding of the early modern fiscal state to include polities beyond Europe, although he also acknowledged that even England, the site of so many significant developments in early capitalism and fiscal governance, remained predominantly a “domain state” in which the main sources of revenue derived from royal estates and the Crown’s feudal rights well into the seventeenth century. For the purposes of this study, a fiscal-military state is broadly considered to be one that is financially capable of waging war on a large scale and for a sustained period of time through fiscal innovations in taxation and borrowing. Both the modern fiscal state and its early modern predecessors derive much of their income from the taxation of economic activity. However, whereas the early modern “tax state” (Joseph Schumpeter’s “*Steuerstaat*”) deployed most of this revenue to cover its immediate expenses and borrowed capital expediently to pay for specific necessities (almost always of a military nature), modern fiscal states also devote a significant portion of their tax income to the leveraging of more capital through long-term borrowing. In the late sixteenth-century Baltic, Sweden had taken the first faltering steps toward developing a synergistic fiscal-military system by which taxation could sustain a prolonged war effort; this process greatly accelerated in the seventeenth century and did not fully coalesce anywhere in Europe until the eighteenth. Sixteenth-century Baltic states were highly heterogeneous, but all combined features of the tax state with the domain state and, in some cases (notably Muscovy), the tribute state. Richard Bonney, “Introduction,” in *The Rise of the Fiscal State in Europe, c.1200-1815*, ed. Richard Bonney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.; Glete, *War and the State.*; Wenkai He, *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State: England, Japan, and China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 9.

¹⁸ John Lynn advocated an evolutionary approach to military technology transfer, arguing that “more than any other institution, militaries tend to copy one another across state borders” due to the fact that war is a matter of dominance or survival for states and of life or death for individuals. John A. Lynn, “The Evolution of Army Style in the Modern West, 800-2000,” *The International History Review* 18, No.3 (Aug., 1996), 509.

¹⁹ Kwasi Kwarteng, *War and Gold: A Five-Hundred-Year History of Empires, Adventures and Debt* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 24.; Bonney, “Introduction,” 9.; Michael Duffy, “Introduction: The Military Revolution and the State 1500-1800,” in *The Military Revolution and the State 1500-1800*, ed. Michael Duffy (Exeter: The University of Exeter Press, 1980), 4-5.

²⁰ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 267.

*of whatever kind, and likewise the taxation of the property or income of individuals is concentrated in the hands of a central social authority. The financial means thus flowing into this central authority maintain its monopoly of military force, while this in turn maintains the monopoly of taxation. Neither has in any sense precedence over the other; they are two sides of the same monopoly.*²¹

The fact that the role of mercenaries has sometimes been overlooked or underemphasized in this statist, institutional narrative of military-political development is unsurprising. Much of the scholarship has been somewhat teleological in presupposing the inevitability of the rise of centralized states defended by national armies comprised of conscripts and/or patriotic volunteers. The mercenary, so the story goes, was sidelined by history, a military dead-end or even an obstacle to be overcome on the path to military modernity, a troublemaker whose independence was an affront to government's aspiration to monopolize the use of violence. Such negative perceptions of mercenaries are not new. Popular and official antipathy to the profession was already rife in the Middle Ages, although it mostly took the form of moral, rather than political disapproval.²² It is primarily in late medieval and early renaissance Italy that one begins to see the emergence of *politically* articulated anti-mercenary sentiment in the form of objections to those who fought for personal profit on the grounds that they destabilized state-building projects and caused political unrest, that their private self-interest set them apart from the ideals of citizenry and public engagement.²³ Petrarch, Salutati, Machiavelli, Erasmus, and others advocated abandoning – or at least curtailing – the use of mercenaries in favour of armies of citizen soldiers, often modeled on idealized notions of the Roman Republic, and warned that

²¹ Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility. The Civilizing Process*, vol. 2, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 104.

²² Mercenary violence, as well as other types of warfare and banditry waged on the margins of the feudal system and unsanctioned by the Church, was frequently condemned by medieval authorities. One solution was to export it by attempting to entice Europe's surplus warriors to join the crusades. At other times, the Church called for lords to take direct military action against rogue freelancers. In the 1360s, Pope Urban V issued three papal bulls against mercenaries, referring to the companies threatening Avignon as the "sons of iniquity", excommunicating those who fought for profit, and even calling a crusade against unruly mercenaries who were causing mayhem in southern France. When it became clear that most of those collecting bounties and earning remission of sins in Urban's campaign were themselves independent mercenary contractors, the call to arms was revised to only include those fighting under an appropriate authority. Despite such efforts, the importance of military entrepreneurs continued to increase in most regions of Europe throughout the late Middle Ages. Neil Jamieson, "'Sons of Iniquity': The Problem of Unlawfulness and Criminality amongst Professional Soldiers in the Middle Ages," in *Outlaws in Medieval and Early Modern England: Crime, Government and Society, c.1066-c.1600*, ed. John C. Appleby and Paul Dalton (London: Routledge, 2009): 91.; Kenneth Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 118-20.

²³ Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (London: The Bodley Head, 1974), 208.

mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous; and, if one holds his state based on these arms, he will stand neither firm nor safe; for they are disunited, ambitious, and without discipline, unfaithful, valiant before friends cowardly before enemies; they have neither the fear of God nor fidelity to men, and destruction is deferred only so long as the attack is; for in peace one is robbed by them, and in war by the enemy [...] the prince ought to go in person and perform the duty of captain; the republic has to send its citizens [...] it is more difficult to bring a republic, armed with its own arms, under the sway of one of its citizens than it is to bring one armed with foreign arms.²⁴

Too often, however, the prescriptive has been mistaken for the descriptive. The admonitions against mercenaries penned by the theorists have been used as evidence to support the prevailing evolutionary narrative in which early modern states gradually eschewed their former reliance on private military enterprise, when, in fact, the realities of early modern warfare do not support this.²⁵ While it is true that there were faltering and sporadic attempts to create armies of native citizens or subjects in the fifteen hundreds, notably under the Vasa kings in Sweden, these were neither especially common nor yet wholly successful, and it would be a mischaracterization to classify them as true national armies in the modern sense. Mercenaries dominated western and central European warfare of the sixteenth century and continued to do so well into the seventeenth (the portion of the Swedish army comprised of foreign mercenaries actually increased over the course of the Thirty Years' War). This historical fact presents a challenge to teleological, inevitablist approaches to understanding the military genesis of the modern state. How is it that European states were becoming more centralized and securing an increasingly monopolistic control over the legitimate use of violence at precisely the time that practices like mercenarism and privateering peaked? If mercenaries were an impediment to the development of states endowed with national armies, then why did the emerging absolute monarchies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries employ so many of them? Why does the golden age of the mercenary coincide with the formative development of those political institutions and administrative technologies that would ultimately bring about the decline of private military enterprise?

²⁴ Nicolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by W.K. Marriott (London: J.M. Dent, 1908), 95-96.

²⁵ "No amount of humanist-inspired enthusiasm for an idealized republic in which a propertied class of citizens express their civic virtue through unpaid military service would turn this into a military reality in early modern Europe." Parrott, *The Business of War*, 29.

Such questions can only be approached through a reassessment of the role played by mercenaries in the development of the state. If the basic argument of the military revolution thesis – that military factors drove early modern state formation – is to be accepted, then it must be acknowledged that private military enterprisers contributed to this process. They were, after all, the dominant military force in much of Europe during the centuries in which the military revolution is alleged to have taken place. However, as David Parrott has persuasively argued, traditional narratives of Western military and political development have been overly focused on the apparent end product – the Weberian state – and have therefore consigned the mercenary to the margins of history.²⁶ If modern states are defined, so the argument goes, by their monopolistic control over the legitimate use of violence, then purveyors of private violence must be seen as either a peripheral sideshow in the development of statehood or even as obstacles who contributed only indirectly to Europe’s political development by forcing governments to adapt in order to overcome them. Acknowledging the possibility that the ubiquity of early modern mercenaries actually facilitated and hastened political centralization and fiscal-military development requires the acceptance of one of two alternative (but related) possibilities: either these allegedly marginal actors played a far greater part in state formation than has previously been argued or they were not as marginal to this process as has commonly been supposed. Neither option is particularly palatable to statist accounts of the West’s political development over the past five hundred years. On the one hand, the rehabilitation of the mercenary as a central figures in the evolution of modern political institutions might require a reconsideration of the nature of the state’s supposed monopoly over violence. Alternatively, if private military enterprisers continue to be understood as marginal and illegitimate – or even morally distasteful – then this undermines the triumphant origin story of the state, necessitating that we acknowledge the presence of a somewhat shady character in the political ancestry of nationhood.

How, though, can we explain this seemingly counter-intuitive but historically undeniable correlation between the sixteenth-century expansion of military activity performed by non-state actors such as mercenaries and the concurrent rise of more centralized states? At the heart of the apparent contradiction lies Weber’s “*Monopol legitimen physischen Zwanges.*” Emphasis

²⁶ Parrott, *The Business of War*, 3.

on the force/violence aspect of his formulation has led to a focus on whether physical coercion or violence is actually performed by statist agents (the national military, the police force, etc.). However, this misconstrues Weber's claim by decentering the key question of *legitimacy*. It is not so much that states must possess a monopoly on the direct performance of violence, but that they must be the sole arbiters of who could legitimately wield violence and under what circumstances.²⁷ All states situationally permit private violence – for example, by allowing citizens to defend themselves or by authorizing the employment of hired security professionals to protect private property – and, so long as governments retain the right to set the parameters within which such private actors can employ physical force, this does not diminish their authority. Mercenaries, then, are not inherently in competition with government because mercenaries are violent actors who generally make no claim to determine the *legitimacy* of their violent actions.²⁸ The assumption that public and private violence exist in opposition to one another within a zero sum system is therefore a flawed one, although it has permeated the literature on the subject.²⁹ Rather, the growth of state power can and often did go hand-in-hand with the proliferation of private military activity, as early modern mercenaries “made possible a robustness and organizational ‘reach’ that would have been impossible to government authorities” of the day.³⁰ In other words, early modern governments still struggling to shed the vestiges of feudalism and not yet possessed of sufficiently developed fiscal-military institutions or logistical nous to field national armies of trained professionals saw in the private military enterpriser a potential partner whose services could be employed as leverage, not only against other governments, but also against their internal competitors in the Weberian sense – rival groups that also made claims to determine the *legitimacy* of force, such as the Church and the aristocracy.

²⁷ Weber was also careful to clarify that he was only discussing one particular type of state, that characteristic of the modern West. Medieval and early modern states should not, therefore, be seen as imperfect proto-nations but simply as different forms of political entity, an observation which also applies to non-Western forms of statehood.

²⁸ The fact that mercenaries did sometimes take up arms against their employers or turn to brigandage should not, of course, be ignored, but recognizing that mercenaries were unpredictable agents who sometimes augmented and sometimes opposed the nascent governments of early modern Europe is very different from the traditional understanding that their very existence is an affront to statist authority, even when they act to further the interests of a government that has employed them.

²⁹ See, for example: Richard Bean, “War and the Birth of the Nation State,” *Journal of Economic History* 33 (1973), 203-221.; Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 23-61.; Martin van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 59-125.; etc.

³⁰ Parrott, *The Business of War*, 8.

It is no coincidence that, in an age when those who sought to advance their aims through violence increasingly turned to the services of the mercenary, the influence of governments and urban burghers swelled, while regional aristocracies, the clergy, and the peasantry frequently saw their traditional rights and freedoms eroded.³¹ Medieval rulers had relied upon the localized power bases of the nobility to provide them with skilled fighters, often undermining their own central authority in the process.³² Mercenaries, however, presented an alternative option, largely unconstrained by the social mores of feudal vassalage, to anyone who had the financial means to hire them. Wealthy monarchs could raise entire armies for coin, effectively emancipating themselves from military reliance on the warrior nobility, whose troublesome feudal privileges and regional power bases they could now safely curtail without fear that, in doing so, they would leave their kingdoms defenseless.³³ An important part of the appeal of mercenaries for would-be early modern autocrats was therefore that they were a means of circumventing “feudalism’s constraints on military service.”³⁴ Or, at the very least, they could be used to supplement the forces available through the usual feudal avenues.³⁵

³¹ England presents a special case for several reasons, notably the failure of royal absolutism in the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution and the fact that large numbers of mercenaries were never employed on English soil after the Anarchy of 1135-1154 (although privateering and the use of mercenaries in the country’s overseas colonies were rampant). Steven Isaac has argued that the twelfth-century civil war of Stephen and Matilda witnessed an unusual influx of mercenaries because baronial loyalties became so fluid that contractually employed mercenaries could be more reliable allies than hereditary vassals. Following the resolution of the conflict, mercenary markets in England declined and were never again as developed as in continental Europe (or, indeed, as in Ireland and Scotland). Poland, where the *szlachta* remained a potent military and political force, presents another exception, although the Commonwealth’s status as a major power came to an end in the eighteenth century. Steven Isaac, “The Problem of Mercenaries,” in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History*, eds. Donald J. Kagay and L.J. Andrew Villalon, 101-110 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 101.; David Potter, “The International Mercenary Market in the Sixteenth Century: Anglo-French Competition in Germany, 1543-50,” *The English Historical Review* 111, No.440 (1996): 26.

³² Jan Glete succinctly summarized the medieval situation as follows: “Military power was diffuse and existed as part of various social institutions of a predominantly local character. In times of war, the actual fighting was dominated by these locally controlled groups, which were connected only conditionally to the rulers and whose loyalty to the state depended on their degree of interest in the success of the war. If they did not co-operate with the ruler, his authority might crumble [...] Local power holders in medieval Europe usually believed that they had the right to use violence [...] Coercion with violence and protection against such coercion were central parts of their power in local societies.” Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe*, 10.

³³ Pertti Joenniemi, “Two Models of Mercenarism: Historical and Contemporary,” *Instant Research on Peace and Violence* 7, No. 3, 187-8.

³⁴ Janice E. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 27.

³⁵ Needless to say, this is not a peculiarity of feudal societies or of societies in the process of transitioning away from feudalism. The urban republics of Antiquity and the Renaissance, the colonial empires of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and, indeed, modern democratic states have all, to varying degrees, used mercenaries to circumvent or enhance the “normal” recruitment procedures of their respective political systems.

For a number of reasons, the growing urban middle class also benefitted from this turn of events. The monetization of war coincided with the decline of the land-based knighthood bound to fight for their liege by the ostensibly reciprocal social obligations of vassalage and the rise of armies comprised of paid soldiers of unspecified social extraction. At the same time, many of the hallmarks of early capitalism, including banking and commercial credit, appeared in the greater German world in the period between the mid-fifteenth and the early seventeenth centuries.³⁶ Capital accumulated through trade was used domestically to finance the production of textiles, metals, and manufactured goods, which could be sold on the international market to generate still more wealth.³⁷ German merchant capital was also loaned to the developing governments of states in other parts of Europe, most famously through banks presided over by the immensely wealthy Augsburg patrician families of the Welsers, the Hochstätters, and the Fuggers. Control of the sixteenth-century banking sector remained essentially familial, with loans often mediated through established social avenues, and was inextricably tied to the families' other economic ventures in manufacturing and trade;³⁸ however, from the early sixteenth century onwards, loans to and deposits by those outside the banking families' immediate spheres, including foreign governments, became increasingly significant. Given that war was by far the largest expense for most early modern governments, access to this new source of wealth, albeit in the form of costly loans, was an important factor in the escalation of sixteenth-century warfare.³⁹ Where the circumstances were right, these twin developments in capital accumulation and military commercialization could also allow the merchant class, not warriors themselves and lacking vassals who were, to make use of their ample funds to hire troops to defend their rights and advance their interests by force.⁴⁰ For this reason, mercenaries

³⁶ William J. Wright, "The Nature of Early Capitalism," in *Germany: A New Social and Economic History 1450-1630*, Vol I, ed. Bob Scribner (London: Arnold, 1996), 181.

³⁷ Wright, "The Nature of Early Capitalism," 184.

³⁸ Jakob Strieder, *Studien zur Geschichte kapitalistischer Organisationsformen. Monopole, Kartelle und Aktiengesellschaften im Mittelalter und zu Beginn der Neuzeit*, 2nd ed. (New York: B. Franklin, 1971), 102.

³⁹ German historians have sometimes characterized this as an era of "finance states", which Richard Bonney argued were merely a "less developed form of the 'tax state' characterized by an increased government reliance on borrowing without a sufficiently sophisticated financial structure to support it." Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, ed. Brigitta Oestreich and H.G. Koenigsberger and trans. David McLintock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Bonney, "Introduction," 13.

⁴⁰ It would be a mistake, however, to ascribe too much rigidity to the medieval caste system. In the medieval German world, knights of the ministerial class quite frequently settled in towns and engaged in

had obvious appeal to the largely autonomous mercantile cities of both the Baltic and the Mediterranean, as well as to the small polities and free imperial cities of the Holy Roman Empire, with their wealthy urban populations.⁴¹ Burghers living under royal authority in larger monarchies or imperial *Landstädte* could also benefit, as it was to them that rulers often turned to borrow money to finance their wars, and it was also the cities that manufactured the increasingly complex armaments demanded by armies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and that hosted the markets where mercenaries sold their services. Banking and large-scale financial institutions appeared relatively late in the cities of northern Germany and the Baltic, where older systems of Hanseatic credit persisted throughout the sixteenth century, but, as in the south, the towns were significant centres of mercenary recruitment and loaners of capital to the region's warlike rulers.

Like regional aristocracies, but for quite different reasons, the agrarian peasantry often saw their rights diminished as a result of changing patterns of warfare and governance. The new armies were large and rapacious (in part because their size made them logistically impossible to supply so plunder was needed to keep them in the field), and the independence of the mercenaries could make them more difficult to discipline than the levies of the Middle Ages. The knighthood at least ostensibly had a duty to protect the common folk, and the demands of medieval warfare very often found them fighting in the lands of their lieges, which were tended by their own villeins. Mercenaries had no such ties, and plunder was often the principle component of their pay. As in the ancient world,⁴² pillaging came to play a significant part in the economies of war-torn early modern Europe, both in terms of the destruction caused by rampaging armies and in the development of markets based on the sale and circulation of

commercial activity, while merchants could sometimes acquire ministerial status and arm themselves as knights. Benjamin Arnold, *German Knighthood, 1050-1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 204-8.

⁴¹ “As the expense of warfare grew exponentially, a new fiscal-military state emerged and new social groups – especially the urban middle classes – became ever more influential.” Robert I Frost, *The Northern Wars: War, State and Society in Northeastern Europe, 1558-1721* (Toronto: Longman, 2000), 18.

⁴² Karl Polanyi, citing the writings of Thucydides and Xenophon, amongst others, claimed that “the chief promoters of markets were the Greek armies, notably the mercenary troops, now more and more frequently employed as a business venture.” He saw the need to monetize plunder – slaves, cattle, and other treasure which could not be transported conveniently during a campaign – as the driving force behind the development of markets in Greece and the eastern Mediterranean, pointing in particular to passages in the *Ἀνάβασις* describing how the Achaemenid Shah provided markets and sutlers to the Ten Thousand as they traversed his empire. Karl Polanyi, *The Livelihood of Man* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 127-34.

booty.⁴³ Articles of war generally only restricted soldiers from robbing civilians in the warlord's own territory, while the legal and ethical arguments of the theorists, largely ignored in any case, focused on proscriptions against the sack of cities – uncoincidentally, the very places where the lawyers and scholars who penned such admonitions tended to live – rather than on atrocities committed against the rural poor. It was with good reason that von Grimmelshausen placed the long-suffering peasant at the bottom of his metaphorical Tree of Battle, and the warning voiced in an old marching song – “*Hüt' dich, Bauer, ich kumm!*” – was no idle threat.⁴⁴

For the centralizing governments of the early modern world, mercenaries also held a significant advantage over the other method by which traditional local powerholders could be sidelined, the creation of national armies, in that they could be hired without allocating military power to the general population (from whom native soldiery would have to be recruited). For the first time since antiquity, the proliferation of mercenaries meant that large and effective armies could be raised outside of the control of the regional nobility *and* without arming the common folk, at least so long as there were funds to keep the contractors in the field. Professional mercenaries imported from abroad could also be attractive because they held advantages in equipment, tactical nous, and professionalism over local troops.⁴⁵ They were expensive, but, unless the employer's nation was already endowed with ample resources and a thriving military culture, then it was generally much more efficient to bring in seasoned soldiers from elsewhere than to invest in the long term development of native recruitment and training and the manufacture or purchase of vast quantities of armaments. In the sixteenth century only a few European nations, notably Spain, France, the United Provinces, and Sweden attempted to conscript, train, and supply armies of native troops – and all of these powers also

⁴³ Mercenaries themselves made no secret of this fact. A notorious company of Balkan soldiers in the service of Emperor Ferdinand II, for example, carried a banner depicting a snarling wolf's head and bearing the words “I crave for booty”. Fritz Redlich, *De Praeda Militari: Looting and Booty 1500-1815* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1956), 21 and 54-5.

⁴⁴ “*Rumpede, pumpede, pum! Hüt' dich, Bauer, ich kumm! Ich nehm' dir Küh' und Kälber weg und sag' dir nicht, warum!*” Franz Magnus Böhme, *Deutsches Kinderlied und Kinderspiel. Volksüberlieferungen aus allen Landen deutscher Zunge* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1897), 235.

⁴⁵ David Potter, *Renaissance France at War: Armies, Culture and Society, c.1480-1560* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 133.

made ample use of mercenaries.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, the only options were to rely on temporary, ad hoc recruitment of mercenaries or to continue using modified versions of medieval methods of recruitment through decentralized vassalage.

In western and parts of central Europe, the growing importance of infantry and the decline in the efficacy of knightly cavalry in the 1400s was the most important tactical precursor to the military revolution. At first, this truly had been a revolutionary development, socially as much as militarily, largely brought about by non-aristocratic classes taking up arms to defend their interests in regions such as Switzerland, Bohemia, and Northern Italy. For the rulers of Europe, the spectre of an armed populace intent on defending its own interests was a threat to their social control. The old aristocracy was forced to adapt as the thousand-year-old battlefield superiority of heavy cavalry was being rapidly undone by the spread of organized infantry armed with polearms and guns.⁴⁷ In regions like England and the Low Countries, the solution was centralized parliamentary government; in France and Spain, royal absolutism. Mercenaries enabled the rulers of these nations to reap the benefits of the new infantry while avoiding many of the social changes that had given rise to them in places like Switzerland. First Swiss and then German professionals became the mainstay of western European armies. In the Empire, Maximilian I raised the first *Landsknecht* regiments in 1487, in deliberate imitation of the Swiss *Reisläufer*, thereby pre-empting the independent appearance of independent infantry motivated by broader social concerns by bringing the process under imperial control from the start.⁴⁸ Small states situated on the edges of major empires, such as Switzerland and Hesse-Kassel, specialized in exporting mercenaries to their more powerful neighbours.⁴⁹ In short,

⁴⁶ Even Spain's military capabilities declined over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the fighting population was steadily reduced by war, plague, and emigration to the New World. The average size of a Spanish company in the 1550s was 288 men, but this number had fallen to a mere 105 by the early seventeenth century, when France became the premier land power in western Europe. Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early-Modern Europe, 1495-1715* (London: Routledge, 1992), 74-5.; I.A.A. Thompson, *War and Government in Habsburg Spain, 1560-1620* (London: Athlone Press, 1976), 104-107.

⁴⁷ It is not a coincidence that Poland, where the landed nobility did retain its social dominance throughout the early modern period, had an unusually large aristocracy available for military service and successfully adapted its shock cavalry to the evolving requirements of modern warfare.

⁴⁸ "Die Landsknechte übernahmen von den Schweizern bestimmte Organisations- und Führungsprinzipien sowie die Taktik großen Gevierthaufen." Helmut Schnitter, *Volk und Landesdefension. Volksaufgebote, Defensionwerke, Landmilizen in den deutschen Territorien vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1977), 55.

⁴⁹ Nepal and Champa are examples of this phenomenon in a non-European context, while the Greek city-states' supply of mercenaries to Achaemenid Persia is perhaps the most noteworthy case in antiquity. For a useful

what had begun as a revolutionary exercise in socio-military autonomy was coopted by authoritarian and market-driven actors, and it would henceforth “develop as a state-controlled and sponsored process.”⁵⁰ Outside of their own nation, the legacy of the Swiss experiment in the co-development of self-rule and an autochthonous, professional infantry was thus felt primarily on the military front; foreign potentates imported the infantry tactics of the *Reisläufer* without most of the political freedoms that had developed alongside them in the Old Swiss Confederacy.

Far from subverting central government’s regulation of violence, then, mercenaries were often instrumental in strengthening it by introducing the possibility that mercantilist market domination could be used to break the traditional warrior caste’s dominance in warfare.⁵¹ They also gave the growing burgher class a means of avoiding the unpleasantness of active military service, except during urban sieges, by instead contributing funds for the hiring of professional troops, essentially a labour-for-capital exchange through which wealthy burghers could outsource their civic defense obligations to men willing to put their bodies on the line for cash.⁵² Historically, therefore, mercenary armies have been most favoured by two types of societies: those in which strong rulers seek to monopolize economic and military power, using the former to hire mercenaries in order to avoid entrusting the latter to their subjects; and mercantile, urban states with small populations dominated by burghers wishing to avoid the dangers of combat by delegating them to paid professionals.⁵³ The Classical and Hellenistic Mediterranean, for example, particularly in the age of the *Διάδοχοι*, became a hotbed of military enterprise, in which city states focused on maritime trade like Tyre, Sidon, Tarentum, Syracuse, and Carthage were utterly reliant on mercenaries for their land campaigns, while direct citizen participation in combat was either minor, or, in the case of Carthage, confined to

case study from early modern Europe, see Charles W. Ingrao, *The Hessian Mercenary State: Ideas, Institutions, and Reform under Frederick II, 1760-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁵⁰ Laurent Henninger, “Military Revolutions and Military History,” in *Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History*, eds. Matthew Hughes and William J. Philpott, 8-22 (Houndsmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 10.

⁵¹ Chris Hann and Keith Hart have gone so far as to argue that economic systems based on land and money have been in conflict since the Bronze Age. The ways in which different societies have organized themselves for war reflects this tension. Chris Hann and Keith Hart, *Economic Anthropology: History, Ethnography, Critique* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 19.

⁵² See Paul Schnitthener’s pioneering labour analysis of mercenary activity. Paul Schnitthener, *Das freie Söldnertum in abenlandischen Imperium des Mittelalters* (Munich: Beck, 1934).

⁵³ Joenniemi, “Two Models of Mercenarism,” 186.

the navy and a single elite regiment (the short-lived and largely unsuccessful Sacred Band). Likewise, the autocratic rulers of the land empires that emerged in Alexander's wake – especially those of the Ptolemies and Seleucids – often favoured importing foreign mercenaries over the risks of arming their indigenous, non-Hellenic populations, who were initially hostile to the dynasties imposed by their Greco-Macedonian conquerors.⁵⁴ Mercenaries similarly thrived in the early modern Baltic, where Hanseatic emporia coexisted uncomfortably with emerging land empires, and where networks of maritime trade facilitated the movement of soldiers between the region's preeminent mercenary markets.

The comparatively poor, agrarian kingdoms of the Middle Ages – with their jealous warrior classes, land-based wealth, decentralized rule through complex power-sharing arrangements, and less developed cash economies – were not as well-suited to the development of large mercenary markets as either the ancient world or the early modern, although soldiers-for-hire certainly did exist (sometimes in great numbers) in many parts of the medieval continent. By the fourteenth or fifteenth century, depending on the area, the situation was changing. The mercantile city states common in regions like Italy and the Baltic were, like their ancient counterparts, ideal markets for mercenary activity; their wealth was great, their populations dense, and their enemies were often other cities with whom they shared a common culture, religion, and economy (factors that eased movement of mercenaries between rival

⁵⁴ For the same reason, mercenaries have often been used to expand and enforce colonial rule. Writing of the British East India Company, Philip J. Stern notes that the Company “offers neither a model of state and empire formation that is a projection of the will of a pre-formed, imperial center outward nor a discussion of the ways in which the British state and national identity emerged through the imperial experience, but rather explores a vision of early modern ‘empire’ that was constituted by a variety of competing and overlapping political and constitutional forms in both alliance and tension with the national state and its claims to coherent and central power, and a modern state and empire that was in many ways formed by the process of incorporating, co-opting, and undermining the legitimacy of those institutions.” Again, the presence of strong private actors, in this case both the Company and the mercenaries it employed, did not weaken the British imperial state, but instead permitted it to expand more rapidly than its own administrative technologies, financial resources, and regular armed forces might otherwise have allowed. Mercenaries and auxiliaries, European and South Asian alike, played a key part in extending the territorial and commercial control of the Company; in turn, the Company's administrative and military institutions, when officially absorbed into the Empire following the events of 1857, formed the groundwork for Britain's assumption of direct colonial rule in the subcontinent, and, ultimately, a framework for some of the governmental and military institutions of the region's post-colonial states. Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundation of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6. For a description of the military organization of the British East India Company, see: Roger Beaumont, *The Sword of the Raj: The British Army in India, 1747-1947* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977).

employers).⁵⁵ With the rise of more centralized and authoritarian monarchies in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, mercenary markets expanded once again: freelancers plied their trade for profit, central governments grew in power, burghers prospered, military aristocracies either declined or were coopted into new state elites, and peasants became ever more disenfranchised. This general pattern is clearly visible in Livonia, where the amalgamation of small peasant holdings into large estates focused on exportable cash crops resulted in the simultaneous creation of surplus wealth, the transformation of the old warrior aristocracy into glorified grain magnates, the expulsion of many peasants from their traditional lands and into unfavourable urban labour markets (where some turned to soldiery), and the appearance of large mercenary armies.⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that the great mercenary-reliant empires and city states of antiquity had all, to a greater or lesser degree, had slave-based economies, which made it impractical for them to arm and recruit their own labour base in times of war. Likewise, it is no coincidence that increasing use of mercenaries and growing military professionalism often went hand-in-hand with the spread of more oppressive forms of serfdom in early modern northeastern Europe. Drawing upon the Revalian chronicler Balthasar Russow's uncharitable description of the Livonian Order and the Baltic German aristocracy of the mid-sixteenth century, William Urban has noted that, in order to modernize its own military capabilities and to hire mercenaries,

*the Livonian Confederation assisted the landowners in fastening serfdom on the necks of the rural population [...] The military classes deteriorated into idle rich; some secular nobles supervised the overseers and improved their estates, but most gave greater attention to hunting, wenching and boozing than to training for war. Protected by [Livonian Landmeister Wolter von] Plettenberg's fifty years of peace, their military skills atrophied. This made them even more dependent on mercenaries. As for the Livonian Knights, as the Protestant Reformation spread across their main recruiting areas, it became difficult to maintain their numbers. There was no alternative to hiring mercenaries.*⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, 2.

⁵⁶ William Urban, *Medieval Mercenaries: The Business of War* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), 281.

⁵⁷ Urban endorsed the Marxist view that there was a connection between the changing agrarian economy and the nature of the military, but, while Marxist scholars argued that changes in the economy brought about a greater reliance on mercenaries, Urban reversed this formula and proposed that early modern Livonia intensified exports of cash crops (grain, wax, amber, and furs) in order to pay for the mercenaries and artillery the Confederation required to defend itself against its increasingly assertive Muscovite neighbour. Urban, *Medieval Mercenaries*, 281 and 288. For a more detailed discussion of the growth of manorialism in Livonia, see Juhan Kahk, *Bauer und Baron im Baltikum. Versuch einer historisch-phänomenologischen Studie zum Thema "Gutsherrschaft in den Ostseeprovinzen"* (Tallinn: Tallinna Raamatutrukikoda, 1999), 15-22.

The colonial, ethno-linguistic hierarchy of the Livonian Confederation, in which a small minority of Baltic German knights, landowners, burghers, and clergy dominated the indigenous Estonian and Lettish peasant majority, exacerbated these trends by making the ruling classes further disinclined to arm the common folk.⁵⁸ Sixteenth-century Livonia therefore combined many of the traits usually associated with rich mercenary markets: mercantile city-states, internal competition, lacklustre domestic military capabilities, a politically marginalized majority whom the authorities were wary of arming, and several threatening neighbours. However, unlike in many other regions of Europe, the partnership between private military enterprisers and local rulers did not bring about Livonia's transformation into a more unified state under centralized rule. Why not?

As elsewhere in Europe, attempts at political centralization within Livonia "threatened traditional privileges and freedoms and faced strong feudal and urban resistance, which tended to channel state reforms within existing regional rather than toward as yet notional national frameworks."⁵⁹ In many parts of the continent, feudal resistance was eventually broken down and urban resources coopted through a gradual, internal consolidation of power by monarchs or other forms of central government, often working in partnership with professional military enterprisers.⁶⁰ In Livonia, however, there was no one authority with sufficient power to begin

⁵⁸ For a recent discussion of some aspects of the colonial model in Livonian historiography, see: Martin Klöker, "Koloniales Modell und regionale Literatur. Die deutsch-livländischen Literaturbeziehungen der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Die Baltischen Länder und Europa in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Norbert Angermann, Karsten Brüggerman, and Inna Pölsam-Jürjo (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2015), 37-66.

⁵⁹ Stephan R. Epstein, *Freedom and Growth: The Rise of States and Markets in Europe, 1300-1750* (London: Routledge, 2000), 147.

⁶⁰ Livonia's eastern neighbour, Russia, was an exceptional case. Under Ivan the IV, there was a decline in the power of the nobility and the serfs in favour of more centralized and absolutist rule, but the way in which this process was achieved differed from in the West. Mercenaries were never central to the Muscovite military, and the *pomeste'e* noble cavalry remained militarily important in the sixteenth century. Partially to curtail their power (but also as part of a general modernization drive), Ivan created two new classes, the *streletsy* and the *oprichniki*, which, while not mercenaries, were of common origin and largely motivated by the promise of financial gain. His extensive use of Tatar cavalry, which was made possible by his conquests in the south and east, also decreased his military reliance on the Russian noble cavalry. As the English ambassador Giles Fletcher observed, the boyars "were bound to serve the Emperor in his wars with a certain number of horse," but, Ivan "being a man of high spirit and subtle in kind, meaning to reduce his government into a more strict form, began by degrees to clip off their greatness and to bring it down to a lesser position, till in the end he made them not only his vassals but his *khlopy*, that is, his very villeins and bondslaves." Giles Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, ed. Albert J. Schmidt (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966), 36. This interpretation was echoed by Ruslan Skrynnikov, who saw the establishment of the *Oprichnina* as intended to crush aristocratic and urban resistance to autocratic absolutism.

this process, and, rather than gradually transitioning to a more centralized form of local government, Old Livonia collapsed under irresistible foreign pressure.⁶¹ The ostensible head of the Confederation was the Archbishop of Riga, but the Livonian Order possessed the greatest military strength, while the cities held much of the wealth. Both the archbishop and the *Landmeister* were celibate elected theocrats, almost invariably from Germany, preventing the gradual accumulation of local dynastic authority. While aspiring Leviathans in other parts of Europe accrued power by eroding the privileges of the Church and coopting those of the aristocracy, this was less viable in Livonia, where the foremost faction was itself a militant religious order, in essence a knighthood whose authority was derived from the Church. Membership in or ties to a number of competing and overlapping supranational networks – the Teutonic Order, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Hansa – also placed certain limits on the Confederation’s independence.⁶²

Many of the factors underlying Livonia’s failure to coalesce into a more unified state – institutional and political heterogeneity, complex power sharing arrangements, and a high degree of urban autonomy – were not unique to the region but characteristic of the broader German world to which the Livonian Confederation belonged. Unlike in parts of western Europe, where monarchal governments ultimately outpaced and absorbed local powerholders to form more cohesive nation states subject to a single central authority, in much of German Europe it was the smaller territorial states and the cities, rather than the greater Holy Roman Empire, whose institutions most closely resembled modern “notions of the ‘state’ and of ‘state finance’.”⁶³ Like Germany proper, Livonia was comprised of both territorial states, ruled by

⁶¹ The manifest inability of the Order to protect its vassals and of the vassals to protect the peasants exposed the failings of the old feudal social contract. Without the promise of military security, the various towns and regions quickly sought out foreign patrons, while, in 1560, the peasants revolted and elected their own leaders when they “saw that the Germans and those in authority were unable to protect them.” Johannes Renner, *Livonian History 1556-161* (henceforth *Renner*), trans. Jerry S. Smith and Willian Urban with J. Ward Jones (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 186-7.

⁶² It has often been assumed that Livonia was part of the Holy Roman Empire, but scholars such as Manfred Hellmann and Jason Lavery have here drawn attention to an important distinction. As Lavery noted, “Livonia never belonged to the Empire understood as the kingdom of Germany (*Regnum Teutonicum*) whose estates supported common institutions” but was instead seen as “part of the universal Holy Roman Empire (*Sacrum Imperium*) with the Holy Roman Emperor as its temporal head.” Jason Lavery, *Germany's Northern Challenge: The Holy Roman Empire and the Scandinavian Struggle for the Baltic, 1563-1576* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 45.

⁶³ Eberhard Isenmann, “The Holy Roman Empire in the Middle Ages,” in *The Rise of the Fiscal State in Europe, c. 1200-1815*, ed. Richard Bonney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 243.

the Livonian Order and the bishops and administered through the longstanding social institutions of vassalage (*Schutz und Shirm, Vogtei*, etc.), and of urban polities that had their own legal systems, raised their own taxes, collected tariffs on commodities, elected their own governing councils, and were bound together through membership in the Hansa.⁶⁴ The Livonian Confederation as a whole could only raise general taxes if its disparate members agreed to do so collectively, and this was seen as an extreme measure to be undertaken only in times of war and with the agreement of the Confederation's constituent lords, towns, and estates, who could be convened in a *Landtag* for this purpose (see Chapter 6.3).

Further, while the Livonian Order, the bishops, the burghers, and the nobility were all rivals in the contest for control of Livonia's resources, they were also all Germans anxious to ensure their continued domination of an overwhelmingly non-German indigenous population while also resisting external pressure from surrounding states. Undermining one another too aggressively might upset the precarious colonial hierarchy that rested upon a degree of cooperation between members of the region's ruling German minority, and utilizing the substantial military potential of the native peasantry in an internal power struggle between rival German factions was a risk that none was willing to take. The Livonian Order, the bishops, the nobility, and the burghers each wanted a bigger piece of the pie, but they also wanted to ensure that the Letts and Estonians had no seat at the table (and that the dinner party was not crashed by any unwelcome interlopers from abroad). In such a diffuse coalition, in which the political situation vacillated between internal competition and collaboration against foreign threats, mercenarism and other military factors played an ambiguous political role, sometimes contributing to consolidation and sometimes reinforcing fragmentation. For example, the need to hire foreign mercenaries for collective defense following the Russian invasion of 1558 eventually compelled the Confederation's leaders to undertake such fiscal-military reforms as

⁶⁴ Within the late medieval and early modern German world, Michael North considered the free imperial and Hanseatic cities to be the "most advanced [polities] with respect to administration, legal autonomy and fiscal and accounting structures." Michael North, "Finances and Power in the German State System," in *The Rise of Fiscal States: A Global History 1500-1914*, ed. Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla and Patrick K. O'Brien with Francisco Comín Comín (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 146.; Isenmann, "The Holy Roman Empire in the Middle Ages," 245.

the raising of a special war tax and the issuance of common articles of war;⁶⁵ but, at other times, mercenaries were also deployed by factions within the Confederation to defend their individual rights or gain leverage over their rivals.⁶⁶

For over three centuries, a combination of internal dynamics and external ties thus prevented the formation of a unified Livonian nation under a strong central government. Despite these challenges, by the 1550s, Riga and the Livonian Order had emerged as the two premier powers within the Confederation and found themselves locked in a struggle for supremacy. Whether or not one or other of these parties would ultimately have emerged victorious and succeeded in creating a united early modern Livonian state from the disparate medieval factions that formed the Confederation – as Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach had done in Prussia in 1525 and Gotthard Kettler would do in Courland in 1561 – must remain a matter of conjecture.⁶⁷ Foreign invasion brought an end to Livonian independence before the question could be decided. Perhaps, however, it is less useful to see sixteenth-century Livonia as an unsuccessful or interrupted attempt at early modern state-building than as a coalition of peculiarly robust and long-lived medieval institutions. The inability of any one faction to unite the Confederation under its rule ultimately left Livonia vulnerable to invasion, but it is also a testament to the carefully designed balance of power that protected the rights of its corporate members for more than three hundred years. Indeed, so ingrained were these checks and balances that, even in the centuries after the Livonian War, the Estonian and Livonian towns and the Baltic German nobility retained many of their privileges under foreign rule. This raises a significant question: If increased centralization, royal authority, and mercenary warfare contributed elsewhere to a decline in the independence of the landed aristocracy, why was this less so in the eastern Baltic

⁶⁵ Renner, 112.; Some more details may be found in a letter dated August 29, 1559. Carl Schirren, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte des Untergangs livländischer Selbständigkeit*, 8 vols. (henceforth *QU*) (Reval: Kluge, 1881), III, 266.

⁶⁶ See, for example, the dispute between the Livonian Order and the Bishopric of Dorpat regarding the former's offer to station troops in the latter's territory in anticipation of a possible Russian attack. Friederich Gustav Bienemann, *Briefe und Urkunden zur eschichte Livlands in den Jahren 1558-1662*, 5 vols. (henceforth *Briefe*) (Riga: Kymmell, 1865-1876), I, 26. and *QU*, II, 69-83.

⁶⁷ For a comparison of the secularizations of Prussia and Courland, see Udo Arnold, "Hochmeister Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach und Landmeister Gotthard Kettler. Ordensritter und Territorialherren am Scheideweg in Preußen und Livland," in *The Military Orders and the Reformation: Choices, State Building, and the Weight of Tradition*, Papers of the Utrecht Conference 30 September – 2 October 2004, eds. Johannes A. Mol, Klaus Militzer, and Helen J. Nicholson (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 11-30.

littoral, where, long after the collapse of Old Livonia, the nobility remained locally powerful under the rule of Sweden (and later Russia)?

In the south, the *Privilegium Sigismundi Augusti*, negotiated in 1561 between Gotthard Kettler and King Sigismund Augustus of Poland, was an important factor in preserving the privileges of the aristocracy after the loss of Livonia's independence.⁶⁸ Sigismund agreed to this arrangement for several reasons: concessions to the local nobility were a small price to pay for the smooth transference of southern Livonia to Polish-Lithuanian control; retaining the Baltic Germans as fairly independent vassals allowed them to be used as a military buffer against Russian or Scandinavian encroachment; and, given that Poland-Lithuania was already a multi-ethnic empire with an aristocracy fiercely insistent upon its rights, there was little reason for Sigismund to curtail the privileges of the German landholders in his new Livonian territories when the great families of the Polish, Lithuanian, and Ruthenian *szlachta* continued to dominate the rest of his realm(s). A more difficult question is why the Swedes and Russians continued to respect this arrangement and made their own concessions to local autonomy after the region came under their sway.

First, although relatively prosperous and developed, Livonia was on the geographic peripheries of both empires, and it was therefore possible for the "Baltic Barons" to remain locally powerful without significantly challenging or being challenged by the centralizing projects being carried out by king or tsar in the core regions of their respective realms (i.e. Sweden and Russia proper).⁶⁹ Second, there was the enduringly colonial quality of Livonia. The majority of the population – consisting of the Letts and Estonians – was no more Swedish or Russian than it was German, so local Baltic German elites remained useful partners for controlling the populace (whose aspirations of greater self-rule they had crushed by putting down the rebellion that broke out in the autumn of 1560).⁷⁰ At the same time, the aristocracy was unlikely to

⁶⁸ *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Poloniae et Magni Ducatus Lituaniae V*, ed. M. Dogiel (Vilnius: 1759), Nr. 139, 243-8.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of Stockholm's relationship with the Estonian nobility in the early years of Swedish rule see: Torbjörn Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland in the Swedish Kingdom during the First Decades of the Swedish Rule," in *Die schwedischen Ostseeprovinzen Estland und Livland im 16.-18. Jahrhundert*, eds. Aleksander Loit und Helmut Piirimäe, 53-62 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993), 53-62.

⁷⁰ "Die livländischen Adeligen hatten durch die Niederschlagung des Bauernaufstandes im Norden des Landes ihre Position zumindest nach innen wieder gefestigt." Jürgen Heyde, *Bauer, Gutshof und Königsmacht:*

establish a regional power base that could challenge Swedish or Russian rule with the backing of the native peasantry. The Baltic Barons thus formed a partnership with Stockholm and later Moscow, whereby they came to constitute a kind of Baltic Raj, controlling the labour of the Estonian and Lettish population and aiding in the region's defense in return for a high level of political independence and the preservation of their traditional rights.⁷¹ The central authorities tampered with this system at their peril. King Karl XI of Sweden's turn toward absolutism, especially the Great Reduction of 1680 which diminished aristocratic power and improved the position of the serfs by making them direct subjects of the Swedish Crown, turned much of the Baltic German nobility against Stockholm.⁷² In 1710, at the height of the Great Northern War between Sweden and Russia, the Livonian and Estonian regional nobility and burghers capitulated to Moscow in return for Peter the Great's reinstatement of their traditional privileges and reintroduction of serfdom.⁷³

In addition to their political maneuvering, the nobility survived the turmoil of the Livonian War and the collapse of Old Livonia by turning to various forms of military enterprise. Over the course of the war, all of the invading parties came to recognize the military utility of having the local Baltic German nobility as allies, and the cavalry formed by these so-called *Hofleute* played a significant part at various stages in the conflict (see Chapter 8.3). In essence, a landed warrior caste avoided military obsolescence and political redundancy by themselves adopting many of the hallmarks of early modern soldiering and mercenarism – adaptability, paid military service, plundering, frequent changes of allegiance, etc. – and thereby partnering with powerful foreign patrons who offered to protect their longstanding rights and privileges in

Die estnischen Bauern in Livland unter polnischer und schwedischer Herrschaft 1561-1650 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 33.

⁷¹ Prior to the dissolution of Old Livonia, the officers of the Livonian Order had also been drifting more toward the role of land magnates, forming a “*geistlichen Adelskorporation*” as Juhan Kreem put it. Juhan Kreem, “Der Deutsche Orden im 16. Jahrhundert. Die Spätzeit einer geistlichen Adelskorporation in Livland,” in *Leonid Arbusow (1882-1951) und die Erforschung des mittelalterlichen Livland*, eds. Ilgvars Misāns and Klaus Neitmann (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2014), 287-95.

⁷² The most significant of these malcontents was, of course, Johann Reinhold von Patkul, who successfully petitioned Peter the Great of Russia and Augustus the Strong, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, to wage war on Sweden.

⁷³ The capitulation violated the 1699 Treaty of Preobrazhenskoye and the 1709 Treaty of Thorn, the terms of which stipulated that Sweden's empire be divided between the coalition opposing her, with Livonia going to Augustus II of Saxony and Poland. Ignoring this stipulation, the Russian commander, Boris Sheremetev, instead required the Baltic German nobility and burghers to swear allegiance to the Tsar. Paul Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great: The Struggle for Power, 1671-1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 294.

return for military allegiance.⁷⁴ Despite the initial hostility of the *Hofleute* to Swedish rule (many of them at first preferred a Danish alternative), it was ultimately the Vasa kings who most effectively cooperated with local powerholders like the Reval city council and the Estonian noble corporations to extend their influence in the region, lending weight to Jan Glete's contention that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Sweden's unusual success in fiscal-military state-building rested on effective partnership with local elites, induction of traditional power groups into nationally focused frameworks, and royal "protection-selling".⁷⁵ Conversely, Stockholm's principal rival in the struggle for the eastern Baltic, Ivan the Terrible's Muscovy, found less success in part because the Tsar's ruthless unpredictability alienated regional elites who might otherwise have proved useful partners in the war effort.

Glete's understanding of fiscal-military state formation rejected the older model of early modern absolutism triumphing over traditional elites primarily through coercion, but also problematized more recent scholarship emphasizing consensus and continuity from the medieval past. Instead, he proposed that the early modern fiscal-military state was a "new type of social structure [that] transformed the relations between state and society" as the state "developed from an arena for political interaction and a source of legitimacy for socio-economic forces into an articulated and centralised organisation with both an apparatus for resource extraction and capability to use armed force independently of the local power structures in society."⁷⁶ The mechanism by which this transformation was achieved were, according to Glete, "innovative and entrepreneurial activities by rulers, elites and men with ambitions to join the elite."⁷⁷ In the context of the Livonian War, paid military service was the prime entrepreneurial activity through which the region's traditional elites partnered with foreign rulers and were incorporated into the national frameworks of the states intent on

⁷⁴ Gunnar Artéus has compiled a list of the cavalry commanders who fought in Swedish service in Sweden, Finland, Germany, and Livonia from 1555 to 1610. Those mustering troops in Livonia in the years after 1583 overwhelmingly remain members of old Baltic German noble families (Buxhoeveden, Engelhardt, Krüdener, Nötken, etc.). Gunnar Artéus, *Till Militärstatens Förhistoria: Krig, professionalisering och social förändring under Vasasönernas regering* (Stockholm: Probus, 1986), 139-82.

⁷⁵ Glete, *War and the State*, 2-5 and 174-216. Michael North has also singled out early modern Sweden's general willingness to rule its territories and subjects according to their own traditions, a flexibility which meant that, even at the height of sixteenth-century Swedish power, the administration of the empire was quite "uneven". Michael North, *The Baltic: A History*, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 123.

⁷⁶ Glete, *War and the State*, 5.

⁷⁷ Glete, *War and the State*, 5.

partitioning Livonia. Far less scholarly attention has been paid to the role of foreign mercenaries – military enterprisers who sometimes cooperated with emerging fiscal-military states and sometimes with local elites but did not belong to either – in Livonia’s violent transition from independent medieval confederation to a peripheral territory of surrounding states. At times, these itinerant freelancers played a significant part in this process (in ways explored in depth in Chapters 6, 7, and 8).

The evident utility provided by private military enterprisers to early modern states begs the question of why, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the use of mercenaries subsequently declined across Europe in favour of greater reliance on standing armies of native conscripts and (eventually) volunteers. The modern state may be understood as a “new, large scale actor on an old market: the market for protection and control of violence” that sells “protection against violence to society by raising taxes through the fiscal organisation [and delivers] the service through military organisation.”⁷⁸ What differentiates modern governments from their historical antecedents, such as medieval sovereigns, is the degree to which they have monopolized that market, for the most part no longer competing with semi-independent cities, the Church, or local lords in the business of protection-selling. Greater control over financial resources, simultaneously enabling and enabled by collaboration with paid military professionals, was one formula by which early modern national governments wrested power away from these rivals and came to dominate the protection market (i.e. absolutism, mercantilism, and mercenarism went hand-in-hand, initially at least). Sometimes, this was accomplished by employing mercenaries to crush dissent, such as the use of German *Landsknechte* to suppress peasant revolts that challenged Vasa and Tudor royal authority in Sweden and England during the 1540s. At other times, traditional elites were incorporated into incipient bureaucracies by temporarily or permanently transforming from the role of land-based regional powerholders into a paid, professional officer class, whether through privatized military partnership with a governmental employer or within the framework of an emergent national army. Michel Foucault argued that “rather than asking ideal subjects what part of

⁷⁸ Jan Glete, “Warfare, Entrepreneurship, and the Fiscal-Military State,” in *European Warfare, 1350-1750*, eds. Frank Tallett and D.J.B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2010), 305-306.; Frederic C. Lane, *Profits from Power: Readings in Protection Rent and Violence-Controlling Enterprises* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979).

themselves or their powers they have surrendered in order to themselves become subjects, we have to look at how relations of subjugation can manufacture subjects.”⁷⁹ This understanding permits the abandonment of the old accusation of administrative weakness on the part of states that employ mercenaries, with private military organizations seen as “worms in the entrails of a natural man,” as Thomas Hobbes might have put it.⁸⁰ Such polities need not necessarily be seen as surrendering their powers to private actors (or as failing to compel those private actors to surrender their powers), but, instead, as partnering with them to subjugate rivals in the fiscal-military protection market and transform them into more obedient subjects. Outsourcing the subjugation process to foreign professionals who were never the sovereign’s subjects to begin with was often an effective means of achieving this aim.

By the late seventeenth century, however, things were beginning to change. States had largely succeeded in establishing themselves as the arbiters of legitimate violence. The Church and the nobility were greatly reduced in power, and urban centres of resistance against central authority had seen their rights curtailed as they were incorporated into national frameworks. New technologies of governance had brought about more intrusive, comprehensive levels of administrative control over populations, urban and rural alike. Post-Westphalian Europe would be characterized less by competition between government and its rivals – the Church, the aristocracy, and the towns – than by inter-governmental confrontations between European nation states and by colonial expansion beyond the boundaries of the continent. Mercenaries and privateers, often in partnership with the great colonial joint stock companies, remained prevalent in the latter enterprise, but they began to decline within Europe. The precise periodization of this process is open to interpretation. Charles Tilly has broken the post-medieval military development of Europe into four broad steps – patrimonialism, brokerage, nationalization, and specialization – and dates the transitions between these phases to the rise of the *condottieri*, the Thirty Years’ War, and the French *levée en masse* of 1793.⁸¹ John Lynn, on the other hand, identified seven distinct developmental stages: feudal, medieval-stipendiary, aggregate-contract, state-commission, popular-conscript, mass-reserve, and volunteer-

⁷⁹ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 265.

⁸⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Dent, 1914), Pt. II, ch. 27.

⁸¹ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 122.

technical.⁸² Regardless of how they are defined, these categories need not be mutually exclusive; the Livonian War, for example, saw the first five of Lynn's stages employed with varying degrees of regularity and success. What is clear, however, is that mercenaries were far less prevalent in European warfare of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries than they had been in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth.

In light of their key role in the development of centralized state power and the general trend toward monetization and commodification in the global economy, the decline in the use of mercenaries from the late seventeenth century onwards is somewhat perplexing. A number of explanations have been suggested. Among the simplest and most convincing are those based on economics. Mercenaries cost more than conscripts, and, while their greater military professionalism often justified the expense, this advantage was eroded over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as governments began to invest more in the training of native officer corps. War was also growing in complexity, cost, and scale. Eventually, the quantity of men required to win a war surpassed the numbers that could be supplied by private contractors; a large mercenary army or private recruiter could provide thousands of professional soldiers, but only states had the administrative tools and population base to recruit hundreds of thousands of troops. The increasing cost and technological sophistication of weaponry was also a significant factor. As Tilly dryly observed, "every thirteenth-century noble household owned swords, but no twentieth-century household owns an aircraft carrier."⁸³ Indeed, as early as the late Middle Ages, mercenaries often negotiated to have their employers provide them with more expensive pieces of equipment, especially horses and armour, which they struggled to afford on their own.⁸⁴ In the end, the sophistication of arms and the quantities in which they had to be produced made state oversight and financial backing a necessity for fielding an effective force of adequate size, largely eliminating the possibility of raising entire armies by hiring ready-made private warriors armed with their own equipment.

⁸² Lynn, "The Evolution of Army Style," 514.

⁸³ Lynn, "The Evolution of Army Style," 84.

⁸⁴ Conversely, employers were sometimes willing to pay mercenaries more if they supplied their own equipment, as was the case at the outbreak of the Livonian War, when the Livonian Order's shortage of modern weaponry prompted them to pay double to men who provided their own armaments. William Urban, "Introduction," in *The Chronicle of Balthasar Russow* (henceforth *Russow*), Balthasar Russow, trans. Jerry C. Smith, J. Ward Jones and William Urban (Madison: University of Wisconsin Madison Baltic Studies Centre, 1988), xiv.

In addition to these material considerations, changes in governance and the nature of statehood contributed to the decline of mercenarism. Ironically, perhaps, the highly centralized and increasingly controlling early modern states that the military revolution had helped to bring into existence now found that they no longer needed mercenaries as they once had. Their fiscal apparatuses and tools of governance had become adequately developed – and their monopolistic claims on the legitimization of the use of force sufficiently unassailable – that they now held enough suasive and coercive authority over their subjects to risk arming them for general defense. As Foucault argued, “we need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatus of security.”⁸⁵ Mercenaries had often provided the apparatus of security that aided in the expansion of early modern government, the erosion of the sovereignty of competing actors and institutions, and the disciplining of populations; but this project had been so successful that governments, grown more confident in their own disciplinary powers (often exercised through instilling *self-discipline* in their subjects), no longer saw the need to outsource their security mechanisms to foreign professionals. The creation of national armies thus served a dual disciplinary function, drawing upon the population to be disciplined and turning them into both *disciplined* and *disciplining* agents, whereas the mercenary’s outsider status meant that he could be used to discipline a target population but that his own potentially problematic independence was generally not eroded through this reciprocal process of discipline / self-discipline.

The rise of a powerful new tool of governance, nationalism, in the eighteenth century, and its intensification throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries significantly altered European systems of recruitment. Patriotism became a potent motivator and helped to ensure that (self-)disciplining citizen-soldiers complied with the goals of their governments. At the same time, the interests of increasingly representative governments ostensibly became less

⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: with two lectures and an interview with Michel Foucault*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 102.

distinguishable from those of society at large. For a renaissance theorist like Machiavelli, the prince's well-being was discrete from that of his subjects (even if, in practice, they often aligned), in that, in circular fashion, the resources of his state were essentially tools to be used to safeguard his ultimate aim of continuing to dominate that state and its resources.⁸⁶ When it came to defending his realm against rival princes, he had two options, hiring mercenaries or arming his own subjects, each of which presented dangers of a different sort; allocate too much authority either way and an incautious Visconti might see his duchy fall prey either to an ambitious Sforza or to an unwelcome outbreak of republicanism (Ambrosian or otherwise). However, as governments increasingly became identified with the nations they administered and those nations with the people who inhabited them, citizen armies gained an important advantage over mercenaries. Few pre-modern peasants likely believed that they were fighting for anything other than the benefit of their lord, which often made them less willing soldiers than mercenaries, who were at least aware that they were profiting from their efforts.⁸⁷ In contrast, the patriotic citizen soldier of the modern world could be convinced that he was fighting for his own interests since his government was often understood as an extension of the society to which he belonged.⁸⁸ Further, as managing the economy increasingly came to be seen as the primary role of government, reinvesting capital in domestic military infrastructure was viewed as preferable to paying outsiders, which, while often no less effective militarily, was a net drain on the financial resources of the state.

Finally, there is the simple fact that, for reasons that have varied according to time and place, mercenaries have never been particularly well-liked. Their mere association with violence is not enough to explain this antipathy, as other types of fighters are also violent but are generally cast in a much more positive light. As Jeremy Black has pointed out, in early modern Europe, "killing was not seen as unnatural, but was, instead, generally accepted as necessary, both for

⁸⁶ "Having the ability to retain one's principality is not at all the same thing as possessing the art of governing." Foucault, "Governmentality," 90.

⁸⁷ "Loyalty to the [medieval] state is not the same thing as nationalism; in fact, in some areas nationalism worked against loyalty to existing states. [...] It took four or five centuries for European states to overcome their weaknesses and to bring lukewarm loyalty up to the white heat of nationalism." Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton Classic Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 57.

⁸⁸ The literature on the relationship between citizenship, democracy, and military service from the eighteenth century onwards is vast. Max Weber's thought remains influential in this discussion.

civil society, against crime, heresy and disorder, and in international relations.”⁸⁹ Rather, it is the question of motive that sets mercenaries apart; whether the sentiment is rational or not, there is a popular perception that fighting for profit is somehow immoral. In part, this is a statist argument that seeks to portray those who fight for their own, personal interests as less worthy than those who fight for a nation or sovereign. However, dislike of soldiers-for-hire predates the rise of the modern nation state by centuries. During the Middle Ages, when the knighthood represented the pinnacle of masculine virtue, the existence of men willing to fight for coin could be seen as an affront to the chivalric warrior ethic (although, in practice, this did not prevent the widespread employment of such freelancers).⁹⁰ If the perfect gentleman was the perfect warrior, then mercenaries introduced an element of venality that undermined the idealized construction of manhood in much the same way that prostitution undermined the courtly fantasy of the perfect woman as the ideal lover. (And, indeed, mercenarism has sometimes been referred to as the “second-oldest profession” and its practitioners labelled the “whores of war”.⁹¹) Writing in 1194, for example, the troubadour Bertrand de Born opined that he had

*as much affection for Basque routiers as for greedy prostitutes. Sacks of sterling pennies and Capetian moutons offend me when they are the product of fraud. A household knight who shows himself greedy ought to be hanged, along with the magnate who sells his services. No man ought to pursue Lady Greed, who sells her favours for money.*⁹²

Whatever the underlying causes, there can be little doubt that popular perception of mercenaries has rarely been positive, and the adjective “mercenary” continues to be employed “above all to condemn.”⁹³ Sarah Percy has convincingly argued that this antipathy cannot be

⁸⁹ Jeremy Black, “Introduction,” in *European Warfare 1453-1815: Problems in Focus*, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 2.

⁹⁰ To a degree, this attitude persisted among historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who romanticized chivalry and denigrated the soldier-for-hire. Sir Charles Oman, for example, memorably described the medieval mercenary as “a stranger to all the nobler incentives of valor, an enemy of God and his neighbor, the most deservedly hated man in Europe.” Charles Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages: A.D. 378-1515*, revised and ed. John H. Beeler (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1953), 65-6.

⁹¹ Wilfred Burchett and Derek Roebuck, *The Whores of War: Mercenaries Today* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); Samuel E. Finer, “The Second Oldest Trade,” *The New Society* (1976): 129-131.

⁹² Quoted in: David Crouch, “William Marshal and the Mercenariat,” in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages: proceedings of a conference held at the University of Wales, Swansea, 7th-9th July 2005*, ed. John France (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 18.

⁹³ Stephen D. Brown, “Military Service and Monetary Reward in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” *History* 74 (1989): 22.

explained by military factors, since mercenaries were often highly effective troops who offered their employers a variety of strategic options, further noting that anti-mercenary sentiment persisted during periods in which they were militarily ubiquitous. Instead, she has identified a “norm against mercenary use” that stems both from a fear that it will undermine the authority of the state and a vague sense that there is “something morally problematic about fighting for money.”⁹⁴ While most historians and political scientists have emphasized the statist angle – see, for example, the work of Deborah Avant, Peter Singer, and Janice Thomson – Percy has proposed that “dislike of mercenaries on ethical grounds is a deeper, older, and harder to shake objection” and that this suggests that “norms can and do influence state decisions even in the realm of national security”.⁹⁵ In other words, employing mercenaries came to be seen as undesirable even when doing so was a militarily or politically effective solution. As states established themselves as arbiters of morality, as well as wielders of authority, these trends converged to the point that what Parrott calls the “free and inappropriate choice of soldiering for profit” came to be seen as unethical both in the more traditional, moralistic sense that it was perceived as greedy and in the political sense that individualistic self-interest was portrayed as a betrayal of the collectivist, authoritarian values of the state.⁹⁶

Although the reasons for the gradual decline in the use of mercenaries are open to debate, the historical reality of that decline, gathering pace from the late seventeenth century onwards, is beyond question. Influential historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Max Weber, Otto Hintze, Fritz Redlich, and Michael Roberts saw this process as inevitable and final.⁹⁷ The dawn of the Cold War seemed to confirm this view, with an international system comprised of a number of great powers and their colonies giving way to a bipolar world dominated by two super-states. From the vantage point of the 1970s, it was reasonable to observe that “mercenaries were useful in the period of transition from feudalism to absolute monarchism and early capitalism but then became a burden to the further development of Western societies,” and, almost two decades later, it was still possible to ponder why “coercion

⁹⁴ Sarah Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

⁹⁵ Deborah Avant, “From Mercenary to Citizen Armies,” *International Organization* 42 (1): 41-72.; P.W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 226.; Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*; Percy, *Mercenaries*, 4-6.

⁹⁶ Parrott, *The Business of War*, 5.

⁹⁷ Parrott, *The Business of War*, 10-14.

[is] not [or no longer] an international market commodity.”⁹⁸ It is true that, in the 1960s and 1970s, men euphemistically referred to as “soldiers of fortune” began to reappear around the world – in Nicaragua and Colombia, in Rhodesia and South Africa, in Angola and the Congo – but these outbreaks of military entrepreneurialism were largely dismissed as footnotes in the great contest being played out between Washington and Moscow. As Philip J. Stern observed, the “history of modern state formation was a history of one form of corporation, the nation-state, triumphing over its rivals, both within and without its borders, from the East India Company to pirates, mercenaries, composite monarchies, municipal corporations, monasteries, even the church.”⁹⁹ Few questioned this narrative, and there was little empirical reason to do so. The last two decades, however, have seen private military corporations tasked with securing overseas assets belonging to governments and corporations alike, ever-growing private sector involvement in not only production but also policy facets of the military industrial complex, interventionist invasions waged against regional warlords possessed of their own private armies, jihadists proclaiming the birth of a new Caliphate in Syria and Iraq, and outbreaks of piracy off the Horn of Africa. It is thus increasingly difficult to assert the total victory of the secular state in the struggle for direct control of legitimate force. Early modern conflicts like the Livonian War – with its militant religious orders, mercenaries, privateers, and confessional disputes – seemed, from a twentieth-century perspective, hopelessly archaic. They now appear to hold important lessons for the struggles of the twenty-first. Mercenaries and other violent non-state actors are, for better or for worse, once again on the rise, making this an opportune time to revisit the phenomenon in other epochs.

⁹⁸ Joenniemi, “Two Models of Mercenarism,” 188.; Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*, 3.

⁹⁹ Stern, *The Company-State*, 213.

Chapter 2

Definitions and Problems: Who Was a Mercenary?

In the past, the approach to mercenarism taken by many military historians has been something akin to United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's famous stance on obscenity: "I know it when I see it." However, recent upsurges in scholarly interest in historical mercenaries and in contemporary private military activity have highlighted the need to develop a more formal definition of the profession. In the context of international law, such efforts have usually been intended to suppress rather than merely to delineate;¹⁰⁰ and, as Sarah Percy has pointed out, there remains a "close relationship between the definition of the term 'mercenary' and the nature of the proscriptive norm against mercenary use."¹⁰¹ The International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries – based on the Geneva Convention and introduced in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly (subsequently entering into force in 2001) – is the standard legal document, despite having been ratified by only thirty-five nations and none of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.¹⁰² Unfortunately, all available legal definitions remain problematic, both as proscriptions against contemporary mercenary activity and as tools for understanding the profession historically.¹⁰³

An increasing number of academics have offered up definitions of their own, although, in practice, most have focused on the same two criteria: foreignness and pay.¹⁰⁴ Among military

¹⁰⁰ James R. Davis, *Fortune's Warriors: Private Armies and the New World Order* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 35.; Façoise J. Hampson, "Mercenaries: Diagnosis Before Prescription," *Netherlands Yearbook of International Law* 3 (1991): 3-6.

¹⁰¹ Percy, *Mercenaries*, 49.

¹⁰² United Nations General Assembly A/RES/44/34. "International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries." <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/44/a44r034.htm>

¹⁰³ "Any mercenary who cannot exclude himself from [the Geneva Convention's] definition deserves to be shot – and his lawyer with him!" Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare: The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 375.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas K. Adams, "The New Mercenaries and the Privatization of Conflict," *Parameters, US Army War College Quarterly*, XXIX (2), 1.; Mohammed O. Beshir, *Mercenaries in Africa* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1972), 4.; H.C. Burmester, "The Recruitment and Use of Mercenaries in Armed Conflict," *American Journal of International Law* 72 (1), 37.; Kim Richard Nossal, "Roland Goes Corporate: Mercenaries and Transnational Security Corporations in the Post-Cold War Era," *Civil Wars*, 1 (1), 18.; David Shearer, "Outsourcing War," *Foreign Policy* (1998), 69.; Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*, 26.; Juan Carlos Zarate, "The Emergence of a New Dog of War: Private International Security Companies, International Law, and the New World Disorder," *Stanford Journal of International Law* 34 (Winter 1998), 18.; etc.

historians of medieval and early modern Europe, classicist Yvon Garlan’s proposal that the mercenary should be identified according to three criteria – specialization, statelessness, and pay – has proven influential, having been popularized through the work of Philippe Contamine.¹⁰⁵ Of course, equal weight need not be assigned to all three of Garlan’s requirements. Juhan Kreem, in his valuable study of mercenaries in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Reval, identified “the condition that the hired men were not members of a political community engaged in warfare” as the “crucial condition” because not all paid soldiers were mercenaries and professionalism is often difficult to assess.¹⁰⁶ However, a potential problem with this definition is that mercenaries were also sometimes retained during times of peace, when there was no a “political community engaged in warfare” with which to contrast the mercenary’s own community of origin. John France has pointed out that, in most parts of Europe, the majority of soldiers were paid from at least the twelfth century onward, primarily because some kind of funding was required for them to continue fighting effectively.¹⁰⁷ (Indeed, unlike the less professional designation “warrior” and comparable words in other languages, both “soldier” and “mercenary” etymologically refer to receipt of pay rather than to fighting, as do the equivalent German terms “*Soldat*” and “*Söldner*”.) France’s implied suggestion that the purpose to which the pay was put and perhaps even the quantity of pay received have some bearing on whether or not the soldier should be considered a mercenary is in keeping with Contamine’s earlier observation that the wages of many medieval soldiers “were not sufficient to turn them into true mercenaries [...] nor can one call every soldier a mercenary from the moment he received payment in one form or another.”¹⁰⁸ In other words, given that virtually all soldiers from the High Middle Ages onward received remuneration of some sort or another, it may be necessary to distinguish between those who only received sufficient pay to support themselves while they continued fighting and those who fought for profit. Motivation is thus an important consideration. In his influential work on the *condottieri*, Michael Mallett, for example, singled out the profit motive, as well as the “gradual

¹⁰⁵ “*Le mercenaire est un soldat professionnel dont la conduite est avant tout dictée, non pas par son appartenance à une communauté politique, mais par l’appât du gain: c’est la conjonction de ces trois aspects, de spécialiste, d’apatride et de stipendié, qui fait l’originalité de ce type humain dans le monde antique, comme dans le monde moderne.*” Garlan, *La Guerre dans l’Antiquité*, 67.; Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 99.

¹⁰⁶ Kreem, “The Business of War,” 27.

¹⁰⁷ John France, “Introduction,” in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France, 1-14 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 7.

¹⁰⁸ Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, 98-9.

emergence of a concept of ‘foreignness’”, to differentiate the “true mercenary [...] from the ordinary paid soldier.”¹⁰⁹ Mercenaries are therefore theoretically distinguished by the fact that profit is their *primary* reason for fighting, whereas regular soldiers are paid to facilitate or enable their continued military service for a cause for which they are otherwise motivated to fight by an authority to whom they already owe allegiance.

There are, however, a number of complications with a simple definition based on profit motive. Richard Abels has noted that, although the relationship between the mercenary and his master “is purely – or, at least, primarily – commercial, while that of other categories of paid troops is not,” pay might still be an important consideration for non-mercenary soldiers.¹¹⁰ As Stephen Morillo has rightly observed, “nationals” often volunteer for service primarily in order to be paid, and the volunteer armies common in the modern world are largely comprised of men and women who see their service as both a calling and a career.¹¹¹ Conversely, there have been many occasions when mercenaries have been influenced by ideological considerations as well as financial gain, such as during the French Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years’ War, and established suppliers of mercenaries often had longstanding relationships with preferred employers. Distinguishing between those who fought for profit and those who were paid just enough to subsist while serving for some other cause is also no simple matter.¹¹² In most periods, the wage of a career soldier increased with time and with promotion, while a mercenary’s pay could sometimes fall to subsistence levels (or less).¹¹³ Should a line be drawn between those who fought to make a fortune and those who merely fought to make a living? Should plunder be taken into account when calculating income? Given that the limitations of

¹⁰⁹ Michael Mallett, “Mercenaries,” in *Medieval Warfare: A History*, ed. Maurice Keen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 209.

¹¹⁰ Richard Abels, “Household Men, Mercenaries and Vikings in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France, 143-66 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 143-4.

¹¹¹ Morillo has developed one of the most nuanced and rigorous typologies of mercenary and non-mercenary military service across cultural and temporal boundaries. Stephen Morillo, “Mercenaries, Mamluks and Militia: Towards a Cross-Cultural Typology of Military Service,” in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, edited by John France (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 246-7. See Appendix Two: Typology of Military Service.

¹¹² Often, that other cause was simple poverty. Although early modern depictions of soldiers as greedy and animalistic were common, there was also widespread recognition that many were driven to their profession by the need to survive. The great dramatist Calderón de la Barca, for example, himself a veteran of Spain’s wars in Italy and Flanders, has one of his characters lament that “only great need drives me to the war, / I’d never go had I money in store.” Quoted in: R.A. Stradling, *Europe and the Decline of Spain: A Study of the Spanish System, 1580-1720* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 124.

¹¹³ Parrott, *The Business of War*, 29.

the sources available nearly always make ascertaining the motives of individual soldiers impossible, is motivation a viable means of classifying historical mercenaries, especially when we can be sure that it would have varied considerably even among the men of a single company and that very few men opted to take up arms for just one reason?

Like pay, foreignness is a problematic basis for a definition. According to this criterion, the question of whether a soldier is considered a mercenary or a regular is, in large part, determined by his relationship with the authorities employing him. In a modern context, in which wars are typically waged by the governments of nation states, a “foreign” soldier can often be defined relatively easily as a person fighting for a country other than his own. Even today, however, private military contractors fighting for profit in a war being waged by their own government or providing security services to a corporation based in their own country are sometimes considered to be mercenaries when serving outside of the recruitment framework and command structure of the national military. Historically, the question is less clear. If mercenary service is understood in terms of the relationship between the soldier and the hiring authority, then the definition of the mercenary changes according to the types of authorities invested with the power to wage war and command military service. Consideration of cultural and political context is thus vital. Steven Isaac has argued, for example, that medieval European mercenaries may have served primarily for money, but that they still generally understood their service “in terms of lordship and vassalage,” despite not being the vassals of the warlord employing them.¹¹⁴ In other words, most medieval warfare was organized through vassalage, so mercenaries had to be employed through this system, even if their treatment as vassals was only a temporary arrangement based on pay rather than a permanent relationship based on feudal allegiance.¹¹⁵

Sixteenth-century Europe contained a multitude of different empires, kingdoms, ecclesiastical states, republics, confederations, and city states, each with its own forms of political and military administration, and it stands to reason that mercenary service would have been defined

¹¹⁴ Isaac, “The Problem of Mercenaries,” 110.

¹¹⁵ Compare A.V.B. Norman’s definition of medieval mercenaries as “men serving for pay without any feudal link, with or without a tribal or national link with their employer.” A.V.B. Norman, *The Medieval Soldier* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1971), 128.

somewhat differently in each of these varied forms of polity. Indeed, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Livonia itself consisted of many separate authorities capable of making independent arrangements to hire troops for their own purposes, ranging from the Livonian Order to the bishoprics to the municipal authorities of the major towns, as well as, from 1558 onward, foreign powers that had acquired Livonian territory by one means or another. Even if a modern definition of mercenarism based on pay and foreignness could be universally agreed upon, it is therefore unlikely that it would prove capable of adequately encompassing all varieties of historical mercenary service any more than a definition of government based on the modern nation state could hope to describe the far more heterogeneous polities that existed in the past.¹¹⁶ The Livonian War is further complicated by the fact that the Livonian Confederation fragmented very quickly and its territory was divided among competing regional powers, each of which sought to claim administrative authority over parts of Old Livonia. Livonians fought in the armies of all of the invading powers, and the question of how this military service should be understood – as opportunistic mercenarism, as legitimate service to a new liege, or simply as a survival strategy in the chaotic wake of their homeland’s destruction – depends largely on whether one endorses the political and territorial claims of the power for whom they happened to be fighting. Given that loyalties within Livonia itself were starkly divided for much of the war, the historical question of whether service to one occupying power or another was more or less legitimate seems something of a moot point. Further, in Livonia and elsewhere, the classification of early modern fighters as mercenaries is invariably complicated by the fluidity of these groups, which frequently shifted allegiance and renegotiated the terms of their service, could dissolve or fragment due to the vicissitudes of war, and contained a mixture of career soldiers and men only serving temporarily. In such times, a man could be a vassal one year and a mercenary the next.

A potentially more fruitful approach is to focus on the extent to which mercenaries were able to independently assess the material opportunities available to them within the military

¹¹⁶ “I suggest that it is precisely in the words ‘paid’ and ‘foreign’ where the definition of a medieval mercenary fails to meet the needs of a medieval military historian, that this is a modern definition and that in using it we create further difficulty in trying to define the larger, more general issues of recruitment and motivation for fighting.” Kelly DeVries, “Medieval Mercenaries: Methodology, Definitions, and Problems,” in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France, 43-60 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 45.

entrepreneurial networks in which they sold their services. While that assessment must invariably be coloured by a variety of factors – social, political, and monetary – it might reasonably be supposed that the mercenary stands apart from other categories of fighting man both in the degree to which pecuniary considerations dictate his choices and in his ability to act upon those choices. In order for mercenaries to exist, there must be mercenary markets in which military contractors are able to choose between more than one potential employer and to negotiate the terms of their service.¹¹⁷ In other words, mercenaries are defined less by their receipt of pay – which, in itself, almost never set them apart from regular soldiers – than by their ability to accept the best offer from among multiple potential customers, to haggle over the price and conditions of their employment, and to reject military service that they find undesirable.¹¹⁸ This requirement distinguishes mercenaries from all unpaid soldiers, from conscripted soldiers who are paid for service that they are obligated to perform, from national volunteers who can choose whether or not to serve but not whom they serve, and from ideologically motivated fighters who choose to take up arms for non-monetary reasons. An emphasis on choice also sets the true mercenary apart from foreign soldiers with permanent positions in the armies of other states, such as the French Foreign Legion and the British Gurkha regiments, who are recruited from abroad but come under the direct control of the hiring state and operate within the command and pay structures of the regular armed forces.¹¹⁹

A different but related question is the degree of operational independence mercenaries are expected to enjoy once they have contractually committed to a period of service. Percy has argued that mercenaries “make the decision to fight independently” but may later have difficulty extricating themselves from a conflict in which they are engaged, while disputes may arise over the degree of operational independence permitted under the terms of their employment.¹²⁰ Abandoning the employer’s cause before the agreed time had expired was almost universally seen as a clear breach of contract, but the details of the mercenaries’ and

¹¹⁷ “Except for the gentlemen volunteers, because all soldiers fought for pay, it was not receipt of a wage that made a man a ‘mercenary’, or indifference to the faith or cause he served in arm, but the size of the unit that comprised him (commonly between 600 and 4000) and his dependence not on a political authority but on a contractor who had negotiated his own bargain with government. The border between private, freelance soldiers and true mercenaries, but for this definition, would be unclear.” J.R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450-1620* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985), 146-7.

¹¹⁸ Morillo, “Mercenaries, Mamluks and Militia,” 254.

¹¹⁹ Percy, *Mercenaries*, 57.

¹²⁰ Percy, *Mercenaries*, 56.

employers' obligations to one another, as well as the degree to which the former was militarily subservient to the latter, varied considerably. Freedom to choose between competing employers in a military market prior to the commencement of their service did not mean that hired soldiers would continue to enjoy total military independence once that service began, nor was it usually intended to suggest continuous financial (re)negotiation between the troops and their employer over the course of the ensuing campaign (although this often happened), as this could undermine the cohesion and operational efficiency of the army or even reduce the likelihood that the mercenaries would perform their duties at critical junctures. Further, early modern warlords tended to violate their contractual promises to pay, billet, and feed their troops at least as frequently as the mercenaries broke the terms of their service, and the question of whether (or at what point) the receipt of inadequate remuneration released the hired soldier from his obligations was a near-constant cause of dispute within early modern armies. This was a significant factor at various stages in the Livonian War, perhaps most crucially during sieges and extended periods of garrison duty, when the supposed obligation of the often badly outnumbered mercenaries to defend their employers' assets was severely tested by a combination of the threat of imminent death, their own employer's failure to pay or support them, and the enemy's pecuniary inducements to surrender or defect.

Despite these complications, the ability to assess and choose between multiple employment options in a military labour market remains an important distinguishing feature of mercenary service, and Stephen Morillo has convincingly argued that true mercenaries cannot exist in societies that do not conceptualize market relations.¹²¹ A degree of labour independence coupled with military monetization (and professionalization) is thus necessary for the establishment of a mercenary market. However, the socio-economic conditions in the mercenary's own society may be more relevant than those of his employer's (or vice versa), and it is certainly possible that one society might allow its members to sell their services to a foreign warlord who forbids his own subjects from engaging in such activities. Sixteenth-century Russian rulers, for example, sometimes made use of hired military professionals from abroad, but Russian military personnel were often forbidden from leaving the country and were obliged to serve their own prince through their status as hereditary vassals. Conversely,

¹²¹ Morillo, "Mercenaries, Mamluks and Militia," 254.

western and central European states often attempted to prevent military specialists from their own nations from traveling to Russia, as well as to the Tatars or to the Ottoman Empire, in order to prevent military technology transfer.¹²² The choices available to mercenaries were thus constrained not only by market factors, such as a shortage of viable employers or offers of adequate pay, but by macro-strategic and cultural considerations. It is also important to note that a definition of mercenarism that emphasizes the ability to choose between competing employment options in a monetized military labour market removes the requirement of foreignness because the mercenary's own government or sovereign could well be one of the potential employers whom he is free to serve and with whom he can negotiate the terms of that service. The increasingly common phenomenon of private military corporations that recruit independently contracted soldiers and security personnel primarily from the nation in which their clients are based falls into this category.¹²³

Attempts to define the mercenary have mostly focused on the absence of political ties to his employer, usually a government or sovereign of some sort. An alternative approach is to examine the status of military professionals through the absence or presence of ties to the societies in which they are employed (or even against whom they are deployed). This allows for a more historically and sociologically nuanced view than the stereotypical, anachronistic, and ultimately unhistorical depiction of the mercenary as a kind of battling *Homo economicus* detached from any considerations other than profit and self-interested greed. Instead, a more well-rounded picture emerges, in which profit is seen as one, albeit often the most important, of several overlapping or even conflicting motives driving the hired soldier. The terms of the mercenary's military service may then be conceptualized not only vertically – through his contractual arrangements with an employer – but also horizontally – through his relations with his brothers-in-arms, with other categories of troops, with the surrounding civilian population, and even with the foes whom he is employed to fight. Stephen Morillo touched upon some of

¹²² The so-called “Schlitte Affair” of the late 1540s is the most famous example. Kurt Forstreuter, *Preußen und Rußland von den Anfängen des Deutschen Ordens bis zu Peter dem Großen* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1955), 116-136.; Thomas Esper, “A Sixteenth-Century Anti-Russian Arms Embargo,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Juni 1967), 180-96.

¹²³ “We are at the moment witnessing the beginning of a transformation in global politics as they pertain to conflict resolution. It is a shift from the traditional national army and its role in ‘politics by other means’ to a much more sophisticated and complex system relying on transnational corporations, private incorporated armies, military consultants ‘for hire,’ and the subcontracting of national security.” Davis, *Fortune's Warriors*, xi.

these considerations when he identified “the ‘embeddedness’ (or not) of the terms of paid service in the social fabric of the employing society” as an important factor in his typology of military service and suggested that the most “extreme case [...] the classical mercenary” is “unembedded in the society of his employer.”¹²⁴ Needless to say, the social embeddedness of the “terms of paid service” and of the mercenary himself are two quite different matters; for example, mercenarism might be considered an “embedded” institution or practice in a society that habitually augments its military capabilities through the hiring of such troops, but this in no way implies that the soldiers are themselves “embedded” members of that society.

Understandably, given the scope and focus of his paper, Morillo did not expound on his own notion of embeddedness in great detail, and, indeed, the concept is not one that has been systematically defined in military historiography. In economic circles, in contrast, there is a substantial literature pertaining to the social embeddedness or disembeddedness of economic activity, originating in the work of Karl Polanyi, who in turn drew upon the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* dichotomy proposed by Ferdinand Tönnies, himself influenced by Thomas Hobbes, and subsequently expanded upon by Max Weber.¹²⁵ Complicating matters, there has, since the inception of the term, been a degree of inconsistency in the understanding of what precisely it means to be “embedded”. Polanyi’s initial proposal was simply that any system of labour (“*Arbeitsverfassung*”) should be understood in the context of the society in which it is embedded (“*eingebettet*”).¹²⁶ He continued to use the idea in this general sense at various times throughout his life.¹²⁷ Institutional economists and economic anthropologists have frequently deployed embeddedness in a similar fashion, to describe how individuals engaged in economic activity are influenced by institutional and/or cultural networks.¹²⁸ Elsewhere, however, Polanyi and others have understood embeddedness as a question of degree, a measure of the extent to which a given economic system or economic actor is entrenched in traditional social

¹²⁴ Morillo, *Mercenaries, Mamluks and Militia*, 244 and 254.

¹²⁵ Karl Polanyi, “Lancashire als Menschheitsfrage,” *Der Österreichische Volkswirt* (23 June, 1934): 341.; Gareth Dale, *Karl Polanyi: The Limits of the Market* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 188-206.

¹²⁶ Polanyi, “Lancashire als Menschheitsfrage,” 341.

¹²⁷ See, for example, his later assertion that “man’s economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships. He does not act so as to safeguard his individual interest in the possession of material goods; he acts so as to safeguard his social standing, his social claims, his social assets. He values material goods only in so far as they serve this end.” Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 46.

¹²⁸ Claude Menard and Mary Shirley, “Introduction,” in *Handbook of New Institutional Economics*, ed. Claude Menard and Mary Shirley (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 1-18.

relations.¹²⁹ According to this understanding, beginning in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, there was a cultural shift away from traditional value systems based on customary hierarchies and personalized relations toward marketized social relations administered by standardized, contractual legalities.

However, as Gareth Dale has pointed out, Polanyi was not suggesting that, even in the modern world, social and economic activity should be considered entirely disconnected spheres – he acknowledged that, at some level, the economic is always embedded in the social – but was instead drawing attention to the separate “*institutionalization* [emphasis mine] of economic and political activity in market societies.”¹³⁰ The mercenary is an economic actor engaged in military market activity who has often been stereotyped – or even stigmatized – as a kind of amoral, socially and politically disembedded *Homo economicus* of the battlefield. Although mercenaries were undeniably motivated by financial incentives and often did enjoy the status of social outsiders, both on account of their foreignness and because of the early modern soldier’s participation in military cultures outside the mores of civilian society, one should be wary of reading modern understandings of the economy as a reified and discrete sphere of activity disembedded from the social into a sixteenth-century context, an approach that risks reproducing the popular cliché of the mercenary as socially and politically disinterested economic warrior. Mercenaries often had a greater *degree of choice* in how they negotiated the local and international networks of social, political, and market relations that characterized the military struggles of the early modern world; and their ubiquity speaks to a broad trend toward monetization, professionalization, and entrepreneurialism in the political economy of post-medieval warfare. However, as this study hopes to demonstrate, the experiences of mercenaries serving in the Livonian War suggest that they were never wholly disembedded from those social and political networks, and they sometimes inserted themselves into them quite deliberately as a means of realizing their aims.

¹²⁹ Polanyi himself would draw a distinction between “the embedded and the disembedded condition of the economy in relation to society.” Karl Polanyi, “Aristotle Discovers the Economy,” in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*, eds. Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson, 67-94 (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 68.

¹³⁰ Dale, *Karl Polanyi*, 198-200.

All economic actors, whether merchants or mercenaries or otherwise, remain embedded in social relations. Early modern soldiers were as much the products of their societies as anyone, and their social, cultural, and religious values influenced how and for whom they fought, with armies of the day forced to operate within these parameters (some of which enhanced and some of which hampered their military effectiveness).¹³¹ Further, sixteenth-century troops were frequently billeted among the civilian population, depended on civilian support for supplies, and fought alongside townsmen during sieges. The authorities played the role of mediator to ensure a degree of harmony in the quotidian interactions between soldier and civilian, attempting to protect the soldiery from economic exploitation by civilian suppliers of food, drink, clothing, equipment, lodgings, sex, and other commodities, while also safeguarding the civilian population from the soldiers' violence.¹³² This often proved to be a challenging logistical balancing act. In the Livonian War, these problems were exacerbated by competition for resources brought about by the destruction wrought on the countryside by near-constant looting, the unforgiving winter climate, the long periods during which the Western forces were bottled up in fortified towns while the numerically superior Russians controlled the surrounding lands, and the comparatively small size of the settlements relative to the armies. The nature of sixteenth-century Baltic warfare, which was generally waged through attrition, with decisive field engagements less common than sieges and raiding (on land and at sea), also ensured that, as elsewhere throughout the early modern world, civilians were drawn into the fray as co-belligerents and as victims. All these factors increased tensions between burghers, peasants, and soldiers by forcing them into close proximity for prolonged periods, during which time they competed with one another for resources like food and coin under often unfavourable conditions.

Despite these regular interactions, soldiers were socially disembedded from civilian societies in ways that members of other professions were not. Most studies of the development of military cultures have emphasized the military's relation to other state institutions. Peter Wilson, for example, has argued that it is the combination of institutionalization and violence that makes armies unique: "armies differ from other institutions in that their primary mission entails

¹³¹ Michael S. Neiberg, "War and Society," in *Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History*, ed. Matthew Hughes and William J. Philpott, 42-60 (Houndsmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 48.

¹³² Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe*, 128.

readiness to take life and destroy property” but “the institutional character of military culture imparts a collective coherence that is lacking in other attitudes to violence.”¹³³ There is, however, a growing literature that seeks to address military culture in less strictly institutional terms. A number of developments in early modern warfare intensified the trend toward the military’s separateness from other spheres of society, including increased professionalization, the growing size of armies, the ubiquity of mercenarism, and widespread civilian fear and disapproval of these dangerous men. The advent of career soldiers who saw fighting as a profession and the concomitant decline of the more socially defined warrior classes of the old feudal system led to the creation of new military cultures with their own norms, economies, laws, and even fashions.¹³⁴ Large armies of the sixteenth century numbered in the tens of thousands, with many thousands of additional followers and support staff in the *Tross*, making them considerably larger than even the most populous cities of the early modern Baltic. Essentially temporary, mobile cities consisting of soldiers and their followers brought together by the vicissitudes of war, these military communities gave rise to peculiar customs that differed from those current in civilian life.¹³⁵ Given that many career soldiers grew up in the armies and/or the *Tross*, and in times and places that were characterized by virtually continuous endemic warfare, it may therefore be more accurate to see them as the products of a peculiar military society or (sub)culture of their own, rather than focusing on civilian life as the societal default from which the soldier had been extricated through his choice of profession.

This social separation of the soldier from civilian mores and his immersion in the military culture of his peers was no accident. Fighting men in all societies have adopted codes of behaviour calculated to set them apart from members of civilian society, and the situation in early modern Europe was no different. As Machiavelli observed, when a man became a soldier “he changed not only his clothing, but he adopted attitudes, manners, ways of speaking and

¹³³ Peter H. Wilson, “Defining Military Culture,” *The Journal of Military History* 72/1 (2008): 22 and 14.

¹³⁴ “As entrepreneurial captains came to play as large a part in raising and leading troops as did ‘natural’ local chieftains, as longer campaigns led to the snapping of more of the ties that connected the mores of field and village with those of battlefield and camp, and as permanent forces came into being, it becomes increasingly relevant to ask how far there emerged a notion of the soldiery as constituting a separate element within society.” Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe*, 127.

¹³⁵ Similar observations have been made of twentieth- and twenty-first-century military cultures. The military of the modern United States of America, for example, has been described as a “separate society, yet one still part of its larger civilian element.” James H. Toner, *Morals Under the Gun: The Cardinal Virtues, Military Ethics, and American Society* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 2.

bearing himself quite at odds with those of civilian life.”¹³⁶ Some of these changes, such as the wearing of uniforms or the initiation ceremonies practised by the *Landsknechte*, could be imposed on the soldiery by the military institutions to which they belonged, while, in other cases, they arose more organically through the gradual development of military cultures. In the early modern German world, the extravagant clothing and armour favoured by the *Landsknechte* served as a visual reminder of their special status, an expression of visual otherness somewhat paradoxically intended to be readable within the civilian society from which it set them apart.¹³⁷ Their riotously coloured, slashed garments were a deliberate violation of civilian sumptuary laws – from which they had been exempted by imperial decree, somewhat resignedly and belatedly, at the 1530 Diet of Augsburg – a form of sartorial self-fashioning and performative masculinity that simultaneously boasted a fierce individualism and membership in a distinct class.¹³⁸ These extravagant costumes elicited a mixture of shock, contempt, fear, and envy amongst the peasantry and burghers of middle Europe. Sumptuary laws in the Germanic world were motivated by a number of factors: a paternalistic desire to regulate how much people spent on luxuries; a need to maintain visual differentiation of rank and class (as well as religion, ethnicity, and gender); cultural conservatism manifest as a general mistrust of things foreign; and a moral preoccupation with enforcing modesty. The *Landsknechte*’s notorious love of finery and tendency to squander their wealth on ephemeral pleasures, as well as their role in the transmission of foreign fashions (for example, introducing certain Spanish and Italian styles into the Baltic), only enhanced the more obvious feeling of unease elicited by their propensity to violence and mayhem.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Quoted in: Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe*, 128.

¹³⁷ Over the course of the sixteenth century, the visual signifiers of the soldier’s social disembeddedness from civilian life contributed to his popularity as a stock figure in the art of the Germanic world, in which he came to be associated with a panoply of sins and peculiar habits. Helmut Schnitter, “Das Soldatenbild des deutschen Bauernkrieges,” in *Der Bauer im Klassenkampf: Studien der Geschichte des deutschen Bauernkrieges und der bäuerlichen Klassenkämpfe im Spätfeudalismus*, ed. Gerhard Heitz, Adolf Laube, Max Steinmetz, and Günther Vogler (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975).; Rainer Wohlfeil and Trudl Wohlfeil, “Landsknechte im Bild: Überlegungen zur ‘Historische Bildkunde,’” in *Bauer, Reich und Reformation: Festschrift für Günther Fanz zum 80. Geburtstag am 23. Mei, 1982*, ed. Peter Blickle (Stuttgart: Ulmer, 1982).; Keith Moxey, *Peasants, Warriors and Wives: Popular Imagery in the Reformation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).; Matthias Rogg, *Landsknechte und Reisläufer: Bilder vom Soldaten. Ein Stand in der Kunst des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).; John R. Hale, “The Soldier in Germanic Graphic Art of the Renaissance,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1986): 85-114.

¹³⁸ Reinhard Baumann, *Landsknechte: Ihre Geschichte und Kultur vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Dreissigjährigen Krieg* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1994), 68.

¹³⁹ The Nürnburger Meistersinger and playwright Hans Sachs (1494-1576) captured some of the scandal elicited by the appearance of these men: *Wilder Leute hab ich nie gesehen. / Ihre Kleider aus den wildesten Sitten*,

In Livonia, where Central European mercenaries were less common during the largely peaceful decades of the first half of the sixteenth century, the appearance of these colourful fighting men on the eve of the Livonian War provoked a measure of astonishment. Balthasar Russow's telling of the arrival in Livonia of German troops hired by Wilhelm von Fürstenberg describes how locals of all classes would stop and stare agape at the bizarre clothing of the mercenaries; and, in a later passage, he recounts how the beleaguered Revalian burgers longed to be rid of the sound of drums and the "guests with the long leggings" (soldiers) and instead hear the bagpipes of the peasants and welcome back the "guests with the long trousers" (sailors).¹⁴⁰ Accounts like Russow's give some indication of the popular association of soldiers not only with fighting, but also with those other aspects of military culture, such as music and dress, that set them apart from civilian society. When assessing popular perceptions of mercenaries, it is therefore important to distinguish between xenophobic hostility to their foreignness – encountered, for example, by the Scottish troops stationed in Estonia in the winter of 1573-1574 and implied in Russow's report of the Rigans' reaction to a multinational army led by Mikołaj Radziwiłł entering their city early in the war¹⁴¹ – as opposed to a feeling of subcultural or occupational otherness aroused by their occupational status as soldiers. The *Landsknechte*, although recruited from a variety of regions, belonged to the same greater German cultural world as the Livonians, who nevertheless found their ways shocking and outlandish. Unlike the religious heterodoxy of the Scots (Calvinists in a city of Lutherans and Catholics) or the frighteningly alien splendour of Radziwiłł's host, their separateness arose not from their status as foreigners but from membership in a peculiar (sub)culture associated with their profession.

In summa, soldiers remained connected to civilian society through the economy of supply, billeting, and quotidian contact with persons of non-military background, but the advent of

*/ Zerflammt, zerhauen und zerschnitten. / Einsteils ihr Schenkel blecken täten, / Die andern groß weit Hosen hätten, / Die ihnen bis auf die Füß herabhingen, / Wie die gehosten Tauber gingen. / Ihr Angesicht schrammet und knebelbartet, / Auf das allerwildest geartet; / In summa: wüst aller Gestalt, / Wie man vor Jahren die Teufel malt. Quoted in Heinrich Pleticha, *Landsknecht, Bundschuh, Söldner. Die Große Zeit der Landsknechte, die Wirren der Bauersaufstände und des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* (Würzburg: Arena Verlag, 1974), 21.*

¹⁴⁰ Russow, 68 and 153. Based on the first passage, Paul Johansen also concluded that troops of this type had not previously been seen in Livonia. "Das Volk in den Gassen bestaunte diese fremden, bunten Gäste mit ihren Pluderhosen, Hellebarden und Hankenbüchsen, das hatte Livland früher nicht gesehen." Paul Johansen, *Balthasar Rüssow als Humanist und Geschichtsschreiber* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1996), 147.

¹⁴¹ Russow, 98.

larger, more permanent, more professional armies also led to the creation of military communities with their own distinctive cultures and values. If “embeddedness” is to be approached as a question of degree – a “matter of more or less,” as Terence Hopkins put it in his discussion of economic relations¹⁴² – then early modern soldiers undoubtedly experienced a higher level of detachment from civilian society than did members of many other professions. Although the *entirely* socially unembedded and *purely* financially motivated early modern mercenary of Morillo’s abstract typology (see Appendix One: Typology of Military Service) is as much a fiction as is the idealized *Homo economicus* of the modern world, a corollary question is whether mercenaries were typically seen as less socially and politically integrated than other types of troops. While acknowledging the diversity of early modern European military institutions, it is tempting to conclude that, as a general rule, this was indeed the case. Certainly, in the Livonian War, the paid fighting men who arrived from the great mercenary markets of northern Germany – and, to an even greater degree, those from further afield, like the Scots – had an outsider status that distinguished them from local forces, such as the knights of the Livonian Order, the cavalry provided by the Livonian nobility, or the town militias.¹⁴³ Merchants of war whose business was the renting out of their military services, mercenaries must, by definition, enjoy at least a degree of distance from the socio-political matrix of the polity for whom they fight. Were they to lose their market independence or fight primarily for reasons other than profit – in other words, were their economic motives to become secondary to their social, political, or religious relations – then they would no longer be mercenaries in the classical sense, but something more akin to subsidized allies. Here, Polanyi’s definition of market economy is pertinent.

In a market economy the production and distribution of material goods in principle is carried on through a self-regulating system of price-making markets. It is governed by laws of its own, the so-called laws of supply and demand, and motivated by fear of hunger and hope of gain. Not blood-tie, legal compulsion, religious obligation, fealty

¹⁴² Terence Hopkins, “Sociology and the Substantive View of the Economy,” in *Trade and the Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*, eds. Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 299.

¹⁴³ In other cases, the matter is less clear. Danish armies of the sixteenth century, for example, consisted primarily of North German mercenaries, typically with only a few thousand cavalry provided by the country’s own nobility, so there were very few standing native troops with whom the mercenaries might be compared. The Russians employed far fewer mercenaries than the western powers, but they did deploy large numbers of Tatar vassals on the Livonian front, who, while not mercenaries, were also not well integrated into the social milieu of the northwest Russian lands whence they operated over the course of the war.

*or magic creates the sociological situations which make individuals partake in economic life but specifically economic institutions such as private enterprise and the wage system.*¹⁴⁴

Straddling the intersection of the military and the economic, the early modern mercenary was a fighter who sold his service in a military market, who was primarily motivated by profit, and the terms of whose labour were contractually defined in specifically economic terms. All of these qualities set him apart from most other classes of soldier who were driven to fight by such non-market forces as “blood-tie, legal compulsion, religious obligation, fealty or magic.”¹⁴⁵ This is not, of course, to say that mercenaries were unmoved by cultural or spiritual concerns or questions of loyalty and allegiance, but it was the primarily economic terms of their service that defined their profession and set them apart from those who “came to the assembly point in family, feudal or regional groups and continued to fight in the service of their rightful sovereign but under the orders of their immediate natural lords [and who] left home together in their customary social formations.”¹⁴⁶

In attempting to define the mercenary, legislators and academics alike have focused almost exclusively on the mercenary’s relationship with his employer (and his employer’s society more broadly), while much less attention has been paid to his relations with the enemy. Statist approaches to enmity have emphasized its political underpinnings. Most famously, Carl Schmitt argued that the friend-enemy dichotomy is central to political sovereignty and that communities are formed in opposition to an “other” with whom violent conflict is at least theoretically possible.

An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy (...) The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy. It is the most extreme consequence of enmity. It does not have to

¹⁴⁴ Polanyi, “Aristotle Discovers the Economy,” 68.

¹⁴⁵ Unlike in, for example, the Spanish *tercios*, piety has not usually been seen as a major motivating factor in the Imperial armies of the sixteenth century, although this generalization has been questioned. Michael Kaiser and Stefan Kroll, “Militär und Religiosität in der Frühen Neuzeit: Ergebnisse, Probleme, und Perspektiven,” in *Militär und Religiosität in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Michael Kaiser and Stefan Kroll (Münster: LIT, 2004), 11-19.

¹⁴⁶ Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, 98-9.

*be common, normal, something ideal, or desirable. But it must nevertheless remain a real possibility for as long as the concept of the enemy remains valid.*¹⁴⁷

A case could certainly be made that enmity between political communities played a part in the outbreak of the Livonian War. The Livonians and their Russian neighbours to the east had a long history of conflict, as did the Lithuanians and the Russians, the Russians and the Swedes, the Swedes and the Danes, etc. The mercenary, on the other hand, presents a problem for an understanding of conflict predicated on antagonism between politically defined communities, since he is very often not a member of any of the political communities engaged in the struggle. Schmitt argued that the decision to fight is made when “the adversary intends to negate his opponent’s way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one’s own form of existence” and that “only in real combat is revealed the most extreme consequence of the political grouping of friend and enemy.”¹⁴⁸ It would be difficult to dispute this interpretation when looking at warfare from the point of view of two enemy states, their rulers, or, in some cases, even their citizens or subjects. However, in the early modern European context, one often encounters a form of warfare in which much of the actual fighting was done by mercenaries with no allegiance to the political communities that employed them and little or no enmity toward those whom they were paid to kill.¹⁴⁹ Far from fighting to destroy the opponent’s way of life, the mercenary’s own way of life is only made possible by the existence of the enemy, who is, in any case, somebody else’s enemy rather than his own. Just as the soldier ceases to be a pure mercenary when he fights primarily *for* the interests a community to which he belongs or *for* a cause that he espouses, his independent mercenary status is also called into question if he is primarily motivated by a desire to fight *against* a particular opponent. In such cases, he might be seen more properly as a subsidized ally fighting against a common enemy.

¹⁴⁷ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political: Expanded Edition*, translated and with an introduction by George Schwab, with a forward by Tracy B. Strong and notes by Leo Strauss (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 28-33

¹⁴⁸ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 27 and 35.

¹⁴⁹ In the fifteenth century, for example, following Lithuania’s conversion to Christianity, the custom of Western European knights gaining remission of sins by fighting alongside the Teutonic Order against their pagan neighbours came to an end, and an increasing number of German knights and soldiers began to inform the Order that, while in the past they would have fought the pagan Lithuanians for “chivalry”, they would now only fight against Christian Lithuania for pay. Sven Ekdahl, “The Teutonic Order’s Mercenaries During the ‘Great War,’” in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 358.

Abstract indifference to thwarting his employer's enemy is thus potentially just as characteristic of the true mercenary as is disinterest in his employer's cause. From his point of view, war is neither "*eine bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln,*" as von Clausewitz would have it, nor a strife driven by intercommunal enmity between enemy states, as in Schmitt's more extreme formulation, but is part of the sphere of market activity, simply a forum in which the mercenary can ply his trade for plunder and profit. In the context of the Livonian War, while the mostly German mercenaries fighting for the Livonians, Danes, or Swedes would no doubt have felt culturally closer to their employers than to their Russian foes, they were certainly not motivated to travel to the eastern Baltic by any special desire to fight *against* the Tsar any more than by a particular eagerness to fight *for* the Livonian Order or the kings of Sweden and Denmark. (Indeed, Moscow made use of European military experts from the West when she had access to them, and, on occasion, foreign mercenaries and Livonians alike defected to the Russians over the course of the war.) It is this economic outlook that sets mercenaries apart from other types of combatants, including the crusaders who traveled to Livonia in the past, who, while foreign and professional and sometimes paid, were motivated by a dual desire to support the establishment of a Christian colony in the eastern Baltic and by antipathy for the pagan foe. If the mercenary could be said to have any true enemy at all, it may simply have been whoever stood between him and his plunder and pay, ideally his employer's enemies but potentially his employer himself or even society at large. As the Tuscan politician Alamanno Salviati remarked of the *condottiero* Niccolò da Tolentino, "in general all men of his occupation disgust me, because they are our natural enemies and despoil all of us, and their only thought is to keep the upper hand to drain our wealth."¹⁵⁰

Finally, any discussion of the role – social, economic, or military – of mercenaries in a conflict as long and complex as the Livonian War must take into account temporal change. The war had a transformative effect on the eastern Baltic, destroying old institutions and established norms and ushering in a generation of violence and chaos. There were many twists and turns in the twenty-five years between Ivan the Terrible's invasion of Old Livonia and the establishment of a new regional order under the auspices of the Truce of Plussa, and, as the

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters*, 209.

political and military situation fluctuated, so too did the circumstances of many individual fighting men. Livonians of all classes turned to military enterprise out of necessity or opportunity, while men who arrived in the region as mercenaries married into local families, acquired property in the region, or otherwise integrated into Livonian society. Political loyalties shifted with the tide of battle, as lords, soldiers, and locals alike flocked to whomever currently seemed best equipped to protect or to pay them. Perhaps the most significant change was the evolution of Livonia from a society that was unprepared for war, as demonstrated by the Confederation's haphazard preparations on the eve of the Russian attack and the surprising ease with which the Tsar captured such redoubtable cities as Dorpat and Narva, into one organized for war and permeated by warlike relations. Many foreign mercenaries were drawn to the eastern Baltic because they saw opportunities for personal advancement in the social transformations taking place, but, once there, they themselves had a transformative effect on the region. The Livonians whom Balthasar Russow described as being initially overcome by amazement at the sight of a few *Landsknechte* quickly became used to the presence in their country of soldiers of many nations, converging on their war-torn homeland from the length and breadth of Europe, from Scotland to Tataria. Those who survived did so by adapting to the more warlike conditions forced upon them, and the martial professionalism and expertise introduced by foreign mercenaries was a crucial component in the region's militarization. The position of the soldiery and their relation to Livonian society was thus very different in 1583 than it had been in 1558.

To conclude, there is no simple or universal definition that can be applied with equal validity to all mercenaries in all historical contexts. However, it is possible to identify certain criteria that, when taken together, delineate the most salient features of the profession.

- Pay. Mercenaries were paid for their service, although this rarely distinguished them from other classes of soldier. In some cases, pay was promised but not delivered.
- Professionalism. Mercenaries were professionals in the basic sense that soldiering was their profession. This reveals little about their military efficacy, which varied considerably.

- Motivation. The mercenary's primary motivation, although not necessarily his only one, was financial gain through a combination of pay and plunder. The amount of pay received could range from the bare minimum needed to subsist (or, in some cases, not even that) to a fortune. Regardless of the amount in question, the receipt of pay, usually in conjunction with the opportunity for looting, must be more important than any ideological or personal desire to fight either for the employer or against the employer's enemies.
- Market choice. Mercenaries exist in societies that conceptualize market relations, and they are able to choose an employer. Their service is voluntary, although they may subsequently become contractually bound to continue rendering it for a prescribed period of time.
- Outsider status. Mercenaries typically experience a greater degree of social and political detachment than do other classes of soldier, although this status is never total, and they could and did become involved in local social and power relations, whether on their own terms or through the vicissitudes of circumstance.
- Context. The position and classification of the mercenary should be considered in historical context, taking into account the institutional and social norms of his day, as well as any specifically military (sub)cultures to which he belonged. Where possible, more exact terms like *Landsknecht* or *routier* are to be preferred to the general "mercenary". Contextual considerations also require a degree of methodological flexibility. As Oscar Wilde observed, "to define is to limit," and limitation can be either detrimental or beneficial when developing a practical definition applicable to a broad range of historical settings.

Chapter 3

Context and Causes of the Livonian War

3.1 The Livonian War in Historical Context

The so-called "Livonian War" was actually a series of overlapping conflicts involving, in some capacity, all of the major states and polities of the sixteenth-century Baltic. Generally, however, the term is understood to refer to the quarter-century of nearly continuous hostilities waged over the territory of the Livonian Confederation – roughly contiguous with the modern republics of Estonia and Latvia – that began with the Russian invasion of January 1558, and ended with the Truce of Plussa, signed by Russia and Sweden on August 10, 1583. The war's geographic parameters therefore correspond to those of Old Livonia, while its temporal scope is defined by the duration of Tsar Ivan IV's military involvement in the region. The principal antagonists in this struggle were the Livonian Confederation itself (until its dissolution in 1561), the Tsardom of Russia (or Muscovy), the Kingdom of Sweden, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the Kingdom of Poland, with Poland and Lithuania adopting an increasingly cooperative policy that culminated in the Union of Lublin and, in 1569, the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Denmark was also involved at various stages of the war, often in a diplomatic capacity, since significant Danish military participation was constrained by a variety of factors: her domestic priorities; the peripheral position of her primary base in the eastern Baltic (the island of Ösel); and the defection of her foremost representative in the region, the young Duke Magnus of Holstein, to the Muscovites in 1570. For the most part, this policy of limited engagement was acceptable to Copenhagen since, despite occasional attempts to renew their old medieval claim to northern Estonia (a Danish duchy from 1219 to 1346), the Danes were unwilling or unable to devote as many resources to the struggle in the east as were their rivals.¹⁵¹

At times during the course of this lengthy struggle for control of the eastern Baltic, all of the competing powers found themselves drawn into other conflicts, some of which had implications for the fate of Livonia, if only because they necessitated the deployment of troops

¹⁵¹ Mastery of the Sound guaranteed Denmark a privileged position in east-west trade without the need to control eastern Baltic ports and river mouths, something that would become a priority for Russia and Sweden.

elsewhere. The Northern or Nordic Seven Years War (1563 to 1570), in which Sweden-Finland was pitted against an alliance of Denmark-Norway, Poland, and Lübeck, with neither side emerging as decisive victor, meant that the war in the east was of secondary importance to the two Scandinavian powers for most of the 1560s. Meanwhile, the significant threat posed by the Khanate of Crimea was a constant concern to the Poles, the Lithuanians, and the Muscovites. While Tatar attacks on Russia during this period have sometimes been characterised by Western historians as raids (albeit substantial ones), the Russians themselves placed at least as much military emphasis on their southern frontier as on their western border. This concern was more than justified when Khan Devlet I Giray sacked Moscow in 1571, burning the city to the ground with tremendous loss of life.¹⁵² Internal clashes, such as Stefan Batory's dispute with Danzig in the mid-1570s, also sometimes prevented the major powers from committing to decisive action against one another on the Livonian front, prolonging the war. Finally, the Livonian War should be understood in the context of earlier conflicts, such as the Russo-Swedish War of 1554-1557, the dispute between the Archbishop of Riga and the Livonian Order in the mid-1550s, the longstanding competition between Muscovy and Lithuania for control of the lands of old Rus', and even *Landmeister* Wolter von Plettenberg's struggle with Ivan III in the early 1500s. All of these disturbances helped to set the stage for the pan-Baltic conflagration of the late sixteenth century.

Considering its pivotal impact on the development of early modern Northern Europe, the Livonian War has been relatively under-studied by military historians. There has been a surge of interest in the medieval eastern Baltic over the past two decades, generating a wave of publications on the Northern Crusades of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, often with an emphasis on themes of culture clash, colonialism, and conversion.¹⁵³ In contrast, the

¹⁵² The English merchant and ambassador Jerome Horsey's description gives some sense of the scale of the slaughter: "infinite thousands of men, women, and children burned and smothered to death by the fiery air ... the river and ditches about Moscow stopped and filled with multitudes of people ... so many thousands were there burned and drowned as the river could not be rid nor cleansed of the dead carcasses with all the means and industry that could be used in twelve months after." Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, eds., *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 272.

¹⁵³ See, in particular, the following collected volumes: Alan V. Murray, ed., *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150-1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).; Alan V. Murray, ed., *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).; Alan V. Murray, ed. *The Northern-Eastern Frontier of Medieval Europe: The Expansion of Latin Christendom in the Baltic Lands* (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2014).; Marek Tamm, Linda Kaljundi, and Carlsten Selch Jensen, eds., *Crusading and Chronicle Writing on the Medieval*

complex dynastic, mercantilist, and territorial wars of the sixteenth century have attracted less attention. As a result, rather more has been written, recently at least, about the thirteenth-century origins of Old Livonia than about her equally bloody sixteenth-century demise. Indeed, until the appearance of Robert Frost's *The Northern Wars: War, State and Society in Northeastern Europe, 1558-1721*, there was no cohesive treatment of the long struggle for military dominance in northeastern Europe that began under Ivan IV and ended with the victorious Peter the Great's establishment of the Russian Empire as the region's pre-eminent power, nor even a comprehensive account of the entire Livonian War, the opening salvo of that belligerent era.¹⁵⁴

While monographs examining more limited aspects of the war are comparatively abundant, they have tended to reflect the national agendas of their authors. Estonian, Latvian, and German scholarship has traditionally focused on the first stage of the conflict, which culminated in the defeat of the Livonian Order at Ermes and the partitioning, in 1561, of Livonia by Russia, Poland-Lithuania, Sweden, and Denmark. To some extent, the historiography has reflected the preoccupations of the nineteenth-century Baltic German historians responsible for assembling and editing the major document collections of the era. Most notably, Friedrich Gustav Bienemann's (1838-1903) *Briefe und Urkunden zur Geschichte Livlands in den Jahren 1558-1562* (Riga: Kymmell, 1865-1873) and Carl Schirren's (1826-1910) eight volume *Quellen zur Geschichte des Untergangs Livländischer Selbständigkeit* (Reval: Kluge, 1881) and three volume *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des Untergangs Livländischer Selbständigkeit* (Reval: Kluge, 1883-1885) are limited to the first few years of the war, covering only a fraction of its total duration. To a degree, this may be explained by the fact that the Livonian Confederation, the polity on whose (former) territory the war was waged,

Baltic Frontier (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).; Ane Bysted, Kurt Villads Jensen, Carsten Selch Jensen, John H. Lind, eds. *Danske korstog – Krig og mission i Østersøen* (Copenhagen: Høst & Søn, 2004).

¹⁵⁴ Frost's emphasis on the "essential continuity of the series of wars between 1558 and 1721" is reminiscent Klaus Zernack's contention that these successive conflicts constitute a discrete epoch in northeastern European history. See also Margus Laidre's treatment of the period from 1558 until 1660 as a Baltic Hundred Years' War. Frost. *The Northern Wars*, 13-14.; Klaus Zernack, "Das Zeitalter der nordischen Kriege als frühneuzeitliche Geschichtsepoche," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 1 (1975): 54-79.; Margus Laidre, "Der Hundertjährige Krieg (1558-1660/61) in Estland," *Forschungen zur Baltischen Geschichte* 1 (2006): 68-81. For the period 1558 to 1583, see also the relevant chapters in Leonid Arbusow's influential *Grundriss der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands* (Riga: Jonck und Poliewsky, 1908) and David Kirby's treatment in *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Baltic World 1492-1772* (London: Longman, 1990).

was eliminated relatively early on, leaving the surrounding powers to squabble over the spoils for the next two decades. Curiously, then, Livonia ceased to be an independent party near the beginning of the war that bears her name, although many Livonians continued to fight on, sometimes with courage and tenacity, in the service of the various foreign potentates contesting their homeland. The interest of the region's historians in the period up to and including 1561 therefore reflects a special focus not on the beginning of the Livonian War but on the end of Old Livonia, with the region's independence from foreign rule not to be recovered until the establishment of the Estonian and Latvian nations more than three and a half centuries later.

Swedish and Russian historians have generally approached the war from the point of view of its role in their own nations' respective ascents to great power status, which Sweden enjoyed during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (the so-called "*stormaktstid*") and which Russia achieved somewhat later but has never lost. Such nationally focused discussions, while interesting in their own right, are not necessarily conducive to more well-rounded treatment of the war or to balanced analysis of its general characteristics. They also run the risk of teleology, for example by seeing in Sweden's 1561 annexation of Reval and the surrounding north Estonian provinces a deliberate policy of empire-building that culminated in her seventeenth-century circum-Baltic imperium, or by framing Ivan IV's invasion of 1558 as inevitable in light of later Russian attempts to secure Baltic ports.¹⁵⁵ (Rarely in such formulations is much weight given to the fact that, when the dust settled in the early 1580s, it was the Rzeczpospolita that controlled the lion's share of Livonia's former territory, albeit for only a few decades.) For reasons quite distinct from those of their Baltic colleagues, Russian and Swedish historians have also tended to be drawn to the early stages of the conflict, particularly the thorny problem of the war's causes and the concomitant questions of what motivated Ivan IV and Erik XIV to intervene militarily in the eastern Baltic in the first place. Consequently, Estonia's position within the Swedish Empire and the complex relationship between the Baltic provinces and Sweden proper have arguably received less attention than

¹⁵⁵ "Swedish expansion began in 1561, when the city of Reval and the three adjacent provinces of Harrien, Wierland and Jerwen in Estonia detached themselves from the disintegrating state of the Livonian Knights and placed themselves under Swedish protection." Klaus-Richard Böhme, "Building a Baltic Empire: Aspects of Swedish Expansion, 1560-1660," in *In Quest of Trade and Security: The Baltic in Power Politics 1500-1900*, vol. I, ed. Göran Rystad, Klaus-Richard Böhme, and Wilhelm M. Calgren, 177-220 (Lund: Lund University Press, 1994), 177.

discussions of why Sweden initially took Reval, Harrien, and Wierland under her protection and how this led to her transformation into a great power.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, Ivan the Terrible's motives on the eve of the war have been scrutinized in greater depth than Russian policy in the later stages of the struggle. Anglophone scholarship has typically followed the Swedish perspective on the period, likely because it was the Swedes who, in the early seventeenth century, emerged as the temporary victors in the contest for control of the Baltic.

Broader discussions within the military historiography of early modern Europe have largely bypassed the Livonian War, except in the context of nationally oriented works that touch upon it obliquely, such as the abundant Swedish monographs on military development under the Vasas or studies of the Muscovite army during the reign of Ivan IV. This is unfortunate given that, by any standard, it was a conflict of considerable magnitude, waged during a period that witnessed important developments in military technology and organization. The reasons for this oversight are somewhat murky. First, there is the nature of the war, which, for much of its duration, was characterized by prolonged periods of raiding and plundering conducted by light cavalry and irregular militias, with few of the decisive field engagements beloved of traditional military historians.¹⁵⁷ More importantly, perhaps, is the enduring notion that changes in Western warfare brought about by the much-debated "Military Revolution" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not apply (to the same degree, at least) in Eastern Europe, which has traditionally been seen as militarily backwards in its continued reliance on cavalry and its comparatively late adoption of such technological innovations as the *trace italienne* style of fortification. A fairly typical statement to this effect is Alexander Filjushkin's assertion that

¹⁵⁶ Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland," 54.

¹⁵⁷ Pioneers of the field like Hans Delbrück and Charles Oman tended to see the pre-modern military emphasis on siege warfare and raiding as the product of a failure to recognize the decisiveness of pitched battles. Celebrated battles of the Middle Ages – such as the English victories at Crécy, Agincourt, and Poitiers – were held up as examples of the impact of large field engagements, and the relative rarity of such encounters was seen as evidence of a general medieval lack of strategic awareness. Ignored was the fact that, while the English won many of the major battles of the Hundred Years' War, the French ultimately won the war itself largely through a strategy of raiding, besieging, and attrition. In the 1950s, the work of such historians as Verbruggen and Smail would transform the understanding of medieval warfare. Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst in Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, vol. 3 (Berlin: G. Stilke, 1920).; Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War, the Middle Ages from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1898).; J.F. Verbruggen, *De Krijgskunst in West-Europa in de Middeleeuwen, IXe tot begin XlVe eeuw* (Brussels: Paleis Academiën, 1954).; R.C Smail, *Crusading Warfare (1097-1193)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).; David Whetham, *Just Wars and Moral victories: Surprise, Deception and the Normative Framework of European War in the Later Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 7-9.

"Russia was not involved in the so-called European 'military revolution' that began in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries [and] consisted of giving up the system of feudal, knightly warfare, the growing role of artillery and professional mercenaries and various changes in armament, strategy and tactics [...] in Russia there was nothing of the kind."¹⁵⁸ This view has not gone unchallenged.¹⁵⁹ And, even if true to a degree, it seems a poor reason to neglect the defining military struggle of sixteenth-century northeastern Europe, especially in light of the fact that the progenitor of the military revolution debate, Michael Roberts, was himself first and foremost a historian of Vasa Sweden, one of the principal states engaged in the contest.

What, then, *have* been the central issues in the historiography of the Livonian War? There is certainly no more widely disputed aspect of the conflict than its cause, a question that has often been closely aligned with discussions of Muscovite policy and the personal qualities of Ivan the Terrible, on the understanding that it was Muscovy's invasion of Livonia in early 1558 that precipitated the war and that Ivan was largely responsible for his country's decision to attack. Complicating the matter are two separate issues; first, the bungled diplomatic negotiations between Dorpat and Muscovy during the 1550s, and, second, the Prussian, Lithuanian, and Polish interference in the internal affairs of the Archbishopric of Riga between 1555 and 1557. Both of these missteps soured Ivan's relationship with Livonia and exacerbated his hostility toward the Confederation, raising the question of how much the prevarications of Livonian ambassadors or the meddling of Sigismund Augustus and his allies should share the blame for the outbreak of war. The motivations behind the decisions of the young, recently crowned kings of Denmark and Sweden, Frederick II and Erik XIV, to take portions of Estonia under their countries' protection in 1560-1561 – actions in some ways out of step with the more measured policies of their royal sires¹⁶⁰ – have also been discussed in the context of the war's causes, as it was the acquisition of Estonian territory at this moment which drew the two

¹⁵⁸ Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 17.

¹⁵⁹ "In the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, roughly at the same time as Roberts's military revolution in the West, Russia underwent similar - though not identical - changes to those occurring in Western Europe..." Michael C. Paul, "The Military Revolution in Russia, 1550-1682," *The Journal of Military History*, vol. 68, No. 1 (2004), 9-45. For further discussion, see Chapter 5.

¹⁶⁰ "The years 1559-1560 marked a watershed in Nordic history. The old, cautious monarchs (and brothers-in-law) Christian III and Gustav Vasa had kept peace with one another, but on their deaths in these years they were succeeded by the warlike cousins Frederik II and Erik IV." Østein Rian, "Government and Society in Early Modern Scandinavia 1560-1721," in *A Revolution from Above? The Power of State in 16th and 17th Century Scandinavia*, ed. Leon Jespersen (Odense: Odense University Press, 2000), 22.

Nordic powers into the conflict. This was a time when both the Scandinavian kingdoms and Muscovy were moving toward more centralized forms of government under strong monarchs (less so in Poland-Lithuania, where the power of the *szlachta* and the *Sejm* persisted), the kind of men Andrejs Plakans has euphemistically referred to as "adventurous rulers".¹⁶¹ It is thus unsurprising that historians have sometimes seen these nations' involvement in the Livonian War as extensions of the ambitions of the potentates who ruled them.¹⁶² Rather than simplifying our understanding of the era, this "great man" approach has raised as many questions as it has answered, primarily because the protagonists of the war remain such enigmatic figures. Both Ivan IV and Erik the XIV have widely been seen as paranoid and psychologically unstable, particularly in their later years, with Ivan's motives being especially inscrutable and difficult to interpret.¹⁶³ Needless to say, ascribing major events in the course of the war to decisions made by men whose sanity is in doubt raises serious complications for any historian intent on a reasoned analysis of the period.

While questions surrounding the causes of the war's outbreak, the formative influence it had on its participants' respective empires, and the personal characters of its protagonists are all worthy objects of study, there are several other aspects of the struggle that deserve to be explored in greater depth. For example, far from rendering the Livonian War an inappropriate context in which to re-examine the various claims of the military revolution debate, the diversity of forces involved – including some of decidedly non-Western disposition – seems to recommend it for precisely this purpose.¹⁶⁴ A central tenet of the military revolution paradigm

¹⁶¹ Andrejs Plakans, *A Concise History of the Baltic States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 98.

¹⁶² William Urban has argued that Balthasar Russow's *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, which has cast its shadow over all subsequent histories of the period, has traditionally been read for its nuanced "portrayal of an era dominated by strong-willed and ambitious men." Urban, "Introduction," iii. Although Russow himself claims to have written his work "in order that the young people who were born during the time of change in the Livonian way of life, as well as those yet to come, might see why God Almighty caused such great turmoil and heavy punishment to befall Livonia," the common (mis)reading of his chronicle as a work of "great man" history may indeed have influenced the direction taken by later generations of historians. *Russow*, 50.

¹⁶³ Robert O. Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy 1304-1613* (London: Longman, 1987), 172.; Rian, "Government and Society," 21; Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden, 1525-1611* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 236-7.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Howard argued that the campaigns of Francis I and Charles V were still essentially "medieval" in their motivation in that "they were fought to assert or defend personal rights of property and succession, to reduce unruly vassals to obedience, to defend Christendom against the Turk, or the Church against heresy" and saw the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) as the end of this pattern of warfare. Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 20. Following this chronology would make

has been that key western European innovations in tactics, organization, and technology gave the emerging nations of the early modern West the competitive edge needed to overtake their wealthier and more populous rivals in Asia and elsewhere, thereby paving the way for centuries of Western imperial and commercial dominance on a global scale.¹⁶⁵ The wide variation in the political structures, logistical capabilities, and armed forces of the nations pitted against one another during the Livonian War provides an ideal opportunity to test this claim by examining whether, at precisely the period that this evolutionary leap forward in Western arms is generally thought to have accelerated, the Western armies of the Swedes (and Danes) did, in fact, prove decisively superior to those of their eastern European adversaries.

The performance of western and central European mercenaries, the quintessential European professional soldiers of the day, in the Livonian theatre is especially relevant to claims of early modern Western military superiority. Does their impact support the notion of the decisive superiority of Western warfare – and, by implication, of Eastern European military backwardness – in the late sixteenth century? The protracted duration of the conflict, its tendency toward back-and-forthery, and the ultimate inability of any single power to establish hegemony over the eastern Baltic littoral until Sweden's defeat of Poland-Lithuania in the 1620s suggests that, at least in the sixteenth century, a more qualified assessment may be advisable. In addition to questions of military interest, the sixteenth century was also a pivotal period in the social and political evolution of the eastern Baltic, witnessing the dissolution, metamorphosis, and reorganization of many of the region's civic and administrative institutions. By the latter half of the century, social, economic, political, and military developments became inseparable as Livonia was transformed from a society in some ways unprepared for war into one shaped by it. The mercenary – not just a hired soldier, but also an agent of social and political change with goals and motivations of his own – embodied the violent spirit of this tumultuous era.

the Livonian War one of the first major post-medieval European conflicts, although many of the characteristics Howard considered medieval continued to apply in the Livonian and Russian contexts after 1559.

¹⁶⁵ Parker, *The Military Revolution*.

3.2 Causes of the Livonian War

Broadly speaking, the origins of the conflicts that engulfed Livonia in the second half of the sixteenth century may be traced to the decline and eventual collapse of the region's two dominant medieval institutions, the Hanseatic League and the Teutonic Ordensstaat, which left a power vacuum in the eastern Baltic that surrounding states quickly sought to fill.¹⁶⁶ This situation was exacerbated by concurrent dynamics elsewhere in northern Europe: Danish-Swedish rivalry in the aftermath of the breakdown of the Kalmar Union; the expansionist policies of the Muscovites; the Russian-Lithuanian struggle for control of their vast borderlands; and Russian-Swedish border wars in Finland, Karelia, and Ingria. The Livonians increasingly found themselves an unwilling accessory to these disputes, which they were unable to prevent spilling over into their own territory, with dire consequences for the region's inhabitants.¹⁶⁷ Scholarly discussions of the war's immediate causes have focused on three issues: Ivan IV's motives; whether the major Baltic powers were driven more by economic or security concerns; and the structural weaknesses and diplomatic failings of the Livonian Confederation.

The position of the Livonian Order in the mid-sixteenth century was precarious. Increasingly isolated following the 1525 secularization of Prussia, it was also unable to keep pace with military and political developments occurring in larger neighbouring states. Compounding these problems, by the 1550s the Order was facing significant challenges to its authority from within the Livonian Confederation, particularly as the Archbishopric of Riga, supported by the Duke of Prussia and the King of Poland, pushed for greater autonomy. The weakening of the Livonian Order made Livonia, which was the most economically developed region in the eastern Baltic, a tempting target for neighbouring potentates intent on territorial expansion. However, most historians have identified Livonia's value to the burgeoning powers of the early modern Baltic as lying not so much in the intrinsic worth of her own lands as in her geographic

¹⁶⁶ Böhme, "Building a Baltic Empire," 181.

¹⁶⁷ The population of Estonia in 1558 was approximately a quarter of a million but had declined to a mere seventy thousand by 1625. Kirby, *Northern Europe*, 150.

position, with its potential to control lucrative trade routes between Russia and the West.¹⁶⁸ For centuries, this trade had been dominated by the Hanseatic League, but, especially after Ivan III's decision to close the Novgorod Kontor in 1493, the Hansa's monopoly had begun to be challenged by growing numbers of Dutch and English merchants and by the naval ambitions of the Scandinavian monarchies. It has been generally surmised that the decline of the Teutonic Order's military power and the breaking of the old Hanseatic commercial dominance meant that, by the middle of the sixteenth century, the major Baltic powers all saw control of the strategic ports of Riga, Reval, Narva, and Pernau as a means to harness Russian trade for their own profit, while, for their part, the Russians sought access to Baltic ports where they could trade directly with western European merchants. Desire to control the mouths of the major rivers and waterways linking the Russian interior to the Baltic Sea, as well as the fortified settlements situated at these strategic locations, has therefore been understood as a major factor both in the establishment of Old Livonia during the crusades and in its destruction during the Livonian War.¹⁶⁹ However, regardless of the long term aspirations of the Baltic powers to control east-west trade routes, a number of more exigent diplomatic controversies contributed to the ebullition of the conflict.

The Baltic crisis of the 1550s began with the Russian-Livonian negotiations of 1554, intended to renew the fifty year peace agreed upon in 1503 by *Landmeister* Wolter von Plettenberg and Grand Duke Ivan III.¹⁷⁰ Fresh from the conquests of the Tatar khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, the Muscovites were undoubtedly in a position of strength, and they now introduced the stipulation that the Bishopric of Dorpat pay the Tsar a stupendously large tribute in recognition of former Russian sovereignty over the outpost of Yuryev.¹⁷¹ This demand –

¹⁶⁸ One may compare Livonia's geographic position to that of the Low Countries or even Korea, relatively small territories whose situation between major powers afforded unparalleled trading opportunities in times of peace but made them prone to invasion in times of war.

¹⁶⁹ For a discussion of the role of the North German merchant community in the initial phases of the Livonian Crusade, see Paul Johansen, "Die Bedeutung der Hanse für Livland," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 65 (1940), 1-55.; Leonid Arbusow, "Die Frage nach die Bedeutung der Hansa für Livland," *Deutsches Archiv für Geschichte des Mittelalters* 7 (1944), 212-39.; Mark R. Munzinger, "The Profits of the Cross: merchant involvement in the Baltic Crusade (c.1180-1230)," *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006), 163-85.

¹⁷⁰ Knud Rasmussen, *Die livländische Krise. 1554-1561* (Kobenhaven: Universitetsforlaget, 1973), 227.

¹⁷¹ *Monumenta Livoniae Antiquae; Sammlung von Chroniken, Berichten, Urkunden und anderen schriftlichen Denkmalen und Aufsätzen, welche zur Erläuterung der Geschichte Liv-, Ehst- und Kurlands dienen*, 5 vols. (henceforth *MLA*) (Riga: E. Frantzen, 1835-1847), V, 508-15.

"totally unexpected" according to Balthasar Russow¹⁷² – came as a shock to the Livonian delegates, who nevertheless agreed to meet Ivan the Terrible's requirements within the next three years in return for a fifteen year truce.¹⁷³ It is difficult to gauge the sincerity of the Livonians' intention to pay the tribute, but it seems probable that their apparent compliance was really a sleightful diplomatic gambit meant to forestall any immediate military conflict while giving them time to drum up foreign support before renegeing on their obligations. Russow recounts, for example, that, despite the misgivings of the mayor of Dorpat, Johann Henck, who felt uneasy about committing to a legally binding tributary relationship with the Tsar, the chancellor, Georg Holzschuher, was able to persuade the city council that

*the Muscovite is a tyrant and would bring upon this land shame and devastation from which it would not soon recover. Therefore, let us sign a treaty pledging him tribute, but then not uphold it one whit. He is a peasant and will not understand. We will have it revoked in the Emperor's Kammergericht.*¹⁷⁴

There can be little doubt that Holzschuher and his supporters, whose position was apparently grounded in a mixture of arrogance and fear, both underestimated Ivan's resolve and miscalculated the Holy Roman Empire's ability to intervene on Livonia's behalf.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, in the years to come, many Livonians would come to lament the Emperor's inability or unwillingness to intervene directly on their behalf, except to send a few futile embassies to Moscow.¹⁷⁶ To make matters worse, Dorpat's options were further undermined by the bishopric's mistrust of its partners elsewhere in the Livonian Confederation. Even as the Tsar pressed his claims with more and more force, the bishop refused offers of military aid from the Livonian Order, fearful that the *Landmeister* would seize the opportunity to establish direct control over the diocese or that the Order's mercenaries would ransack his lands.¹⁷⁷ Ironically,

¹⁷² Russow, 63.

¹⁷³ For further details, see Georg von Rauch, "Stadt und Bistum Dorpat bis zum Ende der Ordenszeit," *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 24 (1975), 599-606.

¹⁷⁴ Russow, 66.

¹⁷⁵ Lavery has argued that the Empire was "largely unable and unwilling to project power beyond its borders." Lavery, *Germany's Northern Challenge*, 5.

¹⁷⁶ "Once a year a delegation arrives, but what does it achieve? They are incapable of anything but haughty words and the devil renders them harmless. And where is the Empire that is supposed to defend this poor country? Alas!" Renner, 169-70.

¹⁷⁷ This correspondence is recorded in *Briefe*, I, 26. and *QU*, II, 69-83. Later, once the Russian invasion began and the magnitude of Dorpat's peril became obvious, the bishop recanted and wrote to the Livonian Order to request military aid. Friedrich Georg von Bunge, ed., *Archiv für die Geschichte Liv-, Esth- und Curlands*. 8 vols. (henceforth *Archiv*), I, 18-9, 43-5, II, 32-42, 50-7, 69-74, and 76-9.; Renner reports that, when the Master

then, Dorpat's desire to remain independent from the Order (coupled with broad concerns over mercenary violence) would be one factor that contributed to her inability to defend that independence from the Russians.¹⁷⁸ The town was largely left to deal with the Muscovites alone, deprived of substantial support from elsewhere within the Livonian Confederation, whose two most powerful factions, the Livonian Order and the Archbishopric of Riga, were at the same time becoming embroiled in a separate crisis of their own.

In 1529, Duke Albrecht of Prussia had helped his brother, Wilhelm von Brandenburg, become coadjutor of the Archbishopric of Riga.¹⁷⁹ Wilhelm was an unpopular choice, and both the Livonian *Landmeister* and the city of Riga at first refused to recognize his appointment. There were well-founded fears that he ultimately planned to secularize the archbishopric and submit to Poland, as Albrecht had done in Prussia; further, custom forbade any member of a German princely family from holding high office within the Confederation lest his dynastic connections endanger Livonian independence, a stipulation later enshrined in the 1541 Treaty of Wolmar.¹⁸⁰ Despite these concerns, upon the death of Archbishop Thomas, in 1539, Wilhelm ascended to the episcopal throne. In 1556, the simmering tension between the archbishop and the Livonian *Landmeister* erupted into open conflict when Wilhelm selected the eighteen-year-old Duke Christoph von Mecklenburg as his coadjutor and successor. In addition to the questionable appointment of Christoph, the Order had intercepted letters sent by the archbishop to the Duke of Prussia suggesting that he dispatch troops to Livonia, since the Confederation was in disarray and they could easily exploit the situation to seize control and secularize it.¹⁸¹

offered to send reinforcements, "the bishop's councillors and the noblemen opposed this and dissuaded the bishop with the argument that if these *landsknechte* and horsemen came into the diocese, they would plunder it and take all manner of liberties with their wives and children. This they could not endure. And if it were to be devastated, better by enemies than by friends. That at least they could understand." *Renner*, 33.

¹⁷⁸ It should be noted, however, that historical assessments of the diplomatic ineptitude of the bishop and city council in the build-up to the war largely echo Russov's scathing account, which did not go unchallenged at the time. Elert Kruse and Heinrich Tiesenhausen issued particularly forceful rebuttals of his version of events. See also Tielemann Bredenbach's eyewitness account of the city's fall in *Archiv*, I, 184-91.

¹⁷⁹ For a recent discussion of Duke Albrecht's Livonian policy, see Stefan Hartmann, "Aspekte der Außenbeziehungen Livlands im Spiegel der Korrespondenz Herzog Albrechts von Preußen (1525-1570)," in *Die Baltischen Länder und Europa in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Norbert Angermann, Karsten Brüggemann, and Inna Pöltz-Jürjo (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), 131-64.

¹⁸⁰ Walther Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1954), 35-6.

¹⁸¹ Even after the failure of secularization, Albrecht remained involved in Livonian, particularly Rigan, affairs and continued to advise his brother from behind the scenes. Stefan Hartmann, "Herzog Albrecht von Preußen und Livland 1525-1570. Analyse und Ergebnisse der Regestierung der Abt. D Livland des Herzoglichen Briefarchivs in Geheimen Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin," in *Preußenland* 1 (2010), 34-88.

This prompted the *Landmeister*, Heinrich von Galen, to have both Wilhelm and Christoph arrested, which in turn aroused the ire of a powerful neighbour, Sigismund Augustus, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania.¹⁸² Sigismund had no doubt hoped that Poland might acquire Livonia in the same manner that she had gained Prussia three decades earlier (and, indeed, this would be the fate of Courland and southern Livonia a few years later). The death of a Polish ambassador, Lanski, at the hands of Livonian border guards added insult to injury, and the King mobilized his army. A standoff ensued, with the forces of the Livonian Order, supported by eight companies of *Landsknechte* who had been shipped over from Germany, taking up position at Bauske, while the Lithuanians camped across the border with a force about five times as large.¹⁸³ War seemed likely until Emperor Ferdinand and the Duke of Pomerania interceded, exonerating *Landmeister* von Galen for his attack on the Archbishopric of Riga but also demanding the restoration of both Wilhelm and Christoph.¹⁸⁴ Peace was restored according to terms agreed upon at Wolmar by the Order and the delegates from the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁸⁵ The agreement was then ratified at Pozwol in early September of 1557 by the King of Poland, Wilhelm von Fürstenberg (the new Livonian *Landmeister*), Archbishop Wilhelm, and Duke Christoph.¹⁸⁶ This pact, which effectively placed southern Livonia under Polish-Lithuanian protection, was viewed with considerable mistrust by the Tsar, who rightly noted its anti-Russian implications.

As the instigator of the war, Ivan has been the focus of the debate surrounding its causes. What exactly motivated him to attack Livonia in January of 1558? In a letter to the Livonians composed in November of 1557, he invoked the treaty of 1554, listing a number of complaints: the failure of the Livonians to hand over old Orthodox churches to the Russian merchant community; the city of Dorpat's broken pledge to pay him tribute within three years; the Livonian ban on Russian merchants trading directly with foreigners; and the violation of the

¹⁸² Described in *Renner*, 22-3.

¹⁸³ *Renner*, 28.

¹⁸⁴ Despite their strained relationship with their archbishop, the citizens of Riga had backed him against the *Landmeister*, fearful that a victory for Heinrich von Galen would threaten the city's customary rights; consequently, they were now required to renew their oath of fealty to the Livonian Order. Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question*, 37.

¹⁸⁵ *MLA*, V, 516-20.

¹⁸⁶ The text of this pivotal treaty may be found in *MLA*, V, 121 and *QU*, I, 1-19.

Livonians' promise not to conclude treaties with the Lithuanians or Poles.¹⁸⁷ Several of these claims were repeated in a letter the Tsar later sent to Emperor Ferdinand explaining and justifying his invasion, and, in the summer of 1558, when the Livonians (reeling from the Russian onslaught) belatedly offered to make good on their promise to pay the tribute, Ivan refused on the grounds that they had previously broken faith with him.¹⁸⁸ For much of the twentieth century, however, the prevailing view was that these gripes were essentially pretexts for a Russian invasion primarily driven by economic concerns, such as the position of Russian merchants in the Livonian towns, Livonian efforts to prevent Western arms and military experts from traveling to Russia, and a longstanding Muscovite desire for Baltic ports.¹⁸⁹ Soviet and Swedish historians of the mid-twentieth century especially emphasized the latter, explaining it as part of a more general Russian drive westward to the Baltic coast (a position characterized by Norbert Angermann as "*Vorstöß zur Ostsee*"), which was seen as the natural western boundary of Russian imperial ambition.¹⁹⁰ Artur Attman, the major Swedish champion of this interpretation, noted, for example, that "although the Tsar in his claims asserted his hereditary right to Livonia, the various measures which he took show that the expansion westwards was prompted by the prospect of direct contact with western Europe, as was the case with the connections via the Arctic Ocean," a view which he traced as far back as the

¹⁸⁷ Russow, 70.; Carl Schirren, ed., *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des Untergangs der livländischen Selbständigkeit*, 3 vols. (henceforth NQU) (Reval: Kluge, 1883-85), I, 31-33.; *MLA*, V, 184.

¹⁸⁸ Russow, 80.; Renner, 70-1.; *MLA*, V, 535-41.

¹⁸⁹ Sture Arnell, *Die Auflösung des livländischen Ordensstaates. Das schwedische Eingreifen und die Heirat Herzog Johans von Finnland 1558-1562* (Lund: A.-b. P. Lindstedts Univ.-Bockhandel, 1937), 10-6.; Esper, "A Sixteenth-Century Anti-Russian Arms Embargo," 180.; Ian Grey, *Ivan the Terrible* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott, 1964), 126 and 132.; Robert Payne and Nikita Romanoff, *Ivan the Terrible* (New York: Crowell, 1975), 166-7.; Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy*, 158-9.; Sven Svensson, *Den merkantila bakgrunden till Rysslands anfall på den livländska ordensstaten 1558. En studie till den ryska imperialismens uppkomsthistoria* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1957).

¹⁹⁰ For a summary of Soviet historiography relating to Ivan's Livonian policy, see Arved Freiherr von Taube, "Die Livlandpolitik Zar Ivans IV. Groznyj in der sowjetischen Geschichtsschreibung," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* (1965): 411-44.; Norbert Angermann, *Studien zur Livlandpolitik Ivan Groznyjs* (Marburg: J.G. Herder Institut, 1972), 1-3. One may compare Angermann's "*Vorstöß zur Ostsee*" to Robert Kerner's idea of a Russian "urge to the sea". Robert Kerner, *The Urge to the Sea: The Course of Russian History: The Role of Rivers, Portages, Ostrogs, Monasteries, and Furs* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1946). The teleological view that Russian expansion to the Baltic was somehow geographically inevitable was endorsed by Kirchner but rejected by Urban, who warned of the dangers of confusing Ivan's motives with those of Peter the Great. Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question*, 122.; William Urban, "The Origin of the Livonian War," *Lituanus* 29, No. 3 (1983), 14.

work of Nikolai Karamzin.¹⁹¹ Ruslan Skyrnnikov, the major Soviet expert on the reign of Ivan the Terrible and the Time of Troubles, also believed that trade was the most important factor in Ivan's decision to invade, although he allowed for other motivations, such as opportunism in light of the clear deficiencies of the Livonian military and a general sense of Russian confidence in the wake of the conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan.¹⁹² Erich Donnert, a prominent advocate of a Marxist economic interpretation, adopted a similar stance.

*Dem Vordringen der beiden großen Slawenreiche, Polens und Rußlands, an das Baltische Meer lagen ökonomische Ursachen zugrunde. Polen und Rußland wollten die Erzeugnisse ihrer Wirtschaft auf direktem Wege, ohne kostspielige Vermittlung durch andere Staaten und Mächte, nach dem übrigen Europa führen.*¹⁹³

The economic explanation, with its focus on the acquisition of key commercial ports, draws upon a particular facet of Russow's sixteenth-century assessment, hinted at here in his account of Russia's loss of Narva to the Swedes on September 6, 1581.

*The loss of the city of Narva was no small defeat and disgrace for the Muscovite, for Narva had been one of his prized possessions, which he valued and treasured more than all of Livonia. It was here that he assembled the goods of all the Muscovites and Russians, and the ships of all nations in all of Christendom came here, providing him with everything his heart desired and buying all manner of goods in exchange, depending on his favor for their livelihood.*¹⁹⁴

Russow wrote from a distinctly Revalian perspective, and one of his city's foremost concerns throughout the war was that she would lose her lucrative control over the Western European trade with Russia that passed through the Gulf of Finland – trade that, at various times during the war, was diverted to Narva, Ivangorod, or Vyborg. It seems plausible, therefore, that Russow was influenced by the questionable Revalian assumption that their own preoccupation with denying the Russians direct access to Western trade was mirrored by an equally great Russian desire for access to it. While Ivan did place a degree of value on securing avenues to wider European markets – he was delighted, for example, when English mariners began

¹⁹¹ Artur Attman, *The Struggle for Baltic Markets: Powers in Conflict 1558-1618* (Göteborg: Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället, 1979), 11. See also his earlier elucidation of this view in Artur Attman, *Den ryska marknaden i 1500-talets baltiska politik 1558-1595* (Lund: Lindstedt, 1944), 121-3.

¹⁹² Ruslan G. Skyrnnikov, *Ivan the Terrible*, ed. and trans. Hugh F. Graham (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1981), 49-51.

¹⁹³ Erich Donnert, *Der livländische Ordensritterstaat und Rußland. Der Livländische Krieg und die baltische Frage in der europäischen Politik 1558-1583* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1963), 173-4.

¹⁹⁴ Russow, 214.

rounding the Northern Cape to Archangel – it is by no means clear that this was his foremost motivation for going to war, and there is certainly nothing to suggest that he valued Narva "more than all of Livonia".

Economic historians, then, have tended to dismiss Ivan's insistence on a large tribute and his dubious claim to sovereignty over the diocese of Dorpat as disingenuous pretexts for what was in fact a trade war. His demands were seen as inherently unreasonable, perhaps even irrational, and therefore could not have been the real motives for the invasion.¹⁹⁵ However, it is probably a mistake to ascribe to Ivan the kind of economic nous, let alone commercial focus, that would move the mercantilist monarchs of later centuries; he was far more concerned with empery than with *ἐμπόρια*. Contemporary accounts of the sixteenth-century Muscovite court paint a picture of a proud, paranoid, and irascible ruler, one deeply preoccupied with such issues as his rights as Tsar, the primacy of the Orthodox faith, and military expansion in virtually all directions.¹⁹⁶ Whether or not the tribute was an unreasonable demand – the Livonians certainly thought so, and modern scholarship has tended to agree – Ivan himself seems to have believed sincerely in the justice of his claim. After all, Dorpat *had* paid tribute to various Rus' princes in the past, and, in the treaty of 1554, the city *had* agreed to do so again. Further, as Anti Selart has convincingly argued, all of the participants in the conflict were eager to produce legal support for their authority over Livonia, and Ivan was particularly assiduous in his efforts to

¹⁹⁵ In light of the diplomatic breakdown in the lead up to the war and the Livonians' shock at the suddenness of the Muscovite invasion, it is interesting to consider the Englishman William Camden's slightly later account of Ivan's views on the appropriate protocols involved in declaring war and concluding treaties, which seem to have been quite different from those current in western and central Europe. It is not inconceivable that conflicting assumptions regarding proper diplomatic etiquette may have contributed to the tensions between Moscow and Dorpat. Camden writes: "Touching these matters [Queen Elizabeth I's attempts to arrange a peace between Russia and Sweden] Sir Hierome Bowes Knight was sent Embassadour thither, but could hardly satisfy him, for that the Moscovite with much Importunity required an absolute League written in his own words; and would by no means hear that it was not part of a Christian, nor allowable by the Law of Nations, to exercise Hostility without first denouncing War, or to come to Blows before such time as he that offered the Wrong was required to give Satisfaction, and to abstain from doing farther Injury." William Camden, *The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth, Late Queen of England* (London: M. Flesher, 1688), 285. For further discussion of the topic in a Western European context, providing an instructive contrast to Ivan's approach, see Frederick J. Baumgartner, *Declaring War in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); Jocelyne G. Russell, *Peacemaking in the Renaissance* (London: Duckworth, 1986).

¹⁹⁶ "Während einige 'rationale' Absichten der Moskauer Politik wie zum Beispiel die Eroberung der wirtschaftlich bedeutenden Ostseehäfen in letzter Zeit in Frage gestellt wurden, sind die 'irrationalen', religiösen Motive des Moskauer Zaren und seiner Umgebung für die Forschung zunehmend interessanter geworden." Anti Selart, "Die Reformation in Livland und konfessionelle Aspekte des livländischen Krieges," in *Leonid Arbusow (1882-1951) und die Erforschung des mittelalterlichen Livland*, ed. Ilgvars Misāns and Klaus Neitmann (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2014), 340.

couch his claim in historical terms as a just restitution of the ancient tributes formerly paid to the Rus' princes of Novgorod and Pskov, once independent cities that he now controlled.¹⁹⁷ His repeated emphasis on the fact that the Livonian delegates of 1554 had sworn solemn oaths to deliver the payment and sealed these assurances by the kissing of crucifixes also points to a sincere feeling of betrayal when they failed to deliver. That these past tributes and promises had been leveraged by fear, rather than out of any genuine Livonian feeling that the Russian claims were legitimate, would not have troubled a man of Ivan's character, although this Thrasymachian streak hardly set him apart from other potentates of the day.¹⁹⁸

In the past half century or so, economic explanations have gradually given way to a resurgent endorsement of the more military and political interpretations first popularized in the nineteenth century by historians like Harald Gabriel Hjärne.¹⁹⁹ Manfred Hellmann, for example, took Ivan's emphasis on the Dorpat tribute largely at face value, believing that he feared his authority as Tsar would be compromised if he backed down from his claim.²⁰⁰ Joel Raba argued that the Livonians' willingness to sign truces construed by the Muscovites as acknowledging at least a degree of Russian sovereignty over their territory nourished Ivan's growing diplomatic confidence and uncompromising insistence on his alleged imperial rights.²⁰¹ Norbert Angermann likewise prioritized the importance of the tribute, pointing out that there is scant evidence to support the idea that Ivan had much interest in the Russian merchant classes, whom he later brutalized during the *oprichnina*, and that, had his primary concern been the capture of a Baltic port, he might simply have contented himself with Narva instead of trying to conquer all of Livonia.²⁰² While Kirchner did not discount the possibility

¹⁹⁷ Selart argued that, quite apart from the question of the historical verisimilitude of Ivan's assertions, it is useful to understand his position as a propaganda campaign through which the Tsar hoped to establish the primacy of his claims over those of his rivals. Anti Selart, "Livland – ein russisches Erbland?" in *Russland an der Ostsee. Imperiale Strategien der Macht und kulturelle Wahrnehmungsmuster (16. bis 20. Jahrhundert)*. *Russia on the Baltic: Imperial Strategies of Power and Cultural Patterns of perception (16th-20th Centuries)*, ed. Karsten Brüggemann and Bradley D. Woodworth (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2012), 29-65.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Cherniavsky argued that Ivan the Terrible should be understood as a Renaissance prince, an extreme embodiment of many of the foibles and furies that were shared by other aspiring autocrats of the age. Michael Cherniavsky, "Ivan the Terrible as Renaissance Prince," *Slavic Review* 27, No. 2 (1968), 195-211.

¹⁹⁹ Harald Hjärne, *Svensk-ryska förhandlingar 1564-72* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1897).

²⁰⁰ Manfred Hellmann, *Iwan IV, der Schreckliche; Moskau an der Schwelle der Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1962), 41-2.

²⁰¹ Joel Raba, "Russisch-livländische Beziehungen am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts: Partnerschaft oder Konfrontation?" *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 26 (1978), 575-87.

²⁰² Angermann, *Studien zur Livlandpolitik Ivan Groznyjs*, 5.

that trade may have played a part in the Muscovites' schemes, he placed greater emphasis on other factors, such as Ivan's personal qualities and military ambitions.²⁰³ The Tsar's pre-war diplomatic focus on Dorpat, Livonia's most significant *inland* town, also lends some dubiety to the notion that he was primarily concerned with gaining access to the sea. Indeed, Prince Kurbsky, who personally participated in the invasion of 1558, explicitly stated that the campaign was initially intended to punish the Livonians for their failure to pay the tribute, rather than to seize their cities or territory.²⁰⁴

*In those years the truce with the Livonian land ended, and envoys came from the Livonians asking for peace. And our tsar began to press for the tribute which his grandfather had mentioned in a charter – from that time onwards for about fifty years, no payment had been made by them. But the Germans had no wish to pay him that tribute, and for this reason the war began ... not to take fortresses and towns, but to war on their land.*²⁰⁵

Few have argued quite so forcefully and consistently against an economic motive for Ivan's invasion as Erik Tiberger.²⁰⁶ While acknowledging other factors, such as Livonian attempts to prevent military experts and equipment from reaching Russia, Tiberger believed that the Livonians were essentially collateral damage in the prolonged struggle between Russia and Lithuania (and later Poland) for control of their vast borderlands, particularly the area which had been the medieval heartland of the Rus' before its devastation by the Mongols. The gradual disintegration of the Golden Horde over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had presented an opportunity for both Moscow and Lithuania to expand into this region, and they now competed for land and legitimacy in a struggle that centred on the city of Smolensk and the Lithuanians' refusal to acknowledge Ivan's preeminent status as Tsar and leader of the Orthodox world. For Tiberger, then, the Treaty of Pozwol was the immediate cause of the

²⁰³ Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question*, 101.

²⁰⁴ He also shared Russow's view that it was a divine punishment inflicted upon the Livonians for their indolence, moral laxity, and impiety, being particularly offended by their alleged desecration of Orthodox icons.

²⁰⁵ Compare Russow's contention that the "Muscovite did not begin this war with the intent of conquering the cities, castles and provinces of the Livonians, but rather in order to demonstrate his serious intent and to admonish them to uphold their pledges and promises." Russow, 73.; Prince A.M. Kurbsky, *History of Ivan IV*, ed. and trans. J.L.I. Fennell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 107.

²⁰⁶ Erik Tiberger, "Kritische Bemerkungen zu einigen Quellen über den Anfangen des livländischen Krieges, 1558," *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 25 (1976).; Erik Tiberger, "Die Politik Moskaus gegenüber Alt-Livland, 1558," *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 25 (1976).; Erik Tiberger, *Moscow, Livonia and the Hanseatic League 1487-1550* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 1995).; Erik Tiberger, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Livländischen Krieges. Die Beziehungen zwischen Moskau und Litauen 1549-1562* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1984).

Russian invasion, and it must be understood in the broader context of longstanding disputes between Moscow and Vilnius. Robert Frost largely agreed, emphasizing Russia's rivalry with Lithuania and Poland, again seeing the Treaty of Pozwol as a provocation that the Russians could not ignore (as well as the main reason behind Ivan's decision to end his conflict with the Swedes in the north in 1557).²⁰⁷ Stewart Oakley similarly contended that the pact was "undoubtedly in breach of the treaty of 1554 between Livonia and Muscovy" and would have been seen as a threat to Russian security, while William Urban agreed in downplaying the importance of trade relative to both the treaty and the Dorpat tribute.²⁰⁸

An interesting variant on this theme is to be found in Knud Rasmussen's proposition that, while the Livonian War did emerge from Russia's rivalry with Lithuania and Poland, the Crimean Tatars played a significant part in determining the circumstances of its outbreak. Rasmussen stressed that both Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania wanted one another to become embroiled in a war with the Crimeans, whom they sought to use against one another. He also thought that Ivan's decision to invade Livonia in early 1558 was an opportunistic move stimulated by the Tatars' attack on Podolia and Volhynia, which necessitated the deployment of Sigismund's forces far to the south.²⁰⁹ (By the same token, Poland and Lithuania had applied pressure to Livonia, through Riga, during the 1550s, when the Muscovites were busy fighting the Tatars in the east.) For Rasmussen, then, the Livonian War was primarily a product of the territorial struggle between Russia and Poland-Lithuania, but its immediate cause was a temporary shift in the fortunes of these two great powers brought about by their oscillating relations with the Crimean Khanate.²¹⁰ The Livonians themselves were certainly aware of the advantages of Russo-Tatar conflict, and Gotthard Kettler received embassies from and

²⁰⁷ "Pozwol was seen by Ivan as a direct provocation. He rapidly ended a brief frontier war against Sweden in Ingria and Karelia (1554-7) to increase pressure on Dorpat." Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 4. Sweden and Russia ratified the Second Peace of Novgorod on April 2, 1557. The fact that Ivan insisted that the Swedes also pledge not to form a military alliance with Livonia, Lithuania, or Poland does suggest that he was already concerned about the prospect of an anti-Russian coalition involving these states.

²⁰⁸ Stewart P. Oakley, "War in the Baltic, 1550-1790," in *The Origins of War in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jeremy Black (Edinburgh: John Donland Publishers Ltd.), 20.; Urban, "The Origin of the Livonian War," 11 and 14.

²⁰⁹ Rasmussen, *Die livländische Krise*, 226-7.

²¹⁰ Compare Balthasar Russow's assertion that, "when the estates of Livonia learned of the Muscovite's success and victory against the Tatar kingdoms, they also knew that the long-standing peace was at an end, and that now it would be their turn." *Russow*, 63.

exchanged correspondences with Khan Devlet I Giray over the summer of 1559.²¹¹ It is also noteworthy that many of Ivan's own advisors were in favour of following up the conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan with an invasion of the Crimea, rather than Livonia, but Ivan himself may have deemed Livonia the softer target given Crimea's exceptionally defensible position, greater distance from Moscow, and alliance with the Ottomans.²¹²

While discussions of the war's causes have centred on the complicated interactions between Livonia, Russia, and Poland-Lithuania, the question of Scandinavian involvement in the conflict has generally been treated separately. To a degree, this is justifiable; the outbreak of war in Livonia in the 1550s was certainly the result of the collision of Livonian, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, and, to a lesser extent, Prussian interests. However, that the war took the eventual course that it did was also a product of Swedish and Danish involvement, neither of which was guaranteed at the inception of the struggle. So, while the question of why there was *a* Livonian War can be answered by examining the policies of the Livonians, Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians in the mid-1550s, the more nuanced problem of why the conflict unfolded in the precise manner that it did also touches upon the circumstances of Scandinavian involvement. What prompted the Nordic powers, particularly Sweden, to enter the fray? As with debates about Russia's motivations on the eve of the invasion, historical discussions of Sweden's rationale for joining the war have tended to be divided into two camps: one focused on economics and the other on security.²¹³ For much of the twentieth century, the former perspective, initially proposed by Ingvar Andersson and then promoted by Artur Attman, predominated in Swedish scholarship.²¹⁴ Sven Nilsson's assertion that "the expansionist foreign policy that is a mark of the Swedish Age of Greatness began as early as the mid-

²¹¹ *QU*, III, 273-6 and 278-9.; *Archiv*, III, 278-9. Renner reports that a Tatar ambassador was present at the *Landtag* held at Wilna in late August of 1559, and he had brought a letter from the Khan to the *Landmeister* indicating that the Crimeans would "with God's help, once again invade the Muscovite's territory in full force. By attacking him at home with our soldiers we would be giving aid to your country, something we have always been completely willing to do." *Renner*, 120.

²¹² David R. Stone, *A Military History of Russia* (London: Praeger Security International, 2006), 14.

²¹³ Stefan Troebst, "The Attman-Roberts Debate on the Mercantile Background of Swedish Empire-Building," in *Die schwedischen Ostseeprovinzen Estland und Livland im 16.-18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Aleksander Loit and Helmut Piirimäe, (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993), 33-52.

²¹⁴ Attman, *Den ryska marknaden i 1500-talets*, 121-3.; Attman, *The Struggle for Baltic Markets*.

sixteenth century” and “for a long time afterwards it looked east, having as its goal control of the trade routes to Russia” is a fairly typical assessment of this type.²¹⁵

The alternate theory proposes that Erik XIV accepted the offer of voluntary submission made by Reval and the noble corporations of Harrien and Wierland in 1561 as a security measure, intended to pre-empt any Danish attempt to gain a foothold in the eastern Baltic – a foothold that would have brought the Danes closer to their goal of establishing *dominium maris baltici* and encircling the Swedish realm. In the latter half of the twentieth century, this view continued to be championed most forcefully by Michael Roberts, who argued that Erik’s “aims may well have been essentially defensive” and that the Swedes acquired northern Estonia almost reluctantly in order to prevent it falling into the hands of the Danes or Russians, which would have imperiled their hold on Finland and Ingria.²¹⁶ Sweden’s 1561 annexation of Reval, a city founded by Danish crusaders more than three centuries before, was indeed met with resentment in Copenhagen and contributed to the worsening of relations that prompted the outbreak of the Northern Seven Years’ War two years later, although other factors like the issue of the *Tre Kronor*, naval rivalry, and border disputes in southern Scandinavia were no doubt of equal or greater importance.²¹⁷ The longstanding view that Denmark’s ambitious young King, Frederick II, and his bellicose advisors at court, including influential German mercenary commanders who hoped to profit from the outbreak of war, were largely responsible for starting the conflict between the two Scandinavian powers has increasingly been supplanted by the proposition that the Danes may have acted out of a reciprocal concern with defending their security against Swedish expansion.²¹⁸ Both Sweden’s annexation of northern Estonia, in January of 1561, and Denmark’s purchase of the Bishopric of Ösel-Wiek, the year before, have thus been portrayed as essentially defensive in nature, motivated not so

²¹⁵ Sven A. Nilsson, “Imperial Sweden: Nation-Building, War and Social Change,” in *De stora krigens tid. Om Sverige som militärstat och bondesamhälle*, ed. Sven A. Nilsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 273.

²¹⁶ Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, 203-4; Michael Roberts, *The Swedish Imperial Experience 1560-1718* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 3-42.

²¹⁷ Contemporary observers made this connection. Renner, for example, wrote that “but soon a great war broke out between the two kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden, not the least cause of which was the fact that King Erik had taken over Reval.” *Renner*, 197. Stockholm’s subsequent naval blockade of Narva, which would not have been possible without having first established control over Reval and the north Estonian coastline, was also an impetus for Lübeck to ally with Denmark against Sweden in 1563.

²¹⁸ Lavery, *Germany’s Northern Challenge*, 11.

much by an appetite for national enlargement as by a fear that their rivals would snatch up vulnerable territories of long-term strategic importance.²¹⁹

It is therefore tempting to find in the contest between Sweden and Denmark for Estonia a parallel with the Russian-Lithuanian struggle for Livonia, where the Muscovites and Lithuanians, while certainly eager to establish their own dominance, were each also anxious to prevent the lands of the collapsing Livonian Confederation coming under the rule of the other. Just as Erik feared the prospect of a Danish Estonia and Frederik was wary of Sweden's growing influence in Baltic affairs, so too did Ivan dread the possibility of a Polish-Lithuanian Riga and Sigismund ultimately could not tolerate a Russian Livonia.²²⁰ The dissolution of Old Livonia not only invited intervention from her neighbours because they desired to make her their own but also because they could not abide her falling into the hands of their enemies. Each of the region's major powers thus sought out pliable allies among the fractious parties who made up the Livonian Confederation: Poland-Lithuania plotted with the Archbishop of Riga; Sweden answered the call of Reval and the northern Estonian nobility; Denmark did business with the Bishop of Ösel-Wiek and (unsuccessfully) with the Revalians; and Russia attempted to manipulate the feckless Duke Magnus of Holstein and appealed to the beleaguered native peasantry whose dissatisfaction with German rule he hoped to exploit. All of the powers also sought the backing of the fickle Baltic German nobility, whose roving bands of cavalry proved to be useful, if unreliable, allies at various stages in the war. With such powerful external forces pulling at the threads that held the Livonian Confederation together, it is little wonder that the best efforts of the weakening Livonian Order failed to prevent it from unravelling. In the absence of a domestic authority capable of forging the politically diffuse Confederation into a more unified early modern state, Livonia's local powerholders and traditional elites – as well as politically unaligned foreign mercenaries active in the region – would instead turn to partnerships with (or be sidelined and absorbed by) the centralizing

²¹⁹ Others have seen Sweden's aims as more overtly aggressive. Filjushkin, for example, argued that Swedish conflict with Russia was inevitable because Sweden sought to establish itself as a major Baltic power by conquering territory to the east. Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 89.

²²⁰ Arnell observed that Livonia was a "protective shield" for Lithuania. Sture Arnell, *Bidrag till belysning av den baltiska fronten under det nordiska sjuårskriget 1563-1570* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977), 21.

governments of surrounding states, consolidating the region's medieval polities not into a nation of their own but into the expanding empires of their neighbours.

The question of why war broke out over Livonian may be answerable by a macroscopic, multifaceted examination of the long-term aspirations of the Baltic powers to secure east-west trade, safeguard their own security by pre-emptively invading strategically valuable territories coveted by their rivals, enforce their treaty rights, and simply conquer more land. These motives are not mutually exclusive, and the search for a single historical smoking gun is likely to be a fruitless one.²²¹ The Livonian Order had grown weak, the Confederation was coming apart at the seams, the Hansa had lost its monopoly on Baltic trade, and, one way or another, Livonia's neighbours were bound to play a part in her demise. A more nuanced quandary is the question of why the Baltic powers intervened in Livonian affairs precisely when and how they did; in other words, not why there was *a* Livonian war, but why *the* Livonian War took place at the time and in the manner that it did. The exact timing and circumstance of Livonia's demise were determined by an amalgam of factors, some deliberately engineered by ambitious individuals, others quite fortuitous. The expiration of the fifty year truce signed in 1503 by Ivan III and Wolter von Plettenberg, the dispute over Dorpat's tribute, Prussian and Lithuanian meddling in Riga, and Muscovite grievances regarding trade restrictions and the treatment of Livonia's Orthodox churches all played a part in the war's outbreak.²²² But so did a number of

²²¹ The Swedish case provides an instructive example of how motivations often overlapped. Böhme, for example, favoured a security-based explanation for Sweden's expansion into Estonia, but he also acknowledged that both King Erik and King Johan discussed plans to siphon Russian trade through Swedish ports. Göran Rystad noted that economic goals were mentioned far less frequently than military ones in the diplomatic records and official correspondences of the day, but Eva Österborg and Lars-Olof Larsson suggested that this was probably because rationales for military expeditions based on security concerns were less likely to be met with objections from the *Riksråd*. Eng pointed to a combination of security interests, economic prospects, and pressure from the aristocracy to acquire new lands where they could be enfeoffed with valuable estates. Ultimately, it is difficult to dispute Klaus Zernack's contention that, in Sweden's ascent to Baltic imperium, "*Sicherheitspolitik [...] und ökonomischer Zugewinn [...] gingen von Anfang Hand in Hand.*" Böhme, "Building a Baltic Empire," 181-3.; Göran Rystad, "The Rise and Fall of the Swedish Empire: The Experience of a Small State as a Great Power in the 17th Century," in *Relations Between Sweden and Poland Over the Centuries*, ed. Zenon Ciesielski (Wrocław: Ossolineum: 1990), 23.; Eva Österborg and Lars-Olof Larsson, "Vasatiden och stormaktstiden," in *Sverige historia 1521-1809. Stormaktsdröm och småstatsrealiteter*, ed. Göran Behre, Lars-Olof Larsson, and Eva Österborg (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985), 67.; Klaus Zernack, "Schweden als europäische Großmacht der frühen Neuzeit," *Historische Zeitschrift* 232 (1981), 335.

²²² Moscow's claim that the Orthodox religious community had been abused by the Livonian authorities was not entirely without substance. In 1548, for example, the mayor of Riga had stolen funds from the Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas and sent the priests to Pskov, although the church reopened the following year. Alexander von Richter, *Geschichte der dem russischen Kaiserthum einverleibten deutschen Ostseeprovinzen: bis zur Zeit ihrer Vereinigung mit demselben* (Riga: N. Kymmell, 1857-58), 319.

more coincidental factors, such as the opportune timing of Ivan's conquests of Astrakhan and Kazan, which empowered him to pursue further conquests in the west, and the deaths of Christian III and Gustav Vasa, who were each succeeded by less cautious sons more willing to engage in military adventures in the east. Serendipity would continue to play a part in determining the course of the war, as when Erik XIV's madness led to his incarceration and replacement by his brother Johan, whose Polish wife and sympathies led him to discard his elder brother's policy of non-aggression against Russia in favour of a blatantly anti-Russian alliance with Poland-Lithuania.

Where does this leave the three most persistent problems relating to the outbreak of the war: Ivan's motives, the economy-security debate, and the question of Livonia's perceived diplomatic and military failings on the eve of her demise? Scholarly emphasis on these three points largely reflects the enduring influence of the era's greatest chronicler, Balthasar Russow, who attributed the outbreak of the war to Muscovite aggression unleashed upon the Livonians as a divine punishment for their sins, while also evincing a typically Revalian preoccupation with maritime trade. Is this perspective justified?

The weight of evidence seems to suggest that, rather than an economic obsession with seizing Livonian commercial ports or even a simple penchant for conquest, it was primarily a desire to punish the Livonians for their failure to uphold their treaty obligations that prompted Ivan's invasion. This interpretation is supported by the reasons Ivan himself gave for attacking, by Prince Kurbsky's version of events, by the timing of the assault not long after a Livonian delegation to Moscow had failed to produce the long awaited tribute, and by the fact that the initial invasion force consisted largely of Tatar light cavalry (highly adept at raiding, pillaging, and terrorizing but less suited to taking walled cities and towns). It was only when the military weakness and political disunity of the Livonians became apparent, especially after the unexpected ease with which Narva and Dorpat were captured, that the Tsar became intent on conquering the entire territory.²²³ Further, the customary focus on Ivan's ambitions at the

²²³ "Als russische Truppen im April 1558 die livländische Stadt Narva angriffen, wurde schnell deutlich, daß die Livländische Konföderation nicht zu einer entschlossenen Gegenwehr in der Lage war." Heyde, *Bauer, Gutshof und Königsmacht*, 23. A letter sent by Hans Kraft to Svante Sture on July 9, 1564, mentions that Ivan was claiming not only the regions already under Russian occupation but the whole of Livonia as his ancestral

outset of the war rests on the assumption that he was solely or primarily responsible for starting it. While there are obvious reasons to endorse this conclusion, a simplistic narrative of bloodthirsty Muscovite belligerence tends to downplay the culpability of other parties, notably of the Livonians themselves, who repeatedly made promises that they could not or would not fulfill, and of King Sigismund Augustus and Duke Albrecht, whose scheming with the Archbishop of Riga and insistence upon the anti-Russian terms of the Treaty of Pozwol undoubtedly contributed to the descent into war.²²⁴ Indeed, contemporary observers within Livonia were well aware that fear of a Polish-Lithuanian or Prussian invasion in support of the archbishop, not of conflict with Moscow, was what initially prompted the Livonian Order to assemble its forces and send to Germany for mercenaries, setting Livonia on the path toward military mobilization.²²⁵ So, while Filjushkin's assertion that Russia should not be seen as the sole aggressor in the conflict because Livonia was "invaded simultaneously by Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and Denmark" is something of a mischaracterization – Sweden and Denmark did not invade, *per se*, but were invited to annex portions of Estonia after the Muscovites had already attacked and broken the Livonian Order's power – there is some truth to the idea that multiple parties had a hand in paving the road to war.²²⁶

How much, then, can it be said that the Livonians themselves were responsible for their own destruction? Their internal bickering and political disunity certainly contributed to their downfall, but the jealously guarded independence that came with that disunity also helped to foster the economic development of the Livonian towns, which were among the wealthiest in the region. In a sense, then, early modern Livonia became a victim of her own medieval success: the commercial climate established by the Hansa attracted Dutch and English mercantile competitors, while the prosperous Hanseatic towns' ability to defend their autonomy threatened the unity of the Confederation and made them tempting prizes for ambitious potentates. It is true that Archbishop Wilhelm's machinations with Duke Albrecht

inheritance. RA Livonica II 235. Sture was the Governor of Estonia and Kraft the bailiff Reval's castle at the time. Claes Annerstedt, *Grundläggningen af Svenska väldet i Livland 1558-1563* (Uppsala: Edquist & Berglund, 1868), 125.

²²⁴ Tiberg thought that Sigismund hoped to play upon the Livonians' fear of the Muscovites to gain control over the southern portions of the Confederation in return for Polish-Lithuanian protection. If so, this gambit was ultimately successful. Tiberg, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Livländischen Krieges*, 62-3.

²²⁵ *Russow*, 67-8.

²²⁶ Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 262.

and King Sigismund Augustus were essentially treasonous and that Dorpat's Muscovite policy was characterized by a degree of diplomatic naiveté.²²⁷ The other bishoprics and towns, however, deserve little blame for Livonia's fall, and the Livonian Order actively strove to unify and defend the Confederation.²²⁸ Heinrich von Galen, Wilhelm von Fürstenberg, and Gotthard Kettler were not cowardly or incompetent men. That they failed to replicate Wolter von Plettenberg's military achievements against the Russians a half century earlier says less about their own failings than it does about the remarkable capabilities of the man history has remembered as "*der größte Ordensmeister Livlands*" and the development of the Muscovite war machine in the intervening decades.²²⁹ Finally, it is worth asking what the Livonians might have done differently to preserve their independence.²³⁰ Given their enormous disadvantages in manpower and resources, it is difficult to imagine any likely scenario in which they could have won a direct military confrontation with either of their two colossal neighbours, Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania. They might, of course, have handed over the Muscovite tribute while also accepting Polish-Lithuanian protection, but, even if a policy of appeasement had bought them a temporary reprieve, it could only have been a matter of time before Ivan or Sigismund (or both) demanded more concessions, gradually whittling away at Livonia's cherished independence. In any case, satisfying both of these ambitious monarchs was likely impossible; as the Treaty of Pozwol made clear, pandering to one was bound to

²²⁷ Renner does not mince words when it comes to ascribing blame to the citizens of Dorpat, singling out the apparent treachery of the translator Christoph Lustfer, who confessed under torture to having plotted with the Russians before hanging himself in his cell: "From this one can see that the war, aside from the first skirmishes mentioned above, took its true beginning from the actions of the people of Dorpat." *Renner*, 59. Georg von Rauch believed that the accusations against both the Bishop of Dorpat and the pitiable Lustfer were false. Rauch, "Stadt und Bistum von Dorpat," 623-5. Lustfer made his confession in July of 1558 at Wenden (*QU*, II, 327-31). On the basis of his accusations, Jorgen Holtschur, the chancellor of the Bishop of Dorpat, was arrested at Hapsal in late August and confessed to the local advocate, Wolmer Treiden, that he and the bishop had conspired to surrender Dorpat to the Russians in return for being permitted to retain their privileges, religion, and laws. Holtschur was then imprisoned in the salt cellar of the castle at Hapsal, where he died on September 22, 1559, possibly by suicide. *Renner* 77-8 and 122.; *QU*, III, 45-8 and 68-77.

²²⁸ Leonid Arbusow's observation that Russov was unduly harsh in his appraisal of the Order is a fair one. Leonid Arbusow, *Die Einführung der Reformation in Liv-, Est- und Kurland (Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationgeschichte III)* (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1921), 177.

²²⁹ Norbert Angermann, ed., *Wolter von Plettenberg – der größte Ordensmeister Livlands* (Lüneburg: Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1985).

²³⁰ "Man muß dennoch fragen, ob die Einigung Livlands unter Führung des Ordens oder unter der persönlichen Landesherrschaft eines geistlichen oder weltlichen Fürsten auf Dauer verhindert hätte, daß das Land mehr und mehr zum Objekt der expansiven Politik von Nachbarstaaten wurde." Reinhard Vogelsang, "Reval und der Deutsche Orden: Zwischen städtlicher Autonomie und landsherrlicher Gewalt," in *Stadt und Orden: Das Verhältnis des Deutschen Ordens zu Städten in Livland, Preußen und im Deutschen Reich*, ed. Udo Arnold (Magdeburg: N.G. Elwart, 1993), 51.

arouse the ire of the other.²³¹ In the end, rather than castigating them for their eventual downfall, it is perhaps fairer to ponder how the Livonians – whose homeland was relatively small, essentially medieval, politically fragmented, and surrounded by puissant enemies – were able to defend their independence for as long as they did.

²³¹ Writing around 1610, the Dutch merchant, diplomat, and adventurer Isaac Massa considered the Poles to be “eternal enemies of the Muscovites”. Isaac Massa, *A Short History of the Beginning of the Present Wars in Moscow Under the Reigns of Various Sovereigns Down to the Year 1610*, trans. with an introduction by G. Edward Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 9. The enmity of the Poles and Russians was also discussed openly by other parties involved in the Livonian War. See, for example, a letter sent by Henrik Klasson, soon to be appointed Governor of Estonia, on June 14, 1564. RA Livonica II 235.

Chapter 4

The Course of the War

According to Cicero's characterization of warfare as simply "contention by force", the Livonian War was not a single, continuous struggle but a series of wars, truces, and temporary alliances played out by a shifting cast of potentates, peoples, and polities.²³² On the other hand, Grotius's more politically nuanced assertion that war constitutes "not an immediate action, but a state of affairs; so that war is a state of contending parties, considered as such" permits the understanding of the long struggle that consumed the Baltic in the twenty-five years from 1558 to 1583 as a single conflict.²³³ In a similar vein, Hobbes emphasized the importance of hostile intentions sustained over a period of time.

*For war consisteth not in battle only or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known, and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain but in an inclination thereto of many days together, so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting but in the known disposition thereto during all that the time there is no assurance to the contrary.*²³⁴

The Livonian War was certainly no passing squall, but rather a quarter century of Baltic inclemency, punctuated by hurricanes of destruction that left death and devastation across whole swaths of northeastern Europe. That said, although the motivations of the angry warlords who cast their thunderbolts upon hapless Livonia were often inscrutable, the conflict was not simply an act of God (although some, like Balthasar Russow, may have seen it as such).²³⁵ Rather, as Carl von Clausewitz remarked, war is a consciously executed means by which one side violently leverages the other to meet its demands – "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."²³⁶ This definition is straightforward enough when taken from the

²³² See Appendix One: Timeline of the Livonian War on pages 308-11.

²³³ Grotius, Hugo. *The Rights of War and Peace: Including the Law of Nature and of Nations*, trans. A.C. Campbell (Washington: M.W. Dunne, 1901), book 1, chapter 1, sec 2.

²³⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, book 1, chapter 13, sec 8.

²³⁵ For a discussion of war perceived as divine punishment in early modern Europe, see Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92-199.

²³⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), book 1, chapter 1, 75.

point of view of the instigator and when the conflict is waged between two states. However, it becomes less clear when there are multiple parties involved, when it is not always certain what demands each faction wishes its enemies to meet, or when the permutations of circumstance dictate that last year's enemy may become next year's friend. Clausewitz's is also an understanding of conflict that prioritizes the potentate (he whose will is to be enforced) rather than the vastly more numerous participants (they who do the enforcing, such as mercenaries, who often act for personal reasons that have little in common with the cause of the prince they serve). The Livonian War, then, was many things to many people, experienced and conceptualized in a variety of ways, none of them mutually exclusive: a territorial conquest, a trade conflict, a proxy war, a war of opportunity, a struggle for national survival, an abortive national awakening, an opportunity for plunder, a divine punishment, an onerous spell of garrison duty, a harrowing exposure to atrocity, and, at times, even something of a civil war. For many, it was simply a premature death sentence.

Most chroniclers and historians since the sixteenth century have chosen to treat the Livonian War as a single prolonged conflict, but some degree of internal periodization is useful when approaching such a sprawling and unwieldy object of study. There is, of course, a variety of ways in which the war might be subdivided into any number of shorter phases or segments. For the sake of clarity, a simple five phase chronology has been adopted here.

1558-1561 – Defeat and Division of Old Livonia: Russian invasion and conquest of Narva and Dorpat, Ösel to Denmark, Reval and surrounding counties to Sweden, dissolution of the Livonian Order, creation of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia

1562-1570 – Distraction, Stalemate, Consolidation: Russia negotiates peace agreements with both Denmark (1562) and Sweden (1565), Northern Seven Years War (Sweden vs. Denmark and Lübeck), Lithuanian conflicts with Russia, Union of Grodno (1566), Union of Lublin (1569), Russian internal turmoil during *oprichnina* (1565-1572), Duke Magnus of Holstein defects to Moscow

1570-1571 – Midpoint of the War: Magnus unsuccessfully besieges Reval, Ottoman-backed Crimean Tatars sack Moscow

1572-1577 – Russian Ascendancy: Russians crush second Crimean invasion at Molodi (1572), Russians sack Weissenstein (1573), Swedish siege of Wesenberg repulsed (1574), Stefan Batory elected King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania (1576), Danzig Rebellion

1578-1583 – Polish-Lithuanian and Swedish Ascendancy: Magnus renounces claims to Livonia, Commonwealth and Swedish forces victorious at Wenden (1578), Stefan Batory captures Polotsk (1579), Commonwealth forces capture strategic Russian fortresses (1580), Swedes capture Kexholm and Padis (1580), Swedes capture Narva and Ivangorod (1581), Commonwealth forces unsuccessfully besiege Pskov (1581), Peace of Jam Zapolski (1582), Truce of Plussa (1583)

1558-1561

In the 1550s, as political tensions increased between Livonia and Lithuania, Poland, and Russia – as well as between competing parties within the Livonian Confederation – there was a growing awareness that the Livonians could not defend themselves without outside help. This aid was pursued along two avenues: first, by courting the protection of powerful foreign rulers; second, by hiring mercenaries and purchasing war supplies from abroad. Unfortunately, both efforts were undermined by a general complacency and lack of political cohesion. Feuding between the Archbishop of Riga and the Livonian Order threatened to draw Poland and Lithuania into Livonian affairs as hostile, rather than helpful forces, while the Bishop and Council of Dorpat received little support from the rest of the Confederation in their increasingly fraught diplomacy with the Tsar. Some efforts were made to bring mercenaries to Livonia, particularly when Gotthard Kettler, then *Komtur* of Dünaburg, traveled to Germany in 1556 to hire troops as a precaution against a possible invasion by Prussia, Poland, and/or Lithuania. However, there was a widespread reluctance to raise the funds needed to hire many men, and Balthasar Russow's description of the arrival of Kettler's recruits in Livonia highlights how unaccustomed the locals were to the sight of professional soldiers (let alone flamboyantly attired *Landsknechte*).

*And as the German soldiers moved through the regions of Livonia to join their lord [i.e. the Livonian Landmeister], they passed with their women and pages through the villages and the noblemen's estates, asking for food and drink as was their custom. When they would enter a house, in their long leggings and tattered clothes, with their long pikes and battle-swords, the nobles, peasants, women, girls and servants would gape in astonishment as though seeing some great sea monster. Up to now they had been unaccustomed to such unusual guests...*²³⁷

²³⁷ Russow, 68.

In short, Livonia was militarily unprepared for a major conflict, and the Russian invasion of January 1558 came as a shock to the Confederation. The outbreak of war seems almost inevitable in hindsight, but why did Ivan choose this particular moment to attack? Certainly, the immediate motivation for the invasion was the Treaty of Pozwol, agreed between Livonia and the Polish-Lithuanian union just months before and a clear violation of the fifteen-year truce signed between Livonia and Russia in 1554, which had stipulated that Livonia would make no treaties with Poland or Lithuania. However, there were also strategic considerations. Most importantly, the Crimean Tatars had invaded Podolia and Volhynia, drawing away Polish and Lithuanian forces to defend their southern border. The season favoured the invaders as well. Livonia and Estonia are densely forested, marshy, and criss-crossed by rivers and streams – poor conditions for a large cavalry force on the move or for the transport of siege cannons – but winter mitigated some of these impediments, hardening the muddy soil, freezing rivers, and removing vegetation. The punitive raids of the Russian and Tatar reavers would also be likely to cause more devastation at this time of year, when it was harder for villagers to take refuge by hiding in the woods and when those who escaped the depredations of the invaders might still fall victim to famine or exposure. The Russians and Tatars themselves were, of course, no less accustomed to bitter cold than were the Livonians.

The Russian invasion force was formidable. Commanded by Ivan the Terrible's vassal, Shahghali, the Khan of Qasim (Kasimov),²³⁸ it numbered just under sixty-five thousand men, a sum deduced by the Livonians from records found on the body of a slain Russian paymaster.²³⁹ The Livonian troops were understandably intimidated by this news and became reluctant to abandon the relative safety of the castles and fortified towns in which they were stationed, leaving the countryside exposed to attack. The commanders discussed the possibility of a counterattack against Pskov to draw the Russian forces away from Livonia, as Wolter von Plettenberg had done sixty years before, but it was deemed too dangerous, so they waited in their fortresses and towns and hoped that their thick walls would be enough. By spring, Russian troops had assembled at Ivangorod, from where they could bombard the Livonian port

²³⁸ Kurbsky, *History of Ivan IV*, 107.

²³⁹ "Their paymaster had listed the number of their troops in a long list. He had been captured, slain and the document seized. On it were listed first the parishes, then the boyars, and then the number of troops each boyar had." *Renner*, 37.

of Narva from just across the border. Gotthard Kettler arrived at the head of a relief force in early May, but he camped some distance from the city, forbidding his men from entering lest the *Landsknechte* already stationed within attempt to prevent them from leaving again or the indiscipline of the garrison infect his own troops. The details of what happened next are not entirely clear. In early May, a fire broke out in the city, perhaps in a brewery or distillery.²⁴⁰ (Russian accounts later claimed that the blaze flared up after a sacrilegious German threw an Orthodox icon onto a fire.²⁴¹) The conflagration was large enough for Kettler to witness from his camp, and he immediately rode to the city with a band of cavalry. Unfortunately, the chaos was also being watched from Ivangorod, and, while the Livonian garrison fought to subdue the inferno, Russian soldiers began crossing the Narva River and entered the city. Soon, the Russians had seized the undefended walls and turned Narva's own guns upon the defenders within. Fierce street fighting ensued, and the Livonians were driven back into the inner castle. It was obvious that they could not hold out for long, but the Russians also faced a dilemma: fearing that they might be attacked at any moment by Kettler's reinforcements, they knew that they needed to resolve the situation quickly but also that storming the castle would entail crippling high casualties. To avoid further bloodshed – and to secure the citadel as quickly and painlessly as possible – the Russian commander offered the *Landsknechte* within free passage from the city with their possessions intact. Asked to clarify, he responded that they could take anything they could carry. This suited the mercenaries, who proceeded to plunder the castle's storerooms, which contained fine cloth and other trade goods. The garrison then departed, having robbed their own employer, while the Russians occupied Estonia's strongest border fortress and gained a valuable port city almost accidentally.²⁴² By the time Kettler arrived, there was nothing more to be done.

²⁴⁰ Russian sources, such as Prince Kurbsky's version of events, give the date as the eleventh, but Russow claims it was the twelfth.

²⁴¹ "Such is the reward of the mockers, who liken the image of Christ, painted after the flesh, and that of His Mother to the idols of the heathen Gods! Such is the recompense of the iconoclasts!" Kurbsky, *History of Ivan IV*, 111 and 115. Renner, on the other hand, suggested that the city might have been betrayed by several of its own prominent citizens, in league with the Russians. *Renner*, 53. Some of the alleged conspirators, including the mayor, Jochim Krumhusen, were in Russian custody at Ivangorod, from where they were supposedly corresponding with their wives and kinsmen in Narva to arrange the conspiracy. Wilhelm von Fürstenberg wrote to request their release on May 12. *QU*, II, 233-5.

²⁴² Oakley saw the fall of Narva as the start of the "modern struggle for Baltic dominance". Stewart P. Oakley, *War and Peace in the Baltic, 1560-1790* (London: Routledge, 1992), 21.

News of the disaster spread quickly, and panic began to set in, particularly in the eastern counties. Several fortresses, including the strategically important castle of Wesenberg, were simply abandoned and occupied by the Russians without resistance. The border castle of Warbeck (Uue-Kastre) was taken by surprise while its *Landsknecht* garrison was sleeping off a drinking binge. Livonian nobles who had been captured by the Russians were forced or persuaded to urge their countrymen to surrender. The mood was especially grim in Dorpat, the principle target of Ivan's threatening diplomacy before the war and the only major Livonian city that could not be supplied by sea in the event of a siege. In early summer, the Tsar himself arrived before the city at the head of an army and began to construct earthworks and move siege artillery into place. Russow recounts how the city surrendered on July 18, after no fighting and "in fear and wanton irresponsibility and not because of any real danger."²⁴³ This version of events was fiercely disputed by his contemporaries, especially Elert Kruse, a nobleman from the diocese who later defected to the Russians and then to the Poles. Kruse's objections are supported by the firsthand account of Tilmann Bredenbach, who reported skirmishes, bombardments, and disputes between Lutheran and Catholic factions within the city before its eventual surrender.²⁴⁴ Regardless of the level of resistance offered, the city capitulated after only a few days, and, as at Narva, the *Landsknechte* and a number of the burghers were allowed to depart with whatever possessions they could carry. Although the *Landmeister* tried to persuade these men to join his army, most refused; the Russians had forced them to sign written oaths promising never to take up arms against the Tsar again and threatening a painful death to any who should be recaptured fighting for his enemies.²⁴⁵

Within Dorpat, the nobility and burghers attempted to persuade Ivan to rule over his new lands as unintrusively as possible, arguing that others would be more likely to submit to a benevolent overlord than to an oppressive tyrant, but it was not long before the capricious Tsar had the bishop and many of the city's leading citizens deported to Moscow as prisoners of war. Within

²⁴³ Russow, 76.

²⁴⁴ *Archiv*, I, 184-190.

²⁴⁵ This was no idle threat. For example, after the surrender of Fellin (August 20, 1560), the Russians honoured their promise to allow the garrison of *Landsknechte* free passage to Pernau, with the exception of a certain Mathias Averdunck whom they recognized from the siege of Dorpat and flayed, hanged from a tree, and shot. *Renner*, 181. Similarly, when the Livonians retook Ringen (October 29, 1558), they spared the Russian soldiers who surrendered, slaughtered those who continued to resist, and quartered a traitorous Rigan youth named Jacob Schoene who had been fighting for the Russians as an arquebusier. *QU*, I, 281.

the space of a few months, he had gained two of Livonia's most significant cities and captured a great quantity of riches and munitions while suffering minimal losses, but he had also squandered a chance to win over the rest of the Confederation by demonstrating magnanimity to his conquered foes. Ivan's failure to form stable and effective partnerships with regional elites – either by requesting that they surrender their local authority in return for more influence within the expanding bureaucracy of the greater Russian state or that they use that local authority in Moscow's interests in return for Russian protection – would prove to be a policy flaw that undermined his war effort and domestic policy alike (at times, he persecuted the centuries-old merchant community of Novgorod and alienated his own boyars with at least as much misguided zeal as he oppressed the Livonians).²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, by the end of the summer of 1558, the Tsar had good reason to be pleased with the progress of his campaign and probably felt optimistic that the future would soon bring even greater victories.²⁴⁷

As Dorpat's defeated garrison retreated westward, they brought news of the city's fall and a fresh wave of terror to the Livonians. Berent von Schmerten, the Livonian Order's commander at the great castle of Weissenstein (Paide), abandoned his post and left the town undefended. It was subsequently pillaged by *Landsknechte* retreating from Dorpat before eventually being reoccupied and defended by the young and courageous Caspar von Oldenbockum. A letter of July 23 from the mayor and council of the city of Reval to *Landmeister* Wilhelm von Fürstenberg and Gotthard Kettler, who had been appointed his coadjutor, gives some impression of the turmoil in Livonia's cities at the time, as the burghers struggled to find sufficient food and housing for the mercenaries stationed there while seeking assurances that the Livonian Order would be able to protect them in the event of a Russian attack, as it had proven woefully incapable of doing at Narva and Dorpat.²⁴⁸ The situation took a turn for the

²⁴⁶ Anderson has pointed out that the Russians also faced cultural challenges in their attempts to win over Livonians to their cause. Their Orthodox faith was viewed with suspicion in a region that was in the process of embracing the Protestant Reformation, and Moscow's autocratic government was incompatible with Livonia's tradition of corporate power-sharing. Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System*, 266. While certainly not free from conflicts with regional powerholders either at home or in newly occupied territories abroad – as the Sture Murders and the years of struggle with the Livonian *Hofleute* make clear – Sweden's Vasa kings ultimately proved comparatively adept at forging partnerships that incorporated local elites into the emergent governing class of Stockholm's burgeoning Baltic empire. Glete, *War and the State*, 3-5 and 174-212.

²⁴⁷ Kirchner believed that the "capture of Narva and the fall of Dorpat [...] reveal the lack of interest of the majority of the Germans and Livonians in the preservation of the status quo." Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question*, 104.

²⁴⁸ *QU*, II, 325-6.

worse three days later, when the Order's castellan at Reval, Franz von Segenhagen (Anstel), fled the city, handing the upper castle over to the German nobleman Christoph von Münchhausen to hold on behalf of King Christian of Denmark.²⁴⁹ Over the summer of 1558, the city, like the rest of the Confederation, was deeply divided between rival factions favouring different courses of action: continued loyalty to the Livonian Order, petitioning Denmark and Sweden for protection, waiting for assistance from the Empire, courting the patronage of the Poles, or capitulating to Moscow. However, faced with the apparent impotence of the Livonian Order and the occupation of the citadel by pro-Danish nobles and mercenaries, the burghers of Reval and the nobility of Harrien and Wierland now sent legates to Copenhagen requesting that the King come to the aid of Estonia, which had, after all, once been Danish (from 1219 to 1346).²⁵⁰ The Danes, however, were unwilling to risk a confrontation with Moscow and sent only war supplies.²⁵¹

Meanwhile, the Livonian Confederation had belatedly raised the sixty thousand thalers that the Tsar had initially demanded as tribute, and a delegation led by the Archbishop of Riga took it to Moscow. Ivan, no doubt encouraged by the ease with which he had captured Narva and Dorpat, was no longer interested. He rejected the offer and resolved to press his attack, while Fürstenberg appropriated the spurned tribute and used it to pay the Livonian Order's mercenaries. In September twelve hundred *Landsknechte* arrived from Germany, and a force of Livonian noblemen was able to retake Wesenberg. The next month, Gotthard Kettler counterattacked, recapturing Ringen, in central Livonia, if only for two months. His *Landsknechte* were at first unwilling to assault the fortress, which the Russians fiercely defended with concentrated gunfire, but they promptly stormed it after being told they could loot the castle. Kettler may have been considering following up on this victory with a more ambitious assault on Dorpat – according to a report sent to Duke Johan in Turku, the Russians were fortifying the city in preparation for such an attack – but it is unlikely that he had

²⁴⁹ Wilhelm von Fürstenberg attempted to have Segenhagen captured and punished. *QU*, III, 50-54. Münchhausen was the brother of the Bishop of Ösel-Wiek and Courland. His interesting career had already seen him serve as seneschal to Otto IV von Holstein-Schaumburg and fight against the Turks and the Dutch in the service of Spain, in the process befriending the famous *Landsknecht* commander Georg von Holle.

²⁵⁰ By July, the city's leaders were favouring the Danes. *QU*, I, 201-4; 219; *QU*, II, 322-6. The purchase of the Bishopric of Ösel-Wiek by King Frederick on behalf of his younger brother, Magnus, the following month was met with rejoicing in much of Estonia.

²⁵¹ Cannons, powder and shot, and a quantity of bacon, according to Balthasar Russow. *Russow*, 78-9.

sufficient men to besiege the city, so he decided not to risk such a bold move.²⁵² The Livonians' other military efforts in late 1558 met with less success than they had enjoyed at Ringen, and the winter was devoted to a series of minor skirmishes across the Confederation as the defenders sought to intercept Russian and Tatar raiders sent to attack villages and isolated garrisons. Archbishop Wilhelm of Riga, who had thus far contributed little to the war effort, issued a proclamation in December outlining certain moral and disciplinary rules of conduct for the Livonian army: temperance in feasting and drinking; the importance of prayer; the swearing of oaths of loyalty in public ceremonies; the sparing of women, children, and the aged; restraint from fighting amongst the troops; and refraining from plunder, the selling of weapons and armour, or simply deserting.²⁵³ While these admonitions were frequently ignored by all sides, the Archbishop's list does provide some insight into what sixteenth-century observers felt were the most grievous issues plaguing the armies of the day.

In January of 1559, the Russians invaded again, ravaging the countryside from their new forward bases in Narva and Dorpat, but, a few months later, there was an unexpected reprieve when they agreed to a six-month truce (from May to November). Historians have judged this voluntary pause in the hostilities to have been a strategic blunder on the part of the Tsar, who might instead have reaped the rewards of pressing his attack against a divided and demoralized foe. However, there are valid explanations for Ivan's decision. A Danish legation led by Claus Urne had recently visited Moscow and helped to persuade the Tsar to accept a temporary truce.²⁵⁴ Russian forces were also badly needed in the south to fend off renewed inroads by the Crimean Tatars.²⁵⁵ In any case, Ivan probably judged his enemies' position to be hopeless enough that they could accomplish little in terms of preparing for his next assault in the space

²⁵² *QU*, III, 40-1.

²⁵³ *QU*, I, 290-6.

²⁵⁴ Rasmussen believed this to have been the decisive factor. Rasmussen, *Die livländische Krise*, 131. Details of the Russo-Danish negotiations may be found in *NQU*, II, 55-107 and 140-164. Emperor Ferdinand also sent an ambassador to Moscow in 1559, but Ivan refused to accept either his offer of mediation or his demand that the Russians vacate Livonia. Lavery, *Germany's Northern Challenge*, 16. The Emperor could offer no concrete military assistance to the Livonians, but he would continue to claim that Livonia was part of the Empire for some time. Eduard Reimann, "Das Verhalten des Reiches gegen Livland in der Jahren 1559-1561," *Historische Zeitschrift* 35 (1876): 346-80.

²⁵⁵ Oakley, *War and Peace in the Baltic*, 29; Isabel de Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 130. The Crimean Tatars also sent ambassadors to Livonia to discuss the possibility of coordinating their anti-Russian campaigns. *QU*, III, 277-8.

of a mere half year.²⁵⁶ After all, the Livonians had had most of the 1550s to either raise the tribute needed to assuage him or to ready their defenses for a confrontation, but they had failed to do either. Further, the truce came at a somewhat inopportune moment for the Livonian Order, who had recently hired a large force of German mercenaries to be used over the summer and would now have to pay them to idle in Livonia for the next six months.²⁵⁷ The Russians had an advantage in this regard, since, although their troops were less professional than Kettler's hired *Landsknechte*, men mustered under the *pomeste'e* system could simply be allowed to return home to their farms and then summoned again when the fighting resumed, while mercenaries either had to be paid continuously or released from service. Ivan may therefore have felt that a truce was more financially damaging to his adversaries or that he was already in a dominant enough position to dictate terms.²⁵⁸ As it turned out, the Tsar's hesitation was an opportunity for the Livonians to regroup and for other Baltic powers to intrude in the region's affairs. In the quiet northwestern corner of the Confederation, Christoph von Münchhausen, an official in the service of his brother, the Bishop of Ösel-Wiek and of Courland, was busy negotiating – with the his brother's enthusiastic support – for the dioceses to be sold to the teenage princeling Duke Magnus of Holstein, younger brother of King Frederick II of Denmark.²⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Gotthard Kettler, who had assumed command of the Livonian Order from the aged Wilhelm von Fürstenberg, sought help first from Emperor Ferdinand I and then from the Poles and Lithuanians. In June, he concluded the first Treaty of Vilnius, placing Livonia's estates under the protection of the Polish-Lithuanian Crown. It was

²⁵⁶ The importance of Ivan's forceful and eccentric personality in determining his country's policy should not be underestimated. As Urban argued, "Ivan could have analyzed his position in geo-political terms and concluded that he should attack his divided opponents before they united against him; but many historians do not believe that he thought in this manner. The evidence seems to indicate that emotion, tradition, and accident were more important than rational planning." Urban, "The Origins of the Livonian War," 18.

²⁵⁷ Renner noted that the Livonian Order "incurred the great expense of paying the *Landsknechte*'s wages all summer long without putting them to any use," while Werner Schall von Bell, the *Vogt* for Rositen, wrote to Fürstenberg urging him to pay the men and expressing his scepticism about the truce. Renner, 103-4.; *QU*, III, 188-91.

²⁵⁸ He sent a letter to Fürstenberg in early 1559 offering peace in return for Livonia ceding all of the towns and lands currently occupied by the Russians to Moscow. Fürstenberg staunchly refused. See Gotthard Kettler's letter of March 12, *QU*, III, 125-30. Given the growing awareness that the Livonians could not hope to resist the Russians on their own, Urban has suggested that Fürstenberg was probably hoping that the Russians would get dragged into a conflict with the Tatars or the Lithuanians. Footnote in *Renner*, 99.

²⁵⁹ The deal was completed on September 26, with the King of Denmark also purchasing the right to nominate future bishops. *QU*, III, 295-300.; *NQU*, II, 178-97. Bishop Johann von Münchhausen received 30,000 thalers from the Danes, half to be paid immediately and half the following June. *NQU*, II, 357-9.; III, 237-40.

also agreed that the lands south of the River Düna (i.e. Courland) would be relinquished to Sigismund Augustus.

The truce having expired, the Russians attacked again in January of 1560, capturing the castle of Marienburg and devastating swathes of territory. The Livonians' hired *Landsknechte* had been dispersed throughout the Confederation to avoid burdening any one location with the entire army's support (and probably to prevent them banding together to demand their pay), and there were reports of minor incidents of indiscipline, mostly involving drunkenness and the harassment of peasants.²⁶⁰ But there were also signs that the Livonian military was becoming more effective. The previous summer (July 25), the leaders of the Confederation had held a *Landtag* at Riga to better organize the war effort. Nobles were required to muster one third of the native male population, companies would be trained and led by an experienced *Landsknecht* officer, each unit would have its own banner, rules were set out for the distribution of plunder, and regulations against plundering the peasantry were agreed. Even more importantly, a more efficient fiscal-military structure was starting to emerge, with taxes levied to support the costs of the war.²⁶¹ More experienced troops had also arrived from Germany, most notably eight hundred *Landsknechte* under the command of Joseph van Munden, many of them battle-hardened veterans of the King of Denmark's recent campaign against the stubbornly independent peasant republic of Dithmarschen.²⁶² However, despite Kettler's best efforts to hold the Confederation together, there were still shortages of money and supplies, and a serious counter-offensive against the Russians was unthinkable without significant military support from the Poles and Lithuanians. Furthermore, it was not only

²⁶⁰ Joachim Plate and the city's company went to Reval, Balzer Fürstenberg and his men to Pernau, Jorgen Lutener's company to Weissenstein, Geert van der Marcke and Joseph van Munden to Oberpahlen, Jorgen Fromknecht to Fellin, Evert Sladoth to Karkus, Johan Bloszwing to Wenden, and Cruitzman to Riga with that city's company. *Renner*, 135. The chronicler Salomon Henning mentions that the mercenaries were refusing to stay in the field over the winter because they had not been paid, there was no money forthcoming, and the countryside was too barren and devastated to yield food or fodder. Salomon Henning, *Salomon Henning's Chronicle of Courland and Livonia* (henceforth *Henning*), trans. and ed. Jerry C. Smith, William Urban, and Ward Jones (Madison: Baltic Studies Centre, 1992), 59. A letter sent to the captains on May 20, 1560 indicates that most of them were still stationed at the same places six months later. *QU*, V, 83-4.

²⁶¹ *Renner*, 112. The amounts of war taxes raised by some districts are given in a letter dated August 29, 1559. *QU*, III, 266.

²⁶² A letter sent to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg from Lübeck on June 15, 1559 discusses the *Landsknechte* serving under the King of Denmark and Duke Adolf of Holstein-Gottorp in the Dithmarschen campaign. *QU*, III, 203-7. Munden and his men arrived at Riga on July 20, 1559. Bereft of pay and poorly supplied, they would survive the winter raiding and robbing Russians and local peasants alike from their base of operations at Oberpahlen.

violent conquest that threatened the Order's hold on Livonia. On April 15, Duke Magnus of Holstein arrived at Arensburg (Kuressaare), the major settlement on Ösel, with five ships and several hundred *Landsknechte* and quickly took control of his newly purchased diocese.

Despite foreign princes being forbidden from possessing territory in the Livonian Confederation by the statutes of the Wolmar Recess of 1541, there was widespread popular support for this Danish intervention, which was seen by the Protestant population as preferable to Polish protection and by virtually everyone as preferable to Russian occupation.²⁶³ As less powerful and more distant states, the Nordic kingdoms may also have been seen as more favourable overlords in that they lacked the will or capacity to exercise the same degree of direct control over Livonian institutions as either Russia or Poland-Lithuania.

The Russians continued to plunder and despoil the countryside, winning small skirmishes and taking minor outposts, while Kettler negotiated with Duke Magnus and sought reinforcements from his Polish and Lithuanian allies, and the Livonian Order's main army moved to Ermes under the command of *Landmarschall* Philipp Schall von Bell. Here, disaster struck. While this was the most formidable army the Order had been able to assemble since the outbreak of war, it was still far too small to risk engaging Ivan's force until reinforcements had arrived from Lithuania. However, on August 2, Bell learned that Russian troops were leaving Dorpat in the direction of Fellin, and some of his own men moved to intercept them. Unbeknownst to them, this was no raiding party but the main Russian field army, and what began as a skirmish soon drew more and more men from both sides into the fray, escalating the engagement into a pitched battle (the Livonian Order's last, it would turn out). Although the Livonians fought bravely, they were too badly outnumbered to prevail, and the army was destroyed, with several senior officers and over a hundred knights of the Livonian Order killed or captured along with hundreds of other troops.²⁶⁴ The unfortunate survivors were paraded through Moscow prior to having their heads smashed in with clubs before the Kremlin. There was now no question of the shattered remnants of the Livonian army defeating the Russians in the field, and they once again took refuge behind the strong walls of their castles and towns. Kettler convened a

²⁶³ The Bishop of Reval, Mauritius Wrangel, acknowledged Magnus as overlord, and some members of the nobility and the Livonian Order also joined his cause.

²⁶⁴ Balthasar Russow's account of the battle is very brief. Prince Kurbsky provides a much more detailed description of the events. Kurbsky, *History of Ivan IV*, 136-149.

Landtag at the port city of Pernau, which was attended by the remaining leaders of the Confederation – Archbishop Wilhelm of Riga; his coadjutor, Duke Christoph von Mecklenburg; and Duke Magnus of Holstein, administrator of the dioceses of Ösel-Wiek, Courland, and Reval – while again writing to the Lithuanians to request military aid.²⁶⁵ In the meantime, Ivan wasted no time in pressing his attack, quickly moving to besiege the great fortress of Fellin, which was defended by about 250 mercenaries under the command of the former *Landmeister*, Wilhelm von Fürstenberg. The besiegers bombarded the castle, but Fürstenberg was determined to hold out. Unfortunately, the mercenaries did not share the old knight's resolve, and, despite his pleas, they negotiated a separate peace with the besiegers, looting the castle and then surrendering it after receiving assurances from the Russians.²⁶⁶

It was now obvious that, barring a major intervention by a third party, the war was lost. Magnus of Holstein abandoned the mainland and retreated from Hapsal to his island stronghold of Ösel, while many of his mercenaries, whom he could no longer afford to pay, traveled to Reval to enlist there. Gotthard Kettler began to replace his own southern garrisons with Lithuanian troops, whom Sigismund Augustus had at last begun to send north. In Estonia, trouble was brewing. The Russians raided Wiek and Harrien, and the Estonian peasants rose up against the Baltic German aristocracy in Harrien and Wierland.²⁶⁷ In September, Kettler wrote to the burghers of Reval and to the mercenaries stationed in the city, instructing them to defend the city and to expect pay from the Livonian Order shortly, but the citizens and the nobles of Harrien and Wierland wrote back demanding immediate assistance or permission to find help elsewhere.²⁶⁸ Kettler, who seems to have mistrusted the Revalians and feared that they would abandon the Order in favour of Swedish patronage, dispatched a small force of Polish cavalry

²⁶⁵ His letters to his Lithuanian allies may be found in *QU*, V, 270, 276, and 279-80. He also signed a truce with Duke Magnus immediately after learning of the defeat at Ermes. *QU*, V, 271-75.

²⁶⁶ This time, however, the Russians confiscated the booty that the mercenaries had stolen from the Livonian Order, although they did allow them safe passage from the fortress. A list of the mutineers is given in *QU*, VI, 199-201. The soldiers' actions were motivated by fear as well as greed, since Ivan had promised to slaughter everyone in the castle if they did not surrender at once. Nevertheless, Gotthard Kettler attempted to capture and punish the mutineers for their betrayal. Wilhelm von Fürstenberg was taken to Moscow as a prisoner, where, as a gesture of public magnanimity on the part of the Tsar, he was permitted to live out an honourable retirement until his death.

²⁶⁷ For a brief summary of this ill-fated rebellion, see Heyde, *Bauer, Gutshof und Königsmacht*, 23-9.

²⁶⁸ *QU*, IV, 337-40.; *QU*, VI, 1-7.

to bolster the city's defenses, but they argued with the German infantry and were not allowed to billet in the city.²⁶⁹

At last, the city of Reval and the nobility of the surrounding counties informed Kettler that they intended to submit to the King of Sweden in return for military protection that the Livonian Order could no longer provide. Despite disputes between various parties within Reval²⁷⁰ – and Kettler's best efforts to persuade them to remain loyal to the Livonian Order – more and more within the city embraced this option as their best chance of salvation from the Russians. The mercenaries stationed there played no small part in these negotiations: the Swedes offered them better pay than the Livonian Order or the city council could afford, and pro-Swedish mutinies ensued (see Chapter 8.2).²⁷¹ Soon, most of the city was in the hands of the Swedes, and the surrender of the citadel in early June of 1561 gave them effective control over all of Reval.²⁷² Northern Estonia was now declared the Swedish Duchy of Estonia, and King Erik XIV confirmed Reval's municipal privileges on August 2, 1561.²⁷³ Ösel-Wiek remained in the hands of Magnus's Danish faction, southern Livonia was held by the Lithuanians, and the east was under Russian occupation.²⁷⁴ With the remnants of the Confederation slipping through his fingers, Gotthard Kettler made his final decision as Livonian *Landmeister*; on November 28, he signed the Second Treaty of Vilnius, subjecting the remaining independent portions of the Livonian Confederation to Sigismund Augustus as the newly formed Duchy of Courland and Semigallia and Duchy of Livonia.²⁷⁵ The Livonian Order was dissolved, and Kettler himself became a vassal of Sigismund Augustus, assuming the title of Duke of Courland and

²⁶⁹ This force was referred to as the "Praesidium". *QU*, VI 247-53. Some more details of their stay at Reval may be found in Eduard Pabst, ed., "Einquartierung polnischer Truppen in die Stadtschule zu Reval Anno 1561," *Beiträge zur Kunde Ehst-, Liv- und Kurlands*, vol. I, no. 2 (Reval: Lindfors' Erben, 1869), 92-3.

²⁷⁰ Duke Magnus wrote to his brother, King Frederick of Denmark, informing him that, in Reval, "*der eine sol guth Denisch der ander Schwedisch der Dritte Reussisch der vierte Meisterisch sein...*" *NQU*, III, 203-4.

²⁷¹ *QU*, VI, 324-37.; *QU* VII, 1-8.; *QU*, VII, 23-9.

²⁷² Attman saw Erik XIV's acquisition of Reval and the surrounding counties as "the beginning of Swedish Baltic policy on a large scale." Attman, *The Struggle for Baltic Markets*, 14. An interesting comparison could be made with Valdemar II's conquest of the region in 1219, which arguably marked Denmark's emergence as a major medieval Baltic power, highlighting the importance of Estonia to the empire-building ambitions of the two Scandinavian powers in two different eras. For a discussion of why Sweden opted to expand into Estonia at this precise moment, see Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland in the Swedish Kingdom."

²⁷³ Tiina Kala, *Lübeck Law and Tallinn* (Tallinn: Tallinna Linnaarhiiv, 1998), 28.

²⁷⁴ Henning wrote that Livonia was like "a hay stack from which almost everyone plucked or pulled something. It was indeed the apple of Eris and the gold of Toulouse and everyone who tried to seize some of it almost all had their fingers smartly burned." Quoted in Urban, *Bayonets for Hire*, 66.

²⁷⁵ Renner provides an account of Kettler's justifications for this course of action. *Renner*, 199.

Semigallia.²⁷⁶ The Free Imperial City of Riga and its small hinterland was all that remained of independent Old Livonia.²⁷⁷

1562-1570

The year 1562 found the lands of the former Livonian Confederation divided between four foreign powers, none of which was strong enough on its own to drive out the other three. In the early stages of the war, there had, perhaps, been opportunities for decisive victory. If the Livonians had been able to defend Narva and Dorpat, then Ivan might have been content to punish them with a destructive raid – likely his original plan – and then call off his forces after receiving the promised tribute, preserving Livonia’s independence for at least a little longer. Conversely, if the Russians had pressed their attack instead of agreeing to a six-month truce in the summer of 1559, then they might have been able to capture one of the major coastal cities – Riga, Reval, or Pernau – from a divided and demoralized Livonia before the Scandinavians and Lithuanians could respond. Now, however, there were too many nations invested in the struggle for any one of them to secure victory. The following decade would be characterized by fighting between the Baltic powers, as well as by political turmoil and eventual consolidation within Sweden, Russia, and Poland-Lithuania.

Although they would come to be less militarily engaged in the region than the other great Baltic powers, the Danes’ political maneuvering in the early 1560s helped to set the stage for many of the subsequent conflicts. The young and ambitious Duke Magnus – an enthusiastic schemer, although not an especially adroit one – having been granted the recently acquired diocese of Ösel-Wiek by his elder brother, King Frederick II, quickly broadened his Baltic power base by also purchasing the bishoprics of Courland and Reval (without Frederick’s approval) and by attempting to expand his influence eastward into northern Estonia.²⁷⁸ This

²⁷⁶ Walther Kirchner saw the demise of the Livonian Order as the “end of a thousand-year-old eastward expansion of western civilization and control.” Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question*, 48.

²⁷⁷ Rigan independence came to an end on January 14, 1581, when the Treaty of Drohiczyn incorporated the city into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as part of the Duchy of Livonia. Wilhelm Lenz, *Riga zwischen dem Römischen Reich und Polen-Litauen in den Jahren 1558-1582* (Marburg: Lahn, 1968), 79-83.

²⁷⁸ The purchase of the bishoprics of Courland and Reval exhausted Magnus’s treasury. He now found himself without the military or financial means to contest his claims with the other powers in the region, so he looked to Copenhagen for support. King Frederick, however, had no desire to be drawn into a major conflict on his brother’s behalf and responded by forbidding Magnus from signing independent treaties and by sending a Danish governor to Ösel-Wiek to oversee Magnus’s rule. Eckhard Hübner, “Zwischen alle Fronten: Magnus von

brought him into conflict with the Swedes, who were busy securing their own claims in the region. While Frederick disapproved of Magnus's rash provocations, he could not ignore the fact that his Swedish rivals had annexed Reval, a formerly Danish city that, together with the southern Finnish ports, had the potential to give King Erik complete control over the Gulf of Finland and the lucrative trade that flowed through it.²⁷⁹ Erik's seizure of Padis in the fall of 1561 and Pernau in June of 1562 and his attempts to bring Riga under Swedish protection, with the collusion of the city's bishop, Christoph von Mecklenburg, further antagonized all of Sweden's rivals. Gotthard Kettler, acting on behalf of King Sigismund Augustus, arrested Christoph, who was forced to renounce all of his claims to the city before his eventual release in 1569, after which he returned to Mecklenburg. The Danes and Russians responded on August 7 by signing the Treaty of Mozhaysk: neither would provide military assistance to the other's enemies; the Tsar promised to respect Duke Magnus's territorial claims in Livonia; Denmark would not contest Russia's occupation of the remaining territories; and each country would give free passage to the other's merchants.²⁸⁰ This arrangement suited both parties, as the Danes wished to concentrate on their maritime rivalry with Sweden over the *dominium maris baltici* and were certainly in no position to fight a land war against Russia on the far side of the Baltic, while the Russians were already surrounded by enemies and could benefit from a Western ally with a powerful fleet.

While Frederick was negotiating Denmark's truce with Russia, Erik was making more enemies for Sweden. Having secured the important emporium of Reval – and on that city's urging – he attempted to blockade the Gulf of Finland, preventing western European merchants from reaching Russian-occupied Narva in a bid to channel their trade through the Swedish ports of Reval and Vyborg. In the spring of 1562, the Swedish fleet captured a major trade flotilla on its

Holstein als König von Livland," in *Zwischen Christianisierung und Europäisierung. Beiträge zur Geschichte Osteuropas in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit, Festschrift für Peter Nitsche zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Eckhard Hübner, Ekkehard Klug, and Jan Kusber (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), 315.

²⁷⁹ Artur Attman argued that "Sweden's Baltic policy dated back to the end of the 1550s" and was rooted in the desire to control Russia's trade with western Europe. While this interpretation risks downplaying the importance of other factors, such as security concerns, trade was one motivation for early modern Sweden's expansionism. Artur Attman, *Swedish Aspirations and the Russian Market during the 17th Century* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985), 6.

²⁸⁰ Eckhard Hübner saw this treaty as a "*Meilenstein in der europäischen Geschichte*" for Russia, as it was one of the first treaties Moscow had signed with a major European power on equal terms and without an earlier military conflict necessitating that they treat with one another. Hübner, "Zwischen alle Fronten.,"; Frede P. Jensen, *Danmarks konflikt med Sverige 1563-1570* (Copenhagen: Den danske historiske Forening, 1982), 318.

way from Lübeck to Narva and subsequently refused to return either ships or goods to the outraged Hanseats. Meanwhile, Erik's younger half-brother, Duke Johan of Finland, had married Princess Katarzyna Jagiellonka, younger sister of Sigismund Augustus, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Erik was displeased by the wedding, seeing it as evidence of his brother's growing ambitions and political independence, as well as his pro-Catholic and pro-Polish sympathies, and he had Johan's stronghold of Turku besieged and both bride and groom captured and imprisoned in Gripsholm Castle (in Södermanland). The chance for a military alliance between Sweden and Poland-Lithuania in the 1560s was thus squandered and would not re-emerge until 1577, when it proved decisive. By August of 1563, Erik found himself in a trade dispute with the powerful Hanseatic city of Lübeck, at odds with Sigismund Augustus over the division of Livonia and the treatment of Sigismund's sister, and in open conflict with Denmark over control of the Baltic.²⁸¹

Denmark and Lübeck declared war on August 13, beginning what would come to be termed the Northern (or Nordic) Seven Years' War, and Poland joined the anti-Swedish alliance in October.²⁸² The Danish army of more than twenty thousand men, professional mercenaries led by capable officers, quickly proved more than a match for Sweden's untested conscripts. Within a month, the Danes had seized the key fortress of Älvsborg, which guarded Sweden's sole western port, situated in a narrow strip of land between Danish Halland and Norwegian Bohuslän, thereby cutting off the Swedes' only access to the North Sea. The Swedes counter-attacked at Halmstad but were driven back, only to be defeated again by a much smaller Danish force at the Battle of Mared.²⁸³ At sea, the Danes also initially had the best of it. A series of naval battles off Öland and Gotland, in late 1563 and early 1564, saw the Swedish fleet driven back to Stockholm, its flagship (Mars) blown up, and its commander, Jakob Bagge,

²⁸¹ There were several other ongoing disputes between the two Scandinavian kingdoms, the most serious of which was the so-called question of the *Tre Kronor*. Despite the dissolution of the Kalmar Union in 1523, Frederick insisted on retaining the three crowns of Sweden on the Danish coat of arms, prompting Erik to retaliate by adding the lion rampant of Norway and the three lions passant of Denmark to his own arms.

²⁸² There is little scholarship on this war in English, and many of the classic Scandinavian studies are now quite old. Otto Frederick Vaupell, *Den Nordiske Syaarskrig, 1563-1570* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1891).; Lars Gustaf Teodor Tidander, *Nordiska Sjuårskriget Historia* (Västervik: C.O. Ekblad & Co., 1892).; Jensen, *Danmarks konflikt med Sverige.*; Arnell, *Bidrag till belysning av den baltiska fronten.*

²⁸³ Vaupell, *Den Nordiske Syaarskrig*, 50-3.

the kingdom's most experienced admiral, captured.²⁸⁴ Klas Kristersson Horn, Bagge's replacement, engaged the Danish-Lübeck fleet in August but with inconclusive results. At the same time, the Swedish army achieved its first significant victories on land, capturing Trondheim and Varberg, while the Danes retaliated by winning a bloody field battle at Axtorna, but neither side could strike a decisive blow. Indeed, Axtorna aside, it would be a war largely devoid of pitched battles, with most of the action taking the form of skirmishing and plundering – guerrilla actions more suited to the wild Scandinavian terrain – and the occasional opportunistic sack of a poorly defended town or isolated fortress.

In the east, the Lithuanians and Russians had been just as busy as their Nordic rivals. Rejecting Sigismund Augustus's offer of an extended truce, the Russians raided Vitebsk and then assaulted Polotsk, which fell in February of 1563. However, they could not capitalize on this significant victory. As Ivan's men pushed westward toward Vilnius, a small Lithuanian force under the redoubtable Mikołaj "the Red" Radziwiłł ambushed and defeated the much larger Russian army at Ula and then proceeded to ravage the countryside around Sebezh. Falling back in disarray, the Russians were compelled to abandon their dream of following up their capture of Polotsk with an assault on the Lithuanian capital and were instead punished with further defeats.²⁸⁵ Ivan's paranoia would soon compound Russia's woes. The failure of the Lithuanian campaign and the defection of Prince Kurbsky prompted the Tsar to seclude himself, accusing the nobility and the Russian church of betraying him and turning on friend and rival alike. A treaty was signed with Sweden, while the Tsar concentrated on fending off the Lithuanians and purging his own government and citizenry of perceived enemies.²⁸⁶ Ivan split his realm into two separate territories: the *oprichnina* (the "apart"), centred on the northern territories of the old Novgorod Republic, was controlled directly by the Tsar and his ruthless secret police, the *oprichniki*; while the *zemshchina* (the "land") was under the jurisdiction of the boyar council.

²⁸⁴ Jan Glete, *Swedish Naval Administration, 1521-1721: Resource Flows and Organisational Capabilities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 617.; Hans Christian Bjerg, *A History of the Royal Danish Navy 1510-2010* (Copenhagen: The National Museum of Military History, 2010), 37.

²⁸⁵ These victories strengthened Lithuania's position in her negotiations with Poland, allowing her to secure more favourable terms when the Union of Lublin was concluded four years later. Harry E. Dembkowski, *The Union of Lublin: Polish Federalism in the Golden Age* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1982), 91-2.

²⁸⁶ In May of 1564, Russia and Sweden signed the Treaty of Dorpat, whereby Ivan recognized Sweden's jurisdiction over Reval and parts of northern Estonia, while Erik accepted Russia's rule over the remainder of Livonia. This was followed by a seven-year truce in 1565. De Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 192 and 195.

Many members of the old nobility were stripped of their lands, tortured or executed, and replaced by *oprichniki* who owed everything to the patronage of the Tsar.²⁸⁷ In his efforts to find and punish scapegoats for the military failures against Lithuania and for the defections of once-trusted confidantes like Prince Kurbsky, Ivan weakened the economy, destroyed infrastructure, temporarily crippled the military, and eliminated many of his most talented subjects (particularly members of the nobility, clergymen, and wealthy merchants). If the goal of his reign of terror was to assert more autocratic control over his empire, then he succeeded, but the means by which he crushed opposition to his policies, as well as the results of those policies, was the weakening and division of the Russian state.²⁸⁸

In Scandinavia, the Northern Seven Years' War ground on without either side able to gain the upper hand. The Danes' professional German mercenaries were superior to the Swedish levies, but they were also much costlier and frequently refused to attack before being paid.²⁸⁹ Denmark was thus prevented from winning a decisive victory that was militarily within her reach by the limited fiscal apparatus of the Danish state and the rough Swedish terrain. Despite his best efforts, Frederick could not muster sufficient funds to maintain the powerful force he had commanded at the outset of the war, and his army either refused to fight or melted away. The Danish army continued to meet with some success in the field, notably the devastating raid carried out through Västergötland over the winter of 1557 to 1558 by Daniel Rantzau (killed by a cannonball at the siege of Varberg in November of 1569), but it progressively dwindled in

²⁸⁷ There is a wealth of literature relating to the causes, methods, and outcomes of the *oprichnina*. Some have seen it as essentially a product of Ivan's paranoid nature and declining mental stability, while others have argued that it should be understood as a calculated move aimed at breaking the power of the boyars in order to create a more autocratic state subordinate to the absolute authority of the Tsar. See, for example Andrei Pavlov and Maureen Perrie, *Ivan the Terrible* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003).; S.F. Platonov, *Ivan the Terrible*, ed. and trans. Joseph L. Wiczyński (Gulf Breeze, Fla.: Academic International Press, 1974).; Alexander Yanov, *The Origins of Autocracy: Ivan the Terrible in Russian History*, trans. Stephen Dunn (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981).; De Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*.; Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy*.

²⁸⁸ The English traveler Giles Fletcher's assessment of the *oprichnina* is one of the key passages of his account of Muscovy, describing the social divisions caused by the policy and predicting the coming of the Time of Troubles: "This tyrannical practice of making a general schism and public division among the subjects of his whole realm proceeded, as should seem, from an extreme doubt and desperate fear which he had conceived of most of his nobility and gentlemen of his realm in his wars with the Polonian and the Crim Tatar [...] And this wicked policy and tyrannous practice, though it now be ceased, hath so troubled the country and filled it so full of grudge and mortal hatred ever since that it will not be quenched, as it seemeth now, till it burn again into a civil flame." Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 38.

²⁸⁹ In January of 1570, a Danish army under Heinrich von Dohna penetrated as far north as Jönköping, but the German mercenaries, who had not been paid for months, refused to press on toward Stockholm, and the attack petered out. Jensen, *Danmarks Konflikt*, 280-286.

size over the course of the war.²⁹⁰ Meanwhile, on the Livonian front, Duke Magnus could do little but rely on the disaffected Livonian nobility, former officers of the Livonian Order, and raiders equipped by Lithuania and Courland harass the Swedes.²⁹¹ In July of 1569, the Danish-Lübecker fleet under Per Munck bombarded Reval and sank about 150 merchant vessels in the city's harbour, a sad twist of fate given Reval's old medieval ties to Denmark and the bonds of Hanseatic friendship that she had long shared with Lübeck.

At the same time, the Swedish war effort was hampered by the personal foibles of her unstable monarch. The paranoid and jealous King Erik lived in constant fear of conspirators, and, along with his influential favourite, Jöran Persson, he had begun arresting, torturing, and humiliating nobles in order to force them to make false confessions and hand over the funds he needed to pay his armies. In 1567, matters came to a head when he and his guards murdered several imprisoned members of the prominent Sture family. In the fall of 1568, a group of noble conspirators had Erik arrested and his younger half-brother, Duke Johan, placed on the throne.²⁹² Johan moved quickly to repair Sweden's diplomatic reputation and secure treaties with her enemies. Peace negotiations were attempted at Roskilde in November of 1568, but these fell through when the Swedes refused Frederick's demands to pay Denmark war reparations and cede Estonia to Copenhagen.²⁹³ It was not until two years later, on December 13, 1570, that the two sides would agree, after the intercession of Emperor Maximilian II, to the mutually acceptable terms of the Treaty of Stettin.²⁹⁴ While both sides renounced their claims to the other's territory, the terms were financially unfavourable to the Swedes, who had to pay the exorbitant sum of 150,000 thalers for the return of Älvsborg Castle and an additional 75,000 in reparations to Lübeck.²⁹⁵ An uneasy peace had been achieved in the western Baltic, but the war in the east was about to escalate.

²⁹⁰ Jensen, *Danmarks Konflikt*, 151.; Rantzau's raiding damaged the local economy and destroyed war supplies badly needed by the Swedes. Arnell, *Bidrag till belysning av den baltiska fronten*, 68.

²⁹¹ See Russow's description of the troubles caused at Pernau and Reval by Caspar von Oldenbockum and his horsemen. *Russow*, 105-7.

²⁹² Russow provides a list of the justifications given by Johan for his brother's overthrow. *Russow*, 113-4.

²⁹³ Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, 250-1.

²⁹⁴ The text of this complex treaty may be found in *Archiv*, VII, 272-87.

²⁹⁵ Byron J. Nordstrom, *Scandinavia since 1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 36.

1570-1571

As the 1560s drew to a close, several of the Baltic powers found themselves in political or financial disarray, the notable exceptions being Poland and Lithuania, which were formally united as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under the terms of the 1569 Union of Lublin. In seven years of war, neither Scandinavian power had been able to achieve victory, and both now faced pecuniary exhaustion. King Johan had succeeded in patching up his relationship with Denmark and Lübeck for the time being – although at the cost of paying them crippling reparations – but Sweden’s relations with Moscow had declined precipitously following the overthrow of the pro-Russian Erik XIV.²⁹⁶ Johan sent a delegation to Moscow, but his ambassadors were imprisoned, publically humiliated, and refused an audience with the Tsar.²⁹⁷ For the remainder of his reign, Johan would view Russia as the nation that most threatened Swedish security, and his diplomatic policy would focus on maintaining peaceful relations with the Danes so that he could commit his forces to the struggle in the east.²⁹⁸ Russia, meanwhile, was still suffering the brutal effects of the *oprichnina*. The more developed northwestern portion of the country, which had long enjoyed trade ties with western Europe, was especially devastated as the *oprichniki* massacred and robbed the populations of Novgorod, Pskov, and other cities and towns. Despite having signed a seven-year truce with Sweden in 1565, Ivan also renewed his attack on Swedish Estonia. Duke Magnus, finding himself effectively abandoned by Denmark, traveled to Moscow in the summer of 1570 to treat with the Tsar. Balthasar Russow tells us that this elicited “great delight and rejoicing from many in Livonia, for they hoped and expected that the Muscovite would cede and convey everything he had captured in Livonia to Duke Magnus.”²⁹⁹ This was not to be. Instead, on June 10, in one of the most remarkable twists of the war, Magnus submitted to Ivan and was crowned “King of Livonia” as a vassal of the Tsar.³⁰⁰ The fact that most of his kingdom still had to be conquered

²⁹⁶ Before he was dethroned, Erik may have been plotting to have Johan murdered and his wife, Katarzyna, sent to Moscow to marry the Tsar, who had once been Johan’s rival for her hand. Even after Johan’s coronation, Ivan continued to demand Katarzyna as a precondition of treating with Sweden. De Madariaga, *Ivan the terrible*, 262.

²⁹⁷ Rolf Dencker, “Der finnlandische Bischof Paul Juusten und seine Mission in Russland,” in *Rossica Externa: Festgabe für Paul Johansen*, ed. Hugo Weczerka (Marburg: N.G. Elert, 1963), 37-57.

²⁹⁸ Lavery, *Germany’s Northern Challenge*, 115.

²⁹⁹ *Russow*, 127.

³⁰⁰ Ursula Renner, “Herzog Magnus von Holstein als Vasall des Zaren Ivan Groznyj,” in *Deutschland – Livland – Rußland. Ihre Beziehungen vom 15. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert. Beiträge aus dem Historischen Seminar der Universität Hamburg*, ed. Norbert Angermann (Lüneburg: Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1988), 137-58.

from Sweden, Poland-Lithuania, and the free city of Riga was a technicality that Ivan soon sought to remedy, starting with Swedish Reval, on which Magnus now marched at the head of an army of more than 20,000 Muscovites.

Magnus and his army of Russians and Baltic Germans from Russian-occupied eastern Livonia arrived before Reval in mid-August and prepared to besiege the city, while also seeking to assure the citizens that, should they surrender, they would be ruled directly by Magnus – “a German Christian sovereign” – the only provision being that “Emperor and Grand Duke [Ivan] shall have the name of Lord Protector.” However, despite the diplomatic overtures of Magnus and several prominent Livonians in his train, the Revalians were not persuaded by his arguments.³⁰¹ The siege dragged on into the fall. In October, the Russian army was bolstered by the arrival of *oprichniki* reinforcements, who proceeded to terrorize the countryside with renewed brutality, while the city was relieved by a steady influx of ships from Sweden and Finland, bringing much-needed supplies and duelling with the Russian artillery from offshore. Over the winter, a devastating plague afflicted defenders and attackers alike, causing far more horrific loss of life on both sides than had the fighting itself. At last, after seven months, the Russians broke camp and withdrew on March 16, at the same time abandoning their concurrent siege of Weissenstein.

A decade earlier, the Muscovites had captured Narva almost by chance and then taken the isolated and unprepared inland city of Dorpat in a few days, but Reval – thickly walled, reinforced with experienced troops, and able to be supplied from the sea by her Swedish patrons – proved an insurmountable challenge for the Russian military, which lacked the naval support to effectively blockade and starve the port city.³⁰² The besiegers had failed to inflict much damage on the city itself, although the devastation suffered by the peasants in the surrounding counties had been cruel indeed. A mere two months later, it would be the Russian capital that would find itself on the receiving end of a hostile attack, when, on May 24, Moscow was burned to the ground by an Ottoman-supported Crimean army under the

³⁰¹ The most notable of these were Heinrich Boismann, Johann Taube, and Elert Kruse. However, “the simple and humble people in Reval understood the Muscovite’s wily schemes better than all the Muscovite’s German knezes and barons and Duke Magnus’s sage counsellors.” *Russow*, 134.

³⁰² Although it has changed hands many times, the city of Tallinn has been captured in battle only once, by the Red Army in 1944.

command of Khan Devlet I Giray (ruled 1551-1577), destroying most of the city and killing tens of thousands.³⁰³ Ivan seems to have blamed this defeat at the hands of the Tatars on the *oprichniki* – or at least to have begun to harbour serious doubts about their military aptitude – and he would abandon the political experiment the following year, reuniting the Russian state into a single polity under the authority of Moscow.³⁰⁴ The destruction inflicted upon Moscow was greeted with grim satisfaction by Russia’s many enemies.³⁰⁵ However, it also awakened the Tsar from his state of paranoid introspection and galvanized him to take the war to his enemies with renewed vigor.

1572-1577

On July 7, 1572, King Sigismund Augustus died, sparking a prolonged search for a successor that would curtail the Commonwealth’s involvement in Livonian affairs for the next several years. Sigismund had been childless, and the *Sejm* resolved that it would elect a new monarch, eventually settling on the young Prince Henri de Valois, fourth son of King Henri II of France and not expected to inherit his father’s throne.³⁰⁶ Henri did not arrive in his new kingdom until January of 1574 and fled the country only five months later, in order to return to France and claim the kingdom upon the unexpected death of his elder brother, Charles IX. He was given until May of the following year to resume his duties in Poland, and, when he failed to do so, a dispute arose over whom to elect as his successor – some favoured a Habsburg (specifically, Emperor Maximilian II), while others wanted a Pole.³⁰⁷ Eventually, a compromise of sorts was reached: Stefan Batory, *Voivode* of Transylvania, was elected to the throne on the condition that he marry Anna Jagiellon, sister of the deceased Sigismund Augustus.³⁰⁸ The marriage took

³⁰³ Heinrich von Staden, Jerome Horsey, and other foreign visitors to Russia vividly described the catastrophic damage and great loss of life. Michael C. Paul provides quantitative estimates of the extent of the damage to Moscow and surrounding regions. Paul, “The Military Revolution in Russia,” 40.

³⁰⁴ He may also have simply felt that the movement had achieved its aims and run its course, eliminating his political rivals and ensuring his absolute control over his subjects. Pavlov and Perrie, *Ivan the Terrible*, 162-167.

³⁰⁵ “This repaid the Muscovite for what he had done to poor Livonia and Finland during the previous winter.” *Russow*, 138.

³⁰⁶ Henri was chosen over a Habsburg candidate in part to maintain the Commonwealth’s peace treaty with the Ottomans, who had long enjoyed good relations with France. Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe*, 26.

³⁰⁷ Maximilian’s death in October of 1576 prevented him from pressing his claim and precipitating a more serious conflict.

³⁰⁸ Antoni Mączak characterized the debacle arising from the election of Henri as “a fiasco and an international embarrassment” and suggested that, even though Batory ultimately “demonstrated that a strong and

place on May 1, 1576, but troubles persisted. The Lithuanians refused to recognize Stefan unless he agreed to make several concessions – which he eventually did – and the great Hanseatic port of Danzig, which had supported Maximilian’s candidacy, rebelled against its new King. On April 17, 1577, *Hetman* Jan Zborowski’s small force of 2,000 defeated the Danzigers’ much larger mercenary army at Lubiszewo (Lübschau), but the city held out until December, when peace terms were settled upon after both sides agreed to a number of compromises.³⁰⁹ Batory was finally free to turn his attention to Livonia and the Russian frontier, but he would find that Ivan had not been idle in the five years since the death of Sigismund Augustus.

Following the 1571 sack of Moscow, the Tatars had once again invaded Russia in the summer of 1572, but this time the Tsar’s forces were ready for them. A vast Crimean army of 120,000 men was crushed by perhaps half as many Russians in three days of continuous fighting at Molodi, just south of the Russian capital; the Tatars would never again seriously threaten Russia’s heartland. With his southern border secure, Ivan wasted no time pressing his attack in the west, personally leading an army into Livonia in September of 1572. The new year saw a small Swedish force under Clas Åkeson Tott defeat a much larger Russian army at Lode (on January 23), but, in doing so, Tott had left only a skeleton force of fifty men to guard the great castle of Weissenstein, which the Russians stormed after a brief siege.³¹⁰ The unfortunate Swedish commander (Hans Boje), the garrison, and the inhabitants of the castle were roasted on spits over several days, while Ivan’s cavalry laid waste the county of Jerwen with such ferocity that “there were at this time so many dead bodies that the dogs, wild beasts and birds

courageous king with sufficient personal charisma could still earn the respect of his subjects, carry through reforms, [and] fight successful wars,” there were already worrying signs that the political system of the Commonwealth was moving toward an impasse. Antoni Mączak, “The Structure of Power in the Commonwealth of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” in *A Republic of Nobles: Studies in Polish History to 1864* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 109. Norman Davies observed that Henri’s “catastrophic reign was preceded by a model election” while the election of Batory (whom he calls “Poland’s most successful king”) followed an interregnum of “indescribable chaos”. Davies, *God’s Playground*, 421. Indeed, because Henri fled the country in secret, giving only a vague promise to return in three or four months and without having formally abdicated, a constitutional crisis ensued in which it was not entirely clear whether he was still king. Daniel Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 121.

³⁰⁹ Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State*, 123.

³¹⁰ Five hundred Baltic German cavalry had earlier sought refuge at Weissenstein, but the Swedes had turned them away, fearing that they might mutiny and seize the castle, as Claus Kursell and his men had done in Reval three years before. The Swedes mistrusted the Germans, the Germans mistrusted the Estonians and Letts, and everyone mistrusted the foreign mercenaries, undermining the resistance against Ivan’s invasion.

were long occupied tugging and dragging them, for there was no one at hand to bury them.”³¹¹ The Russians spent the rest of 1573 and 1574 consolidating and defending their conquests, while the Swedes’ efforts to counterattack were consistently hampered by their inability to pay or control their mercenaries.

In the meantime, five thousand Scottish mercenaries, under the command of Archibald Ruthven, had arrived in Reval to reinforce the Swedish and German troops already in the city.³¹² At first, these outlandish foreigners were treated as a welcome addition to the city’s defenses, but, when their pay ran out, they were given permission to requisition supplies from the local peasantry and soon took to robbing the burghers and nobility as well. Confessional disputes also became an issue when some of the Scots began to preach Calvinism, coming into conflict with local Catholics and Lutherans. Feared by the citizens and resented by the German mercenaries with whose misappropriated wages they had previously been paid, Ruthven’s men soon came to be seen as more of a liability than an asset. The Swedish authorities clearly did not trust either the Scottish or the German troops stationed in the city, and, perhaps recalling Klaus Kursell’s mutiny of a few years earlier, King Johan personally wrote to Klas Ákeson Tott with instructions to garrison the upper citadel only with trustworthy Swedish soldiers. With the city on the brink of boiling over and his requests for more money refused by Stockholm, Tott decided to go on the attack in early 1574, besieging the Russian-held castle of Wesenberg, which guarded the road from Reval to Narva. The siege dragged on into mid-March, with the attackers suffering dreadful casualties in a series of futile assaults. Finally, on March 17, tensions in the Swedish camp boiled over. The Scottish and German mercenaries turned upon one another and a massacre ensued, with the German cavalry riding down and slaughtering fifteen hundred Scottish infantry. With the army in tatters, discipline wavering, and morale at rock bottom, the Swedes broke camp a week later and retreated back to Reval.

³¹¹ *Russow*, 146.

³¹² The most detailed account of Ruthven’s ill-fated campaign is to be found in James Dow, *Ruthven’s Army in Sweden and Esthonia* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964). There is growing scholarly interest in Scottish émigrés in the early modern Baltic, particularly in Danzig and Sweden. See, for example, the recent publications of Maria Bogucka, David Ditchburn, Alexia Grosjean, James Miller, Steve Murdoch, T.C. Smout, and others. The classic studies of Thomas A. Fischer also remain useful.

The county of Harrien was now despoiled first by the renegade Baltic German cavalry who held the castles of Hapsal, Lode, and Leal and then by the Russians and Tatars.³¹³ The former had yet to receive the pay they had been promised, and, when the agreed upon deadline (June 24, 1574) came and went, they began to fight amongst themselves over what course of action to take. Some, led by *Hauptmann* Hans Wachtmeister, remained loyal to the Swedes and made their way to Reval, but the majority favoured selling the castles they had been given as sureties to the Danes. On January 25, 1575, the mercenaries gave over several castles to Claus von Ungern, the Danish governor at Arensburg, on the condition that he pay them by mid-June.³¹⁴ However, Ungern had no intention of honouring this arrangement, instead forcing the captains to pay money they owed to the burghers of Reval for supplies they had taken while in Swedish service. Now considered traitors and with no pay forthcoming from either the Swedes or the Danes, the remaining horsemen defected to the Russians, who were once again on the offensive. Angered by the Danish acquisition of Hapsal, Lode, and Leal – which Ivan viewed as within Russia’s sphere – the Russians now broke their treaty with Denmark and invaded the Danish portions of Estonia in force, plundering and destroying wherever they went. Danish involvement in the eastern Baltic effectively came to an end after this point.³¹⁵ Having lost the trust of his overlord, the Tsar, and without the support of his brother, the King of Denmark, the hapless Magnus of Holstein now made a desperate bid for autonomy by attempting to rally the Livonian nobility to his cause. Few answered, and the erstwhile “King of Livonia” was quickly captured by the Russians, forced to renounce his title, and magnanimously allowed to retire to Courland as a ward of the Polish Crown.³¹⁶

By early 1577, Russian forces controlled nearly all of Livonia and Estonia, the only significant exceptions being Riga, Reval, Courland, and the islands. Having beaten back the Swedes and taken advantage of Stefan Batory’s preoccupation with the Danzig War, they now attempted a second siege of Reval (from January to March of 1577), but, as before, they proved incapable of breaching the city’s defenses. Defeated again at Reval, the Tsar looked south for easier

³¹³ Russow recounts how these *Hofleute* “ravaged and plundered here and conducted themselves no better than had the Russians and Tatars [and] daily fought and murdered among themselves like dogs.” *Russow*, 156.

³¹⁴ On one of his return journeys from Russia to England, Jerome Horsey was briefly detained by the Danish garrison on Ösel, complaining that he was “taken by ragamuff soldiers, who used me very roughly.” Berry and Crumme, *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom*, 266.; Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 295.

³¹⁵ Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, 258-259.

³¹⁶ Paul Douglas Lockhart, *Frederick II and the Protestant Cause* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 38-9.

targets, taking Kokenhausen, Dünaburg, Pernau, and Wenden. Ivan was at the height of his powers, but, despite having occupied most of the territory of Livonia and Estonia, he had been unable to deliver a decisive blow against either Swedish or Commonwealth forces in the region or to capture the great port cities of Riga and Reval. Frost has pointed out that the Russians' failure to secure their conquests at this critical juncture typifies the problems faced by all of the powers engaged in the struggle for Livonia.

*It was relatively easy to capture castles, towns and cities, most of which had decayed or obsolete fortifications, but they were difficult to hold once an enemy returned in force. Infantry were precious, and neither Ivan nor his enemies had enough experienced, trained men to garrison the fortresses they captured; thus castles and towns swapped back and forth between that combatants at regular intervals [...] The application of new technology might have made it easy enough to capture castles, but improved fortifications around Riga and Reval kept the greatest prizes out of Muscovy's reach; without a navy, Ivan was unable to prevent supply by sea.*³¹⁷

Ivan had missed his opportunity to win the war, and, with the succession crisis in Poland-Lithuania coming to end and Danzig pacified, the momentum was about to shift in favour of Stefan Batory as he brought the full force of the Commonwealth's formidable military to bear against the Russians.³¹⁸

1578-1583

With the Russians at war with their western neighbours on a long front stretching from Finland south through Estonia and Livonia and deep into Lithuania and Ruthenia, Sweden and Poland-Lithuania at last had sufficient cause to put aside their differences and cooperate against the common foe. The Swedes assaulted Hapsal, Lode, and Leal and raided the diocese of Dorpat. By autumn, the Polish-Lithuanian forces were on the move, recapturing Dünaburg and other parts of central Livonia. Throughout late 1577 and early 1578, there was near continuous skirmishing around Wenden, and the Russians were expelled from the town in January. Ivan responded by dispatching a large army to the Livonian front; Oberpahlen was taken from the Swedes in September, and Wenden was besieged. For the first and only time, Swedish and

³¹⁷ Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 28-9.

³¹⁸ Dariusz Kupisz has argued that Batory's "unquestionable achievement was the realm's willingness to shoulder the burden of huge financial and organizational efforts over several years." By 1579, he had an army of 56,000 men, of which 41,000 were deployed against the Russians (a number that rose to 48,000 the following year). Dariusz Kupisz, "The Polish-Lithuanian Military in the Reign of King Stefan Bathory (1576-1586)," in *Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1500-1800*, ed. Brian L. Davies (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 70.

Commonwealth forces united, with approximately 5,5000 Swedish, German, Polish, Lithuanian, Transylvanian, and Bohemian troops loyal to Johan III and Stefan Batory launching a joint strike against the Muscovite army, which they soundly defeated, taking great quantities of war supplies from the Russian camp.³¹⁹ Wenden was the first major pitched battle of the war since Ermes and the first serious defeat suffered by Ivan's forces in Livonia.³²⁰ It was a setback from which the Russian war effort would not recover.

The Muscovites were now firmly on the defensive, and Stefan Batory resolved to take the fight to the enemy. Hussars and cossacks were recruited, the Polish artillery was improved, and an army of 56,000 was raised for a new campaign (with just over half of the troops recruited in Lithuania).³²¹ Most of Ivan's reserves were stationed in Novgorod and Pskov as a precaution against the possibility of a Swedish invasion from Estonia or Finland, so Batory struck to the south, capturing the major city of Polotsk on August 30 of 1579. At the same time, a Swedish army under Henrik Klasson Horn attacked Narva but was repulsed. Command of the Swedish forces in the Livonian theatre now fell to Pontus de la Gardie, a ruthlessly capable French mercenary and veteran of countless campaigns. While Batory pushed deeper into Russian territory in the south, capturing the key fortress of Velikie Luki in September of 1580, de la Gardie led a successful campaign in Karelia, taking Kexholm (Korela), before crossing into Estonia in spectacular fashion by marching an army across the frozen Gulf of Finland.³²² Padis quickly fell to the Swedes, and Wesenberg surrendered on March 4, 1581, after a ferocious artillery bombardment.³²³ The summer of 1581 brought even more Swedish victories; Karl Henriksson Horn reconquered the western castles of Lode, Leal, and Hapsal before de la Gardie, supported from the sea by a fleet under Admiral Klas Fleming, marched upon Narva, site of Ivan's first significant Livonian victory more than two decades before. The city was heavily bombarded for two days before terms of surrender were offered to the Russian commanders. The Russians refused to give in, and de la Gardie resolved to storm the city,

³¹⁹ Gary Dean Peterson, *Warrior Kings of Sweden: The Rise of an Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: MacFarland & Company, 2007), 94.

³²⁰ It is characteristic of the conflict that even its decisive field engagement took place in the context of the relief of a siege in a region that had been subjected to more than half a year of continuous raiding and skirmishing.

³²¹ Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State*, 126-7.

³²² "An incredible campaign, unparalleled in world history," as Russow described it. *Russow*, 206.

³²³ Pontus de la Gardie had been second-in-command during the disastrous 1574 siege of Wesenberg and now had a chance to avenge the earlier defeat.

promising that participating troops would be given twenty-four hours of unrestricted plunder. This incentive proved so effective that the cavalry dismounted and sailors from the Swedish fleet came ashore to join the assault. In a matter of hours, the city's defenses had been breached, and over 7,000 Russian men, women, and children were put to the sword by the rampaging Swedish and German troops. De la Gardie quickly followed up this victory by conquering Ivangorod, Jama, Kopore, and Weissenstein. All of northern Estonia was now in Swedish hands, and the Tsar no longer held a single Baltic port.

Much of the Swedes' success was owed to the exertions of Stefan Batory to the south, and it is doubtful whether de la Gardie's victories could have been achieved if a large portion of the Tsar's forces had not been tied down defending Pskov in a siege that lasted from September of 1581 until the beginning of the next year.³²⁴ Although the Commonwealth forces failed to take the city, the threat of losing such a vital strategic centre, the devastation caused by Polish raids (as far east as the Volga), and the string of defeats suffered against Pole and Swede alike finally forced Ivan to negotiate. On January 15, 1582, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Tsardom of Russia signed the Truce of Yam-Zapolsky. Russia agreed to surrender all of its Livonian territory and the cities of Dorpat and Polotsk to the Commonwealth, while Batory would end his siege of Pskov and return Velikie Luki to the Tsar. Russia would also be allowed to keep any Estonian, Ingrian, or Finnish territory taken from the Swedes, although the Swedes themselves were not party to the treaty and refused to accept this clause. Sweden and Russia would sign a separate truce, the Treaty of Plussa, just over a year later, ceding Ivangorod, Korela, and most of Ingria to Stockholm.³²⁵

The quarter-century-long Livonian War had demonstrated that no single power was yet capable of dominating the eastern Baltic on its own. The duration of the war and the inability of any one nation to win it may be explained by the nature of the conflict, which had been characterized by raids and sieges and the avoidance pitched battles, and by the fact that none of

³²⁴ Batory did not have the strength in infantry and artillery to storm the city (although dismounted cavalry were also used in this capacity at times), and he hoped to draw out a Muscovite relief force that he could crush in pitched battle. However, the Russians were too cautious to fall into his trap, and, instead, an impasse ensued, followed by peace negotiations beginning in January of 1582. Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State*, 126.

³²⁵ War between Sweden and Russia would break out once again in 1590, when Boris Gudonov invaded Estonia, Ingria, and Finland.

the states involved yet possessed the fiscal technologies needed to sustain a decisive war effort (although the Swedes were already experimenting with institutions and practices that would stand them in good stead in the century to come). The Western powers' reliance on mercenaries exacerbated these issues, as "cautious professional competence took the place of the quest for glory in the planning and conduct of campaigns," while the Russians' military culture of brutally punishing failure but rarely rewarding success made them very difficult to defeat but unlikely to seize victory against a determined foe.³²⁶ The Livonian Confederation had been defeated within a few years, but Ivan the Terrible, the man who had struck the fatal blow, had little to show for his exertions. It had been a brief period of cooperation between Sweden and the Commonwealth in the late 1570s and early 1580s, as well as the appearance of two unusually capable military leaders in the persons of Pontus de la Gardie and Stefan Batory, that had proved conclusive; the Russians simply could not fight Sweden and Poland-Lithuania at once. By the end of the war, Poland-Lithuania controlled most of Old Livonia, Sweden held the northern portion of Estonia, Denmark was left with the island of Ösel, and Russia had been driven back east of the Narva and out of Ingria and Polotsk.³²⁷ This compromise would ultimately prove unsatisfactory to all parties, and fighting would break out once again as early as 1590 and continue unabated into the seventeenth century as Sweden set about building a Baltic empire and Russia descended into the Time of Troubles. For now, though, the long-suffering inhabitants of Livonia and Estonia had a brief window in which to count their losses and lick their wounds.

³²⁶ Howard, *War in European History*, 27.

³²⁷ Filjushkin's claim that, because the Russians only lost lands that they had already gained earlier in the war, "the overall territorial result of the Baltic wars of the second half of the sixteenth century was not a failure for Russia [...] it had not gained or lost anything important" is slightly disingenuous. Regardless of Ivan's objectives at the start of the war, his aim quickly became the total conquest and subjugation of the former territories of the Livonian Confederation. He not only failed to achieve this goal, but his actions precipitated a series of events that would lead to the destruction of a weak and unthreatening neighbour – Livonia – and the expansion of two much more dangerous rivals – the Commonwealth and Sweden – into its former territory. His country also lost tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians, vast sums of money, and significant international prestige as a result of the turmoil caused by the war and the *oprichnina*. By any standard, the Livonian War was a significant setback for Russian interests. That said, when assessing all of the military failures and accomplishments of Ivan's long reign, it may be fair to conclude that his earlier victories against the Tatars were of more lasting significance than his later defeats in the Baltic. The conquests of Astrakhan and Kazan opened up Asia and the Caucasus to future Russian imperialism, and the defeat of Khan Devlet Giray's invading army at Molodi halted Tatar-Ottoman plans for northward expansion. Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 260.

Demographically, the Estonian and Lettish peasantry and the Baltic German nobility had been devastated by the war, while the townsmen of Reval and Riga had fared somewhat better. The local aristocracy had, however, demonstrated that its support was needed to control the region and would leverage this power to retain many of its rights and privileges in the subsequent centuries of Polish, Swedish, and Russian rule; the peasants, in contrast, would gradually slide further into serfdom.³²⁸ However, while the nobility survived and even prospered as a corporate class, the war had brought social turmoil that reshaped its composition. Many old families lost their lands (and their sons) in the fighting, while successful military commanders were given abandoned or confiscated Livonian estates and lofty titles by the conquering Poles and Swedes in lieu of payment.³²⁹ (Indeed, the desire of the officer classes to be rewarded with newly conquered lands was one of the social forces that drove their countries' expansionist policies.³³⁰) As the conflict wore on, members of the non-German peasantry also occasionally found opportunities to rise in status by joining the soldiery, with Estonians notably serving under the command of Hans Wachtmeister, Ivo "Hannibal" Schenkenberg, and others. Social mobility went the other way as well, as disenfranchised sons of the old aristocracy took up soldiering in the service of one potentate or another and the daughters of once-prosperous burghers and nobles married common soldiers. It was an age characterized by upheavals in wealth, class, and even ethnic identity.

*Since poverty and destruction beset many of the noblemen and townsmen, their children had to join the peasants and support themselves through pillaging. They so lowered themselves that they had as their captain a non-German peasant. During the times of peace they would have considered it beneath them to sit or walk beside him, but now they rode or ran on foot to pillage under his command. Many young noblewomen and townsmen's daughters of the most illustrious families were forced through direst need to marry not only common horsemen, but also others of much lower station, something which would have been completely unlike them and unheard of during the earlier times of peace.*³³¹

³²⁸ Donnert discusses the declining fortunes of the peasantry over the course of the sixteenth century, as well as some of the retaliations suffered by the nobility in the chaos of the Livonian War. Donnert, *Der livländische Ordensritterstaat und Rußland*, 63-101. During the conflict, the native population sometimes supported their traditional Baltic German overlords and sometimes aided the Muscovites or other foreign powers.

³²⁹ Urban, *Bayonets for Hire*, 68.

³³⁰ Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland," 54-55.; Rian, "Government and Society," 21.

³³¹ *Russow*, 209-10.

In short, over the course of twenty-five bloody years, Livonia was transformed from a society that was rather unprepared to defend itself into one so thoroughly shaped by and organized for war that even “children, servants and lackeys knew more of military matters and stratagems than did old, illustrious men during the earlier times of peace.”³³² For better or for worse, professional mercenaries were instrumental in bringing about that change.

³³² *Russow*, 190.

Chapter 5

Military Organization of the Sixteenth-Century Baltic Powers

Assessing the relative military capabilities of the factions fighting over Livonia during the latter half of the sixteenth century is a complex task. The parties involved were not equally assiduous record-keepers, and what documents they did produce have not experienced uniform rates of survival over the intervening centuries. The city of Tallinn, for example, has some of the most voluminous collections of medieval and early modern documents in Northern Europe, while records pertaining to sixteenth-century Muscovite military affairs are comparatively scant. These warring states were also dissimilar in size, economy, culture, government, and military organization. The enormous land empires of Poland-Lithuania and Russia developed along quite different paths from one another, let alone from the crusader colony of the Livonian Order and the two thalassocratic Scandinavian monarchies. Each of these polities was faced with unique challenges and utilised peculiar strategies to meet them. It is true that the major powers were all undergoing processes of centralization and consolidation, but no two of them approached this undertaking in the same way. Sigismund Augustus was intent on unifying Poland and Lithuania into a single super-state, a dream that became a reality with the Union of Lublin in 1569, while his successor, Stefan Batory, concentrated on making important reforms to the Polish and Lithuanian armies.³³³ Ivan IV declared himself Tsar, continued his predecessors' successful policy of expansion into the south and east, regulated military service, founded Russia's first standing infantry regiments (the *streltsy*), and attempted to eradicate those whom he saw as his political enemies through the disastrous policy of *oprichnina*. In Sweden, Gustav Vasa and his sons created a powerful navy, established the national treasury, instituted regular military service, and set their nation on the path to the power it achieved in the following century. Despite the best efforts of the Livonian Order, particularly under the capable and patriotic Wolter von Plettenberg, the various blocs within the Livonian Confederation resisted centralization and never coalesced into a unified state.

³³³ The Lithuanians had been the less willing of the two nations to formalize the union, but they were persuaded to do so after suffering military setbacks against the Muscovites, most notably the loss of Polotsk in 1563.

These differences in political evolution, as much as any developments on the battlefield, would play a part in determining the outcome of the Livonian War, which stretched all involved to the limits of their logistical and administrative capabilities. The ability to harness the realm's financial and military resources to their maximal potential proved a constant challenge, not only to win battles but to sustain the momentum of a prolonged campaign and retain captured territory. The great cost of outfitting, supplying, and paying large numbers of men was the principal difficulty; this was true for field armies, but also for garrisons, which, most of the time, were essentially paid to do nothing in the hope that they would not defect or surrender at the first word of the enemy's approach. In short, the main expenses of early modern governments were usually military in nature, and these were unpredictable, immediate, and required readily available capital.³³⁴ Medieval systems of taxation, such as annual rents or tithes, often reached rulers indirectly through the Church or the aristocracy and did not provide sufficient quantity or liquidity of resources to meet the demands of sixteenth-century states.³³⁵

The struggles of early modern rulers to rectify these issues through policies of centralization and reform – and the frequency with which they partnered with mercenaries to do so – gave rise to an era of turbulence and violent transformation. Nor was expense the only reason that holding an army together for a sustained period of time proved so challenging; disease, desertion, hunger, and the elements could all cause a force to disintegrate before it ever saw action.³³⁶ While this was true everywhere in the early modern world, waging war in northeastern Europe posed special logistical issues due to the unforgiving climate, the marshy and heavily forested terrain, the low population density, and the vast distances involved. Even the Livonian Confederation, a small state compared to her neighbours, was half again as large as modern Belgium and the Netherlands combined. Poland-Lithuania, at her greatest extent, was well over a million square kilometres, and Muscovy was substantially larger. The Swedish realm, though smaller than the two Slavic behemoths across the Baltic, was about six times the

³³⁴ James L. Larson, *Reforming the North: The Kingdoms and Churches of Scandinavia, 1520-1545* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 460.

³³⁵ Ingrid Hammarström, *Finansförvaltning och varuhandel 1504-1540. Studier i de yngre Sturarnas och Gustav Vasas statshushållning* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1956), 275-6.

³³⁶ As the ever-astucious Cardinal Richelieu noted, “*Il se trouve en l'Histoire beaucoup plus d'Armées périées par faute de Pain & de Police, que par l'effort des Armes Ennemies.*” Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal Duc de Richelieu, *Testament Politique*, Première Partie (Amsterdam: Janssons à Waesberge, 1709), 111.

size of England with a fraction of the population.³³⁷ While impressively huge, each of these polities was, in some ways, less than the sum of its parts; all struggled to make effective use of the abundant resources at their disposal, especially during times of war. The great northern and eastern forests of Muscovy and Sweden-Finland presented particularly intractable challenges of governance and efficient resource extraction that the infrastructures and administrative apparatuses of the early modern state were ill-equipped to meet. In effect, no power was able to commit all of its forces to the Livonian theatre while also protecting its frontiers and hinterlands, and, even when a large army could be assembled, it was no easy task to hold it together.³³⁸

Military historians have increasingly acknowledged that “military organisation has to be located socially and politically.”³³⁹ In fact, socio-economic and political norms were as likely to limit the military capabilities of early modern polities as they were to enhance them. In all cases, total manpower was many times greater than the number of men available (and affordable) for military service. In some instances, this was partly a product of social restrictions on those deemed eligible for an active military role; as Jeremy Black has observed, in addition to taking into account sheer population size, “it is also necessary to consider the dynamic relationship between the problems that societies faced in determining what is optimal capability, and the contested character of what are termed the strategic cultures within which military goals were set, and thus which defined the objectives to be pursued by this apparently optimal capability.”³⁴⁰ In Livonia, for example, the native peasantry comprised approximately ninety percent of the population, but this pool was under-utilized in times of war, a precaution intended to reduce the risk of armed insurgency against the dominant German minority. Given that Livonia was already at a significant population disadvantage, failure to make fulsome use of nine tenths of her potential manpower was obviously problematic. Such practices fluctuated according to the requirements of the day. Evald Blumfeldt has, for example, demonstrated that

³³⁷ In the mid-sixteenth century, Stockholm was the only city in the Swedish realm with a population of over five thousand, and only about five percent of the total population was urban. Robert Sandberg, “The Towns, the Urban System and the State in Early Modern Sweden,” in *Society, Towns and Masculinity: Aspects of Early Modern Society in the Baltic Area*, ed. Kekke Stadin (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001), 65.

³³⁸ As Glete has noted, singleminded historiographical focus on changing early modern power structures risks ignoring the fact that the greatest restrictions on the degree to which early modern states could project force remained logistical. Glete, *War and the State*, 12.

³³⁹ Jeremy Black, “Introduction,” 6.

³⁴⁰ Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London: Routledge, 2004), 4.

the combat role of the Estonian peasantry gradually declined throughout the medieval period, likely reflecting an increased emphasis on military professionalization.³⁴¹ To a degree, this trend was reversed over the course of the Livonian War, when all sides discovered that the peasants' expert knowledge of local terrain made them valuable scouts and raiders – and also as the Estonians and Letts formed their own militias to defend their farms and villages against the brutal predations of roving pillagers. After the war, the peasantry was again relegated to a distinctly secondary role in military affairs.

In Poland, while mercenary and conscripted infantry were also employed, the most effective and professional wing of the military was the cavalry, mostly drawn from the *szlachta*, who comprised only about 6-7.5% of the population.³⁴² Although organized and equipped very differently from their Polish counterparts, the core of the Russian army also consisted of noble cavalry, supported by infantry armed with firearms (the *streletsy*, formed c.1550). Merchants and peasants, the latter being by far the most numerous inhabitants of the Tsar's realm, were usually not expected to fight except in times of direst need.³⁴³ This was rather different to the situation in much of central and western Europe, where burghers were often required to participate in municipal defense, although sometimes only to support the war effort through the payment of taxes.³⁴⁴ The Danes, who had no standing army until the seventeenth century, preferred to hire foreign mercenaries, mostly recruited from lower Germany but also from Scotland and elsewhere. Only Sweden relied heavily on native infantry conscripted from the

³⁴¹ Evald Blumfeldt, "Über die Wehrpflicht der estnischen Landbevölkerung im Mittelalter," *Apophoreta Tartuensia* (Stockholm: Societas Litterarum Estonica in Svecia, 1949), 175.

³⁴² Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 9.

³⁴³ Western visitors to Ivan's court considered this system to be unusual. Giles Fletcher, an English ambassador, observed that "every soldier in Russia is a gentleman, and none are gentlemen but only soldiers that take it by descent from their ancestors, so that the son of a gentleman which is born a soldier is ever a gentleman and a soldier withal and professeth nothing else but military matters." Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 75.

³⁴⁴ In the Livonian towns, burghers sometimes could play a comparatively significant part in civic defense, although their participation declined in the sixteenth century as more professional mercenaries were hired from overseas. In Reval, this decline was hastened after 1561, when Swedish troops began to garrison the city. As elsewhere in the sixteenth-century German world, the burghers of Riga, Reval, and the other Baltic towns were not typically expected to take part in campaigns beyond the immediate environs of their own municipalities. Juhan Kreem, *The Town and its Lord: Reval and the Teutonic Order (in the fifteenth century)* (Tallinn: Tallinna Linnaarhiiv Toimetised, 2002), 71-74.; Gerhard Fouquet, "Die Finanzierung von Krieg und Verteidigung in oberdeutschen Städten des späten Mittelalters (1400-1500)," in *Stadt und Krieg: 25. Arbeitstagung in Böblingen 1986*, ed. Bernhard Kirchgässner and Günter Scholz (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1989), 41-82.; Schieman, "Revaler Landsknechte," 228. For further discussion of the military role of citizen militias in the early modern Germanic world see, for example, Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger and Johannes Kunisch, *Staatsverfassung und Heeresverfassung in der europäischen Geschichte der frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1986).

peasantry, a necessity given the realm's low population, chronic shortages of men, and Denmark's semi-successful efforts to restrict her access to the major German mercenary markets. As the war progressed, all of the participants strove to improve the efficiency of their military, political, and economic institutions. In some cases, these efforts were successful, but, in others, as with Ivan's experiment with *oprichnina*, they were tragically counter-productive. By the mid-seventeenth century, it would be the Swedes who would prove most successful in establishing the kind of fiscal-military apparatus required to meet the challenges posed by the virtually continuous warfare that blighted the age, while Russia and Prussia would emerge as the region's great powers in the eighteenth century. In the 1550s, however, it was by no means a given that this would be the case, as Sweden was still languishing in Denmark's shadow in the wake of the collapse of the Kalmar Union, and Poland-Lithuania was a greater land power than either of the Scandinavian monarchies.

Polish-Lithuanian armies of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries present something of a conundrum to devotees of the early modern military revolution thesis. Their main, although certainly not their only, strength lay in their superb cavalry, the *husaria*, often considered the finest horse in Europe. At the same time, the peak of the Commonwealth's military power corresponded with the alleged military revolution, in which the importance and efficacy of cavalry, particularly heavy cavalry, is generally adduced to have declined as Europe entered the era of pike and shotte.³⁴⁵ Admittedly, most proponents of the military revolution theory have focused on western Europe, either ignoring eastern Europe altogether or arguing that it did not experience similar developments due to its supposed technological backwardness or because of its geography (cavalry being retained because they were more suited to warfare in the larger and flatter eastern portion of the European continent).³⁴⁶

In Poland's case, such arguments are simplistic and neglect several important points. First, characterizing the continued use of armies centred upon heavy and medium cavalry as archaic

³⁴⁵ This was not always case, however. As late as 1645, near the end of the Thirty Years' War, cavalry outnumbered infantry in the Swedish field army operating in Germany, largely because they were more effective at pillaging and could thus sustain themselves more easily while campaigning in enemy territory. Tallett, *War and Society in Early-Modern Europe*, 29.

³⁴⁶ See, for example, Geoffrey Parker's somewhat cursory dismissal of eastern European warfare in his *The Military Revolution and the Rise of the West*.

– at least compared to contemporaneous western European forces based around a core of infantry with cavalry in support – overlooks the fact that the *types* of cavalry deployed by the Poles were constantly evolving. The Polish heavy cavalry of the sixteenth century was no mere relict of the knightly armies of the Middle Ages. Rather, the *husaria* were an innovation that had only been introduced in the early fifteen hundreds and whose “sophisticated techniques and weaponry were as much a response to the changes in contemporary warfare as were those of [Swedish and German infantry].”³⁴⁷ Further, they continued to evolve throughout the century, especially under the militarily effective Stefan Batory, who introduced a number of military reforms along Hungarian lines from his native Transylvania.³⁴⁸ Second, Polish-Lithuanian cavalry armies frequently proved themselves quite capable of besting larger forces of western European professional infantry – as in the Rzeczpospolita’s famous victories over Danzig at Lubiszew (1577) and over Sweden at Kokenhausen (1601) and Kirchholm (1605) – a fact which belies claims of their impending obsolescence (or, at least, suggests that this obsolescence came about later than has commonly been adduced).³⁴⁹ Third, in western Europe, cavalry were not only eclipsed by pike- and firearm-wielding foot soldiers for tactical reasons, but also because of the great cost of equipping an armoured horseman.³⁵⁰ This was largely a consequence of the waning combat role of the aristocracy, which resulted in the transformation of the medieval knighthood, a social class who supplied its own arms, into cavalry, functionally designated professional soldiers who had to be paid and outfitted by their employers.³⁵¹ In the Polish context, as in the Russian, this was less of an issue: although the cavalry was also professionalized, a process that accelerated under Stefan Batory, the *szlachta* remained a politically powerful and militarily significant force.³⁵²

³⁴⁷ Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 17.

³⁴⁸ For a concise list of some of Batory’s military reforms, see Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State*, 126.

³⁴⁹ The cavalry was by far the most important factor in the Polish victories at Kokenhausen and Kirchholm, but the infantry and cannon also played a part in the victory over the Russian-Swedish force at Klushino (1610). Wiesław Majewski, “The Polish Art of War in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *A Republic of Nobles: Studies in Polish History to 1864*, ed. J.K. Fedorowicz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 185-6.

³⁵⁰ Tallett, *War and Society in Early-Modern Europe*, 30.

³⁵¹ Laurent Henninger, “Military Revolutions and Military History,” 12.

³⁵² It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that the early modern Polish noble levy functioned in the same way as had knightly service in earlier epochs or even that it continued to be the core of the Polish army. From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, it could only be called upon to render free service in cases of national defense and had to be paid for its participation in campaigns outside of the boundaries of the kingdom. A standing force of three thousand professional cavalry was tasked with defending the southern border against Tatar incursions. Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 55. Although the *pospolite ruszenie* (mass mobilization) of the mid-

As in most of Europe, reasons of cost dictated that, for much of the sixteenth century, Poland's permanent army was small by the standards of later centuries. This was the so-called *obrona potoczna* ("permanent defense"), a predominantly cavalry force tasked with defending the southern frontier against incursions by the Crimeans, Turks, and Moldovans.³⁵³ The troops served in rotating shifts on a seasonal basis. The *obrona potoczna* was primarily financed directly by the Crown, with additional funds provided by special taxes voted on by the *Sejm*. In 1563, this system was replaced by the creation of the *wojsko kwarciane* ("quarter army"), a standing army organized into companies led by captains commissioned by the King to recruit *towarzysze* ("comrades") who were responsible for providing their own equipment, horses, and a small retinue of soldier-retainers.³⁵⁴ By the time of the Livonian War, the Polish army therefore had a flexible, sustainable, disciplined, well-equipped, and skilled core of cavalry – superior in both organization and battlefield performance to either the Muscovite *pomeste'e* cavalry or the Western-style *Reiter* of the Swedes, Danes, and Livonians³⁵⁵ – that continued to evolve over the latter half of the sixteenth century.

In contrast, the establishment of a standing infantry corps was a comparatively late development in both Poland (1562) and Lithuania (1551), although Stefan Batory quickly reformed these forces to good effect, raising the percentage armed with firearms and increasing

sixteenth century could, in theory, raise fifty thousand troops in the Kingdom of Poland alone, in practice the number of *szlachta* mobilized at any given time was far lower, and the importance of these levies had been declining relative to the use of professional troops since the fifteenth century. Brian L. Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 2007), 49.; Kupisz, "The Polish-Lithuanian Military," 64.

³⁵³ Tadeusz Grabarczyk, "Obrona Potoczna," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, ed. Clifford J. Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁵⁴ Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 53-62.

³⁵⁵ *Reiter* could be very effective under the right conditions. However, Montecuccoli's description of the deficiencies of this type of light, pistol-wielding cavalry warrants consideration: "Over a distance of two hundred paces one sees this long rank [of horses] thin out and dissolve. Great breaches appear within it [...] On many occasions only twenty or twenty-five of a hundred horse actually charge. Then, when they have realized they have no support or backing, after having fired a few pistol shots and after having delivered a few thrusts of their swords, they withdraw [...] by and large, they are unable to collide with great force." Raimondo Montecuccoli, "Sulle Battaglie," in *The Military Intellectual and Battle: Raimondo Montecuccoli and the Thirty Years War*, trans. and ed. T.M. Barker, 73-173 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 92. These were also very expensive troops to train and equip, requiring perfect battlefield coordination to perform an effective *caracoles*. Siegfried Fiedler, *Kriegswesen und Kriegführung im Zeitalter der Revolutionskriege* (Koblenz: Bernard & Graefe, 1988), 96.

the size of the *wojsko kwarciane*.³⁵⁶ In 1578, he formed the *piechota wybraniecka* (“selected infantry”), comprised of one man drawn from the peasantry of every twenty estates of the Crown land, with each soldier’s clothing and armaments paid for by the families of the remaining nineteen estates.³⁵⁷ Like their Muscovite counterparts, the Polish and Lithuanian infantry did not favour the pike, transitioning directly from such weapons as the spear, axe, and bardiche to the arquebus and later the musket (or using the new firearms in conjunction with older weapons).³⁵⁸ Unlike in Russia, however, substantial numbers of foreign mercenaries served in the Polish armies – Germans, Hungarians, Scots, Moldovans, Wallachians, Bohemians, Livonians, Transylvanians, and others – and Polish officers also traveled abroad, honing their skills in warzones across the European continent.³⁵⁹ Many of the foreign troops encountered and employed by the Poles did favour the pike formations current in their own homelands and retained their use while fighting in Polish service, so the Poles were certainly familiar with these tactics but chose not to employ them for reasons of their own. In short, Polish-Lithuanian forces of the sixteenth century were amongst the most diverse in Europe, and they had no shortage of knowledge of either Western or Eastern forms of military organization, strategy, and technology.³⁶⁰ They borrowed what they deemed valuable and rejected what they felt was inapplicable to their own needs, and the fact that those needs often dictated responses that differed from ones adopted in western Europe is not indicative of military deficiency. Indeed, Western observers of the day viewed the Poles as formidable foes

³⁵⁶ Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 161.; Kupisz, “The Polish-Lithuanian Military,” 66-7.

³⁵⁷ Norman Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland: The Origins to 1795* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 425.

³⁵⁸ As in many parts of Europe, guns began to replace crossbows in the fifteenth century. Wiesław Majewski estimated that, in 1530, only about one in seven infantrymen was armed with a pike. Majewski, “The Polish Art of War,” 184. The *streltsy* made effective combined use of the arquebus and the bardiche, wielding the bardiche in close quarters and using the head of the axe as a prop for their guns when firing.

³⁵⁹ Foreign mercenaries did, of course, serve in Muscovite armies, but in far fewer numbers. Recounting the events of 1572, when the famous Livonian mercenary Jürgen von Farenzbach was attempting to recruit German horsemen for service in Russia against the Tatars, Balthasar Russow remarks that, “Never before had anyone ever heard of Livonians and foreigners flocking to the Muscovite in the way they did during these years.” *Russow*, 141.

³⁶⁰ Balthasar Russow’s vivid description of a Polish-Lithuanian army under Mikołaj “the Black” Radziwiłł parading through Riga gives a sense of the multinational nature of these forces: “He rode through the city, accompanied by many men of foreign nations: Armenians, Turks, Tartars, Podolskians, Russians and Wallachians, along with many Germans, Poles and Lithuanians. And many a pious heart was amazed as they saw these various foreign nations and peoples, each in their own costumes, with their own weapons, escucheons and music. They saw their own distress in the fact that such bizarre, strange and barbarian nations and peoples were in their fatherland, treading the streets of the Christian city of Riga.” *Russow*, 98.

and expressed admiration for their martial prowess, an attitude that stands in stark contrast to the pervading view of the other major Slavic power of early modern Europe: Muscovy.

Muscovy was one of the great conquering nations of the early modern world. Originating in the late Middle Ages as a large duchy centred on the city of Moscow, by the time of Ivan IV's accession to the throne, in 1533, the realm had expanded to encompass an area of nearly three million square kilometres. Over the next century and a half, an insatiable appetite for Asiatic conquest would see that number swell to an astonishing fifteen million square kilometres or about twice the size of non-Russian Europe.³⁶¹ It is an oft-repeated observation that, from the reign of Ivan the Terrible until the Russian Revolution, the Tsar's domains spread at an average rate of more than 50 mi² (130 km²) per day. In terms of sheer territorial expansion, only the Spanish, Ottoman, and Mughal empires experienced similar rates of growth during the sixteenth century, and only the Qing conquest of China is comparable in the seventeenth.³⁶² By any measure, then, early modern Russia was militarily successful, and, on balance, her armies bested most of their adversaries, at least in the south and the east. Many historians, however, have been unimpressed by the quality of Russian arms during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, considering them backwards and crude compared to their western European counterparts, while also remarking upon the comparatively poor state of the country's military organization and the tyranny and corruption of her government.³⁶³ These are not new ideas but echoes of impressions already formed by Western observers during the sixteenth century.³⁶⁴ To

³⁶¹ Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change*, 21.

³⁶² Significantly, these empires were expanding across major cultural and geographic divides: Muscovy from northeastern Europe into western Siberia and the Eurasian steppe; Spain from Europe into the Americas; the Ottomans from Anatolia into Southeast Europe, North Africa, and Arabia; and the Mughals from Southwest Asia into the Indian Subcontinent. It is tempting to conclude that a certain asymmetry or unfamiliarity of arms enabled them to achieve the dramatic successes that they did, while, elsewhere, old foes and belligerent neighbours long accustomed to one another's ways languished in bloody stalemates (in the late sixteenth century, the Dutch Revolt, the Imjin War, and a succession of Burmese-Thai conflicts stand out in this regard).

³⁶³ William C. Fuller's discussion of "backwardness" is fairly typical. He emphasized three areas: the material ("state poverty"), the administrative ("inadequate sociopolitical organization"), and the intellectual ("the inferior training and skills of the population"). However, he noted that, at least prior to the Industrial Revolution, Russia could "more than cope with backwardness, and could even derive military advantages from it." He also argued against the notion that the rise of the post-Petrine Russian Empire was a result of successfully copying the West, instead suggesting that it was brought about by the development of a peculiarly Russian "style of fighting that capitalized on its existing premodern political and social organization." William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia 1600-1914* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992), xi-xx.

³⁶⁴ Valerie Kivelson, Karen Petrone, Nancy Shields Kollmann, and Michael S. Flier, "The Use and Abuse of Dominant Paradigms in Muscovite Cultural Studies," in *The New Muscovite Cultural History: A*

what extent are these views supported by the facts? Certainly, the sixteenth-century Muscovite military was organized and equipped in a manner quite foreign to its western European counterparts – as well as to the armies of its Lithuanian and Livonian neighbours – but is this difference indicative of inferiority? The weight of evidence suggests that the answer, tentatively, is yes, but neither to the degree that has typically been assumed nor for the reasons usually cited.

What most struck European visitors of the 1500s was the easternness of Russian weaponry and tactics. Richard Chancellor, who took part in the first English voyage in search of the Northeast Passage, rounding the Northern Cape in 1553, noted that the locals “use bows and arrows as the Turks do,” while his compatriot, Anthony Jenkinson, Captain-General of the Russia Company’s fleet in 1557, similarly observed that the Russian warrior went to battle on horseback and armed with “a sword of the Turkish fashion and his bows and arrows of the same manner.”³⁶⁵ Jenkins had traveled in Anatolia and the Levant in his youth, so his comparison with Turkish weaponry was not uninformed. Giles Fletcher likewise mentioned that horsemen outnumbered infantry of all kinds and that “their swords, bows, and arrows are of the Turkish fashion ... they practice like the Tatar to shoot forward and backward as they fly and retire.”³⁶⁶ (The frequency with which explanatory comparisons with Turkish culture appear in early English and German descriptions of Muscovy is noteworthy in that it suggests that western and central European readers were expected to be more familiar with the customs of the Ottoman Empire than with Russia’s.) An earlier visitor, the Habsburg ambassador Sigismund von Herberstein, whose account was the most widely read and influential of the age, recounted that, at the time of his diplomatic missions in the 1510s and 1520s, “bows and arrows are their common weapons ... in their campaigns they make no use yet of artillery nor foot-soldiers, their single tactic being to attack or flee in haste.”³⁶⁷ He also recorded that only wealthy boyars wore heavy armour, the majority of the men being light horse, outfitted much

Collection in Honor of Daniel B. Rowland, ed. Valerie Kivelson, Karen Petrone, Nancy Shields Kollmann, and Michael S. Flier (Bloomington, Ind.: Slavica, 2009), 11-12.

³⁶⁵ Berry and Crummey, eds., *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom*, 28 and 57.

³⁶⁶ Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 76-79.

³⁶⁷ Herberstein’s remark about the absence of artillery seems to refer only to field artillery; siege cannon and fortified gun emplacements were already widely used in Russia by this time (see below). He acknowledged that the Grand Prince had some infantry, but he records that there were only about fifteen hundred of them and they were “Lithuanians and other foreigners.” Sigismund von Herberstein, *Description of Moscow and Muscovy 1557*, ed. Bertold Picard and trans. J.B.C. Grundy (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1966), 76-79.

in the manner of the Tatars but unlike the armoured heavy cavalry of the Poles and the Livonian Knights. The doubts of even the most skeptical historian as to the accuracy of these claims may be dispelled by a cursory examination of the abundant examples of Muscovite armaments that survive in museum collections in Russia and elsewhere.

Western European observers were correct in ascribing to the Russian horseman many Asiatic characteristics; the *pomeste'e* noble cavalry, who formed the core of the Moscow's armies, took their inspiration from the Tatar horse archer, a logical choice given that the Mongols and their successors had dominated the eastern European steppe for centuries and had frequently provided their Slavic tributaries with evidence of their formidable martial prowess.³⁶⁸ The Mongol *orda* was arguably the greatest fighting force of the pre-gunpowder world and justifiably attracted many imitators across medieval Eurasia, but, by the mid-sixteenth century, the era of Mongol supremacy was over. Guns were now the order of the day.³⁶⁹ The tendency in traditional military historiography to equate easternness with backwardness is generally rather suspect (in the age of Mongol greatness, quite the opposite was true), but there is some truth to the view that the Russian cavalry was becoming outmoded by the time of the Livonian War. The problem lies in extrapolating this observation – that the core of Ivan's army consisted of cavalry and that this cavalry was of an increasingly archaic type³⁷⁰ – to reach the conclusion that the Russians had failed to embrace military change, in particular the rise of infantry and the adoption of gunpowder weapons. In fact, the two issues are unrelated.

³⁶⁸ Thomas Esper, "Military Self-Sufficiency and Weapons Technology in Muscovite Russia," *Slavic Review*, vol. 28, no.2 (1969), 187. Donald Ostrowski has noted that early Muscovite grand princes emulated not only the weaponry and tactics of the Mongols but also had to adapt their diplomatic and strategic methods to reflect their status as Mongol subjects. Daniel Ostrowski, "Troop Mobilization by the Muscovite Grand Princes (1313-1533)," in *The Military and Society in Russia 1450-1917*, eds. Eric Lohr and Marshall Poe (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 19.

³⁶⁹ Arquebuses increasingly replaced halberds as the infantry weapon of choice as the efficacy of concentrated firepower was demonstrated over the course of the Italian Wars, from whence new advances in military technology were disseminated to the rest of Europe. Further east, King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (ruled 1458-1490) had every fourth soldier in his famous Black Army equipped with a firearm, an unusually high ratio at this early date. Other regions were slower to adapt. Gy Rázso, "The Mercenary Army of King Matthias Corvinus," in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. J.M. Bak and B.K. Kirily (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 125-40.

³⁷⁰ In addition to the noble levy, the Russians also deployed cossacks, and, after the conquests of the 1550s, troops recruited from Kazan, Astrakhan, and the Nogai became increasingly important. Unlike the German *Reiter*, the Russian cavalry were not armed with firearms until the seventeenth century. Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible: A Military History* (London: Frontline Books, 2008), 19.

Ivan IV aggressively sought to apply foreign technology and expertise to the modernization of his armies, just as his predecessors had done, although now he looked to Europe and not to the steppe for inspiration. Significantly, the greatest strides were made in the fields most associated with the early modern military revolution: infantry, fortifications, and gunpowder technology. As Herberstein correctly observed, Russia lagged behind in the use of field artillery, but her strength in siege guns was considerable. The first recorded Muscovite use of cannon appears to be the firing of a gun from the Moscow kremlin during Khan Tokhtamysh of the Golden Horde's 1382 siege of the city.³⁷¹ It is not clear whether this particular cannon had reached Moscow from an Asian or European source, but, either way, its presence in the city at such an early date demonstrates that the Muscovites were reasonably early adopters of gunpowder ordnance. Notably, the first mention of cannon being used in Livonia dates to the very same year and in Lithuania to just two years later, a good indication of how closely the Baltic powers kept pace with one another in terms of technological development, at least in fields they prioritized, such as weaponry.³⁷² Richard Hellie has estimated that, by the reign of Grand Prince Ivan III (ruled 1462-1505), technology transfer was rapid enough that new military inventions could reach Moscow from centres of European innovation like Italy and the Low Countries within "at most a few years".³⁷³ In spite of, or perhaps because of, their peripheral location on the edge of both the European and Asian worlds, Russian rulers were eager to encourage such exchanges.

By the mid-sixteenth century, Ivan IV had amassed an impressive arsenal of siege guns. While expressing his disdain for what he considered to be the crudity of the hand-guns employed by the *streltsy*, Giles Fletcher noted of the Tsar's cannon that "it is thought that no prince of Christendom hath better store of munition than the Rus emperor ... and it may partly appear by the artillery house at Moscow, where are all sorts of great ordnance, all brass pieces, very fair,

³⁷¹ Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change*, 152.

³⁷² Esper, "Military Self-Sufficiency," 187.

³⁷³ Richard Hellie, "Warfare, Changing Military Technology, and the Evolution of Muscovite Society," in *Tools of War: Instruments, Ideas, and Institutions of Warfare, 1445-1871*, ed. John A. Lynn (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 76. Diplomatically, however, Muscovy remained fairly isolated from western Europe. By the mid-sixteenth century, Dutch and English merchants were becoming more common, they were more the exception than the rule. The first unofficial French representative to reach Moscow was not until 1586, and the first record of a Russian in Paris dates to 1615. The earliest official Russian embassy to France was in the year 1717; by way of comparison, the first Siamese ambassadors reached Paris in 1686.

to an exceeding number.”³⁷⁴ Significantly, although Fletcher borrowed elements of his account from the earlier work of Herberstein, this is one point on which they disagreed, the latter being of the opinion that, “although the Grand Duke had German and Italian gunsmiths and artificers, the Muscovites learned none of their skill, nor have they any notion of which piece to use for battles in the field and which for attack or defense of walls.”³⁷⁵ It is tempting to ascribe this disagreement between the two sources to the rapid evolution of Muscovite siege warfare in the decades that separated the two men’s visits to Moscow, particularly as Fletcher was writing after the Kazan and Astrakhan campaigns of the 1550s, during which valuable lessons were learned and new techniques pioneered. Credence is lent to this interpretation by the testimony of the papal legate, Antonio Possevino, who visited Moscow in 1582 and begins his description of the country with a reference to the fact that “King Stefan [Batory] told me that when Ivan attacked Kazan he had no difficulty taking the place because he used cannon against a people unfamiliar with weapons of this kind.”³⁷⁶ Possevino’s anecdote highlights both the central offensive role played by cannon in the anti-Tatar campaigns of the 1550s and the fact that this was a fairly recent development, since Batory apparently believed that the Tatars, perennial and frequent enemies of the Muscovites, were unfamiliar with such stratagems.

Ivan’s wars against the Tatars during the 1540s and 1550s prompted another significant development in the Muscovite army – the formation of the *streltsy* (“shooters”). The first handheld firearms appeared in Russia in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, but it was not until about half a century later that their use was widely adopted. A standing army of paid, uniformed professionals armed with arquebuses, the *streltsy* were both a new type of soldier and a new socio-economic class, infantrymen recruited from the townsfolk and agricultural population who were required to perform lifelong military service and given the status of

³⁷⁴ Regarding the *streltsy*’s firearms, he opined that “the stock of this piece is not made caliverwise but with a plain and straight stock, somewhat like a fowling piece. The barrel is rudely and unartificially made, heavy, yet shooteth but a very small bullet.” Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 82 and 85.

³⁷⁵ He further claimed that the Muscovites rarely captured towns and fortresses “by force but by persistent siege and by treachery.” Balthasar Russow seems to have shared this view, remarking that the Russian capture of Weissenstein, in January of 1572, was the “first castle or fortress that the Muscovite ever in his whole life captured through frontal assault.” Herberstein, *Description of Moscow*, 79. Russow, 145.

³⁷⁶ Antonio Possevino, S.J., *The Muscovia*, translated with a critical introduction and notes by Hugh F. Graham (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 1-2.

hereditary servitors.³⁷⁷ This represented a significant improvement in social and financial standing, as they were paid in coin, rye, and oats, and, in some cases, cloth for their uniforms and salt which they could sell at a profit.³⁷⁸ Although both the nobility and the *streltsy* were required to provide military service for their entire lives, nobles dispersed to their estates following the conclusion of a campaign, whereas the *streltsy* were retained and used for such tasks as guard duty, policing, and firefighting. This made the terms of their employment more stable and fostered a higher degree of professionalism in their ranks. As dedicated missile troops without the protection of pikes, they could unleash an impressive amount of concentrated fire but were vulnerable to cavalry.³⁷⁹ Their preferred tactic was to deploy in a static formation and fire from cover, whether natural or a fortification of some sort. When forced to take to the field in open terrain, as when fighting the Tatars in the southern steppe, they made use of the *gulyay-gorod* (“wandering castle”), a type of wheeled wooden barricade fitted with gun loops, cousin to the central European *Wagenburg* made famous by the Hussites. Like the artillery, the *streltsy* were instrumental in the conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan; the Russian cavalry was essentially an inferior version of the Tatars’ own, but cannon and arquebuses tipped the balance in the Tsar’s favour.³⁸⁰ Fresh from their conquests in the steppe, the Muscovites would again employ these gunpowder weapons to good effect in Livonia.

It seems, therefore, that Russia was neither unwilling to adopt new technologies nor especially slow to deploy them. As Fletcher suggested, Muscovite equipment may not always have been of the quality of the finest western European pieces, but this difference was not usually pronounced enough to be decisive, and efforts were continuously made to import arms, craftsmen, and technical knowledge from abroad. For their part, Russia’s near neighbours,

³⁷⁷ Initially selected largely on merit, the *streltsy*’s designation as hereditary, while providing some socio-economic benefits, eventually degraded the military quality of the corps by removing the element of choice in recruitment. Paul, “The Military Revolution in Russia,” 20-23.

³⁷⁸ Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 33.

³⁷⁹ They were equipped with a variety of handweapons – poleaxes, bardiches, and sabres – but none of these offered the same protection as a dense wall of pikes.

³⁸⁰ Russow recorded an intriguing anecdote about how Tatars subject to Ivan the Terrible accused Livonian prisoners of war of giving the Muscovites the “cudgel” they needed to crush both the Tatars and the Livonians themselves. The explanation he gave for this remark was that the “Tatar kings meant by this gunpowder, shot and all manner of munitions had been brought from Germany and sold in abundance to the Muscovite by German and Livonian merchants. It had enabled him to conquer and subjugate these very Germans and Livonians, along with numerous other peoples.” It is not clear whether this tale accurately represents the sentiments of the Tatars or is merely apocryphal, but it seems to have been given some credence at the time because it was repeated by Salomon Henning. *Russow*, 87.; *Henning*, 40.

particularly the Livonians, attempted to prevent this eastward flow of military knowledge and personnel, including mercenaries, fearing the consequences if their giant neighbour were to acquire such weapons from the English, the Dutch, the Germans, or some other European source. Contemporary Livonian correspondences indicate that there was genuine fear that the Tsar's great wealth would allow him to hire the mercenaries or purchase the weapons that he needed to conquer Livonia.³⁸¹ This was apparently considered an issue of such magnitude that, just months before the outbreak of the Livonian War, in August of 1557, a letter sent from Dorpat to Riga suggested that lifting the embargo on "*panzer*" might be enough to mollify the Tsar and preserve the peace.³⁸² There can be little doubt that this assessment was wrong, and it is surprising that anyone in Livonia considered the matter to be of such grave importance to Ivan that his decision on whether or not to attack might hinge upon the Livonians' willingness to let him import Western munitions.³⁸³ Thomas Esper believed that the Livonians may have deliberately embellished the Russian need for Western military supplies, using the supposed smuggling of arms as a pretext to protest English and Dutch trade that threatened their own lucrative position as commercial middlemen between Russia and Europe.³⁸⁴ Certainly, although Russia benefitted from traffic in armaments as much as any other nation in early modern Europe, she was not *reliant* upon the West for war matériel; her own ability to produce artillery and firearms was rapidly improving, and she also continued to draw inspiration from Eastern modes of warfare as well as Western.³⁸⁵ All things considered, Muscovite military development may have been somewhat patchy, but, at least in a purely technological sense, its characterization as "distinctly inferior" probably overstates the case.³⁸⁶ Of greater concern

³⁸¹ *QU*, I, 109-114.

³⁸² *Briefe*, II, no.202.

³⁸³ Despite the Emperor requesting that England, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, and the Hanseatic League do everything in their power to help Livonia resist the Russian "archenemy", who was presented as a threat not only to his immediate western neighbours but to all of Christendom, most of these powers continued to trade with Moscow at various points throughout the war. *Renner*, 111. This remained a significant source of contention between Reval and the other cities of the Hansa, who refused to join an embargo unless all other countries also did so. *QU*, III, 317-21. While the Livonians were sometimes able to seize Hanseatic shipments passing through the Gulf of Finland, they were powerless to prevent England's recently established trade with Russia around the Northern Cape. In the fall of 1559, for example, Renner reports that Gotthard Kettler was in Reval to seize Russia-bound shipments from Lübeck, Hamburg, and other Hanseatic cities, but the English "avoided Reval and, sailing around Norway to Russia, brought the enemy armor, guns and other material." *Renner*, 128.

³⁸⁴ Esper, "A Sixteenth-Century anti-Russian Arms Embargo," 196.

³⁸⁵ Hellie believed that, contrary to long-held assumptions, the *streltsy* were most likely not modeled on European infantry but on the Ottoman janissary. Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change*, 161.

³⁸⁶ Oakley, "War in the Baltic," 57.

were deficiencies of a less technical nature: morale, *esprit de corps*, leadership, economy, geography, infrastructure, and logistics.

All sixteenth-century Western sources agree that the Russian soldiery was distinguished by two characteristics: cowardice in open battle and tenacious perseverance in defense. These seemingly contradictory traits were both products of the practice of discipline and reward in the Muscovite army. Fear of punishment was the main motivation in Ivan's army. Neither common soldiers nor officers were likely to be rewarded for daring undertakings done in his service, so there was little impetus to risk life and limb on the battlefield. On the other hand, surrender of a fortress or town was invariably met with the most draconian of punishments, so Russian garrisons typically fought to the bitter end, even against virtually hopeless odds. This contrasted sharply with Western armies, in which mercenaries and officers were willing to conduct hazardous operations in hope of winning promotion, reward, or a share of the plunder but often capitulated with lamentable ease rather than endure a siege.³⁸⁷ Balthasar Russow made much of this difference, listing the reasons why he believed Russians to be "such mighty warriors in a fortress": they are industrious and used to hard labour; they are accustomed to surviving on very meager rations ("a German cannot do this"); if they surrender a fortress they will be executed upon return to their own country, but they also do not like to live in foreign lands so will not accept safe-conduct into exile (in contrast, "it does not matter to a German where he stays as long as he has enough grub and booze"); and it is considered a great disgrace and capital offense to lose a castle. On the other hand, "it is not shame or disgrace among the Russians to give way before the enemy and flee from a battlefield, for in open battle they are incredibly ineffectual, even against a force much weaker than themselves."³⁸⁸

Foreigners who visited Russia agreed with Russow's assessment. Heinrich von Staden, writing in 1578-9, recounted how, "if the people of the Grand Prince surrender a city, a fortress, or a castle, and they return to Russia alive, they are all killed along with all their relatives and those who guaranteed the harquebusiers [...] they know that they are going against their oath, and

³⁸⁷ In the early stages of the war, in particular, many fine Livonian fortresses were lost in this manner. In some cases, unpaid mercenary garrisons mutinied and sold the castles in which they were stationed to the highest bidder (e.g. Hapsal, Lode, and Leal in 1560s).

³⁸⁸ Russow, 152.

that in the churches of Russia on every feast day prayers will be said urging their eternal damnation.”³⁸⁹ Richard Chancellor described the Russian soldier’s astonishing ability to endure cold weather and poor food – “how justly may this barbarous and rude Russe condemn the daintiness and niceness of our captains, who, living in a soil and air much more temperate, yet commonly use furred boots and cloaks!” – but also remarked that they “go forth [in battle] without any order at all”.³⁹⁰ Some even claimed that the Russian body was innately better able to endure the agonies of torture.³⁹¹ In the same vein, Giles Fletcher opined that

*If the Rus soldier were as hardy to execute an enterprise as he is hard to bear out toil and travail, or were otherwise as apt and well-trained for the wars as he is indifferent for his lodgings and diet, he would far exceed the soldiers of our parts; whereas now he is far meaner of courage and execution in any warlike service, which cometh partly of his servile condition, that will not suffer any great courage or valor to grow in him, partly of lack of due honor and reward, which he hath no great hope of, whatsoever service or execution he do ... The Rus trusteth rather to his number than to the valor of his soldiers or good ordering of his forces.*³⁹²

Like Russow, Fletcher also noted that “the Rus soldier is thought to be better at his defense within some castle or town than he is abroad at a set pitched field, which is ever noted in the practice of his wars ... but in a set field the Rus is noted to have ever the worse of the Polonian and the Swede.”³⁹³ A few decades earlier, Herberstein had observed that Russian troops attacked boldly at first but quickly gave up and quit the field if they encountered stiff resistance. Both Herberstein and Fletcher contrasted the cowardice of the Russian soldiery with that of the Tatars, the latter repeating the former’s anecdote about how, faced with defeat, a Tatar fights to the death, a Russian flees, and a Turk throws down his weapons and surrenders.³⁹⁴ Fletcher further added that, “at handy strokes, when they come to join battle, [the Tatars] are accounted far better men than the Rus people, fierce by nature but more hardy and bloody by continual practise of war,” while Jerome Horsey reckoned that the conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan had been necessary prerequisites for the invasion of Livonia, since the

³⁸⁹ Heinrich von Staden, *The Land and Government of Muscovy*, trans. and ed. by Thomas Esper (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 63.

³⁹⁰ Berry and Crummey, eds., *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom*, 27.

³⁹¹ Nancy Shields Kollmann, “Torture in Early Modern Russia,” in *The New Muscovite Cultural History: A Collection in Honor of Daniel B. Rowland*, ed. Valerie Kivelson, Karen Petrone, Nancy Shields Kollmann, and Michael S. Flier (Bloomington, Ind.: Slavica, 2009), 160.

³⁹² Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 82-3.

³⁹³ Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 85.

³⁹⁴ Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 95.; Herberstein, *Description of Moscow and Muscovy*, 79.

Muscovites captured “their princes and mightiest men of war ... [acquiring] an invincible power and strength of these Tatars, resolute and better soldiers than themselves.”³⁹⁵

The lionization of the Tatars suggests that Western observers did not disdain the Muscovite military for its innately eastern character – the Tatars were more foreign still and were accounted brave and ferocious, if cruel and rapacious, warriors – but rather for its manifest qualitative deficiencies. That said, Western perception of the Russians as cowardly and ineffective in open battle may stem in part from tactical differences in the conduct of war. The two major branches of the Muscovite military were the *pomeste’e* cavalry, horse archers who relied upon firing and fleeing in the fashion of the steppe rather than charging home like the heavy cavalry of the Poles and Livonian Knights, and the *streltsy*, whose vulnerability in the *mêlée* and strength at range required that they be deployed in cover at some distance from the enemy. It is hardly surprising that those familiar with Western forces, whose pikemen and heavy cavalry sought to engage their opponents at close quarters, might look askance upon the Russian preference for avoiding close combat. However, given the nature of the Muscovite troops, such tactics were rational. Further, courage itself is not an abstract universal of the human condition but is conceptualized in a variety of ways. Laurent Henninger has argued for a gradual transition from what he calls the “heroic courage” of the warrior to the “stoic courage” of the professional soldier. The former emphasizes the individual fighter’s bravery in performing valiant deeds – exemplified by the charging knight – while the latter is characterized as the collective courage to endure the horrifying impotence experienced in a deadly situation beyond one’s control – as might a company of infantrymen holding their trench in the face of an artillery bombardment.³⁹⁶ As armies have grown and armaments become ever more lethiferous, a commensurate decline in the battlefield agency of the individual soldier has brought about a shift from a chivalric glorification of heroic courage to a disciplinary preoccupation with stoic determination. It is tempting to see in the Western disdain for the Russians’ unwillingness to undertake adventurous field action but praise for their ability to tolerate extreme adversity some hint of a cultural disconnect in the prioritization of these two different types of bravery.

³⁹⁵ Berry and Crummey, *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom*, 266.; Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 93.

³⁹⁶ Henninger, “Military Revolutions and Military History,” 10.

At times, however, real frailties of morale did afflict the Muscovite army in Livonia. The principal source of these problems lay in the Russian leadership, from the Tsar himself to the noble officers who led the army at the front. Ivan's father died when he was three, and the young prince quickly became the centre of a network of scheming boyars, clergymen, and courtiers, all of whom vied to control and use him for their own ends.³⁹⁷ The experiences of his youth seem to have shaped his character, making him distrustful of gifted and ambitious men, whom he suspected of plotting against him. At the inception of the war in Livonia, he was supported by an inner circle of sapient advisors and capable generals – men like Aleksey Adashev, the archpriest Sylvester, and Prince Andrey Kurbsky – but, as the war progressed, the young Tsar became increasingly mistrustful of these influential courtiers, executing some and driving others into exile. He thereby deprived himself of many of his best deputies and of much sagacious counsel. Writing from exile, Prince Kurbsky lamented that, at first, the Russians had been victorious because the Tsar was humble and ruled well, but their fortunes later worsened when Ivan not only failed to reward his successful commanders but actively persecuted them: “thus does he, that crude and fierce barbarian, remembering not the services rendered by fathers and brothers repay his servants who are bedecked with brilliant deeds, the men who serve him faithfully.”³⁹⁸ Likewise, Fletcher described how nobles of unexceptional character and mediocre ability were given command of armies while more competent but less exalted officers were appointed to assist them, a practice that came about because Ivan was “very wary that these two, to wit, nobility and power, meet both in one, especially if they see wisdom withall or aptness for policy.”³⁹⁹ A military culture thus developed in which overly successful commanders were viewed with suspicion, competent officers went unrewarded, and even the most minor perceived infraction was harshly punished. None of this was conducive to fostering a robust *esprit de corps* in the Russian forces serving in Livonia. Ivan's personal paranoia spread like an infection through the upper echelons of the nobility and then percolated down to rot the army to its core, a process that culminated in the horrors of *oprichnina*, which, quite

³⁹⁷ Discussion of the Tsar's childhood may be found in Charles Halperin, “The Minority of Ivan IV,” in *Rude & Barbarous Kingdom Revisited: Essays in Russian History and Culture in Honor of Robert O. Crummey*, eds. Chester S.L. Dunning, Russell E. Martin, and Daniel Rowland (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2008), 41-52.

³⁹⁸ Kurbsky, *History of Ivan IV*, 121 and 215.

³⁹⁹ Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 78-79.

aside from the anguish it caused the Russian people on the domestic front, disastrously undermined their war efforts abroad.⁴⁰⁰

All things considered, it was not straightforward technological backwardness or ignorance of the principles of the military revolution that lost the Russians the war.⁴⁰¹ Rather, it was a combination of more intangible factors. The most important of these was the crisis of the Russian leadership and a subsequent general decline in morale, both of which resulted directly or indirectly from Ivan's persecutory policies, which themselves stemmed from personal foibles that were allowed to mature unchecked in the absolutist political climate of early modern Russia. His growing capriciousness and violent irascibility not only cost him many of those close to him – not least his own son, the Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich, whom he murdered in a fit of rage in November of 1581 – but also whatever chance he may have had of securing allies abroad, as he came to be seen as a cruel and tyrannous despot who could not be trusted to treat in the manner of a civilized prince.⁴⁰² Compounding these problems of tsarist misrule were the enormous logistical challenges posed by the need to maintain armies on both the

⁴⁰⁰ The long decades of war exacted a psychological toll on all of the leaders involved, but political differences allowed each polity a greater or lesser degree of flexibility in coping with the strain. In Livonia, when the old Master, Wilhelm von Fürstenberg, was deemed unable to continue to lead the war effort, he was replaced by the younger and more able Gotthard Kettler. Upon the death of Sigismund Augustus, the Polish electoral system allowed for the selection of the best candidate from a pool of contenders; the *Sejm elekcyjny* first elected the inexperienced and uncommitted, Henri de Valois, but were fortunate that his elder brother died shortly thereafter, prompting him to flee the country to assume the throne of his native France. Their second choice, Stefan Batory, a shrewd and experienced Transylvanian *voivode* of practical disposition, proved to be a far better man. The unpredictable paranoia of the increasingly unhinged Erik XIV might have plunged Sweden into the same dire predicament as Russia, but the power of his brothers, Duke Johan and Duke Karl, and of the nobility more generally, enabled his deposition before he could do too much damage. In short, it was only in Russia that the autocratic nature of tsarist authority prevented Ivan's removal and enabled his unchecked mental instability to cripple the entire nation.

⁴⁰¹ The practical implementation of some of these modernizing policies on the ground proved more problematic than acquiring the technical knowledge that underlay them. The cost of outfitting and supplying large numbers of troops was a challenge for a country like Russia, with her comparatively underdeveloped economy and sparsely populated lands. Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1962), 5-30.

⁴⁰² During the late sixteenth century, dozens of pamphlets appeared throughout Europe, especially in the German *Sprachraum*, describing Ivan's sadism and the horrors inflicted by his forces upon both his own people and the Livonians. For a bibliography of these sources, see: Andreas Kappeler, *Ivan Groznyj im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften seiner Zeit: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des westlichen Russlandbildes* (Bern: H. Lang, 1972), 253-58. Also useful are Konstantin Höhlbaum, "Zeitungen über Livland im 16. Jahrhundert" in *Beiträge zur Kunde Ehst-, Liv- und Kurlands*, vol. 2, (Reval: Lindfors' Erben, 1874), 115-46.; Stéphane Mund, *Orbis Russiarum. Genèse et développement de la représentation du monde "russe" en Occident à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2003). Balthasar Russow's *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt* also attracted so much interest in Europe in part because of its vivid descriptions of Muscovite cruelty. Arthur Võõbus, "Notes on the Chronicle of Balthasar Russow and its Author," *Yearbook of the Estonian Learned Society in America* 5 (1968-1975), 87.

Livonian and Crimean fronts for long periods of time. Gathering Russia's vast resources from the distant corners of her realm and transporting them overland from Moscow to Livonia stretched the faculties of the state to the very limit, while her enemies, particularly the two Scandinavian monarchies, were able to reinforce and supply their small Livonian holdings with relative ease by sea. The growth of the realm's population could not keep pace with the expansion of her territory, which rendered her ability to make use of her natural wealth suboptimal, a problem that was exacerbated over the course of the war.⁴⁰³ The ruthless *oprichniki* also ravaged some of the richest and most developed regions of the country, particularly the territory around the venerable merchant city of Novgorod.

In the thirty-seven years of Ivan's majority, from 1547 to 1584, there were only three years of peace, and the demands of continuous warfare prevented the nobility from returning to their estates, causing agricultural and economic decline as many peasants simply abandoned their fields and villages. Serfdom was introduced to prevent this flight of labour, but the damage had already been done.⁴⁰⁴ In some regions, particularly the northwest, the noble population had declined by the 1580s to only twenty percent of its pre-war levels, the painful cost of decades of continuous conflict and harsh persecution.⁴⁰⁵ Foreign visitors painted a grim picture of abandoned villages and empty lands, "the people being fled into other places by reason of the extreme usage and exactions done upon them" to support the relentless demands of the seemingly endless war effort.⁴⁰⁶ These economic and demographic woes crippled the feudal system that lay at the heart of the Muscovite military machine. The spoliation the land and the abandonment of many estates meant that the *pomest'e* system of land tenureship that was intended to provide the material support needed to equip and sustain the *pomeshchiki* at war had instead become a burden that impeded their ability to fulfill their military duties.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ "Exploration of vast wastelands could not compare in power terms to occupations of highly urbanised and densely populated regions." Sven Lilja, "Peoples, towns and states: structural power resources and state power in the Scando-Baltic Region (1500-1800)," in *The Dynamics of Economic Culture in the North Sea- and Baltic Region*, ed. Hanno Brand and Leos Müller (Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 2007), 36.

⁴⁰⁴ Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change*.

⁴⁰⁵ Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 9.

⁴⁰⁶ Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 66.

⁴⁰⁷ Janet Martin, "Economic Effectiveness of the Muscovite Pomest'e System: An Examination of Estate Incomes and Military Expenses in the Mid-16th Century," in *Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1500-1800*, ed. Brian J. Davies (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 21.

In short, the Russians were not oblivious to the major military changes of the sixteenth century and even implemented some of them with considerable success, but they struggled to compete with their Western rivals economically, logistically, and in terms of professionalism and morale, and all of these problems were exacerbated by Ivan's tragic personal failings.⁴⁰⁸ Many of the pieces of the puzzle – the *streltsy* and the artillery, for example – were present, but they never coalesced into the kind of synergistic economic and military machine needed to achieve decisive victory. For that, an efficient fiscal-military state was required, something the Russians were not able to achieve at this time.⁴⁰⁹ Of the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Baltic powers, it is the Swedes who have generally been seen as most successful in this regard.

By the 1550s, the reforms undertaken by Gustav Vasa had begun to bear fruit, and Sweden's potential to become a major player in Baltic affairs was becoming evident to all.⁴¹⁰ The Danes, however, were still the more established of the two Nordic powers. Denmark and her North Atlantic empire formed a large and far-flung realm consisting of the Danish archipelago, Jutland, Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, Holstein, Schleswig, Gotland, Norway, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland. Denmark and Skåne were the heart of the kingdom, far more populous and developed than the outlying hinterlands and colonies which, however, were rich in natural resources and exotic commodities. Geographically, the Danes enjoyed four significant advantages over their Swedish rivals: proximity to Germany and the Low Countries; control of the Sound; direct access to the North Sea and western Europe; and dominion over Norway,

⁴⁰⁸ Writing on agriculture and the economy, Stephan Epstein argued that “the limits to pre-modern growth were not due to the absence of technology that could be applied, but to constraints on its application.” A similar observation could be made regarding military modernization in sixteenth-century Muscovy (and, indeed, many other regions of eastern Europe and beyond). Epstein, *Freedom and Growth*, 39.

⁴⁰⁹ See Marshall Poe's contention that “the level of socio-cultural complexity was an important independent variable in the process of early modern military reform. It is easy to see how this factor operated in Muscovy. Under increasing military pressure, the Muscovite elite set about importing Western military technologies. To support the new forces (as well as older, expanded ones), the boyars had to build a machinery of state far larger and more complicated than anything they had ever experienced or desired. Yet, unlike their Western competitors, they had few resources with which to accomplish this goal.” Marshall Poe, “The consequences of the Military Revolution in Muscovy: a comparative perspective,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38: 4 (1996), 618.

⁴¹⁰ Jan Glete has noted that, despite the common lionization of Gustavus II Adolphus and Axel Oxenstierna and a historiographical emphasis on the fiscal-military reforms undertaken from the 1610s to the 1630s, the processes that allowed Sweden to become a great power of the seventeenth century had already begun early in the sixteenth. “Sweden did not suddenly become an expansionist state in the early seventeenth century. It became a more efficient empire builder than previously, but the policy was not new.” Glete, *War and the State*, 174.

which allowed them to threaten Sweden with invasion from multiple directions at once.⁴¹¹ The first of these was of both commercial and military import in that it facilitated trade and allowed for the easy recruitment of troops from the major mercenary markets of northern Germany, particularly as the Danish royal house of Oldenburg was able to exploit its politically advantageous position in the Lower Saxon Circle and many ties to the noble houses of the northern Empire to raise armies there unopposed.⁴¹² In the long run, this would prove to be something of a mixed blessing; sixteenth-century Denmark maintained a powerful fleet, but, on land, she continued to rely on costly mercenary forces for decades after Sweden had begun to make effective use of conscripts.⁴¹³ In the mid-sixteenth century, however, while Sweden was still in the early stages of developing an indigenous military and often drew heavily upon poorly trained peasant draftees, the Danes' superior ability to hire professional soldiers from abroad made them dangerous foes.⁴¹⁴

Despite sixteenth-century Denmark's relative wealth, numerous colonies, ties to Germany, and powerful navy, King Frederick II (ruled 1559-1588) found his ability to commit fully to a prolonged war in the eastern Baltic curtailed. The kingdom's population was small and her scattered holdings more difficult to defend than the contiguous territory of Sweden-Finland. Copenhagen's attentions were also divided between the Baltic to her east and the North Sea and Atlantic to her west, where she became embroiled in disputes with the English and Dutch over the unpopular Sound Dues and Danish attempts to exclude foreign fishermen from Norwegian, Faroese, and Icelandic waters. The political system was also un conducive to foreign adventures. Before its 1660 dissolution following the institution of absolutism, the powerful *Rigsråd* exercised a limiting effect on royal power and ambitions, while the Danish

⁴¹¹ In comparison, Sweden had just one port on her tiny sliver of western coast, at Älvsborg, and it was vulnerable to Danish attack from the south and north. When the Northern Seven Years' War broke out in 1563, the Danes captured it almost immediately.

⁴¹² Lavery, *Germany's Northern Challenge*, 45.; Jensen, *Danmarks konflikt*, 85-86 and 104.

⁴¹³ Oakley, "War in the Baltic," 56. The Danish fleet had been greatly strengthened under King Christian III in the 1540s and 1550s, who also reformed the navy's administration and articles of war. Bjerg, *A History of the Royal Danish Navy*, 29-30. In times of need, the Danish nobility were required to provide "knight service" but could only muster about two thousand cavalry. Oakley, *War and Peace in the Baltic*, 17.

⁴¹⁴ By the time of the Thirty Years' War, when Sweden had surpassed Denmark economically as well as militarily, Denmark's nearly exclusive reliance on mercenaries and Sweden's gradual transition to less costly native troops made their military policies inverse to their financial capabilities. Kersten Krüger, "Dänische und swedische Kriegsfinanzierung im Dreißigjährigen Krieg bis 1635," in *Krieg und Politik 1618-1648: Europäische Probleme und Perspektiven*, ed. Konrad Repgen (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1988), 277.

nobility typically favoured the maintenance of a strong fleet to defend the kingdom's territorial waters and commercial interests but were less enthusiastic about the prospect of entanglement in foreign wars.⁴¹⁵ German military enterprisers, such as the influential Rantzau family, were the prime advocates of a more aggressive war policy at the Danish court.

In contrast to the situation in Denmark, the Swedish aristocracy saw military expansion in the east as an opportunity to acquire new lands and the prestige offered by military service, and they also realized the need to control the Gulf of Finland and shore up their eastern defenses against the possibility of Russian attack, goals that could be accomplished by adding Ingria and Estonia to the realm. This may explain why, in the early 1560s, the Swedish Crown at times instructed Swedish governors in Estonia to overrule the local *Oberlandsgericht*, expand Swedish royal lands at the expense of local landholders, and enfeoff Swedish military commanders with Estonian lands in violation of the *Indigenatsrecht* (policies that were largely abandoned as other priorities arose during the Northern Seven Years' War).⁴¹⁶ For Denmark, the east was less important, since expansion there contributed little to her immediate objectives of defending the Sound, checking Swedish power, protecting her Atlantic colonies, and dominating the central Baltic. The two Scandinavian monarchies were thus rivals with similar long term goals but quite distinct short term priorities. Both dreamed of establishing *dominium maris baltici*, but they tried to achieve this aim in different ways: Denmark emphasized naval power and control of the straits, while Sweden would come to develop a strategy based on encirclement of the Baltic through occupation of coastal lands and key ports.⁴¹⁷

Mid-sixteenth-century Sweden was a kingdom on the rise but also one with serious vulnerabilities: peasant uprisings threatened Gustav Vasa's hold on the country; the Danes were able to assemble professional armies with relative ease and were well positioned to march them into the heart of Swedish territory; and the prospect of Russian invasion was a constant

⁴¹⁵ Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 7; Rian, "Government and Society," 21.

⁴¹⁶ King Erik XIV attempted to use the failure of the Estonian nobility to provide the requisite amount of cavalry for the war effort, often a result of the occupation of their lands by hostile Russian forces, as justification to confiscate their estates. Later, in light of the war against Denmark and Lübeck raging in southern Scandinavia and across the Baltic Sea, he relied more on the Estonian nobility and Revalian burghers to look to their own defenses on the Baltic front, and these policies were abandoned. Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland," 56-61.

⁴¹⁷ Knud J.V. Jespersen, "Warfare and Society in the Baltic 1500-1800," in *European Warfare 1453-1815: Problems in Focus*, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 184.

threat to Finland. Nevertheless, despite these initial obstacles, Sweden would emerge as a major military power of the seventeenth century and the ruler of a virtually circum-Baltic empire. To a large degree, this was made possible by the reforms undertaken by Gustav Vasa and his sons, in whom, the madness of both Erik and Magnus notwithstanding, Sweden found herself blessed with a series of militarily competent monarchs.⁴¹⁸ In contrast to Denmark's preference for mercenary forces or the reliance of the Poles and Russians on noble cavalry (and, in Russia's case, hereditary servitors), the Swedes had, since the time of Gustav Vasa (reigned 1523-1560), been moving toward the creation of a national army centred upon native infantry conscripted from the peasantry. In part, this was necessitated by Denmark's (ultimately unsuccessful) attempts to block widespread Swedish recruitment of mercenaries. However, it was also a response to the events of Nils Dacke's peasant uprising of 1542-1543, motivated by popular resistance to taxation and Lutheranism, in which royal armies comprised mainly of German *Landsknechte* initially struggled to defeat guerrilla forces of native peasants in the densely forested and lacustrine topography of Småland.⁴¹⁹

The Dacke War convinced Gustav Vasa that local forces were well-suited to the defense of their homeland and that hired continental professionals were out of their element in the rugged terrain of the Scandinavian wilderness.⁴²⁰ Accordingly, in 1544, he revised the ancient Scandinavian custom of *uppbåd* – a practice of mustering through which local men were gathered for emergency defense – and instituted it as a means of national conscription to create what has sometimes been described as the first indigenous standing army in early modern Europe.⁴²¹ This system provided the Swedes with a cheap and readily available source of men possessed of good knowledge of local conditions, as well as mitigating their deficiency in population.⁴²² During the Russo-Swedish conflict of the mid-1550s, recruitment methods were

⁴¹⁸ Vasa Sweden was confirmed as a hereditary kingdom in 1544. In contrast, late sixteenth-century Denmark-Norway and Poland-Lithuania were elective monarchies. For an account of the Swedish military's gradual professionalization from 1555 to 1610, see Artéus, *Till Militärstatens Förhistoria*.

⁴¹⁹ Bo Alvemo, *Dackefejden. Det stora upproret* (Luleå: Svenskt Militärhistoriskt Bibliotek, 2006).

⁴²⁰ Compare Montecuccoli's comments on the difficulties and advantages of fighting in woodlands. Montecuccoli, *Sulle Battaglie*, 81.

⁴²¹ Frost argued that, initially, it was more specifically a plan to recruit native troops instead of mercenaries in times of crisis. Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 33.

⁴²² Sweden's political, military, and economic development in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries outpaced her demographic growth and urbanization, and many of the policies introduced by the Vasa kings were intended to remedy this disconnect. Sandberg, "The Towns, the Urban System, and the State," 67.

further enhanced with the introduction of *utskrivning*, a form of registry in which lists of potential conscripts were “written out” and a portion enlisted for military service. It is questionable, however, whether *utskrivning* should be seen as a deliberate effort to create a permanent standing army; it may instead have begun as a system based on expediency that, in practice, resulted in the creation of a more-or-less permanent army after the 1560s due to the simple fact that Sweden was engaged in virtually continuous warfare from this point onwards.⁴²³ Nevertheless, it was an important administrative step in Sweden’s development as an early modern military power, and it would set the stage for the introduction of the *indelningsverk* of the following century, which allowed Sweden to maintain armies as large or larger than those of her more populous Catholic enemies during the Thirty Years’ War.⁴²⁴

It would be some time, however, before this newly formed native force achieved the sort of professionalism required to defeat experienced career soldiers and mercenaries, against whom Swedish forces consistently struggled until the introduction of Mauritian reforms by Gustavus II Adolphus in the early seventeenth century.⁴²⁵ The first real test of Erik’s conscripts came in the Northern Seven Years’ War (1563-1570), in which they found themselves consistently outclassed by Danish mercenary armies led by the militarily gifted Daniel Rantzau.⁴²⁶ In the end, Sweden was only spared a disastrous defeat by the Danes’ inability to pay their troops, after which the mercenaries refused to push deeper into the central Scandinavian peninsula. The Swedes, meanwhile, were not without mercenary troubles of their own. Correspondences from 1564 indicate that King Erik was attempting to bring Livonian *Hofleute* over to Sweden

⁴²³ Sven A. Nilsson. *På väg mot militärstaten: krigsbefalets etaverling I den äldre Vasatidens Sverige* (Uppsala: Historiska Institutionen, 1989), 7-9.

⁴²⁴ The units from metropolitan Sweden and Finland were the only in Europe to be raised by general conscription, and, by the end of the war, Sweden was fielding 915 companies, an astonishing number compared to the 224 and 432 of her Hessian and French allies or the 496 of her Imperial foes. Geoffrey Parker, “The Soldiers of the Thirty Years’ War,” in *Krieg und Politik 1618-1648: Europäische Probleme und Perspektiven*, ed. Konrad Repgen in collaboration with Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1988), 303-4.

⁴²⁵ Seventeenth-century Sweden was also partly responsible for transmitting Dutch military reforms to other regions of the Baltic, exercising, for example, a powerful influence on the military development of Brandenburg. Daniel Riches, “Early Modern Military Reform and the Connection Between Sweden and Brandenburg-Prussia,” *Scandinavian Studies* 77, No. 3 (Fall 2005), 347-64.

⁴²⁶ Jensen, *Danmarks konflikt med Sverige*. Most studies of the Northern Seven Years’ War have focused on the Scandinavian rather than the Baltic theatre. An important exception is Arnell’s *Bidrag till belysning av den baltiska fronten under det nordiska sjuårskriget 1563-1570*.

to aid in the defense against the Danes.⁴²⁷ However, in spite of the King's threats of punishment and his representative Henrik Klasson's statement that he would only pay the monthly salary of those horsemen who were willing to travel to Sweden, the troops stubbornly refused.⁴²⁸ Ultimately, the relationship broke down completely: the *Hofleute* attacked Klasson, and many of them were among those who massacred the Swedish garrison at Pernau a year later, while others, like Klaus Kursell and Heinrich Boismann, mutinied in 1570.⁴²⁹

Like the Dacke War before it, the Northern Seven Years' War was an important learning experience for the Swedish military. King Johan III would continue the professionalization of the national army begun by his father and brother, leading to a refinement of military institutions and the establishment of a well-developed military culture and officer corps, but he had also learned that mercenaries had their value as well, particularly when fighting overseas without the defensive advantages afforded by Sweden's rough and forested landscape.⁴³⁰ Foreign mercenaries and local Baltic forces would thus serve side-by-side with Swedish regulars in the Livonian campaigns of the late sixteenth century, and mercenaries would remain an important component of Sweden's armies well into the Thirty Years' War and beyond, when the demands of ceaseless warfare ultimately rendered the meagre population unable to meet the country's military obligations. The Northern Seven Years' War was also important from Denmark's perspective; it had demonstrated that she could win battles in her own backyard and at sea, but sustaining a powerful mercenary army further afield was more than her financial resources could manage. After the 1560s, the Danes never again fielded a large army in the eastern Baltic, effectively ending any hopes that they might play a significant role in the remainder of the Livonian War. Denmark's Estonian adventure, which began with Valdemar the Conqueror's crusade in the early 1200s, would ultimately come to a close in 1645, when Ösel was ceded to Sweden under the terms of the Treaty of Brömsebro.

⁴²⁷ The cavalry captain Heinrich Boismann, for example, wrote to the King on April 11 to inform him that his *Hofleute* were refusing to move. RA R.R. 1564. The accounts of "*Munsterherren*" Friedrich Sandstede and Hans Boismann may be found in TLA B.e.6.330-51.

⁴²⁸ See the letter sent by King Erik to the cavalry captains Heinrich Rauthe and Heinrich Boismann on December 8. The unrest among the mercenaries is also mentioned in a letter sent by Erik to Henrik Klasson on May 18. RA R.R. 1564.

⁴²⁹ For a description of the slaughter at Pernau, see *Russow*, 105.

⁴³⁰ Lars Ericson, *Johan III: En Biografi* (Lund: Historiska Media, 2004), 249-58.; Rian, "Government and Society," 21-22.

Although the Livonians were defeated fairly early on in the war and thereafter fought on behalf of foreign masters, it is instructive to consider the forces available to the Confederation on the eve of the conflict. A comprehensive study of warfare in medieval and early modern Livonian society does not yet exist, but, over the years, a number of valuable contributions on various aspects of the subject have appeared.⁴³¹ For the medieval period, some useful comparisons may also be made with the comparatively well-studied topic of the Prussian military under the Teutonic Order, although the situation was never precisely analogous, and the two regions diverged after 1525. Livonian society was comprised of a combination of the knights of the Livonian Order, the noble vassals (Baltic German nobility), the inhabitants of the major towns (burghers), and the native peasantry (legally designated as “*Undeutsch*”). To varying degrees – and with varying levels of professionalism and effectiveness – each of these groups contributed to the Confederation’s military in times of need. Over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, foreign mercenaries also became an increasingly important part of Livonian armies. The events of the Livonian War would demonstrate the obsolescence of some of these forces, most glaringly the Livonian knights, while others, such as the nobility, were able to adapt to changing circumstances and evolve into effective fighters.

Since the crusades of the early thirteenth century, the Livonian Knights had ostensibly been responsible for the defense of the territory, but, by the late sixteenth century, their battlefield potency was much diminished. A Roman Catholic military order (albeit containing many members with decidedly Protestant leanings), they had struggled to find recruits in the wake of the Reformation and the secularization of Prussia. The knights never numbered more than a few hundred men and were scattered across a large region; compounding these problems, many were elderly, few had much military experience, and most were recruited from Germany, which meant that they sometimes lacked a deep commitment to the Livonian cause. As the centuries passed, their role transitioned from elite heavy cavalry to officers who commanded hired mercenary troops, and finally to administrators who hired mercenary officers to enlist and command troops on their behalf. The active military participation of the peasantry, who

⁴³¹ Senning, *Beiträge.*; Blumfeldt, “Über die Wehrpflicht der estnischen Landbevölkerung im Mittelalter.”; Friedrich Benninghoven, “Probleme der Zahl und Standortverteilung der livländischen Streitkräfte im ausgehenden Mittelalter,” *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 12 (1963), 601-22.; Friedrich Benninghoven, “Zur Technik spätmittelalterlicher Feldzüge im Ostbaltikum,” *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 19 (1970), 631-51.; Kreem, *The Town and Its Lord*, 61-88.; Kreem, “The Business of War,” 26-42.

comprised a large majority of the population, also underwent a decline.⁴³² In the thirteenth century, Christianized native tribesmen had often fought alongside the crusaders as valuable and warlike allies, but major uprisings during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries convinced the ruling German minority to relegate them to more of a supporting role. The ready availability of mercenaries accelerated this process. As in other parts of Europe, the rise in the importance of professional military contractors during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had a transformative effect on the Livonian military, resulting in a concomitant decrease in the military value of both the Livonian Order's knights and the peasantry.⁴³³ However, while the Order ceased to exist in 1562, the Swedish and Revalian authorities in northern Estonia eventually came to realize the potential value of the peasants. In 1576, for example, they appointed the courageous Ivo "Hannibal" Schenkenberg, son of a Revalian minter, as commander of a native force, which he trained into a renowned fighting unit "patterned on the German regimentation and practice": these men served both as guerrilla troopers in the countryside and as ad hoc firefighters during the 1577 siege of Reval.⁴³⁴ After the war, the peasants would once more be relegated to their traditional supporting role, in some cases with greater restrictions on their rights than had been current in Old Livonia.⁴³⁵

The question of the part played by the burghers in Livonia's military structure is a complex one. Their duties fluctuated throughout the Middle Ages according to a number of factors: the interpretation of Lübeck Law (in use in the Hanseatic cities), the circumstances of the campaign, and the fact that some burghers also held fiefs outside the cities which obligated them to perform service for their lord (the Livonian Order).⁴³⁶ Generally speaking, the

⁴³² Blumfeldt, "Über die Wehrpflicht der estnischen Landbevölkerung im Mittelalter," 163-76. Jacob Koit's study of the Estonian peasantry's participation in warfare remains useful. Jacob Koit, "Estnische Bauern als Krieger während der Kampf in Livland 1558-1611." *Eesti Teadusliku Seltsi Rootsi Aastaraamat* 4. 1960-1964. (Stockholm, 1966), 22-60.

⁴³³ Benninghoven, "Probleme der Zahl," 619; Blumfeldt, "Über die Wehrpflicht," 175.

⁴³⁴ There were about four hundred of them, mostly from Harrien and armed with firearms. *Russow*, 166-7 and 172.

⁴³⁵ This trend was reversed in 1631, when Gustav II Adolf granted the Estonian peasantry greater freedoms and again when Charles XI took over a number of large noble estates in the name of the Swedish Crown, perhaps lending some justification to the popular Estonian designation of the era as "*vana hea Rootsi aeg*" (the "good, old Swedish time"). The peasants' situation worsened once more under Russian rule, reaching a nadir in the eighteenth century when the tsars sought to win over the Baltic German nobility by increasing their privileges at the expense of native rights. Finally, during the reign of Alexander I, the serfs were emancipated in Estonia in 1816, in Courland in 1817, and in Livonia in 1819.

⁴³⁶ Kreem, *The Town and Its Lord*, 61-65.

townspeople were often exempted from service beyond the boundaries of Livonia, but they were required to participate in her defense against invasion and to serve their overlord in the event of internal conflicts between rival factions within the Confederation. As with the knights and the peasantry, their active combat role diminished with the increasing importance of mercenaries.⁴³⁷ In addition to supplying or hiring land forces, the cities also played a significant part in such vital wartime activities as outfitting naval vessels and manufacturing, purchasing, and transporting cannon for the Order's armies. They even supplied specially trained musicians whose duty was to raise morale, instill discipline, and signal orders on the battlefield. The military contribution of the Brotherhood of the Black Heads to the defense of the city of Reval could also be significant at times, although it seems to have fluctuated on an ad hoc basis as the need arose.⁴³⁸ The duties of the cities to contribute to Livonia's collective defense differed according to their own political structures; Reval was directly under the overlordship of the Livonian Order, but Dorpat, for example, owed its military obligations to its own bishop.⁴³⁹ This gave the various factions within the Livonian Confederation greater autonomy in terms of seeing to their own defenses, but it also made it difficult to coordinate a collective war effort.

Livonia's greatest strength lay in her castles and fortified towns, many of which were built on foundations laid down during the victorious Livonian Order's eastward expansion over the course of the Baltic Crusades.⁴⁴⁰ Major field engagements were a rarity in the conflicts of the late sixteenth-century eastern Baltic, and the Livonian War was largely characterized by destructive raiding, rapacious pillaging, and frequent sieges. Under such circumstances, the region's castles served a dual purpose, functioning both as refuges where people and supplies could be kept safe from the depredations of plunderers and as bases from whence these raiders could sally forth to despoil the surrounding countryside.⁴⁴¹ However, although they provided

⁴³⁷ Kreem, *The Town and Its Lord*, 75.

⁴³⁸ See, for example, Jüri Kivimäe, "Das Scharmützel hinter dem Jerusalemer Berg Anno 1560," in *Die Revaler Schwarzenhäupter. Geschichte und Schätze der Bruderschaft der Schwarzenhäupter*, ed. Urmas Oolup and Juhan Kreem, 67-83 (Tallinn: Tallinna Linnaarhiiv, 1999).

⁴³⁹ Senning, *Beiträge*, 37.

⁴⁴⁰ Senning, *Beiträge*, 78.; For a comprehensive description of the region's castles see Armin Tuulse, *Die Burgen in Estland und Lettland* (Tartu: Dorpater Estnischer Verlag, 1942).

⁴⁴¹ Ivan the Terrible's Tatars had a particularly unsavoury reputation for slave raiding, a practice they had brought with them from the steppe. Jerome Horsey's lurid description of Livonian captives dragged off by Tatar slavers captures some of the brutality of this aspect of the war. "O the lamentable outcries and cruel slaughters,

adequate protection against the small forces of light cavalry that incessantly scoured the land in search of victims and booty, many of Livonia's castles were of medieval design and proved incapable of resisting a concerted attack by a besieging army equipped with modern artillery. Most had been built for protection against potential uprisings by the native peasantry or attacks by domestic rivals from within Livonia, not to defend the territory against external invasion by a determined enemy army of professional soldiers. Their high medieval walls proved more than sufficient to keep out a lightly armed peasant rabble, but they were often no match for sixteenth-century cannon. Geographically, these strongholds were also frequently positioned to dominate the landscape and control the indigenous population, rather than to defend the borders of the country from outside attack.⁴⁴² Nonetheless, it would be wrong to imagine that all of Livonia's fortresses were obsolete relics of a bygone age. Senning, for example, divided them into three broad categories – *Zwingburgen* (castles built in the interior to establish authority over the surrounding lands), *Grenzburgen* (border fortresses intended to protect against external invasion), and *Burgen* (castles built primarily as administrative hubs) – thereby emphasizing the problem inherent in comparing the military value of edifices built for decidedly different purposes.⁴⁴³ A fourth category, the fortified manor houses of the Baltic German nobility, although generally smaller and less defensible than the castles of the Order, also provided some protection against small bands of light raiders.

It is true that the initial Russian invasion overwhelmed the defenses of many old Livonian castles with calamitous ease. The Muscovites captured fortress after fortress in the first few years of the campaign, to say nothing of the walled cities of Narva and Dorpat. However, the Livonians were far from the only nation to discover to their cost that their medieval citadels could not be relied upon to resist the more advanced artillery that was, quite literally, taking

drowning and burning, ravaging of women and maids, stripping them naked without mercy or regard for frozen weather, tying and binding them by three and by four at their horses' tails, dragging them, some alive, some dead, all bloodying the ways and streets, lying full of carcasses of the aged men and women and infants; some goodly persons clad in velvet, damask, and silks, with jewels, gold, and pearl hid about them; the fairest people in all the world, by reason of their generation, country, and climate, cold and dry. There was infinite numbers thus sent and dragged into Russia. The riches, in money and merchandise and other treasures, that was conveyed and carried out of these cities and country and out of six hundred churches robbed and destroyed, was invaluable. Thus the emperor and his cruel and hellish Tatars, having ranged and ransacked this goodly country and miserable people..." Berry and Crummey, *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom*, 267.

⁴⁴² Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 88.

⁴⁴³ Senning, *Beiträge*, 83.

early modern Europe by storm. Sixty years earlier, the Italians, Europe's most technologically advanced people at the time, had been shocked by the speed with which Charles VIII's artillery had reduced even their strongest fortresses and walled cities as the French army made its way across the north of the peninsula. Francesco Guicciardini recounted, for example, how the French "introduced so much liveliness into our wars" ("*e introdussono nelle guerre tanta vivezza*") that traditional fortifications were useless to resist them, and "the space between shots was so little, and the balls flew so quick and were impelled with such great force, that as much execution was done in a few hours as formerly, in Italy, in the like number of days."⁴⁴⁴ Russow's description of the mercenary general Pontus de la Gardie's capture of Wesenberg, in 1581, provides a comparable example of the effect military innovation could have on Livonian warfare, where defenses that had proven insurmountable less than a decade earlier might be rendered totally obsolete by new siege technologies.

The Russian wooden fortress was built onto the old stone castle and constituted a mighty foreburg which could hold many thousand men. It was fortified on all sides by mighty blockhouses, bulwarks, high wooden towers and great flanking ramparts made of large massive beams and tree trunks and offering advantageous defensive positions. The blockhouses and bulwarks were filled with large, heavy fieldstones and strongly fortified and joined together. In addition, there was a stone wall put up on the outside, encircling the hill. So the fortress could easily hold out against the guns and artillery of a mighty potentate. And so it was that the King of Sweden in the year 1574 was unable to achieve anything against it in twelve weeks with a mighty army of Germans, Swedes and Scots and with splendid artillery and munitions. But now, with the new invention of red-hot shot [gloeyende Kugeln, literally "glowing balls"], one quickly made short work of it in half a day.⁴⁴⁵

The rate of technological change was often simply too rapid for defenders to keep pace. Casting or purchasing new ordnance was a costly and sometimes time-consuming process, but not nearly as taxing as renovating an entire fortress or city wall. Writing in 1548, Raymond de Beccarie opined that any town fortified more than three decades before was essentially indefensible since the art of building proper ramparts (i.e. fortifications of the *trace italienne*

⁴⁴⁴ Quoted in Bert S. Hall, "The Changing Face of Siege Warfare: Technology and Tactics in Transition," in *The Medieval City Under Siege*, ed. Ivy A. Corfis and Michael Wolfe, 257-276 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995), 258.

⁴⁴⁵ Russow, 207.

type) had only recently been discovered.⁴⁴⁶ Some of the castles of the Livonian Order were closer to three centuries in age, and, while a few of them had been upgraded over the years, a combination of the Order's limited finances and simple neglect meant that modernization had been patchy. Technological progress, however, was not the only factor that rendered the defensive value of Livonia's castles somewhat suspect. There were additional problems of geography, communication, and coordination; in the opening stages of the war, a number of inland fortresses were hastily abandoned or surrendered when it became clear that no help would or could be forthcoming from elsewhere in Livonia.⁴⁴⁷ Many were also under-manned. As Geoffrey Parker has argued, the growing importance of fortifications and sieges in early modern warfare necessitated that larger and larger numbers of men be retained in order to garrison them, driving up the size and cost of armies needed to sustain a viable defense.⁴⁴⁸ While large towns and cities, like Riga and Reval, could raise their own militias or hire mercenaries as the need arose, the rural castles of the Order were chronically under-garrisoned as a result of the shortage of trained soldiers in Livonia. Mercenaries were usually far too costly to justify employing them to garrison a castle unless it was in immediate danger, and, even then, they rarely proved to be the most committed defenders.⁴⁴⁹ The Livonians were not the only ones who suffered from this problem. Over the course of the war, all of the sides found that it was often easier to capture castles than to hold them. A concentrated force with an

⁴⁴⁶ Raymond de Beccarie, sieur de Fourquevaux, *The 'Instructions sur le fait de la Guerre' of Raymond de Beccarie de Pavie, sieur de Fourquevaux*, ed. Gladys Dickinson (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1954), 85.

⁴⁴⁷ See, for example, the flight of Berent von Schmerten and his men from the strong and strategically valuable castle of Weissenstein after they heard news of the fall of Dorpat. *QU*, I, 55-57, 131-132; III, 54-56. The castle was then looted by retreating German mercenaries whom the Russians had allowed to depart from Dorpat, before being re-garrisoned by Caspar von Oldenbockum and his small band, who defended it bravely against a Russian siege in the fall of 1560. *Russow*, 78.

⁴⁴⁸ Parker, *The Military Revolution*, 24. See also John Lynn, "The trace italienne and the Growth of Armies: The French Case," *Journal of Military History* 55 (1991), 197-330. For Parker's older view, since revised, that the widespread adoption of *trace italienne* fortresses led to larger armies because such installations could only be taken by completely surrounding and starving them, see Geoffrey Parker, "'The Military Revolution,' 1550-1660 – A Myth?" *Journal of Modern History* 48 (1976), 195-214.

⁴⁴⁹ The mutinous betrayal of the German mercenaries garrisoning Fellin, in August of 1560, stands out as a particularly dark incident, as they not only surrendered the castle to the Russians but also handed over Wilhelm von Fürstenburg, the elderly former Master of the Livonian Order. Gotthard Kettler later executed as many of the mutineers as he could find. Their names are recorded. *QU*, VI, 199-201. The circumstances surrounding the fall of Neuhausen were not dissimilar. After enduring a Russian bombardment, the commander, Jorgen Üxküll, stubbornly refused to capitulate, but the mercenary garrison mutinied and threatened to hang him over the walls if he would not surrender. The Russians allowed the *Landsknechte* to depart in safety and then proceeded to murder the defenceless peasants who had taken refuge in the castle. *QU*, II, 311-313. See also the accounts of the castle's fall provided in *Renner*, 60 and *Kurbsky*, 115-17.

effective siege train could defeat most fortifications, especially if they were of an antiquated design, but good men then had to be left behind to guard them, kept paid and supplied, and reinforced if they were attacked. As a result, many castles changed hands several times over the course of the war. It was only the two fortified cities of Riga and Reval, both easily resupplied by sea since the Muscovites had no fleet with which to attempt a blockade, that proved intractably resistant to conquest, although some peripheral areas like Courland and Ösel also saw comparatively little action for reasons of geography.

Accounts of Livonia's overall military capabilities in the mid-sixteenth century overwhelmingly portray her inhabitants as dangerously unprepared for war. Balthasar Russow, as usual, set the tone in this respect, offering scathing descriptions of the general ineptitude evidenced in the initial efforts to mobilize the populace.

But at this time many of the Livonians, complacent and unaccustomed to war, had neither soldiers nor equipment befitting their holdings. In haste, therefore, they had to enlist non-German stable boys and old, married, two-bit lackeys [sossferdinges knechte] who had already drunk themselves half to death and many of whom had scarcely fired a musket in their entire lives. They put on the old rusty armour, but before setting out, they first got roaring drunk, each swearing to stand by the other in life or death ... [and later] ... They were great warriors while boozing, but as soon as the wedding was over and it came to an actual encounter, not only would several of them flee from one Russian, but they fled from the bushes and fir trees as well, which they mistook from afar for Russians.⁴⁵⁰

Russow's uncharitable, sarcastic characterization of the Livonians as comically naïve and unprofessional was intended to reinforce his argument that the Russian invasion was divine punishment inflicted upon them for their complacency, pride, debauchery, and moral laxity. Still, while he may have exaggerated these vices, there was probably an element of truth to his claims, which were corroborated in general terms by other accounts of the day. One of the more important sources on the state of pre-war Livonia's military is the report of Joachim Burwitz, a Baltic German agent of King Gustav Vasa, whose assessment was, if anything, even more scathing than Russow's. In 1554, Gustav had signed a pact with the Order to launch a joint Swedish-Livonian assault against Russia, but, when Sweden attacked, the Livonians failed to uphold their end of the bargain. The King quickly dispatched Burwitz to determine the

⁴⁵⁰ Russow, 67, 73.

situation in the eastern Baltic. His letter of February 1555 painted a damning picture of the state of the Confederation as a whole – politically divided, militarily weak, and poor in resources – and of the Livonian Knights in particular, whom he described as gluttonous, greedy, arrogant, and debauched.⁴⁵¹ As for the military, he reported that it had not been mobilized in recent memory and that the men were “on the one hand bent, lame, mutilated, and addicted to drink, and on the other distinctly unaccustomed to all knightly labour, to bivouacking in the field, to hunger, frost, thirst, travel, and guard duty.”⁴⁵² Prince Kurbsky was of a similar opinion, noting that the people of Narva were “completely inexperienced in such [military] matters ... [because] ... they had lived for many years in peace.”⁴⁵³ Exasperated, King Gustav soon abandoned his claims against Muscovy and entered into peace negotiations, while the Livonian Order squandered the opportunity for an alliance with Sweden in favour of pursuing its internecine quarrel with the Archbishop of Riga. Incidents such as this served only to highlight the military infirmity and political turmoil of the Livonian Confederation, both of which would soon be exploited by her predatory neighbours.

In addition to shortages of experienced men, necessary war supplies, and seasoned commanders, the Livonian forces also suffered from crippling failures of morale, especially in the early stages of the war. To a degree, this is to be expected. They faced in Ivan’s army a much more numerous and well-prepared enemy, and each new defeat plunged the populace into deeper despair. However, as in Muscovy, the poor morale of Livonia’s troops was also a function of her political climate. It quickly became clear that many of the various factions of the Confederation were largely unwilling to risk their own safety in order to defend one other. Once this was apparent, it was easy for the Muscovites to pick off outposts, castles, and towns

⁴⁵¹ Compare, for example, the description of the Livonian Order’s vices given by the Revalian Councillor Franz Schmedemann, in September of 1560, when the city was negotiating the terms of its submission to Sweden. *Landmeister* Gotthard Kettler wrote to the City Council of Reval, requesting Schmedemann’s arrest and complaining about the slander he was spreading about the knights, namely that they ate and drank too much, consorted with maidens and unfaithful married women, and did not look to the needs of the land (“*das wir durch nachlässigkeit auch durch vielfältig überflüssig fressen und sauffen spaciren Jumfferirn hurerrei und abspenung ehlicher Weiber die armen lande verseumen und in dieser beschwerung sitzen und stecken lassen solten*”). *QU*, VI, 92-94.

⁴⁵² Wilhelm Lenz, “Joachim Burwitz Bericht über Livland aus dem Jahre 1555,” *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 20 (1971): 708-29.; Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question*, 162; Walther Kirchner, “The Russo-Livonian Crisis, 1555: Extracts from Joachim Burwitz’ Report of February 19, 1555,” *Journal of Modern History* XIX (1947, 42-51.

⁴⁵³ *Kurbsky*, 109-10.

one at a time, while isolated and outnumbered local garrisons frequently surrendered or fled when they realized that no reinforcements could be expected. This was not merely a product of poorly realized strategic cooperation on the part of the defenders. A more significant problem was that many of the most powerful factions in Livonia – the Order, the Rigans, the Revalians, several of the bishops – had private contingency plans and exit strategies of their own.⁴⁵⁴ There was little reason, for example, for Gotthard Kettler to hazard open battle with Ivan’s forces, let alone to risk his own life, when he had what amounted to an open offer from Sigismund Augustus to submit to Poland-Lithuania and retire to a life of ducal luxury in Courland. It is thus unsurprising that he failed to counter-attack in force at Narva or at Dorpat. Nor was there much incentive for the Revalians to ride to the aid of their countrymen in eastern Estonia when they were being courted by such powerful patrons as the kings of Denmark, Poland, and Sweden. There were examples of courageous men who fought to the end, such as the brothers Philipp and Werner Schall von Bell, but most of Livonia’s leaders looked to their own survival and submitted to the protection of neighbouring powers in order to spare themselves the less palatable prospect of Muscovite rule. Defeatism set in quickly, and Livonia’s magnates soon found themselves more occupied with negotiating personally favourable terms for the dissolution of their country than with uniting to try to hold it together, initiating a process of splinterization that, once begun, proved to be both contagious and irremediable.⁴⁵⁵ As Juhan Kreem has observed, both external pressure and internal intrigue played a role in the collapse of Confederation.⁴⁵⁶ Foreign political entanglements as well as foreign aggression was to blame. Old Livonia did not simply shatter into its constituent parts under the weight of Russian military pressure but was also pulled apart by the wooing of the Danes, Swedes, and Poles. In the end, Livonia’s greatest weakness on the eve of her destruction may have been that many of her most prominent sons were no longer fully committed to the idea of an independent Livonia.

⁴⁵⁴ Richard Bonney noted that early modern “taxpayers and especially elites with mobile assets” had a “credible ‘exit option’” that could make them resistant to unificatory state-building projects. Bonney, “Introduction,” 7.

⁴⁵⁵ The peasants, tied to their lands and lacking the protection of such mighty foreign benefactors, had far fewer options, and it was they who would suffer the most in the violence of the decades of to come.

⁴⁵⁶ “*Die livländische Konföderation ist um die Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts zusammengebrochen. Neben dem äußeren Druck haben dabei auch innere Verwicklungen eine Rolle gespielt.*” Juhan Kreem, “Der Deutsche Orden im 16. Jahrhundert,” 295.

Chapter 6

Mercenaries as Agents: Recruitment and Costs

6.1 Mercenaries as Agents and Actors

When studied at all, mercenaries have usually been approached as agents of the higher powers whom they served. Accordingly, instances of mercenaries acting contrary to the interests of their employers have typically been treated as evidence of unreliability, insubordination, or disloyalty. This rather one-sided perspective tends to delegitimize the needs and aspirations of the mercenaries themselves, who, from their own point of view, invariably had valid reasons for doing what they did, not the least of which was simply staying alive. In the absence of political or social ties, mercenaries owed their employers no duty of allegiance other than the one stipulated in the articles that governed their conduct. When the terms of their employment were breached, it was very often first by the employer, since early modern states were still in the process of developing the kind of fiscal liquidity required to pay their troops on a regular basis and commonly failed to uphold their financial obligations. It is important, therefore, to approach mercenaries not simply as greedy or unreliable soldiers, but as contracted labourers or as merchants whose commodity was their own fighting bodies and whose marketplace was the crucible of war. Baltic emporia like Riga, Reval, Lübeck, and Danzig were centres of market activity whose lifeblood was trade, and, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, when battle was the business of the day, it is little wonder that mercenaries traveled to such places to sell their services. In light of the recent historiographical shift toward framing the soldiering profession in terms of labour history, early modern mercenarism may thus be understood as a labour-for-capital exchange in which governments, elites, burghers, and corporate entities like the Livonian Order outsourced their old, socio-politically defined military obligations to paid professionals who fought on their behalf or in their place.⁴⁵⁷ This understanding recommends an examination of mercenaries both as hirelings of their employers and as market players with interests of their own – in other words, as agents of others and as actors in their own right.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ For a recent discussion, see Erik-Jan Zürcher, ed., *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative History of Military Labour 1500-2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

⁴⁵⁸ Something of this multifacetedness is reflected in the varied terminology applied to the profession in medieval and early modern sources. *Mercenarius*, *stipendarius*, *söldner*, and *soldat* all refer etymologically to their status as economic agents, or, at least, as professionals in receipt of pay. *Landsknecht*, *kriegsknecht*, and

Much of the tension arising between mercenaries and their employers can be explained by an approach that examines them as uneasy commercial partners in a military labour market whose participants each had their own aims and priorities. In essence, warlords hired mercenaries to fight and only grudgingly paid them, while mercenaries sold their services for pay and plunder and only grudgingly fought. This fundamental disconnect between the objectives of employer and employee was a source of considerable inefficiency in early modern warfare, and many a battle and campaign was lost or abandoned when the troops went unpaid and refused to fight. Recognition of the validity of the mercenaries' contractually mandated right to be paid, which is brought into focus when they are seen as business partners rather than mere lackeys, allows for a more balanced assessment of the relationship between mercenary and master. Like any commercial venture, the operational success or failure of a mercenary army hinged on the willingness and ability of both parties to uphold their obligations. Mercenary armies functioned best when the interests of master and men aligned, for example when plunder or reward were promised in exchange for the defeat of the employer's enemies. When the relationship broke down, it was because the interests of employer and employee had diverged to the extent that one party was no longer willing or able to uphold its side of the bargain.

Mercenaries had a profound effect on the course and outcome of the Livonian War. When they were provided with adequate operational support, professional soldiers recruited from Germany and other parts of western and central Europe typically proved that, man-for-man, they were more than a match for the troops locally available to the Livonians and their Muscovite foes. Despite being consistently outnumbered, hired *Landsknechte* and *Reiter* demonstrated their military worth throughout the war, although the contexts in which they were deployed and the suboptimal conditions under which they fought often curtailed their ability to perform. Their defeats – which, particularly in the early stages of the war and during the Russian offensives of the 1570s, were many – were often the result of overwhelming numerical disadvantage, inadequate supply and support, lack of pay, or crises of morale. When momentum was in favour of the mercenaries' employers, they could usually be counted upon

knecht emphasize service to a master / employer. *Kriegsvolk* and *kriegsleute* suggest a more general association with war.

to deliver, but, when it shifted against them, it could set off a chain reaction of mutinies, surrenders, desertions, and defections.⁴⁵⁹ Although mercenaries did not always prove to be the most reliable of troops – and, in fairness, neither did the knights of the Livonian Order or their vassals – they were an integral part of the Livonian, Danish, and Swedish war efforts, without whom these nations would have been unable to compete with the more formidable manpower available to the Tsar. Paradoxically, however, although the use of mercenaries enabled a military reach and potency that would have been otherwise impossible to many of the powers of the day, the cost of hiring, maintaining, and negotiating with them was also a key limiting factor in early modern Baltic warfare. Further, in addition to both enhancing and undermining, extending and limiting the plans of their employers in their role as effective or ineffective agents of these higher powers, mercenaries also altered the course of the war through the pursuit of their own goals, becoming actors in their own right.⁴⁶⁰

The prevalence of military enterprise in the conflicts of the late sixteenth-century Baltic not only altered military outcomes and reshaped societies, but also affected economic and political developments in an era when the region's states were undergoing intense transformation. As in many parts of northern and central Europe, the most fiscally sophisticated polities of the medieval Baltic had been the largely self-governing cities, and not the much more expansive but less economically developed territorial states.⁴⁶¹ By the late sixteenth century, the independence of many urban centres was beginning to be eroded.⁴⁶² At the same time, the territorial kingdoms were embarking on a long evolution from what might be broadly characterized in Schumpeterian terms as “domain states” to “tax states”.⁴⁶³ This was not a

⁴⁵⁹ Montecuccoli emphasized the value of good publicity in order to maintain morale, warning that, as word spreads of victories and defeats, mercenaries would invariably abandon the losers and flock to the victors or simply desert. Montecuccoli, *Sulle Battaglie*, 164.

⁴⁶⁰ Needless to say, these roles were not mutually exclusive, as the mercenary's performance in the service of his employer was often directly related to his pursuit of his own aims, a correlation that could be positive or negative depending upon the circumstances.

⁴⁶¹ Isenmann, “The Holy Roman Empire in the Middle Ages,” 243-245.; North, “Finances and Power,” 148.

⁴⁶² Some Hanseatic towns experienced a short-lived revival in the latter half of the sixteenth century, when their Dutch competitors were embroiled in conflict with Spain. However, other factors such as the fall of Livonia and the intrusion of the English into old Hanseatic markets curtailed this brief renaissance, and the league experienced further decline in the first half of the seventeenth century. Philippe Dollinger, *The German Hansa*, trans. and ed. D.S. Ault and S.H. Steinberg (London: Macmillan, 1970), 330.

⁴⁶³ Rudolf Goldscheid and Joseph Schumpeter, *Die Finanzkrise des Steuerstaats: Beiträge zur politischen Ökonomie der Staatsfinanzen*, ed. Rudolf Hickel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976). Originally

simple or a short process, lasting as it did from the sixteenth until the eighteenth or even the nineteenth century, with many false starts and setbacks along the way.⁴⁶⁴ The events of the Livonian War amply demonstrate the range of logistical, administrative, and financial challenges faced by early modern states struggling to find ways to sustain an effective war effort at a time when the core strategic, technological, and economic facets of European warfare were all in flux. Even among those proponents of a multicausal model of early modern state formation (including scholars who reject war as its sole or principal impetus), there is widespread acknowledgement that the need to meet military expenses was the prime factor in the growth of taxation.⁴⁶⁵ In warfare, as in all sectors of sixteenth-century European life, professionalization and monetization were becoming the order of the day, with socially constituted forms of military service through vassalage giving way to paid soldiering. The increasing importance of taxation and borrowing relative to older forms of land-based wealth was the inevitable response to these socio-military developments, creating an escalating fiscal-military cycle in which the monetization of war drove the gradual transition from domain to tax state, a process which, in turn, led to further military monetization.⁴⁶⁶ The Livonian War marks an important early stage in this process: the financial and logistical challenges posed by the increasing monetization and growing scale of warfare were already being felt, but governments were still experimenting with the economic and administrative solutions that would give rise to the fiscal-military states of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A detailed analysis of mercenary activity in the Livonian War provides insight into a number of critical developments taking place in the sixteenth-century Baltic. First, the performance of

published in 1918.; North, "Finances and Power," 145.; Gerhard Oestreich, "Ständestaat und Staatsbildung in Deutschland," in *Geist und Gesalt des frühmodernen Staates*, ed. Gerhard Oestreich (Berlin: Duncker und Humboldt, 1969), 277-89.

⁴⁶⁴ During the Northern Seven Years' War, for example, King Erik XIV resisted the temptation to finance the war by over-taxing the peasantry lest this cause popular unrest. It was not until the coronation oath of 1611 and the extension of aristocratic privileges the following year that the Vasa kings became more confident in their ability to fund campaigns through the raising of taxes. Erling Ladewig Petersen, "From Domain State to Tax State: Synthesis and Interpretation," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 23 (2) (July 1975), 117-8.

⁴⁶⁵ "It is hard to doubt that it was military needs that drove up taxation levels and dragged competing states at various times through the transition from a demesne state, in which the ruler's revenues mostly came from landholdings and judicial profits, to a tax state, in which the government more or less efficiently taxed the wealth of its subjects. Both the high proportions of expenditure dedicated to war and the coincidence between lasting innovations in taxation and desperate military need amply serve to prove the case." Gunn et alia, "War and the State," 379.

⁴⁶⁶ "The need for taxes both signposted the shift from the medieval domain state and a subsistence economy and itself hastened the transition from a barter to a cash economy..." Petersen, "War and the State," 116.

western and central European professional soldiers and armies in a conflict involving diverse troops drawn from across much of the European continent allows for the evaluation of some of the key claims of the military revolution thesis (and military historiography of the early modern world more broadly). Second, mercenary activity is intertwined with some of the more significant social and demographic changes experienced in Estonia and Livonia over the course of the Livonian War, such as widespread devastation caused by plundering, violent redistribution of wealth, social mobility, militarization, and military professionalization. Third, as a long struggle involving multiple polities with very different economic systems, the Livonian War is a valuable context in which to examine the evolving responses of both national governments and regional elites to the monetary demands of large scale warfare, particularly in terms of the important role of military enterprise as a mechanism by which the latter could either resist or join state-building projects. The following three chapters are an analysis of how mercenaries influenced the outcomes and consequences of the Livonian War as both pieces and minor players in the great game being played out for control of the eastern Baltic.

6.2 Recruiting, Organizing, and Discharging the Mercenaries

The mercenaries who fought in the Livonian War consisted of both Livonians who turned to military enterprise over the course of the conflict and foreign troops recruited from abroad, the former increasing proportionally in the years after the 1561 collapse of the Confederation and the dissolution of the Livonian Order.⁴⁶⁷ At various stages in the war, the nature of the sources sometimes renders it difficult to define these two categories with absolute precision. As a rule, however, the foreigners are usually easier to classify than the locals, who were sometimes seen as mercenaries, sometimes as Livonian patriots, sometimes as independent rebels and reavers, and sometimes as vassals of one or other of the occupying powers. This confusion is reflected in the terminology applied to these troops. Depending on the context, “*Hofleute*” could mean

⁴⁶⁷ The Livonians and the Scandinavians primarily hired Germans but also men from other parts of northern Europe, such as Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and Scotland. There was often an overabundance of soldiers available in sixteenth-century Germany, which could be socially disruptive, but also allowed recruiters to be more selective in favouring men with military experience, their own arms and armour, or high levels of physical fitness. Peter Burschel, *Söldner im Nordwestdeutschland des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts. Sozialgeschichtliche Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 97-8. The Polish and Lithuanian forces were very diverse and included troops from Germany, Scotland, Hungary, the Czech lands, Tatar, Transylvania, the Balkans, and the Caucasus.

the Baltic German nobility and their vassals, but it could also refer to cavalry more generally (just as *knechte* often simply meant “infantry”), and the same men were sometimes also referred to as *söldruyter* (or *soltruiter*, etc.), a term also used for mercenary cavalry recruited abroad.⁴⁶⁸ Sometimes, the *Hofleute* were singled out or at least listed separately from other members of nobility and from the soldiery (e.g. “*Adell, Burger, Hof und Kriegsleute*”).⁴⁶⁹ All of these men were paid for their military service, and, along with the purchase of war supplies, this proved to be the greatest expense of the war.

Recruitment of foreign and Livonian troops varied depending on the types of fighters involved and the authority whom they were to serve. Mercenaries and other soldiers could be mustered in a variety of ways as the need arose, but, in early modern Livonia (and elsewhere in Europe), most troops were recruited in one of two ways: by commission or by contract. Tallett defines the former as the appointment of a captain who would raise “a specified number of men from a given area within the state’s sovereign territory” and the latter as government negotiation with a military contractor “for the delivery of an agreed number of troops, raised outside the state’s territorial boundaries, at an agreed time and place, in return for the payment of a sum of money laid down in the contract.”⁴⁷⁰ Each system had its advantages and disadvantages. Commission allowed the hiring authority to choose its own captain, in theocratic Old Livonia usually a member of the Livonian Order (elsewhere, of the secular aristocracy), and it afforded a greater degree of governmental control over key aspects of the recruitment process like the numbers of men to be raised and the timing and area of recruitment. On the other hand, desertion on the way to the muster point was common, the troops were usually non-professionals, and the government had to supply their expensive equipment. In Livonia, as elsewhere, most professional mercenaries were recruited by contract.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ “*Reutter und Knechten*” is the most common formula for “cavalry and infantry”. In Latin correspondences, the equivalent term is usually “*equites et pedites*” (e.g. *QU*, I, 235).

⁴⁶⁹ The phrase is found in Eduard Pabst, ed., “Kriegsgericht der Landsknechte über Joachim Stark, vormaligen Hauptmann auf Hapsal, Arensburg d. 10. Sept. 1576,” in *Beiträge zur Kunde Ehst-, Liv- und Kurland*, vol. I, no. 2 (Reval: Lindfors’ Erben, 1869), 94-8. Pabst here defines “*Hofleute*” as simply “*berittene Adelige*”.

⁴⁷⁰ Tallett, *War and Society*, 69.

⁴⁷¹ Nevertheless, recruitment in the Baltic was more haphazard than in some other regions of Europe. The French, for example, recruited Swiss mercenaries through an arrangement based on formalized treaty relations between the two countries, a system for which there is no analog in the eastern Baltic. Potter, *Renaissance France at War*, 125.

Contracting was a significant aspect of military organization in many parts of Europe from the rise of the *condottieri* (literally “contractors”) in fourteenth-century Italy until well into the late seventeenth century. Unsurprisingly, the practice varied from place to place and from time to time. The norms of the German-speaking world informed practices in Livonia and Scandinavia. In the medieval Baltic, the scale of recruitment remained relatively minor, and it was not unusual for small groups of mercenaries to be hired individually for assignments like protecting Hanseatic shipping, in which case the employer might deal directly with the mercenaries.⁴⁷² During the Livonian War, when the employers were more often heads of states raising entire armies than merchants looking for some hired muscle to guard their cogs from pirates, the type of large scale contracting common in other parts of Europe began to be seen more frequently in the Baltic. Under this system, a distinction must be made between the contractor or “military enterpriser” (to borrow Fritz Redlich’s designation) and the mercenary soldiers whom he recruited. The former acted as a middleman who was tasked by the government or monarch in question to raise a certain number of troops of a given type. To do so, he might be provided with capital by the employer or he might invest his own money in the expectation that he would make his investment back through future payment and right of plunder. It is primarily the figure of the military enterpriser who introduces the element of speculative capitalism into early modern warfare through the system of initial investment for expected return, in contrast to the employer who accepted that whatever money he sank into hiring an army was a financial loss he was willing to take in order to realize his strategic aims (or the troops themselves who enlisted as wage-labourers-cum-plunderers).

The contracts concluded between enterpriser and employer usually consisted of a number of separate documents: the *Bestallung* or *Kapitulation* was the business contract itself; there was also the military commission by which the contractor received the rank of *Oberst* (“colonel”); and there were recruiting patents authorizing the contractor to raise specified quantities of particular types of soldier.⁴⁷³ (In the case of Reval, the *Oberst* was invariably a member of the city council, initially Friedrich von Sandsteden and later Hermann Luhr, and he was assisted in

⁴⁷² See discussion in Kreem, “The Business of War.”

⁴⁷³ Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser*, vol. i, 217.

his military duties by the *Stadt-Kriegshauptmann*.⁴⁷⁴) The few surviving examples of the *Bestallung* indicate that the focus of this document was the initial raising of the regiment, rather than its subsequent operations. Significantly, therefore, the contract invariably specified the amount of money to be spent on mustering the troops and the number of men to be recruited, but not the length of time that their service would be required. This was likely an implicit recognition of the inherent unpredictability of war and the impossibility of knowing how long a campaign would last. It also permitted the employer to dissolve the contract and release the mercenaries from service on short notice, as very often happened in the course of the Livonian War and other conflicts of the age. The mercenaries themselves were not, of course, signatories of the contract between the enterpriser who recruited them and the potentate in whose service they fought. But, as professional military labourers, they were acutely aware of the terms and conditions of their own employment, such as how often and how much they were to be paid, what tasks they were and were not obliged to perform, and how they were to comport themselves on and off the battlefield. These details were included in the articles of war that were ceremoniously read aloud to them upon enlistment and periodically re-read at later dates (see below).

It is difficult to generalize about the military enterprisers active during the Livonian War because of their diverse origins, aims, and methods. In some cases, they were close associates of the potentate or members of the government that was intent on hiring the troops. During the early stages of the war, the Livonian Order tended to send its own officers to recruit soldiers in northern Germany. Militarily experienced noblemen were also a common choice. Christoph von Münchhausen, for example, was no doubt selected to undertake recruitment in Germany and Denmark because of his familial ties as brother of the Bishop of Ösel-Wiek and Courland, his connections in Copenhagen, and the knowledge of military affairs he had gained as a mercenary officer fighting in Germany and Spain.⁴⁷⁵ The enterpriser might also be responsible for commanding the men he bankrolled and hired, lending him a multifaceted status as investor, recruiter, and *Oberst*, or he might play the role of absentee investor and leave the

⁴⁷⁴ There is little documentary evidence describing the exact duties of the *Stadt-Kriegshauptmann*, a position held in Reval during the early stages of the war by Michael Schleier. Schiemann, "Revaler Landsknechte," 230-1.

⁴⁷⁵ *QU*, II, 284.

actual leadership to hired officers.⁴⁷⁶ In Old Livonia, the officers of the Livonian Order typically served as both recruiters – whether by contract, by commission, or through older systems of vassalage – and as field commanders. In the bishoprics, recruitment was usually handled by a prominent nobleman with connections to the episcopacy, such as Christoph von Münchhausen in Ösel-Wiek or Duke Christoph von Mecklenburg in Riga, who might delegate command to his captains or take an active part in the fighting as circumstance dictated.⁴⁷⁷

In Sweden, the Vasa monarchs took a more hands-on approach to administering the kingdom's military apparatus than did rulers in many other parts of Europe, relying less on military entrepreneurs to act as mediators than did their Danish or German counterparts. Indeed, Glete has argued that one reason that the dynasty was able to achieve its largely successful program of political centralization was that the kings themselves engaged in military enterprise, something observable as early as the reign of Gustav Vasa, who secured his hold on the country with the aid of German mercenaries and a fleet purchased from Lübeck.⁴⁷⁸ This is not to say, of course, that sixteenth-century Sweden made no use of foreign military entrepreneurs. Particularly when recruiting from abroad and in regions where the Swedish Crown's connections were less established than in Stockholm's own Baltic backyard, local officer-entreprisers were crucial. King Johan's employment of Archibald Ruthven to hire thousands of Scots in the early 1570s stands out as notable example from the Livonian War. Ruthven was known to the Swedish government through pre-existing connections established by Scottish mercenary cavalry serving in the Northern Seven Years' War of the previous decade (see below), and a claim could be made that, by the 1560s and 1570s, the groundwork was already being laid for the relationship of preferential recruitment that would become a cornerstone of Swedish-Scottish relations in the first half of the next century.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser*, vol. i, 218-9.

⁴⁷⁷ Münchhausen led some of the forces responsible for harshly suppressing the Estonian peasant uprising of 1560. Andres Adamson, *Hertsog Magnus ja tema "Liivimaa kuningriik"* (doctoral dissertation) (Tallinna Ülikool, 2009), 45.

⁴⁷⁸ Glete, *War and the State*, 185. This was rather different from the situation in Denmark, where kings tended to rely upon influential German military enterprisers who could wield considerable power at court.

⁴⁷⁹ Alexia Grosjean, *An Unofficial Alliance: Scotland and Sweden 1569-1654* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). The earliest records of Scottish soldiers active in Sweden actually date to the first decades of the sixteenth century, although these men were fighting in Danish service against the Swedes.

In the broadest sense, the motives of military enterprisers were much like those of the ordinary mercenary troops in that they were taking a calculated risk for the possibility of future reward. The prime difference was that, whereas the soldiery signed up for an immediate enlistment fee plus added promises of forthcoming plunder and pay, enterprisers often began the campaign at a financial deficit due to the initial outlay of capital required to raise their troops. On the other hand, the enterpriser could expect not only the lion's share of any future monetary gains but also the possibility of promotion by a grateful employer. Again, the Scots provide an instructive example. Andreas Keith, Hans Stuart, and the Colquhouns – who arrived in Sweden in the 1560s or 1570s as military enterprisers and/or mercenary captains – were all ultimately inducted into the Swedish nobility and achieved prominence in the country's burgeoning administrative class. Men with a proven track record as both officers and entrepreneurs had precisely the skills needed by the emerging fiscal-military states of early modern Europe, and military enterprise became one of the most common paths into the administrative elites of the era's centralizing states. Such cases provide a strong argument against the notion that early modern political centralization was accomplished at the expense of traditional power holders like the aristocrat and independent operators like the mercenary, instead suggesting that the intense inter-state competition that characterized the age created an environment in which these actors could use military service as a means to retain their influence in the increasingly post-feudal world of the bureaucratic state. Likewise, continued reliance on mercenaries and private military enterprisers does not necessarily imply administrative weakness on the part of early modern governments if these individuals could be incorporated into national administrations and their skills directed toward state-building projects. In the context of the Livonian War, perhaps no single figure more wholly typifies this synergy than Pontus de la Gardie, the French mercenary officer who was promoted into the Swedish nobility, married an illegitimate daughter of the Swedish king, and was eventually appointed Governor of Estonia.

Like that of the enterpriser, the status of the captains (*Hauptmänner*) could be ambiguous. In the case of foreign troops recruited abroad and shipped to the theatre of war, these were professional mercenary officers who were given a set salary to lead a certain number of men. In other words, the contractor (whether additionally serving as *Oberst* or not) negotiated

directly with the employer, serving as an intermediary who hired the captains, the other officers, and the ordinary troopers alike. Complicating matters, the leaders of the *Hofleute* were also referred to as *Hauptmänner*, despite their status being quite different from the career officers of the mercenary companies. These were members of the Baltic German aristocracy elected to lead the banners of cavalry formed by their class during the course of the war. Being already in theatre and uneasily occupying a shifting identity that fluctuated between independent militia of the Livonian nobility and occasional vassals, mercenaries, and allies of various foreign overlords, these *Hofleute* captains were not recruited through third-party middleman enterprisers, but, instead, dealt directly with the foreign rulers who sought to employ them. The leaders of the *Hofleute* therefore functioned as aristocratic captain-enterprisers, fighting and negotiating for pay, protection, and the preservation of their traditional rights (see Chapter 8.3).

Given the exorbitant costs, when and why did the Livonians turn to the services of mercenaries? In the mid-sixteenth century, professional mercenaries were seen as expensive specialists, battle-winners who ideally could be quickly demobilized after winning an engagement.⁴⁸⁰ Livonian correspondences of the previous century had already distinguished between regular men and professional soldiers, calling for general mobilization of the local population (including the “*Undeutschen*”) when a large force was required, but specifying the need for higher quality troops when a smaller force was to be mustered and the authorities could afford to be more selective.⁴⁸¹ Unfortunately, the increasing emphasis on siege warfare, the escalating length of conflicts, and the growing size of armies often rendered this system impractical, since judging the duration, scope, and nature of a given campaign was no exact science and it was therefore difficult to estimate the number and types of troops that would be needed in advance. The six month truce negotiated with Moscow in 1559 provides an instructive example. When this temporary peace was arranged shortly after the Livonians had hired a substantial number of mercenaries from Germany, the Livonian Order found itself stuck with a force of *Landsknechte* and *Reiter* who would have to be paid for half a year before the truce expired and they could be put to use against the enemy, while the Russian levies

⁴⁸⁰ Parrott, *The Business of War*, 77.

⁴⁸¹ Kreem, “The Business of War,” 30-1.

could be dispersed to their estates and farms and re-commissioned as needed.⁴⁸² Early modern authorities paid a heavy price for the battlefield professionalism offered by mercenaries.

When Ivan the Terrible invaded in January of 1558, some of the German mercenaries who had been hired during the previous year's tensions between Riga, Poland, and the Livonian Order were still lingering in the cities of Livonia and Estonia. These were de-enlisted men who were paid a monthly waiting fee of 1 gulden to remain at the cities' disposal in case they were needed later; in the meantime, they were permitted to supplement this income by taking on other work, something that was generally forbidden to garrisons and troops on active duty, although they were still obligated to respond if mustered for military duty.⁴⁸³ When the Russians attacked, these men were mobilized immediately, but it was very soon apparent that more troops would have to be brought over from Germany. Most foreign mercenaries were hired in northern Germany and shipped across the Baltic from Lübeck or Danzig, although some also traveled overland through Prussia, meaning in either case that it took time for them to reach the battlefield and that they could not easily be dismissed and rehired as the need arose, unless they were paid a waiting fee to remain in Livonia after being discharged.⁴⁸⁴ The men were shipped over in groups of one hundred to three hundred, with the ships' captains paid a fee for this service but responsible for providing food for the soldiers during the crossing.⁴⁸⁵

Over August and September of 1558, for example, the chronicler Johannes Renner reports that twelve hundred *Landsknechte* who were recruited in Germany (“*in Dudschlandt an genamen weren*”) arrived by ship in Livonia, along with one hundred gunners from Danzig and war

⁴⁸² Werner Schall von Bell wrote a letter to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg addressing this issue. *QU*, III, 188-91.

⁴⁸³ Senning, *Beiträge*, 62-3.

⁴⁸⁴ The men were given an initial enlistment fee (“*Handgeld*”) upon recruitment in Germany. If they did not then make their way to Livonia, then they were considered to be deserters not only in Livonia but wherever *Landsknechte* plied their trade. Schiemann, “Revaler Landsknechte,” 231.

⁴⁸⁵ *QU*, III, 157. Beginning in the late medieval period, mercenaries were also used to defend ships from pirates. Kreem, “The Business of War,” 32-3. During the Livonian War, *Landsknechte* served as a military complement aboard warships equipped by the Livonian towns. The troops were almost exclusively German, but Estonians and Letts commonly joined the crews. Paul Johansen and Heinz von zur Mühlen, *Deutsch und Undeutsch im mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Reval* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1973), 294. A record of a warship from c.1550 mentions that there were nine non-Germans and twenty-nine Germans onboard, most of the latter being *Landsknechte*. TLA B.h.25.

supplies from other Hanseatic cities.⁴⁸⁶ Livonian recruiters, led by Duke Christoph von Mecklenburg, coadjutor of the Archbishopric of Riga, had already been in northern Germany for several months trying to recruit men, and, in July, Gotthard Kettler had also written to the Duke of Prussia to request free passage for mercenaries (“*Kriegsvolck, ahn Reuttern und knechtenn*”) who were needed in Livonia to fight the “*Unchristlichem feinde*”.⁴⁸⁷ A Revalian physician, Dr. Mattheus Friesner, working as an informant for the Swedes, reported the arrival of some of these troops in a letter sent to Duke Johan of Finland on August 30.⁴⁸⁸ A few months later, we find Duke Christoph hiring cavalry in Prussia and leading them to Livonia by the overland route, including, in January of 1559, a force of 372 “black riders” (“*schwartzze Reuther*”) – elite mercenary cavalry of the *Reiter* type, armed with pistols and swords and named for their distinctive armour, who had first come to prominence in the Schmalkaldic War.⁴⁸⁹

Journeying overland, even from a nearby region like Prussia, could have its dangers, as the men would typically be traveling in smaller numbers with the intention of joining the main force once they arrived at their destination. A report sent to Duke Johan on February 14, 1559 recounts how twenty-two “*Deutscher knecht welche von Danczick quemen*” were killed when a much larger force of Russian cavalry attacked the inn at Kourn, where they had spent the night while passing through Courland on their way to Riga.⁴⁹⁰ Renner tells us that the Russians assaulted the inn repeatedly, but were beaten back three times (“*slogen de fiende 3 mal van dem hofte*”) with over a hundred casualties, before they set fire to the village and forced the defenders out into the open to be surrounded and killed.⁴⁹¹ The chronicler Salomon Henning suggests that all of Courland could then have been overrun fairly easily by these Russian raiders, except that they had heard false rumours that the force of mercenary cavalry being led from Prussia by Duke Christoph numbered in the thousands, rather than the mere hundreds,

⁴⁸⁶ Johann Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, ed. Richard Hausmann and Konstantin Höhlbaum (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag, 1876), 210. The need to recruit more mercenaries from Germany was a topic of frequent discussion over the summer of 1558. *QU*, I, 184, 189, 192, etc.

⁴⁸⁷ *QU*, I, 220-2.

⁴⁸⁸ “Five hundred German horses and riders have come to Riga, and it is, in fact, said that two thousand are supposedly coming to Riga via Prussia and Poland...” *QU*, I, 252-3.

⁴⁸⁹ Again, Dr. Friesner is our informant about the troop movements, as well as Duke Johan's. *QU*, III, 120-1. Henning also mentions the arrival of these men in February. *Henning*, 51.

⁴⁹⁰ *QU*, III, 103.

⁴⁹¹ Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 232.

and they therefore pulled back.⁴⁹² (The Russians may have heard the same rumour as Dr. Friesner, who also erroneously reported that two thousand mercenary cavalry were on their way from Prussia.) The relatively minor incident of the skirmish at Kourn exemplifies several characteristics of the early stages of the war: first, when given no option but to fight, the *Landsknechte* were formidable soldiers capable of inflicting disproportionately severe casualties on their Russian foes even when outnumbered and eventually defeated;⁴⁹³ second, the Livonians and their mercenaries were vulnerable to being picked off in small groups and destroyed by the more numerous and mobile roving Russian and Tatar cavalry; and, third, both sides frequently failed to capitalize on advantageous situations because of misinformation and inaccurate hearsay.

Mercenaries were sometimes courted by potential recruiters while they were already serving in other, unrelated campaigns overseas. In the summer of 1559, for example, Christoph von Münchhausen, brother of the Bishop of Ösel-Wiek, was attempting to hire German mercenaries fighting for the King of Denmark and Duke Adolf of Holstein in their invasion of the tiny but redoubtable peasant republic of Dithmarschen.⁴⁹⁴ However, the mercenaries were discharged immediately after the campaign's successful termination, before he could secure their services. Münchhausen stayed in Denmark, where he was able to arrange the sale of his brother's diocese to the young Duke Magnus of Holstein, while many of the King's former *Landsknechte*, including those led by the mercenary captain Joseph van Munden, traveled to Riga to enlist with the Livonians. As this example suggests, it was not uncommon for mercenaries to drift from one warzone to the next as they sought to remain employed following the conclusion of a campaign. Renner also reports the arrival in Riga of fifty cavalry at around the same time (July 20), and he mentions that these men had traveled to Livonia in search of

⁴⁹² *Henning*, 51-2.

⁴⁹³ Renner estimated that the Tsar's raiders suffered the loss of four thousand Tatar and two thousand Russian cavalry over the winter of 1558-9. Friesner's report to Duke Johan gives the much lower figure of fifteen hundred dead from an initial force of seven thousand, compared to just 135 dead German troops in the same period. Neither Renner nor Friesner mentions civilian casualties, which were presumably high. Although Renner's number is likely exaggerated, it is of interest in that it may give some rough indication of the ethnic composition of the Muscovite cavalry operating in Livonia at this time (i.e. two thirds Tatars and one third Russians). *Renner*, 98.; *QU*, III, 103 and 120. An earlier estimate of the strength of Ivan's initial invasion force is given in *QU*, II, 98.

⁴⁹⁴ This campaign is described in *QU*, III, 203-7. It had been suggested the previous summer that Münchhausen might travel to Germany in person to recruit soldiers. *QU*, II, 284.

employment at their own expense (“*up ohren eigen kosten*”) and that they were hired by the Livonian *Landmeister*.⁴⁹⁵ On August 7, 150 *Landsknechte* arrived under similar circumstances.

Clearly, there were various means of enlistment, with some men traveling to Livonia after securing promise of employment from Livonian recruiters operating in Germany, while others made the journey to conflict zones on their own initiative and independently sought out employment upon arrival. Whatever their travel arrangements, the movements of these men were a matter of concern to the regions’ powers, who endeavoured to keep track of how many troops were being hired by their rivals. At the same time that *Hauptmann* van Munden’s *Landsknechte* and the other mercenaries were arriving in Livonia – and being reported on by agents of the Swedes – a small band of German captives who had escaped the Muscovites and made their way back to Estonia disclosed that Ivan the Terrible was anxious about the quantity of German soldiers that the Livonians were hiring while he was under attack from the Tatars to the south.⁴⁹⁶ For their part, the Livonians feared that the Tsar might use his vast wealth to hire an army of professional mercenaries with which to conquer Livonia.⁴⁹⁷ They also had concerns about the German soldiers arriving in their own lands, who, although much needed, constituted a significant financial burden.⁴⁹⁸

After arriving in Livonia or being recalled to service if they were already in the region, the mercenaries were gathered at a muster point, where they were assigned to a *Fähnlein* (company) and sorted into *Rotten* (squads). In Livonia, this took place in one of the large cities, Riga or Reval, to which the men were shipped from Germany. The *Landsknechte* who served in Livonia were organized in much the same manner as elsewhere in Europe.⁴⁹⁹ A *Landsknecht Fähnlein* theoretically consisted of three to four hundred men – although, in practice, this number was often considerably lower due to casualties and desertion – and was subdivided into

⁴⁹⁵ Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 247.

⁴⁹⁶ “*De seden, dat de grotforste tor Moscow in sorgen stunde, darumb dat so vele Dudesch krigs folk in Liflant queme und ohme de Tartern sterk im lande legen.*” Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 250.

⁴⁹⁷ *QU*, I, 39. In April of 1559, Duke Albrecht von Mecklenburg reported to the Reichstag that the Tsar had already secured the services of “*Englische und Teutsche Arctarey Meister und kriegsleite.*” *QU*, III, 161-6.

⁴⁹⁸ “*Die knecht unnd etzliche soldt ruters wolten Ihr hinterstellige besoldung haben...*” *QU*, IV, 136.

⁴⁹⁹ Senning, *Beiträge*, 64.

ten-man *Rotten* (“squads”).⁵⁰⁰ In Reval, the size of the *Fähnlein* seems to have ranged from 112 to 280 men, which cost an average of 11,000 marks to pay every six months.⁵⁰¹ In the *Munsterrollen* of the Revalian *Landsknechte* from the year 1574, nearly all of the *Rotten* consisted of just eight men each, although some had as few as six and some as many as ten.⁵⁰² The total number of *Rotten* active in the city at any time ranged from 14 to 35. Each *Fähnlein* was commanded by a *Hauptmann* (“captain”) and his staff of supporting officers. A *Landsknecht Regiment* consisted of between ten and twenty *Fähnlein*, depending on the era and the locale, but such large forces did not exist in Livonia, so the *Fähnlein* usually remained the highest organizational unit used in the region. As was common throughout Europe, higher ranking officers were usually of noble background, and members of the aristocracy could expect more pay and a greater likelihood of early promotion.⁵⁰³ The portion of noblemen serving amongst the mercenary infantry active in Livonia was nowhere near the one quarter originally hoped for by Emperor Maximilian when he raised the first regiments of *Landsknechte* in the late fifteenth century, but one does invariably find at least a smattering of noble names among the troops (e.g. Üxküll, Unger, Hastfer, etc.).⁵⁰⁴ It is rare for the family name of a man of common background to be given, with the standard designation being the soldier’s first name and city of origin (e.g. Hans von Frankfordt, serving in the 32nd *Rotte* stationed in Reval in December 1574).⁵⁰⁵ The surviving lists of men stationed in Reval at various stages in the war reveal that, although the troops in Livonia and Estonia were mostly recruited in northern Germany, they originated from all over the German lands (and, indeed, individual *Rotten* often contained men from many cities and regions).⁵⁰⁶ In lieu of family names, nicknames were fairly common, and one sometimes finds the same popular cognomen

⁵⁰⁰ The *fänikor* of the Swedish army were very similar, being modeled on the German prototype, which was in turn inspired by the Swiss. The average size of the *Landsknecht Regiment*, the Swiss *Haufen*, and the Spanish *tercio* all declined over the course of the sixteenth century as a result of attrition caused by near constant warfare. Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 48 and 78.

⁵⁰¹ Schliemann, “Revaler Landsknechte,” 229.

⁵⁰² TLA B.e.8.1-6 and 31-41.

⁵⁰³ *QU*, I, 130-1 and 169-72. Compare Grimmelshausen’s famous allegory of the Tree of Battle, whose trunk was “greased with all manner of ointments and curious soap of disfavour, so that no man save of noble birth could scale it, in spite of courage and skill and knowledge, God knows how clever he might be.” Hans Jakob Christoph von Grimmelshausen, *The Adventures of Simplicissimus: being the description of the life of a vagabond named Melchior Sternfels von Fechshaim* (London: William Heinemann, 1912), 55.

⁵⁰⁴ Schliemann, “Revaler Landsknechte,” 230.

⁵⁰⁵ TLA B.e.8.39.

⁵⁰⁶ This does not seem to have changed as the war progressed, at least based on a comparison of the *Landsknechte* stationed in the city in 1560 and 1574-75. TLA B.e.5.17-39 and TLA B.e.8.1-150.

applied to multiple different men (e.g. there was a Hermann “Jungblut” serving in the 27th *Rotte* stationed in Reval in December 1574 and also a “Jungeblut” von Köln serving in the 7th *Rotte* the following the year).⁵⁰⁷

The infantry wielded a variety of weapons, but the two most important were the pike and the arquebus, with the portion of men armed with firearms increasing over time.⁵⁰⁸ A certain number of the soldiers were veteran *Doppelsöldner*, so-called for being paid double the salary of a normal trooper, because of their superior experience, their willingness to risk fighting in the front ranks in return for higher pay, or because of their facility with specialized weaponry such as halberds, glaves, and greatswords (called “*Zweihänder*” or “*Bidenhänder*”).⁵⁰⁹ The *Doppelsöldner* were also frequently employed in the *Trabant* (literally “satellite”), the small and elite bodyguard to which high-ranking officers were entitled.⁵¹⁰ It was also standard practice to pay flag bearers and drummers a double wage. At the outset of the war, the Livonian Order had a severe shortage of arquebuses (only fifty), but this number was rapidly increased by contributions from the cities. A report sent by the attentive Dr. Friesner to Duke Johan in October of 1558 records that Gotthard Kettler’s forces consisted of “*uber 7000 knecht 10000 bauern und 2000 pferde*” and that he had received 250 horses, 350 arquebusiers, and four falconets from the city of Reval alone.⁵¹¹ In February, Riga had also sent 300 men to the *Landmeister*, of whom one third were arquebusiers.⁵¹² As the war progressed, the authorities increasingly prioritized troops armed with firearms, putting many of the costly *Doppelsöldner* on leave in a bid to replace them with more arquebusiers.⁵¹³ The incessant raiding and frequent sieges that characterized the war may have contributed to this preference; gunmen were more

⁵⁰⁷ TLA B.e.8.38 and B.e.8.65.

⁵⁰⁸ Gerhard Quaas, *Das Handwerk der Landsknechte. Waffen und Bewaffnung zwischen 1500 und 1600* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1997), 138-58. By the 1570s, the typical *Fähnlein* consisted of two hundred men armed with firearms and another one to two hundred armed with pikes. Fiedler, *Kriegswesen und Kriegführung*, 66.; Eugen von Frauenholz, *Das Heerwesen in der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1938), vol. ii, 63.

⁵⁰⁹ A thorough treatment of the types of armaments employed by the *Landsknechte* and the methods of their use may be found in Georg Ortenburg, *Waffe und Waffengebrauch im Zeitalter der Landsknechte* (Koblenz: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1984).

⁵¹⁰ The number of *Trabanten* employed to guard the *Oberst* depended on his wealth, but eight was the classic number.

⁵¹¹ *QU*, I, 270.

⁵¹² *MLA*, IV, 104. By the 1570s,

⁵¹³ *Briefe*, I, 139-40.

useful in defending fortified positions and could shoot Russian and Tatar light cavalry that the heavily armed *Doppelsöldner* could not catch.⁵¹⁴

After being sorted, the recruits took part in a muster parade, in which they passed between two long ranks of soldiers and then through an arch consisting of two halberds supporting a horizontal pike, at which point they were counted by the paymaster who also assessed whether they were sound of body and mind. Finally, the men formed a circle around their commanding officer for the *Verlesung*, the ceremonial reading of the articles that governed their conduct and stipulated their rights.⁵¹⁵ The mercenaries then swore oaths to uphold their articles and to remain loyal to the potentate in whose army they happened to be serving. Of even greater importance than the oath of loyalty sworn to their employer were the oaths that bound the *Landsknechte* to one another, the breaking of which almost invariably resulted in bloody retribution, either through the honour-based duelling culture that was pervasive amongst the men or by means a court-martial presided over by the *Profos* (“Provost” – the officer in charge of discipline). These oaths were periodically renewed, usually every six months. In one such ceremony, which took place at Riga on June 8, 1558, the men promised to obey their officers, to remain loyal, and not to desert; and the obligations of their employers and terms of their pay were also renewed.⁵¹⁶ Articles for the Revalian *Landsknechte* from the year 1561 contain regulations for conduct and pay, stipulating that the soldiers were to be paid 4 gulden on the 14th of the month, consistent with the rate of pay offered three years before.⁵¹⁷ Although the sheer numbers of men were generally lower, the articles of the *Landsknechte* serving in the eastern Baltic were like those current elsewhere in Europe.

Early modern soldiering was a dangerous and unforgiving occupation, and its rewards were unpredictable in an era when employers frequently failed to deliver the pay that they had promised. Yet, for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the German world produced a surplus of soldiers. Why did so many enlist, and how financially attractive was

⁵¹⁴ This was something the Russians themselves had discovered only a few years before, when they made devastatingly effective use of the newly formed *streltsy* in their victorious campaigns against the focires of Kazan and Astrakhan, which were overwhelmingly comprised of mounted archers.

⁵¹⁵ Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 72-86.; Burschel, *Söldner*, 115-29.

⁵¹⁶ *QU*, I, 169-72 and 260-3.

⁵¹⁷ TLA B.e.6.18-21 and 5.

mercenaryism? Several factors must be taken into account when comparing the wages of soldiers with those of civilians, such as the former's far greater risk of suffering injury or death, the often-sporadic nature of military employment, the expectation of plunder, and the frequency with which the mercenaries' employers failed to deliver the stipulated wages. Nonetheless, assuming it was actually paid, a theoretical income of 48 gulden a year – amply supplemented, if Fortune smiled, by the fruits of plunder – placed even the ordinary *Landsknecht* in the same income bracket as a skilled craftsman and was about twice the wage of an agricultural labourer in most parts of Germany.⁵¹⁸ While obviously not comparable to the wealth of a successful merchant or affluent nobleman, the elite *Doppelsöldner*'s hypothetical wage of nearly a hundred gulden a year would have been far in excess of most craftsmen or labourers of the day. Soldiers serving in a *Landsknecht* company could also expect better pay than other less professional men tasked with military duties. In Reval, for example, both the *Landsknechte* and local burghers participated in municipal guard duty, and both were overseen by a *Wachtmeister* (a rank that can be translated variously as “sergeant” or “constable” or more literally as “watchmaster” or “guardmaster”). However, the *Wachtmeister* appointed by the city council to command the burghers serving in the town watch received a mere quarter of the pay afforded to the *Wachtmeister* of the professional mercenaries.

Pay and plunder were not the only reasons for enlisting. Many of early modern Europe's wars were long by modern standards, and some were exceptionally destructive to civilian societies; conflicts like the Livonian War, the Dutch Revolts, and the Thirty Years' War brought about the mass brutalization of rural populations over the course of entire generations. For those living within a warzone, enlisting could be a safer option than civilian life, and some men no doubt took up soldiering because it was better to join one of the predatory armed groups roaming the countryside than to be at their mercy.⁵¹⁹ Many Livonians, peasants and nobles alike, found themselves in this situation in the decades after 1558. Mercenary service in a foreign land could also be a means of escape from a difficult situation in one's own country. A portion of the Scottish mercenaries who joined Archibald Ruthven's expedition to Estonia in

⁵¹⁸ Burschel, *Söldner*, 173.; Hans-Michael Möller, *Das Regiment der Landsknechte: Untersuchungen zu Verfassung, Recht und Selbstverständnis in deutschen Söldnerheeren des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1976), 77-80.

⁵¹⁹ This is essentially the scenario in which the eponymous protagonist of Grimmelshausen's *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch* finds himself.

1573-74, for example, were former supporters of Queen Mary in search of an exit strategy in the wake of the Marian Civil War. In some regions, temporary employment abroad as a mercenary was a social norm amongst young men, as in Switzerland and other parts of Europe that became known for exporting soldiers to fight in other nations' wars. Especially during periods of prolonged conflict, when the armies formed mobile communities of substantial size, many career soldiers were simply born into a life of itinerant mercenarism, sons of soldiers who spent their childhoods in the *Tross* and took up their fathers' profession when they came of age. Compared to other types of fighting, mercenarism offered a high degree of choice in terms of when and where the men fought and considerable ability to negotiate the conditions of that service, but the context under which the initial decision to become a mercenary was made varied greatly depending on the individual's circumstances. The mercenaries fighting in Livonia in the latter half of the sixteenth century certainly included career soldiers who had traveled to the region in hope of pay and plunder, but also noblemen in search of adventure, expatriates escaping conflict or persecution in their own lands, and, increasingly, Livonians who saw paid military service in the employ of one or other of the foreign powers fighting over their homeland as a means of survival.

Terminating the service of troops who could no longer be paid or were no longer needed could be as complex and delicate a process as hiring them. Of prime importance to the erstwhile employer was that the discharged soldiers did not reenlist in the service of one of his enemies, turn to banditry, or otherwise cause undesirable mayhem. For the mercenaries, the most significant concerns were that they receive any pay that was still owed them, that they find a new patron as quickly as possible, and, since most of them had traveled to Livonia from overseas, that they secure a safe and convenient means of transport out of the warzone. Immediate reenlistment, whether in the same region or further afield, was fairly common. For example, in January of 1560, mercenary horsemen ("*soltruiter*") in the service of the Livonian Order began to desert after having gone unpaid for too long, with some traveling to Germany and others to Reval to seek alternative employment.⁵²⁰ Since this meant giving up the money that was still owed them, it was no doubt a difficult decision, made only when they had

⁵²⁰ Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 281.

completely abandoned hope of receiving their pay and decided to cut their losses. Salomon Henning provides some details of the circumstances of these men's departure.

One tried most diligently and earnestly to find any possible means of retaining the services of the mercenary cavalry and other German soldiers from abroad until they could be paid and mollified with money from the empire and with some funds expected from Sweden in return for certain guarantees of repayment mentioned above. When they realized that nothing was forthcoming from either of these two sources, some of them withdrew with flags furled and went elsewhere, thus bringing new calamities upon the greatly beset fatherland.⁵²¹

In this instance, as Henning reports, the Livonian Order would have liked to keep these badly needed troops in its service but simply lacked the funds to do so, a ubiquitous dilemma in early modern warfare. In the fifteenth century, fighting men had sometimes been forbidden from departing the country by ship if the authorities believed that their presence might later be required for defensive purposes.⁵²² Although this practice was not common during the Livonian War, when the most pressing issue was paying the men who were already in the region rather than keeping them there, discharged men were technically only allowed to leave the country after they had been given leave by their *Hauptmann* and had received a passport from the authorities.⁵²³ In September of 1560, Duke Christoph discharged about 150 of the Prussian horsemen in his service because he lacked the funds to continue paying them, and we learn that “some of them sold their horses and armour and left Livonia by ship, embarking at Riga,” but most “left by land, travelling through Courland and causing much distress to the peasants” (“*deden den buren groten schaden under wegen*”).⁵²⁴ Incidents like this demonstrate that responses to the termination of a contract varied even among men of the same *Fähnlein*, with some liquidating their military assets (horses and gear) on the completion of their service and departing peacefully by ship, while others took the opportunity to pillage the lands of their former employer and abuse the local folk.

⁵²¹ Henning, 59-60.

⁵²² In practice, there was not much that local town authorities could do to restrict the movement of mercenaries (other than to hire them themselves), even when the Livonian Order instructed them to do so, and there is no evidence that they actually took such radical measures as preventing ships from departing with soldiers onboard. Kreem, “The Business of War,” 32 and 38.

⁵²³ Senning, *Beiträge*, 64.

⁵²⁴ Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 245. It is unclear whether these were the Black Riders who had arrived in February or a different group who had been in the country since the previous year.

Having learned from such experiences, the Livonian authorities subsequently became more adept at limiting the damage that their former mercenaries could inflict, particularly when they were to be discharged without having received the pay that they were rightfully owed. In the winter of 1560, Gotthard Kettler turned over several of his castles to the Lithuanians;⁵²⁵ the *Landsknechte* who had been garrisoning these strongholds on behalf of the Livonian Order were discharged without pay and forced to leave the country in small groups to prevent them from banding together and causing trouble by demanding reparations (or taking them by force from the Order's subjects).⁵²⁶ The same month that Duke Christoph released his cavalry, many of the *Landsknechte* whom Duke Magnus had brought with him from Denmark left his service and reenlisted at Reval. Movement between employers was a frequent occurrence throughout the course of the war, with mercenaries gravitating to those who could pay them at the time. Because war taxes were raised irregularly and many of the factions in the conflict were reliant on loans from outside powers to pay their troops, the strength of the potentates engaged in the struggle waxed and waned along with their ability to pay the fighting men, who invariably followed the money.

A rarer but more serious occurrence than mere desertion or dismissal was the defection of unpaid or discharged troops to the enemy, a scenario that could range from mercenaries simply entering the service of a rival employer following the termination of their employment to sudden changes of allegiance in the midst of a conflict. The authorities had little control over what their former soldiers did once they had been released from their service and the conditions of their articles were no longer in effect, but it was common to require that discharged mercenaries sign oaths promising not to take up arms against their previous employers in the future, either in the service of an enemy power or on their own accord as

⁵²⁵ Kettler was chronically short of money with which to pay his troops in the months leading up to this decision. In August, he had written to Mikołaj Radziwiłł asking for a loan for this purpose. "*Et ne mora ulla in hoc sit, amplius iterum quam fraterne officiose et amanter petimus ut secretarius noster Brunnovius quam citissime ad nos cum promisse et diu spectata pecunia remittatur. Postulat enim necessitas ne residuum tempus frustra consumatur quod fieri si Mercenarius miles ex difficultate rei numariae contra hostem perducere non posset.*" *QU*, V, 278.

⁵²⁶ "*Und oft de knechte wol gerne etwas understanden, so konden se doch nicht by einander kamen, sondern mosten rotsweise uth dem lande tehn.*" Hausmann further notes, "*Nur auf der rechten Landstrasse und nicht stärker als in halben Rotten dürfen sie ziehen.*" Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 337.

bandits or renegades.⁵²⁷ The authorities not only required such promises of their own released mercenaries but also of captured enemy soldiers, who were sometimes permitted to go free provided that they left the country or did not return to active duty. The Russians, for example, were in the habit of making lists of men who had surrendered to them on the understanding that they would be free to leave the country but would face a gruesome execution if they were later recaptured after having returned to the service of the Tsar's enemies. Following the Russian capture of Fellin, in August of 1560, the defeated garrison was released, except for an unfortunate "*Dorptisch domher*" who had been taken prisoner by the Russians on a previous occasion and was put to death in excruciating fashion ("*derhalven he tor stunt gegeisselt, dar na ainem bom gehangen wort und doth geschaten*").⁵²⁸ Such threats and demonstrations seem to have been quite effective at times. For example, the Livonian Order tried to reenlist the *Landsknechte* who had left Dorpat after the city's fall, but most refused on account of having sworn to the Russians that they would leave the country.⁵²⁹ While it is impossible to generalize about whether such promises were adhered to out of a sense of honour or merely from fear of reprisals, there are instances in which mercenaries seem to have taken their oaths seriously (or at least to have claimed to do so in order to gain negotiative leverage), such as when some of the *Landsknechte* holding the citadel of Reval during the winter of 1558 argued that they should not be punished for refusing to hand over the castle to the Livonian Order because they had previously sworn loyalty to the King of Denmark.⁵³⁰ Given that the Livonian War was a time of extremely fluid loyalties, with entire cities and counties changing hands from one year to the next, the fact that mercenaries sometimes honoured and sometimes reneged on their promises hardly sets them apart from any other class of people.

⁵²⁷ A number of these documents survive in Tallinn from the years 1609-1612, signed by dismissed soldiers who promised not to fight against the Swedish Crown or the city of Reval in the future. TLA B.e.5.154-82.

⁵²⁸ Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 328.

⁵²⁹ The *Landsknechte* "proceeded to Riga and Reval but were forbidden on pain of death from joining the master. Whenever the Russians captured a fortress and allowed the Germans to leave, they first made a list of all the names. If these same Germans were captured later, they died." Renner, 67. Later, the Russians "let sixteen Germans return to Livonia, but required of them a solemn oath not to take up arms against the Russians." Renner, 101.

⁵³⁰ At the same time, the German nobleman Dietrich Behr, who was holed up in the castle with those *Landsknechte* who had chosen to remain loyal to the Danes, wrote to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg to explain why he now considered himself to be a Danish subject. *QU*, III, 54-6. The war articles issued by the Archbishop of Riga in December of 1558 also mention the swearing of solemn oaths of loyalty. *QU*, I, 290-6.

6.3 The Costs of Mercenary Warfare

For mercenaries, the initial enlistment fee and the potential for plunder were often more enticing than the questionable promise of future pay.⁵³¹ Military enterprisers and mercenary captains required significant amounts of cash up front, both to induce men to enlist and because they knew that their bargaining power could decrease as the campaign proceeded, making it increasingly likely that their employers would default (a frequent occurrence during the Livonian War).⁵³² Initially, the Livonian Order paid mercenary troopers 4 gulden per month, officers of noble birth 6 gulden per month, and captains 40 gulden per month.⁵³³ The Order also promised a pension to men who could no longer fight due to injury and to ransom those captured by the enemy.⁵³⁴ In early 1558, because the Order itself had just fifty arquebuses (*Hakenschützen*), it offered double pay to mercenaries who provided their own firearms.⁵³⁵ However, pay often diminished or disappeared as the conflict progressed and the Livonians ran out of money; much of the story of the war is one of the authorities attempting to stave off desertion and mutiny until they could raise the funds needed to pay their armies.⁵³⁶

Correspondences mention the costs of the mercenaries and other soldiers in a variety of contexts: complaints about the economic burden placed on local communities and commanders as they struggled to pay the troops; demands for pay made by the mercenaries themselves; reports of mutinies and pillaging by unpaid soldiers; Livonian requests for loans or financial aid from foreign powers (the Empire, the Swedes, the Lithuanians, and the Poles); and other economic measures undertaken in order to keep their men in the field. These issues plagued the Livonians from the outset of the war, indicating a degree of economic as well as military unpreparedness on the part of the Confederation. By March 3, 1558, just two months into the war, the mayor and council of Riga were complaining that the German mercenaries financed by the city had already cost so much money that the burghers would no longer pay them, and

⁵³¹ Tallett, *War and Society*, 96.

⁵³² Parrott, *The Business of War*, 78.

⁵³³ *QU*, I, 19 and 130-1.; *QU*, II, 210-1.; These numbers are largely in keeping with those elsewhere in German-speaking Europe. Hans von Zwiedeneck-Südenhorst, *Kriegsbilder der deutschen Landsknecht* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1883), 49-50.

⁵³⁴ *QU*, I, 169-72.

⁵³⁵ *QU*, I, 44, 115, and 126.

⁵³⁶ By the spring of 1560, Kettler could no longer afford to pay the cavalry and could give the *Landsknechte* only 2 gulden and the arquebusiers only 1. The mercenary captain Balthasar Fürstenberg alone was owed 2,000 thalers. Urban, *Bayonets for Hire*, 60.

the council needed the considerable sum of 15,000 thalers.⁵³⁷ Later that year, in October, Gotthard Kettler set out from Wolmar with six companies of *Landsknechte* and fifteen hundred horsemen, and, even while actively campaigning, the most pressing issue discussed in his correspondences with Wilhelm von Fürstenberg was the urgent need to pay these men.⁵³⁸ Collectively, Livonia was wealthy, especially when compared to less densely populated neighbouring parts of northeastern Europe, but the fragmented nature of the Confederation and the often competing interests of its various rulers, provinces, cities, and estates made pooling financial resources for a unified war effort challenging. Each of the various parts of the Confederation – the bishoprics, the cities, and the Livonian Order – had its own systems of finance and recruitment, and these varied in sophistication and effectiveness. No Baltic polity of the late sixteenth century was especially well-equipped to meet the economic challenges posed by the era’s increasingly monetized warfare, but the politically diffuse and institutionally medieval Livonian Confederation was, perhaps, especially ill-prepared.

The authorities had a variety of means, each fraught with its own dangers and difficulties, by which they attempted to raise the money needed to pay their troops before their funds were exhausted and their armies mutinied, defected, or disintegrated. One of the most common approaches was to secure loans from overseas. As early as the summer of 1558, the Livonian Order was considering the possibility of borrowing money from the Swedes in order to finance their war effort.⁵³⁹ Correspondences between the Order, the King of Sweden, and the Duke of Finland indicate that these efforts were ongoing for some time.⁵⁴⁰ Gotthard Kettler was also in regular contact with King Sigismund Augustus of Poland and a number of Lithuanian magnates, who, while conveying their friendship, explained that they were unable to offer the Order a loan and suggested that Kettler continue to seek funding from Stockholm instead.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁷ The burghers also thought that the other estates should be contributing more to the costs of paying the *Landsknechte*, and they wanted to send some of the artillery home because the city already had enough. By June, the citizenry had still not provided the money needed by the council with which to pay the soldiers. The mayor and council recommended to the Livonian Order that 4,000 marks be given to the mercenary Captain Wolf Singehoff. *Briefe*, I, 62-4 and 222-3.

⁵³⁸ *QU*, I, 274-7.

⁵³⁹ On June 23, 1558, Wilhelm von Fürstenberg wrote to Duke Johan of Finland to request a massive loan of 200,000 thalers with which to pay the mercenaries, purchase supplies, and hire more men from Germany. *QU*, II, 298-300. He requested financial aid again in the fall. *QU*, III, 27-32.

⁵⁴⁰ On October 16, 1559, for example, Gotthard Kettler wrote to King Gustav to request a loan. *QU*, III, 302-4.

⁵⁴¹ “*Consulit ut mutuo accipiatur aliqua pecuniae summa a rege Swetiae...*” *QU*, V, 8-9.

Negotiations such as these underscore that the Livonians' wartime reliance on foreign assistance was financial as well as military; it was not only their dependence on reinforcements from abroad but also their need for foreign capital to pay the troops they already had that allowed neighbouring powers to gain leverage over local authorities and insert themselves into Livonian affairs. Indeed, an even more extreme solution than going into debt was to give territory into the safekeeping of a friendly foreign power who would then be responsible for the costs of defending it from a mutual enemy. This was the motivation behind Kettler's decision to hand over many of the castles of southern Livonia to Sigismund Augustus in the winter of 1560, after which these fortresses' expensive mercenary garrisons were immediately discharged and replaced by Lithuanian troops. Although ceding territory to Lithuania was far from ideal, Kettler and other pro-Polish officers of the Livonian Order certainly saw it as preferable to having their lands conquered by the Russians, which, given the Livonians' chronic inability to pay their troops and the losses that they had already suffered, was the only likely alternative outcome. An added benefit of Kettler's plan was the possibility that the acquisition of Livonian territory could drag the powerful Lithuanians into the fight against Russia, which indeed proved to be the case.

By 1560, at the same time that they were negotiating with the Swedes, Danes, Lithuanians, and Poles, the Livonians had begun to implement a number of internal economic and strategic measures aimed at holding their army together. In some cases, especially expensive troops like Duke Christoph's elite Prussian cavalry simply had to be dismissed.⁵⁴² Promises of imminent pay were made increasingly frequently, both to the local authorities of the towns where the mercenaries were billeted and to the mercenaries themselves. A letter sent by Kettler on September 14 to the troops stationed in Reval is a typical example, promising payment of the wages they were owed and offering them a house in the city as a surety.⁵⁴³ Troops could also be dispersed to ensure that a concentration of men would not overburden a particular locale and to prevent them from banding together to demand their pay or take it by force. In the spring of 1560, for example, neither the cavalry nor the *Landsknechte* could be paid due to lack of funds,

⁵⁴² Needless to say, dismissing highly skilled and much-needed soldiers in order to save money should not be seen as an administrative innovation or financial solution to the Livonians' fiscal-military conundrum. Rather, it was a product of their failure to come up with such a solution.

⁵⁴³ *QU*, V, 339-40.

so the Order scattered them to various districts where the local burghers and nobles had to support them.⁵⁴⁴ The lands of the peasants had already been devastated by the war, and there was a general shortage of goods throughout the country because money that would normally have been spent on imports was instead being given over to the soldiers.⁵⁴⁵ However, while something of an expedient financial measure, there were obvious military disadvantages to garrisoning the soldiers in small groups around the country. Mercenary units posted to isolated villages and castles were forced to live off the land, which effectively meant robbing local populations, and the men were also generally too few in number to be a useful deterrent against the raids of the Russians and Tatars. As the aggressors, the Tsar's commanders could concentrate their forces and attack where they wished with little fear of retaliation from scattered units that were individually too weak to resist but, had they been assembled, would have constituted a formidable army.⁵⁴⁶ The result was that soldiers often burdened and molested local populations while doing little to protect them, a situation which soon became the source of popular discontent with the Livonian authorities (and, more generally, of complaints by the native peasantry against the ruling German minority), contributing to the defections and revolts of 1560 and 1561.

As well as solutions of a more situational and strategic nature, such as requesting loans and dispersing troops, macroeconomic policies were enacted to fund the war effort. In August of 1559, Livonian emissaries led by Jorgen Syburg, castellan of Düneburg, with the support of Duke Johann Albrecht von Mecklenburg, petitioned the *Reichstag* for financial assistance, with the result that the electors and estates ("*Churfürsten, fürsten und Stende*") agreed to raise a special tax of 100,000 gulden to aid the Livonians in the defense of their country against Moscow ("*die Christenliche Lande der orther gegen dem Muscouiter zuerhalten*").⁵⁴⁷ A few weeks before, on July 25, the Livonians had convened a *Landtag* of their own, at which a number of measures were passed to better organize the Livonian forces and provide funds to

⁵⁴⁴ A list of where some of the forces were stationed may be found in *QU*, IV, 297.

⁵⁴⁵ *Renner*, 154.

⁵⁴⁶ Letters sent by local commanders during the early stages of the war often lament that there simply weren't enough men to counter-attack the Russians. *QU*, I, 172-6.; *QU*, II, 139-40.

⁵⁴⁷ *QU*, III, 249-51. Gotthard Kettler was the embassy's original leader, but he was recalled so that he could be present for the critical negotiations at Wilna. *MLA*, V, 565-583. The following year, the estates approved a further contribution of 200,000 gulden to be raised for the defense of Livonia. However, neither this sum nor the initial 100,000 was ever actually collected, and the leaders of the Empire continued to protest Russia's invasion while taking no concrete action to oppose it. Lavery, *Germany's Northern Challenge*, 17.

keep them in the field. It was agreed that the taxes contributed by the various cities and dioceses were to be divided between the Archbishop of Riga and the *Landmeister*, military commanders were to be reimbursed for losses and expenses incurred while campaigning, a third of the peasants should be enlisted and placed in separate companies under the command of *Landsknechte* who spoke their language (“*van den landtknechten, de de sprake konnen, regeret werden*”), fortresses should be sufficiently garrisoned, and taxes must be raised across the land to pay for the war effort.⁵⁴⁸ (It was not a peculiarity of Livonia, but rather the normal state of affairs in the sixteenth-century German-speaking world, that extraordinary taxes had to be passed by a representative assembly of the *Land* and were generally granted by the estates only in times of military necessity.⁵⁴⁹) The receipt of some of these taxes is mentioned in a letter sent to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg on August 29, and a list of the Order’s officers from Courland along with the amount of taxes they had delivered is provided in a document dated two days later.⁵⁵⁰ Significantly, several of the provisions agreed upon at the *Landtag* were specifically intended to lessen the burden on the common people, both from avaricious landlords who may have intended to pay their own contributions by extracting them from their peasants and from the troops who were to be kept properly supplied and thus prevented from pillaging. This seems to reflect a tacit recognition that the peasants had already suffered the most from the depredations of the Russians and that the strain placed upon them by the soldiers’ heavy-handed requisitioning of supplies was causing widespread unrest.

In addition to taxation, currency reforms were undertaken in January of 1560, but these efforts were less effective and resulted in immediate inflation and widespread market confusion.⁵⁵¹ For example, the Rigan mark was devalued from 70 per Portuguese gold piece to 80, already

⁵⁴⁸ Nobles and others who had peasants (“*edelman, ock andere, so under sich buren hebben*”) were expected to pay two marks for each of their farms, which were to be paid from the landlords’ own funds and not taken from the peasants. Only half that rate had to be paid for farms that had already been destroyed by the Russians. The peasants were to pay one mark for the head of the farm, half a mark for his wife, and one farthing for anyone else on the farm (discounting children under the age of twelve). The *Landsknechte* themselves had to pay ten marks for every hundred they received, on account of their yearly income and professional privileges. (“*De landtknechte schollen by orem geweten van wegen orer jarlichen inkumpst und geneth, so se van oren emptern hebben, van 100 marken 10 geven.*”) Special rates were assessed for people of different status and profession – those with no fixed abode, innkeepers, inhabitants of towns and villages, etc. Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 248-9.

⁵⁴⁹ North, “Finances and Power,” 149.

⁵⁵⁰ *QU*, III, 266-7 and 273-8.

⁵⁵¹ Renner opined that the peasants suffered most from the currency re-evaluations (“*und ging meist aver de armen buren*”). Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 281.

down from 60 less than two years before (October of 1558), but many merchants simply raised prices or continued trading at the old rates.⁵⁵² Letters from Gotthard Kettler to the Reval City Council, the mercenaries stationed in the city, and the mint master indicate that the leaders of the Livonian Confederation were still struggling to implement these changes, with the aim of minting more coins with which to pay their soldiers and repay their loans, as late as mid-July.⁵⁵³ The introduction of new taxes and economic policies – while haphazard, unpopular, and ultimately insufficient – does show a willingness on the part of the Livonian authorities to undertake a variety of measures to meet the escalating costs of the war. Their efforts also support the central premise of the military revolution paradigm, that the expense of employing armies was a driving force behind the centralization and reform of early modern states' fiscal apparatuses; in this case, it may be observed both that the costs of the war were the clear impetus for a number of centrally planned economic reforms and that the failure to adopt these policies quickly or completely enough led to the collapse of the Confederation. Needless to say, the question of what the long term administrative, political, and economic consequences of these changes might have been had Livonia survived the war with her independence intact must remain speculative in light of the partitioning of the country the following year.

Although their situation was particularly dire, the Livonians were not the only ones who struggled to meet the monetary demands of keeping an army in the field. Despite administrative advances made under the Vasa kings and the use of cheaper national troops in conjunction with more expensive professional mercenaries, Sweden was also chronically short of funds during this period. This had serious consequences for Stockholm's war effort on both the domestic front, against the Danes, and in the Estonian theatre, against the Russians, Duke Magnus, and the anti-Swedish elements among the *Hofleute*.⁵⁵⁴ In the Livonian theatre, insufficient pay was a significant factor in the defection, in 1565, of the Baltic German cavalry to the service of Sweden's regional rivals, as well as in Klaus Kursell's mutiny of 1570-1, and

⁵⁵² *QU*, III, 39.; Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 281. See table of exchange rates on page 313.

⁵⁵³ *QU*, V, 195-6.

⁵⁵⁴ The Swedes also benefitted from their rivals' depleted war chests, for example in 1561, when the Livonian Order's inability to pay the soldiers stationed in Reval was a significant factor in the city's decision to seek protection from King Erik, and, during the Northern Seven Years' War of a few years later, when the Danes' northward push into Scandinavia ultimately faltered due to a lack of funds with which to pay their German mercenaries. Jensen, *Danmarks Konflikt med Sverige*, 280-6.

in the troubles with Archibald Ruthven's Scottish mercenaries in 1573-4.⁵⁵⁵ The Swedes' difficulties with the unruly *Hofleute* escalated over the early 1560s before taking a serious turn in late April of 1565, when Baltic German horsemen to whom they owed money slaughtered the Swedish garrison at Pernau after stealing the keys to the town gates and letting a second group of Livonian cavalry from the diocese of Riga into the city.⁵⁵⁶ These men were led by Caspar von Oldenbockum, the young officer of the now defunct Livonian Order who had earlier distinguished himself against the Russians in the defense of Weissenstein, and were supported by horsemen from Courland and Riga loyal to Gotthard Kettler and the Poles. While there may also have been political motives for their betrayal of their Swedish employers, the immediate cause seems to have been the pay that they were owed. Indeed, five years earlier, Kettler himself had also been troubled by the inconstancy of these marauding banners of cavalry when many of them had deserted the Livonian Order (their rightful liege) and thrown in their lot with Duke Magnus, also in a dispute over pay.⁵⁵⁷ In both cases, the consequences were dire, as the defection of the Livonian mercenary cavalry from Kettler to Duke Magnus in 1560 essentially cost the Order the province of Wiek and proved a major distraction at a time when the Livonians needed to devote all of their attention to fighting the Russians, while their incessant pillaging and their participation in the Russian sieges of Reval were serious setbacks for the Swedes in Estonia. For all their political maneuvering, the *Hofleute* were like any other early modern soldiers in that they went unpaid at their masters' peril.

The Swedes' finances reached a nadir in the 1570s, when, in the wake of the Northern Seven Years' War, Stockholm's economic position was weakened both by the prolonged war effort

⁵⁵⁵ Between 1561 and 1574, there were between five and eleven banners (*Fahnen*) of Baltic German cavalry operating in Livonia, and, although their loyalties fluctuated, their military operations were usually anti-Swedish and connected to Duke Magnus. Andres Adamson, "Liivimaa mõisamehed Liivi sõja perioodil," *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 10 (2006), 20-47.

⁵⁵⁶ "Several horsemen who had previously served the King of Sweden but had not received their full pay, treacherously surprised and captured the city of Pernau. These horsemen murdered over one hundred Swedes, ignoring all human feelings and compassion. They shot and stabbed some of them as they lay in their beds next to their wives and children. They seized the governor, Andres Perssen, a most prominent Swedish nobleman, at the manor of Audor and sent him captive to Poland." *Russow*, 105. The Swedes had already been growing concerned about the unruliness of the Baltic German troops in Livonia. On November 1, 1564, King Erik instructed Henrik Klasson that if they did not behave their leaders should be sent to Sweden, where he would find a means to punish them. RA R.R. 1564.

⁵⁵⁷ Renner describes their defection in April of 1560 and mentions that the men "*weren meist Liflendische eddelluide*". Hausmann notes that Magnus was actively courting the Order's vassals and mercenaries at this time. Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 301.

and by the reparations she was forced to pay under the terms of the Treaty of Stettin.⁵⁵⁸ Adding to King Johan's woes, the Russians broke their truce with Sweden and renewed their Estonian offensive not long after he had at last secured a peace agreement with Denmark, Lübeck, and Poland-Lithuania, plunging Sweden into a new conflict before she had had time to recover from the last. In Estonia, the position of the three banners of Baltic German cavalry then in Swedish service was becoming increasingly untenable, as they were owed several years' pay and pleas for money from both the Swedish governor, Gabriel Kristiernsson Oxenstierna, and from the cavalry captains themselves had long gone unanswered.⁵⁵⁹ On January 7, 1570, Klaus Kursell, a Baltic German commander who had been in the service of Sweden since 1560, together with three captains of the Livonian cavalry (Jorgen Üxküll, Johann Maydel von der Wollust, and Heinrich Boismann) and many of their men, seized the castle of Reval and took the Swedish governor hostage.⁵⁶⁰ Russow's account stresses that the prime motivation for the mutiny was the issue of the unpaid wages, as Kursell and his accomplices made clear when they explained to the Reval City Council that

*for a long time they had been denied their pay from the Kingdom of Sweden and although they had mentioned this repeatedly and had often sent their officers and delegates to the King, nothing had been done. Moreover, they owed money to other people and were hard-pressed by them. Therefore, they had been forced to seize the castle as security toward payment. Now if they received their pay they would not withhold the castle from the King, nor would they turn it over to anyone else.*⁵⁶¹

Whether pay was the *only* motive behind the insurrection is a matter of debate, and it certainly seems plausible that Kursell and his comrades were caught up in the complex network of scheming between Duke Magnus, Moscow, and prominent Baltic Germans in the service of the Tsar (notably Elert Kruse and Johann Taube), all of whom were working toward expelling the Swedes from Estonia and placing the country under the rule of Duke Magnus, as a vassal of Russia.⁵⁶² As it happened, the Swedes were able to retake the castle a few months later by means of a cunning ruse. Two Swedish soldiers, who had initially joined Kursell's mutiny to

⁵⁵⁸ *Archiv*, VII, 272-87.

⁵⁵⁹ Andres Adamson, "Prelude to the Birth of the 'Kingdom of Livonia,'" *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 14 (2009), 49.

⁵⁶⁰ Ernst Seraphim, *Klaus Kursell und seine Zeit. Ein Bild Ehtlands in der ersten Zeit schwedischer Herrschaft* (Reval: Kluge, 1897).

⁵⁶¹ *Russow*, 124.

⁵⁶² Adamson, "Prelude to the Birth of the 'Kingdom of Livonia,'" 50-2.; See also the correspondences of Kruse and Taube with the city of Reval between the years 1568 and 1578. TLA B.P.5.

avoid punishment for having committed acts of murder and assault, lowered a rope ladder through a castle privy, by which means three hundred of their comrades entered and recaptured the citadel from the rogue cavalymen (who were sleeping off the effects of a drinking binge).⁵⁶³ Many of the mutinous troops were killed, while Kursell himself was captured and executed along with three other prominent conspirators, and the resourceful Swedish soldiers were forgiven their past transgressions and richly rewarded.⁵⁶⁴

Regardless of whether or not Kursell and his men had aspirations of a political as well as monetary nature, there can be no doubt that disputes over pay consistently undermined the Swedes' relations with their banners of Baltic German cavalry and left them vulnerable to mutiny, desertion, and defection. Indeed, the survivors of Kursell's mutiny, as well as two banners of cavalry that he had stationed in the countryside while he held the castle, subsequently entered Russian service and were among those who joined Duke Magnus's siege of Reval a few months later. The next year, in October, the Russians faced a mutiny of their own, when the Livonian mercenary cavalry captain Reinold von Rosen, conspiring with Elert Kruse and Johann Taube, attempted to seize Dorpat. The plot failed when Rosen was cut down by quick-thinking Russian soldiers before he could rally the Livonian burghers against the occupying garrison, but many of his men, as well as Kruse and Taube, managed to flee the city.⁵⁶⁵ It seems that Hans von Zeiz, the *Hauptmann* of the second *Fähnlein* of cavalry stationed in the diocese had not been privy to the conspiracy, but, when the suspicious Russians retaliated by massacring much of the city's German population, the horsemen decided the outstanding pay they were owed by the Tsar was not worth the risk of staying in Dorpat and quietly slipped away.⁵⁶⁶

The memory of past mutinies and betrayals would influence Swedish and Russian policy in the years to come. In January of 1573, for example, while Klas Åkeson Tott led the main Swedish

⁵⁶³ *Russow*, 128-9.

⁵⁶⁴ Kursell's final letter, a short note written from prison on a piece of birch bark to the Castle Bailiff, Erik Håkansson Slang, is preserved in the Tallinn City Archives. TLA B.r.4.I. The Swedish soldiers were given "golden necklaces, silver daggers, silk and satin, and magnificent mares." *Russow*, 129.

⁵⁶⁵ Johansen saw the uprising as the culmination of the conspirators' increasing hostility toward the Muscovites, which suggests that it was provoked by a gradual change in attitude on the part of the *Hofleute* in Ivan's service rather than by mere opportunism. Johansen, *Balthasar Rüssow*, 251-2.

⁵⁶⁶ *Russow*, 140.

army to victory over the Russians at Lode, another Russian force counterattacked and stormed Weissenstein after the tiny Swedish garrison had earlier refused to let a much larger force of allied Baltic German cavalry into the castle for fear that they might attempt to seize it for themselves (or hand it over to Duke Magnus or the Russians), as Klaus Kursell had done three years earlier. Mistrust of the German and Scottish mercenaries stationed in Reval at this time appears to have been felt all the way up the Swedish chain of command; King Johan himself instructed Tott, then Governor of Estonia, that Estonian castles should be “*medh godt trogitt Swenske krigzfolk bemannede och förwaredede*” (“by good, trustworthy Swedish soldiers garrisoned and guarded”).⁵⁶⁷ Clearly, he feared a repetition of the Kursell fiasco, and the events of the following year, when unpaid Baltic German mercenary cavalry seized several castles in Wiek, would justify his suspicions. By the same token, the betrayals of mercenary commanders like Rosen, as well as other members of the Baltic German nobility like Kruse and Taube, fueled Ivan the Terrible’s already highly developed paranoia. A dangerous side effect of the inability of most early modern governments to meet the costs of war was the creation of a cycle of disloyalty and mistrust, in which the mercenaries quite rightly doubted their employers’ intent to pay them, often taking matters into their own hands by seizing whatever assets they could as sureties, while cash-short employers came to fear their own troops. A nation’s financial health was indistinguishable from its military security, and this was also true for the mercenaries themselves. Debate over whether the motives of men like Klaus Kursell should be understood as primarily financial or political thus risks ignoring the fact that these considerations were inextricably entangled in the minds of both early modern governments and the soldiers who served them, and the distinction is therefore in some ways an artificial one.

By late 1573, King Johan’s (Baltic) German troops were owed the astronomical sum of 200,000 thalers, the expenses of the Swedish Crown were approximately double its income, and special measures had to be taken just to keep the troops in the field: they were given royal jewels with which to buy equipment, and the castles of Hapsal, Lode, and Leal were turned over to them as sureties, on the condition that “if their entire pay had not been rendered in full by the stipulated time [June 24, 1574], then they might convey said castles to a Christian lord

⁵⁶⁷ RA Kungliga Konceptor.

of their own choosing, excepting the Muscovite and Duke Magnus of Holstein.”⁵⁶⁸ When, inevitably, this date came and went without the men having received the promised wages, they turned to pillaging to support themselves, viciously plundering the surrounding countryside and compounding the suffering of the peasants, who had already endured years of slaughter and robbery at the hands of the Russians. In October, the Finnish nobleman Henrik Klasson, who had previously defeated renegade *Hofleute* during the troubles of 1565 and subsequently served a brief stint as governor of Estonia, arrived in Reval with a large quantity of spoils that the Swedish navy had captured from Lübeck merchants attempting to bypass the Swedish blockades in the Gulf of Finland to trade at Russian-held Narva. This treasure was now offered to the mercenary cavalry in a bid to prevent them from handing the castles they were occupying over to a foreign power

Klasson’s offer led to a split among the troops. Some, led by Hans Wachtmeister, returned to Reval and re-entered Swedish employment, while the remainder, pointing out that the booty on offer was still substantially less than the sum they were owed, entered into negotiations with Claus von Ungern, the Danish governor of Arensburg.⁵⁶⁹ On January 25, the mercenaries agreed to transfer the castles of Hapsal, Lode, and Leal to von Ungern, acting on behalf of King Frederick of Denmark, on the condition that the horsemen be paid their overdue wages. However, when they traveled to Arensburg to receive their promised pay from the Danes, von Ungern instead charged them for the provisions they had taken from the peasants and for the debts they had previously accumulated while stationed at Reval; in many cases, the pay they were owed was barely sufficient to cover these reparations, and some even had their personal property confiscated to make amends.⁵⁷⁰ Instances such as this demonstrate the often-impossible circumstances in which both employers and mercenaries could find themselves. The Swedes tried to retain the services of their troops by temporarily entrusting them with castles, strategically critical assets of great value, until they could acquire the cash needed to pay them, but they ended up losing castles and soldiers alike. In the meantime, the mercenaries survived through plunder – and, when the Swedish authorities did ultimately offer them a portion of their pay, it was plunder that they themselves had taken from the merchants of

⁵⁶⁸ Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, 258.; Dow, *Ruthven’s Army in Swede and Estonia*, 14.; Russow, 149.

⁵⁶⁹ *Russow*, 157.

⁵⁷⁰ For more details, see Pabst, “Kriegsgericht der Landsknechte,” 94-8.

Lübeck – until, when their employers failed to uphold their end of the bargain, they sought out a new partnership with Denmark, only to be cheated of their pay again. Having exhausted their Scandinavian options, many of the cavalymen sought out the patronage of the Tsar.

At the same time that Stockholm was trying to raise the funds needed to retain the services of her Baltic German cavalry in Wiek, there were also serious problems with the unpaid German and Scottish mercenaries stationed in Reval. The Scottish presence in the Baltic had been growing for some time, with particularly significant merchant communities established at Danzig and Gothenburg.⁵⁷¹ (Indeed, by the early seventeenth century, so many Scots had settled in Poland that, following the regal union of 1603 and James VI's accession to the English throne, there were debates in the English Parliament warning of the "multiplicities of the Scots in Polonia" as evidence that England might also be "over-run with them."⁵⁷²) The Swedes had previously made use of Scottish mercenaries during the Northern Seven Years' War, hiring a cavalry regiment led by the brothers William and Hugh Cahun that is mentioned as fighting in the Battle of Axtorna (October 20, 1565); by 1568, these cavalry were reportedly the most highly paid troops in the Swedish army.⁵⁷³ Unfortunately, correspondences indicate that this pay was not always forthcoming, and a 1566 petition from Cahun's officers lists a number of grievances – they had not received recompense for horses killed in battle, they had not been paid for three months, they needed money to purchase armour – and Duke Karl,

⁵⁷¹ Poland attracted both Presbyterian and Catholic Scots because of its religious tolerance. Maria Bogucka, "Scots in Gdansk (Danzig) in the Seventeenth Century," in *Ships, Guns and Bibles in the North Sea and Baltic States, c.1350-c.1700*, ed. Allan I. Macinnes, Thomas Riis, and Frederik Pedersen (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 39.

⁵⁷² T.M. Devine and David Hesse, "Introduction," in *Scotland and Poland: Historical Encounters, 1500-2010*, ed. T.M. Devine, 1-7 (Edinburgh: West Newington House, 2011), 2.

⁵⁷³ James Miller, *Swords for Hire: The Scottish Mercenary* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2007), 38. Swedish records from the 1620s indicate that, even after equipping, supplying, and paying a Swedish militiaman and transporting him to the desired theatre at the Crown's expense, he cost only about 55% as much as hiring a professional German or Scottish infantryman (34 thalers vs. 62 thalers over a nine month campaign). Nevertheless, Sweden continued to use increasing numbers of German and Scottish mercenaries over the course of the Thirty Years' War because of the quality of these troops and in order to offset Sweden's relatively low population. Krüger, "Dänische und swedische Kriegsfinanzierung," 283. A document from 1565 reckons the cost of just clothing 17,425 Swedish troops – 2,425 cavalry and thirty *fänikor* of five hundred "*knecter*" – to be 2,285½ thalers (1,500 of which was for the 15,000 infantry). RA Strödda militiehandlingar före 1631 A.2. The combined cost of pay, clothing, and arming King Johan's troops serving in Livonia in the year 1573 stood at 113,740 thalers. RA Strödda militiehandlingar före 1631 A.2. A 1579 record of the annual costs of paying and clothing the troops serving in Finland and Livonia provides a useful breakdown of military expenses. For example, five banners of cavalry (some 1,885 men) would cost the Crown 21,965 thalers in pay and an additional 9,922 thalers to clothe and arm. RA Strödda militiehandlingar före 1631 A.3.

younger brother of King Erik, lamented that the Scottish troops had “nothing but hunger and nakedness”, while the peasants complained that the mercenaries were robbing them.⁵⁷⁴ When, in 1570, the war with Denmark ended, King Johan would have been keen to discharge these expensive and unruly forces, but it was at this very moment that the Muscovites once again invaded Estonia, forcing him to hire even more troops just when the royal coffers were running perilously low and the *Riksråd* was unlikely to endorse a general mobilization. In 1572, needing men for an assault on Narva, Johan turned to the 25-year-old Archibald Ruthven, a Scottish nobleman whose elder brother had, in the 1560s, served in Sweden alongside the Cahuns.⁵⁷⁵

Cultural differences exacerbated an already tense situation.⁵⁷⁶ However, the ultimate fate of Ruthven’s more than four thousand Scots, butchered before the walls of Wesenberg by the German troops they were serving alongside, as well as the many missteps that dogged them on their way to that bloody end, can primarily be attributed to lack of pay. Taking ship from Scotland to Älvsborg, they were required to march across Sweden before embarking for Estonia from the east coast, and significant difficulties were already encountered during the Swedish leg of the journey. The Crown initially proved incapable of paying either the Scottish soldiers themselves or the ships’ captains who had transported them across the North Sea, and money had to be raised by whatever means necessary, including a special contribution from the nobility of Västergötland just to pay off the captains.⁵⁷⁷ The soldiers, however, had yet to receive their due, and they refused to set sail for Estonia before they received the money that they were owed. Swedish officials undertook various desperate measures, such as the pawning

⁵⁷⁴ For a full account, see Dow, *Ruthven’s Army in Sweden and Esthonia*.

⁵⁷⁵ The Ruthvens were a Lowland clan involved in several major conspiracies in the latter half of the sixteenth century, including the murder of Cardinal Rizzio (1556), the so-called “Ruthven Raid” (1582), and the Gowrie Conspiracy (1600). Following the latter incident, in which John Ruthven was executed for treason and the practice of black magic, their name was decreed out of existence. The family’s fortunes were, however, partially restored half a century later. The name reappears in the nineteenth century in the form of the fictional Lord Ruthven, titular character of John Polidori’s Gothic tale *The Vampyre* (1819), itself a reference to the ne’er-do-well protagonist of Lady Caroline Lamb’s *Glenarvon* (1816). Both characters owe more to the powerful influence of Lord Byron than to any historical son of the Clan Ruthven. Polidori’s story was later adapted as a play by Heinrich Ludwig Ritter and as an opera by Heinrich Marschner.

⁵⁷⁶ The Scots were Calvinists, while the Swedes were Lutheran, and the local population was Lutheran and Catholic. Early modern soldiers of different nationalities were often ascribed national characteristics, sometimes based on real cultural differences and sometimes on baseless stereotypes, and tensions between men of differing backgrounds were common. Potter, *Renaissance France at War*, 124.

⁵⁷⁷ RA R.R. August 1.

of gold jewellery and paying the ships' captains in butter, in order to raise the funds needed to pay the Scottish mercenaries, who were by this time robbing and violently abusing the local peasantry.⁵⁷⁸ Eventually, they were given some of the money that had been intended for the Swedish regulars and German mercenaries stationed in Reval, probably on the reasoning that the Swedes and the Germans were already in Estonia where they were needed, so the priority was getting the Scots out of Sweden to join them in theatre as soon as possible.⁵⁷⁹ This decision, coupled with the higher wages of the Scots, would later cause resentment among their German peers.

Once in Reval, the Scots maintained their discipline while their funds lasted, but, when the money ran out and they received no more pay, they were given permission to requisition supplies from the peasants.⁵⁸⁰ Grown confident, they soon began to rob the burghers and the nobility as well.⁵⁸¹ It was largely the intolerable situation in Reval, rather than any strategic

⁵⁷⁸ Dow, *Ruthven's Army in Sweden and Esthonia*, 14-5. A list of the supplies consumed by the Scottish cavalry and infantry in Uppland and Gästrikland in 1573 may be found in RA Strödda militiehandlingar före 1631 A.3.

⁵⁷⁹ The diversion of funds already promised to vital frontline forces to mutinous troops elsewhere was a common tactic for dealing with unpaid soldiers throughout Europe. Everywhere it was employed, it tended to have disastrous strategic consequences. Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567-1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries' Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 196.

⁵⁸⁰ The Swedish authorities in Reval wrote to Stockholm to request funds to pay the men, but King Johan replied that the Scots were "more than amply paid before they departed hence, and quite more than they had earned, since they have still done us no service. They have not only lived free off our subjects, but have also robbed and harried them everywhere they have passed..." Quoted in Dow, *Ruthven's Army in Sweden and Esthonia*, 33.

⁵⁸¹ Although most outright pillaging took place in the countryside, this was a rare large-scale case of townsmen being openly robbed by mercenaries billeted in a city. There was little the authorities could do to prevent it, especially after the indiscipline of the Scots spread to the German troops as well. Russow described the conditions in Reval as akin to enduring a hostile siege. *Russow*, 148. Although the situation was extreme, records do show that tensions between the mercenaries and burghers were common enough, usually caused by monetary disagreements, but also involving theft, assault, trespassing, and other crimes. However, the frequency with which burghers stood witness on behalf of accused soldiers indicates that there were also positive ties between these groups. E.g. TLA B.e.6.202-3 and B.e.5.105-35. Crimes perpetrated by mercenaries against their fellows are also recorded. The Criminal-Protocollen of the Reval Lower court notes, for example, that, on March 28, 1575, a Scot by the name of Hans Hudt was released after being held for fourteen days on account of being accused of stabbing another Scot, Wolter Ferier, in the body with a knife. These men were both presumably soldiers. Eugen von Nottbeck, *Die alte Criminalchronik Revels* (Reval: Emil Prahm, 1884), 93. Incidents of civilians victimizing mercenaries are to be found as well, such as a case involving the theft of tankard and two gilded pots ("*Gildetöpfe*") from a *Landsknecht* by a woman named Anna. Nottbeck, *Die alte Criminalchronik*, 94. Records of misdemeanors and punishments of the Revalian *Landsknechte* that survive from the years 1571-1573 and 1576 indicate that, as is to be expected, the most common crimes involved theft, assault, desertion, dereliction of duty, and drunkenness. However, more unusual offences, such as slandering the daughter of a Revalian burgher, are also recorded. Punishments range from minor disciplinary action to execution and everything in between. In one

consideration, that prompted the Swedish commanders to attack Wesenberg in January of 1574. (Although this was far from ideal, financial rather than strictly tactical or strategic circumstances often dictated military policy.) Once at Wesenberg, the stress of repeated failed assaults, high casualties, harsh winter conditions, and lack of pay all contributed to the general breakdown in morale and discipline that culminated on March 17 in the disastrous massacre of the Scottish mercenaries by the German cavalry. While a tavern brawl was allegedly the immediate cause of the fracas, there can be no doubt that a properly paid and supplied army would not have turned upon itself and imploded in such catastrophic fashion. As with the *Hofleute* during the same period, the indiscipline of the foreign mercenaries was brought on by their lack of pay, which forced them to survive by robbing the local civilians and caused disunity and resentment in their ranks. In this case, the authorities did everything in their power to secure the funds needed to pay the troops but simply lacked the economic wherewithal to do so. Incidents like the *Hofleute*'s 1565 massacre of the Swedish garrison at Pernau and the Scottish debacle at Wesenberg stand out as especially egregious, but they exemplify a pattern of financially induced disorder and infighting that was repeated countless times during the Livonian War – and, indeed, characterized warfare throughout early modern Europe more broadly. The monetary and administrative challenges of early modern warfare were readily apparent by the late sixteenth century, even if (still very much imperfect) solutions to those challenges would not be found until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Calvinism of the Scots is especially noteworthy. The Swedish authorities were apparently uninterested in the religious affiliation of their soldiers and instead focused on more mundane disciplinary problems, but some of the local Revalians seem to have been at least as offended by the Scots' sectarian otherness as they were by their penchant for robbery and violence.⁵⁸² While in Reval, some of Ruthven's men had converted a deserted house into a Calvinist place of worship, and Russow remarked that it was "*eine sunderiegnade van Godt dat de Schotten der Dudeschen Sprake unerfaren weren*" ("a special mercy of God that the Scots were inexperienced in the German language") or else they might have corrupted many people with

instance, a certain Wulf Preuss, who had publically called the Revalian *Wachtmeister* Marten Kieseler a racial and a villain ("*Schelm und Bösewicht*"), was sentenced to travel to Hungary to fight against the Turks for a year as penance for his insubordination. TLA B.e.5.105-135.

⁵⁸² For a discussion of the religiosity of early modern soldiers, see Rogg, "Gottlose Kriegsleute?", 122-44.

their “delusions”.⁵⁸³ Intriguingly, then, the Scottish religious alterity that Russow found so threatening was, in his eyes, mitigated rather than exacerbated by their cultural and linguistic disembeddedness from Revalian society. Their foreign ways were what offended Russow, but that foreignness also gave them an outsider status that insulated the local population from their corrupting influence. The eventual disintegration of the Swedish army at Wesenberg resulted from the unfortunate overlap of economic and administrative failings with cultural tensions. While almost certainly insufficient to tear the army apart on their own, sectarianism and xenophobia compounded the low morale and indiscipline caused by the authorities’ failure to pay or control their troops, while stoking the resentment stemming from the higher wages of the Scots and their earlier receipt of pay that had been intended for the Germans. As was so often the case in the troubled relations between early modern mercenaries and their masters, financial problems laid the groundwork for disputes that were then amplified by other issues.

Partnering with local forces in newly acquired lands, like the Baltic German cavalry, or importing troops from overseas, like the Scots, compensated for early modern Sweden’s manpower deficiencies by providing a larger pool of professional troops, thereby enabling her to project power and defend her conquests more effectively than would otherwise have been possible.⁵⁸⁴ However, the enormous cost of keeping a professional army in the field also limited Stockholm’s ambitions. While managing large and multinational armies comprised of Swedish, Finnish, German, Scottish, and other troops had become the norm by the time of the Thirty Years’ War, this was an administrative art that the Vasa kings of the late sixteenth century were still struggling to master. Some early modern military theorists advised that, when possible, soldiers should fight alongside men of the same nationality;⁵⁸⁵ and, during the late Middle Ages, it was not uncommon to divide troops even by regional or provincial

⁵⁸³ Balthasar Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt* (Barth: Fürstliken Drückerye, 1584), 83.

⁵⁸⁴ Despite missteps like the Ruthven disaster, in the decades to come Scotland would become a preferred source of troops for Sweden, as Alexia Grosjean has convincingly demonstrated in her studies of the relations between the two countries during the Thirty Years’ War, when tens of thousands of Scots fought in Swedish service. Grosjean characterized the late sixteenth century as an “early period of Scottish military engagement in the Swedish army” that involved “a mixed bag of private and official recruitment and produced a combination of loyal and mutinous units.” Grosjean, *An Unofficial Alliance*, 18. Despite general improvements in military organization and discipline, some problems of the type experienced in the 1560s and 1570s persisted into the following century, as evidenced by records of a revolt by Scottish troops stationed in Reval in October of 1610. TLA B.F.37.

⁵⁸⁵ Montecuccoli, *Sulle Battaglie*, 83.

affiliation.⁵⁸⁶ In the early modern world, Atlantic Europe's colonial empires and the great territorial states of eastern Europe would be defended by increasingly multiethnic armies; however, experience was required to maintain the military cohesion of these forces – experience that sixteenth-century Sweden was still in the process of acquiring.

⁵⁸⁶ A letter written in 1409 indicates that the Teutonic Order's commander at Scholchau was forced to divide the mercenaries garrisoning the castle of Konitz into two groups because they came from different provinces. As there appears to be no strictly military logic underlying this decision, it presumably indicates that there was social friction between the men. Ekdahl, "The Teutonic Order's Mercenaries," 357.

Chapter 7

Mercenaries as Agents: Coordination, (In)Discipline, and Defense

7.1 Coordination and Defense

Given the overwhelming numerical advantage enjoyed by the Russians at the beginning of the war, it is hardly surprising that their Livonian adversaries struggled to defend their country against the invasion or that Livonian commanders and troops often suffered from crises of morale and logistical failures. Badly outnumbered soldiers – often insufficiently paid and dispatched to isolated castles with little or no support from the main Livonian army – were vulnerable to the terror tactics and bribes of the Russians, to say nothing of the Tsar’s hordes of experienced men and formidable siege artillery. Already politically divided and spread thin over a substantial territory, the defenders found it difficult to organize a unified response to Moscow’s much larger invasion force while also protecting the hundreds of castles and villages scattered across their lands. Especially in the early stages of the war, these problems both compounded and were compounded by the frequent indiscipline of the mercenaries and the commanders’ failures to coordinate the forces available. At times, the troops’ lapses in discipline could be almost darkly comical: the loss of the castle of Warbeck due to the drunkenness of its garrison; the burning of the village of Rujen when a mercenary arquebusier fired on a pigeon that had alighted on a thatched roof; the fatal stabbing of Wolther Quade, Castellan of Wenden, in a gambling quarrel over a farthing; etc. However, more serious issues of insubordination and disunity also plagued the defenders, with grave consequences for the course of the overall conflict. While it would be easy to blame the mercenaries for these setbacks, a more balanced analysis situates them in the larger context of the war, noting the often impossible positions in which the troops were placed by the overwhelming power of the enemy and the lack of support they received from their employers.

The two most significant events in the first year of the war were the Russian conquests of Narva and Dorpat. At Narva, the Russian assault was opportunistic, taking advantage of a distraction caused by a fire in the city, but, regardless of whether the inferno was a tragic accident, a punishment from God, or the result of a conspiracy – all suggestions advanced at

the time – the mercenaries garrisoning the city undoubtedly influenced the subsequent outcome of events. A letter sent by the city’s mayor and council to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg on April 23, only a few weeks before the Russian conquest, requested assistance and complained about the costs of the Revalian *Landsknechte* stationed in Narva, who were eating and drinking their way through the supplies.⁵⁸⁷ The *Vogt*, Ernst von Schnellenberg, wrote an even more urgent plea for assistance three days later, noting ominously that “the enemy has observed well that we have still received no reinforcements,” and, the following day, the city received a letter from the Russians themselves threatening an imminent attack.⁵⁸⁸ The exact circumstances of the city’s fall on May 11 differ according to which account one reads; understandably, nobody wanted to take responsibility for the calamity.⁵⁸⁹ In late April, Gotthard Kettler, then castellan of Fellin, and Franz von Segehagen, castellan of Reval, had answered the city’s call for reinforcements and camped nearby with a fairly substantial relief force.⁵⁹⁰ They were soon joined by Berndt von Schmerten, *Vogt* of Jerwen, who, according to Renner’s account, almost immediately advocated entering the city to reinforce it.⁵⁹¹ Kettler, however, was opposed to this course of action, believing that the *Landsknechte* already in the city would not allow them to leave once they had entered.⁵⁹² The Order’s reinforcements therefore remained at their camp, where they were soon joined by Heinrich Wulf, *Vogt* of Sonnenburg, and Gerdt von Anstenraedt, *Vogt* of Wesenberg, with about five hundred cavalry between them.⁵⁹³ The impasse that ensued was a prime example of the mistrust between the mercenaries and their employers. The *Landsknechte* in Narva clearly feared that they would be abandoned to fend for

⁵⁸⁷ Some of these men were the formidable *Doppelsöldner*. *QU*, II, 197-9.

⁵⁸⁸ *QU*, II, 201 and 205-7.

⁵⁸⁹ Ernst von Schnellenberg, for example, resigned his post and provided a lengthy justification for his actions. *QU*, I, 282-9.

⁵⁹⁰ Segehagen had been delayed by sickness and a lack of men. *QU*, II, 195-6.

⁵⁹¹ Henning disputes this, claiming that Schmerten did not want to enter the city prior to the Russian attack. However, a correspondence dated May 7 endorses Renner’s version of events and suggests that Segehagen also favoured reinforcing the city at once. *Renner*, 53.; *Henning*, 44.; *QU*, II, 288-9.

⁵⁹² There were *Landsknechte* from Riga and Reval stationed in the city. The Revalian *Hauptmann*, Wolf von Strassburg, and his officers had returned to Reval on May 3, leaving the Rigan *Hauptmann*, Wolf Singehoff, in command. There were constant requests for money, and the Revalians and Rigans wanted to pay off the mercenaries and discharge them, which alarmed the Narvans. On May 9, Jurgen Boemer, an envoy from Riga, arrived in the city with the intention of paying the Rigan troops and discharging them, but Kettler suggested that only Singehoff should go to Riga while the troops remained in Narva. Singehoff wanted to pay the troops first. This dispute was ongoing at the time of the city’s fall a few days later. Senning, *Beiträge*, 20.

⁵⁹³ *Renner*, 54. Anstenraedt had earlier twice written to Fürstenberg advising that the city should be reinforced. *QU*, II, 189-91 and 202-5. Russow accused him of being “*ein apentlich horer*” (“an open whorer”) with a fondness not only for common wenches but also for married women, further adding that his servants’ daily work consisted of gluttonous feasting and fornication. Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 43.

themselves and therefore wished to compel the Livonians' reinforcements to remain with them in the city, while the officers of the Livonian Order seem to have been concerned that they might be held hostage by their own hirelings, or, worse yet, die fighting alongside them if the Russians attacked the city in force.

In light of the rather haphazard and impromptu Russian assault that captured the city a few days later, it is worth considering the possibility that the city might have been held had the Livonian reinforcements been inside, not camped a few miles away for fear of their own mercenaries. On the day of the disaster, the *Landsknechte* seem at first to have acquitted themselves reasonably well. When a fire broke out in the town, they tried to fight the blaze and sent messengers to the camp of the Livonian cavalry to request aid, but they soon had to abandon the city walls as high winds spread the conflagration and it engulfed more and more of the town's buildings. Renner reports that, upon receiving word from the mercenaries' messengers, Kettler and sixty horsemen rode ahead to assist the town while the rest of the encamped army prepared to follow on behind, but he was met on the road by Herman zur Moelen, the second mayor, who falsely informed him that the fire had been extinguished and reinforcements were no longer needed.⁵⁹⁴ Meanwhile, Russian troops from neighbouring Ivangorod were making their way across the Narva River and into the city, whose walls had been left undefended as the garrison rushed to deal with the fire. Vicious fighting ensued in the city's narrow streets, and, to their credit, the *Landsknechte* resisted ferociously, fighting house to house and slaying many of the invaders.⁵⁹⁵ At last, however, fire and foe drove them into the inner castle, along with many of the burghers and their wives and children.⁵⁹⁶ The Russian commander, probably fearing an imminent counterattack from Kettler's camp and not wanting to lose more men assaulting the remaining defenders in the castle, allowed the *Landsknechte* to leave the city with any goods that they could assemble in two hours, an offer which the

⁵⁹⁴ Renner, 54. The implication seems to be that Herman zur Moelen was part of a conspiracy allegedly hatched by certain high-ranking citizens to start the fire and give over the city to the Russians. If true, there is some irony in the fact that the hired mercenaries were evidently doing what they could to save the city without realizing that it had been betrayed by its own patricians.

⁵⁹⁵ "De landsknechte deden grote wehre, slogen se twe mal uth der stadt wedderumb und doededen in Krumhusen keller der fiende 14." Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 183. Jochim Krumhusen was the city's mayor.

⁵⁹⁶ Ernst von Schnellenberg argued that resistance was no longer viable at this point, and, despite his obvious motives for presenting continued defense as impossible, there seems little reason to doubt this assessment given that there was no sign that help would be forthcoming from Kettler. *QU*, I, 282-9.

mercenaries enthusiastically accepted, taking whatever treasures they could from the castle itself and from the townsfolk sheltering therein.⁵⁹⁷

Henning lamented that God Himself must have struck the Livonians blind for such a calamity to occur with Kettler's relief force camped just a few miles from the city.⁵⁹⁸ A more prosaic explanation is that the fall of Narva was a product of bad luck, poor military intelligence, and the failure of the Livonian commanders to properly coordinate their own forces with those of their *Landsknechte* in the city.⁵⁹⁹ This was certainly the accusation made by the Dorpater patrician Elert Kruse in his lengthy rebuttal of Balthasar Russow's account of the fall of that venerable city, which Kruse argued was no more shameful than the earlier events at Narva. As Kruse pointed out, even once the city was burned and lost, the forces remaining in the castle were in no immediate danger and could have held out for some time, certainly long enough for Kettler's nearby army to relieve them, but the panicked garrison surrendered almost immediately in response to the Russians' offer of clemency (and booty) and Kettler was paralyzed into inaction.⁶⁰⁰ As was so often the case, the *Landsknechte* had proven themselves to be formidable warriors in the initial fray, but they could not carry the day when their numbers were so few, they were unsupported by their employers, and the enemy was offering tempting inducements to surrender.

As word spread of the city's fall, the morale of the troops stationed elsewhere suffered. A brief note written to Fürstenberg by the Livonian Order's castellans at Fellin, Reval, and Jerwen addresses the fall of the city and mentions that "from this day we have thus forbidden the

⁵⁹⁷ The *Landsknechte* took a "grote buite" of "siden, sammith und anderer kostlicher ware". Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 184. The Russians captured a quantity of artillery and firearms, as well as goods belonging to many Hanseatic merchants, who subsequently wrote to the Tsar to request the return of these valuables. *QU*, II, 244-7.

⁵⁹⁸ *Henning*, 23.

⁵⁹⁹ Indeed, it was not until the next day that Kettler learned that the city had been lost, at which point he decided that it was too late to try to recover it and pulled his army back to Wesenberg, from where he wrote on May 15 to inform Wilhelm von Fürstenberg that "the castle and city of Narva was accidentally burned down, and, another misfortune, our archenemies the Muscovites" captured the city. *QU*, II, 243-4.

⁶⁰⁰ "But, although the townsmen humbly begged, pleaded and implored them for help, they did nothing. Although they saw the fire, they undertook no action." Elert Kruse, "A Fortright Rebuttel to the Livonian Chronicle Published in 1578" (henceforth *Kruse*), in *The Chronicle of Balthasar Russow*, trans. Jerry C. Smith, J. Ward Jones and William Urban (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin at Madison Baltic Studies Center, 1988), 244.

soldiers from departing,” suggesting that desertion was becoming a problem.⁶⁰¹ Despite these efforts, the shock caused by the loss of Narva heightened tensions between the soldiers and their commanders (and employers), leading to a chain reaction of mutinies, surrenders, and logistical failures. Amongst the most egregious was the fall of Neuhausen. The Russians bombarded this strong castle for more than a month.⁶⁰² Meanwhile, in something of a repetition of the failure to relieve Narva, the Livonians’ main field army camped nearby with several thousand men but chose not to relieve their besieged comrades for fear of risking battle.⁶⁰³ Finally, with no reinforcements forthcoming, the *Landsknechte* and burghers in the castle united in demanding that the Livonian Order’s commander (Jorgen Üxküll) surrender, threatening to hang him over the walls if he would not.⁶⁰⁴ The Russians allowed Üxküll and the *Landsknechte* to go free, after robbing many of them of their valuables, but the peasants sheltering in the castle were slaughtered. Although it was the mercenaries who had instigated the surrender, this time against the wishes of the Livonian Order’s presiding officer, it is difficult to blame them given the impossibility of defending the castle indefinitely and the Order’s failure to relieve their position.

By early June of 1558, it was becoming clear that Dorpat would be the Tsar’s next target, and the leaders of the Livonian Order were trying to assemble an army of sufficient size to defend the diocese. Unfortunately, Christoph von Münchhausen refused to bring his troops from Ösel-Wiek to join von Fürstenberg in the field, as did the troops stationed at Wesenberg and the nobility of Harrien and Wierland.⁶⁰⁵ A number of nearby castles were simply abandoned, and correspondences indicate a lack of viable military options for the diocese’s defense.⁶⁰⁶ There was rioting in Dorpat over the condition of the defenses, and the mercenaries even fired on the citizenry.⁶⁰⁷ There had already been hints of discord between the German *Landsknechte* and

⁶⁰¹ *QU*, II, 243-4.

⁶⁰² Kurbsky, *History of Ivan IV*, 115-7.; Elert Kruse gives the length of the siege as six weeks. *Kruse*, 244.

⁶⁰³ There was apparently some discussion of attacking the Russian siege camp at night, but a suitable scout could not be found to lead the army through the swamps and forests to the Russian camp. *Henning*, 45-6.

⁶⁰⁴ Wilhelm von Fürstenberg wrote to the Archbishop of Riga on July 4 to report the castle’s fall. *QU*, II, 309-10.

⁶⁰⁵ *QU*, II, 311-3.; *QU*, I, 156-7.; *QU*, I, 157-62.

⁶⁰⁶ *MLA*, V, 523-44.

⁶⁰⁷ *Kruse*, 244-5.; *QU*, I, 180-96. The captain of the *Landsknechte* at Dorpat was a *Hauptmann* Luning. Little else is known about this man. *QU*, II, 144-5.

the local Livonian forces. In January, a Russian army had passed through the diocese, pillaging the countryside and looting the estates of the nobility, but, when the Livonian horsemen attempted a sally to engage the raiders, the *Landsknechte* had refused to participate in the attack.⁶⁰⁸ When the Russians besieged the city in early July, they therefore found it internally divided and unsupported by the main Livonian army, and the city quickly capitulated. The *Landsknechte* initially defended the city reasonably effectively, but the burghers were pressuring the bishop to surrender; and, when Russian sympathizers set fires in the city, continued resistance became untenable.⁶⁰⁹ The city gave in to the Russians' demands on the third day, and the *Landsknechte* and many of the citizens were allowed to depart with whatever they could carry. As at Narva, it is hard to fault the mercenary garrison, which consisted of a few hundred men facing off against a Russian army that numbered in the tens of thousands, or to disagree with Kruse's assessment that "if people had acted in concert and in accord with their oaths and promises" then things might have turned out differently.⁶¹⁰ Indeed, contrary to the popular stereotype of the disloyal and self-serving mercenary, it appears to have been the foreign *Landsknechte* who defended Dorpat most vigorously and her own citizens who undermined their efforts and handed the city to the enemy.

In addition to major cities like Narva and Dorpat, mercenaries played a significant role in determining the fates of many smaller Livonian castles and towns. After the fall of Dorpat, refugees and troops making their way to Reval stopped at Weissenstein, where the *Landsknechte* informed the ranking officer of the Livonian Order, Berent van Schmerten, that it would be impossible to hold the castle against the Russians. Van Schmerten and his men fled to Pernau, while the *Landsknechte* took the opportunity to plunder the castle, taking what they could carry and continuing on to Reval, where they offered their services to the Danes. At Adsel, the *Landsknechte* simply departed because they deemed the castle indefensible, and the Russians promptly burned it. At Marienburg, the Livonian Order's castellan and the captain of

⁶⁰⁸ A reversal of this situation took place two years later, in June of 1560, when the mercenaries stationed at Reval wanted to attack Russian troops plundering the surrounding countryside, but the noble horsemen refused because they feared that their estates might be further damaged in the fighting. *Renner*, 38 and 165.; *QU*, II, 114-6.

⁶⁰⁹ "Although some of the noblemen and the *landscknechte* put up a good defense, the townspeople could not endure the bombardment and so they went to the bishop and begged him to surrender the city to the Grand Duke. He was, of course, not opposed to this, but the *landscknechte* held the city." *Renner*, 66.

⁶¹⁰ *Kruse*, 248.

the mercenaries agreed to surrender and were permitted by the Russians to leave unmolested. The castellan was subsequently arrested for this “needless surrender” and died in the Order’s custody a few months later, while the *Landsknechte* were commanded to leave the Order’s lands by sundown.⁶¹¹ The mercenaries who surrendered the castle of Tarvast were less fortunate; the men were arrested and their *Hauptmann*, Cordt Unkruth, was hanged by decree of the Livonian Order.

Undoubtedly the most egregious incident was the loss of Fellin, where the *Landsknechte* mutinied and surrendered the great castle to the Russians against the wishes of the venerable former *Landmeister*, Wilhelm von Fürstenberg.⁶¹² Russow’s account highlights the greed of the mercenaries, describing how, after a four week siege, they demanded that Fürstenberg hand over the months of pay that they were owed, while the old Master offered them his own money and jewels and begged them not to give up the castle.⁶¹³ They then surrendered to the Russians anyway, on the condition that they could take with them whatever they could carry, robbing their employer along with the nobles and peasants who had taken shelter in the town. Renner gives an even more pitiable version of events, with a tearful Fürstenberg throwing himself on the ground before the mercenaries, begging them not to negotiate with the Russians, only for one of the soldiers to snatch the keys to the keep from his belt and strike him across the face while remarking that it was “better that one old schemer be lost than all these fine comrades.”⁶¹⁴ While undoubtedly callous, the actions of the *Landsknechte* are also partially understandable. At the start of the siege, they numbered 250, while the Russians’ besieging army consisted of some 15,000 men and one hundred cannons. The town was repeatedly bombarded and assaulted for weeks, with the mercenaries inflicted substantial casualties on the attackers, barricaded breaches, and at one point even sallied out to spike the Russian guns. Finally, having received no pay for months and with no indication that they would be relieved, they chose surrender over death. Despite these mitigating factors, the Livonian Order did not

⁶¹¹ *Henning*, 58.; *Renner*, 151.

⁶¹² Fürstenberg had earlier warned Kettler that the *Landsknechte* stationed at Fellin were unruly, and there had been a troublesome incident when they had violated the temporary truce with Russia by robbing the peasants of the Abbot of Falkenau, whose lands were under Russian occupation. However, Kettler did not have the necessary funds or supplies to keep them paid and fed, so there was little he could do to ameliorate the situation.

⁶¹³ *Russow*, 86.

⁶¹⁴ *Renner*, 180.

take a sympathetic view, and many of the *Landsknechte* who had participated in the mutiny were executed or imprisoned, although their captain, Jorgen Fromknecht, escaped.⁶¹⁵ As was so often the case, the mercenaries were presented with an impossible choice: they could die fighting to defend a position that their employers would not or could not risk relieving, or they could surrender, forfeit any chance of being paid the money they were still owed, and face harsh retribution at the hands of their masters.

Surrender and desertion were not the only issues that plagued armies of the day. Poor coordination at both the tactical and the strategic levels was also a common problem. There were disputes over pay and sometimes between troops recruited from different regions, as in the troubled relationship between the German and Scottish mercenaries in 1573-4. Allied forces also frequently struggled to support one another.⁶¹⁶ In part, this was a product of the divisions within the Livonian Confederation, in which – despite sporadic efforts at military synchronization on the part of the Livonian *Landmeister* and the Archbishop of Riga – the Livonian Order, the bishoprics, the towns, and the noble corporations of the various provinces all looked to their own interests rather than coordinating a truly unified defense of the county. Inexperience and indiscipline could undermine the coordination of the different branches of the army.⁶¹⁷ In the early modern world, even seasoned generals struggled to keep their troops in line when faced with a shortage of funds and an overwhelmingly more numerous foe, and many of the officers of the Livonian Order had little or no experience when it came to managing large forces over a prolonged campaign. Fifty years before, Livonia had rallied

⁶¹⁵ In addition to mutiny, the men were charged with defiling churches. *QU*, VI, 198-201. Fromknecht, was one of the captains to whom Kettler had written in May, promising imminent pay. *QU*, V, 83-4. In the wake of the defeat at Ermes, Kettler was trying to gather an army and frantically requesting aid from the Poles and Lithuanians, but help did not come in time to save Fellin. *QU*, V, 270-1 and 296.

⁶¹⁶ In the summer of 1560, for example, an army under Jan Chodkiewicz entered areas of southern Livonia which had been transferred to Lithuanian control and defeated the Russian forces operating in the region. However, when the Livonians did not support them, Chodkiewicz threatened to retreat, prompting Kettler to demand that the officers of the Livonian Order and his Rigan allies aid the Lithuanians in their attack. *Briefe*, V, 159-63 and 155-75.; *QU*, V, 207-15.

⁶¹⁷ A skirmish that took place near Narva in the spring of 1558 provides an illustrative example. *Landsknechte* hoping to capture horses that the Russians had stolen from local peasants fell into an ambush while pursuing the enemy and were cut off from the main Livonian camp. A relief force of Livonian cavalry and *Landsknechte* was sent to assist them, with the cavalry in the vanguard. However, when the horsemen fell back after failing to break the Russian lines, they rode through the ranks of the *Landsknechte*. Upon returning to camp, the Livonian cavalry and German infantry began brawling with one another until they were separated by the officers, but they later resumed their grudge while stationed together at Wesenberg. *Renner*, 50-1.; *QU*, I, 133-8. The *Landsknechte*'s reckless desire for plunder, the Livonian cavalry's battlefield inexperience, the failure to coordinate infantry and cavalry, and indiscipline in the camp were typical problems of the early war effort.

behind the inspirational figure of Wolter von Plettenberg, but, in the late 1550s and early 1560s, no Livonian leader emerged with the charisma, brilliance, or prestige to ensure the smooth cooperation of the Confederations' disparate elements. The bishops looked to the defenses of their own dioceses, Wilhelm von Fürstenberg was too old for active field duty, and Gotthard Kettler, while not necessarily a poor leader, simply lacked the decisiveness or authority to turn the tide (as evidenced by the logistical failures at Narva and Dorpat, his willingness to sacrifice towns and castles rather than risk engaging the enemy, and his inability to resolve the Livonian Order's dispute with Duke Magnus until it was too late).

However, even in the dark early years of the war, the mercenaries were an indispensable component of the war effort who had their share of successes. *Landsknechte* could be useful for bolstering the Livonian Order's own garrisons when more men were needed, for example at Weissenstein in 1558, following Caspar von Oldenbockum's heroic defense of that castle, and at Ermes in 1560. In some instances, despite their own tendency to misbehave, mercenaries were employed by the authorities as enforcers of discipline. In the fall of 1559, for example, *Landsknechte* and cavalry were dispatched from Courland into the Russian-occupied Diocese of Dorpat to put a stop to looting and burning by local peasants.⁶¹⁸ Mercenaries were a vital component of both the Swedish and Commonwealth forces operating in the region in the decades after the collapse of the Confederation, and, while the relationship between soldier and employer was troubled at times, the hired troops did perform well at key early engagements such as the defense of Rositen and the reconquests of Wenden and Ringen.⁶¹⁹ Unfortunately for the Livonians, although both sides won victories and suffered setbacks, the Russians' numbers allowed them to easily replace their losses, while each defeat further drained the Livonians' small pool of seasoned soldiers (and their coffers). The mercenaries played a critical part in what battles they did win, but deficiencies in manpower and treasure meant that the Livonians were unable to capitalize on those victories or build momentum for a concerted counterattack. Indeed, it would not be for another two decades, with the emergence of Stefan Batory and Pontus de la Gardie and the concurrent Commonwealth and Swedish campaigns of the late 1570s and early 1580s that a by-then-exhausted Russia would finally be driven from the land.

⁶¹⁸ The men involved in this operation consisted of "*Reutern Knechtenn und andern Undeutschen*". *QU*, III, 294-5.

⁶¹⁹ A description of the capture of Ringen may be found in *QU*, I, 281.

7.2 Plunder: Survival and Reward

Given that soldiers' pay was so often belated or inadequate or both, plunder could prove to be a more reliable, as well as a far more lucrative, source of income. The lure of enrichment through looting was a powerful motivator for early modern fighters, and subsistence pillaging was generally an accepted means by which armies maintained themselves in the field, especially when operating in enemy territory.⁶²⁰ As was the case elsewhere in Europe (and the early modern world more broadly), looting and raiding in the Baltic took place in a number of contexts. At various stages, the authorities passed and attempted to enforce regulations intended to protect their own civilian populations from the rapacity of their soldiers, although these were only successful when the troops were kept properly paid and supplied. At other times, soldiers were, by necessity, permitted to requisition supplies from the local population. The promise of loot could also be offered as a reward to incentivize participating in a dangerous battle or assault; in other cases, it was presented to enemy troops as a bribe to induce them to surrender. Frequently, the authorities actively endorsed pillaging, encouraging their armies to practise systematic theft and destruction in order to damage enemy infrastructure, spread suffering and terror, and place the cost of the conflict on the adversary. Most often, the soldiers simply fell back on pillaging as a survival strategy, living off the land by taking what they needed from the local civilian population, robbing peasants, burghers, and nobility alike.⁶²¹ In the early stages of the war, it was the Russians who benefitted from this state of affairs, since most of the fighting took place on Livonian soil and their invasion force consisted primarily of light cavalry who were very adept at raiding.

⁶²⁰ Erasmus describes the soldier flying off to enlist like Mercury and limping home like Vulcan, with the unfortunate veteran recounting how the "hope of booty" had at first made him valiant, but, in the end, he returned home with empty pockets, loaded down with sin rather than with gold. Desiderius Erasmus, *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. N. Bailey, ed. and with notes by the Rev. E. Johnson (London: Reeves & Turner, 1878), 62.; Redlich argued that plundering was accepted both in practice and in law, pointing to the works of Belli, Gentili, Alciati, Vitoria, Ayala, Grotius, and others. Redlich, *De Praeda Militari*, 1-5.

⁶²¹ "No state made arrangements for continuously supplying its forces when they operated on enemy territory: the army then was expected to obtain the bulk of its supplies from the local countryside as a matter of course. This had the advantage of shifting the burden of war on to the opponent." Tallett, *War and Society*, 58. While merchants and sutlers sometimes followed in the *Tross*, they were rarely able to keep the entire army supplies, especially when they troops had not been paid and lacked therefore lacked the funds to buy what they needed. Martin van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 7.

Early modern commanders took for granted that their soldiers would be inclined to loot and pillage if given the opportunity, and prescriptions against this practice were usually aimed at limitation or control, rather than outright prevention, of such behaviour.⁶²² In most cases, the authorities had two primary fears: first, that their own subjects would be robbed by their hired soldiers; second, that men who prioritized plundering over fighting would be prone to indiscipline that could undermine the army's battlefield cohesion. The Livonians were evidently concerned with these issues from the outset of the war. In 1558, during the tense negotiations between Dorpat and Moscow, the Bishop of Dorpat refused the Livonian Order's offer to send *Landsknechte* and cavalry to reinforce the diocese on the grounds that the troops would despoil his own lands and mistreat the locals, although fear of relinquishing autonomy to the Order no doubt also made him wary of accepting Fürstenberg's military aid before it became absolutely necessary.⁶²³ At least while there still seemed to be a possibility of avoiding war, nobody wanted mercenaries camped in their territory if they could help it.

Once the Russians invasion had begun, the emphasis quickly shifted from avoidance of mercenaries to attempting to regulate mercenary conduct. Both the articles issued by Archbishop Wilhelm of Riga in December of 1558 and the *Landtag* of the following summer contained restrictions on plundering. These injunctions presumably only applied to the treatment of the Confederation's own population, not to the robbing of enemy civilians;⁶²⁴ however, there were specific instructions that peasants living in parts of Livonia that had come under enemy occupation should not be molested.⁶²⁵ Although it was the norm for regulations against looting to restrict the warlord's hired soldiers from robbing his own subjects, the situation was invariably more complicated in the case of civil wars and domestic insurrections,

⁶²² Redlich, *De Praeda Militari*, 6.

⁶²³ *Briefe*, I, 26; *QU*, II, 69-83.; On December 18, 1557, *Landmarschall* Christoph von Neuenhofen had written to Fürstenberg to suggest that the presence of soldiers in Dorpat would only antagonize the Tsar and make the diocese's negotiations with Moscow more difficult. *QU*, II, 40-1. Once the Russian invasion began, the bishop sent an urgent letter requesting immediate reinforcements. *QU*, I, 55-7.

⁶²⁴ In practice, this distinction was, in any case, something of a moot point, since, with the exception of a few minor cross-border raids, the Livonian defenders found themselves fighting in their own territory. When a Livonian force gathered from Dünaburg and Rositen did raid into Russian territory in November of 1558, Renner noted that it was the peasant conscripts, not the professional mercenaries, who "burned, slew and devastated everything they encountered" with the greatest enthusiasm. *Renner*, 88.; *QU*, I, 290-6.

⁶²⁵ "*Doch schal men de vorsehunge don, dat den buren beide in dussen ock fienden landen an profiande und andern can den krigs luiden nichts mit gewalt edder sust genamen werde.*" ("However, care should be taken that the soldiers take no supplies from the peasants both in these or enemy-occupied lands, either by violence or by other means.") Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 248.

scenarios with which the Livonian War at times shared certain characteristics.⁶²⁶ That the articles issued by the Livonian authorities emphasized the need to keep the army properly provisioned as a precaution against pillaging reflects a tacit acknowledgement that the men would otherwise be forced to live off the land.⁶²⁷ Unfortunately, especially in the early stages of the war, when the Confederation was in its death throws, this was seldom possible. (The situation gradually improved under the Swedes, who regularly shipped food and war supplies to Reval.) The winter of 1559-1560, when the unpaid troops were dispersed throughout the land, provides an instructive example: the men billeted in the towns could grudgingly be supported by the burghers and provided with a market or sutlers from whom purchase supplies with their pay, but those dispatched to smaller settlements or castles in the interior often had to forage for themselves.⁶²⁸

Fairly typical of this period – and of the war more generally – was the situation of the resourceful *Landsknecht* commanders Joseph van Munden and Geert van der Marcke and their troops, who were stationed at Oberpahlen in late 1559 and remained there until September of 1560. These men were veterans of Denmark’s recent war in Dithmarschen and were therefore no doubt quite accustomed to taking what they wanted from uncooperative peasants. Left to their own devices, with neither pay nor provisions, they quickly resorted to banditry to survive, stealing livestock from the village of Porkel in mid-January and twice despoiling the village of Pikknurme in raids conducted on January 31 and May 21.⁶²⁹ Gotthard Kettler, in Riga at the time, had written to van Munden and the other captains the day before the latter incident, admonishing them to control their troops until they could be paid with money that was

⁶²⁶ Redlich, *De Praeda Militari*, 22.

⁶²⁷ This understanding of the causal link between lack of supply and pillaging continued to prevail in subsequent centuries, long after the establishment of national armies under the direct control of absolutist governments. Frederick the Great, for example, observed that “No government can exist without taxation, which is equally necessary to the republic and to the monarchy. The sovereign who labors in the public cause must be paid by the public; the judge the same, that he may have no need to prevaricate. The soldier must be supported that he may commit no violence, for want of having whereon to subsist.” Quoted in Bruno Aguilera-Barchet, *A History of Western Public Law: Between Nation and State* (Cham: Springer, 2015), 271.

⁶²⁸ In an urban setting, the soldiers were generally quartered in the homes of burghers in small groups of two to five. TLA B.e.6.146-51. In theory, concentrating troops near a large settlement, particularly a coastal one like Riga or Reval, made them easier to supply. However, this system relied on the ability of the authorities to keep them paid and to enforce discipline. When this was not possible, as in the case of the Scottish and German troops stationed in Reval over the winter of 1573-74, disaster could ensue. Kettler’s decision to disperse his mercenaries was certainly made in the knowledge that he would not be able to pay them.

⁶²⁹ Renner, 136-7 and 160.

supposed to be arriving from Prussia.⁶³⁰ A week later, having allegedly learned from a Russian captive that peasants in the district were collaborating with the Russians, van Munden and his *Landsknechte* carried out brutal reprisals against the inhabitants of the village of Kassinorm, where they “*rovede, brande und schloch doth alles wat he averquam, dede groten schaden with und breith*” and returned to their base at Oberpahlen with the villagers’ livestock.⁶³¹ However, they do seem to have made some efforts to protect the local population in addition to terrorizing them. In January, they successfully defended the nearby manor of the nobleman Caspar van der Recke from Russian raiders, and, on May 15, when six hundred Russians attacked Oberpahlen itself, the *Landsknechte* sallied forth from the castle and killed about one hundred of the invaders.

It seems clear that van Munden and his mercenaries were acting more or less independently of the central command throughout this period. Kettler’s letter of May 20 indicates that they were still officially in the service of the Livonian Order, but, being bereft of pay or supplies and isolated from the main army, they could do little but steal what they needed to survive from the Order’s own subjects, while defending Oberpahlen and the surrounding countryside from Russian attacks as best they could. With the *Landsknechte*’s attitude toward the local peasantry protective one moment and predatory the next, the relationship between the mercenaries and the civilian population must have been ambivalent at best. On September 15, with the Russians closing in and no reinforcements or supplies forthcoming from his employers, van Munden at last decided to abandon the castle. Shooting their Russian captives and leaving behind most of their own equipment, the *Landsknechte* departed Oberpahlen in secret and fled along forested backroads in order to evade the enemy. Despite their precautions, many were killed by vengeful peasants before they arrived at Pernau three days later. Under the circumstances, it seems doubtful that either the *Landsknechte*’s departure or the Russian occupation of Oberpahlen soon afterwards would have been greatly lamented by the locals.

If anything, the depredations of the mercenary cavalry or *Hofleute*, most of whom were Livonian nobles and their lackeys, were worse than those of the foreign *Landsknechte*. In part,

⁶³⁰ *QU*, V, 83-4.

⁶³¹ Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 307.

this was because they were mobile raiders with better knowledge of the land. Additionally, unlike *Landsknechte* shipped over from Germany, the *Hofleute* were Livonians themselves, so, when their employers suffered a setback or they went unpaid, they were disinclined to simply cut their losses and go elsewhere, instead remaining in the region and struggling to survive by changing sides or taking up banditry. Instances of these rogue cavalry pillaging the countryside, abusing the peasantry, and turning on their lieges – the Livonian Order, the Swedes, the Danes, the Russians or whomever they happened to be serving at the time – were a constant feature of the war throughout the 1560s and the early 1570s. The situation of these horsemen vacillated over the course of the war, along with their allegiances and their bases of operation. Broadly, their activities tended to be motivated by immediate self-interest, evidenced a high degree of internal disunity, and were characterized by frequent changes of master brought on by a combination of shifting political aspirations and lack of pay. In the late 1550s and early 1560s, the Livonian mercenary cavalry were heavily involved in the conflict between Duke Magnus and Gotthard Kettler, when many of them defected to the newly arrived Danish princeling as it became increasingly clear that the Livonian Order could not hold the Confederation together. This change of allegiance was coupled with a growing propensity for brigandage, as Kettler dryly observed in a letter dated July 23, 1560, in which he complained to Magnus of the pillaging being carried out by “*seine Ehrliche strassen Reuber unsere gewesne Solt Reuter*” (“his Honour’s highway robbers our erstwhile mercenary cavalry”).⁶³² In the same letter, he refers to these men as “*die Solt Reuter die In schutz und schirm des Magni seind*” (“the mercenary cavalry who are under the protection and shield of Magnus”), highlighting the complicated position in which they found themselves. Although Duke Magnus had presumably hired them in order to protect his own interests, Kettler’s reversal of this formulation presented them as renegades or fugitives who had defected to a rival potentate who offered them protection, or, less damningly, as newly minted vassals of Magnus who were now entitled to his guardianship. This ambiguity would become a defining characteristic of the *Hofleute*’s relations with their various employers in the years to come, as competing monarchs sought to

⁶³² *QU*, V, 245. Their banditry had already been going on for some time by this point. Renner, for example, describes how, in July of 1559, “*de Vellinschen soltruiters fellen vaken up de dorper und nemen den buren wat se funden*” and even murdered the son of the mayor of Riga. Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 245.

use them to shore up their interests in the region while they in turn sought out an overlord who could offer them protection from the chaos of war.⁶³³

During the latter half of the 1560s, the most active banners of *Hofleute* were the masterless reavers based at Pernau, who had turned on the Swedes in 1565 due to lack of pay and had seen their numbers swollen by reinforcements from Courland and elsewhere. By the early 1570s they were operating out of Wiek, loosely allied to Duke Magnus and using castles they had taken from the Swedes as bases from which to ravage the surrounding countryside. They survived through opportunistic raiding, robbing the peasantry for supplies and looting the estates of other nobles for money and booty. Here, as elsewhere, the most vicious raiding typically took place along contested borderlands, and the primary targets were the poorly defended farms and villages of the peasants. Baltic German cavalry operating under the command of Duke Magnus and of Moscow remained a serious threat to the Swedes during the 1570s, but both their independence and their military significance diminished after the failure of the second siege of Reval and Magnus's fall from grace. Ultimately, most of them drifted back into the orbit of Sweden or Poland, resettling in Estonia, Livonia, or Courland. The uneasy alliances that the Baltic German nobility formed with foreign rulers during this formative period laid the foundations for the more stable partnerships of the centuries to come, when they retained many of their privileges under the patronage of Stockholm and Moscow. For significant portions of the Livonian War, however, their primary occupation was glorified banditry.

In most instances, mercenaries and other troops were expressly forbidden from plundering while still engaged in battle, lest their undisciplined pursuit of booty expose themselves or their

⁶³³ Despite his obvious pro-Swedish sympathies, Russow provided a good summary of their shifting loyalties in the years following the collapse of Old Livonia. "Many of them put their hopes in the Emperor and the Holy Roman Empire [...] Many looked to the King of Denmark for comfort [...] Many placed their hope in the King of Poland [...] Some also relied on the Master of the Teutonic Order, since Livonia had belonged to the Order, and on other lords and princes as well [however] those who allied with Duke Magnus were, in their opinion, superior to all the Swedes, Poles and Danes [...] But when they began to have doubts about Duke Magnus' cause as well, a number of them placed their hope and faith in the Muscovite, who was, in their view, the mightiest and most powerful [...] Finally, after the King of Sweden, through the Grace of God, won the victory against the Muscovite [...] they again flocked to the illustrious King of Sweden from all districts and in the end he became their best lord." *Russow*, 155.

comrades to danger.⁶³⁴ Despite these instructions, such incidents were common. In early September of 1560, a Russian army *en route* from Pernau to Weissenstein camped at the manor of Hark, in Harrien, where their baggage train was attacked by a force of noblemen, commoners, and mercenaries from Reval. Taking the Russians by surprise, the Revalians were able to kill six hundred of them, drive off the rest, and capture their supply train.⁶³⁵ However, when the *Landsknechte* abandoned the artillery to chase the fleeing enemy in hopes of further spoils, Russian troops from the main camp counter-attacked and routed the Revalians, killing sixty of them and capturing their valuable field guns.⁶³⁶ Russow reflected that “one could have inflicted great injury on the Russians at this time, if one had exercised proper caution.”⁶³⁷ The previous November, a somewhat similar event had taken place when mounted *Landsknechte* in search of spoils had recklessly pursued fleeing Russians despite being forbidden on their lives from plundering until the enemy had been defeated (“*by lives straffe gebaden, dat nemand plundern scholde, er de fiende geslagen*”).⁶³⁸ And, in August of 1565, the mistakes of five years before were repeated when the mutinous Pernau horsemen camped near Reval, intending to drive the Swedes from the city, and were attacked by a force of Swedish soldiers and German mercenaries under the command of the governor, Henrik Klasson. The Swedes rode forth from the city and took the Livonian cavalry by surprise, attacking them in their camp at dawn, driving them off, and looting the rich booty that they had brought with them from Pernau, Courland, and Livonia. However, a group of the Livonians, led by *Hauptmann* Heinrich Dueker, rallied and returned to the camp, where they killed over a hundred of the plundering Swedes before again falling back.⁶³⁹ Lives might have been saved and a more decisive victory won, reducing the renegade horsemen’s capacity to continue harassing the Swedes in the years to come, had the Swedish army pressed its attack or been more cautious,

⁶³⁴ *QU*, I, 290-6.

⁶³⁵ In the process, they liberated many Livonian captives and took back much of the booty and livestock stolen by the Russians in Wiek. *Renner*, 185.

⁶³⁶ *Briefe*, IV, 63-4.

⁶³⁷ *Russow*, 89.

⁶³⁸ *Renner, Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 273.

⁶³⁹ Dueker was killed three years later, on August 24, 1568, while fighting against the Swedes near Pernau. The raids of the renegade horsemen based at Pernau inflicted considerable destruction on the portions of Estonia held by both the Swedes and the Russians during this period. They also clashed with other Baltic German horsemen, these primarily from Harrien, who were fighting in the service of Sweden, men who were “for the most part, [their own] close cousins, in-laws and uncles.” *Russow*, 106-7 and 112-3. The Northern Seven Years’ War and the domestic turmoil caused by the struggles of Duke Johan and Duke Karl against their older brother, King Erik, prevented the Swedes from taking stronger action against the rogue Livonian cavalry at this time.

but, once again, the lure of booty proved too great for the troops to resist. Such was the nature of early modern warfare. When the men were inadequately supplied and infrequently paid to risk their lives in the service of a distant monarch, it is little wonder that they leapt at the chance of instant enrichment when the opportunity for plunder presented itself.

At other times, soldiers were actively encouraged to plunder. There were several possible reasons for the authorities to endorse this practice, the most common being the use of pillaging as a terror tactic to punish an enemy, the offer of booty as a reward to troops for participating in a particularly perilous attack, the weaponization of raiding as a means of damaging an enemy's economy, harassment in order to provoke a foe without risking outright confrontation, and the encouragement of armed foraging as a means of sustenance while in enemy territory.⁶⁴⁰ To a degree, most early modern armies operated on a system of reward. In return for success on the battlefield, members of the nobility who served as high ranking officers were enfeoffed with newly conquered lands or given prominent positions in the administration of new territories. In the cases of Sweden's Baltic conquests and in Russia's eastward drive into Asia, such policies created a positive feedback loop between the nobility and the government that drove expansionism, with the government encouraging military service through offers of reward and the aristocracy pushing for new wars of conquest in order to benefit from the spoils.⁶⁴¹ Many of the early Swedish governors of Estonia fall into this category, and one, the Frenchman Pontus de la Gardie, began his career as a mercenary before rising to prominence through service and promotion.⁶⁴² Titles, estates, and lands were sometimes handed out in lieu

⁶⁴⁰ "No logistic system of the time could sustain an army embarked on operations in enemy territory, nor, indeed, was the need for such a system felt prior to our period. From time immemorial the problem had been solved simply by having the troops take whatever they required." Tallett, *War and Society*, 7.

⁶⁴¹ Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland in the Swedish Kingdom," 54-5. During the Thirty Years' War, Swedish commanders often accumulated enough plunder to retire in luxury when they returned home, and German language anti-Swedish propaganda pamphlets of the day lament the enormous flow of capital out of the Empire and into Sweden. Redlich, *De Praedi Militari*, 56. This pattern was repeated during the mid-seventeenth century Swedish invasions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Russian boyars were given new lands in the east, helping to drive Moscow's expansion into Asia. Comparatively few mercenaries served in the Tsar's armies, but those that did often complained about the distribution of supplies and spoils, although they were sometimes allotted estates for their service, as were Russian military servitors. Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 54.

⁶⁴² De la Gardie (1520-1585) was initially employed by the Danes, before being captured by the Swedes during the Northern Seven Years' War and defecting to Stockholm. He was ennobled after only four years of service, and he soon rose to command the Swedish forces in Estonia. In 1580, he married an illegitimate daughter of King Johan who was roughly thirty-five years his junior. He drowned in the Narva River five years later, dragged down by his own armour. His tomb, designed by Arent Passer, is located in St. Mary's Cathedral, in Tallinn.

of pay when the authorities were short on cash, a practice which contributed to the creation of new military aristocracies in countries like Sweden and Poland-Lithuania. Further down the pecking order, less exalted fighting men could be induced to take up arms by the promise of more mundane reward; as Montecuccoli observed, “it is possible to make soldiers resolute by raising the hope of great reward and prizes if they succeed” and advised military commanders to remind their troops that victory would allow them to “seize everything – men, women, gold, silver, the enemy’s whole country.”⁶⁴³

In addition to the broad appeal of enlisting for plunder, rewards were sometimes given for the completion of specific tasks. In the winter of 1559, for example, with the Tsar’s forces ravaging the lands around Riga, the city’s council offered a bounty of two thalers for each Russian captured and one for each killed.⁶⁴⁴ Plunder or monetary reward was also used as an incentive for troops who were unwilling to undertake dangerous battlefield actions, such as assaulting breaches. When Gotthard Kettler recaptured Rigen in late October of 1558, for example, the *Landsknechte* were at first unwilling to assault the castle in the face of devastating fire from the defending *streltsy*, but they eventually stormed it in return for booty and coin.⁶⁴⁵ On other occasions, soldiers were rewarded after the fact for performing especially courageous or ingenious actions on their own initiative, as in the case of the Swedish troops who recaptured the citadel of Reval during the Kursell mutiny or the officer Hans Uthermarcke who was wounded in the neck while leading the *Landsknechte* in an assault on the Russian-held castle of Lais (on December 15, 1559).⁶⁴⁶ Near the end of the war, Pontus de la Gardie was able to take the fortified port city of Narva relatively quickly by decreeing a twenty-four hour period of unrestricted plundering to any who would join the attack, an offer so tempting that not only the infantry, but also the officers, cavalry, sailors, and camp followers came

⁶⁴³ Montecuccoli, *Sulle Battaglie*, 135-6.

⁶⁴⁴ This call does not seem to have been answered by the professional soldiery but by the general population, five hundred of whom left the city in hopes of killing or capturing the foe. They were quickly chased back into the safety of the city without having accomplished anything of note by the sudden appearance of a Russian army. Renner, 96.

⁶⁴⁵ Calculation of one month’s service began again after every successful battle or siege, and special payments were also made before assaults (“*Das ein storm ader schlacht verhanden und von Ihnen den kriegsknechten erobert und gewonnen wurde soll Ihre monat denselben tagk auffs neuwe angehen und nach aussgang desselben Monats getreulich besoldet werden...*”). *QU*, I, 169-72. and *QU*, I, 281.

⁶⁴⁶ He received “*ein sammitte kleit van hovede tho vote.*” Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 273.

forward to participate, resulting in an orgy of violence that left nearly the entire Russian population of the city dead.⁶⁴⁷ While it was uncommon for camp followers to voluntarily take part in pitched battles, especially actions as dangerous as storming a breach in a well defended city, it was not unusual for civilians accompanying armies to participate in raiding, foraging, robbery, and armed requisitioning. The Livonian War witnessed widespread thieving and pillaging amongst the peasantry, particularly between peasants living on the borders of districts occupied by rival powers, and the armies were invariably accompanied by camp followers of various descriptions who assisted in requisitioning supplies.⁶⁴⁸ Little information survives about the activities or composition of the *Tross* in the Livonian context, but the sources do contain a few tantalizing hints, such as Russow's observation that the Scottish army that came to Estonia in 1573 was accompanied by many who were not trained soldiers but "peddlers, sutlers, and vagrants" and "*so lange alle men de Lande, Buren, unde Börger bestrossen mochte, sint yde alle gude krygeslüde gewesen*" ("so long as they all could pillage the land, peasants, and burghers, they were all good soldiers"), but, when it came time to fight the enemy, a third of them were unfit for combat and deserted.⁶⁴⁹

In summa, a picture emerges of warfare in which raiding, theft, and plunder were the norm, not only for professional mercenaries, but for all categories of troops and at times even for civilians. Towns and castles were the richest targets, but the villages and farms of the peasantry and the manors of the nobility proved to be the softest and were mercilessly ransacked for food, supplies, and even slaves (for which the Tatars were notorious).⁶⁵⁰ The authorities sometimes sought to limit these practices, but, in other contexts, they encouraged them. At times, they even used systematic robbery to punish their own civilians, as in April of 1559, when the Livonian Order gave instructions to its officers in Reval to arrest refugees arriving at the city from Dorpat and confiscate their property;⁶⁵¹ or, a decade and a half later, when

⁶⁴⁷ Russow describes men arming themselves for the assault "joyously, as if preparing for a dance." *Russow*, 213.

⁶⁴⁸ Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 146-54.; Möller, *Das Regiment der Landsknechte*, 152-63.

⁶⁴⁹ Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 83.

⁶⁵⁰ Heinrich von Staden reported that the Turks had been given "the right to buy for money all the prisoners taken by the Russians in Lithuania and Poland as well as those from Sweden, likewise those from Livonia and other surrounding lands, and to carry them off to their own and other countries." Staden, *The Land and Government of Muscovy*, 37.

⁶⁵¹ Dietrich von Galen wrote to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg on April 18 inquiring what should be done with these people, reporting that they had "*viel wagen mit städtlichen gutern beladen*" and that "*von tag zu tag Je mehr*

citizens who chose to leave Pernau with their possessions rather than live under Russian rule were robbed by troops in the service of the Swedish-aligned Duke Magnus of Saxony, who justified his larceny by arguing that they should have used this wealth to fortify their city or hire soldiers to protect it.⁶⁵² All sides raided one another's territory when given the chance, and the questionable example set by the authorities themselves combined with the perennial failure to keep the armies properly paid and supplied made enforcing a prohibition on plundering effectively impossible. With pitched battles few and far between, the Livonian War became a conflict waged through raids, sieges, banditry, and privateering. Two and a half decades of robbery and abuse at the hands of rival armies exacted a terrible toll on the Lettish and Estonian peasantry, who were alternately robbed by the Tsar's Russian and Tatar invaders, by their own nobility, by the foreign mercenaries hired to defend their lands, and even by other peasants – all the while being taxed by their overlords in order to finance the ongoing war effort.⁶⁵³

7.3 Mercenaries in Livonia: A Military and Economic Assessment

Assessing the overall impact of the mercenaries operating in Estonia and Livonia over the course of the Livonian War is no simple matter. Conditions fluctuated as the conflict progressed, especially after the region was transformed by the imposition of foreign rule in 1561. The question is further complicated by the importance of taking into account both military and economic aspects of mercenarism; a wholistic approach quickly reveals the artificiality of treating the two as discrete considerations in an era when security and economy

leuth und guter aus Derpt ankomen thedten." He speculated that it was part of an enemy plan. *QU*, III, 167-9. A list of the goods confiscated from these people survives. *QU*, III, 193-4. Fürstenberg responded the following month with instructions that the property should be returned to those who were not considered guilty of collaborating with the Russians. *QU*, III, 194-6. Some of the refugees fleeing Dorpat in July of 1558 were also robbed on the *Landmeister's* orders while on the road. Wilhelm Wiefferling, a burgher of Reval, oversaw this operation and took "a great treasure of gold and silver to the gain of the Master." *Russow*, 76.

⁶⁵² In contrast to the situation in many other parts of the country, the seven-year Russian occupation of Pernau was quite mild, and the burghers were allowed to leave with any of their possessions if they chose to do so. Norbert Angermann, "Pernau in den Jagren 1575-1582," *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 19 (1970), 744-51. In 1574, Duke Magnus, the brother-in-law of King Johan of Sweden and a former favourite of the deposed King Erik, had been enfeoffed with Sonnenburg Castle, in the Swedish portion of Ösel. A difficult man, he quickly feuded with Claus von Ungern, the Danish governor of neighbouring Arensburg.

⁶⁵³ Russow gives some indication of the scale of the devastation when he describes how Livonia was made barren by the raiding of "*sinen eigenen Landeslüden, Düdeschen unde Undüdeschen, so wol alle van anderen frembden Nationen,*" so that in parts of the country neither livestock nor humans remained, adding that this was on top of what the Russians and Tatars had already done throughout the war. *Russow, Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 122.

were becoming increasingly intertwined through the growing monetization of war and the emergence of new programs of fiscal-militarism. However, the distinction remains an analytically useful one. Troops were only of value for as long as they could be kept in the field, which required both the logistical wherewithal to adequately supply them and the financial capacity to pay them. Equally, however, a healthy economic base and a robust logistical support structure were insufficient to win wars if the quality of the available troops was lacking. Both of these observations relate to the military revolution hypothesis, which, despite dominating the military historiography of early modern Europe for the past half century, has been underexplored in the context of northeastern Europe. Does a close examination of mercenarism and its associated expenses in the Livonian War support the broad, central claim of the hypothesis, that military factors shaped early modern European state development, and, if so, how did this process unfold? And does the performance of mercenary soldiers recruited in central and western Europe (as well as western-style fighters raised in Livonia itself) support the specifically military claims of the hypothesis? In light of the evidence presented in the past two chapters, this section is an examination of these two questions, beginning with the second and more straightforward of them.

In general, professional mercenaries recruited abroad, primarily of the *Landsknecht* and *Reiter* types, proved to be effective warriors who were more than capable of holding their own against their Livonian and Swedish employers' Russian adversaries. Many of the Muscovite troops, both Russian and Tatar, were experienced fighters who had served in the campaigns of the 1550s against Astrakhan and Kazan, but Ivan the Terrible's strategy of fielding huge armies consisting of tens of thousands of men meant that the average professionalism and equipment of the Russian soldiery was almost always inferior to that of the Western mercenaries.⁶⁵⁴ Although the improvements made to the Russian siege artillery and to the *streltsy* should not be underestimated, Moscow's forces were so successful in the early stages of the war and in the 1570s because of their numbers, with Russian armies thousands or even tens of thousands strong commonly besieging isolated castles garrisoned by dozens or hundreds of enemy soldiers. On many occasions, the Livonians, Swedes, and their mercenaries simply could not engage the Russians because they were so greatly outnumbered, and it was common for local

⁶⁵⁴ Peterson, *Warrior Kings of Sweden*, 93.; Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 264.

commanders to express frustration at their powerlessness to counterattack the much larger Russian forces ravaging the territories around the castles in which they sheltered.⁶⁵⁵ However, in smaller skirmishes, when the odds were more even, the Livonians and their mercenaries often had the best of it, as even the Russians themselves acknowledged.⁶⁵⁶

Unfortunately, for much of the war, the combat prowess of the *Landsknechte* could not be put to good effect, and they were often prevented by circumstance from doing what they did best. Excellent battlefield troops, the Livonian War presented these high quality infantry with very few pitched battles in which to demonstrate their worth, and, in an attritional struggle primarily fought by means of sieges and raiding, expensive elite infantry were often more of a liability than an asset.⁶⁵⁷ When possible, early modern leaders attempted to hire a strong force of mercenaries with which to win a decisive victory and then discharged them as quickly as possible; but, because the numerical inferiority of the Livonians and Swedes made them fear engaging the Russians directly, they instead relied on the strength of their castles and fortified cities to offset the Russians' numbers.⁶⁵⁸ A war of attrition ensued in which the Livonians and Swedes were compelled to keep a certain number of professional mercenaries in their employ

⁶⁵⁵ *QU*, I, 172-6. and *QU*, II, 139-40. are typical. Offensive operations also suffered from shortages of men. For example, the Livonians' failure to take advantage of the opportunity to attack Russian-held Dorpat in November of 1559 was a product of their inability to properly invest the city. They estimated that three siege camps would be needed, and they only had sufficient men for one. *QU*, III, 329.

⁶⁵⁶ Prince Kurbsky, for example, attributed the many defeats of the Russians in smaller clashes fought over the winter of 1558-9 to the fact that the Tsar had pulled back his best troops to defend Moscow against the Tatars. Kurbsky, *History of Ivan IV*, 135-7. The alleged traitor Lustfer was also supposed to have advised Ivan the Terrible to invade when he did because there were no longer any *Landsknechte* stationed in Livonia, following the release of these troops after the resolution of the dispute between Riga, Poland, and the Livonian Order in late 1557. *Renner*, 59. Although the testimony given by Lustfer under torture is highly suspect, the fact that the Livonian authorities treated this assessment as credible indicates that the presence of *Landsknechte* in the region was itself considered a significant deterrent.

⁶⁵⁷ It is difficult to evaluate how effective the Livonian forces would have been in large field engagements because they only fought one such battle, at Ermes (August 2, 1560), and, being outnumbered more than ten-to-one, had no realistic hope of victory. Reports of the battle may be found in *Briefe*, V, 269-70 and 276-84. Prince Kurbsky criticized the Livonians for their failure to scout, which caused them to stumble into an engagement they could not win, and he also remarked upon the habitual drunkenness of the German troops. However, he praised the courage and character of *Landmarschall* Philipp Schall von Bell. *Kurbsky*, 140-3. At Lode, in early 1573, the Swedish infantry performed well, breaking the Russian lines, but it was the cavalry that caused the most casualties in the pursuit. The allied Polish-Swedish army that defeated the Russians at Wenden in 1578 was so international – consisting of Swedish, Polish, German, Bohemian, Transylvanian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, and Romanian troops – that it is questionable whether the role of any one branch of the force can be singled out as critical.

⁶⁵⁸ Most early modern commanders and theorists, as well as traditional military historians, viewed pitched battles as more decisive than sieges, but sieges were far more common. Large field engagements usually took place in conjunction with a siege or when an army was cut off from supply or escape and forced to fight, as at Ermes. Tallett, *War and Society*, 53-4.

in order to maintain a credible defense but generally did not dare to risk using them in the field, a dilemma that quickly drained their financial resources and left them vulnerable to indiscipline, desertion, and mutiny on the part of their hired troops.⁶⁵⁹ The boredom and stress of garrison duty, poor morale caused by news of Russian victories, infrequent pay, insufficient support from the authorities, low numbers, and the threats and bribes of the Russians all undermined the efficacy of the *Landsknechte* in ways that had nothing to do with their martial prowess.⁶⁶⁰ However, it should be noted that many of these issues were universal failings of all early modern mercenary warfare, rather than peculiarities of the Livonian context. Sixteenth-century French commanders, for example, were generally of the opinion that German mercenaries were effective shock troops but less valuable in siege operations and difficult to control when not paid.⁶⁶¹ The events of the Livonian War amply reinforce this observation.

In addition to their problems as siege troops, the *Landsknechte* were not especially suited to the other principal requirement of the war: raiding and counter-raiding. Even when not so badly outnumbered that they were forced to skulk behind the thick walls of their employers' towns and castles, the *Landsknechte*'s lack of mobility made it very difficult for them to intercept the fleet Tatar and *pomeste'e* cavalry fielded by the Russians. While Estonia and Livonia were rich and highly developed by the standards of the eastern Baltic, the population density was nevertheless far lower, the distances between large settlements much greater, and the terrain more rugged than in the *Landsknechte*'s traditional Central and Western European stomping grounds. These factors made it more challenging to live off the land, remain in supply, and intercept enemy forces. *Landsknechte* could augment cavalry when sallying from a fortified town or castle, but they were usually too slow to counter mounted enemies in open country. In early 1559, for example, Russian and Tatar cavalry were plundering and terrorizing in the

⁶⁵⁹ The Livonians' chronic shortages of manpower were partially a product of their adoption of a dispersed defensive strategy that relied on maintaining small garrisons at scores of castles and fortified villages scattered across the Confederation, lending support to John Lynn's thesis that the growth of armies in the early modern period had more to do with the number of garrisons than the need for larger forces to besiege the new fortifications of the *trace italienne* type (as Geoffrey Parker had earlier argued). Lynn, "The *trace italienne* and the Growth of Armies," 297-330.

⁶⁶⁰ Hale points to the seldom-discussed effect of tedium on a garrisons' morale as an important factor in early modern warfare. Hale, *War and Society*, 133-5.

⁶⁶¹ Möller, *Das Regiment der Landsknechte*, 14-35.; David Potter, "Les Allemands et les armées françaises au XVIe siècle. Jean-Philippe Rhingrave, chef de lansquenets: étude suivie de sa correspondance en France, 1548-1566," *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, vol. 20/2 (1993), 1-20.

vicinity of Riga, and the Livonians set out in pursuit with a strong force of *Landsknechte*, but, before the enemy could be engaged, the German infantry had to turn back when they proved unable to make their way through the deep snow, while the Russians avoided tiring their horses by driving captured peasants before them to create a path.⁶⁶² It quickly became apparent that cavalry – whether mercenary *Reiter* or the Baltic German *Hofleute* or the hussars of the Poles – were better able to counter the Tsar’s mounted plunderers than were heavy infantry, and, even when the foot soldiers could break the Russian lines or drive them off, as at Lode, the most casualties were usually inflicted by the cavalry in the rout and pursuit.⁶⁶³ Consequently, as the war progressed, the importance of the *Landsknechte* declined relative to the cavalry, whose superior mobility not only made them more suitable troops for raiding and counter-raiding, but also allowed them to live off the land more effectively since they were better foragers.⁶⁶⁴ This strategic development would have important socio-political ramifications for the future development of the region, encouraging the local nobility to turn to military enterprise as mercenary horsemen and preventing the authorities from replacing them with professional infantry, as was the trend in some other parts of the continent. During a transitional period of extreme chaos, the Baltic German nobility was thereby able to retain its position as the region’s preeminent landowning class in part because the Swedes and the Poles made a habit of rewarding mercenary cavalry captains with estates when they were unable to pay them in coin.⁶⁶⁵

Frank Tallett has noted that much of early modern “military activity was concerned [...] with foraging, raiding, destroying the enemies’ economic resources, occupying territories with supply potential, and besieging strongpoints which allowed its control and denied its use to the enemy” [and that] “warfare remained attritional in nature, its aim being to wear down the

⁶⁶² This Russian force went on to cause considerable damage, massacring civilians in the vicinity of Dünamunde and even burning two large ships at anchor. *QU*, III, 119-22.

⁶⁶³ “Thus, the sole objective in establishing a battle order is to disrupt, smite, rout, confuse, and hound the enemy from the field. Thereafter, in pursuit, one can massacre him.” Montecuccoli, *Sulle Battaglie*, 83.

⁶⁶⁴ There were instances of unmounted troops making use of horses acquired in theatre, as when Joseph van Munden and his men stole horses from both the local peasantry and the Russians, later using them in an operation against the enemy. *Renner*, 165.

⁶⁶⁵ Urban, *Bayonets for Hire*, 68. See Russow’s observation that the King of Sweden, out of Christian compassion, “*desüluien Höfe, Dörper, und Landgüder, de in Lyfflandt noch auerich weren, den nodtröfftigen van Adel, Börgern unde Krygeslüden merer deels uth Gnaden vorlenet hadde, darmit se sick underholden möchten.*” Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 152.

enemy, rather than annihilate him with a single blow.”⁶⁶⁶ These broad conditions, in conjunction with the geographic and demographic characteristics of eastern Baltic, meant that hallmark developments of the military revolution like superior professional infantry and field artillery were frequently of little use against an enemy that was often either too mobile to be caught or too numerous to risk engaging in the field.⁶⁶⁷ In contrast, the nature of the war played to the Russians’ strengths in light cavalry and siege artillery, while the *streltsy*’s comparative vulnerability in field engagements – unlike Western infantry, *streltsy* regiments consisted entirely of arquebusiers without a complement of pikemen to defend them from cavalry – was of less importance than their prowess at defending fortified positions with concentrated firepower.⁶⁶⁸ That the Russians lost the war was not, therefore, primarily a consequence of qualitative advances in Western mercenary infantry and artillery, although these advances were real, but more of their ultimate inability to fight off the Swedish and Polish-Lithuanian forces on two fronts (and the Ottoman-backed Crimeans on a third), of the superiority of the Polish cavalry to their own, of socio-economic woes inflicted upon the nation by Ivan the Terrible’s tyrannical policies, of the emergence late in the war of two intelligent enemy commanders in the persons of Stefan Batory and Pontus de la Gardie, and of Moscow’s inability to contest the Western naval dominance that allowed Reval and Riga to be continuously supplied by sea.⁶⁶⁹ By the 1580s, Russia was simply a nation exhausted – economically, militarily, and demographically.⁶⁷⁰

Despite the popular reputation for selfishness and disloyalty enjoyed by members of their profession, it is not clear that the mercenaries were inherently more duplicitous than other troops serving in the Livonian War. It is true that, especially before 1561, mercenary garrisons were guilty of surrendering several Livonian castles, but so were the officers and vassals of the Livonian Order, and it would be unfair to fault the German *Landsknechte* for failing to die

⁶⁶⁶ Tallett, *War and Society*, 66-7.

⁶⁶⁷ Compare Parrott’s contention that it was the *Reiter*, rather than pike-armed infantry, that ended the dominance of heavy cavalry in the West. Parrott, *The Business of War*, 58-9.

⁶⁶⁸ The Russians’ prior experiences in steppe warfare had also predisposed them to the avoidance of pitched field engagements, in which the Tatars were at their most dangerous. Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 19.

⁶⁶⁹ Some of these observations were made at the time by outside observers. Giles Fletcher, for example, noted that “the people, being oppressed and spoiled of their gettings, are discouraged from their labors” and opined that Ivan had been defeated by the Poles because of the “disquietness of his own state at home.” Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, 67 and 86.

⁶⁷⁰ Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System*, 267 and 271-8.

defending castles that the Livonians themselves would not risk trying to relieve. It is also questionable whether the surrender or desertion of mercenaries who had not been paid for months should be seen as disloyalty or as a legitimate reaction to a breach of the terms of their employment. While chronicles and correspondences of the day make clear that the mercenaries were held responsible for surrenders, desertions, and indiscipline motivated by lack of pay, the difficult circumstances of the troops and the culpability of the authorities who failed to pay or support them were invariably downplayed or ignored.⁶⁷¹ Foreign mercenaries operating in the region did occasionally switch sides, but this was much less common than simply surrendering or deserting, in part because the Russians did not favour the use of such troops and so preferred to induce them to leave the region.⁶⁷² At the same time, many Livonians defected to the service of the Swedes, Danes, Poles, and Russians, and it was not uncommon for them to shift allegiance multiple times as the fortunes of the great powers waxed and waned. It is true, of course, that the *Hofleute* were especially prone to sudden changes of allegiance, but it is questionable whether they should be seen strictly as mercenary cavalry or as a mounted militia of the Baltic German nobility that sometimes cooperated with foreign powers in return for protection and pay. In other words, their fluctuating loyalties were in part a product of their vested political interests in the outcome of the war, the very thing that potentially qualifies their status as “pure” mercenaries (for further discussion of this problem, see Chapter 8.3).⁶⁷³ The fact that so many of the leaders of the war – Gotthard Kettler, Duke Magnus, Prince Kurbsky, etc. – ultimately defected to foreign powers also makes it more difficult to blame the ordinary men in their service for lesser lapses of loyalty.

The security of a state militarily reliant on mercenary armies was intimately linked to its finances, and the partitioning of Livonia in 1561 should thus be seen as a product of her monetary depletion as well as her military exhaustion. The Livonians did not have the men to wage a short and decisive campaign against the overwhelmingly more numerous Russians and

⁶⁷¹ Needless to say, the authorities themselves were also keen to stress the illegitimacy of any actions taken by their mercenaries in protest against lack of pay. During the Kursell mutiny of 1570, for example, an official declaration was made to the effect that Kursell and his unpaid men had been unjustified in seizing the citadel of Reval and the goods contained therein. TLA B.r.4.II.

⁶⁷² Filjushkin has argued that “Russian society was prejudiced against European mercenaries [and that] such behaviour was considered shameful.” Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible*, 19.

⁶⁷³ In times of civil strife and deeply divided loyalties, locally unattached mercenaries were sometimes seen as *more* reliable because their financial motivations were predictable and unlikely to be clouded by other considerations. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages*, 149.

also lacked the funds needed to maintain a defensively viable force through a long war of attrition (or, at least, did not have the political will to raise the required money from the country's wealthy but disparate factions). Mercenaries, readily available throughout the Baltic region and often more than a match for the Tsar's troops in terms of quality, became both a necessary component of the Livonians' defensive strategy and a significant factor in the country's eventual disintegration. Without these expensive troops, the Russians could not have been resisted for as long as they were, but the cost of employing them was also a contributing factor in Livonia's increasing financial and military reliance on the Swedes, Danes, Poles, and Lithuanians – the very powers who, in the early 1560s, carved up the parts of the country that the Russians had not yet conquered. Employing mercenary armies was also a painful expense for the Danes and the Swedes. After the Northern Seven Years' War, Denmark responded to the crippling financial demands of prolonged campaigning by retreating from foreign engagements; while still a naval power with the ability to defend her own waters, Copenhagen would never again raise a large field army for overseas expansion. Sweden took a very different path, becoming one of the great powers of the seventeenth century and fighting long wars across northern and central Europe. The campaigns of the *Stormakstid* were made possible by the logistical, administrative, and financial lessons learned during the wars of the sixteenth century – the Dacke Rebellion, the Northern Seven Years' War, and, of course, the Livonian War. In this respect, the outcome of the Livonian War supports the central thesis of the military revolution paradigm: the escalating financial and organizational pressures of military expenditure forced states to adapt effectively, as did Sweden, or perish, as did the Old Livonian Confederation.

The Livonian War was fought for a variety of reasons (see Chapter 3.2), some of which were economic, so it is worth considering to what degree the states who contested the conflict profited from it. It is important here to distinguish between gains made from the outcomes of a war – which could yield conquered territories and expanded tax bases, monetary reparations and tributes, and control of strategic resources and trade routes⁶⁷⁴ – and the notion that war itself could be a profitable enterprise. In the sixteenth-century Baltic world, as in any other

⁶⁷⁴ Glete argued that political power had been more closely linked to trade and market control in the medieval Baltic, during the heyday of the Hanseatic League, than it would become during the seventeenth century, when it was dominated by strong territorial states. Glete, *War and the State*, 212.

time or place, the victors could expect to reap economic rewards after the fact; however, accepting short term losses incurred during the fighting in the expectation of long-term gains was quite different from the creation of a war economy in which the state actually realized a profit through the waging of war. For the most part, this was something that would require administrative, infrastructural, and logistical developments that were still far off in the 1500s. It is widely agreed that warfare was nearly always a net financial loss for sixteenth-century European states; indeed, the costs of warfare and the servicing of debts incurred during previous conflicts were “incomparably the greatest drain on their finances.”⁶⁷⁵ Even mighty Spain, the wealthiest European nation of the sixteenth century, was bankrupted by military expenses on three occasions in the latter half of the sixteenth century alone.⁶⁷⁶ The first early modern fiscal-military states – Spain, the Dutch Republic, and Sweden – were becoming more adept than their rivals at using their economies to support prolonged war efforts, but their growing capacities for monetary extraction and the increasing efficiency with which their funds were used to finance military ventures should not be confused with the ability to profit from the war economy itself. This would become possible only once the military and its support industries were brought under more direct state control through nationalization, allowing for capital raised for war to be reinvested in the domestic economy.⁶⁷⁷ The widespread sixteenth-century reliance on mercenaries meant that much of the money spent on a campaign instead flowed out of the country, into the hands of foreign military enterprisers. War could still be a sound investment if it secured militarily or economically strategic goals or ensured the survival of the state, but warfare itself was not yet an effective program for governmental profit.

⁶⁷⁵ Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System*, 6.

⁶⁷⁶ Van Creveld, *Supplying War*, 8.

⁶⁷⁷ Notably, none of the first wave of early modern fiscal-military survived as great powers into the modern era. Spain and Sweden were both militarily and economically exhausted by the end of the seventeenth century, and the Low Countries cast aside its aspirations to be a first class fiscal-military power in favour of a more commercial focus. New European powers would dominate after 1700. Eighteenth-century Prussia emerged as a great power through an effective program of fiscal-militarism, but even Prussian fiscal-militarism was successful not because it rendered war a profitable enterprise but because the state's entire economy was subordinated to the needs of the military. Britain and France both made significant fiscal-military advances over the course of the eighteenth century, but neither was able to sustain the enormous costs of virtually ceaseless European warfare and colonial competition. The financial burdens and unpopular tax policies of the Seven Years' War lost both countries many of their American colonies. Duffy, “Introduction,” 7.

It was not national governments that were primarily responsible for the monetization of war. This was a trend that had already begun with the broad socio-economic movement toward monetization and professionalization in the late Middle Ages (accelerating in the wake of the Black Death). Early modern governments, like their medieval predecessors, derived much of their authority and their legitimacy from their ability to provide protection to their subjects. In a feudal society with a predominantly agricultural economy, this was mainly accomplished through a socially determined hierarchy of vassalage, in which military service was rendered to an overlord in return for his protection, or in which (semi-)autonomous municipalities and local elites maintained their independence by seeing to their own defenses. The monetization of warfare during the golden age of early modern mercenarism did not fundamentally alter this basic *raison d'être* of the state; indeed, the Vasa dynasty's state-building project was successful in part because Sweden's kings proved especially adept at providing protection in exchange for the cooperation of their subjects.⁶⁷⁸ (In the sixteenth-century Baltic, this was nowhere clearer than in the defection of Reval and much of northern Estonia to Sweden in return for protection from the Muscovites, who were seen by most locals as less palatable overlords.) What had changed was that military monetization and the growth in the scale and sophistication of warfare meant that sixteenth-century states had to adapt in order to remain viable protection-sellers in the social-contract-cum-protection-racket from which their legitimacy derived. It was the intersection of increasingly monetized and professionalized mercenary warfare with government's longstanding mandate of providing protection in times of conflict that drove the transition from domain to tax state (with the fiscal-military state understood as an especially militarized form of the latter).

The sporadic and expedient taxes of the sixteenth century were nearly always raised in reaction to the immediate costs of warfare. The extraordinary tax levied by the Livonian Confederation at the *Landtag* held in July of 1559 (see above), for example, was a direct response to the need to hire more mercenaries from Germany in order to resist the Russian invasion.⁶⁷⁹ The funds

⁶⁷⁸ The developments experienced over the course of the Livonian War are in keeping with Glete's thesis that the (early) modern state was essentially a "new, large scale actor on an old market: the market for protection and control of violence" and that it sold "protection against violence to society by raising taxes through fiscal organisation [and delivered] the service through military organisation." Glete, "Warfare, Entrepreneurship, and the Fiscal-Military State," 305-6.

⁶⁷⁹ Renner, 112.

collected were almost always insufficient to fully cover the costs of a long war, and taxation of any sort invariably provoked resistance from traditional powerholders and estates who resented having to surrender their wealth or their independence to a central authority.⁶⁸⁰ The necessity of convening a *Landtag* just to persuade the Confederations' corporate members to contribute to their common defense, while not unusual in the context of the sixteenth-century German world, highlights the disconnect between Livonia's medieval institutions and the changing nature of warfare. Old Livonia was a confederation of knights, bishops, nobles, merchants, and towns loosely united through a complex arrangement of decentralized power-sharing in which each faction was fiercely protective of its traditional rights and privileges. The Livonians' institutions and resources had proven sufficient for the challenges of medieval Baltic warfare, when they resisted growing pressure from neighbouring states through a combination of the Livonian Order's military capabilities and the locally organized defenses of the Confederation's other corporate members. As the evidence presented in the preceding chapters has shown, this system would not be flexible or efficient enough to meet the demands of the monetized, professional warfare of the late sixteenth century, when the Livonians were rudely awakened to the difficulties of trying to apply medieval solutions (administrative, economic, strategic, and tactical) to distinctly early modern military problems.⁶⁸¹ It was not, of course, that the Livonians were unaware of the pressing need to raise capital for the immediate hiring of large numbers professional soldiers from abroad; indeed, this was one of the most frequently discussed topics in Livonian correspondences of 1558-1561 (see above). However, internal rivalries and divergent factional interests prevented the effective pooling of resources, rendering the Livonian *Landmeister* and the Archbishop of Riga increasingly incapable of organizing a the country's defense, which in turn eroded their credibility as viable protection-sellers and drove regional elites into the arms of foreign potentates like the Danish, Swedish, and Polish kings.

⁶⁸⁰ The Baltic was hardly exceptional in this regard. Populations throughout Europe (and beyond) remained "deeply resistant to anything that interfered with normal economic life: the imposition of new taxation, or the cutting-off or restriction of customary trade." Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System*, 32.

⁶⁸¹ For a discussion of some of these issues in the Swedish context, see Hammarström, *Finansförvaltning och varuhandel 1504-1540*, 275.

Given the exorbitant costs and frequent disciplinary issues associated with early modern mercenaries, it is worth considering why they were used at all. In short, the appeal of mercenaries lay in their professionalism, their martial prowess, and their ready availability.⁶⁸² As the events of the Northern Seven Years' War and the Livonian War demonstrated, militias, levies, and mobilized vassals were usually not the military equals of veteran career soldiers; and, while the short term cost of recruiting a substantial mercenary force was considerable, it was still more affordable than maintaining a large standing army comprised entirely of professional soldiers trained and equipped by the state, something no European nation was consistently able to do in the sixteenth century.⁶⁸³ While Denmark relied overwhelmingly on mercenaries and Russia largely eschewed them in favour of vassals and hereditary servitors, Sweden and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the victors of the Livonian War, created hybrid armies by effectively combining native troops with foreign mercenaries.⁶⁸⁴ This system of public-private military partnership would become the European norm in the seventeenth century, as early modern states improved the professionalism of their own troops in tandem with their fiscal-military organization, allowing for the simultaneous creation of a better native soldiery and the employment of more foreign mercenaries, a dual approach that the Swedes in particular would refine and use to devastating effect throughout the Thirty Years' War.⁶⁸⁵

The Livonian War was fought at a time when the challenges posed by the changing nature of warfare were already apparent, but the governments of the day were still in the process of developing the solutions that would lead to the more efficient fiscal-military states of later

⁶⁸² “Fundamentally, the reason was that they provided, for the most part, a reservoir of trained and battle-hardened troops who could be hired without the expense of keeping a constantly trained body of native troops.” Potter, *Renaissance France at War*, 133. Given the peculiarity of Livonia's colonial ethnic hierarchy, one might add that mercenaries could be hired without the *risk* of training a body of native troops.

⁶⁸³ Senning considered professional mercenaries to be the “*wichtigsten und ausschlaggebendsten taktischen Teil eines Heeres*” after the early and mid-sixteenth-century reforms to the Livonian military. Senning, *Beiträge*, 62.

⁶⁸⁴ Frost provides useful figures for the numbers of foreign mercenaries serving in Poland over the course of the sixteenth century. Frost, *The Northern Wars*, 47-8.

⁶⁸⁵ The Scandinavian wars fought between Sweden and Denmark in the sixteenth century tended to involve fewer men than those waged elsewhere on the continent, both because of their smaller populations and because of the relative importance of naval warfare in the Baltic. Finding ways to increase her pool of available soldiers was one of the main military challenges Sweden faced in her seventeenth-century struggles with the Habsburgs, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Russia. This had a variety of social consequences. For example, the average age of soldiers in Swedish armies of the seventeenth century was lower than elsewhere in Europe, presumably because boys were being enlisted to compensate for manpower deficiencies. Jespersen, “Warfare and Society,” 190-1.; Jan Lindegren, *Utskrivning och Utsugning. Produktion och Reproduktion: Bygdeå, 1620-1640* (Uppsala: Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 1980), 159.

centuries. In broad terms, the Schumpeterian narrative of transition from medieval domain state to monetized tax state reflects a real trend in the macroscopic development of early modern European statehood; however, a detailed analysis of the events of the Livonian War highlights just how gradual and faltering this transition was. The late sixteenth-century was a period of intense competition between heterogeneous polities, each of which adopted different strategies in an effort to cope with the economic and security demands of the day. Historians should thus be wary of constructing a general model of fiscal-military state development predicated on the experiences of a handful of the era's most militarily successful nations, such as Vasa Sweden, while overlooking the military and administrative strategies of those that disappeared (Old Livonia), ceased to be major expansionist powers (Denmark), or experienced short term decline in the wake of the Livonian War before re-emerging in the centuries to come (Russia).⁶⁸⁶ Despite many successes, Sweden also experienced frequent setbacks: attempts to fund military development through taxation were met with violent resistance from the peasantry in the Dacke War of the 1540s and the Club War of the 1590s;⁶⁸⁷ relations between the Crown and the nobility reached a nadir with the Sture murders of 1567; local elites in newly acquired territories, like the Livonian *Hofleute*, sometimes cooperated with Swedish rule and sometimes resisted it; the peasant conscripts who formed the core of Gustav Vasa's and Erik XIV's remodeled army were at first outclassed by Denmark's professional German mercenaries; and Sweden's own mercenaries were prone to mutiny and defection.⁶⁸⁸ That Sweden emerged as one of the victors the Livonian War is more a testament to the flexibility with which Stockholm navigated the setbacks that beset all sixteenth-century powers than an indication that the country's fiscal-military transformation in the nine decades of Vasa rule that preceded the *Stormaktstid* was in any way smooth, easy, or linear – let alone inevitable.

⁶⁸⁶ Even while acknowledging the diversity of governance in the early modern world, there is a risk of equating fiscal-militarism with development, progress, and success. In other parts of the early modern continent, the fiscal apparatuses of polities like Venice and the Old Swiss Confederacy developed under limited forms of government. Here, economic evolution and mercenary warfare did not lead to the centralized political absolutism associated with the fiscal-military state. Bonney, "The Rise of the Fiscal State," 4.

⁶⁸⁷ Dissatisfaction with taxation policies was not, of course, the only cause of these uprisings, but it was an important one.

⁶⁸⁸ David Parrott, focusing his attentions on France's seventeenth-century wars with the Habsburgs, referred to an early modern "cycle of inefficiency" in which the chronic underfunding of the military and the resultant predations of the soldiery would have rendered the "notion that a more disciplined and ordered society was emerging through the demands of military expansion [...] a mockery to contemporary Frenchmen." David Parrott, *Richelieu's Army: War, Government and Society in France, 1624-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 551-2.

The role of mercenaries in the formative decades of the late sixteenth-century Baltic has been underexamined. The growing ubiquity of mercenarism lay at the heart of the monetized warfare that drove the development of new fiscal-military technologies of governance, especially in the key spheres of taxation and logistics; and the appearance of more centralized states possessed of ever greater capacity to extract capital, deliver protection, and project power was in large part a response to the demands of this type of warfare. But the early modern revolution in fiscal and military administration was not merely a response to the need to pay the professional soldiery, and mercenaries were not simply a military necessity whose cost prompted the economic innovations of government. Rather, military enterprise was also a principal means by which that innovation was accomplished. At the military level, mercenaries played an indispensable part in the professionalization of the conscripted troops who represented the first large scale European attempts at the creation of standing, professional armies since the Roman Empire. In Livonia, for example, it was *Landsknecht* officers from Germany who trained the local population into a credible fighting force in the decades following Ivan the Terrible's invasion (see above). The Estonian peasant uprising of the early 1560s was suppressed by mercenaries and mercenarized *Hofleute*, who, later in the war, were used to train local peasants into effective soldiers in the service of the Swedish state.

In the Baltic, as elsewhere, mercenary warfare was one of the early modern world's foremost avenues of social mobility, not only through the recruitment of mercenary officers and military entrepreneurs into state-building projects and the ranks of the emerging elites of the era's nascent state administrations, but also through the large scale redistribution of property and capital associated with pillaging. The centrality of the plunder economy, both in reshaping European societies during long periods of internal warfare and in early European overseas colonialism, has not often been acknowledged. Traditional models of political transition from land-based to taxation-based economies have tended to ignore – or, at the very least, downplay – the fact that both of these economic systems functioned in tandem with far more ancient practices of raiding and plundering. Likewise, the distinction between vassalage and salaried soldiering only goes so far in an era when soldiers of all types so often went unpaid and thus derived most of their income from pillaging; and the importance of innovations in state-backed

logistical support and military supply should not be overestimated when the troops invariably lived off the land. A detailed analysis of mercenary activity in the Livonian War provides a sobering reminder that – whatever the lofty ambitions of the era’s monarchs and governments – raiding, sacking, and privateering were often no less the prime activities (and, for the men themselves, the prime motivations) of sixteenth-century Baltic warfare than they had been in the Viking Age. The rise of professional mercenarism and accompanying fiscal-military innovations of the 1500s may have contributed to the growing monetization of war, but the prospect of booty continued to be why many men enlisted, and plunder remained the means by which armies sustained themselves in the field.

Recent scholarship has rightly questioned traditional understandings of the origins of early modern fiscal-military absolutism as a zero sum game in which government ultimately triumphed over local and traditional powerholders like the church, the aristocracy, and autonomous urban communities.⁶⁸⁹ Although there is no denying that many parts of early modern Europe experienced a marked growth in the power of central government, there is increasing recognition that this was achieved not only through governmental suppression of traditional power groups but also by means of partnership with them. Jan Glete argued that this process involved a “double contractual relationship, one between rulers and the society and another between rulers and their armed forces” and that a prime challenge of early modern governance was simultaneously upholding both of these relationships: a society that did not provide sufficient taxes for the support of the military would be defenseless, and a military that went unpaid would become a separate “interest group that coerced rulers and societies [for its] own advantage.”⁶⁹⁰ The Livonian War provides plentiful examples of both of these potential difficulties, and a focus on the oft-overlooked role of mercenaries in this complex administrative balancing act between central government, local powerholders, and traditional estates allows for some important observations.

First, the ubiquity of the mercenary soldier and the military enterpriser at a key moment in the fiscal-military development of the Baltic reveals how this process was not only institutional

⁶⁸⁹ See Gunn, Grummitt, and Cools, “War and the State.”

⁶⁹⁰ Glete, *War and the State*, 4.

and administrative but also deeply entrepreneurial. Military reliance on mercenaries was a costly financial burden and a dangerous source of instability that stretched the economic and administrative resources of the sixteenth-century Baltic powers vying for control of Livonia and Estonia to their limits, but there was as yet no better alternative, and the emerging great powers would be those nations that most effectively combined the use of domestically available military resources with external ones provided by private enterprisers.⁶⁹¹ The rampant mercenarism that characterized the Livonian War and other conflicts of the age is indicative of the key part played by transnational networks of highly mobile and entrepreneurial military professionals at a critical juncture in European history. Second, the independence with which mercenaries often navigated the shifting social and political avenues of power between central(izing) governments and local stakeholders highlights the ways in which the professional soldiery were not merely the hired muscle that these socio-political power groups used as leverage against one another; rather, mercenaries could be powerholders in their own right, with ambitions that sometimes ran parallel with and sometimes contrary to those of governments and other socio-political groups. Drawing on examples from the Livonian War, the following chapter is an exploration of how mercenaries acting in pursuit of their own ambitions could influence social, political, and economic developments of local and even geopolitical importance.

⁶⁹¹ Parrott has contrasted the idealized nineteenth- and twentieth-century state endowed with a “narrowly defined monopoly of force” with the successful military powers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which maintained their security through the “co-option of both internal and outside resources and skills to create a multi-faceted system of authority.” Parrott, *The Business of War*, 8.

Chapter 8

Mercenaries as Actors

8.1 Negotiating Networks of Power

In any labour-for-capital exchange, the interests of employer and employee sometimes diverge and sometimes align. In the case of the mercenary, this relationship could be especially fraught on account of his status as a fighting man and the violent nature of his work. Labour disputes could quite literally become matters of life and death, for mercenary and for master alike. The situation was further complicated by the mercenary's outsider status, his propensity to be characterized by a degree of social otherness and political independence, which often allowed him to negotiate and renegotiate the terms of his service to a far greater degree than could members of other professions. Mercenaries influenced the military, political, and social outcomes of conflicts, not only as effective or ineffective fighters acting in the service of their employers, but also as (semi-)independent actors with goals and aspirations of their own. In the Baltic, as elsewhere, their relative, though never absolute, detachment from local societies could leave foreign mercenaries friendless and exposed when things took a turn for the worse, but it could also give them freedom to maneuver or to extricate themselves from perilous circumstances on their own terms. While the ability of peasant, burgher, and noble to escape wartime violence was, to varying degrees, curtailed by their ties to the land and to immobile property, the wandering soldier had the option of simply walking away from a lost cause, carrying his possessions with him.

As armed professionals, mercenaries used both the threat of violence and the threat of withholding violence as leverage to extract concessions from their employers, from civilians, and from their employers' enemies. The Livonian and Swedish authorities, who frequently made use of hired troops to garrison their castles and towns, also had to contend with the mercenaries' propensity to use any strategic assets with which they had been entrusted as bargaining chips. Garrisoning valuable strongpoints with mercenaries was risky business, especially when, as was so often the case, the men could not be properly paid, supplied, or reinforced. The first step in a mutiny was usually to secure a fortified base, often the very place that the men had been assigned to garrison, and then survive by sending out cavalry to raid the

surrounding countryside for as long as it took to conclude negotiations between the mutineers and the authorities.⁶⁹² Logically enough, it was within the existing context of their employment that mercenaries most frequently turned to negotiation to improve their lot, for example to demand more money, to exempt themselves from arduous and menial tasks like digging fortifications or constructing siege works, or to opt out of or request more pay for participating in dangerous operations like assaulting breaches.⁶⁹³ However, when they felt that they had not been treated fairly by their employers or that their situation was hopeless, they could also negotiate entirely new arrangements with third parties or even with the enemy. Such wheeling and dealing had the potential to change the course of a war.

When undertaking particularly dangerous operations, it was expected that mercenaries would receive additional compensation, whether in the form of a one-time bonus or through entitlement to plunder, and provisions for such payments were often integral to the terms of their service (see Chapter Six). In addition to prearranged bonuses for fighting in battles and sieges that were outlined in their articles, it was also possible for mercenaries to renegotiate the conditions of their employment or demand additional reward on the spot. This was particularly apparent while besieging or being besieged, when the long duration of the undertaking and the episodic nature of the fighting – a series of bombardments and assaults separated by periods of comparative inaction – allowed ample opportunity for discourse between the troops and their employers (and with the enemy). In mid-December of 1559, for example, a force of *Landsknechte* in the employ of the Livonian Order moved from Falkenau to attack the Russian-held castle of Lais. After the artillery had bombarded the walls, the *Landsknechte* were ordered to attack, but four of the eight companies refused, while the rest, led by the courageous Hans Uthermarcke, were beaten back by the determined Russian defenders.⁶⁹⁴ After another failed assault on the following day, December 16, negotiations were initiated between the Livonian Order and the Russian garrison, with the latter agreeing to surrender the castle on the condition that they be allowed depart unharmed and with their possessions. The mercenary captains, however, not wishing to be deprived of an opportunity for booty, persuaded the Livonian

⁶⁹² This pattern was also the norm in other parts of Europe. Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, 189.

⁶⁹³ Civilians were usually expected to do labour that professional soldiers found distasteful, but prisoners of war could also be used for this purpose. Renner recounts, for example, that Russian captives were used to dig earthworks around Riga in December of 1558. Renner, 90.

⁶⁹⁴ Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 273.

commanders not to accept this offer, insisting that they could storm the castle and that this would strike fear into the enemy and give the Livonians greater sway in future negotiations. While the besiegers were debating their options, the Russians reinforced the defenses with earthworks, and the *Landsknechte* refused to attack when ordered to assault the following day.⁶⁹⁵ Finally, the Livonians abandoned the siege, having captured neither the castle nor the treasure therein. Incidents like this highlight how the mercenaries' wrangling over issues like booty could influence the course of a siege or battle.⁶⁹⁶ Battlefield parlaying was not merely a question of two-way dialogue between opposing sides (in this case, the Russians and the Livonians), but a multifaceted network of negotiation that also involved input from the mercenary officers, who, given the semi-democratic organization of the *Landsknecht* company, were expected to represent the interests of their men.⁶⁹⁷

As in all conflicts, the overall war effort was guided by senior commanders and governments, but the independent decision-making of lower-ranking officers and soldiers could also affect military outcomes. This was especially true in premodern warfare, when communication between command centres and isolated raiding parties or outposts was patchy at best, necessitating a greater degree of initiative at the company, garrison, or even squad level. Particularly in the early stages of the war, when the Livonian forces were spread out in an attempt to defend the many minor castles and strongpoints that dotted their land, decision-making on the part of local officers of the Livonian Order and mercenaries in Livonian service profoundly affected the course of the war. In many cases, when confronted with a besieging army, local garrisons simply fled or surrendered. However, there was not always a consensus

⁶⁹⁵ Renner describes how the mercenaries formed up in preparation for an attack but wouldn't advance into the Russian firestorm, and the defending *streletsy* shot almost four hundred of them while they stood in formation before the walls debating whether to attack or fall back. Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 273.

⁶⁹⁶ More was riding on the outcome of this siege than merely the fate of Lais. The failure to take the castle brought an end to Kettler's winter offensive, and his army disintegrated as the peasants returned home and the mercenaries dispersed to their winter quarters. On January 1, the Archbishop of Riga wrote to him to suggest that they must now rely on Poland to save them. *QU*, IV, 150-2.

⁶⁹⁷ Each company had a complement of *Gemeinämter*, officers elected by simple majority by a collective (*Gemein*) of soldiers to defend their interests. Their responsibilities included allocation of supplies and munitions, finding and organizing lodgings, overseeing matters of justice among the troops, and representing the interests of the men to their captain. The *Rottmeister*, who led the *Rotte* (squads) of eight to ten men into which the company was subdivided, was elected by and from the members of the squad itself. At times, internal discipline and punishment were also carried out by collective consensus. Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 98-101.; Möller, *Das Regiment der Landsknechte*, 95-9 and 202-8.

about how to proceed. Wesenberg, for example, was garrisoned in the summer of 1558 by only about a dozen fighting men. When the Russians sent emissaries to demand the castle's surrender within two weeks, the *Vogt* dispatched all of the supplies to Reval for safety, but also forbade his men to fire on the Russians, to whom he handed over the castle after being promised a nearby manor as reward.⁶⁹⁸ Soon later, in early August, the Russians attempted the same strategy at Weissenstein, which had been abandoned by Berent von Schmerten and then regarrisoned by Caspar von Oldenbockum. The Russian commanders (Prince Michail Petrovich, Pavel Saboloski, and Pavel Repnin) offered Oldenbockum the manor of Alpe if he would surrender the castle, but the courageous young man refused and successfully resisted the Muscovites' assaults.⁶⁹⁹ On other occasions, as at Neuhausen and Fellin, the Wesenberg scenario was reversed, with the commanders advocating continued resistance until the soldiery eventually demanded that they surrender to the enemy.⁷⁰⁰ In either case, the authorities might punish those responsible for capitulating: the *Vogt* of Wesenberg was later fined for his surrender, while the mutineers of Neuhausen and Fellin were severely punished by the Livonian Order. Sometimes, everyone involved was blamed. After the fall of Marienburg, in early 1560, both the Livonian officers and the mercenaries were held culpable for what was deemed an overly hasty capitulation, with the Livonian Order's officers forced to explain their reasons for surrendering and the *Landsknechte* ordered to leave the Order's lands.⁷⁰¹ In all of these cases, regardless of the outcome, decisions made by local officers and/or the men under their command determined the fate of the castles they were garrisoning. In some cases, even the fates of entire cities could rest in the hands of the mercenaries.

8.2 The Mercenaries and the Fate of Reval

Reval was one of the most valuable prizes of the Livonian War and was consequently desired by all of the region's powers. Given its commanding role in the east-west trade that passed

⁶⁹⁸ Letters sent by the Russian commander Paul (Pavel) Saboloski at around the same time to the ranking officers of the Livonian Order at Weissenstein and Jerwen may be found in *QU*, III, 4-5.

⁶⁹⁹ *Renner*, 75.

⁷⁰⁰ Wilhelm von Fürstenberg notified Archbishop Wilhelm of Riga of the fall of Neuhausen in a letter sent on July 4, 1558. *QU*, II, 309-10.

⁷⁰¹ *Renner*, 143. The castellan was Evert Syburg zu Wischlingen. *Russow*, 84. The precise chronology of these events seems to be slightly confused, as he apparently died in prison at Kirchholm on February 9, five days before the fall of Marienburg. Lutz Fenske and Klaus Militzer, eds. *Ritterbrüder im livländischen Zweig des Deutschen Ordens* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 647-8.

through the Gulf of Finland, its commercial value was considerable, and King Erik XIV's acquisition of the city in 1561 was of substantial economic importance to the Swedish realm, which had long conducted most of its trade through Hanseatic emporia like Danzig and Lübeck.⁷⁰² The city's strong fortifications, central position on the north Estonian coast, and the possibility of keeping it supplied by sea also gave it great strategic value. Once northern Estonia was in Stockholm's hands, it afforded the Swedes the flexibility to temporarily concede territory in the eastern Baltic – whether diplomatically or militarily – in the knowledge that they could always expand into Estonia and Livonia again at a later date as long as they still held their secure base of operations at Reval.⁷⁰³ The city thus quickly became the military and commercial strongpoint around which Sweden anchored her eastern Baltic holdings. For the Revalians themselves, Swedish rule offered protection in a time of chaos and uncertainty, and, as a Protestant power willing to confirm the city's longstanding privileges, Sweden was viewed as a more favourable overlord than either Poland or Russia.⁷⁰⁴ It was not, however, inevitable that Reval would defect to Stockholm, and several alternative options were discussed in the early years of the war, with the King of Denmark at first appearing to be a likelier patron. Negotiations over the city's fate were carried out at the highest diplomatic level between the city council, the Livonian *Landmeister*, Duke Magnus of Holstein, and the Kings of Denmark, Sweden, and Poland. At the same time, affairs on the ground were influenced by the troops stationed in the city, who consisted of an assortment of officers of the Livonian Order, local noblemen, and hired mercenaries.

As early as the summer of 1558, there were concerns in Reval that the Livonian Order would not be able to defend the city, especially after the Russians had conquered Narva and Dorpat with such lamentable ease. Representatives of the noble corporations of Harrien and Wierland, together with the council of Reval, wrote to the *Landmeister* on July 23, five days after the fall of Dorpat, to express their concerns about the Order's ability to protect the city and to point out

⁷⁰² John P. Maarbjerg, *Scandinavia in the European World Economy, ca.1570-1625: Some Local Evidence of Economic Integration* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 49-50.

⁷⁰³ This state of affairs would later afford King Johan greater flexibility in his negotiations at the end of the Northern Seven Years' War. Lavery, *Germany's Northern Challenge*, 126.

⁷⁰⁴ Vogelsang, "Reval und der Deutschen Orden," 58.; Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland," 56. Eastern Baltic towns that came under Swedish rule often continued to enjoy greater autonomy than their counterparts in Sweden and Finland, which were generally subject to strong royal authority. Sandberg, "The Towns, the Urban System, and the State," 67.

that Ösel-Wiek and Courland were seeking protection from the Danes (the implication being that they might do the same).⁷⁰⁵ Another letter sent by the mayor and council on the same date mentions the need for money to meet the costs of the war and the growing monetary demands of the mercenaries stationed in the city, indicating that the hired soldiery were already becoming a factor, indirectly at least, in both Reval's internal affairs and her relations with the Livonian Order.⁷⁰⁶ Three days later, the castellan of Reval, Franz von Segenhagen (also known as Amstel or Anstel), abandoned his post and departed the city after leaving the citadel in the hands of Christoph von Münchhausen, the ambitious and pro-Danish brother of the Bishop of Ösel-Wiek, to hold on behalf of King Christian of Denmark.⁷⁰⁷ Segenhagen had been in close communication with Münchhausen since at least early June, when he sent a letter to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg relaying the latter's offer to travel in person to Germany in order to recruit more mercenaries.⁷⁰⁸ Fürstenberg was angered by his subsequent desertion and gave instructions to have him arrested.⁷⁰⁹ Balthasar Russow, on the other hand, believed that the castellan had acted honourably in transferring custody of the castle to Münchhausen before fleeing, although he also noted that Münchhausen had accepted control of the castle on behalf of the King of Denmark without first receiving any confirmation that Copenhagen actually wanted it.⁷¹⁰

The mood in the city in the summer of 1558 was already broadly pro-Danish, and, on July 6, the burghers of Reval and the noblemen of Harrien had sent a delegation to formally request royal protection since Harrien, Wierland, and Reval "*vormals Denesch gewesen.*" Several possible arrangements were suggested – that the city be placed under direct Danish rule, that Denmark be given control of certain key border castles, or that a Danish governor be sent to administer the city in cooperation with the Livonian Order – but the Danes ultimately declined

⁷⁰⁵ *QU*, II, 322-4. The letter echoes an earlier request for aid, sent in late May, that also mentioned the difficulties the municipal authorities were having with the mercenaries over pay. *QU*, I, 133-6.

⁷⁰⁶ *NQU*, I, 65-70.

⁷⁰⁷ Burchard von Klot was of the opinion that Münchhausen was motivated to espouse the Danish cause by his own selfish desire to be appointed the King's "*Statthalter*" in Estonia. Burchard von Klot, *Jost Clodt und das Privilegium Sigismundi Augusti* (Hannover: Verlag Harro von Hirschheydt, 1980), 35. For a contemporary account of Segenhagen's actions, see *NQU*, I, 76-8 and 121-6.

⁷⁰⁸ *QU*, II, 284-5.

⁷⁰⁹ *QU*, III, 50-54.

⁷¹⁰ Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 44. Renner also mentions that Münchhausen had been scheming to bring all of Estonia under Danish rule for some time and agreed with Russow's assertion that he was acting on his own initiative, without instructions from Copenhagen. *Renner*, 62.

all of these options on the grounds that the acquisition of Reval and northern Estonia might provoke a dangerous and undesirable confrontation with Russia.⁷¹¹ The reticence of the Danes did not, however, prevent the scheming Münchhausen from sending a letter to the Russians requesting that they leave Estonia because it was now a possession of the King of Denmark.⁷¹² The response from the Muscovite commander at Dorpat, Prince Peter Ivanovich Shuysky, was not favourable. Russian emissaries were dispatched with letters for the Bishop of Reval, Moritz Wrangel, and the city council demanding that they surrender the city to the Tsar or face an immediate attack.⁷¹³ The Russians' threats elicited widespread panic, and immediate measures were taken to improve the municipal fortifications, while efforts to find a royal patron to defend the city acquired a new urgency. Had the response from Copenhagen been more enthusiastic, the fear engendered by the Russian backlash to his ultimatum could have played into Christoph von Münchhausen's hands by driving the city closer to Denmark. As it happened, the opportunity slipped by as King Christian opted for a more cautious approach. Upon learning that the Danes would neither commit to the defense of the city nor provide direct military support, the garrison of the castle of Reval offered to sell it to the city council and depart. However, this offer was rejected, leaving the troops in a precarious position.

Something of an impasse now ensued. Having initially failed to secure Danish overlordship for the city, Christoph von Münchhausen left Reval for Denmark after handing control of the citadel over to the nobleman Heinrich Üxküll and the garrison of *Landsknechte* for safekeeping in his absence.⁷¹⁴ Meanwhile, acting on behalf of the Livonian Order, Heinrich Wulf, the *Vogt* of Sonnenburg, convened a meeting with representatives of the noble families of Harrien and Wierland; he argued that, since the King of Denmark had declined to place Estonia under his protection, they should now return to their rightful lord, the Livonian Order.⁷¹⁵ Both the

⁷¹¹ "The King of Denmark was also reluctant to become involved in the Livonian war against the Muscovite, doubtlessly influenced by the cautions and warnings of his good lords and kinsmen." *Henning*, 51. They did send some munitions and provisions (mostly bacon, apparently) to the troops stationed in the castle. Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 44.; *QU*, I, 201-4.

⁷¹² He also wrote to the Livonian Order's commanders at several Estonian castles asking that they change allegiance to Denmark. They refused and remained loyal to the Order. *QU*, I, 244-6, 249-52, and 258-60.

⁷¹³ This exchange is mentioned in a report sent by Henrik Classon Horn on July 23 to Duke Johan of Finland. *QU*, I, 212-6. A copy of Prince Shuysky's missive made by the councillor Jost Clodt is recorded in *QU*, II, 318. Bishop Moritz Wrangel later sold his diocese to Duke Magnus. *Briefe*, V, 132-4.

⁷¹⁴ For Münchhausen's negotiations in Denmark, see *Archiv*, III, 131-40.

⁷¹⁵ *Renner*, 79.

noblemen and the Revalian municipal authorities agreed to this proposal, but the mercenaries holding the upper city refused on the grounds that they had previously sworn oaths of allegiance to King Christian of Denmark. Despite occupying one of the strongest castles in the eastern Baltic, in the heart of the most important city in Estonia, their situation was now a difficult one, since they found themselves isolated and at odds with both the city council in the lower city and the Livonian Order. In a report sent on August 30 to Duke Johan of Finland, the informant Doctor Mattheus Friesner described how the troops in the upper city were becoming “*gantz unwillich*” and had no money.⁷¹⁶ And, in a subsequent letter, sent on October 19, he reported that Wilhelm von Fürstenberg had thrice demanded – on September 21, September 30, and October 8 – that the garrison hand the castle over to the Livonian Order, each time without success. The doctor also mentioned that the *Landsknechte* in the castle had not been paid for four months and were beginning to complain to their *Oberst* about their situation.⁷¹⁷

The standoff was not only becoming problematic for the mercenaries holding the castle, but also for the Livonian Order and for the municipal authorities of Reval. In early October, Gotthard Kettler was gathering troops from across the Confederation for a counteroffensive into Russian-occupied eastern Estonia. At the same time, a force of more than five hundred cavalry and 2,500 peasants from Harrien and Wierland set out to attack the Russians at Wesenberg. However, Heinrich Üxküll and the *Landsknechte* in the Reval castle refused to participate in the attack on the grounds that they were still awaiting promised instructions from Christoph von Münchhausen or the Danes, on whose behalf they had sworn to hold the castle.⁷¹⁸ Hearing that the castle’s garrison was planning to remain where it was, the City Council of Reval decided that they would not contribute any of the own *Landsknechte* stationed in the lower city either, which in turn caused the troops from Harrien and Wierland to remain camped ten miles from the city rather than proceeding to Wesenberg without the support of the professional infantry languishing in the city. In short, the intransigence of a few hundred mercenaries garrisoning the castle of Reval had set off a chain reaction that brought

⁷¹⁶ *QU*, I, 249-54.

⁷¹⁷ *QU*, I, 270. At around the same time, the city council wrote to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg to suggest that a large payment might be needed to coax the mercenaries from the upper city. *QU*, III, 28-32. Fürstenberg shared Dr. Friesner’s assessment, noting that the troops were becoming “*fast unwillig*” due to lack of pay. *QU*, III, 35.

⁷¹⁸ *Renner*, 82.

the entire offensive against Wesenberg to a halt. The decision of the mercenaries to hold the upper city in hope of receiving future support (and, more importantly, the four months of pay that they were still owed) from the Danes was not only becoming a dangerous source of internal division within Reval but had begun to undermine the cohesion of the entire Livonian war effort in northern Estonia.

On October 8, a new round of negotiations began, with Heinrich Wulf and Dr. Rembert Gildsheim representing the Livonian Order's position to Heinrich Üxküll.⁷¹⁹ They argued that the Order's castellan (Segenhagen) had surrendered the castle without instructions from his superiors, that Münchhausen had occupied it without orders from the King of Denmark, that no one had any right to take or hold the citadel by force, and that, unlike the *Landsknechte*, Üxküll himself had not sworn an oath of loyalty to the King.⁷²⁰ Their argument was thus derived from authority on two levels, arguing first that the *Landmeister* had not granted permission for the castellan to surrender the castle and second that King Christian had not given permission for it to be received in his name. Segenhagen and Münchhausen were therefore equally at fault in that neither had acted with proper authorization, while Üxküll and the mercenaries were presented more as obstinately misguided in their continued refusal to stand down in a situation not of their making. Üxküll countered that it had not been his plan to take control of the castle but he now found himself obliged to hold it as he had promised to do. He also pointed out that, when he had arrived in the city several months earlier, he had found it in disarray; the Russians had been fast approaching, and the city council, nobility, and garrison had all been in favour of defecting to the Danes for protection. He had therefore taken it upon himself to defend the castle and would do so until the return of Münchhausen and the other delegates from Denmark. If King Christian sent instructions to hand over the castle to the Livonian Order, then he would do so, and he would happily serve the Order as loyally as he now conducted his current duties.⁷²¹ The Livonian and Revalian delegates reiterated their demands, now in far stronger terms, arguing that his refusal to return the castle was illegal and inappropriate, and that they

⁷¹⁹ Gildsheim was often employed in dealings with the *Landsknechte*. A popular song of 1558 satirizing the *hauteur* of the Livonian Order contains a verse mockingly referring to him as a "stable brother" of the Order ("*Ein stalbruder ist er worden / bej dem ritterlichen orden*"). Lutz Mackensen, ed. *Baltische Texte der Frühzeit* (Riga: Verlag der Akt.-Ges. Ernst Plates, 1936), 202.

⁷²⁰ They also made the serious accusation that the actions of Üxküll and the mercenaries violated the imperial *Ewiger Landfriede*. Renner, 83.; *QU*, I, 269-72.

⁷²¹ Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 217.

were now forced to indict him before “*Got und der tidt.*”⁷²² They also noted that his obstinacy was costing them a thousand troops, presumably referring both to those under his command in the castle and those in the lower city who had refused to take to the field without the former.⁷²³ Üxküll would not budge.

The deadlock persisted into November, when Gotthard Kettler was in Reval receiving medical treatment for a broken leg (an injury incurred falling from his horse while in pursuit of the enemy). Kettler repeated the Livonian Order’s demand that the *Landsknechte* hand over the castle, and the mercenaries agreed that they would do so if they had not received support from Denmark by a given deadline. On November 27, the nobleman Dietrich Behr (an accomplice of Üxküll who had joined him in the castle), wrote to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg to explain the situation and why he, Üxküll, and the *Landsknechte* had chosen to remain loyal to the Danes and await instructions from Münchhausen or King Christian before they would hand over the upper city to the Livonian Order.⁷²⁴ On December 7, a Danish delegation arrived in Reval, but it had no instructions for the mercenaries occupying the upper city and was merely passing through on its way to conduct diplomatic negotiations in Russia. Three days later, having given up on the prospect of Danish help (and Danish gold), the majority of the *Landsknechte* in the castle pledged their allegiance to the Livonian Order, on two conditions: first, that they would not be punished for their obstinacy since their earlier intransigence had been justified by the oaths they had sworn to serve the King of Denmark; second, that the Order would give them the pay that they were still owed.⁷²⁵ However, one hundred and fifty of the mercenaries still remained in the castle, refusing to surrender until the following day, when the exasperated Kettler turned some of the artillery in the lower city on the castle and drew up troops in

⁷²² Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 218.

⁷²³ For more details, see *QU*, I, 277-82.

⁷²⁴ *QU*, III, 54-6. Behr was connected to the brothers Christoph and Bishop Johann von Münchhausen through their sister Anna, his wife since 1529, which no doubt influenced his loyalties. Nicolai von Essen, *Genealogisches Handbuch der Oeselschen Ritterschaft* (Tartu: Oeseleschen Gemeinnützigen Verbande, 1935), 652.

⁷²⁵ A letter sent by City Councillor Johann Bockhortst to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg the next month recommended that they be paid immediately because they were becoming discontented. *QU*, III, 89. Fürstenberg responded on the January 27 with instructions to Dr. Rembert Gilsheim authorizing him to requisition the supplies and money that were needed for this purpose. *QU*, III, 91-3. More information on the city of Reval’s military expenditures in the years 1558-1562 are to be found in the records of Jasper Kappenberg, Jochim Bellholt, and Jürgen Honerjäger. TLA, B.e.4. A description of how most of the mercenaries were eventually persuaded to abandon Üxküll and Behr is given in *NQU*, I, 190-218, 250-5, and 299-337.

preparation for an assault. Dietrich Behr and Heinrich Üxküll had already fled the castle the night before, traveling west to Wiek, and the remaining one hundred and fifty *Landsknechte* now handed over the castle to Kettler and followed the departed noblemen to seek employment with the pro-Danish faction in the Bishopric of Ösel-Wiek.⁷²⁶

The occupation of Reval's castle in the latter half of 1558 is a prime example of how foreign mercenaries could find themselves enmeshed in political negotiations at both the local and the international levels. This was a period of considerable uncertainty throughout Livonia, and Reval was no exception, caught up as it was in the machinations of the Livonian Order, the Danes, and the Swedes, with the constant fear of Russian attack looming over the city. The noblemen involved in the stalemate in the upper city – Münchhausen, Üxküll, and Behr – seem to have been motivated by the belief that, if they became the architects of a transition to Danish rule in Estonia, then Copenhagen would surely grant them positions of power in the new order. They were further predisposed to champion the Danish cause by their personal circumstances, namely Münchhausen's ambition to sell his brother's diocese to the Danes and have himself installed as the King's *Statthalter* and Behr's marital ties to the Münchhausens.⁷²⁷ All of their schemes would have been for naught, however, without the cooperation of the mercenaries in the upper city, who, in the absence of an actual Danish military presence in the region, were the only practical leverage that the conspirators had on the ground. What is less clear is why these troops, independent mercenaries recruited in northern Germany who owed allegiance to neither the Livonian Order nor to the Danes, would maintain an obstinately pro-Danish stance

⁷²⁶ Renner, 91.

⁷²⁷ King Valdemar II had established the position of *capitaneus regis* (*königlicher Hauptmann* or royal captain) in Danish Estonia in 1240. During the period of medieval Danish rule, the *capitaneus* served as both castellan of Reval and viceroy of Estonia, wielding secular power on behalf of the King, presiding over the colony's supreme court, and leading the vassals in time of war. Friedrich Georg von Bunge, *Das Herzogthum Estland unter den Königen von Dänemark* (Gotha: von Hirschheydt, 1877), 101-4.; Peter Rebane, "Denmark, the Papacy, and the Christianization of Estonia," in *Gli inizi del Cristianesimo in Livonia-Lettonia: Atti del Colloquio Internazionale di storia ecclesiastica in occasione dell'VIII centenario della Chiesa in Livonia (1186-1986)*, ed. Michele Maccarrone (Vatican City: Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche, Atti e Documenti, 1989). As the personal representative of royal authority in Estonia, the *capitaneus* was named directly by the King. The only surviving record of this process relates to the last man to hold the office, Stig Anderson (appointed in 1344). *Diplomatarium Danicum*, ed. A. Afzelius et alia. In progress. (Copenhagen: The Carlsberg Foundation, 1933ff), vol. 3:2, no.66.; Thomas Riis, *Les Institutions Politiques Centrales du Danemark 1100-1332* (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1977), 324. Sixteenth-century actors like Münchhausen did not, of course, expect a faithful recreation of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century institutions in the event that Danish rule over Estonia was restored after a more than two century hiatus, but they were certainly cognizant of the region's Danish history and actively made use of Estonia's Danish past to promote Copenhagen's claims in the eastern Baltic.

that put them dangerously at odds with the city of Reval and the Livonian Order. Their initial decision to swear allegiance to Denmark was logical enough in light of the fact that the city of Reval and the noble corporations of northern Estonia had decided to seek Danish aid.

However, once the lower city and the nobility had returned to the Livonian Order after King Christian's noncommittal response to their request for aid, why did the mercenaries in the upper city not immediately do the same?

The mercenaries' claim that the oath they had taken to serve the King obligated them to await direct instructions from Münchhausen or another Danish representative before handing over the castle to the Livonian Order is an interesting one. Certainly, the swearing of oaths was of significant cultural importance to the *Landsknechte*, as it was one of the means by which the men bound themselves to one another or to an employer. In this case, however, the mercenaries had not been contracted by the Danes nor even received any word from Copenhagen that their service was desired. It seems likely that their prime concern was actually the Livonian Order's failure to keep them properly paid. In renouncing their Danish turn and returning to the Livonian Order, the lower city and the nobility had calculated that, although the protection of the Order was not equal to that which the Danes could provide, it was better than nothing, which is essentially what King Christian had offered to the delegation they had sent to seek his aid. The *Landsknechte*, however, were seeking an employer able to pay them rather than a guardian capable of protecting them, so there was far less incentive to abandon their Danish hopes and return to the Livonian Order, who still owed them several months of wages and looked no more likely to pay them in the future than they had been in the past. Indeed, it is noteworthy that it took both the failure of the Danish delegation of December 1558 to offer them support and the Livonian Order's agreement to pay them their back wages to persuade the majority of the mercenaries to finally give up on the Danish cause and return to the service of the Order.

It is more difficult to assess why one hundred and fifty of the troops refused the Livonian Order's offer and instead traveled west to seek out further employment in Wiek. As a profession predicated upon risking one's life in return for pay and plunder, soldiering for hire always involved assessing the balance of risk and reward. It seems that most of the soldiers

were convinced by the Order's promise to pay their wages, but some either doubted the Livonians' ability to make good on that promise or still held out hope that they would be rewarded by Münchhausen or the Danes for their loyalty during the standoff. Additionally, with the Russians on the advance all across Livonia, some of the troops may have judged traveling west to take up garrison duty in Ösel-Wiek to be a safer option than remaining in Reval, where they might be sent to the front lines or have to defend the city from a hostile siege at any moment (they were no doubt aware of the Russians' threats to attack the city and of how poorly the Livonian defenders had fared at Narva and Dorpat). Indeed, just twelve days after the stalemate over the castle was resolved, three hundred *Landsknechte* were dispatched from Reval to join up with troops from Oberpahlen and Fellin for a combined attack on Russian forces in the region.⁷²⁸ One thing that is clear is that the mercenaries had the ability to negotiate with the various factions vying for control of Reval and that their choices had potentially significant outcomes for regional politics, military affairs, and even international relations. It is also noteworthy that the soldiers appear, at times, to have negotiated more as a group of individuals than as a united bloc, as evidenced by the ultimate failure of the men in the upper city to reach a consensus on how to proceed, with some renewing their oaths to the Livonian Order and others departing the city to seek further service under the Danes. This reflects the relative independence of even the ordinary *Landsknecht* within the semi-democratic internal organization of the mercenary company.

While Münchhausen, Üxküll, Behr, and the mercenaries stationed in Reval's castle were trying unsuccessfully to orchestrate a Danish annexation of Estonia, the Swedes had already begun making moves of their own. Just as the Danish plot was the work not of King Christian himself but of schemers allegedly working on his behalf (but, in fact, without his permission), it was not the aged King Gustav who first sought to entangle Sweden in Livonian politics but his second son, the 21-year-old Duke Johan of Finland. Given that Johan's power base in the late 1550s and early 1560s was in Finland, it is perhaps unsurprising that he was more concerned with Estonian affairs and relations with Russia (and Poland) than were his royal father and brothers in Stockholm, for whom rivalry with the Danes in southern Scandinavia was of paramount importance. His agents had also been reporting that Livonia was weak and

⁷²⁸ Renner, 91.

vulnerable, correctly suggesting that the Russian invasion presented an opportunity for Sweden to make territorial gains in the region if the Livonian Confederation were to collapse.⁷²⁹ The possibility of Johan loaning the Livonian Order funds for its war effort had already been a matter of discussion since mid-1558.⁷³⁰ However, although potential financial assistance from Finland was no doubt welcome, it was still a long way from acceptance of Swedish sovereignty over Estonia. Livonian legates, one of whom was the chronicler Salomon Henning, were sent to Sweden to negotiate the terms of a loan, traveling via Turku and then on to Stockholm. However, King Gustav proved no more willing to take on the responsibility of defending Estonia than had his Danish counterpart, and negotiations stalled during the Russian-Livonian truce of 1559.⁷³¹ This state of affairs lasted until the arrival of Magnus of Holstein in Ösel-Wiek, in April of 1560, which reignited hopes of a Danish intervention, particularly as the recent death of the cautious King Christian had made way for the young Frederick II. Supported by Livonian cavalry who had defected to his side, Magnus feuded with the Livonian Order for several months, before he and Kettler finally agreed to put aside their differences in early August, following the destruction of the Livonian Order's field army at Ermes. One of the conditions of their rapprochement was that the diocese of Reval (although not the city or the surrounding counties) would be entrusted to Magnus until Pentecost of the following year; the Livonian Order was therefore required to remove all of the mercenaries stationed in the Cathedral Chapter "as soon as they receive their pay."⁷³² Ultimately, despite having a number of supporters in Reval, Magnus was unable to capitalize on the situation, in part because of the military ascendancy of the Russians after their great victory at Ermes, which prompted the Duke to cautiously relocate from Hapsal to the relative safety of the island of Ösel.

⁷²⁹ *NQU*, III, 149-51. In one letter to Duke Johan, Henrik Classon Horn opined that "*hwem som nu först kommer, honom lata the porthen up*" ("whoever first comes, they will open the door for them"). Quoted in Arnell, *Die Auflösung des livländischen Ordensstaates*, 36. Henning believed that Johan was "eager to wage war against the Muscovite on account of his atrocities" and therefore hoped that his father would provide him with the necessary funds for a campaign. *Henning*, 53. Although reports of Muscovite war crimes were met with shock in much of Germany and Scandinavia, it is probably safe to assume that the ambitious young duke was more concerned with expanding his own influence than with putting a stop to Ivan's malfeasance.

⁷³⁰ *QU*, III, 28-32.

⁷³¹ Behind the scenes, however, the various factions in Reval continued to scheme and conspire against one another, and an atmosphere of paranoia and mistrust prevailed. A Russian prisoner captured at Lais and interrogated on January 28 reported that there were traitors in the city. *Briefe*, I, 199-201. Plots and treasons are also discussed in *QU*, III, 212-5 and *Archiv*, III, 295-300.

⁷³² *QU*, V, 271-5.

While Magnus dallied and Kettler played for time, negotiations with the Swedes were ongoing throughout the latter half of 1560, with legates from Moscow, Poland, the Livonian Order, and the city of Reval converging on Stockholm in autumn of that year. The death, on September 29, of King Gustav and the ascension of his son, the more pro-Russian and anti-Polish King Erik, altered the political landscape of Sweden.⁷³³ The legates from Poland and the Order were soon dismissed, while the Muscovite and Revalian ambassadors were allowed to remain at court, with the latter now conducting negotiations intended to bring about a Swedish annexation of their city without interference from the Livonian Order. Salomon Henning speculated, perhaps correctly, that the timing of King Gustav's death and the "evil" counsel of King Erik's closest advisor, Jöran Persson, prevented the formation of an effective coalition against Russia at this critical juncture.⁷³⁴ As it happened, Erik moved to secure Reval for Sweden while simultaneously negotiating a non-aggression pact with Moscow, distancing himself from Poland and Lithuania, and allowing relations with Denmark to deteriorate toward war.⁷³⁵ With the Revalians now favouring Swedish rule and a receptive king on the throne in Stockholm, serious arrangements for a transfer of sovereignty could be undertaken. These involved not only the Swedes, the city council, and the north Estonian nobility but also the soldiers in both the lower and the upper (cathedral) cities. Aware that Estonia was slipping from their grasp but lacking the military and financial clout to adequately defend it from the Russians, the Livonian Order attempted to buy time by promising assistance to the citizens of Reval and pay to the mercenaries stationed in the city.⁷³⁶ However, the city council responded that they would have to find a foreign patron if the Order did not send immediate money and reinforcements, which Kettler was in no position to do.⁷³⁷ Clas Kristiernsson Horn, Governor of Vyborg, arrived in the city on March 25 of 1561 at the head of a Swedish delegation, and

⁷³³ Attman *The Struggle for Baltic Markets*, 14.

⁷³⁴ "For the sake of Christendom and of these northern regions all hearts might have wished and earnestly beseeched God that the old, illustrious King Gustav, a splendid and wise sovereign, tested and experienced in government, might have lived somewhat longer, or that the illustrious, present reigning King of Sweden, Johan, might have immediately succeeded his gracious, beloved and godblessed father. Had this been the case there is no doubt that the Swedes would have allied themselves with the King of Poland to fight against the Muscovite on behalf of Livonia. Much misfortune, as well as the later tragic war between Denmark and Sweden [i.e. the Northern Seven Years' War], would have been avoided. *Sed facta non possunt fieri infecta*. It was the will of God, punishment for our many sins." *Henning*, 67.

⁷³⁵ For Erik's Livonian diplomacy in this period, see *QU*, V, 307.; *QU*, VII, 94-7.; *NQU*, III, 311-24.

⁷³⁶ *QU*, VI, 337-40. Gotthard Kettler did not trust either the Revalians themselves or the mercenaries. *QU*, VI, 105-9.

⁷³⁷ *QU*, VI, 1-7.

negotiations for an annexation began in earnest.⁷³⁸ The city of Reval quickly sent emissaries, Reinholt Lode and Johann Winter, to Mitau to inform Wilhelm von Fürstenberg of their intention to submit to Swedish rule, and the city council and nobility swore allegiance to Sweden in early June.⁷³⁹ Once again, however, the troops stationed in the highly defensible upper city and castle would prove an obstacle to those hoping to control Reval.

The city was defended by a force of several hundred German mercenaries led by the captains Joachim Plate and Hans Kraft, with the upper city under the command of Caspar von Oldenbockum, an officer of the Livonian Order who had been appointed the Order's governor of Reval's castle on Christmas Eve of 1560.⁷⁴⁰ There was also a small contingent of Polish troops that had been sent, on Gotthard Kettler's request, by Sigismund Augustus to reinforce the city (and the Order's claim to it).⁷⁴¹ Kettler had been engaged in diplomacy on multiple fronts, trying to persuade the Revalians to await aid from his Polish and Lithuanian patrons rather than making arrangements of their own with the Swedes or the Danes, petitioning Sigismund Augustus for money and reinforcements, and promising the mercenaries stationed in the city that they would soon receive their pay if they remained loyal to the Livonian Order.⁷⁴² As elsewhere in Livonia, however, when Polish reinforcements did arrive at Reval, they were too few to present a credible deterrent to the Muscovites, and they argued with the local Livonian troops and the German mercenaries. As a consequence, the Revalians barred most of them from entering the city, and they were forced to camp in the surrounding countryside.⁷⁴³ Ultimately, the Polish cavalrymen's disputes with the German mercenary

⁷³⁸ *QU*, VI, 307-16.; *Briefe*, IV, 241.

⁷³⁹ *Henning*, 68.; *Briefe*, IV, 241-51, 259-61, and 307-48.; *QU*, VII, 311-24.

⁷⁴⁰ *QU*, VI, 188.

⁷⁴¹ *Archiv*, VIII, 206-34. The Swedes were closely monitoring Kettler's overtures to Poland. *QU*, III, 147-51.

⁷⁴² Jost Clodt, a prominent Revalian in the service of Kettler, attempted to persuade the other citizens not to abandon the Livonian Order. *Briefe*, IV, 270-307 and 365-84. Even after he had left the city, in early 1561, he continued to send letters to the council in an attempt to plead Kettler's case. Klot, *Jost Clodt und das Privilegium Sigismundi Augusti*, 40-4. Clodt, accompanied by a Polish legate, Heinrich von Dohna, returned to the city in June as a representative of the Livonian Order, again attempting to dissuade the council and nobility from defecting to Sweden. *QU*, VII, 311-24. Kettler was also upset that some of the delegates the Revalians had sent to Stockholm, foremost among them Johann Schmedemann, had badmouthed the Livonian Order at the Swedish court. *Briefe*, V, 104-6.

⁷⁴³ A Swedish report sent to King Erik on April 11 mentions that the German mercenaries and Polish soldiers in the city had come to blows. *QU*, VII, 1-6. Kettler had written to the mayor and city council in November to ask that the Polish cavalry be allowed to enter Reval. *QU*, VI, 164-7. They replied in late January, claiming that there was no room in the city due to the number of refugees and that they could not provide fodder

infantry became so troublesome that the city council dismissed them and sent them home (with gifts and honours so as to avoid giving offense to their powerful king).⁷⁴⁴ However, some Polish infantry who had been in the lower city became involved in street fighting and took refuge in the castle with Oldenbockum and his men.⁷⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the Swedish delegates in the city continued their negotiations with the mercenaries, attempting to lure them away from Oldenbockum and the Livonian Order and into their service with offers of higher pay;⁷⁴⁶ by late spring, they had succeeded in winning over many of the soldiers in the cathedral district and turning them against Oldenbockum.⁷⁴⁷ At the end of April, many of the mercenaries mutinied and defected to the Swedes, placing both the lower and upper cities in the hands of pro-Swedish troops, with Oldenbockum and his few remaining men – about sixty Livonian cavalry loyal to the Livonian Order and three squads of Polish foot – confined to the castle, which they stubbornly refused to surrender to the Swedes.⁷⁴⁸ Skirmishes ensued between the Swedish soldiers and the now Swedish-aligned German *Landsknechte* in the city and Oldenbockum's Livonian cavalry, whom the Swedes attempted to prevent from leaving or returning to the castle.⁷⁴⁹ Clas Kristiernsson Horn, who was now in command of the troops in the lower city, Swedes and Germans alike, ordered them to bombard the castle, which they did for six weeks before Oldenbockum finally surrendered on June 6, having run out of supplies and received no reinforcement from Kettler or his Polish backers.⁷⁵⁰ Oldenbockum received seven thousand gulden for his capitulation and was allowed

for the Poles' horses, suggesting that the horsemen could instead be stationed in nearby villages and manors. *QU*, VI, 247-53.

⁷⁴⁴ *Russow*, 91.

⁷⁴⁵ *QU*, VI, 324-37; VII, 1-8.

⁷⁴⁶ *QU*, VI, 211-16 and 290-5.

⁷⁴⁷ *QU*, VII, 23-9 and 113-22. Dirck van Galen, an officer of the Livonian Order, had been sent from Riga with a small force of a hundred cavalry and pay for the mercenaries stationed in the upper city, but he arrived at Reval to find that the men had already sworn allegiance to the King of Sweden. *Renner*, 193.

⁷⁴⁸ A report of the activities of the *Landsknechte* in the city up until their defection to the Swedes may be found in *QU*, VII, 188-99.

⁷⁴⁹ *Renner*, 194.

⁷⁵⁰ *Renner* provides the most detailed account of the action. Following the garrison's surrender, Kristiernsson lined the narrow path down from the castle with eight companies of ranked *Landsknechte*, whom Oldenbockum and his men were compelled to march between. *Renner*, 194-6. *Russow*, in contrast, gives no details of the siege. The entire incident reflected poorly on his home city of Reval and its new Swedish overlords.

to depart the city, although Kristiernsson reneged on his promise to have the castle's guns and powder (rightly the property of the Livonian Order) sent to him and his men at Weissenstein.⁷⁵¹

The events of 1561, in which the city of Reval defected to Sweden while a small force loyal to the Livonian Order stubbornly held the castle, were something of a reversal of what had happened in 1558, when the city had reverted to the Livonian Order while the castle held out for the Danes. Why did the Swedes succeed where the Danes had failed? The simplest explanation is timing. In 1558, King Christian had refused to accept the annexation of northern Estonia due to his cautious nature, the Danish nobility's unwillingness to engage in a military adventure on the far side of the Baltic, and fear that such a move would bring him into conflict with Russia at a time when relations with Sweden were already tense closer to home.⁷⁵²

Sweden's position in 1561 was very different. The young and warlike King Erik had just been crowned, and he and his brother Duke Johan saw the acquisition of Estonia as a means of extending their influence southward across the Gulf of Finland. Christoph von Münchhausen and his co-conspirators had tried to bring about a Danish annexation on their own, without authorization from Copenhagen, and had relied on the mercenaries they had won over with promises of Danish gold to secure the upper city until the King could be persuaded to intervene; when both the gold and the intervention failed to materialize, the mercenaries abandoned the cause and the castle reverted to Livonian control. Unlike the Danes, the Swedes took matters into their own hands, planting agents in the city and actively courting the city council and the nobility with promises of protection, while simultaneously corrupting the mercenaries with offers of higher pay. As soon as the city council pledged themselves to King Erik, soldiers and munitions were sent over from Finland to secure the city. The new Danish King, Frederick, and his proxy in the region, Duke Magnus, wrote to the council to make a case that Reval should once again accept Danish rule (as it had from 1219 until 1346), but it was too little and too late, and they failed to match the concrete actions of the Swedes by deploying Danish troops to the region or buying off the mercenaries who were already there. The Danes would make one more attempt to gain the city, in 1568, when King Frederick

⁷⁵¹ *QU*, VII, 229-34.

⁷⁵² The Danish nobility tended to view military expansion in the east as risky and potentially of little benefit to their interests, whereas influential members of the Swedish nobility increasingly came to see eastward expansion as an opportunity for personal advancement and the acquisition of new lands. Rian, "Government and Society," 21.

demanded it be given to his younger brother under the terms of the abortive Treaty of Roskilde, near the end of the Northern Seven Years' War, but the Swedes ultimately refused and the war dragged on for another two years until Stockholm was able to secure more favourable terms.⁷⁵³ In the turmoil that characterized the first few years of the Livonian War, the city might well have become Danish – or even Polish, had Sigismund Augustus pursued it more aggressively by sending more than a token force to reinforce it or by providing enough treasure to Kettler to secure it on his behalf – but, in the end, it was the Swedes who acted most quickly and decisively, not least by recognizing that winning over the mercenaries garrisoning the city was key to making their rule a reality on the ground.⁷⁵⁴

The similarities and differences between the events of 1558 and 1561 are also revealing when examined from the point of view of the mercenaries themselves. The importance of the foreign soldiery in determining the political fate of Reval was, in fact, incidental to their own concerns, which revolved around which patron would be most likely to pay them for their service and not who would make the most suitable guardian for the city of Reval. Nevertheless, their actions suggest that the notion of the socially and politically detached mercenary has its limitations. Despite being outsiders with virtually no political capital of their own, the *Landsknechte* in the city were able to achieve their monetary aims by inserting themselves into local power networks and even into negotiations of international importance;⁷⁵⁵ in other words, their straightforward and immediate needs for pay and steady employment may have been unconnected to the socio-political situation of the community in which they found themselves (i.e. the city of Reval), but it was by strategically inserting themselves into that socio-political

⁷⁵³ The treaty was signed on November 22, 1568, by the Danes and the Swedish delegates sent to treat with them, but, upon their return to Sweden, King Johan judged that his ambassadors had overstepped their authority, and, with the backing of the *Ständriksdag*, he refused to ratify the treaty. Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, 251. The war was ultimately brought to an end in December of 1570 by the Peace of Stettin.

⁷⁵⁴ As late as the summer of 1561, just before the defection to Sweden was formalized, Duke Magnus wrote that the city was still so divided that a popular revolt or some form of civic conflict was a real possibility. *NQU*, III, 203-4.

⁷⁵⁵ Hann and Hart have argued that market actors in general are often seen as “subversive of traditional social arrangements” because “commerce knows no bounds – all markets are in a sense world markets – and this threatens local systems of control [...] They offer a potential means of escape to the dominated [...] The power of long-distance merchants often modified the autonomy of local rulers.” Hann and Hart, *Economic Anthropology*, 25. The dealings of the *Landsknechte* stationed in Reval with the Danes and Swedes highlight the mercantile aspect of their profession. It was the mercenaries' ability to negotiate within an international network of military markets that opened up options of alternative employment in ways that ultimately proved subversive to the crumbling “traditional social arrangements” vainly upheld by the region's “local rulers” (i.e. the Livonian Order).

context and identifying and exploiting the opportunities that it presented that they were able to get what they wanted. In turn, this was made possible by the conditions of the soldiers' employment, which gave them significant practical leverage on the ground.

Collectively, the *Landsknechte* formed the largest group of armed professionals in the city, and, in the course of their employment as a garrison, they had been entrusted with a valuable asset, the upper city and castle of Reval, which was widely desired by several powerful factions but could not easily be gained or recovered without the cooperation of the troops that held it. This state of affairs was mirrored and repeated all over Livonia throughout the course of the war; castles needed to be garrisoned, professional mercenary infantry were militarily the most effective troops for the job, but they were also crippling expensive to employ for prolonged garrison duty, and, when they could not be paid, they could use the castles they had been hired to defend as leverage against their employers.⁷⁵⁶ The situation in Reval was further complicated by the division of the city into politically and topographically separate lower and upper districts, the latter of which was also attached to the castle. On three significant occasions over the course of the Livonian War, a small number of troops stationed in the upper city and/or the castle was able to subvert the political will of the much larger lower city and its overlord: in 1558, when Münchhausen, Üxküll, Behr, and the *Landsknechte* held it on behalf of the Danes against the Livonian Order; in 1561, when Oldenbockum and his Livonian and Polish troops held it against the Swedes and the mercenaries Clas Kristiernsson Horn had won over (bribed) to Stockholm's cause; and in 1570-1, when Klaus Kursell and his mutinous Livonian cavalry took over the castle and held it against the Swedes.⁷⁵⁷ The defensibility of Reval's upper city and castle were one of the city's great strengths and undoubtedly contributed to the fact that it was never conquered by an external enemy. Internally, however, these defenses could allow a small faction within the larger municipality to effectively hold the

⁷⁵⁶ The mercenary garrison's weaponization of the very asset that they had been employed to guard against the employers who had hired them to guard it is an intriguing example of the Foucauldian notion of the "strategic reversibility" of power relations, or the ways in which governmental practice can be turned around into focuses of resistance." Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: with two lectures and an interview with Michel Foucault*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 5.

⁷⁵⁷ As in the earlier incidents, conflict over pay was arguably the most important factor in the Kursell mutiny. The fullest account of these events remains Seraphim, *Klaus Kursell und seine Zeit*. Kursell's correspondences may be found in TLA B.B.14. The illegality of his occupation of Reval's castle is described in TLA B.r.4.II.

entire city hostage until they could be dislodged, a vulnerability that the troops stationed in the city understood all too well.

The Swedish acquisition of Reval in 1561 and the Danish failure to gain control of the city two years earlier are prime examples of how early modern powers used temporary partnerships with private actors to further their aims and enhance their capabilities to project power. The Swedes correctly identified the mercenaries stationed in Reval as an independently significant faction in the city, and Duke Johan's and King Erik's agents proved effective because they courted the soldiery on the men's own terms, winning them over with promises of higher pay in Swedish service. As Deborah Avant has argued, control over force must be understood in different ways: functionally, in terms of military strength; politically, in terms of who has the ability to authorize the use of violence; and socially, in terms of the extent to which the violence in question is in keeping with societal values.⁷⁵⁸ In 1561, it was the Swedes who most efficiently combined these three facets to bring Reval into their sphere of power, cleverly using the mercenaries already in the city to establish a functional beachhead that was quickly shored up by reinforcements from Finland and Sweden, while socially presenting King Erik as a sympathetic Protestant monarch who would respect the citizens' longstanding legal and confessional norms.⁷⁵⁹ The defection of the mercenaries to Stockholm gave Sweden a military presence on the ground before their own troops even arrived in theatre and made Oldenbockum's position in the castle untenable. Three years earlier, the Danes, while undoubtedly viewed favourably by many in the city, failed to seize the opportunity that they had been handed by the initiative of Münchhausen and the mercenaries, with King Christian's options limited by the old nobility's unwillingness to be drawn into a risky venture on the far side of the Baltic. While the seventeenth-century would see Sweden intensify its partnerships with mercenaries to form a nearly circum-Baltic empire and project power deep into the European continent over the course of the Thirty Years' War, Denmark's importance would

⁷⁵⁸ Deborah Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45.

⁷⁵⁹ As soon as Clas Kristiernsson Horn had the lower city, he began "sending messages day and night to the King, asking for ships, culverins, cannons, shot, powder and soldiers, German and Swedish." Renner, 194. Renner's account is supported by a wealth of correspondences to this effect. King Erik simultaneously promised to ratify all of the privileges of the city of Reval and the noble corporations of the surrounding counties, to defend the Protestant faith, and to protect the city and the nobility against all enemies. Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland," 56.

decline as Copenhagen remained content to profit from her strategic position athwart the Sound and to oversee her far-flung North Atlantic colonies.

Although the Swedes were successful on this occasion, the events of 1558 to 1561 also foreshadowed some of the future difficulties they would face as they continued to rely on partnerships with private military enterprisers over the course of the Livonian War. The inability of Kettler's Polish reinforcements to cooperate with the German mercenaries already in Reval worked in Sweden's favour, but Stockholm would face difficulties of a similar kind twelve years later when the Swedes' own Scottish and German mercenaries proved incapable of cooperating. The precise nature of the disagreements between the Polish cavalry and the *Landsknechte* in 1561 is difficult to ascertain, but it is reasonable to surmise that cultural, confessional, and monetary disputes much like the ones that soured the relationship between the Scots and the Germans in 1573 may have been at play. The underhand and ungracious means by which Clas Kristiernsson Horn dealt with Caspar von Oldenbockum, by all accounts a brave and honourable man, may also have been a mistake. Horn's successful attempts to bribe some of Oldenbockum's troops to mutiny against him, the avoidable skirmishing between the Swedish infantry and Oldenbockum's tiny force of Livonian cavalry at the castle gates, the Revalians' hostile treatment of the Livonian Order's Polish allies, the Swedish bombardment of Oldenbockum's forces in the castle, the needless humiliation of Oldenbockum and his garrison after their surrender (forcing them to descend from the castle through a gauntlet of ranked *Landsknechte* – many of them the very men whom Horn had earlier lured away from the Livonian Order), and Horn's decision not to honour his promise to return the powder and guns that Oldenbockum had been forced to leave behind when he departed the castle all potentially contributed to Oldenbockum's subsequent antipathy to the Swedish cause. As one of the most active and anti-Swedish leaders of the *Hofleute*, he would go on to cause significant difficulties for the Swedes in the years to come, seriously undermining Stockholm's attempts to unify northern Estonia against the Russian threat. As the Livonian Order's governor of Reval's castle, Oldenbockum was thwarted by the Swedes' manipulation of the mercenaries under his command; but, in the years after the collapse of the Livonian Order, he and many of his fellows would return the favour by themselves embracing various forms of mercenarism and undermining the Swedish presence in the region. Ironically, it would be

Stockholm's failure to pay the *Hofleute* that would lead many of them to turn on the Swedes in 1565, just as it had been the Livonian Order's inability to match the Swedes' offers of pay that led the mercenaries to abandon Oldenbockum for Horn in 1561.

8.3 The Case of the *Hofleute*: Livonians as Mercenaries in their own Land?

Prior to Ivan the Terrible's 1558 invasion, the inhabitants of Livonia owed political – and therefore military – allegiance to one or other of the Confederation's rulers, in other words to the Livonian Order or to one of the bishops. This was an essentially feudal system, according to which an aristocratic-theocratic overlord, whether the Master of the Livonian Order or a local bishop, was entitled to military support from the landed gentry and peasants inhabiting the territories under his tenure. Although these vassals expected monetary compensation in return for rendering military service when the need arose, this had been a normal condition of feudal recruitment since at least the high Middle Ages, and receipt of pay alone should not be considered a mark of professionalism, let alone an indicator of mercenary status.⁷⁶⁰ Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Livonian armies thus consisted of a mixture of socially and politically defined local troops levied under the old feudal system and a variable number of foreign mercenaries recruited abroad, with the latter gradually assuming increasing military importance.⁷⁶¹ In practice, however, the chaos of war quickly complicated this situation. The political collapse of the Livonian Confederation and the division of its territories between a shifting assortment of foreign powers disrupted the region's hierarchy of vassalage. With many of formerly independent Livonia's local overlords replaced by new ones from abroad and a significant portion of the population internally displaced, the old system of recruitment based on feudal obligation and territorial lordship largely ceased to function. In southern Livonian and Courland, the nobility's transference of allegiance from the Livonian Order to the newly established Duchy of Courland and Semigallia was relatively smooth, facilitated by Sigismund Augustus's willingness to uphold the old privileges of the local aristocracy; for the most part, those who had served Gotthard Kettler as *Landmeister* now fought for him as Duke. In the north and the east, which came under Russian, Swedish, and Danish occupation, things were

⁷⁶⁰ France, "Introduction," 7.

⁷⁶¹ Kreem, *The Town and Its Lord*, 75.

not so simple. Here, the precise military status of the roving bands of Livonian cavalry who came to be referred to as “*Hofleute*” – comprised mostly of members of the landed gentry and their vassals but also of some former knights of the Livonian Order⁷⁶² – is an especially complex question. Of greatest relevance to the current discussion is the question of whether or not these men should be seen as mercenaries.

Assessment of mercenary status rests on a number of factors, including whether the troops’ motivation was primarily economic, whether they enjoyed some level of political and market independence, and, most challengingly for the historian, the degree to which their service remained outside the internal military organization of the society in which they served. Determining whether Livonians undertaking military service in the 1560s and 1570s met these requirements and can be considered mercenaries is therefore a thorny problem. Historical assessments of the *Hofleute*’s motives and role in the Livonian War have varied widely. Sometimes seen as little more than self-interested renegades, Andres Adamson has more recently argued that, initially at least, they should be seen as an organized militia of the Livonian nobility who were intent on defending Livonia’s institutions and restoring her independence.⁷⁶³ At the other extreme is Erich Donnert’s interpretation – influenced both by Marxist conceptions of class struggle and by the unsympathetic portrayal of the Baltic German nobility in the writings of Balthasar Russow – which saw them as bands of lawless reavers who took advantage of the chaos of war to murder, pillage, and terrorize the common folk.⁷⁶⁴ These two understandings are not necessarily mutually exclusive.⁷⁶⁵ It was, after all, in the best interests of these sons of the Old Livonian nobility to preserve what they could of a system that had long guaranteed their rights and privileges. The muddiness of this distinction was remarked upon at the time, for example by Russow himself, who, with his typical dry wit,

⁷⁶² They “*weren meist Liflendische eddelluide.*” Renner, *Johann Renner’s Livländische Historien*, 301.

⁷⁶³ Adamson, “Liivimaa mõisamehed Liivi Sõja Perioodil,” 20-47.

⁷⁶⁴ Donnert, *Der livländische Ordensritterstaat*, 96.

⁷⁶⁵ As Sture Arnell pointed out, however, Donnert’s interpretation is in stark contrast with older Baltic German historiography that tended to glorify members of the Baltic German nobility, including the leaders of the *Hofleute*. Arnell contrasts Ernst Seraphim’s reference to Caspar von Oldenbockum as “*der letzte echte Ritter des alten Livland*” with Donnert’s assertion that Oldenbockum and his men presided over “*ein grausames Terrorregime*”. Arnell, *Bidrag till belysning av den baltiska fronten*, 152.; Seraphim, *Klaus Kursell und seine Zeit*, 73.; Donnert, *Der livländische Ordensritterstaat*, 38.

observed that the *Hofleute* set out to expel the Swedes from Estonia in 1565 in order to defend their “*olde Lyfflendissche fryheit (hadde schyr gesecht eigenwillicheit)*.”⁷⁶⁶

Further, the division of Old Livonia was neither a quick nor a neat process, and, even with the benefit of hindsight, it is not always clear to whom a particular individual rightfully owed allegiance in the tumultuous years after 1561; this political ambiguity complicates the question of whether an individual’s military service should be understood as paid service rendered to his rightful liege or as economically motivated mercenarism on behalf of a foreign employer. In 1560 and 1561, for example, many noblemen and burghers from across Estonia viewed Duke Magnus as the preferred replacement for the crumbling Livonian Order, hoping that he would extend Danish rule across Estonia while Copenhagen’s diplomats negotiated a Russian withdrawal or perhaps arranged for Estonia to retain its status as an autonomous territory with ties to the Empire under Magnus’s princely rule.⁷⁶⁷ As a result, at various times throughout the 1560s and 1570s, not only those vassals who had previously owed allegiance to the bishops of Ösel-Wiek and Courland, whose episcopal titles Magnus had purchased, but also Baltic Germans from parts of Estonia that had come under Swedish and Russian occupation flocked to Magnus’s service. Should one consider the inhabitants of Ösel-Wiek to be feudal vassals continuing to serve their rightful bishop (Magnus), while viewing those who were from former territories of the Livonian Order that had fallen under Swedish rule, such as Harrien and Wierland, but who preferred to fight for Magnus rather than for King Erik, as mercenaries or renegades?

Such a distinction may have appealed to chroniclers like Balthasar Russow, whose outlook was pro-Swedish, sympathetic to the peasantry, and therefore doubly inimical to the *Hofleute*. However, any strict division based on pre-war residence or allegiance seems petty in light of the complete dissolution of the Old Livonian state(s) and the subsequent frequency with which the political situation – both *de iure* and *de facto* – fluctuated in the decades after 1558, especially given that many districts of the country became disputed border zones or changed

⁷⁶⁶ Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 59.

⁷⁶⁷ Adamson, *Hertsog Magnus ja tema “Liivimaa kuningriik”*; Adamson, “Prelude to the Birth of the ‘Kingdom of Livonia’”, 31-61.

hands several times over the course of the war.⁷⁶⁸ At any given time, opinion was often starkly divided over to whom a given region or town and its inhabitants owed allegiance, and, in the political chaos that prevailed at key moments in the war, it was entirely possible that members of the same community might find themselves fighting on different sides while all believing themselves to be serving their rightful lord(s). It is therefore important to recognize the fighting man's own ability to assess his situation and choose to serve one or other overlord for reasons of his own. The territorial claim of a distant king or tsar should not be seen as the sole factor determining the political (ir)regularity of military service on the part of a Livonia's inhabitants; the acceptance or refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of a monarch's, government's, or other authority's overlordship on the part of the men themselves is also an important determinant of their status as soldiers, vassals, or mercenaries. That many of the *Hofleute* favoured the losing cause of Duke (later "King") Magnus and at times fiercely opposed Swedish encroachment has sometimes been used after the fact to deligitimize their role in the war, casting them as mercenaries and renegades, a position that somewhat teleologically implies that the Swedes' wartime activities in Estonia were more valid than those of Magnus or the Russians because they ultimately emerged as victors. The fact that many people from parts of the country that came under Swedish and Russian rule chose not to fight for these powers does not necessarily suggest that they were repudiating politically constituted military service in favour of a turn toward mercenarism; it could also indicate that they simply did not recognize the legitimacy of the Swedish or Russian occupation and had made a political decision to throw in their lot with another regional power, more often than not, at least in Estonia during the early stages of the war, Duke Magnus and the Danes.

There is also a risk of equating Magnus's own tumultuous career, characterized by frequent changes of allegiance, with the motivations of the men who fought for his cause. Needless to say, the personal nature of the man in whose service one fights does not determine the professional nature of that service. Magnus himself was moved by a mixture of necessity and opportunism – and his schemes were certainly executed with varying degrees of

⁷⁶⁸ High levels of internal displacement also significantly complicated the situation, with many Livonians abandoning their pre-war homes to avoid occupation by one invading power or another. After the Russian conquest of Dorpat, for example, large numbers of the diocese's inhabitants relocated to Reval, where some of them subsequently took up military service for the Livonian Order and later for the Swedes. Dietrich von Galen reported the arrival of some of these refugees to Wilhelm von Fürstenberg. *QU*, III, 167-9.

(in)competence – but this should not be taken as evidence that all of those who favoured his cause shared these traits. Some of the *Hofleute* who backed the young Duke certainly fought primarily for money and plunder or simply to survive, and critical contemporary commentators like Balthasar Russow were not entirely unjustified in characterizing them as primarily driven by avarice and ambition; but others may have had goals of a more political or even personal nature. The line between political motivation and individual gain is invariably blurred when the political system that one is fighting to uphold (or restore) is responsible for ensuring one's traditional social privileges, and it is difficult to distinguish monetary greed from dire necessity when plunder and pay are required simply to survive.⁷⁶⁹ So, while the status of the professional, foreign mercenary who travelled to a warzone specifically to seek employment in a conflict in which he had no political or ideological stake is generally clear enough, that of the local who turned to military enterprise when his own homeland was engulfed by war is invariably more ambiguous. Desire for monetary gain was clearly a significant factor in the *Hofleute*'s wartime activities, as evidenced by their propensity for pillaging and larceny and by the fact that all of their most serious mutinies and defections coincided with disputes over pay, but this does not necessarily preclude the possibility that their military activities also had a political dimension that muddies their status as pure mercenaries.⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁹ A French saying of the sixteenth century held that a mercenary was “a man forced to risk death in order to live.” Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser*, vol. i, 457.

⁷⁷⁰ Of particular note are the 1565 mutiny against the Swedes at Pernau, the 1570 Kursell mutiny, and the 1575 sale of the castles of Hapsal, Lode, and Leal to the Danes by unpaid Livonian cavalry who had been garrisoning them on behalf of the Swedes. It is less clear whether pay was a factor in the failed attempt by Reinold von Rosen's cavalry to capture Dorpat from their Russian employers in 1571. The involvement of Elert Kruse and Johann Taube suggests that the incident may have been more of a political conspiracy than a simple mutiny over pay, although Balthasar Russow does mention that the other banner of cavalry stationed in the diocese – that commanded by the *Hauptmann* Hans von Zeiz – had not been paid, so this may also have been a factor in Rosen's decision to betray his Russian employers. *Russow*, 140. Even on occasions when the *Hofleute*'s motives were self-evidently of a primarily monetary nature, there could be serious political ramifications. The mutiny of 1565, for example, resulted in the massacre of the Swedish garrison of Pernau and temporarily cost Stockholm control of that city, while, in 1560, the decision of many of the *Hofleute* to abandon the Livonian Order in favour of Duke Magnus significantly undermined Gotthard Kettler's war effort by forcing him to defend his western flank rather than concentrating all of his forces against the Russian invasion from the east. Magnus benefitted from this state of affairs by demanding land – Sonnenburg, Windau, and a number of manors – from the Livonian Order in return for curtailing the raids of the horsemen (Kettler refused), while Kettler considered the depredations of the cavalry to be one of the two major issues preventing him from signing a treaty with Magnus (the other being the possession of Pernau). *NQU*, III, 61-5.; *QU*, V, 149-59 and 244-6. Kettler was at Pernau negotiating with Duke Magnus when the Livonian Order's field army was destroyed at Ermes.

Social and political dimensions further complicate the problem of whether or not the *Hofleute* and other Livonians who undertook paid military service on behalf of one or other of the foreign potentates fighting over their homeland should be considered mercenaries. As vassals of the Livonian Order or one of the Livonian bishops, these men clearly began the war as regular troops serving under politically constituted terms. However, the dissolution of Old Livonia and the region's partitioning by foreign powers profoundly altered the circumstances of the local population. As privileged members of the Livonian aristocracy, the *Hofleute* continued to have a political stake in the outcome of the war. However, at various times in the 1560s and 1570s, they exercised a degree of political independence and monetized professionalization akin to that of mercenaries, largely choosing to fight for whoever offered them the best and most reliable pay and switching sides as it suited them.⁷⁷¹ As we have seen, foreign mercenaries without local connections sometimes became enmeshed in the region's social and political networks. Both the *Landsknechte* who played a part in determining the fate of Reval in 1558 and 1561 and Archibald Ruthven's Scottish mercenaries in 1573-74, were motivated by an essentially apolitical drive for monetary reward, but they inserted themselves into local disputes as political actors in order to leverage more money from their employers (or from their employers' rivals and enemies). In a sense, the *Hofleute* reversed this tactic. Influential members of Livonian society with deep-rooted socio-political interests in the outcome of the war, they adopted many of the practices associated with mercenarism (and, at times, even resorted to outright banditry), using financially motivated, contractual military enterprise as a means of pursuing their goals. Mercenarism was a wartime survival strategy for many Livonian men, providing them with desperately needed finances, facilitating the formation of military partnerships with foreign potentates active in the region, and giving them a means by which they could continue to exercise agency under foreign occupation and thereby influence the outcome of the war and the fate of their homeland.

⁷⁷¹ Urban has argued that the Baltic German gentry were willing to serve whoever happened to be ruling the eastern Baltic as long as their traditional rights were respected. Urban, *Bayonets for Hire*, 68. However, respect for their rights should not be understood only as the promise to uphold long-standing social privileges following the conclusion of a conflict, but also, more immediately, as the wartime willingness to pay these men for their service. The *Hofleute's* most serious disputes with the Swedish Crown, for example, were all arguably caused by the Swedes' failures to pay them for their ongoing military service, and only much less directly by any fears that that Stockholm would fail to uphold their rights once the conflict was over.

Regardless of their precise motives and the fact that they constituted an interested party fighting in a war for control of their own country, many of the *Hofleute*'s contemporaries did see them as mercenaries. The term "*Hofleute*" itself appears in chronicles and correspondences of the day as primarily a social designator for the Baltic German nobility but also sometimes as a functional descriptor for Livonian cavalry more broadly, and common references to both Livonian and foreign cavalry as "*söldrøyter*" ("mercenary horsemen") leave little doubt that all were considered to be mercenaries. Gotthard Kettler's characterization of the Livonian cavalry who had defected, in 1560, from the Livonian Order to Duke Magnus as the Duke's "*strassen Reuber unsere gewesne Solt Reuter*" is interesting not only in that it highlights the degree to which the horsemen had embraced outright banditry but also in that he refers to the troops as his "former *mercenary* cavalry" in spite of the fact that they were members of the local nobility and properly vassals of the Livonian Order.⁷⁷² Swedish sources generally refer to the Baltic German cavalry operating in the parts of northern Estonia under Stockholm's control as "*rjitterne*" (or some other variant thereof), regardless of whether they were true mercenaries or vassals of the Swedish Crown.⁷⁷³ The same term is used for domestic cavalry recruited in Sweden and Finland. It seems possible that the relative autonomy of the Livonian nobility (greater than that of their Swedish counterparts), the very recent Swedish acquisition of Estonia, and ongoing ambiguity about the region's status within the Swedish realm created a sense of separateness that contributed to the view of Baltic troops in Swedish service as less embedded in the Swedish military system than Swedes and Finns, even when the fighting was taking place in Livonia itself, and, indeed, (Baltic) German and Swedish troops are most often listed separately from one another in the Swedish military records of the time.⁷⁷⁴ Troops currently serving in Sweden, Finland, and Livonia are also generally listed separately, although this seems more a matter of logistics than of identity. Commonly, military expenses for each of these three macroregions appear in separate sections of the same document, with subtotals given for each region and a combined total for all of them at the end.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷² *QU*, V, 245.

⁷⁷³ See, for example, any number of documents in RA Strödda militiehandlingar före 1631 A.2.-3.

⁷⁷⁴ For a discussion of the Swedish policy toward the Livonian nobility in the 1560s, see Eng, "The Legal Position of Estland," 53-62.

⁷⁷⁵ See, for example, a combined reckoning of the annual costs of paying and clothing the troops stationed in Sweden, Finland, and Livonia in the year 1580. RA Strödda militiehandlingar före 1631 A.2.-3.

At times, “mercenary” may have been more of a functional designator than a statement of political integration or social status (insider or outsider), simply reflecting the fact that the terms of service and pay of the banners of Livonian cavalry fighting for Stockholm were contractually defined according to standards common to mercenarism of the day. The fact that the *Hofleute* were, for the most part, Livonian noblemen who had enjoyed great social privileges in the old days of the Livonian Confederation, privileges that they continued to claim, sometimes seems to have mattered less than their current professional circumstances; in May of 1565, for example, King Erik instructed Henrik Klasson not to “deal with [the Baltic German cavalry] as they are entitled but as their power stands.”⁷⁷⁶ In short, the *Hofleute* may have been at least partially politically motivated, can hardly be seen as social outsiders in war for the fate of their own homeland, and were not even professional soldiers when the war broke out (although their professionalism increased with time) – but they were hired like mercenaries and fought like mercenaries and were therefore frequently referred to as mercenaries.⁷⁷⁷ In the end, perhaps all that can be said with certainty is that, while the designation “*Hofleute*” does not necessarily imply mercenary status, it certainly does not preclude it, and the two very often went hand-in-hand.⁷⁷⁸

Of all classes of Livonian society, why was it the Baltic German nobility who most thoroughly and successfully embraced military enterprise over the course of the Livonian War? Perhaps the simplest explanation is that many of them had little choice but to take up arms, and their social and financial capital allowed them to do so reasonably effectively. Urban populations in places like Riga and Reval could shelter behind their city walls and use their mercantile wealth and access to the sea to import mercenaries and supplies, thereby avoiding the worst violence of the war. Invariably, it was the rural population who suffered the greatest losses in a conflict waged primarily through raiding and pillaging. Poorly organized and bound to their lands by

⁷⁷⁶ Letter of May 9, 1565. RA R.R. 1565.

⁷⁷⁷ Sture Arnell observed that, in a purely military sense, the *Hofleute* were indistinguishable from “imported” German mercenary cavalry operating in the region in that both were frequently unhappy with the terms of their service, had a tendency to be unruly, and became involved in disputes with their employers over pay. However, he also argued that, as a political factor, the *Hofleute* were “decidedly more important” in that they represented the public opinion of the local nobility and were therefore courted by invaders lest they fall into the orbit of a rival power. Arnell, *Bidrag till belysning av den baltiska fronten*, 11.

⁷⁷⁸ See, for example, Paul Johansen’s careful, dualistic description of Claus Kursell as a “*livländische Adlige und Söldnerführer*” and the troops who participated in his 1570 rebellion as “*Kriegsknechten und Hofleuten*.” Johansen, *Balthasar Rüssow*, 174-5.

the agricultural cycle, the peasantry were the most vulnerable, and they responded by endeavouring to mobilize in a number of ways: on their own terms in the uprising of 1560; in the service of various foreign invaders; and through makeshift defenses and opportunistic retaliation against the soldiers who preyed upon them.⁷⁷⁹ As the war progressed, more peasants were incorporated into Estonia's military forces, particularly in pillaging operations in which their knowledge of the local terrain compensated for their military inexperience.⁷⁸⁰ Ever the astute social commentator, Balthasar Russow describes how, by the early 1580s, some Estonian peasants had become so accustomed to pillaging that they were reluctant to do other work, leading to a shortage of manual labourers in Reval; they conducted night raids throughout the countryside, killing and robbing their fellows for whatever meagre possessions they might still hold, and even targeting farms that had been given writs of protection by the Swedish Crown.⁷⁸¹ However, while useful as irregular troops, poorly armed peasants were not reliable battle winners, and, even in raiding and skirmishing operations, they struggled against well equipped professional soldiers unless they enjoyed an overwhelming numerical advantage or the element of surprise.

Like the Estonian and Lettish peasantry, the Baltic German nobility were often targeted by raiders – whether foreign invaders, their own rebellious peasants, or their erstwhile peers – forced off their estates, their manors plundered and burned or handed out as rewards by conquering invaders. However, when threatened with violence, they had more options than the common folk. Financial capital and movable wealth meant that the aristocracy were less tied to their lands than were the peasantry, for whom displacement from their agricultural base could mean swift impoverishment and starvation, and this gave many Baltic German landholders the mobility to actively seek out military employment under more favourable conditions

⁷⁷⁹ The peasant rebellion that broke out in northern Estonia in 1560 was, at least partially, a response to the failure of their German overlords to uphold their feudal obligation to protect them from the Tsar's Russian and Tatar raiders, although opportunism was also no doubt a factor. According to Renner, the revolt began "when the peasants of Harrien and Wiek saw that they had no protection from the authorities and the Germans." Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 333. Following incidents of extreme violence, diminished confidence in the authorities' ability to prevent similar events from taking place in the future is often a principal cause of social anxiety and unrest. Pekka Räsänen, Atte Oksanen, and James Hawdon, "Communities: Examining Psychological, Sociological, and Cultural Consequences after Mass Tragedies," in *The Causes and Consequences of Group Violence: From Bullies to Terrorists*, ed. James Howdon, John Ryan, and Marc Lucht (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 228.

⁷⁸⁰ Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 103.

⁷⁸¹ Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 103 and 123.

elsewhere. This mobility was enhanced by a strong pre-war social matrix between the region's prominent landowning families, which enabled more rapid mobilization and effective military cooperation, and the *Hofleute* recruited by means of existing aristocratic networks with reach throughout the eastern Baltic. In addition to mobility and pre-war connections, literacy and international ties also worked in their favour when organizing for war. Many members of the Baltic German nobility had familial or personal relations throughout Livonia and beyond, especially in Germany, with whom they corresponded throughout the war. These links gave them flexibility and multiplied options, while the literacy and diplomatic *nous* of the aristocrat provided a significant advantage in negotiations with foreign powers, including in negotiations concerning military service. Cultural and linguistic commonalities with the many northern German mercenaries who came to Livonia over the course of the war further facilitated the spread of military cultures between these groups, with Baltic Germans increasingly adopting forms of military enterprise and battlefield praxis introduced to the region by professional soldiers from Germany. At the most practical level, the Livonian nobility's wealth also allowed for the purchase of expensive war supplies such as horses, armour, and firearms. They may not have gained much military expertise in the fifty years of peace that preceded the outbreak of the Livonian War, but the typical son of a noble family could at least afford to outfit himself as a *Reiter*, and the added battlefield survivability provided by armour and a horse increased his chances of living long enough to learn to fight through experience in the field.

The aristocratic shift toward military enterprise was a widespread phenomenon in many parts of early modern Europe – the French Wars of Religion being a prime example – with systems of feudal vassalage giving way to centralized states employing armies of paid professionals all across the continent, and it was far from uncommon for the descendants of the knighthood to take up more economically constituted forms of professional soldiering in order to retain their military relevance. In Livonia, the relative longevity of the region's medieval institutions – the Livonian Order, the theocratic bishoprics, the Hansa, etc. – as well as the state of peace that prevailed for the first half of the sixteenth century, delayed the transition away from the old feudal system. However, when war did break out, such was the speed with which the Confederation collapsed and the violence with which venerable social norms were upturned that the population was forced to adapt quickly to the realities of late sixteenth-century warfare.

This entailed not only seeking protection from abroad through hiring foreign mercenaries and partnering with foreign potentates but also a very rapid turn to military enterprise on the part of many Livonians themselves. For the Baltic *Ritterschaft*, this meant adopting over the course of just a few years forms of warfare that the nobility in other parts of Europe had taken generations to embrace. The *Hofleute* were not mercenaries in the purest sense, but they quickly emulated many features of mercenarism and military enterprise as a means of retaining a military role in the conflict engulfing their shattered homeland and as a way to hold onto a degree of agency in a time of chaotic political upheaval. Although many lost their lives in the quarter century of violent turmoil, the Baltic German nobility was collectively successful in using wartime militarization as a route toward partnership with invading powers that allowed them to remain a relevant and surprisingly independent class in Baltic politics rather than simply being absorbed or displaced in the Scandinavian and Polish-Lithuanian order that subsequently emerged from the ruins of Old Livonia.

Conclusion

Livonia's security had relied on a steady stream of foreign fighters from the west since the colony's foundation in the thirteenth century, when crusaders from Germany, Denmark, and other regions of Latin Christendom flocked to the shores of the eastern Baltic to defend the newly founded "church of the new plantation" (to borrow Henry of Livonia's evocative phrase) from the indigenous pagans and the neighbouring Rus'. Over the ensuing three and a half centuries, the Livonian Order continued its longstanding policy of recruitment in northern Germany, but the influx of crusaders gradually gave way to recruitment of mercenaries, who were shipped to the region in times of crisis like the Muscovite wars of the fifteenth century. The long (1503-1558) peace of the early 1500s was something of an anomaly in Livonia's otherwise tumultuous history. When war did break out again, the Livonian Confederation found that its administrative and military institutions and the inexperienced troops available domestically were ill-prepared for a confrontation with Ivan the Terrible's potent war machine. From the outset, mercenaries played an essential role in the Livonians' defensive efforts and in the campaigns of the foreign powers that invaded and partitioned the country in the years to come. The object of this study has been to explore some of the outcomes – military, economic, political, and social – of these men's involvement in one of the most pivotal periods of the region's history.

One aim of this study has been to assess some of the specific, military claims of the military revolution hypothesis in the under-examined context of northeastern Europe. The military performance of German mercenary infantry – the *Landsknechte* – met with mixed results in the Livonian theatre. There is little doubt that these dangerous men were formidable fighters, more than capable of holding their own against their Muscovite adversaries when the conditions were right. Unfortunately, especially in the early stages of the war, the conditions so seldom *were* right. Vastly outnumbered and struggling to coordinate the forces of the Confederation's bickering factions (the Livonian Order, the five bishoprics, and the towns), the Livonian commanders could, at first, do little but retreat to fortified positions and avoid direct confrontation with the Tsar's enormous field army, all the while hemorrhaging money as they struggled to pay their soldiers. For the most part, the Livonians' troops were relegated to

garrison duty, raiding and counter-raiding, and the occasional siege to retake a castle that had fallen into the hands of the Russians. Most of these were tasks for which mercenary infantry were far from ideal. As garrisons, they were crippling expensive to maintain and became unruly or even mutinous when unpaid. When tasked with conducting or intercepting raids, they were usually too slow to provide an efficient defense against Ivan's *pomeste'e* and Tatar light cavalry, whose experience in steppe warfare was put to such devastating use against the rural populace of Livonia. As foragers, the *Landsknechte*'s lack of mobility also put them at a disadvantage, and, given their employers' struggles to keep them adequately paid and supplied and the fact that the fighting took place almost exclusively on Livonian soil, most of their pillaging was inflicted on the local population, the Livonians' own subjects.⁷⁸² Elite infantry did prove their worth in sieges and assaults, especially when adequately supported by artillery, but, as the war progressed, it is little wonder that the *Hofleute* and other forms of cavalry increasingly supplanted the *Landsknechte* in importance, especially once the Swedes gained control of northern Estonia and began shipping their own infantry to the region. In the end, though, the fact that professional German infantry could not win the war for Livonia says less, perhaps, about the troops themselves than about the extremely unfavourable odds faced by the Confederation and the suboptimal conditions under which these troops were forced to fight. When isolated garrisons of scores or hundreds of men – often underpaid, undersupplied, and suffering crises of morale – were forced to defend against besieging Russian armies numbering in the thousands or tens of thousands, there was little to be done.

Given the economic and logistical issues associated with mercenary warfare and the many difficulties arising from their rancorous negotiations and disputes with their employers, why did mercenaries continue to be used in such large numbers in so many parts of Europe? In short, they provided a ready supply of troops in an age when standing armies were either non-existent or very small, and they were often seasoned professionals who were better fighters than conscripts. While paying mercenaries for the duration of a campaign was a substantial expense, hiring professional soldiers could still be cheaper than raising, training, equipping,

⁷⁸² Over the winter of 1559-1560, for example, Joseph van Munden and his men resorted to stealing horses from both local peasants and the Russians, which they used for raiding and pillaging. *Renner*, 165. Even troops who arrived in the region as infantry and were accustomed to fighting on foot quickly realized the benefits of raiding, pillaging, and foraging from horseback.

and maintaining a domestic standing army of the size needed to win wars. Even those nations, like sixteenth-century Muscovy and seventeenth-century Sweden, that did maintain large native forces for prolonged periods of time arguably did so because they were almost always at war and thus had no option but to remain in a state of constant mobilization. Nor, in the case of Sweden, did the important reforms and improvements made to the country's native forces in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries lead to an immediate reduction in the contribution of mercenaries to the Swedish armies. During the Thirty Years' War, Gustavus Adolphus's army decreased from 85% Swedish in 1621 to just 28% Swedish in 1631. Scotland alone provided 25,000 mercenaries to Stockholm's cause over the course of the war.⁷⁸³ During the early years of the Livonian War, mercenaries may not have been able to turn the tide for the beleaguered defenders, but they were still the best troops the Livonians had, an irreplaceable component of the Confederation's defenses, and a major reason that the defenders were able to hold out as long as they did. Mercenaries were certainly not an ideal solution to the military requirements of early modern Baltic warfare, but they were an effective enough one that they remained ubiquitous.

Foreign mercenaries influenced Livonian governance in a number of ways. Most obviously, at the governmental level, there were the extraordinary costs associated with employing enough of these expensive professionals to maintain a credible defense over many years of fighting. This required the Livonian authorities to undertake a series of institutional reforms and special war measures – war taxes, currency adjustments, foreign loans, requests for financial assistance from the Empire, and even privateering – intended to raise the capital needed to sustain a war effort against a much larger and more powerful enemy state (although a less economically developed one). These efforts met with mixed results, but they do indicate willingness on the part of the Livonians to make the changes needed to field an effective mid-sixteenth-century army, even if the measures adopted were arguably too little and too late. The Livonians' belated attempts at fiscal-military reform support the central thesis of the military revolution paradigm that early modern administrative change took place, for the most part, in response to

⁷⁸³ Alexia Grosjean, "Scotland: Sweden's Closest Ally?" in *Scotland and the Thirty Years' War 1618-1648*, ed. Steve Murdoch, 143. Gunnar Artéus outlined the growing number of foreign officers in the Swedish army and navy from the mid-sixteenth to early seventeenth century. For example, between 1555 and 1560, 4% of naval captains and 10% of infantry captains in Swedish service were foreigners, compared with 30% and 27% between 1599 and 1611. Artéus, *Till Militärstatens Förhistoria*, 50.

the escalating demands of war. The Livonian case is interesting in that, because they were prompted by a sudden catastrophe at the end of a long period of peaceful complacency, these efforts were made with unusual haste over the span of just a few years. It is also instructive to examine fiscal-military developments in polities that ultimately failed to make the changes typically associated with the transition from medieval to early modern forms of statehood and thus did not survive into the modern era; too often, the focus has been on those nations whose fiscal and military reforms were largely successful and which subsequently emerged as major seventeenth- and eighteenth-century powers, an approach that can lead to the teleological assumption that these reforms were natural and inevitable products of the evolution toward modernity, rather than adaptive innovations peculiar to specific states.

Debates about the nature of early modern political centralization and fiscal-military state development have generally focused on the changing relationship between national governments and local powerholders and traditional estates, with discussion often centering on the degree to which this process should be understood as one predicated on coercion or consensus. In the case of Livonia, the absence of a sufficiently authoritative domestic government or ruler meant that, rather than Livonia itself transitioning to a form of more centralized early modern statehood, the region lost its independence and was partitioned by neighbouring powers, with local elites such as the bishops, the nobility, and municipal governments negotiating with foreign potentates for protection and the maintenance of longstanding traditional privileges. Eschewing the dichotomy of consensus and coercion in his analysis of fiscal-military state formation in Vasa Sweden, Jan Glete chose instead to emphasize questions of organization, transformation, innovation, and entrepreneurship.⁷⁸⁴ The present study's focus on the hitherto under-studied role of mercenarism in the Baltic warfare of the latter half of the sixteenth century broadly supports the validity of Glete's approach. However, while the Livonian War was undoubtedly a time of changing relations between (foreign) governments and local elites, the fate of Livonia was also, at times, deeply influenced by the mercenaries fighting in the region, who constituted an important and overlooked third dimension in the fluctuating power relations of the early modern Baltic. Instead of a two-way interaction between central, governmental authorities and regional, traditional powerholders,

⁷⁸⁴ Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe*.

the Livonian War suggests the utility of a three-way analysis that also includes international military enterprisers and the itinerant professional soldiery. The key role of the mercenary in sixteenth-century Baltic warfare – as well as the turn to mercenarism on the part of some local social groups – highlights the important entrepreneurial and international elements in early modern state-building projects, as well as the ongoing monetization of the older feudal status norms that structured earlier forms of European warfare.

The need to support the costs of employing mercenary armies was an important factor driving the fiscal and governmental innovations of the sixteenth century. The ubiquity of mercenaries in early modern Baltic warfare allowed for greater force projection than would otherwise have been possible given the resources available to the era's states, while simultaneously placing limitations on their capacity to wage war. Leaders intent on retaining their legitimizing status as providers of protection were required to adopt a more entrepreneurial role in an age of increasing military monetization, something the rival potentates who contested the Livonian War did with varying degrees of success. However, the nascent fiscal-military states of the fifteen hundreds were still very much works in progress, and administrative and military missteps plagued every Baltic power of the day. The Livonian War is therefore an illuminating context in which to assess early attempts at some of the fiscal and military developments that would be refined in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in terms of the creation, financing, and support of larger armies comprised of domestic conscripts, levied vassals, and professional mercenaries (a logistical and administrative juggling act that would become more efficiently synergistic in later centuries). Of course, mercenaries were employed not only by states intent on expanding their authority over new territories and social groups, as when the Swedes bribed the mercenaries stationed in Reval in order to facilitate their takeover of that city, but also by peripheral regions and traditional elites intent on resisting statist encroachment, as when the Livonian Order imported German mercenaries to resist Polish-Lithuanian and Russian intrusion in Livonian affairs in the late 1550s. Further, as the present study has shown, mercenaries also influenced military outcomes and political developments through their pursuit of their own objectives, whether in search of the crudely materialistic rewards offered by plunder and pay, or by turning to military enterprise as a means of gaining negotiative leverage in an era of chaotic social mobility and political transformation. The

waging of war was not yet a program of profit for the Baltic states of the sixteenth century, although the financially crippling immediate expenses were sometimes justified by the realization of long term strategic and economic benefits such as the control of trade routes, but military enterprisers and mercenary soldiers themselves could certainly profit from the combination of pay (when it was forthcoming) and plunder.

In addition to their political and economic impact on early modern Baltic polities, mercenaries also had a profound effect on Livonian society, both by contributing to the country's militarization and by participating in the cycle of grinding, quotidian violence that had such terrible consequences for the rural population in particular. Militarization took place at all levels of Livonian society, from the political, economic, and strategic policies of the authorities to the independent formation of militias and raiding parties among the peasantry.⁷⁸⁵ Mercenaries were deliberately employed by the Confederation's leaders in many of these initiatives, for example the decision to have enlisted peasants trained by *Landsknechte* who could speak their languages.⁷⁸⁶ The ordinary inhabitants of Livonian also responded to the cycle of violence and devastation on their own terms, by imitating the cultures of raiding, pillaging, and destruction introduced from the steppe by the Muscovites and Tatars and from central Europe by their own mercenaries. Conversely, although frequently agents of chaos and perpetrators of wartime violence, mercenaries were sometimes deployed to enforce order upon the civilian population, as when the Livonian Order led a force into the Diocese of Dorpat in the fall of 1559 to put a stop to burning and looting by the local peasantry.⁷⁸⁷

The adoption of mercenarism by many members of the Baltic German nobility, who reinvented themselves as the *Hofleute* and fought in the service of the foreign powers contesting their shattered homeland, is a prime example of the transformative effect that mercenary warfare had on the region's society. Although the *Hofleute* suffered heavy casualties, military enterprise proved to be an effective survival strategy, allowing them to form wartime partnerships with foreign governments and emerge with a surprising degree of autonomy under

⁷⁸⁵ Compare Otto Büsch's debated concept of "social militarization" in his *Militärsystem und Sozialleben im alten Preussen, 1713-1807; die Anfänge der sozialen Militarisierung der preussisch-deutschen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1962).

⁷⁸⁶ Renner, *Johann Renner's Livländische Historien*, 248-9.

⁷⁸⁷ *QU*, III, 294-5.

postwar Swedish, Danish, and Polish-Lithuanian rule. As many scholars of military cultures have observed, soldiers, even while immersed in the mores and values of their own military cultures, continue to be affected by their own civilian backgrounds and by the civilian societies with which they interact.⁷⁸⁸ The reverse is also true: a civilian society forced into prolonged association (and conflict) with soldiers will almost invariably undergo a degree of militarization, both through official avenues like recruitment and more organically through the normalization of violence. A sense of the outcome of this process for Livonia's population may be gained by contrasting Balthasar Russow's account of initial mobilization, when crowds of Revalians gathered to gape at the inept drilling of young boys and old drunks who had never fired a gun, with his descriptions of the war's later years, when even "children, youths, and domestic servants were wiser in military affairs and strategy than old, renowned men had been in the good old days [of peace]" and "ambushing and reaving were the best type of chivalry in Livonia."⁷⁸⁹

The messy intersection of the social, the military, and the economic in early modern warfare complicates the stereotypical understanding of the mercenary as politically disinterested outsider. Even foreign mercenaries who arrived in Livonia without prior ties to any of its factions and who were motivated solely by the prospect of financial reward, such as the *Landsknechte* stationed in Reval in the early stages of the war, could become involved in regional affairs and sometimes took sides in local disputes for complex reasons of their own. In the case of Reval, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that the mercenaries played a decisive part in determining the city's fate, but their actions did exert influence on a delicate situation that had profound geopolitical repercussions for the long-term relationship between Reval, Denmark, and Sweden. That they primarily inserted themselves into local power networks and diplomatic disputes in order to leverage pay from their employers (and from their employers' rivals) in no way diminishes the non-monetary consequences of their involvement. By the same token, local Livonians with a profound interest in the outcome of the conflict being waged for their homeland, like the *Hofleute*, who turned to mercenarism over the course of the war partially for financial gain but also in hope of realizing their political aims and forging ties

⁷⁸⁸ Neiberg, "War and Society," 48.

⁷⁸⁹ Russow, *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, 94 and 110.

with foreign potentates, blur the line between mercenary and militia, auxiliary and ally, horseman and highwayman. It is, perhaps, safest to conclude that, while the “pure” mercenary’s military service was generally *less* socially and politically constituted than that of other types of fighting man, he was never *entirely* free of such complicating ties, and he sometimes quite deliberately engaged with networks of local and even geopolitical power relations in pursuit of his own aims, at other times being drawn into them despite his best efforts to remain aloof.⁷⁹⁰

As a context in which to undertake a study of mercenarism, the Livonian War presented a number of advantages and difficulties. Most importantly, the topic has barely been touched upon in the historiography of the war, which, in turn, has been overlooked in all but a handful of studies on early modern mercenaries. This presented both challenges and opportunities. Documentary evidence relating to the military struggles of the late sixteenth-century eastern Baltic is extensive, and, although the region’s mercenarism has not attracted much scholarly attention, there is a wealth of secondary literature on all manner of other aspects of the period. The vastness of the primary and secondary material available – written in approximately a dozen different languages – required that choices be made regarding the scope of the project, in particular the decision to focus on Livonian and Swedish sources. As a doctoral dissertation, the study was also constrained by certain limitations, both in terms of the length of the monograph and the time that could be devoted to its preparation. Feasible research goals needed to be set, and difficult decisions made, such as the choice to prioritize working on texts and documents in German, Swedish, and occasionally Latin at the expense of Polish and Russian ones. While the variety of the armies and nations involved in the Livonian War made it a challenging object of study, it also presented a unique opportunity to compare how war was waged under extremely different early modern political and military systems, as well as by troops drawn from all across northern Europe, from Edinburgh to Astrakhan. In sixteenth-century Europe, only the Balkans and the Caucasus could match the eastern Baltic in terms of sheer diversity, and, like those two otherwise very different regions, *Balticum* has always been something of a paradox in that it shares characteristics of both a frontier and hub, a contested

⁷⁹⁰ “All that can be suggested with any confidence is that the separateness of military from civilian society becomes more pronounced as we look from permanent forces and princely guards towards those private and mercenary sectors whose identities become progressively confused.” Hale, *War and Society*, 152.

borderland and a meeting place, an obstacle to and a conduit for the movement of people and goods.⁷⁹¹ This has been no less true militarily than it has been culturally, commercially, and demographically.

The flavour of the study was determined by its focus on a region that was primarily a destination for rather than a source of mercenaries. Late sixteenth-century Livonia was a combat zone whither men were drawn by the desire to fight for pecuniary reward. Sweden, similarly, attracted mercenaries hoping to serve in the campaigns of the Vasa kings, but, although many Swedes were recruited into their own country's armies, few fought overseas as mercenaries in the service of other states. As such, Livonian and Swedish sources of the day provide the historian with abundant insights into how early modern governments made use of mercenaries, relations between mercenaries and their employers, the effects of mercenary warfare on the societies that hosted them, and their strategic, tactical, and combat value as soldiers. Conversely, there is vanishingly little about who these men were, their civilian backgrounds, or why they took up the sword. They enter Livonian and Swedish records and chronicles as ready-made soldiers recruited in places like northern Germany and Scotland, and they depart as casualties, deserters, or discharged troops on their way back home.⁷⁹² Except for the odd mention in a correspondence or chronicle, the vast majority of these men survive as little more than names or numbers on lists. One of the challenges of the study was therefore to enrich the plentiful material available on the institutional management of mercenarism, military operations, and the effects of the war on Livonian society by breathing life into the stories of the mercenaries themselves, men about whose personal lives we know next to nothing. Regrettably, this endeavour sometimes proved to be more anecdotal than systematic, based on fleshing out those scattered incidents that the Livonian and Swedish authorities and local chroniclers felt were interesting enough to record. Further, the Livonian and Swedish wars of the late sixteenth century did not produce the same rich culture of graphic depictions of mercenaries that one finds in Switzerland, Germany, and the Low Countries, nor does one

⁷⁹¹ Recent discussions in keeping with this theme may be found in Anti Selart and Matthias Thumser, eds. *Livland – eine Region am Ende der Welt? Forschungen zum Verhältnis zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie im späten Mittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017).

⁷⁹² The *Hofleute*, of course, are a notable exception, but, for reasons discussed above, they cannot be considered pure mercenaries. A fulsome treatment of the political ambitions and social milieu of the sixteenth-century Baltic German nobility was deemed to be beyond the scope of this study.

encounter anything comparable to the autobiographical, firsthand accounts written by soldiers of, for example, the French Wars of Religion or the Thirty Years' War. All of this meant that the study became, at times, rather more institutionally focused than had originally been envisioned.

Work on the current project suggested a number of future avenues of inquiry. Accessing sources from northern Germany would help to round out the picture of the mercenaries recruited there for service in Livonia and would undoubtedly shed some light on their backgrounds and origins. Comparing concurrent wars being waged elsewhere in the greater Baltic region would also be of interest. It is known, for example, that many of the *Landsknechte* who arrived in Livonia in the fall of 1559 had recently served in the Danish invasion of Dithmarschen, and it would be fruitful to examine records of that conflict to trace the careers of these men over multiple campaigns, perhaps with a particular eye on their interactions with the Dithmarscher and Livonian peasantry.⁷⁹³ The equipment, clothing, and armaments of troops serving in the Livonian War is another topic of potential interest, which has not, to the author's knowledge, been studied to date, although the accoutrements of the *Landsknechte* and *Reiter* serving in the eastern Baltic were presumably very much like those current in Germany at the time (which have been studied extensively). Abundant archival sources exist in the Tallinn City Archives on the topics of the city's fortifications and the purchase and production of artillery, aspects of the city's early modern military history that warrant detailed investigation. Certain elite participants in the Livonian War, such as the French mercenary general Pontus de la Gardie (1520-1585) and the nobleman Christoph von Münchhausen, have potential as the subjects of new studies focused on their careers as military enterprisers. The activities of other categories of violent non-state actors in the Baltic region also merit closer analysis. Early modern banditry, for example, is a topic that has attracted relatively little scholarly attention when compared with urban crime, wartime violence, or maritime piracy. In short, the future promises no shortage of opportunities for further research.

⁷⁹³ *QU*, III, 203-7.

Gazetteer

<u>German</u>	<u>Estonian</u>	<u>Latvian</u>	<u>Swedish</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>English</u>
Adsel	Koivaliina	Gaujiena			
Arensburg	Kuressaare				
Bauske		Bauska (Lit. Bauskė)		(Pol. Bowsk)	
Dagö	Hiiumaa	Hijumā	Dagö (Dan. Dagø)		
Danzig				(Pol. Gdańsk)	
Dorpat	Tartu	Tartu (arc. Tērbata)	Dorpat	Дерпт (arc. Юрьев)	
Düna	Daugava (or Väina)	Daugava (Lit. Dauguva)		Двина (Bel. Дзвіна) (Pol. Dźwina)	
Dünaburg		Daugavpils (Lit. Daugpilis)			
Ermes	Härgmäe	Ērgeme			
Estland	Eesti	Igaunija	Estland	Эстóния	Estonia
Falkenau (or Valkenau)	Kärkna				
Fellin	Viljandi				
Hapsal	Haapsalu				
Harrien (or Rugel)	Harrien				
Ingermanland	Ingeri(maa)	Ingrija	Ingermanland	Ижора	Ingria
Jamburg	Jaama			Кингисепп (arc. Ям)	

<u>German</u>	<u>Estonian</u>	<u>Latvian</u>	<u>Swedish</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>English</u>
Jerwen	Järva				
Johannstadt (or Iwangorod)	Jaani linn		Ivangorod	Ивангород	Ivangorod
Karelien	Karjala (F. Karjala)		Karelen	Карелия	Karelia
Karkus	Karksi (F. Käkisalmi)		Kexholm	Приозёрск	
Kassinorm	Kassinurme				
Kokenhusen		Koknese			
Koporje			Koporje (arc. Caporie)	Копорье	
Kurland	Kuramaa	Kurzeme	Kurland	Курляндия	Courland
Lais	Laiuse				
Leal	Lihula				
Libau		Liepāja			
Liebschau				(Pol. Lubiszewo)	
Livland	Liivimaa	Livonija	Livland	Лифляндия	Livonia
Lode	Koluvere				
Marienburg	Aluliina	Alūksne			
Mitau		Jelgava			
Narwa	Narva			Нáрва	
Neuhausen	Vastseliina				
Newa	Neeva	Neva		Нева	Neva
Oberpahlen <u>German</u>	Põltsamaa <u>Estonian</u>	<u>Latvian</u>	<u>Swedish</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>English</u>

Ösel	Saaremaa	Sāmsala	Ösel (Dan. Øsel)		
Ösel-Wiek	Saare-Lääne				
Padis	Padise		Padis		
Pernau	Pärnu	Pērnavā			
Peude	Pöide				
Pleskau	Pihkeva (or Pihkova)	Pleskava	Pskov	Псков (arc. ПЛЬСКОВЪ) (Pol. Psków)	Pskov
Plotzkow		(Lit. Polockas)		Полоцк (Bel. Полацк) (Pol. Połock)	Polotsk
Poswol		Pasvale (Lit. Pasvalys)		(Pol. Poswol)	
Reval	Tallinn	Tallina (arc. Rēvele)	Reval (or Tallinn)	Таллин (arc. КОЛЫВАНЬ)	Tallinn
Ringen	Rõngu				
Rositen		Rezekne			
Rujen	Ruhja	Rūjiena			
Schlüsselburg (F. Pähkinälinna)			Nöteborg	Шлиссельбург (arc. Орешек)	
Sebesch		(Lit. Sebežas)		Сéбеж (Pol. Siebież)	
Soneburg (or Sonnenburg)	Maasilinn				
Tarwast	Tarvastu				
Warbeck	Uue-Kastre				
<u>German</u>	<u>Estonian</u>	<u>Latvian</u>	<u>Swedish</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>English</u>

Weissenstein	Paide				
Wenden	Võnnu	Cēsis (Lit. Cēsis)			
Wesenberg	Rakvere				
Wiborg	Viiburi (F. Viipuri)		Viborg	Выборг	Vyborg
Wiek	Lääne				
Wierland	Virumaa				Vironia
Wilna		Viļņa (Lit. Vilnius)		Вiльнюс (arg. Вiльня) (Pol. Wilno)	Vilnius (arg. Vilna)
Wolmar	Volmari	Valmiera			

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A.3. Kommissariats- m. fl. räkenskaper och handlingar 1571-1580.

Talinna Linnaarhiiv (TLA)

Briefkonzepte (B.A.)

Criminalia (B.j.)

6. 1531-1599 Kriminalsachen.

Danica (B.J.)

Eingegangene Briefe (B.B.)

14. Klaus Kursells Briefe 1564-1570.

Handel (B.h.)

25. Briefe, Obligationen und lose Blätter den Handel betreffend 1400-1599.

Kriegswesen (B.e.)

4. 1558-1562 Jasper Kappenbergs, Jochim Belholt und Jürgen Honerjägers
Abrechnung über städtische Ausgaben zu Kriegszwecken.

5. Munsterrolle der Landsknechte 1560

5. Schriftliche Versprechungen entlassener Stadtknechte, daß sie sich in Jahr
und Tag nicht gegen Reval und Schweden gebrauchen lassen wollen 1610-1612.

5. Vergehen und Bestrafung der Kriegsknechte 1571-1573 und 1576.

5. Vergehen und Strafen

6. Artikel für die Landsknechte.

- 6. Akten über Statskriegsknechte, deren Bestallung, Löhnung und Versorgung.
- 6. Rechenschaft der Munsterherren Frederick Sandstede und Hans Boeymann.
- 8. Munsterrollen 1574, 1575.

Landessachen (B.r.)

- 4. Erklärung, daß C. Kursell unberechtigt den Dom und die Schloßgüter besetzt habe 1570.

Livländischer Krieg (B.P.)

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Appendix One: Timeline of the Livonian War

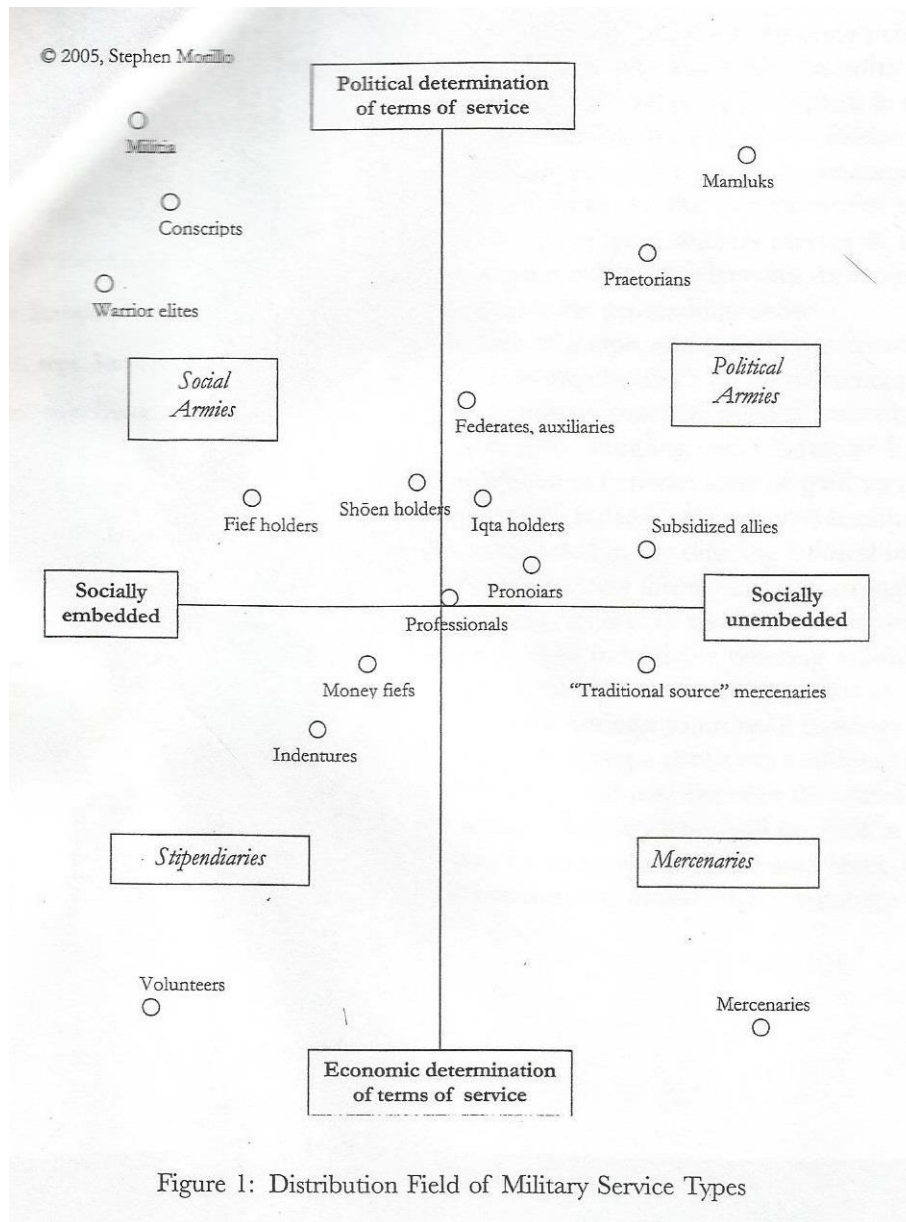
- 1547 Ivan IV proclaims Tsardom of Russia
- 1552 Russian conquest of Kazan
- 1554 King Gustav of Sweden unsuccessfully attempts to form an anti-Russian coalition
- 1554 Russia and Livonia conclude a fifteen year truce in which Livonia agrees not to ally with Poland or Lithuania
- 1554-1557 **Russo-Swedish War:** inconclusive fighting around Vyborg and Oreshek: concluded by the *Treaty of Novgorod* (April 2, 1557) in which Sweden agrees not to aid Livonia, Poland, or Lithuania against Russia
- 1556 Russian conquest of Astrakhan
- 1556 King Sigismund Augustus of Poland (and Grand Duke of Lithuania) supports Archbishop Wilhelm von Brandenburg of Riga against Livonian Landmeister Wilhelm von Fürstenberg, most likely in the hope of Livonia becoming a vassal of Poland (as Prussia had in 1525): The Livonian Order learns of this plan and the Archbishop is arrested while Polish and Lithuanian forces mass on the border
- 1557 Sigismund invades southern Livonia at the head of an army of 80,000 men and forces the Livonians to sign the *Treaty of Pozvol* (September 15, 1557) in violation of the Livonians' earlier pledge to the Russians: Ivan correctly surmises that the intention of this treaty is anti-Russian
- 1558 Beginning of the **Livonian War:** Russian forces commanded by the Khan of Kasimov invade Livonia: Narva captured in May: Dorpat captured in July: many other castles, villages, and towns quickly overrun by the Russians
- 1559 Russians launch another offensive in January: a six month truce is called from May until November while the Russians are occupied with fighting the Crimean Tatars: Livonia seeks aid from Emperor Ferdinand and Poland without success
- 1559 Gotthard Kettler appointed joint Landmeister of the Livonian Order
- 1559 Death of King Christian III of Denmark: Frederick II crowned
- 1560 Duke Magnus of Holstein, younger brother of King Frederick II of Denmark, arrives in Livonia having purchased the dioceses of Ösel-Wiek and Courland

- 1560 Death of King Gustav of Sweden: Erik XIV crowned
- 1560 **Battle of Ermes** (August 2): a much larger Russian force crushes the Livonian Order's field army
- 1561 *Treaty of Vilnius* (November 28): Livonian Order secularized: Gotthard Kettler embraces Lutheranism and becomes Duke of Courland and Semigallia as vassal to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Livonia placed under Polish/Lithuanian protection except for Danish and Swedish Estonian territories and the Free City of Riga: *Pacta subiectionis (provisio ducalis)* and *Privilegium Sigismundi Augusti* outline submission of Livonia to Lithuania and guarantee privileges and religious freedom of the Livonian gentry: eastern Livonia still under Russian occupation
- 1561 Reval and northern counties of Estonia submit to Sweden
- 1561 Russo-Lithuanian truce brokered by Lithuanian nobles opposed to Polish union
- 1562 Swedes capture Pernaü
- 1562 *Treaty of Mozhaysk* (August 7): Denmark and Russia agree that neither will support either Sweden or Poland/Lithuania: Moscow and Copenhagen recognize their respective spheres of influence: Ivan recognizes Magnus of Holstein's Livonian possessions: Danish and Russian merchants granted free passage
- 1563-1570 **Northern (or Nordic) Seven Years' War** fought by Sweden against Denmark, Lübeck, and Poland-Lithuania
- 1563 **Russians capture Polotsk** from the Lithuanians
- 1564 **Battle of Ula** (January 26): Lithuanians under Mikołaj "the Red" Radziwiłł defeat Russians
- 1564 Prince Andrey Kurbsky defects from Russia to the Lithuanians
- 1564 *Treaty of Dorpat*: Ivan recognizes Swedish rule over Reval and the surrounding counties: Erik accepts Russian rule over the remainder of Livonia
- 1565 Russia and Sweden agree to a seven year truce
- 1565-1572 The period of the *oprichnina*
- 1566 *Union of Grodno* (December 25) formally incorporates Livonia into Lithuania
- 1567 The Sture Murders (May 24): Erik, showing increasing signs of mental instability, murders several high ranking members of the Swedish nobility

- 1568 Erik overthrown by his half-brother: Johan III crowned King of Sweden
- 1569 *Union of Lublin* (July 1): creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth
- 1570 Magnus of Holstein defects to Moscow and is crowned “King of Livonia” with Russian backing
- 1570 Oprichniki massacre much of the population of Novgorod
- 1570 Breakdown of Russo-Swedish relations in the face of increasingly unreasonable demands from Moscow (that Ivan be styled “Lord of Sweden” and that the Swedes surrender Reval and parts of Finland)
- 1570 *Treaty of Stettin* (December 13): conclusion of the Northern Seven Years' War: Frederick II renounces Danish claims to Sweden: Johan III renounces Swedish claims to Danish provinces and Gotland: Sweden agrees to hand over its Livonian territories to Emperor Maximilian II in return for payment (this stipulation is ignored and the HRE subsequently loses its influence in Baltic affairs)
- 1570-1571 Magnus, at the head of an army of 20,000 Russians and Livonians, unsuccessfully **besieges Reval**
- 1570-1572 Russo-Crimean War: an Ottoman-backed Crimean army **burns Moscow** (1571): a second Crimean invasion is defeated at the **Battle of Molodi** (1572)
- 1572 Death of King Sigismund Augustus: Henri de Valois elected King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania
- 1573 Russians sack Weissenstein and kill the Swedish garrison
- 1574 A Swedish army under Clas Åkesson Tott unsuccessfully besieges Russian-held Wesenberg: Sweden’s counter-offensive peters out as they prove unable to pay their mercenaries: the *Hofleute* sell the castles of Hapsal, Leal, and Lode (given to them by King Johan as sureties) to the Danes
- 1576 Stefan Batory, Prince of Transylvania and Anna's husband, elected King of Poland (contested election with Emperor Maximilian, whose death in October, prevents escalation of this conflict)
- 1577 30,000 Russians invade Livonia and devastate Danish areas: Danish involvement essentially ceases after this point
- 1577 **Danzig War**: Danzig contests the election of Stefan Batory, who defeats the city in battle: Danzig pays Stefan 200,000 złoty but retains its city rights

- 1577 Poland and Sweden ally against Russia but problems remain: Poland claims whole of Livonia and Johan's Polish wife Catherine is owed her inheritance following the death of Sigismund Augustus
- 1577 Second unsuccessful Russian **siege of Reval**
- 1577 Lithuanians capture Dünaburg from the Russians
- 1577-1578 Magnus calls on Livonian nobles to rally to him and expel foreigners but is captured by Ivan's forces and forced to renounce his claim to the Livonian throne
- 1577-1578 **Fighting around Wenden** between Russian and allied Polish-Lithuanian and Swedish forces ends in victory for the allies and the capture of Wenden itself
- 1579 Swedes unsuccessfully besiege Narva
- 1579 Ivan pulls back his forces to defend Novgorod and Pskov from the Swedes: a large Polish-Lithuanian army **takes Polotsk** on August 30
- 1580 Polish-Lithuanian forces under Jan Zamoyski capture the strategic Russian fortress of Velikie Luki on September 5, followed by minor forts of Sokol, Velizh, and Usvzat
- 1580 Swedes under Pontus de la Gardie campaign successfully in Karelia and then capture Kexholm and Padis
- 1581 Swedish army under Pontus de la Gardie **captures Narva** with help from the Swedish fleet, followed by taking Ivangorod, Jama, and Koporye
- 1581 Polish-Lithuanian army **unsuccessfully besieges Pskov**: financial support from the Sejm is dwindling by this point
- 1582 *Peace of Jam Zapolski* negotiated by Jesuit papal legate Antonio Possevino between Russia and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: very unfavourable conditions for Russia
 a) Russia surrenders all of its Livonian territory, Dorpat, and Polotsk to P-LC
 c) Russia could keep captured Swedish territory (but Sweden was not party to the treaty and could not be persuaded to give up its territory)
 d) Velike Luki returned by P-LC to Russia
- 1583 *Truce of Plussa* between Russia and Sweden: Sweden gains Ingria, Narva, and Ivangorod: treaty set to expire in 1590: **End of the Livonian War**
- 1584 Death of Ivan the Terrible: Feodor I crowned Tsar
- 1586 Death of Stefan Batory: Sigismund III Vasa crowned King of Poland

Appendix Two: Typology of Military Service



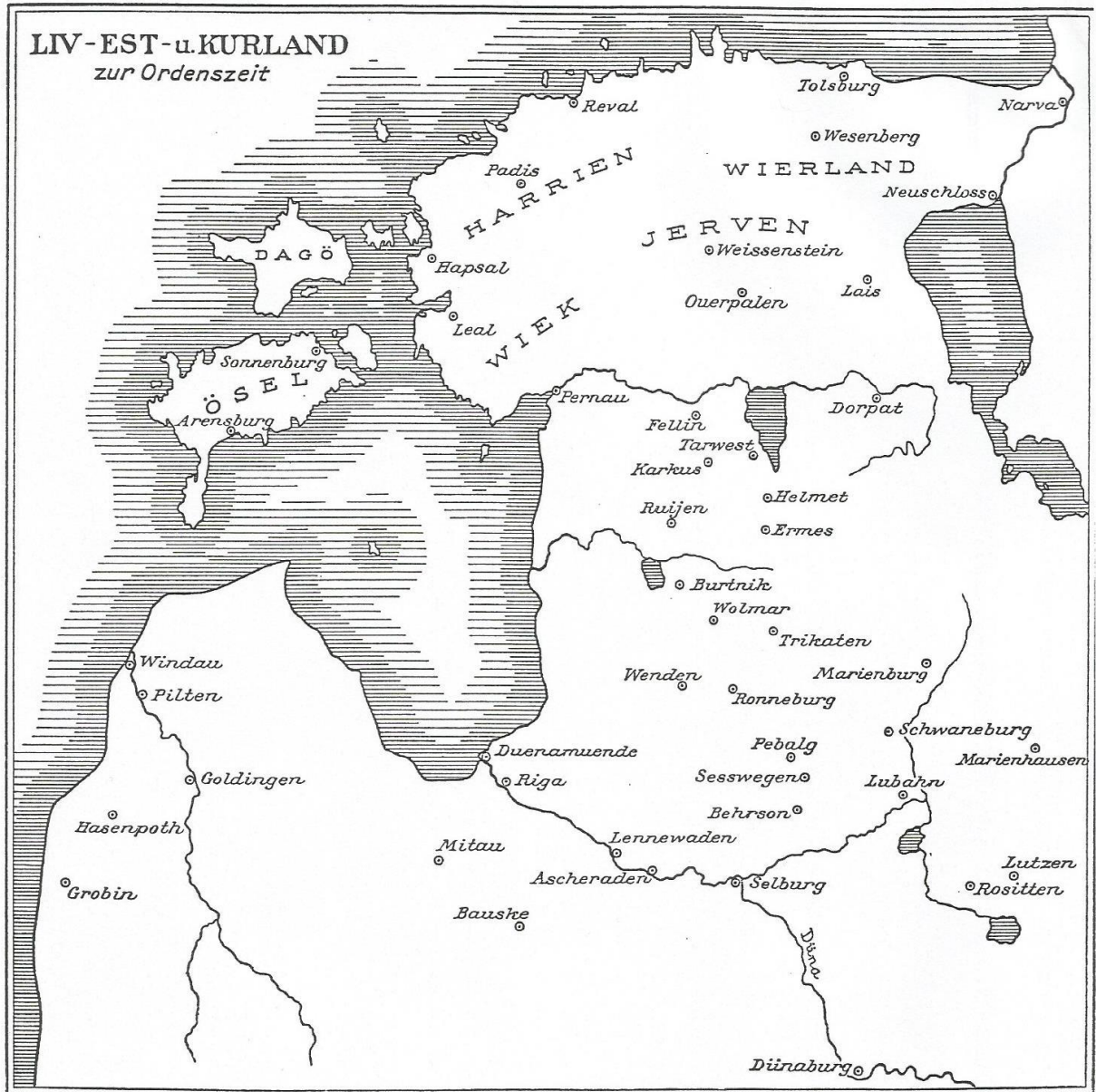
Source: Morillo, "Mercenaries, Mamluks and Militia," 260.

Appendix Three: Table of Exchange Rates
(as of October 13, 1558)

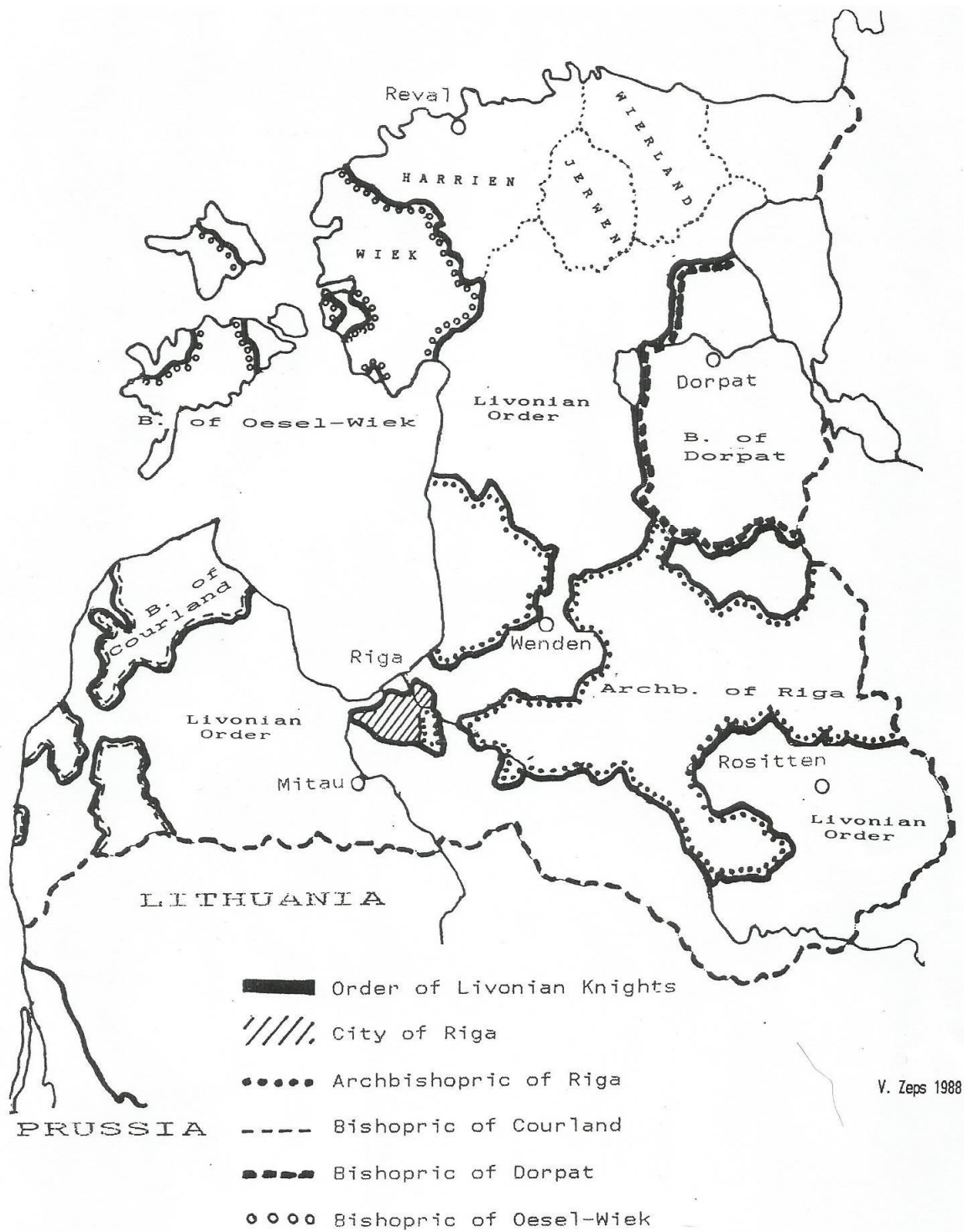
Portugaleser	60	<i>M^z</i>	
Die orde dar van	14	„	
Die halue orde	6	<i>M^z</i>	min. 1 f.
Rosennobell	13	„	
Hinricus nobell	11	<i>M^z</i>	27 <i>ß</i> .
Krusate	11	<i>M^z</i>	24 <i>ß</i> .
Olde Engellotten	8½	„	
Nigge Engellotten	8	<i>M^z</i>	9 <i>ß</i> .
Vngersche gulde	5	<i>M^z</i>	30 <i>ß</i> .
Kort krutz gulde	5	<i>M^z</i>	27 <i>ß</i> .
Lanck krutz. g.	5½	„	
Kroine	5	<i>M^z</i>	12 <i>ß</i> .
Rigisch g.	6	<i>M^z</i>	min. 1 f.
Golt gulde	4	<i>M^z</i>	1 f.
Embder gulde	3	„	
Nimwegische Krusate	10½	<i>M^z</i>	
Keisergulde	2	<i>M^z</i>	27 <i>ß</i> .
Halue gulden Regall	4½	„	
Daler	4	<i>M^z</i>	min. 1 f.
Ferdingsstucke	14	<i>ß</i> .	

Source: *QU*, III, 39.

Appendix Four: Maps



Source: Arnell, *Die Auflösung des Livländischen Ordensstaates*, iii.



V. Zeps 1988

LIVONIAN FEDERATION up to 1557

Source: Smith, Jones, and Urban, trans., *The Chronicle of Balthasar Russow*, 313.



Source: Smith, Jones, and Urban, trans., *The Chronicle of Balthasar Russow*, 315.



LIVONIA after 1583

Source: Smith, Jones, and Urban, trans., *The Chronicle of Balthasar Russow*, 317.