


BOOK REVIEW

Adam Marks. *England and the Thirty Years' War*

History of Warfare. Leiden: Brill, 2023. Pp. 218. \$141.00 (cloth).

Thomas Pert 

University of Warwick

Email: thomas.pert@warwick.ac.uk

The topic of the Stuart Kingdoms within the Thirty Years' War has attracted greater scholarly attention in the last two decades, and the idea that the European war of 1618–48 and the British Civil Wars were entirely separate, geographically contained conflicts is increasingly being redressed. Whereas works by Mark Stoye (*Soldiers and Strangers: An Ethnic History of the English Civil War* [2005]) and Peter Edwards (*Dealing in Death: The Arms Trade and the British Civil Wars, 1638–52* [2000]) have shown the significance of soldiers and armaments from mainland Europe for the “British” wars, this new work by Adam Marks conversely demonstrates the contributions of English soldiers in the conduct of the most destructive conflict in European history prior to the twentieth century.

England and the Thirty Years' War opens with an examination of the motivations which inspired Englishmen to take up arms in the European conflict. Marks argues that a number of these factors (such as serving the Protestant Cause and a desire to serve the House of Stuart) would also determine side-taking in the British Civil Wars. However, the next four chapters are where the work truly excels as a study of the various contingents which were raised in England and served within and alongside various anti-Habsburg armies during the conflict. As demonstrations of English involvement in continental affairs, these campaigns are too often overshadowed by the calamitous failure of the 1625 expedition to Cádiz and the expeditions to La Rochelle to assist the Huguenots in their struggle against the French Crown in 1627–28.

In the chapter on the Anglo-Dutch brigades, Marks argues that early Stuart foreign policy was not a clean break from that of Elizabeth I, and it is clear that considerable research went into his examinations of the relative contribution of Englishmen in the composition of anti-Habsburg forces. In this chapter, as well as subsequent ones addressing English involvement in the defense of the Palatinate in the early 1620s and alongside Danish and Swedish forces in the late 1620s and the 1630s, respectively, Marks also draws attention to a number of important issues relating to international politics and warfare in the early modern period. For example, he examines the complex combination of dynastic loyalty and religious allegiance that could allow an English volunteer in a foreign army to serve the Stuart dynasty while in the ranks of another power. Marks also addresses the difficulties in classifying the nationality of specific armies during the Thirty Years' War, as well as determining the extent to which the involvement of English volunteers and troops levied in England by foreign powers can be regarded as English intervention in the conflict. However, it should be noted that Marks on occasion blurs the distinction between the involvement of Englishmen in the conflict and the intervention of England. His assertion that English involvement in the Swedish army in the 1630s “showed that England was still a capable military power” (181) is puzzling considering the humiliating English defeats at Cádiz and La Rochelle in the later

1620s and then at the hands of the Scots Covenanters in the First and Second Bishops' Wars in 1639 and 1640.

Marks concedes in the introduction that the work is not a comprehensive study of all forms of English intervention in the Thirty Years' War, as it does not address the topics of naval action or service in pro-Habsburg armies. However, when one considers these other aspects of English involvement in the European war, some of the broader conclusions in this work become less convincing. For example, it is asserted that the decisions of James VI and I and Charles I to allow foreign powers to levy troops within the British Isles constituted active Stuart involvement in the continental conflict and was "an alternative method of conducting foreign policy and war" (3). Whilst certainly applicable to the aspects of English intervention addressed in this book, this was hardly the case with the levies conducted on behalf of pro-Habsburg powers which Marks omits. The main aim of Stuart foreign policy during the Thirty Years' War was the restoration of the Electoral Palatinate to James's son-in-law from the occupying forces of Spain, the Bavarian-led Catholic League, and the Imperial army. If, as Marks argues, the decision to permit levies was always indicative of the policy of the monarch, it is curious that James VI and I allowed the Earl of Argyll to raise troops for Habsburg service in February 1622, over a year after Spanish soldiers first invaded the Palatinate.

Marks complements the work of Steve Murdoch and Alexia Grosjean on Scottish involvement in the Thirty Years' War, and makes an excellent contribution to our understanding of England's place within the events unfolding in mainland Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century. With examinations of how military experience gained in European armies influenced the conduct of the Civil War—and how the proliferation of radical political and religious pamphlets in the 1640s had its origins in the demand for printed news in the 1620s—Marks demonstrates how military, political, and social aspects of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms were influenced by the continental conflict. In addition to the sheer number of volunteers for anti-Habsburg armies, the substantial financial donations and the popularity of sermons lamenting the plight of the "Protestant side" demonstrate that Englishmen in the 1620s and 1630s did not regard the war engulfing the Holy Roman Empire as some distant event of no interest. As a result, *England and the Thirty Years' War* is a valuable addition to the growing literature highlighting the need to place "British History" in its broader European context.