CHAPTER ONE

RESOURCES, ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITIES AND CONTROL OF THE SEA

1.1 State formation, complex organisation and naval power

1.1.1 Introduction

State formation has been explained by historians and social scientists as a result of the rise of national consciousness, political interaction between rulers and socioeconomic groups, or war and international politics. Most explanations regard competition between states as the driving force behind resource extraction and the development of strong structures that form states. Changing military technology has frequently been used as an explanation for state formation, especially in the early modern period. Such explanations ignore the organisational context, however, particularly a state’s capability to make more efficient use of resources. Although many studies have emphasised inefficiency and waste in the use of resources in early modern European warfare, few have used economic theories about resource utilisation and innovation in their exploration of state formation, and fewer still have regarded organisational capability as the most central phenomenon in state formation. This book offers a different perspective on domestic political interaction, warfare, and the growth of early modern European states. The key words are violence, protection, organisation (capability to use resources), and institutions (rules of human interaction).

Violence was often used to settle domestic conflicts, but conflicts, warfare, and violence before the rise of strong states cannot be neatly divided into domestic conflicts and international wars. Military-political alliances frequently crossed political borders, which often were diffuse. Protection from violence was much in demand, but the rules of human interaction strongly favoured local solutions to the protection problem. Political power has its root in the ability to create a tolerable order of life for a majority of the population, and power derived from personal presence has an advantage over more distant power-holders who act through local agents. Distant power-holders had to provide something markedly superior in quality and efficiency to become
accepted. Consequently, the rise of states as complex organisations, raising resources from wide territories and providing protection to them with permanent armed forces, coincided with a marked change in rules of human interaction. Society agreed to pay higher taxes if the new type of state, which claimed that it had a monopoly on violence, was able to show that it markedly improved order and predictability in daily life. When such a state was, or seemed to be, threatened by external enemies, taxpayers might be willing to make heavy sacrifices to maintain this stability, as the alternative was highly unpredictable. This makes it important to study the creation of complex organisation for protection and the changes in political institutions which resulted.

One of the most often overlooked examples of an early modern European organisation that was essential to state formation is navies. This book examines the rise of one complex organisation (the Swedish navy) as a new agent of change in early modern Europe and emphasises the importance of control of the sea in early modern state formation. In particular, the book focuses on the growth of naval capabilities as a part of the formation of the dynastic Swedish state and of the rise and fall of the Swedish Baltic empire. Northern Europe is a highly maritime region. It is shaped by the Baltic Sea, its outlets to the Atlantic, and the several large rivers which flow to this sea. Navies were highly complex, and policy-makers must coordinate and administrate several types of capabilities and resources if a navy should have an operational value. If naval power to secure control of the sea was important for state formation, it ought to be visible in the Baltic region in the period when the early modern states developed. A study of naval technology in its organisational context may also provide perspectives on technology in state formation.

Studies about Swedish imperial expansion are predominantly focused on military and continental operations, even though the empire was created around a sea. Historians seldom show much interest in how control of the sea was achieved and rarely acknowledge the importance of large-scale amphibious warfare. Surveys of the Swedish impe-

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