

# CITIZENS, SOLDIERS AND CIVIC MILITIAS IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE\*

One of the world's best-known works of art of the early modern period has an uncomfortable relationship with current historiography. The subject matter of Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*, created between 1640 and 1642, is amateur soldiers — but had these not become obsolete as a result of the Military Revolution? As it is, the figures in the *Nightwatch* are going through military procedures, closely following Jacob de Gheyn's soldiers' manual of 1607, even though it is quite clear that they are citizens, not soldiers. In the painting we see officers of an Amsterdam civic militia company on their rounds, depicted against the dark shape of a town gate.<sup>1</sup> In seventeenth-century Amsterdam civic militias patrolled the city at night; one of their duties was to shut the gates, and to take the keys to the home of the presiding burgomaster. In the centre of the picture is the company's commanding officer, Frans Banning Cocq, who, as the son of a German immigrant, was understandably proud of the status that he had achieved in his home town. He and his fellow-officers paid Rembrandt one hundred guilders each to have their portraits included. The painting was to be displayed in the *doelen*, or militia hall, where it could be viewed by members of their own and other militia companies, as well as by ordinary passers-by.<sup>2</sup> A hundred guilders, the equivalent of four months of a labourer's wages, for a portrait that would not become private property, was a substantial amount of money, suggesting how much importance

\* Earlier versions of this paper were read at seminars, workshops and conferences in Amsterdam, Exeter, Haarlem, Leeds, Los Angeles, Murcia and Warsaw. I am grateful for the opportunity to develop my arguments on those occasions and for the comments that I received. My ideas about civic militias were developed over many years of discussions with Robert Descimon (Paris) and Phil Withington (Sheffield). Thanks are also due to the late Stephan Epstein (London), and my Utrecht colleagues Bas van Bavel, Oscar Gelderblom and Arie van Steensel, for commenting on drafts.

<sup>1</sup> E. Haverkamp-Begemann, *Rembrandt: The Nightwatch* (Princeton, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> On these so-called militia pieces, see M. Carasso-Kok and J. Levy-Van Halm (eds.), *Schutters in Holland: kracht en zenuwen van de stad* (Zwolle, 1988).

was attached to the public presentation of one's person in a militia context.

In between identifiable portraits of officers, Rembrandt painted imaginary figures busy loading their weapons. This underlined the military role of the militias as a civic defence force. Somewhat surprisingly, a little girl is also included in the picture, caught in a spotlight and therefore quite visible. She symbolizes the connection between the militias and the chambers of rhetoric, the amateur literary societies patronised by the urban upper middle classes.<sup>3</sup> The child invokes a social and cultural context for the militia company, and immediately puts the military activities of those portrayed into the correct, that is a civic, perspective. To fully appreciate that context, it is also important to realize that in the towns of Holland and Zeeland alone, 135 of such larger-than-life canvases have been preserved from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Having one's portrait displayed in a militia environment, at one and the same time military and civic, was obviously no mean thing. But then, of course, neither was the tradition that Rembrandt invoked in the *Nightwatch* merely imaginary.

## I

'War made the state, and the state made war', the American sociologist Charles Tilly famously wrote.<sup>5</sup> The volume of essays that he published in 1975 argued that European state-formation was the result of military competition and that European states had developed their institutions in response to the challenges of such competition. Taxation, and the bureaucracies necessary to collect those taxes, were portrayed by various authors in the book as the pivotal instruments in state-making.<sup>6</sup> This analysis of the

<sup>3</sup> See Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten: rederijders in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 1480–1650* (Amsterdam, 2009); Arjan Van Dixhoorn and Susie Speakman Sutch (eds.), *The Reach of the Republic of Letters: Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Carasso-Kok and Levy-Van Halm (eds.), *Schutters in Holland*, 390–5.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Tilly, 'Reflections on the History of European State-Making', in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975), 42. See also Richard Bean, 'War and the Birth of the National State', *Journal of Economic History*, xxxiii (1973).

<sup>6</sup> Tilly (ed.), *Formation of National States*. See also his 'War making and State Making as Organized Crime', in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda

(cont. on p. 95)

process of state-formation, which became very influential among historians, dovetailed nicely with another ‘big idea’ about early modern Europe: the Military Revolution thesis argues that with the arrival of gunpowder technology, weapons became so complex that only professionals could handle them on the battlefield. Armies of mainly amateur soldiers were replaced by fully trained regulars in permanent employment.<sup>7</sup> The two processes combined created the European fiscal–military state, whose policies were determined by international rivalry and military competition.<sup>8</sup>

These two master narratives of early modern European history have together pushed citizens as political actors onto the sidelines. One implication of the military state thesis is that, from the late Middle Ages, citizens were no longer directly involved in the business of violence. Through the tax mechanism they presumably left this to professional soldiers in full-time employment — often misleadingly labelled ‘mercenaries’ — and only with the *levée en masse*, in the wake of the French Revolution, was the idea of the citizen-soldier revived.<sup>9</sup> Norbert Elias, moreover, argued that the monopolization of violence in

(n. 6 cont.)

Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, 1985), and *Capital, Coercion, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Oxford, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim, “‘Then was Then and Now is Now’: An Overview of Change and Continuity in Late-Medieval and Early Modern Warfare”, in Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (eds.), *European Warfare, 1350–1750* (Cambridge, 2010). Core works include Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution, 1500–1800: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800* (2nd edn, Cambridge 1996); Jeremy Black, *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1550–1800* (London, 1991); Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495–1715* (London, 1992); Clifford J. Rogers (ed.), *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Boulder, 1995); Jeremy Black, *European warfare, 1494–1660* (London, 2002); Paul E. J. Hammer (ed.), *Warfare in Early Modern Europe, 1450–1660* (Aldershot, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Bonney (ed.), *The Rise of the Fiscal State in Europe, c. 1200–1815* (Oxford, 1999); Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla and Patrick K. O’Brien (eds.), *The Rise of Fiscal States: A Global History, 1500–1914* (Cambridge, 2012). Other works using this perspective include Brian M. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, 1993); Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997); Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal–Military States, 1500–1660* (London, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> On the reforms introduced in the wake of the French Revolution, see Thomas Hippler, *Citizens, Soldiers and National Armies: Military Service in France and Germany, 1789–1830* (London, 2008).

the hands of the state during the early modern era was one of the key advances in what he called the 'civilizing process'.<sup>10</sup> In the pages that follow I argue that this chronology is fundamentally wrong. The popularity of the Military Revolution thesis among historians and historical sociologists has led to an emphasis on standing armies and a neglect of the mutation of the role of the militias. Contrary to the currently dominant interpretation of early modern history, this article seeks to demonstrate that both the idea and practice of the citizen-soldier remained a vital ingredient in the socio-political structures of society.<sup>11</sup> Influential political theorists in the 'republican' tradition worried about the military dimension of citizenship, a dimension that remains significant even today in some Western countries, most notably in the United States.<sup>12</sup> To prove the point, this article considers three texts from the European tradition of republican political theory, before turning to the practice of citizen-soldiering. This latter will be analysed in three sections: one deals with the Middle Ages, i.e. the era before the Military Revolution, and two discuss the role of civic militias after professional soldiering became the dominant form in inter-state violence. I argue that although civic militias became less important as military forces, they remained significant in both policing and as a political force throughout the early modern period. Citizen-soldiers, in other words, were not so much made redundant by the Military Revolution and the fiscal-military state, but forced to shift from one foot to the other.

<sup>10</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Oxford, 2000), 303–13, 437–9.

<sup>11</sup> For the related but nonetheless different issue of interactions between citizens and (professional) soldiers, see Phil Withington, 'Citizens, Soldiers and Urban Culture in Restoration England', *English Historical Review*, cxxiii (2008), and the special issue, edited by Phil Withington, 'Citizens and Soldiers in England, Scotland, Ireland and the Wider World', *Journal of Early Modern History*, xv (2011); Griet Vermeesch, 'War and Garrison Towns in the Dutch Republic: The Cases of Gorinchem and Doesburg (c. 1570–c. 1660)', *Urban History*, xxxvi (2009); Marjolein 't Hart, *The Dutch Wars of Independence: Warfare and Commerce in the Netherlands, 1570–1680* (London, 2014), ch. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Joyce Lee Malcolm, *To Keep and Bear Arms: The Origins of an Anglo-American Right* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994); Saul Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America* (Oxford, 2006).

## II

Armed citizenship and civic militias have an impressive pedigree in Europe. They go back to the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and before that to Greek and Roman Antiquity. But as far as the civic militia as a political issue is concerned, the story really starts with Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527).<sup>13</sup> In his written work and in his own life Machiavelli was very much concerned with the militia issue.<sup>14</sup> *The Prince*, composed during the 1510s, includes a diatribe against the professional troops that had come to dominate Italian battlefields (pp. 42–4).<sup>15</sup> Mercenaries, and their *condottieri* leaders, are portrayed by Machiavelli as unreliable forces, because they were only in it for the money. Their military effectiveness, according to Machiavelli's persuasive logic, was mainly limited to peacetime. For the mercenaries military service was, after all, a way of making a living. Because their interests were exclusively financial, the enemy could easily buy them off, leaving a state denuded of protection. To avoid such painful experiences, Machiavelli strongly recommended the use of civic militias, that is, troops consisting of citizens, people with a real stake in the fighting. Citizens were protecting their own homes, families and property. In Greek and Roman Antiquity, he pointed out, such citizen militias had worked well.

At the same time, Machiavelli was of the opinion that civic militias were good for the polity: 'It is impossible to have good laws if good arms are lacking, and if there are good arms there

<sup>13</sup> It is confusing that, in the Italian context, the word 'militia' referred to knights and cavalry ('those who rode'), rather than to the citizen infantries that we are concerned with in this paper: Peter Hoppenbrouwers, 'An Italian City-State Geared for War: Urban Knights and the *Cavallata* of Todi', *Journal of Medieval History*, xxxix (2013), 242, 244.

<sup>14</sup> C. C. Bayley, *War and Society in Renaissance Florence: The De Militia of Leonardo Bruni* (Toronto, 1961), 240–67; Michael Mallett, 'The Theory and Practice of Warfare in Machiavelli's Republic', in Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli (eds.), *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Quotations are from the edition by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price in the *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* series (Cambridge, 1988). Machiavelli's *Art of War* (ed. and trans. Christopher Lynch, Chicago, 2003), at first sight perhaps more appropriate as a source, is really a book about strategy and tactics, rather than about the politics of citizen soldiers. See also William Caferro, *Mercenary Companies and the Decline of Siena* (Baltimore, 1998); Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, *Cavaliers et citoyens: guerre, conflits, et société dans l'Italie communale, XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 2003); Paolo Grillo, *Cavalieri e popoli in armi: le istituzioni militari nell'Italia medievale* (Bari, 2008).

must also be good laws' (pp. 42–3). The reader is left in no doubt that 'good arms' means an army composed of citizens (p. 51). What is more, a prince who conquers new lands and finds his new subjects unarmed, should start arming them: 'For when you arm them, these weapons become your own' (p. 72). On the other hand, 'if you disarm your subjects, you begin to offend them, for you show that you do not trust them, either because you are weak and cowardly or because you are too suspicious' (pp. 72–3). A wise prince, in other words, creates loyalty in his subjects by demonstrating his trust in them, and the best way to achieve this is by giving them arms.

Italian ideas were revived and reshaped during the English Civil War. In particular James Harrington's *Oceana*, first published in 1655, helped to create this 'Machiavellian moment'.<sup>16</sup> For Harrington, however, the citizens were not so much urbanites, but rural folk. In Harrington's ideal state, citizens were defined by their ownership of property, i.e. land. His citizenship, as with almost all republican authors, was gendered in the sense that females did not come into consideration. States that relied on 'servants' for their defence could only afford to do so if, like Venice, they lay outside the reach of their enemies, and would anyway never be great.<sup>17</sup>

Harrington's opinions should be read, obviously, against the background of England's recent political history. The Parliamentarians in the Civil War were convinced that Charles I had misused the army in order to eradicate all opposition to his policies. Unfortunately, the New Model Army that Parliament had employed to prevent Charles from executing his designs, had subsequently evolved into an oppressive force in its own right. All of this could demonstrate only one point: professional soldiers were dangerous and better avoided altogether. Hence the debate over 'standing armies', which continued for decades.<sup>18</sup> The Scottish author Andrew Fletcher (1653–1716) was a late entrant into this debate. His *Discourse of Government with Relation to Militias* was first published in 1697, and again in

<sup>16</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), esp. ch. 12.

<sup>17</sup> James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Cambridge, 1992), esp. 75–6.

<sup>18</sup> Lois G. Schwoerer, 'No Standing Armies': *The Anti-Army Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Baltimore, 1974); Malcolm, *To Keep and Bear Arms*.

revised form in 1698.<sup>19</sup> Fletcher was familiar with Machiavelli's work, even though he does not quote Machiavelli in his *Discourse*.<sup>20</sup> He was a firm believer in the feudal system, for 'this constitution of government put the sword into the hand of the subject' (p. 3). The feudal barons' way of life had been altered fundamentally by the Discoveries, which had bred a demand for new luxuries in the upper classes. Because their estates did not produce the cash to buy those luxuries, they converted the military services of their tenants into money rents. The money was then used by the government to hire soldiers, and the barons lost their monopoly of the sword. Soldiering became a profession, and professional soldiers were in the pay of the sovereign. Thus, 'the power of the sword was transferred from the subject to the king' (p. 7). As the barons were now serving in the king's standing army as officers, and earning good money in the process, they became the monarch's most loyal supporters (p. 7).

Fletcher was convinced that standing armies were completely unnecessary for the British Isles, protected as they were by the sea. He argued that they were a break with a long militia tradition (p. 12). But what good would it be, he asked, to prevent the risk of foreign conquest, when 'standing armies will enslave us' (p. 19)? Whilst mercenaries were a pest and a threat, militiamen 'would always preserve the publick liberty' (p. 21). To have a militia was not merely beneficial from a military point of view, but could also create the best possible society. The Swiss were proof of that, according to Fletcher, as they were 'the freest and happiest' people in Europe (p. 22).

In the 1780s the debate on the relative merits of standing armies and civic militias was also emerging in the Dutch Republic. Fletcher's *Discourse* was published in a Dutch translation in 1774.<sup>21</sup> The Dutch had a long and significant militia tradition, and it was precisely this tradition that was invoked, in proper Machiavellian fashion, to demonstrate the desirability of citizens-in-arms. A 'call to arms' was included in an anonymous treatise that was distributed in towns throughout the Dutch

<sup>19</sup> This is included in Andrew Fletcher, *Political Works*, ed. John Robertson (Cambridge, 1997). The main secondary source is John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh, 1985).

<sup>20</sup> Fletcher, *Political Works*, 88, 111 n. 38, 113.

<sup>21</sup> S. R. E. Klein, *Patriots republikenisme: politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766–1787)* (Amsterdam, 1995), 78.



Republic on the night of 25 September 1781. *To the People of the Netherlands* was the provocative title of the seventy-six-page pamphlet.<sup>22</sup> Its author was later identified as Johan Derk, baron Van der Capellen tot den Poll (1741–84), who also happened to be the translator of Fletcher's *Discourse*. He claimed that the original inhabitants of the Netherlands, the Batavians, had been a free people, who took decisions in general assemblies, 'where the whole people met in arms and every Batavian was equally important' (p. 3).<sup>23</sup> By the time of the Dutch Revolt such general assemblies had disappeared, mainly for practical reasons. However, the citizens' representatives in the guilds, civic militias or common councils still made sure that their voice was heard in the council chambers of towns throughout the Republic. Unfortunately, in 1581, Prince William of Orange, leader of the Revolt, had managed to suppress such popular consultations in the province of Holland. Under his descendants things went from bad to worse. The Orange stadtholders were not merely the most important nobles in the country, as well as its most powerful politicians, but also commanders-in-chief of the Republic's army and navy. They abused their position by steadily replacing Dutch officers with foreigners, loyal only to their paymaster (pp. 16, 41). As a result, the army developed from an instrument with which to fight foreign foes, into one of domestic oppression.

*To the People of the Netherlands* also referred to other nations that had fared badly under princes who were not accountable to any representative institution. It was therefore an obvious conclusion that 'a people that wants to behave sensibly and prudently, should make sure to be the strongest at all times' (p. 19). Van der Capellen conceded that professional soldiers were necessary to fight proper wars, and also because citizens had other things on their minds. However, if they were not to suffer oppression at the hands of these same troops, citizens should have a rifle at home, and make sure that they were trained to use it. Every Sunday they

<sup>22</sup> Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Poll, *Aan het volk van Nederland: het patriottisch program uit 1781*, ed. H. L. Zwitser (Amsterdam, 1987). All quotations have been translated from this Dutch edition.

<sup>23</sup> On the role of the Batavians in the Dutch Republic, see Ivo Schöffer, 'The Batavian Myth during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossmann (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands*, v, *Some Political Mythologies* (The Hague, 1975).



should exercise, under the command of officers elected by the companies. This might look far-fetched, but in fact it was not: according to Van der Capellen it was the practice of both the Americans and the Swiss. It was not even an innovation, as the Union of Utrecht of 1579, the Dutch Republic's informal constitution, had specified the creation of just such a civic militia (pp. 19–20).<sup>24</sup> Therefore, *To the People of the Netherlands* concludes, arming the citizens and training them to use their arms would help to restore civic freedom, and thus, it was suggested, the prosperity of the country as a whole.

The previous discussion has sampled three works from a rich literature in three different political contexts and from three different centuries, but it should also have demonstrated a number of things. First of all, throughout the early modern period, the concept of a civic militia was central to some of the most significant contributions to the debate on the best possible form of government. Machiavelli, Fletcher and Van der Capellen all agreed that militias were a vital ingredient of any healthy constitution. Whereas professional armies were likely to become instruments of oppression in the hands of the government, civic militias would allow citizens a 'voice' in the business of the realm.<sup>25</sup> This convergence of opinions is no coincidence, of course. The writings of Machiavelli, Fletcher and Van der Capellen were all part of the same tradition of republican theory and discourse.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, these authors differed over who should be armed. Machiavelli seemed to want to limit this to the propertied classes, but Fletcher and Van der Capellen were less restrictive; in their system all males could, and indeed should, serve as militiamen. Machiavelli and Fletcher were also convinced that from a military point of view militia forces were, in fact, superior to professional standing armies. Fletcher seemed to take into account the particular situation of Great Britain as an island state. Only Van der Capellen acknowledged, albeit in passing, that amateur

<sup>24</sup> See also F. C. Spits, 'Unie en militie', in S. Groenveld and H. L. Ph. Leeuwenberg (eds.), *De Unie van Utrecht: wording en werking van een verbond en een verbondsacte* (The Hague, 1979).

<sup>25</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

<sup>26</sup> Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (eds.), *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2002).

soldiers were probably no match for professionals. A third point upon which all three authors agreed, was that a militia force was low in cost, and this would have an impact on levels of taxation. Replacing professionals with militias would strike a blow at a second weapon in the hands of central government: its cash reserves. In this respect, as well as in relation to the preservation of the constitution, the debate on militias was a debate on domestic rather than on international politics.

On one point, however, these writers interpreted the connection between a militia system and the structure of society as a whole in very different ways. For Machiavelli and Van der Capellen militias were typically urban institutions. They were both at ease with commercial society. In *To the People of the Netherlands*, Van der Capellen actually compared Dutch society to the East India Company, and portrayed the people of the Netherlands as 'shareholders' in their society (p. 21). Fletcher, on the other hand, was deeply suspicious of commerce. He argued that militia service would bring back the sobriety of feudal society.

### III

During the Middle Ages there was very little debate about militia forces, because every state relied primarily on temporary units composed of amateur soldiers. Urbanites were expected to serve just as much as rural folk. For medieval princes, towns provided various military opportunities: they were strongholds that could ward off enemies, they were a financial source to be tapped for military as well as other purposes, and they were a source of manpower.<sup>27</sup> Urban populations, or at least the male part, had to organize their own defence, as well as follow their sovereign into battle. How did they do this? In this and the following sections material from the city of Utrecht (20–30,000 inhabitants) in the Netherlands will be used to analyse the military and civic roles of the militias. These local data will be supplemented by material from other European towns, to tease out variations and similarities.

Utrecht must have had some form of military service long before written sources refer to it for the first time in the

<sup>27</sup> Sergio Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant, 1356–1406* (Woodbridge, 2004), 133.

fourteenth century.<sup>28</sup> From the very start of its documented existence it was part of the local corporate system. Utrecht's twenty-one guilds had managed, during a guild revolution in 1304, to obtain a serious amount of influence over the administration of the city. Annually they helped to select the members of the council and aldermen, and had to approve the introduction of new taxes, as well as the financial accounts of the local government. It was therefore almost inevitable that they would also dominate Utrecht's military defence. For military purposes the guilds were grouped into three 'batalies', under the command of the guild deans, and could be stationed outside the city as a form of forward defence.<sup>29</sup> They were involved in military action during the intermittent regional warfare of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, they were responsible for the maintenance of Utrecht's physical defences: the ramparts were divided into sections, each of which was the responsibility of one of the guilds. Finally, the guilds were responsible for the nightwatch: their members manned the towers on their own sections of ramparts, as well as the town hall. They were providing, in other words, a combination of military and police duties: keeping an eye on approaching enemies, and making sure that public order was maintained during the hours of darkness.<sup>31</sup>

Between 1525 and 1528 the Utrecht guilds more or less took charge of the city, which was at the time precariously balanced between the Habsburgs, installed in Holland to the West, and their main opponent in the Low Countries, the duke of Guelders, to the East. Both were trying to gain control over the city through the election of the new bishop, who in Utrecht and its hinterland was also the temporal lord. The guilds held regular

<sup>28</sup> 'Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van het geschutzwezen, bepaaldelijk in de middeleeuwen', ed. A. M. C. Asch van Wijck, *Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap*, vi (1850), 328; *De gilden van Utrecht tot 1528: Verzameling van rechtsbronnen*, ed. J. C. Overvoorde and J. G. C. Joosting, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1896-7), i, pp. cciv, 26.

<sup>29</sup> *Gilden van Utrecht*, i, pp. cciv-ccv, 26-30.

<sup>30</sup> 'Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van het geschutzwezen', 328-38, 387-406, as well as the sequel in *Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap*, ix (1853), 218-38, 472-96, suggests that this happened in 1428, 1444, 1480-2, 1499 and 1517. For background information on these conflicts, see A. J. van den Hoven van Genderen, 'Op het toppunt van de macht (1304-1528)', in R. E. de Bruin *et al.* (eds.), *'Een paradijs vol weelde': geschiedenis van de stad Utrecht* (Utrecht, 2000), 164-5, 180-3.

<sup>31</sup> *Gilden van Utrecht*, i, 32-7, 43.

general assemblies in the main square, at least once, in August 1525, fully armed.<sup>32</sup> Even if, on other occasions, they may have been unarmed, their control of the armed citizenry must have added significant weight to their political demands. Ultimately, however, they lost out to the Habsburg emperor, Charles V, who managed to gain control of Utrecht and to install a relative as the new bishop. He altered the local constitution, excluding the guilds from political involvement, and subdividing the city into eight militia precincts. These would later be graced with remarkably romantic names; Turkey, Popish Standard, Fortune, Blood Pit, Black Journeymen, Orange Trunk, Tar Pitches and Arbalest.<sup>33</sup> Charles also ordered the building of a modern fortress to control Utrecht, Vredenburg Castle, or Peace-keep.

Even though the reforms had clearly been designed to gag the guilds and their artisan membership politically, the militia's finest hour was yet to come. During the Dutch Revolt their officers, known as *burgerhopmans*, emerged as the leaders of the popular party, supporting the rebel cause. In December 1574 they fought off Spanish soldiers who were trying to enter the city to claim arrears in their pay, and reportedly killed 180 of them in the process. From December 1576 to February 1577 the militiamen laid siege to Vredenburg Castle, eventually managing to eject the Spanish garrison. In April of the same year they also ousted a garrison of German mercenaries, and in August they finally forced the Utrecht council to join the Revolt formally.<sup>34</sup> For the next three decades, the local authorities would ignore the *burgerhopmans* at their peril, given their popularity among Utrecht's middle classes.<sup>35</sup>

All medieval European towns had some form of compulsory military service for able-bodied men. Its precise form varied from place to place, but men could expect to be called upon to perform their military duty. On the one hand citizens were expected to

<sup>32</sup> C. A. van Kalveen, 'Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de gildenbewegingen te Utrecht, Mei-Augustus 1525', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (1979), 78.

<sup>33</sup> There is a map showing their location in Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht, 1578–1620* (Oxford, 1995), 126–7.

<sup>34</sup> K. van Vliet, *Ketters rond de dom: de reformatie in Utrecht, 1520–1580* (Utrecht, 1987), 46, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Their social profile is analysed in Annette Weber, 'Schutterij of geschutter? De Utrechtse burgerhoplieden, 1572–1610', *Maandblad Oud-Utrecht*, liv (1981), 149–54. See also Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 136, 167, 189, 198, 241–4, 264, 299.

defend their own towns, by manning the gates and ramparts when the town was under siege or otherwise threatened. On the other hand they were supposed to perform police duties, usually in the form of a nightwatch.<sup>36</sup> On top of this, and more contentiously, citizen-soldiers were asked to follow their lord, or their local government, on offensive campaigns outside the perimeter of the town and its direct hinterland.

Early references to urban militias date from the twelfth century, even though they must have existed earlier.<sup>37</sup> For the towns of Brabant, Sergio Boffa has proposed the following chronology. From the twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century a *levée-en-masse* required all able-bodied man to rally to the town's defence whenever there was an emergency. The well-off would appear on horseback, the rest acted as foot-soldiers. From the mid thirteenth to the early fifteenth century, the guilds in Brabant's towns took over as the framework for recruitment. Citizens marched under the banner of their guild; the guilds raised their admission fees to cover the costs of equipment. In the first half of the fifteenth century a new phase started with the creation of militia guilds, elite units whose members trained regularly and held shooting competitions. And finally, in the second half of the fifteenth century, the new Burgundian lords of Brabant offered the possibility of transforming personal service into a monetary levy, which was used to pay professional soldiers to do the job.<sup>38</sup> This chronology is not necessarily applicable everywhere else in Europe, but it helps to highlight a number of important elements of the civic militias of the late Middle Ages.

A first issue concerns recruitment. Two distinct models were generally used, a corporate and a territorial. Utrecht actually used

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Heinrich Blömker, *Die Wehrverfassung der Stadt Osnabrück bis zum Westfälischen Frieden* (Osnabrück, 1931), 78–9; William M. Bowsky, 'The Medieval Commune and Internal Violence', *American Historical Review*, lxxiii (1967), 11–12; Beate Sauerbrey, *Die Wehrverfassung der Stadt Braunschweig im Spätmittelalter* (Braunschweig, 1989), 55.

<sup>37</sup> J. F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages from the Eighth Century to 1340* (Amsterdam, 1977), 128–9; Daniel Waley, 'The Army of the Florentine Republic from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century', in Nicolai Rubinstein (ed.), *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1968), 71–2; Teofilo F. Ruiz, 'The Transformation of the Castilian Municipalities: The Case of Burgos, 1248–1350', *Past and Present* no. 77 (Nov. 1977), 7–9.

<sup>38</sup> Boffa, *Warfare*, 139–46.

both: the former before 1528, the latter after that date. In the territorial model, the town was subdivided into a number of militia precincts and men would march under the banner of their precinct.<sup>39</sup> This model also existed in Paris, for example, where in the seventeenth century militia precincts would be closed off with the help of heavy chains hung across the entry routes, to mark their boundaries.<sup>40</sup> In Siena, town districts were likewise the basis for recruiting the militia; in the twenty-first century they still compete in the *Palio*.<sup>41</sup> The corporate model used the guild system to bring men together for military service. There was no consistent pattern in the application of either the territorial or guild model, but the guild model was more likely to be preferred in those towns where the guilds were also politically strong. It is no coincidence that they became the foundation for recruitment in Flanders and Brabant during the exact period of the so-called 'guild revolutions' of 1302 and subsequent years.<sup>42</sup> The absence of a consistent pattern was reinforced by the fact that, like Utrecht, towns switched between systems. In Basle and Braunschweig, for example, the territorial system was transformed into the corporate,<sup>43</sup> while in Cologne, the corporate system was abandoned in favour of the territorial in 1583.<sup>44</sup>

A second issue is training. How were all these butchers, bakers and blacksmiths to make a useful contribution on the battlefield? We have to remember that they were not considered absolutely vital. During much of the Middle Ages battles were dominated by

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, James F. Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000–1284* (Berkeley, 1988), 101.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Descimon, 'Les Barricades de la Fronde parisienne: une lecture sociologique', *Annales ESC*, xlv (1990). For a hint of similar chains in London see David Allen, 'The Role of the London Trained Bands in the Exclusion Crisis, 1678–1681', *English Historical Review*, lxxxvii (1972), 297.

<sup>41</sup> Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 125–32; William M. Bowsky, *A Medieval Italian Commune: Siena under the Nine, 1287–1355* (Berkeley, 1981), 127.

<sup>42</sup> Carlos Wyffels, *De oorsprong der ambachten in Vlaanderen en Brabant* (Brussels, 1951), ch. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Sauerbrey, *Wehrverfassung der Stadt Braunschweig*, 41; August Bernouli, 'Die Organization von Basels Kriegswesen im Mittelalter', *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, xvii (1918), 127. See also Jürgen Kraus, *Das Militärwesen der Reichsstadt Augsburg 1548 bis 1806: Vergleichende Untersuchungen über städtische Militäreinrichtungen in Deutschland vom 16.–18. Jahrhundert* (Augsburg, 1980), 107–12.

<sup>44</sup> Toni Heinzen, *Zunftkämpfe, Zunft Herrschaft und Wehrverfassung in Köln: ein Beitrag zum Thema Zünfte und Wehrverfassung* (Cologne, 1939), 95. See also Blömker, *Wehrverfassung der Stadt Osnabrück*, 78–9.

cavalry. In so far as cavalrymen were not recruited from the rural nobility, they came from social circles with more leisure time and hence more opportunity to practise their riding skills.<sup>45</sup> Civilian infantry forces would travel with their precinct's wagon, the *carroccio*, which not only carried supplies, but also served as a rallying point on the battlefield. Equally important in sustaining cohesion in such amateur units was their professional or neighbourhood solidarity.<sup>46</sup> These factors actually allowed urban infantry troops to win some notable battles against the regulars employed by princes. Those of Milan, together with militias from Lodi, Verona, Vercelli, Piacenza and the Marche towns, were victorious in 1176 against the German emperor Frederic Barbarossa.<sup>47</sup> In 1302 Flemish urban militias won a similarly remarkable victory against the French king. This latter victory also marked the emergence of the infantry as a more permanently significant military force.<sup>48</sup>

These changes were partly the result of the superior organisation of citizens, for example in craft guilds, and partly of technological changes such as the emergence of a new type of bow. This gave infantry troops superior fire power — and caused wars to become much bloodier in the process.<sup>49</sup> It also required citizen-soldiers to be better trained. Training was already provided by town governments in the early fifteenth century, but it was placed on a regular footing by the creation of shooting guilds.<sup>50</sup> In Northern Europe the first of these emerged in the late thirteenth century in Flanders and Brabant, from where they quickly spread to adjacent regions, first in the Low Countries and France.<sup>51</sup> Utrecht had its *schutten*, militiamen who had received extra training and were recompensed with a share in any loot.<sup>52</sup> Around 1400 shooting guilds were already being established in the Rhineland, and from there they spread

<sup>45</sup> The best study is Maire Vigueur, *Cavaliers et citoyens*.

<sup>46</sup> Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 125–6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>48</sup> Clifford J. Rogers, 'The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War', in Rogers (ed.), *The Military Revolution Debate* (article originally published in 1993), 57–8.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 59–63.

<sup>50</sup> Steven Gunn, 'Archery Practice in Early Tudor England', *Past and Present* no. 209 (Nov. 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Theo Reintges, *Ursprung und Wesen der spätmittelalterlichen Schützengilden* (Bonn, 1963), 58–60.

<sup>52</sup> *Gilden van Utrecht*, i, pp. ccviii–ix.



further, to the Hansa towns in the Baltic area, as well as the eastern and southern parts of the Holy Roman Empire. By the end of the fifteenth century they had reached the Austrian lands. In that same century they spread to Burgundy, through its contacts with the Low Countries, and in the sixteenth century English towns finally adopted the same institutions: in 1537–8 the Guild of St George in London was patented by Henry VIII.<sup>53</sup> Shooting guilds were created with a military purpose in mind, but they were not, in themselves, military units.<sup>54</sup> Their objective was to train civilians in the use of arms, to prepare them for military service. The rise of the arbalest contributed to the spread of the shooting guild, because the foot bow was difficult to handle unless one was properly trained in its use. Shooting guilds provided training grounds — those of the London Guild of St George were located at St Martin-in-the-Fields — and once a year there was an opportunity for members to demonstrate their skill at a competition, by shooting at a wooden bird, normally a parrot, raised on a large vertical pole. The man who managed to hit the parrot, would be the guild's 'king' for the next year. In the Tyrol such competitions are recorded in the fifteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Women were not by definition excluded from shooting guilds, but they did not, as far as we know, participate in competitions. Female heads of households were expected to contribute to militia service, but only financially.<sup>56</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that the only female in Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* is very much an outsider to the action taking place around her. Civic militias created a male world, built around arms and drink, and underlined by specific rituals and gestures. The toasts to 'friendship' that were a regular feature of militia meals, had a gendered implication, as did the references to loyalty, which concerned the urban community as a whole, but especially the male confraternity of the militia. In the Dutch militia paintings we see males shaking hands and pledging loyalty with their hands on their hearts. Equally in evidence are numerous 'Renaissance

<sup>53</sup> Reintges, *Ursprung*, 50–74.

<sup>54</sup> B. Ann Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany: Civic Duty and the Right of Arms* (Basingstoke, 2011), 189.

<sup>55</sup> Otto Stolz, *Wehrverfassung und Schützenwesen in Tirol von den Anfängen bis 1918* (Innsbruck, 1918), 158.

<sup>56</sup> For Utrecht, see *Gilden van Utrecht*, i, pp. ccvii–ccviii, ccxi.

elbows' pointing towards the viewer, a popular reference to male boldness and control.<sup>57</sup>

For males, the shooting guilds promoted another form of exclusivity; as in the craft guilds, only those with full rights of citizenship were accepted as members.<sup>58</sup> This immediately suggests a potential for shooting guilds to position themselves as representatives of the citizen community. Shooting guilds usually had a couple dozen members, perhaps 150 at most. This was small-scale compared to the number of militiamen that major towns could field. Florence raised 1,400 cavalry and about 4,000 foot-soldiers in 1260 from amongst its citizens.<sup>59</sup> Bruges supplied 1,254 men for a military campaign in 1303.<sup>60</sup> Basle could raise around 1,900 militiamen in 1421.<sup>61</sup> These were all significant proportions of the male population of these towns. The members of the shooting guilds would constitute but a fraction.

Citizen troops would almost never fight alone; they would be accompanied by regulars.<sup>62</sup> One point that the Military Revolution debate has obscured is that professional soldiers were a feature of the Middle Ages too. It is clear from the earliest records that Italian towns were using professional units. Two hundred mounted mercenaries fought alongside Milanese citizens in 1260.<sup>63</sup> Professionals are recorded in Venice in the tenth century, while in the North the duke of Anjou was employing them in 991, as was Frederick Barbarossa during his Italian campaigns of the 1160s.<sup>64</sup> What happened over the course of time — relatively early in Italy, later in the rest of Europe — was that such troops became an increasingly significant part of a

<sup>57</sup> Joaneath Spicer, 'The Renaissance Elbow', and Herman Roodenburg, 'The "Hand of Friendship": Shaking Hands and other Gestures in the Dutch Republic', both in Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (eds.), *A Cultural History of Gesture* (Cambridge, 1991). See also Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*, ch. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Reintges, *Ursprung*, 299.

<sup>59</sup> Waley, 'Army of the Florentine Republic', 76.

<sup>60</sup> Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 143.

<sup>61</sup> Bernouli, 'Organization von Basels Kriegswesen', 129.

<sup>62</sup> Kelly DeVries, 'Medieval Mercenaries: Methodology, Definitions, and Problems', in John France (ed.), *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2008).

<sup>63</sup> Waley, 'Army of the Florentine Republic', 76; Caferro, *Mercenary Companies*, ch. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 117–19.

sovereign's armed forces.<sup>65</sup> As a result, the role of civic militias as an offensive weapon declined.

#### IV

Paradoxically, we are much better informed about various aspects of early modern civic militias, even though it is asserted that they had by then been marginalized as a result of the rise of professional soldiering. Most of the great powers of the early modern period maintained a reserve army, to be called up in times of war. Louis XIV's defence minister, François-Michel le Tellier, marquis de Louvois, created a royal militia of 25,000 men. In the 1740s as many as 80,000 French militiamen served in the War of the Austrian Succession. Brandenburg-Prussia reformed its militias in 1693, and Spain revived its militias in the eighteenth century.<sup>66</sup> But only in seventeenth-century Britain and Switzerland were the militias still the backbone of the military establishment, even though the British also had a professional army. It is perhaps no coincidence that both countries were favoured by natural features, which provided them with borders that were relatively easy to protect. In both countries the militias' role was that of a home guard; it was not assumed that they would act as offensive forces.

The English militias were a feudal force, which had been reformed by Elizabeth I in 1558 in the face of the dual threat posed by enemies within (subversive Catholics) and from outside (Philip II of Spain). Their feudal origins are clearly visible in that they were held to be temporary forces, springing to life in times of military crisis. They were recruited on a compulsory basis. It was soon evident, however, that amateur forces would only be useful if properly exercised. Hence, in 1573, the so-called trained bands were established. These were

<sup>65</sup> Steven J. Gunn, David Grummitt and Hans Cools, *War, State, and Society in England and the Netherlands, 1477–1559* (Oxford, 2007), 20–3; Frederik Buylaert, Jan Van Camp and Bert Verwerft, 'Urban Militias, Nobles and Mercenaries: The Organization of the Antwerp Army in the Flemish–Brabantine Revolt of the 1480s', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, ix (2011), 150.

<sup>66</sup> André Corvisier, *Armies and Societies in Europe, 1494–1789* (Bloomington, 1979), 53–9. For Spain see Ruth MacKay, *The Limits of Royal Authority: Resistance and Obedience in Seventeenth-Century Castile* (Cambridge, 1999), and José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez (ed.), *Las milicias del rey de España: sociedad, política e identidad en las monarquías ibéricas* (Madrid, 2009), pt 1.

special militia units that received additional training and were rewarded for their trouble with a small allowance.<sup>67</sup> Militia service could be fulfilled by a replacement and the upper classes seem to have been eager to let their inferiors do the dirty work for them.

German towns, or at least the imperial cities, were in a unique position in that they were more or less independent states in their own right. As a result, their civic militias were, and remained, more military in nature than those of other continental countries. Augsburg, for example, employed its own professional soldiers for the defence of the city, but citizens were expected to make a contribution as well. The Augsburg civic militias performed police duties, and paraded on official occasions. Citizens were required to supply their own arms, but these were kept in the city's arsenal, the *Zeughaus*. Later, a payment to the *Zeugamt* made the private ownership of firearms superfluous. As in England, militia service itself could be fulfilled by a replacement, a fact that caused its increasing proletarianization. Besides companies of foot soldiers, the civic militias of Augsburg also consisted of artillery and cavalry companies.<sup>68</sup>

In 1610 the civic militias of Utrecht received new statutes, which give a fair idea of what their role in society was supposed to be. Article 5 defined it as 'to protect the city of Utrecht, and all its citizens and inhabitants, against all violence, disturbance and violation from within and without, everything for the security, quiet and peace of everyone, as will be commanded by the Colonel, under orders of the sovereign and the local magistrate'.<sup>69</sup> Elucidation of these statutes in 1619 specified that there would be eight companies, of 150 men each.<sup>70</sup> In the eight militia districts the officers were involved in much more than just the nightwatch, or the organisation of military defence. From private notes kept by David Jan Martens as commanding officer of Utrecht's Turkey Company during the 1780s we learn that no

<sup>67</sup> Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558–1945* (Manchester, 1991), 20, 23.

<sup>68</sup> Kraus, *Militärwesen der Reichsstadt Augsburg*, 76–88, and ch. 5. See also Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*.

<sup>69</sup> Johan van de Water, *Groot placaetboek, vervattende alle de placaten, ordonnantien en edicten der edele mogende heeren staten's lands van Utrecht, mitsgaders van de borgemeesteren en vroedschap der stad Utrecht*, iii (Utrecht, 1729), 589: Ordonnantie . . . voor de schutterij van de stad Utrecht, 1 June 1611.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 591.

collections, including tax collections, could be held in the district without him announcing them to the inhabitants. Martens was also asked to give his opinion on all citizenship applications emanating from the district. The Turkey district was subdivided into twenty smaller neighbourhood units, each with its own neighbourhood sheriff who executed a range of (unpaid) chores under the supervision of militia officers like Martens.<sup>71</sup> These included registering newcomers and checking taverns, as well as fire pumps, fire ladders and sewers in their area. They also warned citizens to clear their part of the pavement of snow during the winter. Sheriffs were also responsible for ensuring a sufficient number of neighbourhood participants in any district funerals.<sup>72</sup> These were not mere formalities. In February 1752, for example, the commanders of all eight districts advised Utrecht's burgomasters to continue to refuse the right of citizenship to Catholic newcomers, unless the applicant proved vital to the community.<sup>73</sup>

The militias in Nantes (France) were called out during riots. Especially in times of food scarcity, they were notified to be vigilant and in case of disturbances called upon to restore public order. In 1630, with local elites divided on political issues, taxes rising and with epidemics causing havoc among the population, the militia was called out to protect meetings of the town council, while all other inhabitants were expressly forbidden to carry arms within the town. In 1675 taxes were again rising sharply, due to the war against the Dutch Republic (the so-called *Guerre d'Hollande*) that had started in 1672, and in April of that year the militias had to help to quell a popular

<sup>71</sup> Het Utrechts Archief, Stadsarchief (hereafter HUA, SA) II, 2078: private notes of D. J. Martens as commanding officer of the Turkey district. See also HUA, SA II, 2064: 21–29 Apr., 24 Nov. 1747, 27 July 1751, 2 Apr. 1753.

<sup>72</sup> On these neighbourhoods see Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 278–81; Llwellyn Bogaers, 'Geleund over de onderdeur: doorkijkjes in het Utrechtse buurtleven van de vroege Middeleeuwen tot in de zeventiende eeuw', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, cxii (1997).

<sup>73</sup> HUA, SA II, 2064: 28 Feb. 1752. On refusing citizenship to Catholics see Maarten Prak, 'The Politics of Intolerance: Citizenship and Religion in the Dutch Republic (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries)', in R. Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2002), 162–3.

uprising, which at one point saw the bishop of Nantes taken hostage by dissatisfied crowds.<sup>74</sup>

The English equivalent of the urban militias found in Dutch and French towns was the so-called watch. Watchmen could be called up in times of military crisis, but they also paraded on festive occasions and performed the nightwatch, as their name suggests.<sup>75</sup> They were, in other words, police forces. In Richard Hooker's late sixteenth-century *History of Excester*, for instance, the task of the 'watchmen and wardesmen' is described as 'to serve by night and the other by Daye'.<sup>76</sup> They operated from the town hall and were to make sure that the town gates were properly shut at night, and generally to supervise their respective districts 'that their be no miserule kept'.<sup>77</sup> In Bristol, the watchmen were parading in the streets of the city during a civic ceremony in 1571; London's 'marching watch' would do the same on similar occasions.<sup>78</sup> In Scotland, Edinburgh had its town guard, which played an identical role.<sup>79</sup>

As military forces the militias' qualities were not very impressive. This was true even in the British Isles, where the militias retained more of their military character than in most continental countries. Lack of training cannot have been the only cause of this underperformance. In London, the Guild of St George, a shooting guild similar to those found on the continent,<sup>80</sup> was an institution mainly for militia officers in the London companies. Other towns followed London's example and set up similar guilds. All captains of the London trained bands were enrolled as members in 1614. The guild, by then known, after its training grounds, as the Society of the Artillery

<sup>74</sup> For this discussion of the Nantes militias, see Guy Saupin, *Nantes au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: vie politique et société urbaine* (Rennes, 1996), ch. 5, pp. 127–51, and 'La Milice bourgeoise? Relais politique fondamental dans la ville française d'Ancien Régime: réflexions à partir de l'exemple de Nantes', in Bruno Dumons and Olivier Zeller (eds.), *Gouverner la ville en Europe: du moyen âge au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 2006).

<sup>75</sup> Beckett, *Amateur Military Tradition*, 15.

<sup>76</sup> *The Description of the Citie of Excester*, by Iohn Vowell alias Hoker, Gentleman and Chamberlayne of the Same / Transcribed and Edited from a Manuscript in the Archives of the Corporation of the City of Exeter by Walter J. Harte, J. W. Schopp, H. Tapley-Soper, 3 vols. (Exeter, 1919–47), 819.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 820.

<sup>78</sup> Beckett, *Amateur Military Tradition*, 15.

<sup>79</sup> R. A. Houston, 'The Military and Edinburgh Society, 1660–1760', *War & Society*, xi (1993), 42.

<sup>80</sup> Keith Roberts, 'Citizen Soldiers: the Military Power of the City of London', in Stephen Porter (ed.), *London and the Civil War* (London, 1996), 95.

Garden, was quick to adopt the Dutch methods of drill and other innovations pioneered by Maurice of Orange.<sup>81</sup> However, the English militias' theatre of operations was England itself, and civil conflict hardly ever amounted to a pitched battle. This was true even during the Civil War. The London trained bands were said to have performed honourably in the face of professional opponents, and at Turnham Green even sustained casualties, but they never really had to demonstrate that they were fire-proof.<sup>82</sup>

Civic militias in the Dutch Republic received only limited drill practice.<sup>83</sup> After 1600 Utrecht was safe from Spanish attacks, but in the spring of 1672 the French overran substantial parts of the country. The performance of the Utrecht militia was disappointing, to say the least. Dutch troops under William III were refused shelter in the city while just a few days later Utrecht was handed over to the French without a shot being fired. In other Dutch towns militias proved equally hopeless as military forces.<sup>84</sup> In Paris, a commentator had observed back in 1595 that 'they are just like dogs that only bark and bite on their own doorstep'.<sup>85</sup>

All of this underscores that the civic militias of the early modern period were first and foremost police forces. They did, however, retain elements of their former role as military units. They were called upon to help to defend their own towns, and sometimes even required to venture outside their own turf. This sustained a self-image that was supported by military paraphernalia and historical tales of past bravery, just enough as it turns out to give credibility to republican arguments about citizens-in-arms.

Although technically every able-bodied male was required to serve in the militia, the Utrecht regulations of 1702 limited participation to those who could afford to bring their own weapon.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, in practice, households not individuals were the units of recruitment: every household was supposed to supply

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 96–7.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>83</sup> Paul Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer: de schutterijen in Holland, 1550–1700* (Hilversum, 1994), 253.

<sup>84</sup> On the Holland towns see *ibid.* See also Maarten Prak, *Republikeinse veelheid, democratische enkelvoud: sociale verandering in het Revolutietijdvak, 's-Hertogenbosch, 1770–1820* (Nijmegen, 1999), ch. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Descimon, 'Solidarité communautaire et sociabilité armée: les compagnies de la milice bourgeoise à Paris (XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)', in F. Thélamon (ed.), *Sociabilité, pouvoirs et société: actes du colloque de Rouen* (Rouen, 1987), 601.

<sup>86</sup> Te Water, *Groot placaeboek*, 597 (art. 14).



one militiaman.<sup>87</sup> In actual fact, the number of men was much smaller than the number of households. According to a survey in July 1786, the Turkey district of Utrecht had 539 households, but its militia company came to only 174 in June 1784. In other words, a mere 32 per cent of all households was involved in the militia. This figure is slightly higher than the percentage for the city as a whole, which came to 29 per cent; as a percentage of the total population the strength of the eight Utrecht militia units, 1,793 men in total, amounted to 7.3 per cent.<sup>88</sup> In terms of social background, the militiamen, at least at the end of the eighteenth century, belonged overwhelmingly to the solid middle classes. In 1785 D. J. Martens's Turkey Company had several journeymen in its ranks, but most of its members were independent artisans, exercising such trades as bookbinder, sculptor (two), wigmaker, tailor (five), pharmacist, merchant, hat-maker, shoemaker (four), carpenter (four) and shopkeeper (five).<sup>89</sup> Evidence from the nearby town of Bois-le-Duc suggests the same pattern.<sup>90</sup>

Social equality was reinforced by rituals and sociability. The Utrecht regulations of 1619 already stipulated that only those who drank during the nightwatch, would be required to pay for the alcohol consumed by the company.<sup>91</sup> Drinking and eating were important aspects of militia life.<sup>92</sup> After David Jan Martens received his command, in May 1781, he immediately invited his fellow officers to his home, where toasts were raised 'with the use of the Company's goblet'.<sup>93</sup> Many Dutch militia companies owned highly elaborate (and quite expensive) silver drinking vessels, which were passed round the table on solemn occasions for all the officers to share, underlining the

<sup>87</sup> HUA, SA II, 2064: 17 Apr. 1748.

<sup>88</sup> Inhabitants per district are recorded on a separate sheet of paper, dated 10 July 1786, in a bound volume of correspondence of the Turkey Company: HUA, SA II, 2076; the number of men and non-commissioned officers, 1597 and 96 respectively, is in the records of the Turkey Company: HUA, SA II, 2075, 18 June 1784.

<sup>89</sup> The names of the militiamen serving in the Turkey Company in May 1785, under the command of D. J. Martens, were recorded in the accounts of the company: HUA, SA II, 2077. These were combined with a tax assessment from 1793 in HUA, SA II, 2051. I am grateful to Joost van der Spek for helping me to collect these data.

<sup>90</sup> Maarten Prak, 'Identité urbaine, identités sociales: les bourgeois de Bois-le-Duc au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Annales ESC*, xlviii (1993), 919–20.

<sup>91</sup> Te Water, *Groot Placaetboek*, 597 (art. 45).

<sup>92</sup> See also Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 297–304.

<sup>93</sup> HUA, SA II, 2077: accounts of the Turkey Company, 14 May 1781.

bond of company membership.<sup>94</sup> After the annual muster, Martens received his fellow officers for the 'captain's meal'.<sup>95</sup> On such occasions 'harmony' and 'friendship' were key words in the speeches and compulsory toasts, articulating the unity of the community that the militia represented and was bound to maintain.<sup>96</sup> The Haarlem portrait painter Frans Hals set his famous militia pieces around a table.<sup>97</sup> Another aspect of the same intention was expressed by the presence of militiamen at the funerals of their colleagues.<sup>98</sup>

The Nantes militia had a membership of approximately 2,000, i.e. 10 per cent of the population; in the eighteenth century, when the population increased, the militias remained at the same strength, reducing the percentage to about 5 per cent.<sup>99</sup> In the diocese of Albi around 1,800 were on active service in 1694, 2 per cent of a population of 90,000, but that comprised a substantial rural area as well.<sup>100</sup> In 1703 fourteen Augsburg militia companies numbered a total of 2,800 members. That was about 10 per cent of the urban population at the time. However, 1703 was a year of high military alert, due to the War of the Spanish Succession. In September 1673 a mere 900 men were drafted into four militia companies.<sup>101</sup>

English militias were organized on a regional basis. Individual counties, or a combination, had to raise the number of militiamen assigned to them and to make sure that they were properly trained. The counties were also financially responsible for their own units. Because those called up could send a replacement, a proletarianization of the militia units was almost inevitable.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Louise E. van den Bergh-Hoogterp, 'Der schutterschat: het zilverbezit van de schutterijen in de noordelijke Nederlanden', in Carasso-Kok and Levy-Van Halm (eds.), *Schutters in Holland*.

<sup>95</sup> HUA, SA II, 2075: 4 Aug. 1784; see also HUA, SA II, 2064: 10 Mar. 1788.

<sup>96</sup> HUA, SA II, 2075: 15 Oct. 1783, 3 Feb. 1784.

<sup>97</sup> Neeltje Köhler and Koos Levy-Van Halm, *Frans Hals: Militia Pieces* (Zwolle, 1990).

<sup>98</sup> Te Water, *Groot Placaetboek*, 589 (art. 16); HUA, SA II, 2075: 18 Jan. 1784.

<sup>99</sup> There are more numbers in Albert Babeau, *La Ville sous l'Ancien Régime*, ii (Paris, 1884), 22. Some of them look suspiciously high, however.

<sup>100</sup> Pierre Bonin, *Bourgeois, bourgeoisie et habitanage dans les villes du Languedoc sous l'Ancien Régime* (Aix-en-Provence and Marseille, 2005), 250, 251 n. 1.

<sup>101</sup> Kraus, *Das Militärwesen*, 21, 124–6.

<sup>102</sup> J. R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century: The Story of a Political Issue, 1660–1802* (London, 1965), 256. For similar developments in eighteenth-century Geneva, see Marco Cicchini, 'Milices bourgeoises et garde soldée à Genève au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: le républicanisme classique à l'épreuve du maintien d'ordre', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, lxi (2014).

Data from eighteenth-century Exeter demonstrate this. A town of 11,000 inhabitants in the late seventeenth century, and 16,000 at the end of the eighteenth, Exeter was a county in its own right.<sup>103</sup> The borough militia was recruited from four precincts within the city, with their prosaic names East Within, West Within, and so on, as well as four precincts *extra muros*, with the equally predictable names East Without and so on. Each precinct was supposed to muster ten men. The roll of 1770 was however a depressing fifty-two names short of full strength.<sup>104</sup> Most of the twenty-eight men actually serving were indeed substitutes, like Thomas Gall, whose name appears on the list as substitute for Thomas Wilson, but two years later took the place of Matthew Cosseraty the Younger. Most Exeter substitutes were unable to sign their names.<sup>105</sup>

With many lower-class substitutes serving in the English militias, the urban middle class had reasons to be suspicious of their loyalty. This may have been the reason why Exeter's city council, the Chamber, chose to rely on the city watch, rather than on the local militia during the troubled times of the Civil War. On 23 January 1642 the Chamber made the first moves to prepare the city for things to come. It was decided that forty inhabitants, 'men to be confided in', would be added to the officers and volunteers who would take turns at the watch. 'Disaffected persons', on the other hand, were to be disarmed, while a muster of men and arms, as well as 'trayners', i.e. members of trained bands, and volunteers would be undertaken.<sup>106</sup> In August it was decided that 'there shall be 32 persons charged to warde everie day and 32 persons to watch everie night'.<sup>107</sup> As these watches turned out to be on almost permanent duty, the watchmen were temporarily taken into the pay of the community.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540–1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958); Mark Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction: Rebellion and Civil War in an English City* (Exeter, 1996).

<sup>104</sup> Exeter City Archives, Devon Record Office, Miscellaneous papers, box 3: 'Militiamen now serving . . . 28 February 1770'.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*: 'A roll of the persons . . . 31 March 1768'.

<sup>106</sup> Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction*, 185–6.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> 'Documentary Evidence for the Civil War Defences of Exeter, 1542–43', ed. Mark Stoye (Exeter Museum's Archaeological Field Unit, no. 88.12, 1988).

Civic militias thus continued to recruit substantial numbers of men throughout the early modern period. At any one time, in the region of 7.5 per cent of the urban population — and by implication a much higher percentage of the adult males — participated in the militias. Their social composition varied, and no clear pattern emerges from the available information. Many towns had a preference for middle-class militiamen: propertied forces who could keep the working classes in check. There were, however, other places where replacements were acceptable and that led to an influx of lower-class recruits. This served the interests of middle-class males reluctant to spend the night patrolling the town, but it also created anxiety in those same circles about the loyalty of the force.

## V

As organizations composed of citizens, of whatever social background, the civic militias were almost inevitably going to be caught up in local politics. Machiavelli considered this one of the main purposes of having a civic militia. It can therefore come as no surprise to find militiamen using their organizations as platforms to voice political claims, claims reinforced by the fact that the men who made them were armed. Shooting guilds were, for example, consulted by Dutch urban governments in times of crisis, as happened in Amsterdam in 1542.<sup>109</sup> Their great opportunity came with the Dutch Revolt in the second half of the sixteenth century. Local authorities were desperate to establish legitimacy for their decisions, which one way or another were bound to be controversial. In Leiden this happened on the very first day of the Revolt, when the support of the militia was required to restore order after a wave of iconoclastic rioting. Whereas normally the militia would be ordered out by the burgomasters, it was now considered better first to consult, not only its officers but also the regular members. In Haarlem, during a technically illegal meeting in September 1566, militiamen volunteered their advice on how the most important posts in the city should be filled, but in Delft the council summoned the militiamen to a meeting on 6 October,

<sup>109</sup> *Resoluties van de vroedschap van Amsterdam, 1490–1550*, ed. P. D. J. van Iterson and P. H. J. van der Laan (Amsterdam, 1986), 58.

referring to them as 'members of the town'.<sup>110</sup> In Amsterdam, siding with the Habsburg government until 1578, it was thanks to a coup by the local militias that the Catholic council was finally forced to make way for a Protestant successor, which was elected by representatives of the militia. One of its first acts was to organize a huge dinner for the revolutionary militiamen, 'to plant and let grow once more love and unity among the citizens'.<sup>111</sup>

During the 1580s the civic militias in the rebel territories were completely overhauled. Instead of the former guild structure and voluntary participation, William of Orange introduced compulsory service for able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and sixty, recruited by district. The former 'shooting guilds' became 'burgher companies', but in practice they retained their colloquial name of *schutterij*.<sup>112</sup> They thus inherited the shooting guilds' position of spokesmen for the community.<sup>113</sup> In Utrecht this was confirmed during a rebellion in 1610. On Sunday 21 January of that year, at 6 a.m., the presiding burgomaster of Utrecht was woken up by a messenger from the commanding officers of the eight civic militia companies, demanding an interview with the city council.<sup>114</sup> Their companies were in the meantime called up, and gathered in the square in front of the town hall. By 9 a.m. the council was ready to hear their complaints. On behalf of the citizens of Utrecht, the *burgerhopmans* demanded, in effect, a reintroduction of the local constitution of 1304, as it had been in force until 1528. This implied that henceforth the council would be elected, not through co-option as had happened since 1528, but through the citizens' representative institutions. However, in places where the former constitution had given a key role to the deans of the guilds, it should now read *hopmans*, and the vote would be given, not to the guild members, but to the

<sup>110</sup> J. C. Grayson, 'The Civic Militia in the County of Holland, 1560–81: Politics and Public Order in the Dutch Revolt', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, xcv (1980), 41, 45, 47 (quotation).

<sup>111</sup> As quoted in E. Lievense-Pelzer, 'De alteratie en de financiële toestand', *Jaarboek Amstelodamum*, lxxi (1979), 49.

<sup>112</sup> On these reforms, see Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, ch. 3.

<sup>113</sup> For Amsterdam this process is discussed in detail in Maarten Prak, 'Cittadini, abitanti e forestieri: una classificazione della popolazione di Amsterdam nella prima età moderna', *Quaderni Storici*, xxx (1995).

<sup>114</sup> Dina Albertina Felix, *Het oproer te Utrecht in 1610* (Utrecht, 1919).

militiamen in their eight companies. The proposals also stated that the commanding officers should henceforth be elected by the members of their companies, instead of being appointed by the council.<sup>115</sup> Further demands requested changes in the provincial government, to better protect the interests of the city, a general maintenance of the city's ancient privileges and particularly those of the guilds, and insisted that 'the prosperity of the city of Utrecht and its community will be the ultimate law and privilege'.<sup>116</sup>

The council, denuded of its normal means of protection, immediately stood down, declaring that no one would want to rule against the express wishes of the citizens, and that very day proceeded to organize elections according to the militias' proposals. A subsequent investigation of complaints by the provincial States of Utrecht created more controversy, and another call-to-arms of the militias in early March, when a rumour was deliberately spread to the effect that a 500-strong garrison was about to enter Utrecht. For a full week the militias were in charge of the city, seeking satisfaction for their demands. On 31 March professional troops did finally arrive, and after nine days of negotiation, under the threat from the commander-in-chief Maurice of Nassau that he would if necessary take the city by force, they were at last admitted into Utrecht. On 16 April the States of Utrecht felt that it was safe to return to their headquarters in the city.<sup>117</sup>

In the 1780s there were complaints about the decline of the Utrecht militias, complaints that were voiced all over the Dutch Republic.<sup>118</sup> These related specifically to the militias' military capabilities, or rather lack of them. They should be read in conjunction with Van der Capellen's appeal to revive the militias as military units capable of substituting for, or at least providing a counterweight against, the professional troops commanded by the Orange stadtholder. As Van der Capellen had recommended, exercise societies were set up, to drill militiamen several times a week. Participation was voluntary,

<sup>115</sup> A document summarizing the citizens' demands is reprinted *ibid.*, p. iv.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>117</sup> For similar militia rebellions, see Paul Knevel, 'Onrust onder schutters: de politieke invloed van de Hollandse schutterijen in de eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw', *Holland: Regionaal-Historisch Tijdschrift*, xx (1988).

<sup>118</sup> HUA, SA II, 2075, fo. 1 (1783).

but it constituted a demonstration of adherence to the anti-Orange camp. The Utrecht companies also set up exercise societies. Those of the Turkey Company were looking for training grounds in early 1783.<sup>119</sup> During the following four years the militias, and more particularly the exercise society *Pro Patria et Libertate*, recruited from the ranks of the militias, were the backbone of the revolutionary Patriot movement in Utrecht.<sup>120</sup> Once again they claimed to be spokesmen for the civic community: in a draft constitution, published in 1784, the militias were put in charge of organizing local elections.<sup>121</sup>

In Paris, during the summer of 1648, militias barricaded their districts with the help of the chains that were provided to defend them.<sup>122</sup> Apart from their police duties and contribution to local defence, the Parisian *milices bourgeoises* were generally seen as institutions representing the community as a whole.<sup>123</sup> The Paris militias had been reorganized in 1562, changing them from an essentially corporative to a territorial model. The reorganisation did not, however, fundamentally alter the militias' social composition, which remained middle class, and more specifically dominated by craftsmen, at least insofar as the rank and file were concerned.<sup>124</sup> As in other towns, in France and elsewhere, the Paris militias were inspired by the egalitarian ideals so dear to early modern citizens.<sup>125</sup> And, as elsewhere, these ideals notwithstanding, the Parisian militias were exclusively male institutions, and citizens found militia service attractive to support in theory but difficult to sustain in practice. As a result, there were innumerable conflicts about absenteeism, and continuing pressure to permit replacement by

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 2 (Feb. 1783).

<sup>120</sup> N. C. F. van Sas, 'Politiek als leerproces: het patriotisme in Utrecht, 1783–1787', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (1987), 21, 27, 34–6.

<sup>121</sup> *Concept-reglement op de regeerings-bestelling van de provincie Utrecht* (Utrecht, 1784), 29 (art X.I).

<sup>122</sup> Robert Descimon, 'Les barricades frondeuses (26–28 Août 1648)', in Roger Duchêne and Pierre Ronzeaud (eds.), *La Fronde en questions: actes du 18ème colloque du Centre Méridional de Rencontres sur le XVIIIème siècle* (Aix 1989).

<sup>123</sup> William Beik, *Urban Protest in Seventeenth-Century France: The Culture of Retribution* (Cambridge, 1997), 79–84; Laurent Coste, 'Les Milices bourgeoises en France', in Jean-Pierre Poussou (ed.), *Les Sociétés urbaines au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Angleterre, France, Espagne* (Paris, 2007), 184–5.

<sup>124</sup> Robert Descimon, 'Milice bourgeoise et identité citadine à Paris au temps de la Ligue', *Annales ESC*, xlviii (1993).

<sup>125</sup> Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society: essays in German and Dutch history* (Leiden, 1992), 6–30.



social inferiors who would be financially recompensed for their trouble.<sup>126</sup>

In the middle of the seventeenth century the London trained bands played a decisive role in swinging the support of the City to the Parliamentary side. In January 1642 they mobilized spontaneously, against the express wishes of the Lord Mayor who was their formal commander. The Committee of Safety, also known as the Militia Committee, dominated City politics during the early stages of the crisis. It expanded the trained bands from 6,000 to 8,000 men, on a voluntary basis. Significantly, apprentices who signed up were promised the freedom, i.e. citizenship, of the City after their tour of duty.<sup>127</sup>

Such examples show not only how the militias could be a significant political force in their communities, but also that in many places they acted as the main vehicle for citizen agency. In that sense, Machiavelli was right: arming citizens almost automatically implied that local authorities had to listen to those citizens, and pay attention to their concerns. While the historiography of the period tends to highlight the rise of oligarchy, the history of the militias provides a different perspective on urban life before the emergence of democracy.<sup>128</sup>

## VI

The evidence presented here suggests a number of broader conclusions. First, and perhaps most important, that the monopoly of violence in the hands of early modern European governments remained very incomplete, even after the Military Revolution. On the contrary, governments were keen to encourage their citizens to bear arms and to contribute supplementary military services, at low cost to the public treasury. Secondly, with the rise of professional soldiering, civic militias became increasingly unhelpful as military forces. Only the Swiss Confederacy and England, favoured by natural

<sup>126</sup> Descimon, 'Milice bourgeoise', 901–4, and 'Solidarité communautaire', 604.

<sup>127</sup> Lawson Nagel, "'A Great Bouncing at Every Man's Door': The Struggle for London's Militia in 1642", in Porter (ed.), *London and the Civil War*, 71, 75, 79; Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997).

<sup>128</sup> For more on this point see Maarten Prak, 'The People in Politics: Early Modern England and the Dutch Republic compared', in Margaret C. Jacob and Catherine Sécrotan (eds.), *In Praise of Ordinary People: Early Modern Britain and the Dutch Republic* (London, 2013).

conditions, managed to continue to rely on militias for military purposes. Thirdly, even though their military role became less significant, civic militias continued to play an important role in early modern town life. Scattered figures from the Dutch Republic and France suggest that between 5 and 10 per cent of the population, that is as much as a quarter of all households, was involved in the militias at any one time, and that by implication a much larger segment of the population must have been involved in them during their life cycle. Fourthly, through the discourse of classical republicanism, as first articulated in Renaissance Italy but subsequently developed and adapted in other parts of Europe, civic militias added a significant dimension to conceptions of citizenship. As such, they felt not only compelled to defend their community against military enemies, but also acted as defenders of the political integrity of that community. They were simultaneously forces of public order and disorder. Therefore, fifthly and finally, as institutions encompassing significant sections of the urban community, militias shaped the ritual and political lives of medieval and early modern towns, providing at one and the same time identity and voice to that community. The militiamen in Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* may have been unique in the way in which they were captured on the canvas, but their ambition to be portrayed while serving with their fellow citizens would have appealed to men in similar positions everywhere in pre-modern Europe.

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