

Invitation to a workshop at the University of Helsinki, 26–27 October 2023

## The Business of War in the Baltic Sea Region: 1520–1815

The business of war, meaning the commercial supply, financing and organisation of soldiers and materiel for armies and navies, was one of the predominant economic sectors in early modern Europe. This was a turbulent period, with civil unrest and wars the norm rather than the exception. Warfare itself was in transition, requiring ever more manpower and expensive new technologies. In response to these challenges - and opportunities - many rulers and other powerholders turned to the private market to provide the necessary military resources, from swords, armour and provisions to warhorses, ships and military professionals. While some resources could be acquired locally, the bulk were obtained through transnational networks of merchants and military enterprisers, making this a pan-European and even global system.



*The Sword Dance in Olaus Magnus' Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus 1555*

The use of private capital and personnel and the outsourcing of military functions has for a long time been condemned as immoral, inefficient, and a mere transitory phase in the development of strong nation states with powerful, centrally administered national armies and state-controlled military markets. Only in recent years have these ingrained and teleological assumptions come under revision. The re-emergence of military contractors in the Post-Cold War era and a wider trend towards privatization and specialization of operations has raised interest and awareness towards past practices. As demonstrated by recent studies, outsourcing could be an efficient means of resource mobilization and interest aggregation, with mutual benefits for both the contractor state and the entrepreneurial suppliers. Neither did military entrepreneurship disappear with the advent of nation states, but continued in varying forms throughout the early modern period.

In spite of growing interest towards the early modern business of war, the research field remains dispersed. The aim of this two-day workshop in Helsinki is to bring together these scattered groups doing research on the military markets of Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea region, and provide a forum to present the latest research outputs in the field. Moving forward, we aim to explore opportunities for continued cooperation and future research projects around this theme. It is our hope that the individual papers presented at the workshop can be worked towards an open-access anthology presenting the first transnational, long run study of the business of war in the Baltic Sea region.

Keynote speaker: **Steve Murdoch** (Swedish Defence University)

We invite proposals for papers of 20 minutes. Papers may be, though are not restricted to, the following themes:

- Forms and definitions of military entrepreneurship
- The Baltic Sea military market and regional variations
- Long-term developments in the business of war
- Transnational fiscal-military networks
- "Foreign" and "domestic" military entrepreneurship - questioning national narratives
- The business of war, state formation and foreign relations
- The political significance and societal implications of military entrepreneurship

Please send abstracts of up to 500 words with a brief biographical note to [jaakko.bjorklund@helsinki.fi](mailto:jaakko.bjorklund@helsinki.fi) by **Friday 26 May 2023**. Please indicate if you are interested in developing your paper into a chapter in a collective anthology. The acceptance of papers will be notified by **Monday 12 June 2023**.

Contact and more information:

Assoc. Prof. Anu Lahtinen  
[anu.z.lahtinen@helsinki.fi](mailto:anu.z.lahtinen@helsinki.fi)

Sofia Gustafsson  
[sofia.gustafsson@helsinki.fi](mailto:sofia.gustafsson@helsinki.fi)

Jaakko Björklund  
[jaakko.bjorklund@helsinki.fi](mailto:jaakko.bjorklund@helsinki.fi)

Sebastian Schiavone  
[sebastian.schiavone@uef.fi](mailto:sebastian.schiavone@uef.fi)