"Savage War" as "People's War": Nineteenth-Century African Wars, European Perceptions, and the Future of Warfare*

Dieter Langewiesche
Universität Tübingen

In 1844 Carl von Decker, a Prussian major general, opined that in Africa, "warfare according to the ordinary European sense is not possible." Commenting on the Franco-Moroccan War, he noted, "All strategic combinations have . . . a different meaning in Africa than in Europe. The fighting forces, as well as all elements belonging to warfare in general, are constituted under different configurations, and thus the whole war will have to take on a different form, just as it bears a different colour." The current "art of war in its theories" offered no guidance; "the finest techniques of our newest war theorists lose their magic power there." Nor was the cumulative memory of European wars of any help. Officers would be faced with the task of "inventing a new way of waging war."[1] Decker was one of many military men of the nineteenth century to seriously ponder the peculiarities of colonial warfare with the goal of preparing European officers for a type of war most were unfamiliar with. Scholars today see the doctrine of counterinsurgency as emerging from these nineteenth-century efforts on the part of European military thinkers to come to terms with what was so different about colonial warfare.[2]

Using contemporary sources, this article first looks at how British, French, and German officers assessed the specifics of nineteenth-century colonial warfare and how they distinguished it from wars in Europe. Part 2 explores, on the basis of war reports from the nineteenth century and secondary literature, the significance of specifically African war traditions from precolonial times and how these came into play when, in the second half of the century, within a few decades

[1] C. v. Decker, *Algerien und die dortige Kriegführung. Nach offiziellen und anderen authentischen Quellen, und den auf dem Kriegsschauplatz selbst gesammelten Nachrichten bearbeitet*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1844), 2:160–61, 105, 162–63.

[2] For a focus on the French discussion, see Thomas Rid, "The Nineteenth Century Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 5 (2010): 727–58.

the European colonial powers divided the continent among themselves with enormous brutality in their "scramble for Africa." In their mental baggage Europeans brought ideas about war as having to "take a different form in Africa," to quote once again the Prussian observer of the Franco-Moroccan War. What did this imply for their own style of warfare?

Part 3 intervenes in the politically charged debate about how the European experience of nineteenth-century colonial warfare shaped war, and genocide, in twentieth-century Europe. The wars in nineteenth-century Africa, both precolonial and colonial, were not "contained" (*gehegt*) wars, to use Carl Schmitt's term.[3] Following 1815, in most of Europe the containment of warfare—that is, the separation of combatants and the civilian population—worked for a hundred years. After that, no more. Why? Does the experience of colonial warfare offer an explanation? This article will test an explanation that hinges on an unconventional comparison of what Europeans called "savage war" in Africa and "people's war" (*Volkskrieg*) in Europe. "Small war" links both ways of war.[4] It has dominated the world since ancient times, and it remained dominant in the European colonial conquests. But "small war" contradicts the Eurocentric concept of national war as "people's war."

I. Colonial Wars in the Perception of European Officers

"One must not apply our usual standard to the way of warfare in Africa, one usually fights in Africa against an enemy who will stop short of nothing. If you don't think that every means is allowed against him, you are often enough at a disadvantage." When Major Hermann von Wissmann, governor of German East Africa, revered by contemporaries as "Germany's greatest African," wrote this in 1894, he wanted to prepare Europeans for life, and warfare, in Africa. In the "little African war" everything was different. One must not expect a decisive battle: war has to be fought against an enemy who withdraws from open battle. There is no other choice than to take away the enemy's livelihood. His country must be devastated, his villages burned, his property plundered or destroyed. This "African war" was to be waged "by allied natives" who "must spread out in the terrain in the largest possible numbers, plundering and foraging," while the regular

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[3] Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, 9th ed. (Berlin, 2015), 72. In the 1963 foreword, he deals with the concept of containment of war under international law (not in the translation: *The Concept of the Political* [Chicago, 1996]).

[4] " Small war" originally meant the struggle of irregular forces. The meaning shifted in the nineteenth century to wars that were not fought according to the rules of European state wars. See Roger Beaumont, "Small Wars: Definitions and Dimensions," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 541 (1995): 20–35.

troops would ideally only intervene when the African fighters "encountered a fortification or a stronger enemy they were not up to."[5]

Without expressly saying it, Wissmann developed a doctrine of colonial warfare with a wealth of specific advice on how to act. Some features he mentioned recurred whenever European officers wrote about wars in Africa (or in other colonial regions of the world): no decisive battle; the enemy attacks by surprise, retreats, and is merged with the population again; the whole country with its people is the battlefield; to win means to submit the population to "white rule." This is the kind of warfare the European military would have to adopt to be successful. Natives are indispensable, as helpers and as fighters.

Wissmann's doctrine was grounded in his own military experience in Africa. That was typical. Colonial war was learned in practice, and what was learned was passed on to less experienced soldiers as well as to one's national public. Military decision makers wanted to justify themselves for waging a brand of warfare that was considered illegitimate in Europe and criticized when practiced in the colonies.[6] Thus in his 1893 book about his time as a lieutenant in the German "Schutztruppe" (colonial army) in East Africa, Georg Maercker defended the systematic burning of villages and devastation of fields as a necessity in accordance with "African custom," countering criticism from those he derided as "gentlemen philanthropists" at home. According to Maercker, this was the only way to "force the enemy to make peace" in Africa.[7] In order to win over the domestic public, the military also used civilian reporters. Thus in 1891 a travel writer was "authorized" by Wissmann to participate in "that victorious campaign against the terrible Maasai, which became known as the Maasai-Kilimanjaro Expedition" and to publish a book about it.[8] In 1873/74, a "Special Correspondent" of the *Daily News* took part in the war against the Asante, which had caused a fierce debate in the British press. Today one might speak of "embedded journalists."[9]

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[5] Dr. [Hermann] von Wissmann, *Afrika. Schilderungen und Rathschläge zur Vorbereitung für den Aufenthalt und den Dienst in den Deutschen Schutzgebieten*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1903), 18, 11, 44, 33. He addresses "the European" in the book. He was also active in Africa on behalf of the Belgian king. Alexander Becker et al., *Hermann von Wissmann. Deutschlands größter Afrikaner*, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1909).

[6] See Benedikt Stuchtey, *Die europäische Expansion und ihre Feinde. Kolonialismuskritik vom 18. bis in das 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2010), 156 (India), 354–55 (South Africa).

[7] Georg Maercker, *Unsere Schutztruppe in Ostafrika* (Berlin, 1893), 201. He was promoted to major general in 1917 and commanded a *Freikorps* in 1918/19.

[8] Friedrich Kallenberg, *Auf dem Kriegspfad gegen die Massai* (Munich, 1892), iv.

[9] [John Frederick Maurice], *The Ashantee War: A Popular Narrative. By the "Daily News" Special Correspondent* (London, 1874). Lieutenant Maurice was private secretary of the commander-in-chief, Wolseley. Ian F. W. Beckett, "Manipulating the Modern Curse of Armies: Wolseley, the Press, and the Ashanti War, 1873–74," in *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850–1918*, ed. Stephen M. Miller (Leiden, 2009), 221–34.

Even more drastically than the German Maercker, Charles Braithwaite Wallis, who worked in India and West Africa as a British officer and high administrative official, sought to describe "savage warfare" in the colonies for the British public, since this form of warfare was so alien to them. The basic rule for survival in this part of the world was, he wrote, "to play the enemy's own game."[10] The depravity of the "African bush savage" did not shy away from any cruelty: "Black and white, old and young alike, were cut down and butchered in cold blood."[11] Only the British army was capable of "subjugating the savage and lawless races who were the original inhabitants of the soil." Yet "official text-books" were of little use in navigating these constant wars, although "Great Britain is never at peace, and some portion of our army . . . is ever somewhere struggling to uphold our flag and the supremacy of our empire."[12] To civilize the uncivilized by subjecting them to European domination with the same kind of violence that inhered in "savage war"—this was the idea with which the representative of the British Empire justified a colonial war that contradicted international law's rules of war by which the "civilized world" was, after all, bound.[13]

The containment of war, which the European powers were closer to than ever before in Europe in the nineteenth century, was considered impossible under the conditions of colonial warfare.[14] All colonial powers shared this belief. The French army, under its supreme commander in Algeria, Thomas Robert Bugeaud, expanded the *razzia*, an Arabic form of small war, into a successful colonial war of devastation.[15] Bugeaud had learned how to wage a small war in the service of

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[10] C[harles] Braithwaite Wallis, *West African Warfare* (London [1905]), 5–6; based on his more detailed book, *The Advance of Our West African Empire* (London, 1903; repr. 2012).

[11] Wallis, *Advance of Our West African Empire*, 3.

[12] Wallis, *West African Warfare*, 2.

[13] Stephen C. Neff, *War and the Law of Nations* (Cambridge, 2008); for a detailed survey of rules and practice, see Alexander Gillespie, *A History of the Laws of War*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 2011).

[14] Against the widespread idea that the war in Europe from the French Revolution up to the world wars of the twentieth century had been without containment, see D. Langewiesche, *Der gewaltsame Lehrer. Europas Kriege in der Neuzeit* (Munich, 2019), passim.

[15] Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Oxford, 1986); Marie-Cecile Thoral, "French Colonial Counter-Insurgency: General Bugeaud and the Conquest of Algeria, 1840–47," *British Journal for Military History* 1, no. 2 (2015): 8–27; Martin Rink, "Kleiner Krieg, Guerilla, Razzia. Die Kriege des französischen 'Imperiums' 1808 bis 1848," in *Imperialkriege von 1500 bis heute*, ed. Tanja Bührer et al. (Paderborn, 2001), 425–42; on *razzia*, a derivation from the Arabic *ghazia*, see Thomas Rid, "Razzia: A Turning Point in Modern Strategy," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21 (2009): 617–35. On the transformation of the small war, see Martin Rink, "The Partisan's Metamorphosis: From Freelance Military Entrepreneur to German Freedom Fighter, 1740–1813," *War in History* 17 (2020): 6–36.

Napoleon in Spain. In Algeria he became a master of this form of war. One of his officers defined its essence in his memoirs: "All we have to do [with our enemies] is to take away the grain that feeds them, the herd that clothes them. Hence the war against the warehouses, the war against the cattle, la razzia."[16] Moreover, atrocities against the population were a staple of this kind of warfare. The people, not just combatants, was considered an enemy. "In European wars the enemy army is the object to be fought, in colonial wars one is at war with the whole people, so warfare is inevitably more cruel," wrote the German *Militär-Wochenblatt* in 1909, based on observations from the French war in Morocco.[17]

Even though colonial war did not play a role in the two great European nineteenth-century theories of war (those of Clausewitz and Jomini[18]), it played a major role in public discussions due to the many writings of military men on their colonial experiences, be it in books or articles in specialist journals.[19] Typically, these writings discuss the specificity of colonial wars as compared to European state wars and thus ultimately provide the elements for a systematic analysis of colonial wars—from a European perspective.

Commands telling the troops how to behave in foreign territory also show how the peculiarities of colonial war were assessed and tactically implemented by the officers. Consider, for example, the major general's order to all soldiers of the British Army and Navy who took part in the war against the Asante in 1873/74.[20] The order began with rules of conduct to avoid tropical diseases. The area of the Gold Coast was feared as the "white man's grave."[21] But even here one

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[16] Louis Charles Pierre de Castellane, *Souvenirs de la vie militaire en Afrique* (Paris, 1852; repr. 2002), 229. On *razzia* as a main form of war in the Tukulor states, see Richard L. Roberts, "Production and Reproduction of Warrior States: Segu Bambara and Segu Tokolor, c. 1712–1890," in *African Military History*, ed. John Lamphear (Aldershot, 2007), 349–79, 375–77.

[17] Quoted from Harald Potempa, *Der Raum und seine tatsächliche Beherrschung als zentrales Problem von Imperialkriegen*, in Bührer et al., *Imperialkriege von 1500 bis heute*, 443–62, 459.

[18] Antoine-Henri de Jomini, *Précis de l'Art de la Guerre* (Paris, 1837); Carl von Clausewitz, "Vom Kriege (1832/34)," newly edited in *Kriegstheorie und Kriegsgeschichte*, ed. Reinhard Stumpf (Frankfurt, 1993), 9–423, and von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ, 1984).

[19] Potempa, *Der Raum und seine tatsächliche Beherrschung*; Stig Förster, ed., *An der Schwelle zum Totalen Krieg. Die militärische Debatte über den Krieg der Zukunft 1919–1939* (Paderborn, 2002).

[20] Henry Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War: A Narrative Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley* (London, 1874), 1:361–67 (order 20.12.1873); Charles Rathbone Low, *A Memoir of Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley*, vol. 2 (London, 1878), app. C ("Notes on Bush Fighting"). Also Maurice, *Ashantee War*, 205–12.

[21] On the death rates in colonial wars and in Europe, see Daniel R. Headrick, *Power over Peoples: Technology, Environments, and Western Imperialism, 1400 to the Present*

should learn from the enemy: the soldiers were to copy the way the Asante made their sleeping camp. Rules for the mode of fighting followed. Bush fighting was considered the most difficult form of colonial warfare, along with fighting in the mountains. Specifics were explained in detail over several pages and instructions for the British approach to fighting were derived from them. The order also explained how the Asante fight, including their battle cries, battle songs, and drums.[22] Looting and destroying conquered villages without command was strictly forbidden. The stress was on "without command"—this is key. Time and again we read: we "cleared" the village.[23] The British public knew what this phrase meant from many reports. One of them was by the military painter Charles Edwin Fripp. In 1879, during the war against the Zulus, he had observed and illustrated what "to clear it out" meant: "Columns of black smoke rose from burning kraals; long black lines preceded by swarms of dots slowly wound their way across the sunlit landscape, and showed us that the country was being thoroughly scoured by the enemy."[24]

In the war against the Asante, the British commander-in-chief ordered the destruction of the capital, including its royal palace and places of worship. Just before that, British officers who were working as "prize agents" and advised by local chiefs looted everything they considered valuable that the Asante had not taken with them.[25] To a limited extent officers and soldiers were also allowed to loot for their own profit. For regular and auxiliary troops, looting was a normal part of colonial warfare. The precolonial wars had lived on the loot anyway; the booty was the warriors' pay. The articles for the *Daily News* also reported on this, without criticism, as something that went without saying.[26] Colonial wars were always wars of enrichment for European soldiers and for their non-European auxiliary troops.[27] Here too, European officers liked to refer to rules operative

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(Princeton, NJ, 2010). On the Gold Coast, about two-thirds of British soldiers died in the first year in the 1820s. This was the highest figure recorded for the colonial wars in the nineteenth century (ibid., 147).

[22] On the rarely explored meaning of sounds in colonial wars, to which European battle reports repeatedly refer, see Trutz von Trotha and Christine Hardung, "Der Krieg hat viele Stimmen. Materiale Dimensionen von Kommunikation in Krieg und Razzia der Nama/ Oorlam im südwestlichen Namibia im 19. Jahrhundert," *Anthropos* 109 (2014): 1–20.

[23] For an evaluation of all war reports, see Edward M. Spiers, *The Victorian Soldier in Africa* (Manchester, 2004), chap. 1.

[24] Charles E. Fripp, "Reminiscences of the Zulu War, 1879," *Pall Mall Magazine* 20 (1900): 547–62, 554 (with drawings by him).

[25] Brackenbury, *Ashanti War*, 2:232–44.

[26] Maurice, *Ashantee War*, 374–77.

[27] On China and all warring parties, see Susanne Kuss, *German Colonial War and the Context of Military Violence* (Cambridge, MA, 2017). For British soldiers, their share in loot was the main source of income; see Saul David, *Victoria's Wars* (London, 2007), 25; Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (New York, 1972), 60; Keith

in local African wars. Indeed, many small wars in precolonial Africa up to the nineteenth century had primarily been raids—that is, wars of robbery (see part 2 below).

The expert reports and mission orders leave no doubt: European officers were aware that colonial war was different from war in Europe in this time. Those who had firsthand experience of colonial warfare in Africa spoke of "African war," but those who were deployed on other continents knew that these forms of warfare were not specifically African because all colonial wars were fought without containment.[28] They did not develop a theory of colonial war, however. This was only achieved by the British officer Charles Edward Callwell at the end of the nineteenth century. This "Clausewitz of colonial warfare"—who would more aptly be designated the Jomini of colonial warfare since, like Jomini, Callwell was interested in operational details—produced a global analysis of colonial wars up to about 1900 in his book *Small Wars*.[29]

The logic of this type of warfare was determined not by the conqueror, but by the enemies and the space in which they lived. Whoever wants colonies, whoever wants to build an empire, must be prepared to accept these military conditions. "Imperialism *was* war," as Isabel Hull writes.[30] But a special kind of war: "savage war." No savage war, no colonial empire. Callwell transposes this widely accepted insight into operational practice in order to offer European officers assistance in a kind of war for which they were not trained. Officers in imperial wars were among those men on the spot who were important for the development of colonial regimes everywhere. They learned on the spot. Callwell taught military learning. The French and US military also accepted this help and used his work as a textbook for a long time.

When Callwell characterized enemies, he used the language of a sense of superiority that was common at the time. They were "half-civilized races or wholly savage tribes." But cultural superiority does not mean being superior in fighting.

Smith, *Dead Was Everything: Studies in the Anglo-Zulu War* (London, 2014), position 793 Ebook. On German auxiliary troops, see Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, OH, 2014), chap. 3.

[28] Detailed insights into these forms of war are provided by such studies as Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*; Ian Hernon, *Britain's Forgotten Wars: Colonial Campaigns of the 19th Century* (Stroud, 2003); in a global perspective and a systematic analysis of "imperial wars," see Dierk Walter, *Organisierte Gewalt in der europäischen Expansion. Gestalt und Logik des Imperialkrieges* (Hamburg, 2014).

[29] Douglas Porch in the preface to the reprint (Lincoln, NE, 1996) of the third edition of C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London, 1906) (1st ed. 1896; 2nd ed. 1899, repr. 1904). See Daniel Whittingham, *Charles E. Callwell and the British Way in Warfare* (Cambridge, 2020).

[30] Isabell V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (New York, 2005), 332.

The locals were better at coping with their environment and the living conditions there. European troops must therefore learn from them. Callwell sees in Turkmen a "formidable fighting nomad race" in the war against Russian troops, and he pays tribute to the disciplined and independently organized armies of the Zulus. Those who do not pay attention to the highly diverse fighting styles and lifestyles of the enemies, who are foreign to their culture, must expect heavy defeats despite superior weapons. For that reason Callwell offers information and analyses from many regions, yet insists that every officer familiarize himself with his own area of operations and its people. Above all, it is important to find out where the enemy might be hit worst, with maximum impact. Callwell's basic rule was the same as that of the colonial officers mentioned above: plundering or destroying the enemy's livestock and food supplies, destroying fields and homes, looting property of all kinds, frightening the population as a whole, making them unable to fight or support their warriors. This war of devastation is necessary because, with rare exceptions, there is no "European battlefield" that can take on the role of "supreme arbiter" in the struggle between states.[31] Rather, this struggle concerns an enemy who, realistically assessing its own military capabilities, is unwilling to engage in open battle.

Callwell's advice regarding the destruction of the enemy's livelihood is not aimed at its physical annihilation. At stake was the most efficient form of combat in a war that was being fought according to different rules than those that had prevailed in the nineteenth century in the wars between European states. It is the importance of learning from "wild uncivilized races" anywhere in the world where colonial wars are fought that Callwell wants to teach: "The Arabs of Algeria, the Kirghisz and Turkomans of the steppes, and the Red Indians—all warriors enjoying in virtue of their horses or camels great mobility—displayed remarkable prowess in their forays. These wild uncivilized races may indeed be said to have taught the regular troops opposed to them how such operations are best conducted."[32]

In this context, learning meant adapting to local ways of fighting. Learning also meant not expecting surrender. Half a victory signified no victory at all because the enemy was usually a fluid entity, not a regular army mobilized, deployed, and withdrawn by the political decision-making center. Even in states with a king at their head, one never knows which group will next take up arms. The immediate success of a struggle is measured by how much of the enemy's livelihood has been captured or destroyed. It was this kind of destruction, and only this, in which military "pacification" might be grounded, and only such "pacification" made colonial rule possible.

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[31] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 1899, all quotes 7, 9, 20–21, 212–13, 127.
[32] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 212.

Callwell and many officers who in the nineteenth century sought to distill the characteristics of colonial warfare from their own professional practice already recognized what is central to today's counterinsurgency doctrine: military victory must be followed by civil construction. But if there is indeed a genealogical line extending from the past to today, it is not a straight one.[33] Callwell and his colleagues were concerned with learning for themselves and passing on to others how wars for colonial hegemony could be waged as effectively as possible. And even after a war, civil administration, often headed by the officer who had previously led the war, usually aimed to secure rule through subjugation. The idea that soldiers should see themselves as "a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse, a boy scout" and that they should all act as "nation builders as well as warriors," as required by the US Army's 2006 Field Manual, would have been completely alien to Callwell and his fellow officers.[34]

The colonial officers of the nineteenth century were convinced that they represented a culturally superior "white race" and that they were fighting for legitimate claims to rule on the part of their nation-state or empire. Just how intertwined racism and recognition of the fighting power of others remained at the beginning of the twentieth century is manifest in British Field Marshal Garnet Wolseley's 1904 memoirs. Reflecting on his time as commander-in-chief of the British troops in the Asante War of 1873/74, he continued to be impressed by the fighting spirit of the enemy: "a proud nation of brave and daring soldiers." He combined this appreciation with the conviction: "Cruelty is ingrained in the African negro's disposition." Addressing his own society, he added: "My dear Abolitionist, do please understand that this horrible depravity is not the result of what was lately known as slavery in America, and before 1833 in our colonies also. It is as natural to the curly-headed man as the colour of his skin."[35] He was convinced that Britain's "little wars" in the nineteenth century not only created the empire and opened new economic markets but also broadened "the circle of civilisation in all regions of the earth."[36]

[33] Rid, "Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine"; Alan Cromartie, "Field Manual 3-24 and the Heritage of Counterinsurgency Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 41, no. 1 (2012): 91–111.

[34] Field Manual 3-24. MCWP 3-33.5: *Counterinsurgency. Dec. 2006*. It is considered a turning point in US war policy.

[35] Field-Marshal Viscount [Garnet] Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life* (New York, 1904), 2:369, 290–91.

[36] "War and Civilisation. By the Commander-in-Chief. Opening address delivered before the Philosophical Institution, Edinburgh, 3.12.1896," *United Service Magazine* 820 (1897): 559–78, 564.

II. Types of War in Nineteenth-Century Africa

Historically, power and war are inextricably linked. This was the case everywhere, including precolonial Africa.[37] The precolonial period ended in the last third of the nineteenth century. In 1876 more than 90 percent of the African continent was still ruled by Africans, but in 1914 only a small remainder.[38] This division of the continent among European colonial powers happened through constant wars. These wars in turn ended a process of independent African state formation, which itself had depended on war.[39] In these African wars a change in warfare took place, which has been called revolutionary. Richard Reid, a leading expert in African military history, recently wrote that Africa's nineteenth-century military revolution laid the foundation for political modernity, just as the European military revolution two centuries before that had created the conditions for the modern state and for the emergence of nations.[40]

This is a different picture from that painted by European colonial officers. They do, however, converge in one central point: one feature of the African way of warfare even in precolonial times was the attack on the enemy's livelihood. Reid, Lamphear, and other experts call this a form of total war.[41] It was not the only form of precolonial war, but it was a common one. The boundaries between this

[37] Richard Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa: The Patterns and Meanings of State-Level Conflict in the 19th Century* (London, 2007), and Reid, *Warfare in African History* (Cambridge, 2012); Timothy J. Stapleton, *A Military History of Africa*, vols. 1–2 (Santa Barbara, CA, 2013); John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500–1800* (London, 1999); Claude E. Welch Jr., "Continuity and Discontinuity in African Military Organisation," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1975): 229–48. For an excellent case study, see Jan Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom* (Madison, WI, 2004).
[38] Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830–1914* (Bloomington, IN, 1998), 28; Richard J. Reid, *A History of Modern Africa 1800 to the Present* (Oxford, 2009), 134.
[39] About the manifold forms of African statehood in the nineteenth century and the terminology, see Christoph Marx, *Geschichte Afrikas von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 2004), 70–74; for a case study of concepts of statehood in the later nineteenth century, see Richard Reid, *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda* (Oxford, 2002), esp. 131–32.
[40] Richard Reid, "Remembering and Forgetting Mirambo: Histories of War in Modern Africa," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 30, nos. 4–5 (2019): 1040–69, 1043.
[41] Reid, *Warfare in African History*, 137, and Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa*, 65, 67; John Lamphear, "Sub-Saharan African Warfare," in *War in the Modern World since 1815*, ed. Jeremy Black (London, 2003), 169–91, 172; Patrick Royer, "La guerre colonial du Bani-Volta, 1915–16," *Autrepart* 26, no. 2 (2003): 35–51, 41; Elizabeth A. Eldredge, *The Creation of the Zulu Kingdom, 1815–1828* (Cambridge, 2014), 79 (but as an exception). According to one study, the expanding, belligerent Xhosa got to know "total war" as the destruction of the basis of life and expulsion only through the British: J. B. Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of Their Independence*

form of war and the predominant type of war throughout precolonial Africa, "raiding, fighting, and population displacement," were fluid.[42]

Whether total war is the apposite term need not be discussed here. Scholars of African history who use it attach importance to the fact that this type of war was not an exclusively colonial phenomenon but exhibits traditional characteristics of African warfare. They describe these characteristics in the same way as nineteenth-century European colonial officers did: "the burning of land, the destruction of stores, the killing or stealing of livestock" as an attack on "the enemy's very economic and environmental foundations."[43] Taking away the enemy's economic and environmental foundations, including women and children, is—despite the diversity of traditional African warfare—a major factor, according to research that seeks to detach itself from the European-colonial perspective. The duty to contain war by separating combatants and civilians, as developed by European international law, was generally alien to precolonial warfare, and not only in Africa.[44] The colonial officers used this to legitimize why they, too, waged uncontained wars outside Europe.

The transformation of war in nineteenth-century Africa—Africa's military revolution—had many causes, both internal and external.[45] They remain outside the confines of this discussion; here we are concerned with the forms of war.

(Berkeley, CA, 1982), 66; but the Mfecane wars were about livelihoods, and the San regarded the Xhosa as animals rather than humans and therefore killed them (138).

[42] John Wright, "Turbulent Times: Political Transformations in the North and East, 1760–1830s," in *The Cambridge History of South Africa* (Cambridge, 2010 online), 1:211–55, 235. On North Africa, see Roberts, "Production and Reproduction of Warrior States."

[43] Reid, *Warfare in African History*, 137; see Michel Izard, "Histoire Militaire et Anthropologie Politique: À propos de la conquête du basin des Volta," in *Histoire militaire et sciences humaines*, ed. Laurent Henniger (Paris, 1999), 34–59, 45; Lamphear, "Sub-Saharan African Warfare," esp. 17. He too emphasizes the diversity of warfare in Africa. Among key volumes of essays on pre- and colonial warfare are: Bethwell A. Ogot, ed., *War and Society in Africa* (London, 1972); Lamphear, *African Military History*. In his study of the localized Turkana groups (Kenya), he distinguishes their constant raids from the European idea of total war; John Lamphear, *The Scattering Time: Turkana Responses to Colonial Rule* (Oxford, 1992), 22–23. How the African tradition of war survived in Latin American conflicts is analyzed by Manuel Barcia, "'To Kill All Whites': The Ethics of African Warfare in Bahia and Cuba, 1807–1844," *Journal of African Military History* 1 (2017): 72–92.

[44] On the current research situation, see Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford, 2006), chap. 1.6. Early on, the basic forms of war since their historical beginnings were worked out by a founder of sociology in the Netherlands whose studies are almost forgotten today: Sebald Rudolf Steinmetz, *Der Krieg als soziologisches Problem* (Amsterdam, 1899), *Die Philosophie des Krieges* (Leipzig, 1907), and *Soziologie des Krieges* (Leipzig, 1929; repr. Marburg, 2014).

[45] For a concise overview, see Reid, *Warfare in African History*, chap. 5.

Suffice it to say that these causes were as diverse as the economic and political regimes. But some similarities in development can be discerned. First, the number and intensity of wars increased. This also applies to groups that had been put under pressure by expansive neighbors only since the middle of the century and therefore had only recently created more solid forms of military organization. Previously, ad hoc combat groups, mostly of young men, had formed there. Afterward they rejoined their own groups. Men who periodically served as warriors were called "citizen soldiers."[46] They made appearances as a "raiding citizen army," but the boundaries with professional armies were quite fluid.[47]

This points to a second general trend: military organization solidified up to full-fledged standing armies of professional soldiers, but often with fighters who were in a temporary professional phase in their lives. Additional fighters complemented this core army in wartime; they were drawn either from the local population, including the enslaved population, or from allies, or from those who had been conquered or from mercenaries.[48] But the *levée en masse* remained the basis. Every man physically capable of fighting was obliged to participate when the call came.[49] The consolidating process of armies, combined with varying degrees of professionalization, was the driving force and at the same time the consequence of the formation of states. Everywhere state-building was politically and economically dependent on war. To be sure, these developments played out in very different ways. But they were alike in one respect: the formation of states and empires, coupled with the reorganization of the military, remained unfinished because these states could not assert themselves against the military enforcement of colonial states during the European "scramble for Africa." The next section will briefly examine these independent African state-building processes and their outcomes as colonial peripheries of European metropoles by way of a few examples, each with a view to military organization and the nature of warfare.

[46] Lamphear, *Scattering Time*, 218. See John Lamphear, *The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda* (Oxford, 1976), chap. 7.

[47] Roberts, "Production and Reproduction of Warrior States," 355. From the 1820s "aristocratic" cavalries began to dominate in the savannah states, ultimately moving along a trajectory toward standing armies.

[48] How difficult it is to distinguish in a concrete case between standing army, royal permanent force combined with general mobilization in war, and mobilized army in permanent use is shown for the Kingdom of Buganda by Reid, *Pre-Colonial Buganda*. The most comprehensive work on the military history of Africa (Stapleton, *Military History*, vols. 1–2) lists numerous states with a professional army core to which mobilizations in the event of war were added. See G. N. Uzoigwe, "The Warrior and the State in Pre-colonial Africa," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 12, 1–4 (1977): 20–47 (also on armament in several African states).

[49] The same applied to the Yoruba states; see "Warfare," in *Encyclopedia of the Yoruba*, ed. Toyin Falola and Akintunde Akinyemi (Bloomington, IN, 2016), 340–41.

The War of Professional Armies in State-Building in East Africa

Professional armies arose in precolonial Africa in the nineteenth century in a variety of areas—in the West African kingdoms of Dahomey and the Asante; in the East African states in the area of the great lakes of the White Nile, Bunyoro, Buganda, Burundi, Rwanda, and the new Nyamwezi rule under Mirambo; and in the south in the Zulu kingdom and with another military organization, the kingdom of Mpondo. The following pages will focus on three East African states, highlighting the diversity of historical trajectories even in a single region. These three states were in competition with each other. They were concerned with territorial expansion, with the lucrative control of ever-changing trade routes, and last but not least with the slave trade.[50]

In the old kingdom of Bunyoro, the new king, Kabalega, weakened by a bloody succession struggle, began vigorous reforms in 1869. The establishment of a central administration began, and regular taxes were introduced. The basis for these reforms was the new army under the king's command (*barusura*). He appointed the commanders of the twelve regiments that made up the standing army, which was responsible for internal security, external defense, and expansion. The regiments were spread over the country; their commanders stood as regional chiefs above the local ones, and their soldiers were given land on which they lived. The commanders were also allowed to maintain private armies (*bwesengeze*). These were smaller than the royal army and had to support the latter in times of war. The traditional *levée en masse* remained, though it was no longer carried out by the chiefs but instead by the royal army. According to British estimates in 1893, which are probably too high, it included about 8,000 soldiers with firearms and 20,000 with spears.

This military reform stabilized the kingdom, advanced state-building, made the subjugation of smaller rulers possible, and stopped the earlier loss of territory to the expanding state of Buganda. In order to assert itself, Buganda copied elements of the military system of its competitor and introduced a military innovation:

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[50] On the following, see Reid, *Warfare in African History*; Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial East Africa*; and Richard Reid, "Mutesa and Mirambo: Thoughts on East African Warfare and Diplomacy in the Nineteenth Ccentury," *International Journal of African History* 31, no. 1 (1998): 73–89; Shane Doyle, *Crisis and Decline in Bunyoro: Population and Environment in Western Uganda, 1860–1955* (London, 2006), 50–60 (the following figures); Stapleton, *Military History*, vol. 1, chap. 3; on the types of warfare, see Chris Peers, *The African Wars: Warriors and Soldiers in the Colonial Campaigns* (Barnsley, 2010), chap. 4; H. Moyse-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles: A Study in the Military History of East and Central Africa, 1890–1945* (Aldershot, 1956), 57–64. On the final phase of the independent kingdoms and British "ground level imperialism," see D. A. Low, *Fabrication of Empire: The British and Ugandan Kingdom, 1890–1902* (Cambridge, 2009).

a fleet of large canoes on Lake Victoria.[51] These could be used to carry out surprise attacks on coastal towns, control trade routes, and raid trading caravans. They proved unsuitable, however, against the weapons of European invaders who were able to sink them.

State formation since the 1860s, based on military reforms, took place in decades of constant fighting. Most of this fighting did not consist of open battles; rather, these were wars of robbery to weaken the enemy, to loot and to extort regular tribute payments from the harassed or dependent territories. The wars of state-building in Bunyoro and Buganda did not differ from the raids characterized above and in the passage below about Mirambo's state-building wars. They were about loot—people, livestock, food—and, of course, about predominance. Both kings made enemies in their own states and among the neighbors they pressured, and civil wars broke out in Buganda. These consequences of the state-building processes could no longer be dealt with in the region itself, either militarily or via negotiations. The British Army, a new player in the region, had appeared in the early 1890s. It was able to take advantage of the local rivalries, with Bugandan troops fighting alongside those of Britain. Against this new enemy the guerrilla tactics of the Bunyoro armies helped only for a short time, especially since the supply of ammunition, which had to be imported, was increasingly cut off. But in the end it was the forms of combat, which the European colonial officers described as African, that proved decisive. Scorched-earth tactics worked. Many people in Bunyoro died of hunger and disease; population loss was high and long lasting.[52] But the war of resistance against the British invading troops and their allies in the region ended only when the king was seriously wounded in battle, captured, and exiled by the British colonial administration. Even after that there were periodic skirmishes.

The British victors ended autochthonous state formation in the kingdoms, which had previously been rivals for supremacy in the region and now came under a common protectorate—and engaged in considerable redrawing of territorial boundaries and redistributing of power between the elites of these states. The precolonial structures survived in part, but not their new military basis, which had been in place since the 1860s. State-building continued, now under British sovereignty.[53] Among the precolonial traditions that survived was the

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[51] For details, see Reid, *Pre-Colonial Buganda*, 227–50. The largest boats had been manned by 60 to 100 warriors, excluding the crew, and 50–100 formed a squadron under a commander.

[52] On the complex weighting of the consequences of war, see Bouda Etemad, *Possessing the World: Taking the Measurements of Colonisation from the 18th to the 20th Century* (New York, 2007), 85–96.

[53] On this "conquest without annexation," see William Fitzsimons, "Sizing Up the 'Small Wars' of African Empire," *Journal of African Military History* 2 (2018): 63–78.

institution of monarchy, but not the military. Nevertheless, the precolonial military reforms did not simply break off, for they had prepared for a professionalization that African soldiers in the British army and other colonial armies also had to go through.[54] Thus the "scramble for Africa" of the European invaders continued a reform process that African rulers had set in motion—in a modified form, but still a continuation. This also applies to the military sector. Even the raids survived in the colonial protectorate when "punitive expeditions" were carried out against rebel groups and the British troops with their local helpers took the livestock of the "punished." One example is the result of the frontier war against the Turkana in 1915: over 400 Turkana were killed, and 19,000 cattle, 8,000 camels, 7,000 donkeys, and 123,000 head of small stock were confiscated. Many were distributed to the local helpers.[55] The colonial small war was always also treated as a "punitive raid."

It would be wrong to blame the colonial powers exclusively for the end of independent state formations and the military reforms on which they were based. Let us take a brief look at an East African warlord, Mirambo, who became the founder of a state but was unable to institutionalize his war creation, which disintegrated shortly after his own death in 1884. Contemporaries called Mirambo "the African Bonaparte" or "the black Bonaparte."[56] These epithets described, on the one hand, his type of mobile warfare with fast marches and surprise attacks, and on the other his attempt to establish an empire consisting of dependent rulers of various kinds. This mobile structure was one of the states that emerged from the upheavals (*mfecane*) that culminated in South Africa in the founding of the expansive Zulu state and triggered collective migration movements that reached as far as the territory of present-day Tanzania. Mirambo's aim seems to have been to combine the many small dominions into a few large states (one of which was to be his) in order to assert himself first against the most important intra-African competitors—Arab traders, who dominated the trade routes with well-armed caravans, and the Zanzibar Sultanates, who were also powerful traders—and then against the European invaders.

[54] See Moyse-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*. On the proportion of indigenous soldiers in the colonial armies before the First World War (an overall average of about 70 percent), see Etemad, *Possessing the World*, 46–51.

[55] Lamphear, *Scattering Time*, 138. This was common; see Moyse-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*, chap. 9.

[56] Henry M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures, and Discoveries in Central Africa, including four months residence with Dr. Livingstone* (London, [1873]), 224, 227, 435. The warrior state founder, Shaka, was also called the "African Napoleon"; Adrian Greaves and Xolani Mkhize, *The Zulu at War: The History, Rise, and Fall of the Tribe That Washed Its Spears* (New York, 2014), 22. About Mirambo, see n. 50 above, and N. R. Bennett, *Mirambo of Tanzania, 1840?–1884* (New York, 1971); J. B. Kabeya, *King Mirambo*, foreword by Terence Ranger (Kampala, 1976); Ronald J. Harvey, "Mirambo," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 10 (1950): 10–28.

Mirambo raised a relatively small army, estimated at about 7,000 men and consisting mostly of so-called Ruga-Ruga. These were young men of different origins who hired themselves out as mercenary warriors in many states as well as in caravans. With this squad, armed with rifles and stabbing weapons, Mirambo raided settlements, killed chiefs, and appointed new ones who vowed loyalty to him. Young men from the raided villages were forcibly recruited into the army. Because of these forced conscriptions the epithet "the African Bonaparte" might actually be an apt one. In this way Mirambo created a network of loyalty and subordination, which, to varying degrees, attached a kind of empire to his emerging state made up of associations between people. This structure of power was tailored to the charismatic military leader. It emerged from a multitude of wars of annexation. His army lived from them. Every war was a war of prey. Without war there would be no army. The prey consisted mostly of cattle, but also of women and children. Fighting with armed Arab traders secured trade levies.[57]

Mirambo perfected the raid as a type of war of sudden attack and robbery. In doing so, he developed techniques of overcoming fortifications, which had been greatly expanded during this period of war. These fortifications also caused considerable problems for the colonial armies—Callwell discusses this in detail in his work—and they started copying them when setting up bases. The British Army, however, with its global experience of war, could also fall back on other types of fortifications. The Naval Brigade, for example, built an "admirable fort" of the New Zealand type during the Asante war of 1873/74.[58]

Mirambo varied his tactics in the wars he waged. He used guerrilla tactics against militarily strong opponents and formed alliances with them. The main characteristic of African wars in the eyes of European colonial officers—the refusal to engage in decisive battles—was also typical of his brand of warfare, and he practiced devastation warfare. However, devastation was not his main objective, as Mirambo wanted to bring conquered territories and their people under his rule. He most successfully waged "fluid war," a tactically varied war, ranging from "African *blitzkrieg*" to siege war, to guerrilla war, and to war of devastation.[59] What was not part of his repertoire was exposing his small army to open battle.

Avoiding a decisive battle was by no means a general characteristic of all African wars, however; above all it was a rational calculation when faced with strong or superior enemies. That is why European colonial officers in their reports

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[57] For detail primarily based on oral sources, see Kabeya, *King Mirambo*.

[58] Brackenbury, *Ashanti War*, 2:75. For the new form of fortification with trenches, which the Maori probably pioneered, see James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (London, 1988), 294.

[59] Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Africa*, 66, 64.

agreed that, with a few spectacular exceptions, colonial war did not lead to decisive battles. And yet, militarily strong states, such as the Sokoto Caliphates,[60] the Kingdom of Xhosa,[61] or the Zulu military state, did try to force a quick decision in battles against their neighbors and initially also against European troops. It was their experience of the superiority of European troops to which they responded with the military tactics of the weak. To be sure, this could not be sustained against an aggressor whose aim was to smash the enemy's state and who was therefore unwilling to negotiate a peace.

The Zulu armies faced the British enemy several times, and they won. The outcome of their defensive wars was decided in a battle in July 1879 near Ulundi, the headquarters of the Zulu king. There, the king's well-trained army, which had proved its worth in many wars, was no longer able to compete with the superior weapons of the British, especially machine guns and artillery, as well as logistics. Zulu warriors who could not flee were killed; prisoners were not taken.[62]

Unlike the Zulus, the Asante had escaped a great showdown in battle a few years earlier. But even they and their guerrilla methods were unable to stop the march of the invading—and, as always, several times enlarged by African soldiers and porters—British army. The superiority of the invaders was too great. It was based not only on modern weapons but also on the general staff planning of the invasion, including logistics. The offensive was scheduled in the most bearable season for Europeans, and routes were sought on which the risk of falling ill would be as low as possible. A medical department looked after the European soldiers, who regularly received quinine as a prophylactic measure; special forces built a deployment road through pathless terrain with 237 bridges; bases were built and telegraph lines laid, although the latter were not as fast as planned; the "Intelligence Department" procured information about the allies and the enemy; and militarily organized police forces with "police-runners" ensured fast communication between the units. Moreover, the British forces even engaged in man-to-man "bush fighting." The strong Asante army was no match for this aggressor. When their royal city was captured, plundered, and burned to the ground—after the British commander-in-chief Garnet Wolseley had demanded a payment of 50,00 ounces

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[60] For detail on the battles, see Joseph P. Smaldone, *Warefare in the Sokoto Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1977, repr. 2009). A comparative analysis of African forms of violence and war can be found in Toyin Falola, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria* (Bloomington, IN, 2009), 51.

[61] Peires, *House of Phalo*; Keith Smith, *The Wedding Feast War: The Final Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (Barnsley, 2012); Timothy J. Stapleton, *Maqoma: The Legend of a Great Xhosa Warrior* (Kuilsriver, 2016). In the first frontier wars of the late eighteenth century and after 1800, Xhosa groups successfully faced the Boers in battle.

[62] For detail, see Greaves and Mkhize, *The Zulu at War*; John Laband, *The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation* (New York ,1997); Smith, *Dead Was Everything*.

of gold from the Asante king as a condition of peace—this was the decision Wolseley had been looking for.[63]

Even more than the Zulu and the Asante, the Xhosa adapted their tactics to those of their enemies during seventy-five years of frontier wars, first with the Boers and then with the British. And yet they too, after many victories, ultimately proved unable to compete with British resources.[64] The neighboring kingdom of Mpondo, which took in populations fleeing from the Zulus, adopted a different approach. In the 1820s Mpondo's King Faku had reformed the military and established a centralized "aggressive, even somewhat predatory, raiding state."[65] Faku tried to avoid military conflicts with the Cape Colony. He relied on cooperation, made concessions, and hoped for mediation by missionaries (Wesleyan Methodists) whom he had allowed to establish mission stations. But here too the British desire for imperial expansion and the settlers' demand for land precluded a state of peaceful coexistence. Colonial magistrates levied taxes on huts in 1895. This marked the endpoint of a gradual erosion of autonomy. The Mpondo Kingdom was the last African state to come under colonial rule in South Africa, having previously lost a considerable part of its land.

"A colonising Empire never is at peace": when a London newspaper wrote this in 1846 in its editorial, it predicted that the European "*élite* of nations" had learned to coexist peacefully despite competition, but that peace in the outposts, the "out-offices," would arrive only after indigenous peoples had been subjugated in battle.[66] Many local actors were involved on the side of the colonial powers: "Without Africans . . . no 'European' partition."[67] This applied to the local African conflicts in which European powers intervened and in which they were often asked for military support, and it aptly described the necessity for all European colonial armies to deploy African soldiers and carriers.

Local people were indispensable as porters and for other work. Without them colonial war was impossible. Accordingly, the British officer corps saw it as a major problem when masses of local helpers ran away during the Asante war of 1873/74.[68] The British Army Command had estimated the need at about 9,000, including women for hospitals and communication between troop stations. To

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[63] This is derived from the contemporary reports of Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War* (quote 20), and Low, *A Memoir of Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley*; further eyewitness accounts are from Spiers, *Victorian Soldier in Africa*, chap. 1.

[64] Peires, *House of Phalo*, esp. chap. 9.

[65] Timothy J. Stapleton, *Faku: Rulership and Colonialism in the Mpondo Kingdom (ca. 1760–1867)* (Waterloo, Canada, 2001), 31–32.

[66] *Illustrated London News*, October 24, 1846, 234; a partial excerpt is in Donald Featherstone, *Victorian Colonial Warfare: Africa* (Castle Hill, 1994), chap. 6.

[67] Reid, *Warfare in African History*, 140.

[68] The following is based on the semi-official report by Brackenbury, *Ashanti War*, vols. 1 and 2.

stop the desertions, friendly chiefs were arrested, and there was even a plan to burn down their villages. It was left to these chiefs to force the deserters to return. More effective was probably the doubling of the daily rates from 3 to 6 pennies for each porter. Local recruiters received a one-time payment of 50 pounds for every 500 men who remained in service; the chiefs received 10 pounds per month for every 100 men and 6 for every 100 women.[69] In fact, many were recruited by force in villages that had been destroyed.

How many locals were recruited as soldiers or irregulars is not reported. The plan had included about 10,000, including the "police." Officers who searched the villages as "special commissioners" to recruit "fighting men" were not unsuccessful, but they gathered fewer men than the chiefs had promised. As soon as the fighting started, there were further disappointments for the British. One colonel is reported to have been on the road with nine officers and 1,111 soldiers, 1,011 of them "native allies." Most of them escaped when fighting broke out. The attack was repulsed, but at a very high price: of the nine officers, one was killed and five were wounded.[70]

Local soldiers were indispensable. The experienced warriors among them possessed considerable bargaining power. They were at the top of the hierarchy of non-European soldiers and helped determine the way the colonial armies waged war. The regular auxiliary troops received pay and booty, the irregular ones only booty. Many had considerable earnings.[71] The pay was based on local conditions and combat experience. Sikhs, Hausas, and Sudanese were in great demand in the British colonial armies; they received more than others and were promoted. When the irregulars had made enough loot, they often quit fighting.[72] Simply put, they had goals other than those of the colonial power for which they were supposed to risk their lives.

One of the features of precolonial warfare that spilled over into colonial war was that warriors were accompanied by their families. Children often carried weapons; women provided food. They had to be supplied from the territory through which the troops passed. Whether friend or foe, the passing through of

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[69] Brackenbury, *Ashanti War*, 2:28–29.

[70] Brackenbury, *Ashanti War* 1:254–55.

[71] Lamphear, *Scattering Time*, 133, 138.

[72] Moyse-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*, 14. He also goes into detail regarding agreements on pay, compensation to families in the event of death, special payments by the colonies, etc. The British government was concerned about the high pay in Africa because it feared that it would have to pay the same in India (19–20). But there was also payment in kind (54, 84). How loot was distributed is also explained (68). What it meant in concrete terms, however, when the colonial troops "raided in revenge" (18), when they had the inhabitants "below at their mercy" (20), or "punished" more than 300 places in order to "pacify" the area (28) is not explained. Nor do we learn what happened to women and men who were captured in attacks.

an army could be like a plague or a swarm of locusts.[73] Both precolonial and colonial scorched-earth tactics included not only the destruction of villages and fields and the theft of cattle, women, and children but also the supply of the troops, including their extensive supply trains. Women and children captured by German troops in East Africa were often added to askari households or sold in the slave trade, which was never discontinued. All of this enhanced the reputation of African soldiers in the colonial army. These soldiers saw themselves as "big men" and were perceived as such in their environment, especially as they took on a wealth of administrative tasks in the emerging colonial state.[74] When a German squad captured women and children during fighting with Maasai warriors, they were handed over to French and British mission stations.[75] Captive taking by Sudanese soldiers was carried out "with terrible bestiality"; a small boy who resisted was stabbed in the neck. This was tolerated because "without the Sudanese in Africa, we could not conduct a successful battle." Since the Sudanese soldiers were needed, their way of waging war was largely adopted, or adapted to the particular circumstances—thus, because of space limitations, the African soldiers among the British were allowed to take only one woman each when their battalion was shipped to Mauritius.[76]

In precolonial wars, women generally played an important role. In the sources, however, they usually appear only as "ghost-like figures."[77] But "women were at the very centre of much pre-colonial conflict: war was fought for their capture." They were not only victims of wars, however, but also protagonists. They were indispensable for social cohesion during the war, for providing the material war basis, for supplying the troops on their war expedition, for collecting intelligence, for participating in spiritual rituals and social celebrations that accompanied and justified the wars, and as desired booty. Supply and booty for

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[73] Vansina, *Nyinginya Kingdom*, 93; Lamphear, *Scattering Time*, 134; similarly Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*, to the German troops in East Africa (chap. 3).

[74] Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*.

[75] Kallenberg, *Auf dem Kriegspfad gegen die Massai*, 123–59. The following quote, 124.

[76] Moyse-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*, 29. 878. Africans were accompanied by 220 women and 77 children. There were also 32 Sikhs and 7 officers. In Uganda Sudanese battalions had so many "civilian followers" that they could provide for themselves with their own recruits (135). In the war against the Hehehe, the German commander had huts for Zulu and Sudanese families built on the barrack yard. Tom von Prince, *Gegen Araber und Wahehe. Erinnerungen aus meiner ostafrikanischen Leutnantszeit* (Berlin, 1914), 77. His wife, who accompanied him on the campaign, reports in detail about the life of the soldiers and the African "'women's question'" (81–82.). Magdalene von Prince, *Eine deutsche Frau im Inneren Deutsch-Ostafrikas*, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1908).

[77] Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial East Africa*; this and the next quote, 155; see also 155–57 (a concise summary, but some remains speculative due to the sources).

non-European soldiers and for the irregulars: these two functions stayed in colonial wars. In addition, they were sexual booty for European soldiers, and the colonial armies needed them for various auxiliary services in the military stations and on the campaigns.[78] Occasionally they also seem to have intervened with arms in battles, but in organized fashion probably only in the army of Dahomey.[79]

The "Askari way of war" can be understood as the "Africanization" of colonial military violence and may be traced back to precolonial traditions.[80] By accepting this kind of warfare, all colonial armies justified the suspension of containment of warfare, to which they remained committed in Europe—for the time being. "To play the enemy's own game" describes what the colonial armies did, but this justification also conceals the fact that war was different when it was "perfected" with the vastly more efficient killing methods of the Europeans.[81] The many war massacres in precolonial Africa were done "by hand"; in colonial wars, modern weapons were available for this purpose.[82] Notwithstanding his blaming of the "slaughter of the wounded" on Commander-in-Chief Herbert Kitchener when the British army turned the decisive battle of Omdurman against the army of Mahdists into a massacre in 1898, Winston Churchill celebrated it in his report as "the most signal triumph ever gained by the arms of science over barbarians. Within the space of five hours the strongest and best-armed savage army yet arrayed against a modern European Power had been destroyed and dispersed, with hardly any difficulty, comparatively small risk, and insignificant loss to the victors."[83]

[78] See, for example, Kuss, *German Colonial Wars*, 197 (sexual violence in the camps). In the Afghan War of 1839, a British officer explicitly highlighted as extraordinary that no Afghan woman had been raped during the conquest of Ghazni. David, *Victoria's Wars*, 32.

[79] Stapleton, *Military History*, 1:101–3; Stanley B. Alpern, *Amazons of Black Sparta: The Women Warriors of Dahomey*, 2nd ed. (London, 2011), 3 (about Igbo and Fulani women who shared combat with men in the 1750s and 1820s), 39 (even in Dahomey they could be spoils of war and slave raids).

[80] Tanja Bührer, "Kriegführung in Deutsch-Ostafrika (1889–1914)," in Bührer et al., *Imperialkriege von 1500 bis heute*, 197–215, 215; see Julie d'Andurain, "La 'petite guerre' africaine, entre conquête, contre-guérilla et contre-insurrection (1880–1900)," *Revue historique des armées* 268 (2012): 1–10.

[81] Wallis, *West African Warfare*, 5–6.

[82] For many precolonial examples, see Vansina, *Nyinginya Kingdom*; Thornton, *Warfare Atlantic Africa*; Osarhieme Besnon Osadolor, "The Military System of Benin Kingdom, c. 1440–1897" (PhD diss., Hamburg, 2001); Alpern, *Amazons*; for colonial struggles and the transition phase, see, e.g., Stapleton, *Faku*.

[83] Mark Urban, *Generals: Ten British Commanders Who Shaped the World* (London, 2005), 194; Winston S. Churchill, *The River War: An Account to the Reconquest of the Sudan* (London, 1902), 111.

How to React to the European Invasions

The end of African states in wars against the European colonial powers shows how the possibilities of surviving as a social group in the military history of nineteenth-century Africa fundamentally changed over time. The turning point was the territorialization and nationalization of the entire continent, a process that had already begun in precolonial times but was enormously accelerated and shaped by the invasions of European states in the last third of the century. As Africa became a continent of territorial states, one of the precolonial ways of responding to the expansion of foreign groups and their formation of power was lost: namely, permanent collective "flight and migration."[84] In South Africa, since the early nineteenth century, violent upheavals (*mfecane*) had triggered large-scale migratory movements and led to the founding of states, including the Zulu and Swazi kingdoms.[85] In Yorubaland, a chain of internal wars and external attacks led to migration and the establishment of new city-states.[86] Here, too, the conquest by British troops ended the possibility of escaping new rulers by way of collective migration. Territorialization closed off any remaining escape routes for groups that wanted to settle elsewhere in order to maintain their autonomy.

The second form of escape from attackers foreclosed by territorialization was temporary escape to go into hiding and to hide movable property until danger had passed.[87] This had been a rational option for weaker parties in the most common type of war in precolonial Africa, namely, wars of raiding. Whereas raiders had come, robbed, killed, and left, the territorial state remained.

A third way to survive was through subjugation. This could imply integrating into the superior power's society or the continuation of one's own autonomy in exchange for tribute, often combined with the duty to provide soldiers. There were fluid boundaries between subjugation and the willingness to form an alliance to avoid war. The consequences of submitting to a European power or seeking an alliance with it in order to resist rival powers first had to be learned. The

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[84] Falola, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*, 52.

[85] See Philip Curtin et al., eds., *African History*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, 1995), 268–73; Reid, *A History of Modern Africa*, 66–75; Philip Bonner, *Kings, Commoners, and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth-Century Swazi State* (Cambridge, 1983). About the controversy surrounding the concept of Mfecane, see Elizabeth A. Eldredge, "Sources of Conflict in Southern Africa, c. 1800–30: The 'Mfecane' Reconsidered," *Journal of African History* 33, no. 1 (1992): 1–35; Wright, "Turbulent Times," 211–12.

[86] J. F. Ade Ajaki and Robert Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1964); Leonhard Harding, *Das Königreich Benin* (Munich, 2010), chap. 16; see also the entries for "Kingdoms" and "Warfare," in *Encyclopedia of the Yoruba*.

[87] As one example among many: When Mirambo and an ally attacked Takuma in 1880, all the inhabitants were hiding in the bush. The attackers moved on and plundered Mpimbwe, whose fortifications they overcame. Kabeya, *King Mirambo*, 51–52.

colonized could not know the consequences because colonial powers never pursued a uniform course, not even in their own spheres of influence. In the British Empire, the sheikdoms on the Persian Gulf were at one extreme—no British control of domestic policy—while the Malaysian states and Zanzibar with British residents as actual rulers were at the other. In between there was a variety of other arrangements.[88] Things were particularly complicated in the protectorate of Uganda, with four kingdoms. Of these, Bunyoro had fought against the British invaders, while Buganda had given military support, supposedly out of self-interest. In the end, both became subject to British supremacy.

Whatever form colonial power took, it did not open up the possibility of integrating into the colonizers' society. The imperial powers' racist beliefs did not allow this. Only African societies offered a chance for integration, even though there was racial thinking within them as well.[89]

Resistance was a fourth option. Resistance led to colonial wars, as discussed above. The native population's defensive wars were usually not called "wars" by the European attackers. Rather, they spoke of uprisings or rebellions that would be punished, of "punitive expeditions" or "punitive campaigns." This is what Callwell did in his textbook, and the usage continues to this day. This language figures as an instrument of domination, denying the locals the right to wage defensive war. They behave, theorists like Callwell held, like lawbreakers in a state territory. Whoever resists the new ruler does not wage a defensive war that is legitimate under international law, but instead violates state order. In contemporary European legal thought, "only the states with European culture were considered as full members of the international legal community."[90] Language reflected this European claim to superiority when, for instance, denying usage of the term "war" with reference to the wars of African states against European colonizers.[91]

[88] Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 316.

[89] In detail, Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, IN, 2011). On Xhosa's thoroughly negative assessment of the San, see Peires, *The House of Phalo*, 138.

[90] Botho Jordan, "Die Staatsgewalt des Deutschen Reiches in den Schutzgebieten" (Jurist. diss., Halle-Wittenberg, 1895), 16. The author reviews the German legal discussion, according to which there was a cultural hierarchy in which states with European culture were at the top, followed by Asian states with lower international legal standards, and finally African "chiefs."

[91] Carl Schmitt ascerbically wrote about language that avoids the word war—to be sure, not for colonial wars, but for the League of Nations in 1932: *Der Begriff des Politischen*, 72.

III. People's Wars in Africa and the End of the Containment of War in Twentieth-Century Europe

War without containment is part and parcel of the history of mankind since time immemorial.[92] Modern technology has changed the ways of military killing and the number of dead has increased enormously (in absolute, not relative, terms), but the aim of uncontained war has always been to fight the enemy by destroying the lifeworld from which he draws his ability to fight. In this respect, it was always close to what we have called total war since the early twentieth century. The various definitions and periodizations need not concern us here.[93] To determine the place of colonial war in military history, it is sufficient to note that in total war the entire society becomes the object and subject of war, its goal and its resource. This totality is broken up only by the international law of war, which distinguishes between combatants and civilians and declares war to be a matter for the state and its military. The separation between civilians and combatants is at the core of containment of war. It presupposes a functioning state that has a monopoly on the use of force even in times of war. This was not the case when Ottoman rule in the Balkans collapsed at the end of the nineteenth century. That is why the mixture of types of wars in the Balkans (civil war, war of conquest, war of secession, war of state-building) repeatedly spread to the population. The temporary special path of the contained war after 1815 succeeded only in non-Ottoman Europe.[94] To speak of a European special path of contained war between 1815 and 1914 does not counter the much-discussed concept of "Westphalian sovereignty." But it does specify the kind of war waged by sovereign states. It was only after the Napoleonic era that the will to separate combatants from soldiers determined warfare in Europe.

At the same time, European troops and their non-European helpers waged wars without containment in the areas of colonial conquest. In Europe, this was rationalized by pointing to local, in our case African, forms of war and through a cultural racism that promised to civilize war itself—something the new rulers from Europe would take care of. But this racism, as the analysis of precolonial wars shows, fails to explain the nature of colonial war; it simply served as a justification

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[92] Lawrence H. Keeley, *War before civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage* (Oxford, 1996); Jürg Helbling, *Tribale Kriege* (Frankfurt, 2006); Gat, *War in Human Civilization*; Steinmetz, *Der Krieg als soziologisches Problem*.

[93] About the state of research, see Roger Chickering, "Total War: The Use and Abuse of a Concept," in *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914*, ed. M. F. Boemeke, R. Chickering, and S. Förster (Cambridge, 1999), 13–28. Unsurpassed as a theoretical-methodological approach is Panajotis Kondylis, *Theorie des Krieges: Clausewitz, Marx, Engels, Lenin* (Stuttgart, 1988), 116–45.

[94] On the wars in the Balkans and the special European path of the contained war, see in detail Langewiesche, *Der gewaltsame Lehrer*, chap. 3, 4.d and chap. 4, 2.g.

for the European historical actors at this particular time. Colonial warfare itself did not disappear. This is because it was not exported from Europe to the areas of colonial conquest; it was a kind of warfare that had long prevailed in those areas. Recent scholarship is very clear about this. Europeans "perfected" this kind of warfare with the resources at their disposal. Thus, they became masters in a type of warfare that had no regard for containment.

Was this brand of colonial warfare without containment exported from the European colonial empires to Europe in the twentieth century? This is the contention of those who believe that the destruction of the European Jews, the Holocaust, was prefigured and foreshadowed in genocidal colonial war in Africa. The causal connection harks back to German colonial military history.[95] Even if there were empirical proof for this causal chain, however, one would still have to explain why the containment of warfare as an exceptional European path— even European states that had no part in the Holocaust conformed to the pattern—ended in the first half of the twentieth century.

One would also have to engage in a detailed, granular comparison of the genocidal wars in the colonies and take into consideration the specific type of colony in each particular case. Newer research findings suggest that there was a great danger that the fight for land could lead to genocide, especially when settlers met hunter-gatherer societies, but also when they met pastoral ones.[96] This article does not inquire into the connection between the nature of war and the type of colony, a lacuna that is best made transparent here.

When trying to parse types of war from the specificity of warfare, as this article has attempted for colonial war in Africa, the question arises whether what since circa 1800 has been called people's or national war in Europe kept changing until the twentieth century, and, if so, whether these changes were connected with colonial war. The European officers quoted at the beginning of this article identified one distinguishing feature for the nineteenth century: European wars hinged on a decisive battle between combatants,[97] while colonial wars did not. Taking this distinction as a point of departure, how can we describe the transformation of European war from the nineteenth to the twentieth century?

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[95] Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust* (Munich, 2011). On the Herero War, see the balanced study by Matthias Häusler, *Der Genozid an den Herero* (Weilerswist, 2018). The literature on genocide and colonial war in Africa and in general in modern world history is discussed in Langewiesche, *Der gewaltsame Lehrer*, chap. 4.

[96] Mohamed Adhikari, ed., *Genocide on Settler Frontiers* (New York, 2014); A. Dirk Moses, ed., *Genocide and Settler Society* (New York, 2004).

[97] A fundamental study with regard to the German development is Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Year's War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS, 2005).

Let us first examine the two military thinkers who in the 1830s studied changes in warfare in their own time. Notwithstanding their many differences, both Antoine-Henri de Jomini and Carl von Clausewitz, against the backdrop of the terrifying military experience in the era of revolution and Napoleon, propounded a type of people's war that would mobilize the entire nation and put it into service, at the front and at home, yet would be waged as a contained war of states.[98] In order to achieve this, a quick decisive battle was crucial. Helmuth von Moltke perfected this strategy, and it seems to have reached its apogee in the Franco-Prussian War. In his memorandums, he championed a war of states as short as a duel in order to mobilize the full economic and demographic power of the country without ruining it. This type of modern war was to combine the containment of war by the state with the mobilization of the nation's entire power. In a certain sense, this was a synthesis of cabinet and people's wars. Moltke, however, already suspected before 1870 that the strategy of a quick war of annihilation, decided in a few central battles, might fail in the future.[99]

This problem was a subject of intense inquiry and debate in the European military in the decades before the First World War.[100] The experts thought that future wars could no longer be decided in a great battle, because the entire social power of the belligerent countries would go to war. In order to win a war, the enemy's society must become incapable of fighting, not just its military. The term annihilation thus took on a new meaning. Just how the semantics of the military term "annihilation" shifted in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how the experience of colonial warfare contributed to it has hardly been investigated so far. To be sure, Clausewitz called "the war an act of mutual annihilation." He had in mind "annihilation" in battle, with the battlefield as the decisive place. But Clausewitz was well aware that in the new people's war, war runs the risk of losing "its old artificial walls," which might ultimately "expand and intensify the whole fermentation process we call war."[101]

In the nineteenth century, "war of annihilation" meant something different than it did in the twentieth century. There was a shift in meaning from an annihilation

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[98] See in detail Langewiesche, *Der gewaltsame Lehrer*, chap. 2.2.

[99] D. Langewiesche and Nikolaus Buschmann, "'Dem Vertilgungskriege Grenzen setzen'. Kriegstypen des 19. Jahrhunderts und der deutsch-französische Krieg 1870/71," in *Formen des Krieges. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Dietrich Beyrau et al. (Paderborn, 2007), 163–95; Stig Förster, "Facing 'People's War': Moltke the Elder and Germany's Military Options after 1871," in *Warfare in Europe, 1815–1914*, ed. Peter H. Wilson (Aldershot, 2006), 159–80.

[100] For Germany, Great Britain, France, and Russia see Antulio J. Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers before the Great War* (Lawrence, KS, 2000); Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, 2010), chap. 7; Citino, *German Way of War*.

[101] Clausewitz, "Vom Kriege," 234, 300, and *On War*, 216, 479. The quotes in my translation (D. L.).

of the enemy's fighting power in battle to an annihilation of the enemy society's war capacity, at least its social capacity to continue the war. But this fundamental change was inherent in the concept of people's war from the very beginning, as it was conceived around 1800. As von Clausewitz recognized early on, the loss of containment was inscribed in its program. After 1815, the wars in Europe itself succeeded in preventing the loss of containment for an entire century. We here have a temporary European special path (*Sonderweg*) of war, one of the great achievements of the European nineteenth century.[102] This special path ended with the First World War.[103] In their colonial wars, however, the Europeans did not even try this kind of containment. They encountered uncontained war in the locales they set out to colonize, and they went on to radicalize it.

Therefore, the connection between colonial wars and wars in twentieth-century Europe was not one of unidirectional transfer from one to the other: it lay in the specificity of people's war. Loss of containment is part of the essence of people's war because it wants to involve the entire society in the fighting. That is precisely what happened in Africa—and not just in colonial wars, but already in the precolonial wars. The wars in precolonial Africa were people's wars—and that is why they were uncontained.

This article has avoided the term "people's war" in part 2 on the wars in Africa because it was not used in the sources, nor in the secondary literature on the wars there.[104] But this analysis has shown that in Africa people's wars were waged in the full sense of the word—*levée en masse* for all men physically capable, with the participation of women as helpers and victims, sometimes even as warriors—when in Europe this was still being successfully avoided. Europeans of the nineteenth century closed themselves off from this insight because, believing in their cultural and racial superiority, they perceived the African people's wars as, to quote Callwell once more, wars of "half-civilized races or wholly savage tribes." How wars in Europe would later also turn civil society into an object of struggle—for in "people's war" it is social performance that decides the outcome—could have been observed in the colonial areas. The wars there afforded a glimpse of the future of war.

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[102] This is one of the central theses in Langewiesche, *Der gewaltsame Lehrer*.

[103] The reasons are manifold; they cannot all be discussed here. See Langewiesche, *Der gewaltsame Lehrer*, chap. 2.4.c.; Jörn Leonhard, *Pandora's Box: A History of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA, 2018).

[104] See the research report by David Brown et al., eds., *War amongst the People: Critical Assessments* (Havant, 2019).