Introduction

Seeking to understand the character of colonial rule and violence, historians have regularly turned to George Orwell's novel *Burmese Days*, which describes the life of Ellis, a fictional white policeman in British Burma in the interwar period. In one often-cited passage from the novel, Ellis speaks to himself in a rage after the murder of a white man:

> Why did we make these cursed kid-glove laws? Why did we take everything lying down? Just suppose this had happened in a German colony, before the War! The good old Germans! They knew how to treat the niggers. Reprisals! Rhinoceros hide whips! Raid their villages, kill their cattle, burn their crops, decimate them, blow them from the guns.[1]

The passage is obviously ironic in that it shows a Briton lusting for the same sort of colonial brutality the British had customarily ascribed to the Germans. Ever since the German *Kaiserreich* had become a formal colonial power in the 1880s, a public discourse had arisen in Britain that contrasted the supposedly exceptional colonial brutality of the Germans with the reputed restraint of the British. As early as 1891, at the beginning of the British colonisation of MaShonaland in southern Africa, Lord Grey had urged Cecil Rhodes, the man behind the endeavour, to avoid 'objectionable German methods' in the new territory.[2] While stories of the exceptional brutality of German colonisers were often associated with flogging, they also pertained to German colonial wars, as during the German–Herero War.[3] Such views came much more prominently to the fore after the First World War, when they proved politically

[1] George Orwell, *Burmese Days: A Novel* (New York 1974 [1934]) 241.
[2] T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896–1897: A Study in African Resistance* (London 1967).
[3] Ulrike Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen: Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika 1880-1914* (Frankfurt am Main 2011) 79–81; Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden 2003) xxiv–xxix; Mads Bomholt Nielsen, *Britain, Germany and Colonial Violence in South-West Africa, 1884-1919: The Herero and Nama Genocide* (Cham 2022) 18–21.

opportune to legitimise the takeover of German colonies by the victorious powers through the claim that the Germans had been unfit as colonisers. The famous 'Blue Book', published by the British Government in 1918, not only provided extensive documentation of atrocities committed against native populations under German colonial rule; it also sought to construct contrasting identities for 'German' and 'British'.[4]

Yet, there are further layers of irony in the passage from the novel, which Orwell's readers, or even Orwell himself, were probably not aware of. The imagined 'German' scene might just as well have described British conduct in Ellis's own colony of Burma before the Great War. One need only read British reports of the operations in the long aftermath of the Third Anglo–Burmese War (1886) or the account of a Dutch military observer who accompanied British troops there in 1887 to find mentions of reprisals that included raiding villages, burning homes, carrying off cattle and crops, and the flogging, or even 'decimation', of their populations.[5] Even more ironically, 'blowing men from the guns' as a punishment has never been attested for German colonialism, but it has been for British India, especially, as is well known, during the Indian Uprising of 1857.[6]

Whether Orwell intended his readers to note the double irony or not, it seems the idea of colonial exceptionalism – that is, the notion that some imperial powers were inherently either more or less violent in their colonies – is something we have not yet shaken off. In 2021, the British historian William Dalrymple was still lamenting in a newspaper interview that 'There's a whole generation of people who are very happy to believe that the German empire was terrible, that the Belgians were awful and cut the hands of everyone, but somehow the British empire was different, that it was all about tea parties and smiley maharajahs and lawns with ladies in crinoline, and not at all about exploitation like all the other empires.'[7] Such national-exceptionalist thinking also leaves little space for considerable connections between different empires when it comes

[4] Silvester and Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found*, xxxiii. A full reprint of the 1918 report is provided in this book.
[5] C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London 1896) 115; Ian F. W. Beckett, 'The Campaign of the Lost Footsteps: The Pacification of Burma, 1885-95', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 30: 4–5 (2019) 994–1019, here 1012; J. F. Breijer, 'Verslag eene zending naar Opper-Burma van J. F. Breijer, kapitein Ned. Ind. Leger', *IMT* 17: I (1888) 1–219, here 12–13. See also Chapter 4.
[6] Kim A. Wagner, *The Skull of Alum Bheg: The Life and Death of a Rebel of 1857* (London 2017) 175–189.
[7] Alison Flood, '"Imperially nostalgic racists" target Empireland author with hate mail', *The Guardian*, 12 March 2021.

to colonial violence, connections that can be seen above already in the fact that a Dutch officer accompanied British troops in Burma. This book presents an argument against both exceptionalism and isolationism, with a temporal focus on the time 'before the War' – that is, roughly between 1890 and 1914.

Historiographically, this work engages with newer forms of colonial exceptionalism that have emerged in scholarship over the past decades. Most famously perhaps, this concerns German colonial violence. Since the early 2000s, the genocide committed by German soldiers in present-day Namibia at the beginning of the twentieth century has been the subject of increasing interest, which has brought forth a host of publications that have interpreted the events there as precursors to National Socialist racial policy, mass murder and destruction in Europe between 1939 and 1945. These arguments, often referred to as the 'Windhoek to Auschwitz', 'colonial Sonderweg' or 'continuity' thesis, have been advanced most forcefully by Jürgen Zimmerer.[8] Zimmerer not only squarely labelled the war against the Herero and Nama as genocide but also saw it as an expression of a specifically German development, linking racial segregation in German South West Africa (GSWA) to Nazi racial policy and the Herero and Nama genocide to the Holocaust.[9]

Another, rather different, theory of German particularity that has proven influential in the literature has been Isabel Hull's 2005 book *Absolute Destruction*. In this book, Hull sought to explain the genocidal outcome of the German colonial war against the Herero and Nama as the result of a specific 'military culture' in the Prussian-German army.[10] Although Hull at times states that the military culture she identifies prevailed more generally in Western armies at the time,[11] the overall

[8] The debate had some forebears in the 1960s and 1990s; see the general overview in Susanne Kuß, *Deutsches Militär auf kolonialen Kriegsschauplätzen: Eskalation von Gewalt zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin 2010) 20–26.

[9] For a selection of Zimmerer's academic publications on this topic, see Jürgen Zimmerer, 'Krieg, KZ und Völkermord in Südwestafrika. Der erste deutsche Genozid', in Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Völkermord*, 45–63; Jürgen Zimmerer, 'Colonial Genocide and the Holocaust: Towards an Archaeology of the Holocaust', in Dirk Moses, ed., *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (New York 2004) 49–76; Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz: Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust* (Münster 2007). For another variant of the continuity thesis, see Benjamin Madley, 'From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe', *European History Quarterly* 35: 3 (2005) 429–464.

[10] Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY 2005) particularly chapters 1–3.

[11] Ibid., 2, 101–102. In a more recent interview, Hull declared that she had never been interested in the German *Sonderweg* thesis but reiterated her view of German particularity in some respects (though in this case more with regard to international

argument still reads (and has generally been read) as another case of German exceptionalism.

This German feature has been mirrored and reinforced by the simultaneous existence of the historical myth of a special British 'way of war', supposedly marked by notable restraint, cultural sensitivity and 'minimum force'. This theory of national particularity has been defended primarily by Thomas Mockaitis and Rod Thornton.[12] In these cases, favourable comparisons with supposedly more brutal fellow imperial powers often constitute an explicit or implicit part of the myth.[13] In the Dutch case as well, there has long been a tendency, albeit a less outspoken one, to assume that the Dutch military had not been quite as bad as the others.[14]

Many of these theories of particularity, with the important exception of the one advanced mainly by Zimmerer, reveal another underlying problem: They have approached colonial wars primarily as a military problem, which has focused attention almost of necessity on two typical concerns – armies and doctrines. Both, certainly during the time period under consideration here, were understood to be *national* institutions. The corollary has been that the manner in which colonial wars were waged has frequently been assumed to be an outcome of such institutions. Military historians in particular have been keen to find some elaborate and formalised doctrine of war in the colonies specific to a particular state, or, if that could not be found, at least some national 'way of war', 'military culture', 'school' or 'approach'. This goes not only for a German 'military culture' or a British doctrine of 'minimum force'. There are numerous other examples such as a 'Dutch approach', a 'French colonial school' (that of Gallieni and Lyautey) and a

law): Jens Bisky and Jakob Borchers, '"Für die Sonderwegsthese habe ich mich nie interessiert". Ein Gespräch mit Isabel V. Hull', *Mittelweg 36* 30: 4 (2021) 125–136.

[12] Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-1960* (London 1990); Rod Thornton, 'The British Army and the Origins of Its Minimum Force Philosophy', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 15: 1 (2004) 83–106.

[13] Thornton, 'British Army and the Origins', 86; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 56–57. See also, e.g. Ian F. W. Beckett, 'British Counter-insurgency: A Historiographical Reflection', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23: 4–5 (2012) 781–798, here 789; Daniel Whittingham, 'Savage Warfare: C.E. Callwell, the Roots Of Counter-insurgency, and the Nineteenth Century Context', ibid., 591–607, here 602. The claim seems to be absent from Whittingham's recent biography of Callwell, *Charles E. Callwell and the British Way in Warfare* (Cambridge 2020).

[14] Thijs Brocades Zaalberg and Bart Luttikhuis, 'Beyond the League Table of Barbarity: Comparing Extreme Violence during the Wars of Decolonization', in Thijs Brocades Zaalberg and Bart Luttikhuis, eds., *Empire's Violent End: Comparing Dutch, British, and French Wars of Decolonization, 1945-1962* (Ithaca, NY 2022) 1–24.

'Portuguese Way of War'.[15] Colonial war has thus been presented as something fought largely along national lines.

The search for national military doctrines, however, has not been the only problem. National-exceptionalist myths have certainly also responded to the demands of the politics of national identity. That the violence of empire has for decades been, and continues to be, silenced or downplayed in historiography, in what has been characterised as an 'empire whitewash', cannot but be read as an attempt to preserve some of the lustre of the former empire and its positive connotations in national remembrance.[16] Silence on the brutality of empire reigned in all three former imperial metropoles after decolonisation, though arguably in Germany not primarily in order to preserve a positive image of empire (even if those tendencies were not absent either),[17] but rather because historiography was mainly occupied with the history of Nazism and the Holocaust. In Britain and in the Netherlands, a large-scale silence can be said to have persisted into the early 2000s, though occasionally punctuated by more critical voices.[18] This despite the fact that there has long existed a body of literature made up mostly of monograph case studies which has laid out the full extent of violence, not least in contributions written by the formerly colonised themselves.[19] For those imperial historians who actually chose to write on violence, one strategy for downplaying it was to portray it as somehow 'restrained', somehow 'better' than that committed by other empires, thus claiming an

[15] On the debate about a 'Dutch approach', see Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, 'The Use and Abuse of the "Dutch Approach" to Counter-insurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36: 6 (2013) 867–897. On the 'French colonial school', see the brief discussion in the Conclusion. See furthermore John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961-74* (Havertown, PA 2012).

[16] On 'empire whitewash', see, e.g. Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York 2005).

[17] For German memories of colonialism up till the 1990s, see Britta Schilling, *Postcolonial Germany: Memories of Empire in a Decolonized Nation* (Oxford 2014).

[18] On this silence, see Richard Drayton, 'Where Does the World Historian Write from? Objectivity, Moral Conscience and the Past and Present of Imperialism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 46: 3 (2011) 671–685; Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge 2008) 9; Henk Schulte Nordholt, 'A Genealogy of Violence', in Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad, eds., *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary Violence in Historical Perspective* (Leiden 2002) 33–61, here 36–42; Stef Scagliola, 'Cleo's Unfinished Business: Coming to Terms with Dutch War Crimes in Indonesia's War of Independence', *Journal of Genocide Research* 14: 3–4 (2012) 419–439.

[19] As an illustration, see some of the works on my own case studies: Lawrence Vambe, *An Ill-fated People: Zimbabwe before and after Rhodes* (London 1972); G. C. K. Gwassa, 'The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War: 1905–1907' (PhD thesis: University of Dar es Salaam 1973). For the Aceh War, see, e.g. the work by Ibrahim Alfian, in Documentation and Information Center of Aceh, ed., *Perang Kolonial Belanda di Aceh = The Dutch Colonial War in Aceh*, 2nd rev. ed. (Banda Aceh 1990).

exceptional position for one's own national group – as seen particularly in the British case. Thus, the propagation of notions of national doctrines or 'ways of war' should certainly also be seen in this context.

Luckily, there now exists a larger body of scholarship challenging these exceptionalist assumptions. The German colonial *Sonderweg* has met with convincing criticism.[20] Studies on colonies other than GSWA have been unable to find a uniquely German genocidal trait to its colonial warfare.[21] In the United Kingdom, research carried out in the first decade of this millennium on the crushing of the Mau Mau has done much to debunk the 'minimum force' argument.[22] Other scholars have done the same on a more general level or for other time periods.[23] Historians of the former British settler colonies such as Australia and South Africa have long been aware of the horrifying violence of British colonial wars, though these histories have somehow become detached from larger British imperial history.[24] Finally, in the Netherlands, Henk Schulte Nordholt's assertion, in 2000, that the Dutch East Indies had been a 'state of violence' met with few objections in Dutch academia, and

[20] Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, 'Hannah Arendt's Ghosts: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz', *Central European History* 42: 2 (2009) 279–300; Birthe Kundrus, 'Kontinuitäten, Parallelen, Rezeptionen. Überlegungen zur "Kolonialisierung" des Nationalsozialismus', *WerkstattGeschichte* 43 (2006) 45–62; Mark T. Kettler, 'What Did Paul Rohrbach Actually Learn in Africa? The Influence of Colonial Experience on a Publicist's Imperial Fantasies in Eastern Europe', *German History* 38: 2 (2020) 240–262.

[21] Susanne Kuß, *German Colonial Wars and the Context of Military Violence*, trans. Andrew Smith (Cambridge, MA 2017); Tanja Bührer, *Die Kaiserliche Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika: koloniale Sicherheitspolitik und transkulturelle Kriegführung 1885 bis 1918* (Munich 2011); Bernd Martin, 'Soldatische Radikalisierung und Massaker. Das deutsche Erste und Zweite Seebataillon im Einsatz im "Boxerkrieg" in China 1900', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 69: 2 (2010) 221–241.

[22] David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London 2004); Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London 2005); Huw Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-insurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge 2012). For a historiographical overview, see Dane Kennedy, *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire* (London 2018) 90–94.

[23] Kim A. Wagner, 'Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency', *History Workshop Journal* 85: Spring Issue (2018) 217–237; Michelle Gordon, *Extreme Violence and the 'British Way': Colonial Warfare in Perak, Sierra Leone and Sudan* (London 2020); Matthew Hughes, 'The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39', *The English Historical Review* 124: 507 (2009) 313–354; Bruno C. Reis, 'The Myth of British Minimum Force in Counterinsurgency Campaigns during Decolonisation (1945–1970)', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34: 2 (2011) 245–279.

[24] As noted, for instance, by Richard Price, 'The Psychology of Colonial Violence', in Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck, eds., *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World* (Cham 2018) 25–52, here 25–27; Michelle Gordon, 'Prospects for a Bewältigung of Extreme Violence in Britain's Imperial Past', *Modern Languages Open* 1 (2020) 1–17, here 3.

since 2014, following the rise of more sustained public attention to Dutch colonial violence during the Indonesian War of Independence, significant studies on the subject have appeared.[25]

This book builds on that body of scholarship but also seeks to remedy one of its major shortcomings: The works just mentioned refute national exceptionality largely from within a *national* framework. They base their arguments on research covering one single empire. While they reject certain supposedly unique characteristics of that empire's approach, that in itself cannot strictly be considered as saying anything about the comparability of that particular empire to the others. The national fragmentation of research on colonial violence thus remains largely in place. Most of these scholars are obviously not blind to the wider imperial context, but their remarks on the transimperiality of such violence are generally brief and mostly limited to the conclusion.[26] Where studies place the violence they describe within the larger imperial frame, they offer only a rudimentary empirical fleshing-out.[27] Mads Bomholt Nielsen has recently published a more detailed study on Britain, Germany and colonial violence in South West Africa, but its main focus is on British perceptions and actions vis-à-vis German violence.[28] Edited volumes

[25] Henk Schulte Nordholt, *Een staat van geweld* (Rotterdam 2000); Bart Luttikhuis and Dirk Moses, *Colonial Counterinsurgency and Mass Violence: The Dutch Empire in Indonesia* (London 2014); Gert Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië, 1945-1950: getuigenissen van een oorlog aan de verkeerde kant van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 2015); Rémy Limpach, *De brandende kampongs van Generaal Spoor* (Amsterdam 2016); Piet Hagen, *Koloniale oorlogen in Indonesië: vijf eeuwen verzet tegen vreemde overheersing* (Amsterdam 2018); Gert Oostindie et al. ed., *Beyond the Pale: Dutch Extreme Violence in the Indonesian War of Independence, 1945-1949* (Amsterdam 2022).

[26] For example, Wagner, 'Savage Warfare', 231–232; Gordon, *Extreme Violence*, Conclusion. Susanne Kuß' treatment of German, British and French manuals of colonial warfare is an exception, though it remains short: Kuß, *German Colonial Wars*, 127–131. In the Dutch case, a more explicitly comparative approach to colonial violence post-1945 has recently appeared as part of a major national multi-institutional research project; see Thijs Brocades Zaalberg and Bart Luttikhuis, eds., *Empire's Violent End: Comparing Dutch, British, and French Wars of Decolonization, 1945-1962* (Ithaca, NY 2022).

[27] See, e.g. Gerwarth and Malinowski, 'Hannah Arendt's Ghosts', 286–289. Comparative but relatively scarce on analysis of colonial violence are Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914* (Bloomington, IN 1998); James O. Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke: The Subjugation of the Zulu and the Sioux* (Lincoln, NE 1994). Better, though mostly discursive, are Helmut Walser Smith, 'The Logic of Colonial Violence: Germany in Southwest Africa (1904-1907) and the United States in the Philippines (1899-1902)', in Hartmut Lehmann and Hermann Wellenreuther, eds., *German and American Nationalism: A Comparative Perspective* (Oxford and New York 1999) 205–231; Ulrike Lindner, '"An Inclination towards a Policy of Extermination"? - German and British Discourse on Colonial Wars during High Imperialism', in Felicity Rash and Geraldine Horan, eds., *The Discourse of British and German Colonialism: Convergence and Competition* (Abingdon, Oxon 2020) 163–181.

[28] Bomholt Nielsen, *Britain, Germany*.

that touch on several empires are often juxtapositions of individual studies that leave comparative observations largely to the reader, while comparative studies of settler colonialism have generally restricted themselves to comparing the British-descended settler colonies.[29]

A 'Western Way of War' in the Colonies

The argument of this book, therefore, is, first, that we need to move away for good from the prevalent national exceptionalisms; and, second, that we need to do so within an explicitly *transimperial* framework. If we are to understand why levels of violence were extraordinarily high in *all* Western empires, the many theories about national 'ways of war' would seem to be the wrong place to look. In their place, this study posits a *colonial way of war* that was marked, across the different empires and both in theory and practice, more by commonality than divergence. This concept encompasses two main arguments: first, it positions extreme violence as an inherent part of this way of war, and thus a shared phenomenon among all Western colonial powers independently of national particularities; second, it holds that colonial ideology and racialised ideas explain an important part of this extreme violence.

In the following chapters, the existence of a colonial way of war is shown within a transimperial framework and on a broad empirical base. The book places three different empires at the centre of analysis through a selection of case studies, and by looking at both the practice *and* the theory of colonial warmaking. This is an important step in establishing the transimperial commonalities in colonial warfare. Anyone reading the different case studies reproduced at some length in Chapter 2 will not fail to notice the essential comparability in practices of violence across them. Yet, that alone is not sufficient. To note that all empires employed similar practices does not tell us everything. We must also attempt to explain why that was the case. Factors such as practices, organisational culture, local conditions and military strategy and tactics can provide a useful base of comparison among colonial wars, and they have figured prominently in some of the handbooks on the subject.[30] However, we

[29] Jaap de Moor and H. L. Wesseling, eds., *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa* (Leiden 1989); Thoralf Klein and Frank Schumacher, eds., *Kolonialkriege: militärische Gewalt im Zeichen des Imperialismus* (Hamburg 2006). See the criticism by Bernd Lemke, 'Militärgeschichte im Vergleich: Imperien, Genozid und Kolonialkriege, circa 1860-1945. Methodische Ansätze – Forschungsergebnisse – Perspektiven', *Neue Politische Literatur* 63: 1 (2018) 27–66, here 42.

[30] See, e.g. Dierk Walter, *Colonial Violence: European Empires and the Use of Force*, trans. Peter Lewis (New York 2017); Jacques Frémeaux, *De quoi fut fait l'empire: les guerres coloniales au XIXe siècle* (Paris 2010).

need to conceptualise what constitutes comparability in colonial warfare across imperial borders through *ideas* as well. What, we should ask, was the body of knowledge informing such practices of violence?

Recent studies have hinted at the existence of a shared body of thought on colonial warfare,[31] and this book lays out the contents of this thought in more detail for the first time. It identifies precisely which aspects it was of the thinking, language and practice of the European practitioners of colonial violence that made them comparable. The answer lies in the intense processes of racial othering that marked nineteenth-century colonial conflict. These produced what were perceived as five 'basic imperatives' of colonial warfare: those of 'moral effect', of the offensive and 'bold initiative', of 'force must be felt first', of 'punishment' and of a high death toll (the 'big bag'). It was these imperatives that played an important, though not an exclusive part in determining the extreme violence which marks all *fin-de-siècle* colonial wars.

Racialisation and racial othering are thus key in thinking about colonial warfare. Racialised views of the opponent were crucial in shaping a body of knowledge on how to conduct colonial warfare; the role of racism in such wars thus went far beyond a situational and individually variable influence in the shape of racist contempt and hatred experienced by individuals. I agree here with Kim Wagner that 'What became known as "savage warfare" was not simply shaped by the tactical necessities of asymmetric fighting against irregular enemies but was based on deeply encoded assumptions concerning the inherent difference of local opponents.'[32] Racism was central to this definition of inherent difference. Even if a number of prominent treatments of colonial warfare tend to downplay its importance, with Dierk Walter claiming, for instance, that extreme violence was 'overdetermined anyway' by the structural logics of colonial conflict, our transimperial look at the thought behind the violence of colonial warfare will reinforce its significance.[33]

[31] William FitzSimons, 'Sizing up the Small Wars of African Empire', *Journal of African Military History* 2 (2018) 63–78, here 69; Jonas Kreienbaum, 'Colonial Policy, Colonial Conflicts and War before 1914', *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (2022), www.encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/colonial_policy_colonial_conflicts_and_war_before_1914, accessed 28 April 2023.

[32] Kim A. Wagner, '"Calculated to Strike Terror": The Amritsar Massacre and the Spectacle of Colonial Violence', *Past & Present* 233: 1 (2016) 185–225, here 220.

[33] Walter, *Colonial Violence*, 161. For further such treatments, see Hull, *Absolute Destruction*; Frémeaux, *De quoi*; Sibylle Scheipers, 'Counterinsurgency or Irregular Warfare? Historiography and the Study of "Small Wars"', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25: 5–6 (2014) 879–899; Joseph R. Vergolina, '"Methods of Barbarism" or Western Tradition? Britain, South Africa, and the Evolution of Escalatory Violence as Policy', *Journal of Military History* 77: 4 (2013) 1303–1327.

This importance of racial thought is apparent in two recent strands of interpretation of colonial violence and warfare that have deeply influenced my thinking about the ideational content of the colonial way of war. The first strand, represented by scholars such as Kim Wagner, Gavin Rand, William Gallois, James Hevia and Elizabeth Kolsky, emphasises that such violence always had important communicative and performative aspects: The practitioners of colonial war employed certain modes of violence in order to convey and perform a certain message to what they generally thought of as the 'native mind'.[34] While my approach differs somewhat from the aforementioned scholars, I share the belief that in committing such acts of violence the practitioners were very much concerned with the effect their violence would have on the 'natives' – however distorted their comprehension of that supposed 'native mind' was. As Wagner has noted, 'It was precisely because of the perceived need for a culturally specific 'translation' of violence that colonial punishment and military campaigns in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were so demonstratively brutal.'[35] Such notions of 'cultural warfare' inform my understanding of the 'basic imperatives'. Its colonial practitioners frequently viewed brutal violence as a way of exerting a particular effect on the 'native mind' and thus conveying a message that would supposedly be understood by their interlocutors.

'Cultural warfare' generally also found expression in the 'spectacular atrocities' that accompanied most colonial wars and were so clearly predicated on racial alterity. In Aceh, for instance, many in the colonial army believed that decapitating killed Acehnese had a particularly deterrent effect, as it would supposedly deny Muslims entry into heaven.[36] Other recurring atrocities of this type included the mutilation of enemy bodies, the public display or parading of severed body parts, or blithe posing next to the piles of bodies resulting from colonial massacres. (Cultural warfare was, however, not the only rationale for collecting body parts; it was, for instance, also pursued by Western scientists for the sake

[34] Wagner, 'Calculated'; Gavin Rand, 'From the Black Mountain to Waziristan: Culture and Combat on the North-West Frontier', in Kaushik Roy and Gavin Rand, eds., *Culture, Conflict and the Military in Colonial South Asia* (New Delhi 2017) 131–156; William Gallois, 'Dahra and the History of Violence in Early Colonial Algeria', in Martin Thomas, ed., *The French Colonial Mind II: Violence, Military Encounters, and Colonialism* (Lincoln, NE 2012) 3–25; William Gallois, *A History of Violence in the Early Algerian Colony* (Basingstoke 2013); James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham, NC 2003) 182–206, 220–229; Elizabeth Kolsky, 'The Colonial Rule of Law and the Legal Regime of Exception: Frontier "Fanaticism" and State Violence in British India', *The American Historical Review* 120: 4 (2015) 1218–1246.

[35] Wagner, 'Calculated', 221. [36] See Chapter 3.