# *War and Conflict in the Early Modern World, 1500–1700* by Brian Sandberg (review)


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Richard Owen, a nineteenth-century British anatomist, took over where the Frenchman left off. He provided the great sloth "with a skin and a history, an identity and habits—a life" (283). He also showed that animals of the distant past did not necessarily behave the same way. Megatherium never dangled from branches like modern sloths. It used its strong limbs to rear up to forage leaves high off the ground.

Ganda and the Megatherium appear to have very different histories, but, as Pimentel points out, both have very deep roots in the past. One brought the wonders of the Orient to the west, whereas the other brought those of remote geological time. They must indeed have seemed almost extraterrestrial, prodigies of nature, chimeras. These two extraordinary creatures expanded both the frontiers of what was zoologically real and what was possible to imagine.

Pimentel tellingly asks in his engrossing account of Megatherium, "What is more fascinating than the history of how we came to know what we know?" (262). This question distills the essence of his skilled, beautifully written (and superbly translated) essay. Pimentel must have had great fun writing what may well become a classic work about the intricacies of scientific research.

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*War and Conflict in the Early Modern World, 1500–1700*. By Brian Sandberg (Malden, Mass., Polity, 2016) 362 pp. $24.00

This exciting, informed global history covering a great span of time and place will appeal to scholars who want a survey text about war and society after 1500 that is firmly non-Eurocentric; its points of detail and interdisciplinary methodologies will interest specialists. Although the book under review is a history, it draws from geography, sociology, anthropology, and economics, not least by way of Sandberg's use of a variety of methodological approaches to explore the complex dynamics of early modern warfare. These approaches pivot on "military revolutions" and technology diffusion, "encounters" with biological exchanges and migrations, "new imperial histories" of colonial trade routes and conflict generation, "connected histories" of transnational economic networks, and "state development" studies of the changing administrative and financial techniques supporting early modern warfare. These embedded methodologies emphasize differing historical explanations, helping to make sense of the changing relationship between war and society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Sandberg challenges the accepted periodization that world wars emerged only after the French and industrial revolutions, instead placing the early modern period center-stage for our understanding of war as a global, cultural phenomenon and arguing persuasively that war had

transformed as such by 1700. War accompanied European cultural and economic expansion; only mountainous inland areas escaped the direct touch of European traders, functionaries, missionaries, and soldiers. This is not a radical new thesis, but Sandberg's work usefully synthesizes scholarship about the subject, enhancing existing paradigms of conflict and change in the early modern era.

The book's non-Eurocentric approach is welcome, but it struggles to escape the gravitational pull of emerging European power and the mobilization of new technologies after Christopher Columbus and Vasco de Gama kick-started the European age of "discovery" in the 1490s. Sandberg argues that "technological developments were not exclusively European in nature, nor were technology transfers unidirectional" (302), but it is doubtful that the world would have become "global" in the way that it did without the driver of European expansion. That said, Sandberg's focus on transnational and global themes brightens the text, not least with his many examples of dynamic non-European reactions to this changing world. Tellingly, only the last chapter examines conventional "territorial" warfare. In this chapter, as in all his chapters, the book introduces many non-European examples to develop debates. The fact that Europe initiated much of the warfare during the early modern period does not mean that the story must be told from a European perspective, as this book proves.

The point that, in a Weberian sense, the states in this period never had a monopoly on violence is well taken. It allows discussion of what Sandberg calls an "organized armed violence" from 1500 to 1700 that assumed many forms—the violence of warrior elites, peasant revolts, tax disputes, vendettas, dueling, piracy, and raiding warfare, among others. Meanwhile, regional officials conducted their own violence, mobilizing troops at the local level. "A stunning array of individuals and organizations orchestrated military activity during the early modern period" (3). Sandberg aptly demonstrates that the modern post-Enlightenment nation-state, with its control of violence and its mobilization of citizens, emerged into a world that was truly global, formed by the radical transformations that occurred after 1500.

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*Once Within Boundaries: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging*. By Charles S. Maier (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2016) 387 pp. $29.95

"As we know," Foucault announced in a famous 1964 lecture, "the great obsession of the nineteenth century was history: themes of development and arrest, themes of crisis and cycle, themes of accumulation of the past, a great overload of dead people, the threat of global cooling. . . . The present age may be the age of space instead. We are in an era of the