



# European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire

ISSN: 1350-7486 (Print) 1469-8293 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cerh20>

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To cite this article: Peter H. Wilson (2020) Foreign military labour in Europe's transition to modernity, European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire, 27:1-2, 12-32, DOI: [10.1080/13507486.2019.1699504](https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2019.1699504)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2019.1699504>



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Published online: 06 Mar 2020.



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# Foreign military labour in Europe's transition to modernity

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## ABSTRACT

Foreign soldiers were a major element in virtually all European armies between the early sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. The extent and duration of their use clearly indicates they were far more than a temporary expedient adopted solely until states acquired the capacity to organize forces from their own inhabitants. Rather than being a hindrance to state formation, they were integral to that process. Likewise, the formation of European states and an international system based on indivisible sovereignty was not purely competitive: it also entailed cooperation. The transfer of foreign military labour is an important example of this and is central to what can be labelled the European Fiscal-Military System, which assisted the emergence of a sovereign state order and was dismantled as that order consolidated in the later nineteenth century. Wilson's article articulates 'foreign soldiers' as an alternative to the problematic term 'mercenaries', and examines their motives, explaining how and why foreign soldiers were recruited by early modern European states, as well as assessing the scale of their employment. The article concludes that the de-legitimation of foreign military labour was connected to fashioning the modern ideals of the citizen-in-arms as part of a more general process of nationalizing war-making.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 10 February 2019

Accepted 27 November 2019

## KEYWORDS

foreign soldiers; foreign fighters; mercenaries; Fiscal-Military System

Foreign soldiers were a structural feature of early modern European warfare and essential to both the growing scale of conflict, as well as to the establishment of permanent state-controlled armed forces. Their significance has been obscured by their general characterization as 'mercenaries' in contemporary polemic and later scholarship. Mercenaries have generally been regarded as unwelcome expedients, used by states that either lacked the capacity to organize forces from their own inhabitants, or were ruled by authoritarian elites who preferred foreigners who would not sympathize with domestic opponents.<sup>1</sup> Their widespread use thus becomes a stage in what is generally narrated as the progressive modernization of states and armed forces towards the so-called Westphalian model of the sovereign national state possessing a monopoly on legitimate violence. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars are widely hailed as the decisive breakthrough to modernity, in which 'every citizen must be a soldier, and every soldier a citizen', leading to mass armies and 'total war'.<sup>2</sup>

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Not only is this narrative a teleology, but it assumes that each successive stage is inherently superior (including in destructive potential) to those that preceded it. Political development is treated as a struggle to nationalize force by monopolizing inhabitants' military labour, both to employ it in the 'national interest', and to control 'extra-territorial violence' by preventing people from engaging in wars elsewhere, at least without permission. This idealized Westphalian model of the modern sovereign state was enshrined in international law, notably through The Hague and Geneva conventions of 1907 and 1949. The rapid proliferation of private military and security companies (PMSCs) since the 1990s is widely characterized as the 'return of the mercenary', and a sign that the modern international order is under threat and may even be declining.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly, there are clear signs that security is increasingly no longer provided by governments but instead delivered on their behalf by private companies.<sup>4</sup> During the 1991 Gulf War, the US employed 5000 contractors, with the ratio to combat troops being 1:55. By 2010, over 250,000 contractors were working for US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the ratio had shifted to 1:1. UK spending on contractors doubled across 2001–3 to reach £2bn annually, and has grown substantially since then. After its acquisition of ArmorGroup, the UK-based firm G4S became the world's largest PMSC and second-largest employer, with 657,000 personnel in 125 countries and an annual turnover of £7.52bn in 2011.<sup>5</sup> Services range well beyond equipment maintenance, logistics and conventional security, and include intelligence, cyber warfare and the provision of combat forces on land, air and sea.<sup>6</sup>

Accountable to shareholders, not voters, PMSCs are widely criticized within the media and scholarly literature as 'foreign' elements within national states threatening the 'democratic bargain' of citizenship in return for military service.<sup>7</sup> It is thus timely to re-examine the place of foreign soldiers in the development of centralized states in Europe across the early modern/modern divide. In doing so, this article will articulate 'foreign soldiers' as an alternative to the problematic term 'mercenaries', before briefly examining their motives and how these might help inform debates on what today are called 'foreign fighters'. It will explain how and why foreign soldiers were recruited by early modern European states and assess the scale of their employment. The article then concentrates on how the de-legitimation of foreign military labour was connected to fashioning the modern ideals of the citizen-in-arms and how this belonged to a more general process of nationalizing war-making.

## Foreign soldiers in Europe's Fiscal-Military System

What follows constitutes initial findings from a wider project on how European states raised war-making resources from beyond their own populations and frontiers, and what influence this had on the processes of both state-formation and the development of an international order resting on sovereign national states. It examines the element of cooperation in what is otherwise regarded as an inherently competitive, Darwinian struggle for the survival of the fittest. Thus, the project aims to complement and extend the existing analytical models of the Fiscal-Military State and the Contractor State. The former emphasizes institution-building and *revenue* raising as each state supposedly strove for autarky through institution-building to maximize resource-extraction.<sup>8</sup> The latter stresses the continued significance of the 'private', in the form of contractors and

military entrepreneurs, amidst the development of the 'public' (i.e. the early modern state) and examines this primarily through *expenditure*.<sup>9</sup>

While both approaches provide valuable insights into the relationship between war finance and state development, they generally overlook that inter-state competition was only possible through cooperation with allies, neutrals and even enemies, since states rarely obtained all they needed from their own populations, while governments were usually unable to prevent their own subjects from aiding other powers. Mutuality extended to how states were legitimated, since it was not enough for a state to assert itself militarily; it also had to be recognized as a 'state' by its neighbours, some of whom might be long-standing enemies. The emergence of diplomatic conventions and international law were only two aspects of this process. Europe contained many semi-sovereign entities, like the German and Italian principalities and city-states, which not only struggled to preserve or enhance their autonomy, but also provided war-making resources to other, larger states. A host of non-state actors, like merchants, entrepreneurs and bankers, were also involved in supplying war-making resources. These partnerships became sufficiently dense and extensive as to constitute what can properly be called a 'Fiscal-Military System' in the accepted definition of a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole. Transfers within the system were handled by intermediaries often based in cities which were not necessarily political capitals, but which functioned as 'hubs', or nodal points. The system evolved in parallel with state sovereignty from the 1530s, maturing around 1700 before being progressively dismantled as national states were consolidated between about 1790 and 1870. War-making became fully nationalized, and the last elements of 'private' or semi-private extra-territorial violence were almost eliminated. That age is now gone or at least fading rapidly as we enter a postmodern, post-sovereign world order.<sup>10</sup>

## A taxonomy of foreign military labour

This article focuses on foreign military personnel, who were the most obvious and politically significant aspect of the Fiscal-Military System, alongside the other five primary forms of war-making resources: expertise; information and intelligence; finance and credit; war materials; and the provision of services such as the use of port facilities or transit rights.<sup>11</sup> Analysis of foreign soldiers has been clouded by their categorization as 'mercenaries'. Virtually all definitions share three characteristics.<sup>12</sup> First, mercenaries are allegedly a transhistorical phenomenon which has 'existed since time immemorial' and thus a fact of nature, seemingly everywhere and beyond interpretation.<sup>13</sup> This is reflected through historical surveys charting the use of mercenaries since the ancient world, as well as frequent, if also highly problematic comparisons with prostitution.<sup>14</sup> The second characteristic is that mercenaries are 'foreign' in the sense of being non-citizens and non-nationals who have no (legitimate) stake in the conflicts they are involved in. Thirdly, their motivation is invariably characterized as self-interest, especially pecuniary in the popular euphemisms 'guns for hire' or 'soldiers of fortune'.

Clearly, the standard definition has been fashioned through moral critiques and political discourse.<sup>15</sup> This is not to say that it might not still carry analytical weight in some contexts, but for present purposes it would be better to use the term 'foreign soldier'. Individuals falling under this term are 'soldiers' in the sense that they are paid or

otherwise recompensed for their services, and that they are part of an army, defined as an institutionalized armed force and are thus not 'fighters' or 'warriors' whose relationship to organized forces is different.<sup>16</sup> The categorization as soldiers has wider significance. Article 47 of the Additional Protocol of the Geneva Convention, the main statement on mercenaries in international law, was drafted in response to the high-profile presence of Western and South African personnel in various African civil wars during the 1960s and 1970s. Following pressure from leading Western powers, personnel like French Foreign Legionaries and the Gurkhas in the British Army were excluded on the grounds they were serving in permanently integrated units.<sup>17</sup> This has led some scholars to advocate adding a fourth characteristic defining mercenaries as 'private' forces only temporarily under state control while paid, in an effort to single them out as a small group of 'illegitimate service providers' distinct from PMSCs.<sup>18</sup> However, in practice it has proved easy for states to circumvent formal legal restrictions by temporarily integrating foreign personnel and even providing them with passports.

These contemporary problems highlight the difficulties of defining 'foreign' conventionally through citizenship and nationality. Early modern states lacked codified definitions of either of these categories and applied their own naturalization processes inconsistently.<sup>19</sup> More fundamentally, nationality is also a historical construct, and there are serious methodological issues surrounding its application even to the contemporary world. Thus, 'foreign' is more usefully defined politically as alien to the jurisdiction of the war-making power employing those soldiers. For example, the Flemish, Walloon, Burgundian and Italian troops in the early modern Spanish army were not 'foreign' to the Spanish empire, despite not being Castilians and being grouped into different 'national' regiments. Conversely, the Irish, Swiss and German troops were 'foreign' to the empire and their recruitment differed from that of other units from the various parts of the composite Spanish monarchy.<sup>20</sup> The same applied to modern empires whose colonial soldiers were not 'foreign' despite lacking citizenship.<sup>21</sup> Governments' ability to recruit their own subjects has of course varied considerably with regions or social groups being exempt from conscription, for example. Likewise, not all regions or population groups have been equally willing to serve, and some, like sixteenth and seventeenth-century Irish Catholics, were often more inclined to join their sovereign's enemies. Nonetheless, 'foreignness' was consistent across all these cases in that the recruiting power was obliged to rely on an external agent to obtain personnel.

The question of definition leads directly to that of foreign soldiers' motives. Their conventional classification as 'guns for hire' suggests only financial self-interest. By contrast, most discussions of conscripts stress the element of compulsion, while the term 'volunteer' is usually associated with self-sacrifice, value-based decisions, honourable causes and ideology. In practice, citizen armies have relied heavily on conscription.<sup>22</sup> Like 'mercenary', the terms 'volunteer' and 'citizens-in-arms' are largely moral and ideological constructs which have been powerfully shaped by Western, Christian just-war doctrine and its definition of legitimate killing.<sup>23</sup> Yet, as Uwe Steinhoff argues, 'it is anything but clear why killing for the nation ... or for glory or in order to make one's girlfriend or mother proud and happy is more "appropriate" than killing for money.'<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, much recent scholarship rejects the classic 'homo economicus' model of human behaviour driven by rational self-interest.<sup>25</sup> In practice, it is extremely difficult to

disentangle motives which could change even for the same individual according to circumstances.<sup>26</sup> Any distinction is further blurred by the actual practice and conditions of service: generally, regardless of how and why they were recruited, all soldiers were integrated within a formed unit, and were paid, fed, clothed and accommodated. Motives nonetheless remain important, as it matters whether personnel serve another power voluntarily or because they are ordered to. The distinction has often affected how their service has been perceived and legitimated, as well as whether their home state has been considered a party to the conflict they are involved in.

The term 'foreign fighter' was scarcely used before the early 1990s but has now largely displaced other variants like 'foreign volunteer' and 'transnational soldier' to identify those who are usually portrayed as ideologically motivated individuals who travel considerable distances for causes they believe in.<sup>27</sup> Recruiters offer an infrastructure, including some kind of organized force to join, whereas terrorism relies on ad hoc groups providing a template for individual action. Identifying a distinct category of foreign fighters has some value, provided it is recognized that it is not a purely modern phenomenon, as will be shown later in this article. Generally, what distinguishes the various categories of military personnel is not their actual motives or employment, but how they are perceived and legitimated. One distinction nonetheless holds up: foreign soldiers seek employment and are a phenomenon of peace as well as war, whereas foreign fighters look for a fight and are usually only found in times of conflict.

## Recruitment methods

Early modern European foreign soldiers were recruited through contracts between an employer (principal) and a provider (agent). Generally, the latter was an intermediary between the principal and the actual personnel, such as the 'military enterprisers' who raised and commanded regiments for various powers, or a government that provided existing or new troops to serve another power. Fritz Redlich's classic study of military enterprisers analysed them in rational materialist terms, while more recent literature presents them as mercenaries selling soldiers 'to the highest bidder'.<sup>28</sup> Agents' motives were as complex as the soldiers they recruited, and they often forewent material advantages in hope of obtaining political, cultural and social benefits.<sup>29</sup> Principals were generally governments, but could include non-state actors, notably the English and Dutch armed training companies.<sup>30</sup> Regardless of the precise arrangements, the principal enjoyed superior political, financial and military power relative to the agent. This asymmetry was the reverse of that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries when powers, such as the United States, have supplied military assistance to prop up weak client states or enable them to wage wars as surrogates.

Four types of contract emerged with the Fiscal-Military System around 1530 and achieved their definitive shape as that system matured between about 1660 and 1710. Like the other elements of the system, their purpose was to minimize what was an inherently risky 'business' by providing standardized and mutually recognized ways of recruiting personnel.<sup>31</sup> One form involved foreign regiments raised by governments or non-state contractors and supplied to serve directly in the hiring power's army. Such units were not normally intended to be returned to their point of origin, but instead remained integral parts of the hirer's army until disbanded, such as the Swiss infantry in Neapolitan service

1734–89.<sup>32</sup> A second type were the auxiliaries raised by one government and supplied on a temporary basis to another power which was supposed to cover the costs of their pay and maintenance and which had operational control over the troops for an agreed period. The most famous were the so-called ‘Hessians’ employed by Britain in its failed effort to suppress the American Revolution 1776–83.<sup>33</sup> Subsidy treaties constituted a third form involving the supply of auxiliaries or exiled armies on a looser arrangement in which the beneficiary merely ‘subsidized’ the provider’s costs and exercised less direct operational control, as was increasingly common in major European wars between later sixteenth century and 1815.<sup>34</sup> Collectively, these three methods accounted for the majority of ‘foreign’ recruitment throughout this period. The fourth category involved the direct recruitment of individuals or small groups of men who were subjects of one power into the army of another power, such as the Swiss peasant Ulrich Bräker, duped into joining the Prussian Army.<sup>35</sup> This form was less significant numerically or politically than the other three types.

### **Employers’ motives**

These contractual forms developed to manage the growing demand for foreign soldiers. The early modern European labour market remained relatively inflexible into the later eighteenth century, and it was difficult in a pre-industrial age to replace human labour with machines.<sup>36</sup> Armies and civilian employers competed for the same pool of younger, healthy men. Periodic economic crises and chronic underemployment in some regions certainly pushed men to enlist, but recruitment generally remained costly and difficult, especially as a combination of personal, corporate and provincial liberties further restricted most governments’ ability to compel their subjects to serve. Overall, European armies grew ten-fold across 1500–1800 whereas population growth was only three-fold. Pressures increased once armies were retained as peacetime cadres, as well as raised for war. Far from being a consequence of the Thirty Years War, ‘standing armies’ began around 1480 in France, shortly followed by Spain, and belatedly by the Austrian Habsburgs around 1570.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, we must dispense with the cliché that this was an age of relatively bloodless ‘limited war’. Infantry Regiment Hessen-Darmstadt lost 35% of its strength in the first nine months of the 1663–4 campaign in the emperor’s service.<sup>38</sup> It was not uncommon for regiments to replace their original manpower two or three times over during major eighteenth-century wars, an attrition rate comparable to the First World War.<sup>39</sup> Even in peacetime, around 10–20% of strength had to be replaced annually.

In addition to supplying raw numbers, employing foreigners offered greater flexibility. Early modern European armies operated without trained reserves, adding to the pressures to find large numbers of new recruits at the outbreak of each conflict. Recruitment abroad or the hire of foreign auxiliaries was particularly welcome because these were often already trained, armed and equipped. For Britain, this also removed the need to transport its own troops to fight in continental Europe, since armies could be assembled from auxiliaries and subsidized forces where needed. As these were foreigners, a government’s obligations generally terminated with the contract, making demobilization easier than for indigenous soldiers who would have to be reintegrated back into the economy and society.

Assessment of foreign soldiers' actual quality has been clouded by the longstanding critique of mercenaries as disloyal, cowardly and undisciplined. Famously articulated by Machiavelli and canonized through its repetition by Clausewitz, this damning verdict has led to the widely held assumption that they were employed simply as an expedient.<sup>40</sup> The flipside of this is the belief that foreign fighters have been more effective than locals and have contributed to the success of insurgencies.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, early modern Europeans voiced all the complaints featuring in the moral and ideological condemnation of mercenaries, and these prompted Naples to disband its Swiss regiments in 1789.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, various parts of Europe were already famous in the sixteenth century for supplying particular types of soldier, such as Swiss pikemen and Albanian light cavalry. These regional characteristics were largely eliminated through the convergence by 1650 in how armies were organized, trained and armed. Nonetheless, national stereotypes persisted, with the Swiss prized for their reliability and steadiness, the Neapolitan case notwithstanding.

Conversely, foreigners could prove attractive as 'cannon fodder' to spare native subjects, particularly with the spread of mercantilist thinking, which prized population as a key source of national wealth. Mid-eighteenth-century Prussia recruited 'free battalions' from deserters and foreigners to augment its army rapidly in wartime and for use in dangerous tactical situations. Britain retained around a third of its army at home after 1715 to counter the danger of a Jacobite rising, relying on foreign troops to make up its 'continental commitment' to its European allies. Various German principalities used their contracts with the emperor as opportunities to rid their territories of social undesirables, including criminals pardoned in return for enlisting in units sent abroad.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, contracting foreign troops – like paying subsidies – was a means of extending political influence. France, Britain and the Dutch Republic all cultivated clients amongst the German princes, even when their troops were not immediately needed.<sup>44</sup> Hiring foreign troops was also a way of denying them to potential enemies, and France paid various German princes not to send contingents to the imperial army during the 1670s and 1730s.

For these reasons, it is not surprising that foreign soldiers contributed significantly to European forces during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Around 70% of the French royal army came from outside the kingdom in the 1570s, while Sweden drew up to 80% of its manpower from abroad during the Thirty Years War.<sup>45</sup> The proportion in the French army varied between 10% and 32% across the seventeenth century and was steady at 15% across the next. Though the proportion dropped somewhat, more foreigners served, because the army was now much larger.<sup>46</sup> Around 35% of the Piedmontese army were foreign, mainly Germans and Swiss.<sup>47</sup> The proportion in the Prussian army rose from 20% in 1713 to peak at around half in the mid-century, before declining to 36% by 1806, though it was relatively exceptional in Europe in that foreigners were not organized into separate units. Only around 5% of these foreigners came from outside the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>48</sup> The Dutch East India Company (VOC) sent nearly 1 million employees to Asia, of whom around half were foreigners, mostly Germans. One in six employees was a soldier.<sup>49</sup> By contrast, foreign fighters have never been significant numerically.

## Foreign soldiers and fighters in early modern Europe

Foreign soldiers were integral to the emergence of permanent forces in Europe, something which is usually viewed as part of a process of national state-building. Outsiders

had served before, but the scale, character and significance of foreign military labour shifted profoundly between about 1530 and 1570. The period 1470–1530 saw the peak of the demographic and economic recovery from the Black Death, providing more resources and fuelling major growth in the scale of warfare. Simultaneously, the dynamics of monarchical competition shifted dramatically the Habsburgs' accumulation of lands from the Atlantic to the Balkans, increasing the potential for war on multiple fronts, as demonstrated by the Italian Wars between 1494 and 1559.<sup>50</sup> Yet, states' foundations remained fragile and their authority was often contested by influential sections of society and by the poor. Most conflicts before the mid-seventeenth century involved disputes over the form of government and the exercise of sovereignty. All these problems were exacerbated by the Reformation after 1517, Europe's first permanent religious schism since the mid-eleventh century. The monarch's assertion of the right to decide between competing versions of Christianity represented a monumental increase in royal authority that proved violently controversial, notably in France and the Netherlands after the 1560s. The efforts of church and state to enforce conformity with officially sanctioned belief 'confessionalized' society. Though dissent remained widespread, the process of confessionalization forged new bonds across space where, for example, the fate of Bohemian Protestants now became a concern of ordinary Londoners whose information came from the rapidly diversifying print media.<sup>51</sup>

This situation already fostered the emergence of the ideologically motivated foreign fighter, well before the late-eighteenth-century 'Atlantic revolutions' to which they are commonly dated.<sup>52</sup> Examples include the many Britons angry with their government's apparent failure to assist beleaguered continental Protestants in the 1620s and 1630s who joined the wars in France, the Netherlands and Germany.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the numerous civil wars and the process of confessionalization created exiles who served other governments in the hope of eventually liberating their homeland. The Huguenots in many armies between 1685 and 1720 are the most famous example.<sup>54</sup> These early modern foreign fighters encountered exactly the same structural problems faced by their contemporary equivalents, including often being at odds with their own governments, facing considerable practical difficulties travelling to the war zone, and finding language and culture a barrier to integration if they reached the front. Likewise, their presence amongst the far more numerous foreign soldiers has complicated how both categories have been interpreted historically.

### **From foreign soldiers to citizens-in-arms**

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic era saw both the peak of the Fiscal-Military System and the onset of its demise. Much of Europe still relied on established practices to fund war and raise troops. Britain subsidized all the coalitions assembled against France, either supplying cash, credit and arms, or by taking continental troops directly into its own pay. Numerous foreign 'legions' also served in the British, French, Russian and other armies.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, the Revolution amplified existing criticism of foreign soldiers who, because they were more visible than natives, were already scapegoats for more general problems inherent in old-regime armies. The long peace after 1763 encouraged financial retrenchment, and in most armies pay remained static across much of the century, despite rising prices. Lack of attractive alternatives in civilian employment encouraged soldiers to re-enlist once their initial contracts expired, and this was often encouraged by

commanders keen to avoid the trouble and expense of finding and training replacements. Consequently, many armies contained superannuated, demoralized soldiers.

There are some indications that financial constraints squeezed recruiters' profits and made it harder to find good quality manpower abroad.<sup>56</sup> However, there is little evidence to substantiate contemporary claims that foreign soldiers were markedly inferior to their native counterparts, particularly from the perspective of the authorities employing them. A detachment of the Swiss Salis Regiment defended the Bastille in 1789, while men from the French Royal Guards were prominent amongst the attacking mob. More significantly, foreign soldiers also had advocates within Enlightened thought even after 1789. The Spanish minister Count Campomanes favoured augmenting the Swiss units within his country's forces in 1792.<sup>57</sup>

It was far from inevitable that citizens-in-arms would replace mercenaries.<sup>58</sup> However, the French revolutionaries were trapped in the logic of national sovereignty. The long-standing civic republican critique of mercenaries on moral as much as practical grounds necessitated repudiation of their use.<sup>59</sup> As outsiders, foreigners were incompatible with the ideal of a nation-state and its virtuous republican government, and from the outset the revolutionaries insisted every soldier must be a citizen. Despite their expectations, the famous *levée en masse* failed to sustain French forces, while volunteers were not noticeably more effective in battle, and suffered rates of desertion often exceeding those of professional troops. Explanations for France's relatively favourable military position by 1802 are complex and extend beyond issues of soldiers' motivation.<sup>60</sup> The myth of the motivated patriot was too central to revolutionary ideology to be jettisoned, and the practical shortcomings were masked effectively by propaganda.<sup>61</sup> More immediately, the ideal of universal patriotic duty proved readily adaptable to legitimate conscription after 1793. Coupled with the Revolution's general assault on individual, corporate and regional privileges, this enabled the central authorities to tap national resources to an unprecedented extent.

Crucially, these resources were now considerably larger than before. Since the mid-fourteenth century, Europe's population had grown only modestly, often slowed or retarded by mortality crises marked by war and epidemics. A steady, accelerating rise set in during the 1730s, giving the eighteenth century an overall increase of 14%, compared to 4.5% over the previous hundred years. Growth in France was particularly impressive, and Napoleon had 25% more Frenchmen to command than did Louis XIV. French conquests after 1792 added new resources, with the proportion of conscripts from the newly annexed departments rising from 16.6% in 1800–4 to 20.5% in 1808, and 25.6% by 1814. The system of satellite states provided access to substantial foreign forces as nominal allies: the Confederation of the Rhine provided 100,000 men, while a further 180,000 came from the duchy of Warsaw and the kingdoms of Italy and Westphalia. The external contribution was particularly obvious in the disastrous 1812 campaign when 21 of the 35 infantry divisions were provided by allies, while many of the conscripts in the other 15 were only 'French' through the annexation of their homelands.<sup>62</sup>

These developments were largely reversed, not simply through Napoleon's defeat and the reduction of France to its 1792 frontiers, but because – like so much else in Restoration Europe – the period after 1815 saw strong continuities with the pre-revolutionary era. Foreign military service carried on, though on a somewhat reduced scale. Spain organized an Italian regiment in 1815, even though it had not held territory there since 1700. France, Spain, Naples and the Netherlands all re-established Swiss infantry regiments as integral

parts of their armies. These drew directly on previous practice. For instance, the Swiss had contracted to provide 12,000 infantrymen to the newly restored Bourbons in July 1814. Napoleon ordered them disbanded in April 1815, but in practice some men joined his Second Foreign Regiment, which survived until October. Negotiations reopened in February 1816 with a contract concluded between Louis XVIII and the Swiss cantons on 1 June for two guard and four line infantry regiments. The 39 articles were based on those of previous Franco-Swiss contracts and included various safeguards, such as the stipulation that France could not deploy the troops overseas or onboard ships. Each canton jealously guarded its rights to appoint the officers, many of whom had served in Napoleon's army.<sup>63</sup>

Many states still allowed their inhabitants to serve foreign powers, ensuring the continued supply of military labour. Britain made little effort to prevent over 5000 men joining the liberal insurgencies in Spanish America, partly because this was regarded as a welcome opportunity to rid the country of demobilized soldiers considered a threat to public order amidst the economic downturn after 1815.<sup>64</sup>

Nonetheless, both the supply and demand for foreign soldiers increasingly clashed with the ideal of national sovereignty and new concepts of neutrality emerging after 1815, as well as the changing political, social, economic and global context. Ideology resurfaced every time domestic politics lurched to the left, notably in the 1830 Revolution, which prompted the new liberal French monarchy to cancel its contract with the Swiss and return the six infantry regiments in September 1830.<sup>65</sup> It was easier to dispense with their services, because military manpower demands declined relative to the capacity of state, society and economy to meet them, compared to the situation prior to 1792. The half-century after 1815 was not an age of mass armies. Custoza in July 1848, the largest battle in this period, involved 144,000 men, of whom only around half were engaged, while the total loss of 7900 included prisoners.<sup>66</sup> Battles involving 100,000 or more were already fairly common by 1700 when population levels were much lower.

Universal military service remained a formal obligation in most states, but actual conscription systems were far from universal. Politicians and generals alike distrusted conscripts and preferred long-serving professionals. Obligatory military duty was usually for four to five years, followed by a lengthy period in the reserve involving periodic recall for refresher training. Many conscripts simply re-enlisted after their initial service, and so became professionals. All conscription laws allowed exemptions on social and economic grounds and permitted those selected to pay a substitute. The 1854 Piedmontese law, based on that in France from 1818, included 46 ways to avoid the draft or buy an exemption. Consequently, only 10 to 20% of eligible manpower was called up.<sup>67</sup>

Continued population growth and the industrialization of much of north-western Europe involving mechanization – much of it staffed by female labour – further boosted society's capacity to absorb recruitment demands. Only smaller, less economically developed states seeking to maintain disproportionately large armies still encountered serious difficulties, and these were the ones employing significant numbers of foreign soldiers: Spain; Portugal; Naples; and the Papacy.<sup>68</sup> Technological advances enabled states to make more efficient use of the soldiers they already had. Already by 1848, troops were being moved by railway to suppress internal unrest and confront external enemies, while steamships greatly accelerated the despatch of expeditionary forces, as in the Crimean War.<sup>69</sup>

European imperialism simultaneously opened access to additional military manpower overseas. Local auxiliaries had already been employed in the fifteenth century, partly as

European numbers were generally too small, but also because the indigenous population was less susceptible to disease and skilled in local ways of war. The changing character of imperialism during the nineteenth century added to the existing incentives to use local manpower which was abundant and cheap, while its employment absorbed labour which might otherwise pose a security threat to European colonies and conferred a degree of legitimacy on imperial control.<sup>70</sup> Above all, the restriction of national sovereignty to the European metropole made it difficult to legitimate the despatch of citizen soldiers beyond their 'homeland'.

Local forces remained institutionally distinct from metropolitan troops but were now increasingly nationalized in the sense that the colonial powers recruited their own subjects, rather than employing other military labour. France developed the *Armée d'Afrique* in North Africa after 1830, using discharged Swiss soldiers as the nucleus of the new Foreign Legion. The famous Zouaves were created from the white settler population in Algeria, while loyal locals were recruited into the *Tirailleurs Algerien* and the *Spahi* cavalry. Separate units of *Tirailleurs* were later created in Senegal and Indo-China. Meanwhile, the *Troupes de Marine*, an all-volunteer force existing since 1622, was greatly expanded after 1830 as the metropolitan element in France's imperial expansion.<sup>71</sup> The Royal Netherlands Indian Army was also established in 1830, and ceased recruiting European foreigners in 1900, switching instead to West African, Javanese and Ambonese who were Dutch colonial subjects.<sup>72</sup> Britain was exceptional in relying on a volunteer army throughout the nineteenth century, enabling it to despatch metropolitan forces to police its empire. However, it also nationalized its primary colonial army when it reorganized the three East India Company armies into a single imperial force in 1861. Simultaneously, the European infantry regiments of this force were merged into the British army and stopped recruiting foreigners.<sup>73</sup> The scale of European global conquests, coupled with the desire of the surviving non-western states to match European power simultaneously ended the presence of autonomous foreign units in non-western service, of which those employed by imperial China against the Taiping rebels in the 1860s had been the most significant.<sup>74</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, the *Force Publique* in the Belgian Congo was the only substantial colonial army still recruiting outside the colonial metropolis for its European element, while Europeans in non-western forces were now primarily national personnel despatched by their governments as foreign military missions.

All imperial armies broadly followed the same four stages across the nineteenth century. Initially, colonial troops were employed against local enemies to expand and consolidate imperial control. Increasingly, they were transported to fight indigenous enemies far from their own home, as in the case of the Indian Sepoys employed by the British against the Chinese in the Opium War of 1839–42, and then in the Persian campaign of 1858.<sup>75</sup> French colonial troops were used in the expedition to Mexico in 1864–7 and against the Vietnamese and Chinese during the conquest of Tonkin in 1884–5. France moved to a third stage involving combating European enemies when it despatched elements of the *Armée d'Afrique* to augment its forces against Russia in the Crimea in 1854. Finally, colonial troops were increasingly used to defend the metropolis, starting with elements of the *Armée d'Afrique* summoned to France to confront the German invasion in 1870.

Falling demand for foreign soldiers after 1815 coincided with declining supply, hastening their overall demise. The wars between 1792 and 1870 eliminated most of Europe's smaller states, as well as the remaining areas of fragmented sovereignty such as

the German Confederation, thus removing the principal providers of foreign troops. Most German principalities already restricted foreign enlistment by 1700 to conserve manpower for their own armies. These limits were tightened after 1815 in line with the growing idea that a citizen's first duty was towards his homeland, not a foreign power. New ideas of neutrality encouraged this too. Early modern Europeans had condemned neutrality on moral grounds as incompatible with Christian just war theory which maintained only one side could be right, and that failing to assist was akin to endorsing evil. The ideal of national sovereignty changed this by reconceptualizing the world as composed of independent states interacting as equals and each with its own legitimate interests.<sup>76</sup> The United States 1794 Neutrality Act is widely considered the first expression of this modern idea of neutrality as non-interference.<sup>77</sup> Pressure from merchants and maritime insurers meanwhile encouraged similar action on the seas, culminating in the Declaration of Paris banning privateering in 1856.<sup>78</sup>

The reduction in supply and demand squeezed the market for foreign soldiers from both directions, triggering a mutually reinforcing effect. Once one state closed itself to foreign recruitment, its traditional clients found it harder to obtain further recruits and so intensified their own efforts to nationalize war-making and prevent the export of labour. Recruiting difficulties prompted the Dutch to return their two Nassau regiments in 1815 and 1820, followed by the four Swiss units in 1829. Spain disbanded its Italian regiment for the same reason in 1818.<sup>79</sup>

There was no sudden break with past practice, with established elements continuing across 1830–70 alongside new forms. Britain last used foreign soldiers in the Crimean War, though its Swiss, Italian and German legions did not see action and many of the men were subsequently set to populate South Africa.<sup>80</sup> Having tacitly permitted volunteers to serve in the Greek War of Independence 1821–9, Britain allowed the recruitment of two large auxiliary corps to support the liberal regimes in the Portuguese (1828–34) and Spanish (1835–8) civil wars, even temporarily suspending its 1819 ban on foreign enlistment in the latter case.<sup>81</sup> Austria, France and Belgium granted serving soldiers leave of absence to join the Papal and Neapolitan armies 1859–70, as well as the Austrian and Belgian legions defending the doomed Mexican empire of Habsburg Archduke Maximilian in 1864–7. Numerous Irishmen independently joined the St Patrick's Battalion in the Papal army in 1860. These units were structured conventionally as foreign regiments, but incorporated ideological elements associated with foreign fighters, particularly in the case of the Papal Zouaves recruited from conservative Catholic volunteers.<sup>82</sup>

A similar blending of old and new was manifest in the various liberal volunteer units that sprang up during the 1848 Revolutions and continued into the 1870s. For example, Garibaldi's insurgent army that destroyed the kingdom of Naples in 1860–1 contained numerous Piedmontese soldiers given leave of absence by their government. The unit of Hungarian exiles fighting with Garibaldi was subsequently employed by the army of the newly united Italy to suppress the large-scale conservative insurrection in Naples 1861–5.<sup>83</sup> With the demise of Naples and the Papal State by 1871, foreign regiments effectively disappeared. Meanwhile, the true impact of industrial, mass warfare was demonstrated by Prussia's victory over France in 1870–1, prompting most European countries to finally align their conscription laws with the rhetoric of universal service, completing the nationalization of military labour.

## Conclusions

Foreign soldiers were a major element in virtually all European armies between the early sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. The extent and duration of their use clearly indicates they were far more than a temporary expedient adopted solely until states acquired the capacity to organize forces from their own inhabitants. Rather than being a hindrance to state formation, they were integral to that process.

Likewise, the formation of European states and an international system based on indivisible sovereignty was not purely competitive: it also entailed cooperation. The transfer of foreign military labour is an important example of this and is central to what can be labelled the European Fiscal-Military System, which assisted the emergence of a sovereign state order and was dismantled as that order consolidated in the later nineteenth century. The right to enter the honourable service of a foreign potentate, which had previously been an expression of individual or corporate liberties, now became treason to the nation.

There had already been instances of ideologically motivated military volunteering during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These re-emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century, but their legitimization also matched that of the new concept of citizen armies in resting on the new language of liberal nationalism and self-determination. Ideology certainly played a significant part in the decision to nationalize warfare and eliminate foreign service, but this process was far from sudden and can only be fully explained when set in its broader political, demographic, social, economic and global context.

## Notes

1. The classic statement is the widely cited article by Kiernan, "Foreign Mercenaries and Absolute Monarchy," 66–86. Other examples include Howard, *War in European History*, 17–38; Peter Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 23–9.
2. Edmond-Louis-Alexis Dubois de Crancé, Dec. 1789, quoted in Tozzi, *Nationalizing France's Army*, 3. See also Bell, *The First Total War*; Clausewitz, *On War*, 591.
3. Förster, et al. eds., *Rückkehr der Condottieri?*; Jäger and Kümmel, eds., *Private Military and Security Companies*; Carmola, *Private Security Contractors and New Wars*; McFate, *The Modern Mercenary*; Mandel, *Armies without States*.
4. Eckert, *Outsourcing War*, 160–1.
5. Bruneau, *Patriots for Profit*, 114–16; Axelroyd, *Mercenaries*, 337–48.
6. For instance, Pitney Jr. and Levin, *Private Anti-Piracy Navies*.
7. Ferejohn and McCall Rosenbluth, *Forged through Fire*; Avant and Sigelmann, "Private Security and Democracy," 230–65; Grofe, "Human Rights and Private Military Companies," 241–58 at 253; Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 191–205.
8. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*. Examples of the impact of this concept include Glete, *War and the State*; Graham and Walsh, eds., *The British Fiscal Military States*; Storrs, ed., *The Fiscal-Military State*; Godsey, *The Sinews of Habsburg Power*; Torres Sánchez, ed., *War, State and Development*.
9. Knight and Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet*; Harding and Solbes Ferri, eds., *The Contractor State and its Implications*; Fynn-Paul, ed., *War, Entrepreneurs, and the State*; Bowen and Gonzáles Encisco, eds., *Mobilising Resources for War*; Conway and Torres Sánchez, eds., *The Spending of States*; Torres Sánchez, *Military Entrepreneurs and the Spanish Contractor State*.
10. This argument is developed further in Wilson, "The European Fiscal-Military System."
11. These categories are defined in Wilson, "The Exchange of War-Making Resources."

12. Examples include Fitzsimmons, *Private Security Companies*, 221; Kinsey, *Corporate Soldiers*, 19; Andreouloulos and Brandle, "Revisiting the Role of Private Military and Security Companies," 1–20; Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 19–20.
13. International Committee of the Red Cross commentary on the condemnation of mercenaries in Article 47, Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Convention, 1977: Sandoz et al., *The Geneva Conventions*, 577.
14. Calazans, *Private Military and Security Companies*, 7–21; Varin, *Mercenaries*, 9–18; Burchett and Roebuck, *The Whores of War*.
15. Spencer, *Romantic Narratives in International Politics*, 139–60; Percy, *Mercenaries*.
16. Wilson, "Defining Military Culture", 11–41.
17. Burmester, "The Recruitment and Use of Mercenaries," 37–56; Maaß, *Der Söldner und seine kriegsvölkerrechtliche Rechtsstellung*, 35–170.
18. Hampson, "Mercenaries," 3–38 at 5–6; Tonkin, *State Control*, 28–35; Ortiz, "The Private Military Company," 55–68 (61).
19. Tozzi, *Nationalizing France's Army*, 8–9.
20. Stradling, *The Spanish Monarchy and Irish Mercenaries*; Mesa, *The Irish in the Spanish Armies*.
21. Arielli, *From Byron to Bin Laden*, 8–9.
22. Hippler, *Citizens, Soldiers and National Armies*; Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters*; Stoker, Schneid and Blainton, eds., *Conscription in the Napoleonic Era*.
23. Johnson, *Just War Tradition*.
24. Steinhoff, "Ethics and Mercenaries," 137–51 at 140.
25. Drutschmann, "Informal Regulation," 443–56.
26. Berkovich, *Motivation in War*; Arielli, *From Byron*, 8, 69–95.
27. Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 14–32, 215–17; Arielli and Collins, eds., *Transnational Soldiers*.
28. Werther, "Back to the Future," 321–9 at 323; Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser*.
29. Parrott, *The Business of War*; Wilson, "The German 'Soldier Trade,'" 757–92.
30. Tzoref-Ashkenazi, *German Soldiers*; Prinz, *Das Württembergische Kapregiment*.
31. These are discussed further in Wilson, "Mercenary Contracts as Fiscal-Military Instruments."
32. Eyer, *Die Schweizer Regimenter in Neapel*.
33. These in fact came from six different German principalities, though Hessen-Kassel supplied the majority of the 37,000 who served. Gräf, Hedwig and Wenz-Haubfleisch, eds., *Die "Hessians" im Amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskrieg*; Huck, *Soldaten gegen Nordamerika*.
34. Hartmann, *Geld als Instrument europäischer Machtpolitik*.
35. Bräker, *The Life Story and Real Adventures*.
36. For examples of how the demands of agriculture and family structures affected recruitments see Casparis, "The Swiss Mercenary System."
37. See the table in Wilson, "Warfare Under the Old Regime 1648–1792," 69–95 (80).
38. Calculated from the monthly returns in Staatsarchiv Darmstadt, E8 B180/1.
39. Jany, *Geschichte der Preussischen Armee*, II 666–7; Luh, *Ancien Regime Warfare*, 48–51.
40. Clausewitz, *On War*, 587; Alexandra, "Private Military and Security Companies," 21–37 (24).
41. Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 52–3, 197, 203. This is disputed by Arielli, *From Byron*, 151–78.
42. Eyer, *Die Schweizer Regimenter*, 419–82.
43. Wilson, "The Politics of Military Recruitment," 536–68.
44. Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*.
45. Wood, *The King's Army*, 41; Glete, *War and the State*, 34–5.
46. Rowlands, "Foreign Service," 141–65, Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, 49–50; Corvisier, *L'Armée française*, I 728, 774–5, II 962.
47. Loriga, "Soldaten in Piemont," 64–87 (65).
48. Jany, *Preussische Armee*, I 711, II 77, 240–4, III 55–6, 184–7, 372, 435–41; Fann, "Foreigners in the Prussian Army," 76–84.
49. Gelder, *Das ostindische Abenteuer*. Soldiers were also prominent amongst the Germans serving the Portuguese in India: Malekandathil, *The Germans*.

50. Mallett and Shaw, *The Italian Wars*.
51. Schilling, *Konfessionalisierung und Staatsinteressen*; Boys, *London's News Press*.
52. Arielli, *From Byron*, 3–19, 36, 215 represents the majority view in this respect.
53. Examples in Murdoch and Grosjean, *Alexander Leslie*.
54. Glozier and Onnekink, eds., *War, Religion and Service*.
55. Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder*; Gould, *Mercenaries*; Dempsey, *Napoleon's Mercenaries*; Demet, "We are Accustomed to do our Duty."
56. Suter, *Innerschweizerisches Militär-Unternehmertum*, 105–10.
57. Bolzens, "Vorteile des Gebrauchs von Schweizer Soldaten," 267–78.
58. Avant, "From Mercenary to Citizen Armies," 41–72.
59. Percy, *Mercenaries*, 99–166.
60. Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars*.
61. Moran and Waldron, eds., *The People in Arms*; Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars*.
62. Corvisier ed., *Histoire militaire de la France*, II 307; Gill, *With Eagles to Glory*. My thanks to Frederick Schneid for additional information.
63. Archives de Etat de Genève (AEG), France 28 and 29.
64. Hughes, *Conquer or Die!*
65. AEG France 32 Liquidation après Juillet 1830.
66. Berkely, *Italy in the Making*, III 353–68; Embree, *Radetzky's Marches*, 205–35.
67. Amersfoort, "The Dutch Army in Transition," 447–77; and Rovinello, "The Draft and Draftees in Italy," 479–518.
68. For instance, see Alvarez, *The Pope's Soldiers*, 80–252.
69. Köster, *Militär und Eisenbahn*; Mitchell, *The Great Train Race*; Wolmar, *Engines of War*.
70. Johnson, *True to their Salt*, 392.
71. Windrow, *Our Friends Beneath the Sands*; Porch, *The French Foreign Legion*; Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*; Anon., *Les Troupes de Marine*.
72. Moor, "The Recruitment of Indonesian Soldiers," 53–69; Kessel, "West African Soldiers."
73. Heathcote, *The Military in British India*.
74. Smith, *Mercenaries and Mandarins*; Wilson, *The Ever-Victorious Army*.
75. Inglis, *The Opium War*; English, *John Company's Last War*.
76. Gotthard, *Der liebe und werthe Fried*; Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals*.
77. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates and Sovereigns*, 78–9.
78. Lemnitzer, *Power, Law and the End of Privateering*.
79. Amersfoort, "The End of Enterprise"; Bueno, *Italiani al servizio di Spagna*, 40.
80. Bayley, *Mercenaries for the Crimea*.
81. St. Clair, *That Greece Might still be Free*; Brett, *The British Auxiliary Legion*.
82. Coulombe, *The Pope's Legion*; Duchesne, *L'expédition des volontaires belges au Mexique*.
83. Viotti, Garibaldi; Carteny, *La Legione Ungherese*.

## Acknowledgements

This article draws on initial research supported by the University of Oxford's John Fell Fund and a research grant from All Souls College. Its completion in this form was part of the 'European Fiscal-Military System c.1530–1870' project which is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No.787504).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Funding

This research was part of the 'European Fiscal-Military System c.1530–1870' project which is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No.787504).

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