Colonial Role Models: The Influence of British and Afrikaner Relations on German South-West African Treatment of African Peoples

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COLONIAL ROLE MODELS: THE INFLUENCE OF BRITISH AND AFRIKANER RELATIONS ON GERMAN SOUTH-WEST AFRICAN TREATMENT OF AFRICAN PEOPLES

A Thesis Presented

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

MAY 2013

Masters Program in History
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DEDICATION
I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Jason and Denise Geeza, who supported my academic goals since my early childhood.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since I first started my research, there are a number of people that have supported me and helped me in a great many ways.

First and foremost, I must thank my committee for their advice, support, and guidance since the beginning of my research. Dr. Andrew Donson, Dr. John Higginson, and Dr. Jon Olsen gave me insightful critiques and guidance to help me pull together a polished thesis in the end.

Furthermore, I must thank my friend Katrin Bahr, a PhD student in the German studies department here at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, for her help with the translations. Many of the old German syntax and terms were over a century old and very difficult to understand without her help.

I must also thank my close friends within the department for their kind support throughout the last few months especially, as I drove to finish each chapter on time. They were there to help me laugh and relax when I needed it most, and I will never forget their kindness – thanks to Sarah Marrs, Marwa Amer, and Jaimie Kicklighter especially!

Finally, I must thank my family: my parents, younger sister, and grandparents. Without their love and understanding throughout my graduate career here at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and my entire academic career I would not be where I am today.
ABSTRACT

COLONIAL ROLE MODELS: THE INFLUENCE OF BRITISH AND AFRIKANER RELATIONS ON GERMAN SOUTH-WEST AFRICAN TREATMENT OF AFRICAN PEOPLES

MAY 2013

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Recent scholarship on the renewed Sonderweg theory does not approach the debate with a comparative analysis. This thesis therefore presents a new argument looking at the influence of British and Afrikaner tensions in South Africa, culminating in the South African War of 1899-1902, and how their treatment of the various African peoples in their own colony influenced German South-West African colonial native policy and the larger social hierarchy within the settler colony. In analyzing the language of scholarly journals, magazine articles, and other publications of the period, one can see the direct influence of the Afrikaners, including South African Boers, on German South-West African settlers, and their eugenically infused discussion of Herero, Nama, and Bastards, within their new home. Furthermore, the relations between the German settlers and the British settlers and colonial officials in the neighboring colony serve as a case-study of the larger rivalry between Berlin and London that would later culminate in World War I. In looking at how this British colony influenced German South-West Africa in socially, politically, economically, and scientifically, one can place this new research within the context of the renewed Sonderweg debated amongst scholars like Isabel Hull and George
Steinmetz, extending the critique that Steinmetz argued in *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German State in Qingdao, Samoa, and South-West Africa.*
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INTRODUCTION

From 1904 to 1907 a brutal and expensive war raged throughout German South-West Africa, resulting in the death of the majority of the Herero chiefdom, in what is now modern day Namibia.\(^1\) Approximately forty years later World War II ended with the genocide of millions of European Jews, as well as other racial and national groups seen as Lebensunwerten: life unworthy of life in the National Socialist Third Reich. To the untrained eye, the two tragedies appear incongruous. Yet, some recent scholarship suggests a connection between the two that seeks to understand the supposedly unique nature of Germany’s violent history.

Comprehensive and significant works on the Kaiserreich as well as German colonial ambitions through to 1945 published after the Second World War explored these themes of trajectory and exceptionalism.\(^2\) These works, largely contributing to the theory of the German Sonderweg, took on the characteristics of the Cold War period from which they emerged.\(^3\) Resurgence in scholarly works on German colonialism, particularly German South-West Africa occurred around the turn of the twenty-first century. Scholars such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Isabel Hull, Mary Townsend, and Lora Wildenthal, have spurred debates within the field. These debates range from how the field should be researched and represented to whether or not the Herero-Nama War in Southwest Africa can qualify as genocide. Taken together these recent works open the field for further research.

\(^1\) Exact figures as to the deaths in battles as well as in the concentration camps are unavailable and can only be surmised from mentions in various documents.

\(^2\) Kaiserreich refers to the period of Imperial Germany from 1871 (unification) to through the First World War.

\(^3\) Sonderweg literally translated means ‘special path,’ referring to a theory of Germany’s trajectory towards the National Socialist Third Reich.
My initial interest in German South-West Africa stemmed from this larger discussion of its relevance within the renewed Sonderweg debate. I was particularly interested in the allegedly unique violence that took place during the course of the Herero-Nama War. Yet I found this argument to be especially troubling in light of the many other violent colonial regimes in Africa within the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. My continued interest in such discussions of German exceptionalism sparked my research for this project months ago. To complicate this decades-long Sonderweg debate I looked at German South-West African relations just outside its borders, particularly to the then British Cape Colony.

Existing discussions of German Colonialism between the two World Wars, focuses largely on German frustration at the perceived injustices done by the Versailles Peace Treaty and a longing for the way things once were. By the post-World War II period, historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler published The German Empire, 1871-1918, which sought to understand the emergence of the Third Reich and its success, however short-lived. Wehler’s pioneering work helped to define the German Sonderweg theory, or the concept of Germany’s “special path,” in terms of its general history. The basis of the original Sonderweg is found within Marxist theory. Following Marxist theory, the failure of the bourgeoisie to assume the role of leadership after the Industrial Revolution, set the

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4 See specifically Wolfe W. Schmokel, *Dream of Empire: German Colonialism, 1919 – 1945*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); and Dr. Heinrich Schnee, *German Colonization, Past and Future: The Truth About the German Colonies*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926); Mary Evelyn Townsend’s, *Origins of Modern German Colonialism, 1871-1885*, (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1921), is really the first comprehensive work on German Colonialism that does not prescribe to any sort of animosity over the loss of German colonies (as Townsend was an American student) nor any theory of German exceptionalism. Such a work would not be published again until the 1990s.
German nation as a whole apart from what some Marxists believed to be the norm. This veering away from the ‘normal’ European model of Marxist history and economics made German history unique, suppressing the Bourgeoisie in Industrialized society, directing it towards the extreme violence against European Jewry and other minorities under National Socialism.

Wehler’s perspective on Imperial Germany as a whole is highly controversial. With his Marxist understanding of history, he saw German Imperialism as an economic concept solely for the purpose of procuring raw materials for industries back home. The Sonderweg theory was heavily critiqued by British New Left Marxists such as Roger Evans and David Blackbourn in the 1970s and 1980s and largely abandoned until recently. It is important to remember that the emergence of texts up through 1989 was summarily influenced by the international and domestic political tensions of the Cold War era. As divided Germany was the literal front of the Cold War, the division and residual effects of the crises of the second half of the twentieth century in many ways defined the then contemporary literature on German history.

Thus where Wehler and other Sonderweg supporters failed to acknowledge some of the greater motivations for German colonies, especially in South-West Africa, new discussions filled in the gaps of the historiography. While the need for resources for a growing industrial and capitalist economy as well as the desire for wealthy diamond fields such as those found in Kimberley, South Africa, certainly drove German Prime Minister, Otto von Bismarck’s larger schemes, there were several other underlying motivations as well. Germany’s long anthropological interests contributed to the flux of early explorations into the African continent, alongside missionaries like the Rhenish and
London Missionary Societies, early in the seventeenth century. Economic ventures even into South Africa and the surrounding areas by German entrepreneurs were also common by the late nineteenth century. Increasing German migration to the Americas dealt a blow to the nation’s own pride and prestige in comparison their French, British, and other competitors. No succinct document identifies the primary reason for Germany’s expansion, but Bismarck himself and the infant nation’s developing role in the Western world, certainly factored into Germany’s scramble for Africa following the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.

While the motivations for a German colonial empire may have varied, the violence of colonial rule, particularly in German South-West Africa was singular. Its roots stemmed from the larger global context of oppressive colonial rule and the evolution of racism that first began with the Atlantic Slave Trade in the sixteenth century. Missionaries often used the Bible to justify racial inequality, viewing indigenous persons as “vulnerable, innocent, [and] child-like.” By the late nineteenth century, the emergence of biological racism, fueled by mid-eighteenth century social interpretations of Darwin’s *The Origins of Species* and the development of eugenics, brought about new characteristics within this already tense relationship. Over time, the public accepted the idea that the white man had superior genes as well as an allegedly civilized manner of being. In the minds of Europeans, the ‘Hottentot,’ a pejorative term referring to different African pastoralists with similar physical features and Bantu ‘click’ languages,

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6 For a basic understanding of eugenics, and it’s both negative and positive connotations and typically practices at the turn of the century, see Diane B. Paul’s *Controlling Human Heredity, 1865 to the Present*, (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995).
represented all Africans – who they perceived as similarly base and illiterate. With the growing popularity of eugenics, society blamed bad genetics for these lesser characteristics of indigenous peoples, using it to further justify their subordination.

In light of this greater context, I began to question the validity of the argument for a unique brand of German violence in South-West Africa. While several examples of colonial violence in Africa were present, due to geographic proximity, I turned to South-West African relations with the British Cape Colony and the accompanying Boer Republics. Through my research I discovered not only the smaller acts of a larger Anglo-German antagonism playing out between the two colonies, but also a shared heritage between the white South African peoples that were descendants of Dutch, French Huguenot, and Germans, known as Afrikaners and Germans that allowed for greater communication and diffusion of ideas across the border.

The violent racism of the Afrikaners towards African and mixed-race individuals was largely reflected within South-West African communities as well as in the discourse surrounding colonial native policy. The presence of the British colony to the South and West, as well as the character of German relations with the people living there largely influenced their own perspectives and practices, even throughout the Herero-Nama War. The tensions between the British settlers and colonial officials as well as the Afrikaners largely concerned not only individual nationalities, but more so the policies concerning various African peoples throughout the colonies. This century-long feud between the British and Afrikaners ultimately culminated in the Second Anglo-Boer, or South African, War between 1899 and 1902, which despite the insistence of both parties, was

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not simply a ‘white man’s war.’ Alongside the growing agitation of the working class and recovery from the long depression of 1873, the British economy faced competition from Germany’s growing industries and prestige in the final decades of the nineteenth century. These tensions added to the ferocious character of the Anglo-German rivalry, especially within the colonies, up until the onset of World War in 1914.

German involvement within the British Cape Colony and the Boer Republics ranged from religious to economic in character, yet it was ultimately the social and military relations that led to the development of German South-West Africa’s own colonial policies. My analysis of the scholarly articles and magazine pieces from the period before, during, and after the Herero-Nama War, focuses primarily on content and language. In looking at the examples, definitions, and even words that different Germans used in their discussion of subordinate peoples within their colony, we see not only the respect Germans had for Afrikaners but also the greater animosity they had towards the British. Furthermore, we see the ways in which the growing eugenics movement and these greater Afrikaner and British relations shaped the discussion and implementation of colonial native policy, primarily as concerned the Herero, Nama, and Bastards within the colony.

Within this research, I was careful to differentiate between the many different agents at work throughout the documentation and relevant secondary literature. For instance, while the narrative and analysis focuses primarily on the colonial front, there

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9 Bastards, a German word borrowed from Cape Dutch or Afrikaans, refers to individuals of mixed-race specifically within South-West Africa and not in other German colonies. This will be discussed in greater detail within chapters 2 and 3.
are a number of references to both Germans and British within the metropole, Berlin and London, respectively. In the literature there are several points of contention upon which those in the metropole diverge from those German and British settlers living in southern Africa, which I will delineate further in this thesis. Furthermore, within the colonies themselves it is important to note that the respective settlers and colonial administrations did not act collectively. Amidst these particular agents, there were also the Boers, farmers living in the British Cape Colony, and Afrikaners, both groups whose people were descendants of not only Dutch but French Huguenots and Germans that settled in the colony with the Dutch East India Company, prior to British rule. And while these various agents as descendants of Europeans made up the white minority in both South and South-West Africa, the various groups of African peoples, ranging from the Khoikhoi to the Herero and the Nama to the Xhosa, amongst several others, made up the majority. The appropriate groups of African peoples are referred to throughout the text, as they figure within the larger historical context. All of these peoples had relations between both the colonies and within each of their borders. It is therefore important to differentiate between them now, so as to better understand the exact role of these agents as they are discussed throughout the work.

This greater influence and ongoing relations, when differentiated from the actions of the upper-class military and colonial officials, show how violence in German South-West Africa developed out of a broader context and was much more complicated than originally perceived. Within the context of renewed discussion of a German Sonderweg, my research extends the greater assessment of the renewed Sonderweg within the larger context of colonialism.
My thesis therefore serves as a comparative approach to the renewed *Sonderweg* debate and a case-study of the way in which colonial violence manifested within the larger contexts of eugenics and trans-colonial relations. When the extreme violence towards the Herero and Nama in the early twentieth century is examined within a broader context, the uniqueness of German violence and general policies is nowhere to be found. Germany’s violent military campaign during the Herero-Nama War as well as the policies and structures of the communities there derive not only from their close relations with the neighboring British colony, but from an incredibly tumultuous and racialized period that led to the suffering of millions of Africans.
CHAPTER 1
THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND

Introduction

Anglo-German relations in South Africa were characterized by not only the larger diplomatic relations between both Imperial Germany and the British Empire, but also by German agents and their developing tensions with the British and Boers. Although the primary governing agencies of these two nations ultimately determined the actual colonial native policy within German South-West Africa, the separate discussion outside of this particular sphere reflected a point of contention between the German public and its government. While the German imperial government followed its own course in its greater relations with the British Empire, the dealings between the British presence in South Africa, the Afrikaners, German settlers, and an array of African peoples largely determined the character of the South-West African settlement and the scientific and racist ideologies that manifested in the region. Relations between Germans in South-West Africa and South African Boers continued to fuel Anglo-German rivalry up until the onset of World War I.

The character of this particular rivalry, however, was removed from the context of the larger diplomatic relations back in Europe, which greatly influenced the discussion on colonial native policy in German South-West Africa. While this particular discussion is analyzed in greater detail in Chapter 2, it is important to first cover the extent of the complicated relations between Germans in South-West Africa and South Africa with Boers, Britons, and various indigenous persons in order to grasp the depth of the ensuing tensions and influence.
Relationship Status: It’s Complicated

The British were not the first Europeans to encounter the various indigenous peoples of South Africa. Portuguese explorers following the route of Vasco de Gama after 1498 made stops along the coast to trade with the Khoikhoi and San living along the coast. By the time the Dutch East India Company settled at Table Bay in 1652 relations between the local “Hottentots,” as they quickly became known, and the Dutch developed to the point where they regularly traded cattle and other local goods. However, as more Europeans migrated to the settlement and moved beyond the Hedge of Almonds established by Jan van Riebeeck, interactions with not only the Khoikhoi, San, and Nama, but soon the Xhosa in the region of the Great Fish River, grew increasingly tense. During his early governance of the colony, van Riebeeck wrote to his cousin in the Netherlands that:

Last week we finished stuffing our first Bushman….What we’re going to do is set up a little museum to offer some instruction to the officers and crews of passing ships, give them an idea what the interior country is like. So I’ve asked the Commanding Officer to try and get a couple more, specifically a nursing female and a couple of dusty children so that we can have a proper Bushman family group.\(^{10}\)

Although van Riebeeck enforced other policies in an effort to maintain amicable trade relations with the local indigenous populations, Dutch farmers, or Boers ignored his precautionary tone.\(^{11}\) Beyond Table Bay, settlers were free of such policies, and even taxes, as there were not enough resources or men to enforce such regulations beyond the fortress at Table Bay.


\(^{11}\) van Riebeeck, 2-3.
By 1812, the British emerged as the new rulers of the South African colony and unlike the Dutch East India Company before them, expanded beyond the Table Bay settlement. The utilized the numerous resources in the Zuurveld to expand further inland. This posed several problems for the Boers who lived autonomous of any real governmental rule in the Zuurveld, and were unwilling to submit to a foreign power. The Slagter’s Nek Rebellion of 1815 highlights the tensions that developed between not only the British and the Boers, but the role that indigenous peoples played within this toxic relationship as well.

The Slagter’s Nek Rebellion of 1815, led by Boers of the Eastern Veld, and was sparked by new legislation passed by the British colonial administration, which mandated against the mistreatment of Khoikhoi servants. When Frederik Bezuidenhout, accused of doing just that, was called before a British colonial magistrate, he evaded arrest. British expeditionary forces, comprised of Khoikhoi soldiers, sent a man to find and shoot Bezuidenhout for his insubordination. As a result of both the disagreement with the new British policy as well as the assertion of a Khoikhoi’s authority over a white man in this way, Boers rose up in rebellion at Slagter’s Nek. The rebellion was quickly quelled by British troops and the five leaders of the rebellion hanged by none other than Khoikhoi soldiers. This served as a doubly humiliating act towards the Boer community. While there were many confrontations of this nature throughout the nineteenth century, the Slagter’s Nek Rebellion was a “long remembered grievance” in Afrikaner

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12 Zuurveld, from Dutch, translates to the Sour Fields, a fertile farming region in the area around the Great Fish River, to the east of the Table Colony.
13 Also spelled ‘Slachter’s Nek’ and ‘Slagtersnek’.
communities, illustrating not only their rivalry with the British administration but their deep-seated racism and prejudices against African peoples as well.  

Beyond the power struggle between these two groups of white men in South Africa, there remained several indigenous populations whose fates were largely determined by the character of this tenuous relationship. As the Slagter’s Nek Rebellion in many ways demonstrates the Khoikhoi, San, Nama and other groups of African peoples were clearly subordinates from early colonial occupation. Many South African historians as well as post-colonial theorists note that the initial naval suppression of the slave trade in 1807 and the slaves’ emancipation in 1833 did not necessarily make them free. In fact, many slave owners kept them in apprenticeships, getting a few more years of labor out of them before releasing them into the world on their own. Upon their release they were forced to face an unforgiving economy, politics, and social hierarchy that offered them no form of opportunity.  

Treatment under the Boers was characterized by a different kind of violence that was more racially based than the economic exploitation of Africans by the British. In the case of slavery, while the Boers did not see any reason to free their slaves and thereby disrupt their livelihood, they further felt no need to abide by British policies. This continuing British encroachment on the livelihoods of the Boers led to their mass exodus.

15 Macmillan, 8.
18 Watson, 129.
from 1835 to 1837, later known as the Great Trek.¹⁹ Sovereign Boer republics, including the Transvaal and Orange Free State, were founded within British South Africa in 1852.²⁰ Thus as the British implemented new policies such as the Color-Blind Franchise of 1853, by which an African male in ownership of at least £25 of property could vote for representatives within the new parliament, the Boer Republics were not required to enforce these within their own boundaries. Their sovereignty from the British Colony on domestic matters such as this allowed for a greater degree of inequality and even violence against African peoples. This would change in time, with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1868 and eventually gold in 1886. These new sources of wealth gave the British Cape Colony new reasons to assert their authority over the less than hospitable Boers. Debates over sovereignty and suzerainty continued, further fueling tensions, until the 1899 South African War sparked, which served as the culmination of the unsettled issues between these two groups.

This ongoing debate prolonged the suffering of African peoples in a variety of ways. For example, the plight of African peasants, who tried to assimilate into society, worsened due to land regulations, such as the Glen Grey Act, and eventually the growing racism that seemed to infiltrate society throughout the nineteenth century.²¹ With the growth in the mining industry and continuing disagreements over land tenancy, the African peoples found themselves forced to sell some of their subsistence in order to

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¹⁹ As Watson writes in *Slave Emancipation and Racial Attitudes in Nineteenth-Century South Africa*, “In addition, the Anglicization of the colony, the decreasing availability of desirable land for young Boers to exploit, and the increasing intervention of the imperial government in relations with their workers, together with its failure to pacify and secure the frontier, further disenchanted many Dutch colonists.” Watson, 130.
²⁰ This would eventually change following the 1852 Sand Convention which annexed the outlying states while simultaneously granting them sovereignty.
²¹ Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*. 
survive in the changing economy. Furthermore, historian Clifton Crais took a socioeconomic perspective of the poverty stricken African peasants and demonstrated how the fantastic violence perpetrated by both the British and the Boers in many ways drove them to ruin. While there were some peasants who were capable of owning land they “faced a barrage of extraordinary pressures ranging from avaricious settlers to a nettle of colonial regulations.” Aside from their economic burdens, Africans still living separate from Boer and British settlements were, inconsistently, subjected to war and forced migrations throughout the nineteenth century as well. The incessant subordination of Africans until the end of the South African War in 1902 led to a new transition in the twentieth century.

The proverbial “final straw” came in December of 1895 when the British, desperate to gain control of the gold mines in Witwatersrand, planned an offensive now known as the Jameson Raid. The raid, a manipulation on the part of the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes, and Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, ultimately failed. When Dr. Jameson took it upon himself to invade the South African Republic with nearly 500 men on 29 December 1895, he envisioned the rejoicing of businessmen and politicians in Johannesburg, not the crumbling of already complicated relations.

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23 “I argue that the violence prosecuted by colonial forces during the nineteenth century produced a crisis within African communities that led to long-term irreversible historical changes. These changes entailed the emergence of new forms of inequality and the creation of modern poverty, as well as basic shifts in the ways people organized agricultural production and managed vulnerability.” Crais, 27-28; also see his Conclusion on pages 150-152.
24 Crais, 105.
Following the explicit congratulatory telegram from Kaiser Wilhelm in Germany to the President of the South African Republic, Paul Kruger, on suppressing Jameson’s attempted coup, the distrust and tensions continued to grow until they reached a breaking point in October of 1899.26

The War within a War

The South African War, or the Second Anglo Boer War, from 1899 to 1902 was only one of at least ten wars waged throughout British South Africa in the nineteenth century. The bloodiest of the wars, it caused widespread devastation of property, especially due to the “Scorched Earth” policy that emerged in the latter phase of the war under Lord Kitchener’s command. This same policy led to the imprisonment of thousands of Boers and Africans in both prisoner of war and concentration camps, and caused further social repercussions following the Peace of Vereeniging in 1902. Of particular importance here is the violence and overall treatment of the African peoples fighting on both the British and Boer sides of combat. The combined experiences of these peoples served as the culmination of more than a century of inequality at the hands of white European colonizers and their descendants.

The “war within a war” during the South African War first and foremost exemplified the utter subordination of the black man in relation to the tense relationship between the British and the Boers. However, in examining the character of this minute conflict within the scope of the greater war, one notes key differences between the

26 Buttler, 10-11; Judd and Surridge, 39, 45-46. Both Judd and Surridge note that the descent to war from 1895-1899 was drawn out thus due to attempts at negotiations. However following the end of Britain’s campaign in the Sudan – led by none other than Lord Kitchener who would become a lethal actor within the South African War – the British government as a whole had the resources and mind to fully address the growing tensions in the Transvaal head on. Judd and Surridge, 50 – 51.
treatments of African peoples. While Africans worked on both the British and Boer sides of the conflict in different capacities, significantly more fought for the British as they believed “that a British victory would herald the dawn of a better era.” The restrictive policies Africans faced on a day-to-day basis within the Boer republics as well as hostility, and ongoing thievery of homes and farms throughout the course of the war led African peoples to hope for a British victory.

However, as scholars Shula Marks and Stanley Tripido duly noted, “The goal of British policy in Southern Africa – whatever the rhetoric of the war years – had little to do with granting Africans political rights or with ‘freedom and justice’.” Yet receiving the aid and support of the various African peoples was not the intention of British colonial officials, or even of the imperial government back in London. While there were general security fears in arming Africans, the desire to control the gold mines surpassed all other concerns for the British High Command, including High Commissioner and Governor of the Cape Colony, Lord Milner. In the early phase of the war the British believed that the number of soldiers already employed would be enough to overrun Boer forces, and that there simply was no need for African volunteers, just as there was no

28 Lambert, 122-126. Also see Bernard Mbenga, “The Role of the Bakgatla of the Pilanesberg in the South African War,” in Writing a Wider War, 87-89.
30 Nasson, 12.
31 Warwick, 15-16.; also see Marks and Trapido, “Lord Milner and the South African State,”
need for aid from foreign forces. So while African soldiers were not initially given combat positions, they were assigned to non-combative roles, such as scouts and transport-riders, ultimately aiding those British troops who were unfamiliar with the area.

A great number of African men and boys served in such non-combative positions including “transport workers, allied service workers, and produce and other commodity suppliers upon whose wheels anvils, fields, and backs the imperial war effort rolled forward.” Yet even here, in already subordinate roles, the racism of Boers and British forces was unhindered. Lacking authority over these workers, men were hired to oversee the males who were perceived as “unruly.” The accompanying image within Nasson’s chapter says it all, with the transport conductor looming over the boys with a whip in his right hand, just behind the boys sitting in the

Figure 1 “Transport conductor with boy remount servants, King William’s Town. (Courtesy of South African Library),” in Nasson, 67.

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32 Warwick, 15-16.
33 Ibid., 21, 26-7.
35 Ibid., 66.
dirt. Fewer Africans worked within similar capacities for the Boer commandos throughout the war, although many defected to the British side, by the end of the war. Boer forces however, were not as confident in their ability to fight without African forces. While their fear of armed Africans was great, their reluctance to arm them in combat did not stop the Boer republics from forcing African men and boys to fight ahead of them, taking the brunt of British force and violence. As Jan Smuts, State Attorney to the South African Republic wrote in later peace negotiations in 1902:

> the peculiar position of the small white community in the midst of the very large and rapidly increasing coloured races and the danger which in consequence threatens this small white community….have led to the creation of a special code of morality as between the white and coloured races which forbids inter-breeding, and…which forbids the white races to appeal for assistance to [them].

In the heat of the war though, Boers were often unable to keep arms from those Africans fighting in combat alongside them, despite the very real fear of armed revolt and Boers dealt out incredibly harsh punishments for those Africans that deserted commandos. In one noted instance, upon recognizing former members of their troops in April 1901, Boer men beat seven Africans with their own arms before summarily executing them. The

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36 See figure 1, courtesy of the South African Library, labeled “Transport conductor with boy remount servants, King William’s Town” in Ibid. 67.
37 Lambert, 122-126.
38 Warwick, 17.
40 Warwick, 17-19. Note also that this strong racism inherent throughout the Boer republics, fueled primarily by beliefs in white supremacy, would eventually lead to the Natives Land Act of 1913, the first policy in the development of Apartheid decades later; Nasson, 102.
racism of the Boers permitted Africans to work under them, yet to turn against the Afrikaners was an act of far greater treachery.

The continuation of the war past 1900 forced the British General Staff to re-strategize. Foreign troops numbering a half million came to South Africa, just as they recruited fifty to a hundred thousand African irregular troops. These latter men took part in the “Scorched Earth” offensive, under the direction of Lord Kitchener, which spurred the guerilla phase of the war. Following a warning to British troops that any Africans taken prisoner would be summarily executed by Boers, British colonial officials agreed to arm their irregular troops, allowing them to defend themselves against the enemy.41 However, despite the growing necessity of the African irregular troops to carry arms as Lord Kitchener readily admitted, members of the British War Office and of the general public within the Cape Colony remained anxious over the matter. This ever-present anxiety in many ways reflected the continuing fear of black majority revolts against the white population.42

The use of African irregular troops only partly addresses the matter of African agency within this larger discussion of the relationships between European settlers. Sol T. Plaatje, a representative of the African National Congress and voice against the later Native Land Act of 1913, gave many harrowing tales of individual African persons within the South African War. During the early period of the war, Plaatje remembered the invasion of Bechuanaland by Boer forces, despite the mandate that it was to be a “white

41 The British decision to arm Africans came in July 1901, following the aforementioned notice from Boer General P. H. Kritzinger to Lord Kitchener. Warwick, 23.
42 Warwick, 24-27.
man’s war.” In response to assurances that the British would protect the natives from any Boer attacks, Chiefs of the Barolong tribes near Mafeking replied with wit and bravery:

We remember how the chief Montsioa and his counsellor Joshua Molema went round the Magistrate's chair and crouching behind him said: "Let us say, for the sake of argument, that your assurances are genuine, and that when the trouble begins we hide behind your back like this, and, rifle in hand, you do all the fighting because you are white; let us say, further, that some Dutchmen appear on the scene and they outnumber and shoot you: what would be our course of action then? Are we to run home, put on skirts and hoist the white flag?...Until you can satisfy me that Her Majesty's white troops are impervious to bullets, I am going to defend my own wife and children. I have got my rifle at home and all I want is ammunition."

Beyond showing the determined courage of just one of many African peoples that fought within the South African War, this example further demonstrates their agency in choosing to side with the British, despite their larger diplomatic issues. This argument for the arming of Africans was in stark contrast to that of the greater anxiety that white men – whether British or Boer – had at the start of the war.

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44 Plaatje, Chapter XIX.
45 Plaatje similarly remarked on other African indigenous persons that fought not only at Mafeking during the war, but in other combat regions as well. For example he wrote that, “Two other small companies who filled their posts without reproach were the Fingo contingent and the Black Watch, so-called, presumably, from the jet-black colour of the members. The "Black Watch" included Mozambique and Zambesi boys, Shangaans and others from among the blackest races of South Africa.” (Plaatje, Chapter XIX). The participation of other African peoples that merely migrated to the region from other colonial settlements serves as further proof of the African agency despite the greater racism and prejudices throughout society at the time.
The continuing plight of the various African peoples throughout the war is best illustrated by the October 1899 siege of Mafeking in the Northern Cape near the Bechuanaland protectorate, a republic under the control of Tswana people. The territory was of particular interest to both the British and Boers in terms of expansionist desires: the Boers wished to expand the South African Republic to this western region while the British wanted a direct path into the African interior. However, the British were put on the defensive as Boer forces overpowered and seized the capital, trapping hundreds of Africans, including the Tshidi and Barolong peoples, within the city’s limits. Food stuffs dwindled over time, forcing Baden-Powell and his colleagues to ration the food before cutting off all rations completely in January 1900. The long siege by the Boers lasted through April, and coupled with the lack of food stuffs, caused the death of innumerable amount of African peoples.

As scholar Bernard Mbenga noted, the Africans, “war effort differed sharply in terms of how it pressed upon different regions.” For the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg, their role was much more active and characterized by less suffering than the Barolong in Mafeking. Following their cooperation with the British at Derdepoort in November 1899, they took the arms supplied to them by the British forces and continued to raid Boer homesteads throughout the Transvaal. Africans saw their looting of goods and cattle and overall destruction as justification for the similar treatment to which the Boers subjected them in the years before the war. Coupled with their greater confidence due to

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46 Warwick, 28.
47 Ibid. 36.
48 Ibid., 36-37.
49 Mbenga, 85.
50 Ibid., 94-99.
the success at Derdepoort, their campaign against the Boers eventually garnered public attention. As a result of their violent campaign, the Bakgatla’s repossession of their ancestral lands from the Boers and the wealth they gained from their spoils was short lived. However, despite its temporary nature, the confidence and pride the Bakgatla, as well as other African peoples, gained in helping to bring down the Boers would carry them into the twentieth century with entirely new attitudes.  

Yet despite all the bloodiness of the war and the violence of Boer-African relations, arguably the most violent phase of the war remained the British use of concentration camps for Boers and African refugees. As the war, and specifically Lord Kitchener’s scorched earth campaign, dragged on thousands of Afrikaner women and children as well as Africans were dispossessed of their homes, forcing the British to set up camps to foster these refugees. Separate from Prisoner of War (POW) camps which were held outside of the Cape Colony, to prevent Boers from rescuing their comrades, these refugee camps within the colony were poorly managed and caused the death of thousands of people. While the actual numbers are unknown and fragmentary, several reports detail the harsh conditions under which refugees lived. In her observations of these camps, Emily Hobhouse wrote, “I call this camp system a wholesale cruelty. It can never be wiped out of the memories of these people…,” sadly affecting the young children and elderly the most as they did not have enough stamina to resist the spread of diseases or the pains of starvation and dehydration there. Further accounts of not only

51 Mbenga, 102-103.  
the courage and determination of Afrikaner women caught in the struggle as well as the horrific conditions through which they lived are well documented.\(^{53}\)

With the sparse documentation of the separate camps for African refugees, scholars have often overlooked them as a result. An estimated 115,700 Africans were held in sixty-six camps by the war’s end, with an approximate death rate of 380 per thousand refugees, “more severe than that in all the white camps in any one month.”\(^{54}\) However, the actual reports tend to gloss over the actual conditions of the camps, often even praising the administration of them. Many groups, including the Society of Friends and the South African Native Congress, lauded the improved conditions of the camps over time and the higher wages provided to skilled laborers, despite the fact that neither of these facts held any merit.\(^{55}\) The establishment of a Native Refugee Department came in the wake of rapidly increasing numbers of refugees and the need for administration to sift out those African refugees eligible for non-combative labor on the battlefield. This led to the division of resources between white and black refugee camps throughout the colony until the end of the war. While an effort was made by British officials to keep the camps relatively small so as to halt the spread of disease, the conditions were still less than sanitary, with a conservative estimate of 14,154 dead by the end of the war.\(^{56}\)

The British use of foreign POW camps as well as concentration camps, as many scholars such as Helen Bradford now designate them, for Afrikaner women and children

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53 For more on this discussion, see the following: Sol Tshekisho Plaatje, *The Mafeking Diary*, translated by John Lionel Comaroff and Brian Willan, (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); also see *Writing a Wider War*
54 Warwick, 145.
55 Ibid., 146.
56 Ibid., 145 and 156.
tried the morale of the Afrikaner soldiers over the course of the war. The South African War officially ended in May 1902, although POW and the refugee camps did not shut down until early 1903, as reports continued to document the grotesque conditions up until that point. The memory of the Second Anglo-Boer war lives on in South African society, through, “the stories…[that] choke forth orally from generation to generation,” for both Afrikaners and the various African peoples. While only one of many wars throughout South Africa’s history, the characteristic violence towards African peoples as well as the long-term manifestation of Anglo-Boer tensions made an interminable impression upon the land and its people.

**Conclusion: Following Suit**

The South African War served as a major turning point in the history of all the concerned parties within the region. In the post-war period, African-Boer relations changed dramatically, as various African peoples became more confident and less fearful of their white masters, leading some of them to even desert life as tenant farmers entirely. The power struggle between the British and the Boers continued until the British relinquished its rule over the colony in 1936. Furthermore, the plight of the African peasantry and the remaining indigenous groups caused by policies well before the South African War, live on into contemporary society. Beginning with the Native Land Act of 1913, the majority of South Africa’s population continued to be subordinated

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58 Warwick, 146-147.
60 Mbenga, 102.
in a broken political and economic system, despite the fall of Apartheid nearly two decades ago. This past century’s roots of violence stemmed from the aforementioned colonial struggles between the various parties with their culmination in the South African, or Second Anglo-Boer, War.

However, the violent struggles between all involved in this war reached well beyond the borders of the Cape Colony and the Boer Republics. Germans from South-West Africa, an infant colony to the northwest of the Transvaal, actively participated within the South African economy, society, and politics both before and during the South African War. The character of their time spent in the Boer Republics as well as their developing rivalry with the British, whether globally or locally, in many ways shaped their own response to rebellious indigenous populations within South-West Africa just two years after the South African War. Furthermore, their ongoing relationship with Afrikaners and the British during the course of the Herero-Nama War, fostered their ongoing discussion of die Eingeborenfrage even into the period prior to World War I. In looking specifically at this discussion in scholarly works, newspaper articles, and pamphlets of the period, one can literally see a reflection of the violence and tensions of the British, Boers, and Africans in South Africa via the similar policies suggested and the language used.

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61 Die Eingeborenfrage from German translates as “The Indigenous Question”
CHAPTER 2
A BLURRED REFLECTION

Introduction

Amidst the developing tensions within the British Cape Colony, Germany established its own settlement within the southern peninsula, just north of the Orange River and to the west of the Orange Free State. Anglo-German relations existed within the Cape Colony well before September of 1884. Work with the Rhenish and London Missionary Societies as well as increasing opportunities for entrepreneurship in the diamond mines fostered such relations. However, the character of Anglo-German relations rapidly changed in the two decades before the Herero-Nama War in 1904; oscillating from the larger diplomatic relations between the two European governments, to the individual ventures of South-West African Germans into the Cape Colony and Boer Republics. Following the 1898 Anglo-German Convention, concerning the fate of the Portuguese colonies in Africa, relations between individual parties of the two colonies came to the forefront.

By 1904, the discussion of die Eingeborenfrage took place within pamphlets and scholarly journals between the colonies as well as within Imperial Germany. However, it is the discussion, within German South-West Africa that are central to this work, as they suggest that the physical presence and relations between German settlers, the British settlers, and Afrikaners in South Africa influenced not only the development of colonial native policy but the way in which it was enforced and perceived by Germans. In examining this greater influence, Germans emulated Boer language and practices while simultaneously critiquing the policies of the British within the Cape Colony. While the
tone and specific issues discussed changed throughout the course of the Herero-Nama War, these two characteristics remain constant. In order to better discuss this connection however, one first needs to place Germans within not only the larger context of the South African War but provide a greater narrative of the Herero-Nama War as well.

**Sticking Their Nose Where it Didn’t Belong**

While missionaries had been active within the Cape Colony since the seventeenth century, it was the wealth of diamonds and gold that attracted new German settlers to the region. This growing presence of Germans was of particular interest to British officials concerned with the threat of competition in the mines. Adolf Lüderitz in particular held a substantial economic stronghold within the Transvaal well before Bismarck took the world by surprise in establishing German colonies in 1884. A Bremen tobacco merchant, in 1883 claimed a post at Angra Pequeña in the Western Cape, a northern point along the Orange River. It was the first of many German economic ventures into the region, leading to the growth of a pro-Kruger community. While working apart from the Imperial German government, Lüderitz’s move sparked British concern. Soon other Germans, as well as many other foreigners looking to strike it rich in the mines, flooded the Boer Republics in search of a new life.

Outside of economic competition, British concerns over the increasing German population stemmed from their shared heritage with the Afrikaners, a growing thorn in the side of British colonial policy in the Cape Colony. Germans originally migrated to the colony in the seventeenth century while it was still under Dutch control. Over time, they intermixed with the Boers living on the frontier. During this period, the language now known as Afrikaans evolved, at the time referred to as the Cape Dutch, “a rather difficult
idiom, whose main component is composed of Dutch, which was mixed with a number of English and German words.“

The South African War from 1899 to 1902 however revealed the break in the previously congruent efforts of Imperial Germany to compete with Great Britain in southern Africa. German interests, in the British South African colony manifested themselves not only through private economic ventures but via political means as well, particularly in alliances with the Boer Republics. However, the character of the ongoing rivalry between Great Britain and Germany changed dramatically following their 1898 agreement concerning the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. This agreement marked the metaphorical split between public opinion in German South-West Africa and those new-founded well-mannered intentions of the Imperial German government to work with Great Britain instead of against them. It is the former’s continued conduct in British South Africa that is the concern of this section, in so much that it allowed the rivalry to continue festering between the colonies themselves right into the first decade of the twentieth century. This split appeared more clearly as the Herero-Nama War developed in 1904.

Combined with South-West African Germans’ ongoing rivalry with the British in South Africa, the increasing presence of German individuals working separate from their imperial government, in Boer Commandos from 1899-1902, therefore came as no surprise. In fact a month prior to the war, Jan Smuts called for not only firearms from

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1 Hauptmann Baher, *Die Nation der Bastards*, (Berlin: Wilhelm Süsserott, 190-), 3.
2 Britain was already isolated in the war, as not only Germany, but their other European competitors openly supported the Boers as well. (Judd and Surridge, 247). While Judd and Surridge discuss the larger global context of Anglophobia here, they only discuss the Anglo-German rivalry in the context of Germany’s brief fore into African colonies. They
Germany industries but high ranking German military officers to help better train the
commandos.\(^3\) The Imperial German government’s involvement within the South African
War was particularly complicated, due to their recent diplomacy with the British.
However as German Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow noted, “The German public looked
at the whole situation not with its head but with its heart and the German heart burned for
the poor Boers.”\(^4\) Therefore German aid to the Boers came not in an official manner but
rather from the agency of individual Germans sympathetic to their cause.

While Germans got involved within the South African War, those not already
living in the Transvaal did not become heavily involved. Units of explicitly foreign
Germans died early within the first months of the war, with the highest number of
casualties at the Battle of Elandsslaagte in Natal.\(^5\) Some Boers went so far as to describe
these German volunteers as “disorderly” thieves.\(^6\) However, neither of these accounts
within scholars Denis Judd and Keith Surridge’s \textit{The Boer War} took into account the
larger German communities already present within the Boer republics even before the
war began. While some estimate the presence of at least five thousand Germans living
and working largely in the Transvaal prior to the war, there is no telling of how many
chose to fight.\(^7\)

\(^3\) “Document 130: Memorandum (4 September 1899) Vol. XCVI, no 95” in Hancock and
van der Poel, 328-329.
in Seligmann, 135.
\(^5\) Judd and Surridge, 248.
\(^6\) Ibid., 250.
\(^7\) Raymond Walter Bixler, \textit{Anglo-German Imperialism in South Africa, 1880-1900},
(Baltimore: Warwick and York, Inc., 1932), 145.
Germans were involved in the South African War beyond the battlefield as well. When Boers crossed into German South-West Africa in order to escape British troops, colonial officials refused to release them to the British, claiming them as political refugees. Furthermore, German propaganda published during the war greatly annoyed the British in that it was exclusively pro-Boer. However the Imperial German government did not share this allegiance, as the new Weltpolitik, or world policy, moved their focus to the Pacific and the long-term effects of their actions. While Berlin officials made peace with the British in 1898 during discussion of the Portuguese colonies in Africa, their unofficial position was a different story. Caught between their heart and their pragmatic diplomacy, the German government’s investment within the diamond and gold mines of South Africa, their neighboring colony, and their earlier diplomacy with the Boers, suggested that their loyalties lay with the republics more-so than their former rivals.

Towards a More Inclusive Narrative

By the time Germans colonized what is now modern day Namibia, several different African peoples as well as Afrikaners, had already settled in the region. The African peoples of greatest majority were often only distinguished between two groups.

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9 Ibid., 46.
10 Martin Kröger, “Imperial Germany and the Boer War,” in Keith Wilson, ed., The International Impact of the Boer War, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 31-39; the unsettled Anglo-German relations and the degree to which Germany and Britain actually trusted one another is discussed further in Bixler, 146-147.
11 The developing tensions upon the onset of World War I in 1914 are also clearly telling of the duplicity of Anglo-German relations at the turn of the century. For more on this particular relationships see Paul Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914, (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1980).
within German writings: the Herero and the Hottentot. Afrikaners often shared in these perceptions, especially since the same indigenous groups often crossed between the borders of the two colonies. The migratory nature of these peoples, coupled with the forced migration of many Africans over the course of the nineteenth century, due to expanding European settlement, brought many Germans and Afrikaners into physical contact with the same populations. The growing eugenics movement also influenced the larger discussion of colonial native policy in German South-West Africa. Science in general loomed large in contemporary, discussions of various Africans peoples, including the notes and publications of explorers such as Francis Galton. The societal structure of South-West Africa in many ways explains the evolution of violence towards the Herero and Nama while also reflecting the greater relations between the Germans and Afrikaners in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Francis Galton played an important role in shaping these perceptions of African peoples not only as an explorer but the founder of eugenics as well. He specifically noted during his travels to South Africa that, “I have the details in full of many of them [specifically the Namaqua and Damara people here], but they are all alike, with little more than the name and place varied.”  


traditions and institutions, by the twentieth century these perceptions became more scientifically based in biological racism and the growing eugenics movement. Galton’s findings on the seemingly shared physical characteristics of these peoples magnified the racist ideologies already in existence, by adding more alleged evidence of common genetics to this already roaring fire.

This continually developing racism infused with eugenics is highlighted in the development of policies and debates over interracial marriages in the colony. German South-West Africa, while fueling the hopes of greater German wealth and prestige in potential resources, was also a settlement colony. Although Bismarck and other German politicians in the metropole hoped that the acquisition of territory abroad would persuade Germans to migrate there instead of the Americas, the settlers who did migrate to South-West Africa shared different concerns and objectives. The greater male population in the colony quickly led to interracial sexual relations with local women. As historian Lora Wildenthal noted in *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945*, while both men and women sought new and grander opportunities in the colonies, their goals diverged, with men, to some degree, wishing to gain more freedom and sexual autonomy in the colonies.14 Yet this collided with the nationalistic ideas of racial purity that were gaining popularity within the metropole and the colonies of the period. Advocates of intermarriage such as missionary Carl Büttner, and even Governor Colonel Theodor Leutwein, existed before the Herero-Nama War. However, colonialists in the metropole “deemed intermarriage a danger to German rule and claimed that children of mixed parentage were inferior to both

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white Germans and to Africans.”15 Some imperial patriarchs both in the metropole and in the colony, building upon this argument, stated German men’s relations and violent treatment towards African women was simply another way in which they established their authority over an allegedly lesser people. Following these racial and Eugenical concerns “Marriage between “whites” and “natives and Rehobothers” was banned in the colony in 1905.”16 These ideas of racial purity brought about laws in the colony marriages between, and the children of, German males and African females. Therefore individual men in South-West Africa sought to mediate their own desires and autonomy with these concerns of Rassenreinheit, or “racial purity.”17 As more German women migrated to the colony, “racial separation and hierarchy became more marked,” as these new German women took priority in the lives and desires of German women, more so than the African women.18

While Wildenthal’s work contextualized eugenics in the context of intermarriage within the colony, eugenics influenced all aspects of society and even discussions of the period, not just in German South-West Africa but in the region as a whole.

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15 Wildenthal, 87.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 79.
18 Ibid.
As noted in Chapter 1, Governor Jan van Reibeeck of the original Table Bay settlement established laws banning the inter-mixing of Dutch Burghers and Boers with the local Hottentots, as they then understood them, arguably for their own safety. However, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this warning took on a new tone in the Boer Republics, cautioning against interracial mixing for the trading of genetic character traits as then understood by eugenics then understood them.19

The term Bastaard emerged as the Cape Dutch term for an individual of mixed race, Basters referring specifically to those people with Afrikaner fathers and African mothers.20 The Rehoboth Bastards as the Germans also called them in a myriad of writings from the period, identified with South Africa more so than the newly founded German colony.21 The presence of the Rehoboth Basters within German South-West Africa as well as their later collaboration with the German Schutztruppe, or colonial armed forces, during the Herero-Nama War further complicated Germans’ relationship with the Afrikaners and Africans, now within their own borders. The above image from Hauptmann Baher’s own pamphlet Die Nation der Bastards depicts this, clearly distinguishing the area within South-West Africa, known as the community of the Rehoboth Bastards, from the rest of the capital city of Windhoek.22 In referring to it here

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19 Förster, „Die Hererofrage,“ 2.
20 Bastaards was Afrikaans for a person of mixed-race, the German spelling being Bastards. Basters emerged as another spelling, referring specifically to those living in Rehoboth, South-West Africa (Namibia). Despite the differentiation here, Germans used Bastards and Basters interchangeably in their writings, no matter the actual ethnicity of these peoples.
21 As George Steinmetz notes in The Devil’s Handwriting, “Like the Orlams and Nama, the Namibian Basters were viewed through colonial lenses that had been forged at the Cape,” 121.
as *Bastardland*, Baher not only invokes the direct influence of the Afrikaners and their language, but he also sets these people apart from other German and Afrikaner settlers in the colony. Coupled with other evidence of language and policies at the time, this differentiation placed them squarely as subordinates within the greater social hierarchy. However of equal importance here is the differentiation between the *Bastards* of Rehoboth, Namibia and other *Bastards* of mixed European and African ethnicities. In *Der Nation der Bastards*, Hauptmann Baher wrote that the *Bastards* were “proud of their white blood which flows in their veins. They feel superior to the other natives and love to be counted as whites,” depicting them as of a higher stature than other Africans while still imposing a racial prejudice against their African genetics. Germans quoted Afrikaners complaining about the arrogance of *Bastards* in their assumed authority within society as well. However, while the then popular discussion of eugenics and biological racism defined the *Bastards* as of a higher breed than other Africans because of their white genetics, this did not qualify them for equal treatment in the eyes of the Germans.

So although Baher praised the work of the Rehoboth *Bastards* in helping to contain earlier Herero rebellions, he noted that in awarding them honorary medals, the medals were not as ostentatious or even as large as those given to the German soldiers. Even on reconnaissance missions, *Bastard* troops had to be chaperoned by a German

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23 These people, still living within Namibia today, are referred to as *Rehoboths, Baasters,* and *Rehobothan Basters* interchangably.


26 Baher, 3.
soldier. They received lower wages than the white soldiers, and although “the governor… promised half of the captured cattle as long as it wasn’t stolen from German traders/merchants. [But] this arrangement was met with opposition in the colony.” As sociologist George Steinmetz even noted, “The Basters were clearly categorized as natives in precolonial and colonial-era legal arrangements.” While they had “white blood” they were still tainted by their African genetics. Thus, despite the fact that the Bastards and the Basters referred to two different groups of peoples, Germans drew no such distinction either before or, as we will see, after the Herero-Nama War.

Tensions developed between these Bastard populations, German settlers, and the Herero and Nama peoples until coming to a peak in 1904. The Herero and Namaqua peoples sustained repeated revolts in the years since April 1884, yet none as large and systematic as that which officially began on 12 January 1904 under the direction of Samuel Maherero. In fact, at the time of Herero’s attack on German farms in Windhoek, Governor Colonel Theodor Leutwein and the Schutztruppe were in Southern Namibia quelling a Witbooi Nama rebellion. Therefore, when the Kaiser received the telegram announcing the result of the Herero’s rebellion, “in the absence of the governor and

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27 Baher., 6.
28 Ibid, 15.
30 Förster, „Die Hererofrage,“ 2.
31 Although the period of war in this German colony is said to have lasted from January 1904 through to 1907, the dates themselves are hotly debated both in past and contemporary texts.
before receiving the fiscal appropriation from the Reichstag,” he called for immediate reinforcements to be sent to the colony.32

The only resources to be gained from fighting the Herero and eventually the Nama peoples would be their land, livestock, and forced labor. This paradigm commonly manifested within other European colonies in Africa, including British South Africa, where the expropriation of land and cattle and its debilitating effects on the livelihoods of African peoples was a hallmark of the divided state until the fall of Apartheid in 1994.33 For Germany, this war sought to duly subordinate the rebellious populations and establish their authority within the colony. The nature of the war, while not uncharacteristically violent of colonial campaigns, was peculiar in its administration. The war was propagated not by the settlers themselves, but from the Kaiser and the German Military Command in the metropole. Governor Colonel Leutwein, a middle-class German man, was deliberately replaced by General Lothar von Trotha, a veteran from the Boxer Rebellion in Germany’s Qingdao leasehold in China and a Prussian Junker. At every level the war was defined by class antagonisms and an overarching social hierarchy, whether between the Germans in the metropole and the settlers, or the settlers and the Herero and Nama involved.

Historian Isabel Hull discusses this particular structure of the war in her monograph Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany. Hull’s work is part of the scholarship associated with the resurgence of the

33 Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa, discusses the Native Land Act of 1913 in South Africa and the effects it had on the African and Boer populations at the time. Many historians argue today that this was the first step towards institutionalized segregation with Apartheid.
*Sonderweg* debate. It looks at the extremity of German violence in the Herero-Nama War, as well as its unique administration. From her analysis of the military culture that developed from the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 through to the German loss in the First World War in 1918, she contends that the relationship between colonizer and colonized in Southwest Africa reaffirmed the army’s belief in their European superiority and the administration of the war via the metropole and Prussian *Junkers*. Southwest Africa was an unusual German colony in that it was the only overseas territory in which Reichstag politicians and Kaiser Wilhelm II became directly involved, due to both the peculiar construction of Bismarck’s constitution as well as the extensive cost of the war. This document was arguably unbalanced in its distribution of power, as while the Bourgeoisie was given some say in the *Reichstag*, the ultimate authority remained in the hands of the Prussian *Junkers*. Hull ultimately argued that the use of European-military tactics in a non-European terrain and context coupled with this peculiar constitutional structure that allowed for overarching administration by the nobility that led to such violent outcomes to the war.

In order to strengthen this argument of German exceptionalism in the Herero-Nama War, Hull shifted the focus to make a larger comparison with British military practices of the South African War as well. Her argument here was two-fold: she acknowledged the similarities between the two conflicts, but centered her focus on British Parliament’s and civilian’s responses to the war, and the greater differences here than in Imperial Germany. While both wars were “poorly organized and badly provisioned” and similar in many other regards, down to their use of concentration camps
for the opposition, the real difference in the end lay with overall administration. Hull ultimately argued that the British government’s structure allowed for greater division of power and administration even within South Africa. This organization stood in stark contrast to the structure of the Imperial German government under the new constitution. More specifically, it was not only the structure and power of the Reichstag but the fact that criticism of the war effort in South-West Africa, especially those critiques from Socialists, members of the Center Party, and even Catholics, stood out as unpatriotic. Furthermore, Hull argued that “the thinness of civilian institutions was compounded by the Kaiser’s decision, spurred by his military advisors, to suspend civilian administration in SWA [South-West Africa], first by restricting it to non-military matters,… and then by making [Lothar von] Trotha acting governor.” This was not the case in Great Britain, where politicians and humanitarians had more liberty to voice their opinions within Parliament.

However, while Hull addressed the difference between British and German administration of colonial conflicts, both in the colonies themselves and within the metropole, she ignored the effort of Afrikaners on the ground. The fidelity between the Afrikaners and German settlers proved fruitful in the German war when Afrikaners from the Cape Colony migrated west to aid their neighbors. The manner of Afrikaner aid differed throughout the war from active duty within the Schutztruppe to general support in the former Boer republics. However, this aid contrasted with the presence of ex-British

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34 Hull, 183.
35 Hull, 187-189. “Germany did not lack its own Emily Hobhouses,” wrote Hull, 188. A greater discussion of Hobhouse’s findings on the concentration camps of the South African War can be found in Chapter 1.
36 Hull, 188.
Expeditionary soldiers from the South African war just a few years earlier. Not only did some of these soldiers fight with the Herero and Nama during this war, but in a quid-pro-quo, the British refused to deport those Africans who crossed into the Cape Colony to the Germans, claiming them as political refugees. The British implemented this procedure largely to counter the former German South-West African policy that accepted Boer soldiers and civilians as political refugees during the course of the South African War. This prolonged presence and relations with the white inhabitants in the Cape Colony further influenced the discussion of colonial native policy in German South-West Africa.

The fighting itself virtually ended within a year’s time, with the Battle of Waterberg in August 1904, in which the Germans gained clear military superiority. Following this battle the Herero and Namaqua peoples were first faced isolation and starvation within the Omaheke desert, before eventually moving to a series of concentration camps to be used for forced labor. It is here, that we begin to see not only the greater influence Afrikaners had on German colonial native policy, but also the British colonial administration of South Africa as well. Just as the British used concentration camps to intern Boer women and children and various African peoples, the Germans used them to intern their enemies and weaken their morale. Hull addressed this as a further point of comparison in Absolute Destruction, and argued that the British provided more rations for their prisoners, whether Boer or African, than did the

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37 For an interesting perspective of British expeditionary soldier’s involvement in the Herero-Nama War in particular see Peter Curson, Border Conflicts in a German African Colony: Jakob Morengo and the Untold Tragedy of Edward Presgrave, (Suffolk: Arena Books 2012).
Germans.\textsuperscript{39} However, both rations were too small to sustain the health of the prisoners, and did not take into account the consistency of their typical diets as pastoralists.\textsuperscript{40} Furthermore, the high rate of diseases such as measles and dysentery that ravaged the prisoners accounted for a high number of deaths each month. In fact, Warwick noted that “the alleviation of hardship in African camps took second place to the improvement of conditions in those for whites,” although ‘improvement’ was a strong word for the meager provisions the British supplied.\textsuperscript{41} The British even used the labor of prisoners in the camps, forcing them to harvest crops for the British soldiers when possible.\textsuperscript{42}

This elaborate web of relations led to a highly prejudicial and in many ways complicated discussion amongst German scholars and officials within the beginning of the twentieth century. While the ability of this discussion to actually influence the policy as dictated by the imperial government in Berlin was limited, the discussion remains vitally important in terms of explaining the inexplicable violence against these two particular indigenous groups. Furthermore, while the actions of the \textit{Schutztruppe} represented the imperial government’s own policy in Berlin, they did not represent the wider opinions and discussions going on within German South-West Africa as revealed by newspapers and journals of the period.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Within Sol Plaatje’s own publications in South Africa, he noted that a general tendency towards racial prejudice in the press was common in the Boer Republics. “The

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Hull, 137.
\item Warwick, 152.
\item Ibid.
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\end{footnotesize}
newspapers, especially the *Rand Sunday Press,*” he wrote, “seem always to have open spaces for rancorous appeals to colour prejudice, perhaps because such appeals, despite their inherent danger, suit the colonial taste.”\(^{43}\) The special brand of racism and violence of the Afrikaners in the Cape Colony, while mirrored elsewhere, stemmed from long-term tensions continually bolstered by the growing discussions of new science within contemporary society. However German colonial violence did not develop in this manner, but rather from an adaptation of past policies specifically those used in South Africa and the Boer Republics, where they certainly encountered the racism described above.

These larger influences illuminate the ways in which German South-West Africa’s colonial native policies developed within the larger context of Colonial African history. The Anglo-Afrikaner-German relations between South and South-West Africa found within the German discussion of colonial native policy and social relations, as well as the relevant secondary literature, illuminate the specific points of similarity and contention, helping to place German colonial violence within a much larger context. Furthermore, the complicated relations between Germans, Hottentots, Herero, and persons of mixed race in South-West Africa depict a society that was in no position to agree on how to handle the onslaught of the Herero-Nama War, reasons for which, as we will see in the next chapter, brought the Imperial Government’s direct intervention.

\(^{43}\) Plaatje, *A Native Life in South Africa,* Chapter XIX.
CHAPTER 3

A PECULIAR CONSTELLATION

Introduction

Within the past twenty years discussion of Germany’s colonies has emerged in an entirely new light. In looking specifically at German South-West Africa, many contemporary scholars draw parallels between the violence of the Herero-Nama War and the atrocities of the National Socialist Third Reich that later emerged. This new Sonderweg surfaced free of the Marxist implications of the original Sonderweg pioneered by those such as Hans Ulrich Wehler and Jürgen Kocka in the 1960s. This highly controversial debate over German exceptionalism continues on in scholarly discussions and works today. Yet in the near sixty years of this concept’s life scholars have not looked at Germany’s alleged exceptional violence within the larger context of colonial violence in Africa at the turn of the twentieth century.

This final chapter examines the finer details of the discussion concerning die Eingeborenfrage to illuminate the influence that Afrikaner racist ideology and the greater Anglo-German rivalry had on the development of the colonial native policy, and the outcome of the Herero-Nama War. This chapter also places the findings of my research within the context of the renewed Sonderweg, looking specifically at the peculiarities that fail to resonate with the arguments of scholars like Isabel Hull and Jürgen Zimmerer. In examining the specific influence that the relations between the British, Boers, and Africans had on the social structure and treatment of Africans in German South-West Africa, we come to see that German South-West Africa was not
isolated from other violent reigns on the African continent. Therefore, their violent history simply cannot be treated as such.

**The Peculiarities**

At the outset of the Herero-Nama War in 1904, discussions on how to handle the rebellious peoples arose. The influence of British-Afrikaner relations and the eugenics movement on this dialogue carried into the war, and characterized the debate on how to respond to the Herero’s attacks on Windhoek. Furthermore, the social hierarchy that developed in the years prior came to the fore in the descriptive responses that this literature had towards the Herero and Nama. These perceptions and ideologies remained even into the post-war period, as scholars sought to evaluate the colonial native policy and the place of the remaining Herero and Nama in German South-West African communities. In looking at these discussions and the language used to describe the African peoples involved both during and after the Herero-Nama War, we can begin to see a clearer representation of society in the Germany’s most expensive colony.

Yet despite discussion of these two major groups by both Germans and Afrikaners, Germans specifically discussed the Herero and their presence within South-West Africa. The Herero were often seen as separate from this larger discussion of the Hottentots as to German settlers they were culturally and racially distinct. Out of this perceived difference, Germans developed a new term, *die Hererofrage*, to specifically debate the question of what to do with the rebellious Herero population in German South-West Africa. Within this discussion the Germans’ focused on both what they understood as the baseness of Herero culture and how to make them participate in the colonial economy in a helpful but still subordinate manner. As sociologist George Steinmetz
wrote, “Ovaherero tended to be seen as occupying a transparently obvious position near the savagery pole of the spectrum,” more so than the Hottentots and Bastards whose intermingling with European settlers in both colonies complicated social hierarchies.\textsuperscript{105} They were consistently identified as “lazy, thieving,” keeping of “false company,” abusing the alcoholic beverages brought into the colony, which only served to magnify their negative qualities in German eyes.\textsuperscript{106} While African labor had been used in the colonies to varying degrees, Dr. E. Th. Förster sought to incorporate them in much the same way Afrikaners had: as farmers alongside Germans, paying taxes and selling their harvest to the local settlers and abroad. However, as the example of the African peasantry in South Africa demonstrated to Europeans, an African’s ability to build a sustainable farm when he had come from nothing was nearly impossible.\textsuperscript{107} While some captured Herero, even prior to the war, were traded for indentured labor to Afrikaners in the South African Rand, it became increasingly necessary for such labor to be used within Germany’s own colony.\textsuperscript{108} During the war this came in the form of forced labor in prison camps.

\textsuperscript{105} Steinmetz, 134. Although Steinmetz states, “It is fruitless to argue about which of the two ethnographic formations – Khoikhoi or Ovaherero – was more racist,” I have found that while there are some ambiguities it seems fairly clear through the works of that period that the Germans in German South-West Africa were significantly more racist towards the Herero peoples much more so than the Khoikhoi, and other Hottentots.

\textsuperscript{106} Förster, „Die Hererofrage,“ 2.; also in terms of the problem of Alcohol and the Africans, H. Prehn-von Dewitz, “Alkohol und Eingenbornenpolitik,” Koloniale Rundschau: Monatsschrift für die Interessen unserer Schutzgebiete und ihrer Bewohner, (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen), 1911), 280.

\textsuperscript{107} See again Clifton Crais’ discussion in Poverty, War, and Violence in South Africa, which was discussed to some extent in Chapter 1.

However, this belief that the Herero, and eventually the Nama, were an untapped source of labor and support for the colony remained prevalent even after the war. An ethnographer named Dr. Georg Hartmann’s interest in this dilemma peaked upon his arrival to the colony where he had originally planned to study mountain zebras. In a series of articles by Dr. Georg Hartmann the question of what to do with the remaining indigenous population, including the Bastards, in the wake of the war’s destruction came to the fore. Relations between the Herero and Nama peoples as well as the Bastards worsened as a result of the war, ultimately disturbing the greater social hierarchy. However, Hartmann saw no need to further eliminate the remaining population, as he believed they would eventually die out on their own in the wake of the Bastards, Germans, and other white European ethnicities. Hartmann saw great opportunity in the various communities of Bastards, both those in Rehoboth as well as those that occurred as a result of interracial relations between German men and African women in the colony. He denied the depiction of the African as a child physically, as missionaries often portrayed them, but not morally in his description, stating that, “The adult native is just as grown as we are, only not as mature as…we mature spiritually and morally.” He argued that Africans, both in South and South-West Africa, had come to accept their role as subordinate to the Boer. While he recognized exceptions to this particular finding,

110 See Marcia Klotz, White Women and the Dark Continent: Gender and Sexuality in German Colonial Discourse from the Sentimental Novel to the Fascist Film. (Dissertation (Ph. D.)--Stanford University, 1994)
111 Dr. Georg Hartmann, „Die Gedanken über die Eingenbornenfrage in Britisch Südafrika und Deutsch – Südwestafrika, Teil III,“ 29.
112 Dr. Georg Hartmann, „Die Gedanken über die Eingenbornenfrage in Britisch-Südafrika und Detusch-Südwestafrika, Teil I,“ Koloniale Rundschau: Monatsschrift für
Hartmann argued that the majority of Africans on a larger scale would greatly benefit from racial mixing with Germans. Furthermore, he argued that German society, while not necessarily accepting of these “half-breeds” could benefit from not only their labor but support as German citizens. ¹¹³

The greater discussion of the place of various African peoples as well as those Bastards within German South-West African society reflects not only the influence of Afrikaner culture but furthermore the inability to simplify a historicized German understanding of these peoples. However, the German South-West African discussion of their colonial native policy compared to British South Africa differed in tone from that with the Afrikaners. In light of developing tensions prior to World War I, the competition between the two colonies reached new levels concerning legal actions, diplomacy, social differences, etc.. Most importantly, German support for Afrikaners, who also experienced tensions with the British in South Africa, magnified German settler’s contention for the British. This duplicitous rivalry is largely depicted within an unveiled critique of British polices within South Africa, along with an accompanying praise of the Afrikaners.

Hartmann in particular pitted the British against the Boers in South Africa. For example, in a discussion of the Britons’ first arrival to the Cape Colony in 1795, Hartmann noted that, “Instead the Briton started off on the wrong foot upon his first appearance in South Africa through his vigorous advocacy of the natives and his rugged

¹¹³ Direct citation from Baher, 2; summation of Hartmann’s argument from Dr. Georg Hartmann, “Die Gedanken über die Eingenbornenfrage in Britisch Südafrika und Deutsch – Südwestafrika, Teil III,” 31.
appearance against the Boers.”

Upon their return in 1812 however, the British were still not well received. Hartmann admonished the British for their failure to fully accommodate the Boers and the natives within their new rule, upsetting the communities and laws that had been established for generations. While the British were comparatively more humanitarian in many respects than the Afrikaners in South Africa, the German coalition here with the Boers is in itself very telling.

Hartmann’s depiction of the Germans’ greater affection for the Boers over that of the British, specifically in citing the British failure to heed the Boers’ advice concerning the natives, is merely one example of the German rivalry with the British in the literature of the period. The implication of not only British wrongdoing but also the higher moral ground of the Boers is clear here and in other sections throughout Hartmann’s and other writings. In the literature, the language alone, while holding the British in high esteem, also clearly envies their larger empire and extensive wealth. However, in many ways, the policies in German South-West Africa, spoke for themselves. For instance, as interracial relationships became an increasing issue within the colony, Germans banned inter-relations between not only Germans and Africans and Germans and Bastards but

114 Dr. Georg Hartmann, “Gedanken über die Eingeborenenfrage in Britisch-Südafrika und Deutsch-Südwestafrika, Teil II.” Koloniale Rundschau: Monatsschrift für die Interessen unserer Schutzgebiete und ihrer Bewohner, (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen), 1909), 753.
115 Dr. Georg Hartmann, „Gedanken über die Eingeborenenfrage in Britisch-Südafrika und Deutsch-Südwestafrika, Teil I.“ 665-666; and Dr. Georg Hartmann, „Gedanken über die Eingeborenenfrage in Britisch-Südafrika und Deutsch-Südwestafrika, Teil II.“ 759.
116 Dr. Georg Hartmann, “Gedanken über die Eingeborenenfrage in Britisch-Südafrika und Deutsch-Südwestafrika, Teil II,” 753.
117 Dr. Georg Hartmann, „Die Mischrassen in unseren Kolonien, besonders in Südwestafrika,“ Verhandlungen des Deutschen kolonialkongress, 1910, zu Berlin am 6, 7, und 8. Oktober 1910, pp.906-932 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen), 1910); Also see again Dr. Georg Hartmann, „Gedanken über die Eingeborenenfrage in Britisch-Südafrika un Deutsch-Südwestafrika, Teil I-III.“

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Germans and British as well.\textsuperscript{118} Despite the efforts of Lord Selbourne, who wrote a response to Hartmann’s articles within \textit{Koloniale Rundschau} to redeem the British’s overall policies towards both the natives and the Boers in South Africa, the greater Anglo-German antagonism prevailed.\textsuperscript{119}

\textbf{Expanding the Critique}

Despite the compelling arguments of scholars like Hull and Zimmerer, there is a growing school of intellectuals opposed to the renewed \textit{Sonderweg} theory. Starting in the 1990s, a greater trend in the field brought about a search for singular foci, rather than a focus on German colonial ventures within the scope of German exceptionalism. In placing German colonialism within the interdisciplinary discussion of colonial and post-colonial theory and debate, these new intellectuals joined the ranks of foundational texts in the fields written by scholars such Edward Said, Partha Chatterjee, and Ani Loomba. Susanne Zantop was one of these scholars who brought the typical historical perspective to her research for \textit{Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870}, followed by Lora Wildenthal who contributed to the growing body of feminist literature in \textit{German Women for Empire, 1884 -1945}. Both women historicized the \textit{Sonderweg} within their works, arguing that while Germans believed themselves to be exceptional, this did not ultimately mean they were.

\textsuperscript{118} Ulrike Lindner, Contested Concept of ‘White’/’Native’ and Mixed Marriages in German South-West Africa and the Cape Colony 1900-1914: a histoire croisée,” \textit{Journal of Namibian Studies: History, Politics, Culture}, No. 6, pp. 57-79 (Essen: Otjivanda Presse, 2009).
However, the most notable critiques came from sociologist George Steinmetz. His publications sought to further a critique of the renewed Sonderweg theory, as first propagated by Hull in Absolute Destruction. Steinmetz first opposed this new debate in The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial state in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa. In case studies of German colonies in Samoa, Southwest Africa, and Qingdao, China he contends that each of the colonies were in fact unique, not following a particular model of colonialism as might have been supported by the government back in Germany. The peculiar characteristics of each of these colonies were determined by the precolonial literature and accounts of travelers that emerged throughout Europe before the short-lived period of German colonization in the late eighteenth century.

In order to best understand his argument, one has to look at his analysis of two other German colonies outside of Africa: Samoa and the leasehold in Qingdao. His discussions of these two colonies is compelling within the scope of his larger argument, as both differed from each other and South-West Africa. He focused on these particular German colonies due to the great variation as well as the common similarities between them. Although the Germans established Samoa as a colony on 1 March 1900, foreigners from the Pacific region and Europe already maintained contact with them for centuries. Therefore, when the Germans claimed the four islands as Samoa with an elaborate flag ceremony, Samoans were already modernizing in some ways. Steinmetz employed Bhabha’s concept of ‘mimicry’ contending that the natives, after initial contact with foreigners, would have taken on some of the traits and practices of their new friends and vice versa. So when Governor Wilhem Solf developed the colonial policies in Samoa,
they “stabilized” an interpretation of the native culture, preserving the romanticized ideal that the Germans conceptualized from precolonial literature in Europe.

Such judgments and opinions about foreign peoples and regions played a large role in developing the native policy of Qingdao as well. In cooperating with the Chinese in the Qingdao the Germans’ held a general Sinophobic attitude at first, seen primarily in the policies employed in the city of Qingdao. Steinmetz explicitly described the leasehold as a “quasi-apartheid” system in the early years of occupation. However, at the turn of the twentieth century the character of German occupation in Qingdao changed, gradually incorporating a more Sinophilic attitude. Architecture designed in both Chinese and German styles emerged, Chinese populations moved into formerly closed districts, and grammar schools that taught Chinese language and traditions opened throughout the colony. With time the new policies and attitudes towards the Chinese people “suggested a civilizational exchange rather than a colonialism encounter.” This evolution came about with the reconciliation of precolonial Sinophobic opinions that settlers and officials had formed in Europe with the realization that Chinese culture was not uncivilized. However, Steinmetz noted that this evolution was specific to Qingdao, and certainly not present within any of the other German colonies.

Steinmetz’s overall argument against the uniformity of German colonialism is rooted in the dual independence of the colonial governments, from the metropole in Europe and in the unique characteristics of each situation. In providing case studies of

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120 One should note that it was in fact a leasehold designating the region of Kiaochow and the city of Qingdao to the Germans for a period of ninety-nine years, and not a colony. This is an important designation to remember as it in part helps to determine the character of German occupation.

121 Steinmetz, The Devil’s Handwriting, 486.
German colonialism in Samoa, Qingdao, and German South-West Africa, Steinmetz clearly argued that each colony’s character was determined largely by a constellation of different factors at play. As he discusses in his introduction:

The German depredations in Namibia might not seem so paradoxical if one believed that colonialism always leads to massacre, or if one subscribed to the theory that German colonialism was singularly hideous. But the comparison with Samoa and Kiaochow instantly refutes both of these simple accounts.\(^\text{122}\)

In so arguing, Steinmetz stands in stark contrast to Isabel Hull’s 2005 work, *Absolute Destruction*. Whereas Hull argued for the exceptional military practices of the *Schutztruppe* in South-West Africa as an extension of the skewed political balance in Berlin, Steinmetz’s focus on the differences between all German colonies nullifies her argument in proving that such extreme violence did not manifest in other German colonies. In looking at the German leasehold in Qingdao and the colony under Governor Wilhelm Solf in Samoa, the two stand in stark contrast to the extreme violence of the Herero-Nama War in South-West Africa. For example, Steinmetz concluded that the heightened sense of Sinophobia in Qingdao was what led to the use of “full-scale military campaign[s]” and “‘scorched-earth’ strategy” against the Chinese for simply having anti-Western sentiments or arming themselves against an increased German presence.\(^\text{123}\)

Steinmetz further expanded upon this critique in his article “From Native Policy to Exterminationism: German Southwest Africa, 1904, in Comparative Perspective.” Within this piece, he argued that the transition towards what he calls the “first genocide

\(^{122}\) Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting*, 19.
\(^{123}\) Ibid., 456.
of the 20th century,” was not an easy and straightforward one.\textsuperscript{124} In fact, he argues that the decision to deliberately annihilate two populations was in many ways shaped by the German high command, particularly General Lothar von Trotha, who controlled the military campaign in the Herero-Nama War. Trotha’s orders to alienate the Herero and Nama, including the women and children in the desert, from food and water only came following the Battle of Waterberg: such extremism had not shown itself prior to this event.\textsuperscript{125} This focus on von Trotha as the primary propagator of the extermination of the Herero and Nama, despite the opposing opinions of others such as Governor Theodor Leutwein and Paul Rohrbach, is central to Steinmetz’s argument.\textsuperscript{126} His critique of the Sonderweg further develops in highlighting that the objectives of one individual in light of other colonial officials and great colonial discourse cannot alone account for the violence that later occurred within the Third Reich.

However, Steinmetz also makes a marked point of noting that no comprehensive research on the public opinions of settlers in German South-West Africa exists.\textsuperscript{127} My research then comes as an extension of Steinmetz’s findings, addressing some of the gaps present. For instance, while the influence of the Afrikaner relations towards various African peoples as well as the larger developing culture of eugenics helped to create a

\textsuperscript{124} Steinmetz, “From Native Policy to Exterminationism: German Southwest Africa, 1904, in Comparative Perspective,” \textit{Theory and Research in Comparative Social Analysis}, (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Department of Sociology, 2005), 3.


\textsuperscript{127} Steinmetz, “From Native Policy to Exterminationism,” 14-15.
society in German South-West Africa that was partial to violence no mention of annihilation of specifically the Herero and Nama population ever arises within the dialogue. In fact, one such article explicitly stated in January of 1904 that, “We hope that he [Leutwein], for many reasons, not the least of which is economic-political in nature, is not pushing the enemy into the poor areas of the East [the waterless desert] driving them to their…destruction.”¹²８ This same tone appears in both early and later works such as those of Dr. Hartmann.

The German settlers’ economic reasons behind sparing the Herero and Nama populations can be found not only in Steinmetz’s analysis and my own. In fact, as Steinmetz discusses to some degree in his own research, evidence of larger concerns for the economy and the need for the Africans in terms of labor were present.¹²⁹ General Lothar von Trotha’s efforts to exterminate the Herero and Nama populations after the Battle of Waterberg were not “economically rational policies.”¹³⁰ And yet the intentions as outlined by scholars and journal articles both before and after the Herero-Nama War were clearly aimed at using the majority populations in South-West Africa explicitly for labor purposes. Hauptmann Baher cited the necessary aid from the Rehoboth Bastards in terms of having sufficient men to fight from 1904 to 1907¹³¹. Yet even Baher noted that the Bastards “care more about the cattle then the money hidden under the seat,” so to speak, and needed guidance from the German settlers on how they might benefit from a larger profit.¹³²

¹²⁹ Steinmetz, “From Native Policy to Exterminationism,” 12-14.
¹³⁰ Ibid., 14.
¹³¹ Baher, Die Nation der Bastards, 16.
¹³² Ibid., 18.
Even after the war, Hartmann’s writings discussed how not only African labor was necessary for the new settlement’s economy, but that the training of the Germans allowed them to be more productive in the field. Furthermore, this “increased activity” helped to lessen their confidence in, and need for, their own culture and traditions, turning them towards a life, however subordinate, in the German settler communities instead. Setting the paternalistic and racist tone of Hartmann’s work and even Baher’s piece aside, the need for a work force within the colony was clear and served opposition to the objectives of von Trotha and other German officials, who supported the extermination of the population. Much like the Afrikaners and British forced Africans, along with poor whites of European descent, to work in the mines and fields of the Cape Colony, the German colony saw good reason to profit off of a larger African labor force as well.

**Conclusion**

Beyond the economic critiques against this renewed Sonderweg, there were many other reasons as well. Citing the insistency of Franz von Bülow and Rhenish Missions for Christian humanity towards the Herero, Schlieffen stated that, while he was still in support of the ultimate “Vernichtung” or extermination of the population, he would call for a, “permanent state of forced labor, that is, a form of slavery,” instead. The gaps

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133 Hartmann, “Die Gedanken über die Eingenbornenfrage in Britisch Südafrika und Deutsch – Südwestafrika, Teil III,” 34.
134 Ibid.
135 For more on the economic exploitation of African peoples within the Boer Republics and the Cape Colony see Clifton Crais, *Poverty, War, and Violence in South Africa;* for specific details on the economic exploitations of Africans in German South-West Africa see Steinmetz, “From Native Policy to Exterminationism,” 12-14.
136 Schlieffen to Chancellor, Nov. 23, 1904, BArch Berlin, RKA, Vol. 2089, p.4 recto-verso in Steinmetz, “From Native Policy to Exterminationism,” 10. Steinmetz also notes
within the arguments of scholars like Hull and Zimmerer, as both my own research and other scholars’ indicate, weaken the overall argument of this renewed Sonderweg. While further research will help to settle this debate, as it now stands there are many theoretical and factual inconsistencies. A concept of German exceptionalism cannot rest solely on a flawed base: in this case the violence of the Herero-Nama War in German South-West Africa. Research endeavors into the history of this particular colony, let alone German Colonialism in general, are still in their infancy and the historiography not yet comprehensive enough to discuss parallels between the “first genocide of the 20th century,” and the Holocaust in an in-depth manner.\footnote{Steinmetz, “From Native Policy to Exterminationism,” 3.}

The context of not only German South-West African public opinion before, during, and after the Herero-Nama War, as well as the greater influence of British South Africa on their northeastern neighbor, further weakens the basis of this renewed debate. The greater Anglo-German rivalry both globally, and specifically between these two African colonies, in many ways drove the actions of German policy at the time period. This competitive relationship was certainly not unique to Germany, as France, Russia, and other major Western powers participated as well. However, combined with the parallels and close relations between the Germans and Afrikaners, the unique character of not only German policies but the Anglo-German rivalry is largely nullified. Having appeared to the African Colonial theatre late in the nineteenth century, Germans were

\footnote{Steinmetz, “From Native Policy to Exterminationism,” 10.}
forced in great part to imitate those who they were closely associated with. The geographic proximity of the Boer Republics as well as of persons of Afrikaner descent through settlements and trade, combined with their shared heritage in many ways led Germans to relate and imitate Afrikaners over other settlers in the region. Therefore, when the *Sonderweg* is examined within this larger context, its unique factors diminish, leaving it to oral traditions and archives to retell its history in a new light.
CONCLUSION

As World War I came and went, so did the German colonies. Under the Treaty of Versailles’ Article 119, the German nation was stripped of all her colonies, forced to pay reparations, and assume sole responsibility for the war. In the shadow of the world’s first Great War, British colonial administrators moved into former German South-West Africa. In a published report, the British interviewed survivors and witnesses of the Herero-Nama War and the extreme violence which many like Hull argued was characteristic of not only German military tradition, but of their political and social structures as well. The 1918 Blue Book Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany would later be used to explain the violence that characterized Nazi Germany.

However, in a response to this very report by the Union of South Africa, the German Colonial Office published their own report: The Treatment of Native and Other Populations in the Colonial Possessions of Germany and England: An Answer to the English Blue Book of 1918. The great Anglo-German rivalry continued on for decades, as the Germans cited the atrocities that the British carried out against the Boers and African peoples of the Transvaal during the South African War, and even later against the African peasantry with the Native Land Act of 1913. The nationalist antagonisms remained, leading to an era of competition in an effort to identify the true culprits of Western civilizations greater problems.

138 Dr. Heinrich Schnee, German Colonization, Past and Future: The Truth About the German Colonies, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926).
Yet while this debate of exceptionalism in European colonies survives in academia, the memory of the violence in the South African War, the Herero-Nama War, and the two colonies in general lives on today. “For large parts of collective memory in Germany,” wrote scholar Henning Melber, “this chapter [in German history] is either closed or even forgotten. In contrast to this widespread amnesia or indifference the trauma lives on among parts of the Namibian population.”\textsuperscript{140} The long-term effects of the colonial violence in South Africa, Namibia, and even surrounding colonies such as Zimbabwe and Botswana, discussed within this thesis call for a greater analysis of this history, and how it has come to define the peoples there today.

The question of Germany’s Sonderweg, or a question of any country’s exceptionalism for that matter, cannot solely be examined within the context of one field, but rather across borders, waters, and contexts. This project highlights the greater influence of not only eugenics and cross-border relations in southern Africa, but touches upon the greater context of gender issues, nationalism, and the economics within discussion of extreme German violence as well. Future research into this comparative approach needs to further examine these latter contexts, and perhaps use the example of German violence in the Herero-Nama War, and general colonial native policy in South-West Africa, as a case-study into a larger examination of colonial violence throughout the allegedly ‘dark continent.’ It is my hope that future scholars and generations will further explore these parallels and contexts, in order to finally respect and do justice unto those

\textsuperscript{140} Henning Melber, “How to come to terms with the past: Re-visiting the German colonial genocide in Namibia” \textit{Afrika Spectrum, vol. 40, no. 1}, (Hamburg: Institut für Afrika-Kunde, 2005), 140.
Herero, Nama, Khoikhoi, and other African peoples in the southern African peninsula, for whom it is long overdue.
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