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"New Wars" and Medieval Warfare: Some Terminological Considerations

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Academics and policy makers concerned with the shifting nature of conflicts in the post-modern era have coined the term "new war" as a way of conceptualizing the move away from regular armed forces involved in conventional warfare to the more or less openly sponsored and overtly condoned use of "irregular" third-party actors, including professional mercenaries, warlords, criminal gangs and ideologically motivated volunteer fighters, a shift that seems to have gone hand in hand with a general loss of restraint on how warfare is conducted that has resulted in an increase of atrocities committed against non-combatants and cultural objects, which are frequently described as "medieval."[1] Apart from being dominated by a variety of different fighting groups alongside (and often independent from) the regular army, these "new wars" also generate new and decentralized war economies which, according to Mary Kaldor, "are heavily dependent on external resources and customarily rely on revenue generation by criminal means through blackmail, extortion, plundering and the illegal traffic in arms, drugs and humans, all of which are sustained through continued violence."[2] As a result, the "distinction between war (usually defined as violence between states or organized political groups for political motives), organized crime (violence undertaken by privately organized groups for private purposes, usually financial gain) and large-scale violations of human rights (violence undertaken by states or politically organized groups against individuals)" has become increasingly blurred.[3] In all of this the "new wars" distinguish themselves from the state-centered, high-intensity "old wars," which were fought by armies consisting of "vertically organized hierarchical units" and fueled by "centralized, totalizing and autarchic" economies.[4]

How "new" these "new wars" are has now become a matter of some debate. Mary Kaldor, in the third edition of her influential *New and Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era*, argues that as a new type of organized violence "new wars" developed in Africa and Eastern Europe during the last decades of the

1 Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford, CA, 1999; repr. with an afterword 2001), p. 9.
2 Ibid., p. 11.
3 Ibid., p. 1.
4 Ibid., pp. 9, 11.

twentieth century, but she also acknowledges that "many of the critics point out, rightly, that the wars of the early modern period were similar to 'new wars' before states became as strong as they are today."[5] The primary goal of this paper is to encourage a discussion about the use of the study of pre-modern (and especially medieval) warfare for understanding "new wars" and the terminological problems pre-modern historians might encounter when engaging in the business of trading comparisons with their modern colleagues across the Westphalian divide. In particular I will concentrate on the problem of dealing with "irregulars" within transcultural contexts, before asking the more fundamental question of whether the modern concepts of "regular" and "irregular" or "conventional" and "unconventional" warfare are suitable for the study of medieval transcultural warfare.

The argument why the history of medieval warfare should prove to be fertile ground for a study of military actors, tactics and conduct that fit the modern understanding of "irregular" or "unconventional" warfare seems, on first glance, quite straightforward. If the term "irregular" is understood to describe military elements "forming part of the armed forces of a party to an armed conflict, international or non-international, but not belonging to that party's regular forces and operating in or outside of their own territory even if the territory is under occupation,"[6] and the term "unconventional" can be applied to "a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source,"[7] then examples from the medieval period fitting these descriptions are not hard to find. The violent resistance of Muslim populations against Frankish occupation in the Levant throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although sporadic, bore many "unconventional" characteristics, especially if it was supported or encouraged by Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul or Cairo. The same goes for the strategies of warfare employed by the Irish, Welsh and Scots against the English throughout most of the Middle Ages, or by Byzantine border forces along the Islamic–Byzantine frontier across the Taurus and Anti-Taurus Mountains in the tenth century.[8] There was no shortage of mercenaries – irregular fighters *par excellence* – in medieval armies; and religiously motivated

5 Ibid., p. x.

6 Political Geography Glossary, http://www.umsl.edu/~naumannj/geog%202001%20glossaries/political%20geographyh/POLITICALL%20GEOGRAPHY%20GLOSSARY.doc [accessed 17 January 2016]. For what follows see also Robert C. Piddock, "The Need for Conventional Warfare as the US Military Addresses the Environment and Threat of the 21st Century", MA dissertation (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, 2009), p. 3.

7 *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, p. 547.

8 Lucas McMahon, "The Past and Future of *De velitatione bellica* and Byzantine Guerrilla Warfare" (MA dissertation, Central European University, 2015).

volunteer fighters were a common feature, especially from at least the eleventh century onwards, and of Islamic warfare long before that.

Volunteer jihadists played a role in Islamic warfare at the time of the crusades,[9] while Christian holy warriors travelling alone or in groups attached themselves to armies fighting on behalf of Christendom in Spain, the Levant and the Baltic. Werner Paravicini has shown that scores of German, French and English volunteers of knightly and noble stock traveled considerable distances at high personal costs to join the Teutonic Order in Prussia on one or more of its bi-annual raiding campaigns against pagan Lithuanians, orthodox Russians and Mongols.[10] These *Preussenreisen* were crusading in its most ritualized form. Trapped in chivalric pomp and supported by a large corpus of propaganda literature, much of it published by the Teutonic Order itself, it became for a while an integral part of the cultural identity of aristocratic families in Germany, England and France.[11] And as with crusading in previous centuries, some families – the counts of Namur and the earls of Warwick being two examples – developed veritable traditions of *Preussenreisen*.[12] During campaign the volunteers were subject to the overall control of the marshal of the Order. They were not integrated into the Order's banners, however, but formed independent fighting units with their own banners, *cris de guerre* and internal command structures. Guest knights traveled under their own banners if they were important enough or under banners especially dedicated to them by the Teutonic Order, usually those of St George and the Virgin Mary, both of whom were closely associated with the crusades and thus would have reminded the knights fighting under them of the religious nature of their mission.[13]

Volunteer fighters across the centuries joined campaigns for a combination of different reasons. It is by now a well-established fact, for example, that many French knights who ventured into Spain from the tenth century onwards to join battle against Muslims were chiefly motivated by the prospect of easy plunder. But this did not rule out a strong religious incentive, especially after the First Crusade had set the paradigm for a new kind of holy war. In the case of the *Preussenreisen*, the primary motivator was social prestige, not material gain. The Teutonic Order bestowed social recognition on those volunteers by hosting elaborate banquets at which the twelve most valiant knights were invited to sit at the *Ehrentafel* (or Honors Table) and by allowing departing crusaders to display their coats of arms in the cathedral of Königsberg.

9 See generally Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 89–250, and Alex Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions to the Franks in the Levant, 1097–1291* (Farnham, 2014), passim.

10 Werner Paravicini, *Die Preußenreisen des europäischen Adels*, 2 vols. (Sigmaringen, 1989/1995).

11 Karol Polejowski, "The Teutonic Order's Propaganda in France during the Wars against Poland and Lithuania (Fifteenth Century)," in *Die geistlichen Ritterorden in Mitteleuropa. Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Borchardt and Libor Jan (Brno, 2011), pp. 233–42.

12 Timothy Guard, *Chivalry, Kingship and Crusade. The English Experience in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 76.

13 Paravicini, *Preußenreisen*, 2:137–51.

Unlike the knights who traveled to the Baltic, however, not everyone who joined a crusading expedition or somehow ended up in one of the overseas crusading theatres was an experienced fighter and an asset to the army. The Holy Land crusades in particular had produced their fair number of popular movements, enticing large numbers of people usually considered unfit to fight to embark for Jerusalem. Most of them never made it very far. Like the knights fighting in the Teutonic Order's Baltic campaigns, most volunteers who did arrive at their intended destinations equipped and ready for battle were either mercenaries or knights (and often both) who were, by virtue of upbringing or profession, already trained in arms. Unlike most jihadists of modern times, they did not become warriors for the purpose of holy war; rather, they were warriors who directed their profession to a new cause.

The problem with using medieval examples such as these to argue that "irregular" forces and "unconventional" warfare always had a role to play in military conflicts is that it requires one to presuppose that structures, groups and tactics which by the same standard are considered "regular" and "conventional" also existed in the pre-modern era, and that these were recognizable across national and cultural borders. And yet it remains very unclear where and how the distinction should be drawn between what we recognize as "irregular" or "unconventional" in the modern sense of these words and what pre-modern generals, tacticians and moralists would have recognized as "regular" or "conventional." "Regular armed forces" as implied by the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and recognized by the Third Geneva Convention of 1949 have in common that they are (a) "being commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates," (b) "having a fixed distinctive sign recognizable at a distance," (c) "carrying arms openly and (d) "conducting their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war."[14] "Irregular forces" do not satisfy these criteria. In connection with warfare the definition of "regular" is closely tied to that of "conventional." The Political Geography Glossary defines "conventional conflict" as "armed conflict between states and/or nations in which combatants appear in organized military units that are often outfitted with standard uniforms, weapons, and equipment. It typically involves major combat operations that overtly seize control of territory, inhabitants, and resources."[15] The goal of conventional warfare is "the capture of territory by military means," which usually involves battles.[16] In contrast, "unconventional warfare" is understood as "activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground,

14 *Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War 12 August 1949*, Art. 4:2 [https://www.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/375]. For commentary see Major Geoffrey S. Corn and Major Michael L. Smidt, "'To Be or Not To Be, That Is the Question': Contemporary Military Operations and the Status of Captured Personnel," *The Army Lawyer* no. 319 (1999).

15 *Political Geography Glossary*, s.v.

16 Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, p. 9.

auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area" (*Joint-Publication 1-02*),[17] or, more elaborately, as "a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes, but is not limited to, guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and unconventional assisted recovery" (*Joint Publication 3-03*).[18] "Unconventional warfare" avoids battles and the massive concentration of military force they necessitate. Instead it often aims at gaining political control over populations, sometimes by capturing "hearts and minds," sometimes (and in recent times increasingly often) through "fear and hatred."[19] Its close relationship to "irregular warfare" is drawn out further in *A Tentative Manual For Countering Irregular Threats: An Updated Approach to Counterinsurgency*, produced by the United States Marine Corps Combat Development Command, where it is stated that "the term irregular is used in the broad, inclusive sense to refer to all types of non-conventional methods of violence employed to counter the traditional capabilities of an opponent."[20] "Irregular warfare," according to the same manual, "includes both state and non-state participants who desire to drive out or lessen the authority of local or outside governments."[21] Both "unconventional" and "irregular" warfare are main characteristics of post-modern "new wars" insofar as they constitute a break with the Clausewitzian paradigm.[22] For historians concerned with the military conduct of pre-modern societies, however, these forms of warfare as well as their protagonists can seem very ancient indeed.

As already indicated, the problem with the definitions currently applied to classify warfare across the ages is that they build on the Clausewitzian paradigm of conflicts between clearly identifiable states and nations,[23] which, as Martin van Creveld has pointed out, is a useful framework for understanding one kind of war, but not war in its totality.[24] The paradigm certainly poses problems to historians working on periods and cultures in which nation-states had not yet fully emerged, where standing armies were a rarity rather than the norm, or where the default mode for organized violence even in the presence of the state simply followed very different rules. This raises the question what the terms "regular" and "irregular" could and should mean in these contexts. The most

17 *Joint Publication 1-02*, p. 253; *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations* (Washington, DC, 2014), p. xi [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_05.pdf].

18 *Joint Publication 1-02*, p. 547.

19 Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, p. 9.

20 Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *A Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats: An Updated Approach to Counterinsurgency* (Quantico, VA, 2006), p. 1 [https://fas.org/irp/doddir/usmc/manual.pdf].

21 *A Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats*, p. 7.

22 Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, p. 9

23 Ibid., p. 15.

24 Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York, 1991), p. 58.

common approach seems to be to test all warfare, past and present, against a modern (Western) paradigm of "regularity" and to label as "irregular" what does not fit. That is of as little help to pre-modern historians as it is to modern historians, sociologists and political scientists engaged in explaining the validity, even predominance, of alternative military cultures across time and space.[25] For a medieval historian, for example, it is impossible to conclude with certainty whether the fighting convents of the military orders should be labeled "irregular" because they recruited internationally and acted independently from secular oversight and control, or whether they should be regarded as "regular" because they presented the most regulated standing armies in the crusader states, whose members wore clearly identifiable uniforms and wore their weapons openly. Both explanations would seem to have merit; neither is fully convincing.

One way of approaching a solution to the problem of having to apply post-Clausewitzian concepts to pre-modern warfare is by singling out the norms which define warfare within a particular cultural system (e.g. Latin Christendom) and to call the style of warfare that adheres to them most closely "conventional" or "regular." This, however, would also mean acknowledging that regular and conventional warfare differed between cultures and that within each larger system multiple sub-systems existed, thus necessitating a large degree of adaptation whenever these larger or smaller systems collided. Having thus entered the realm of transcultural warfare, we are immediately confronted with the additional set of problems – lucidly laid out by Stephen Morillo in his attempt at a general typology of transcultural war – of establishing "a working notion of what we mean by *culture* and how cultural boundaries can affect the conduct of war." After all, "[i]f we are strict enough about what counts as a unitary culture, all wars will count as transcultural, which would make a typology of them pointless."[26] Morillo pragmatically distinguishes between "Big Cultures" and "Subcultures," with the latter forming component segments of the former while potentially containing their own subcultures within themselves.[27] Whereas intracultural warfare (at any level) "is characterized by mutual comprehension"[28] and shared norms and conventions, warfare between cultures was "characterized by mutual incomprehension," i.e. a "failing to comprehend the goals, motivations

25 See van Creveld, *Transformation*, p. 58: "The news that present-day armed violence does not distinguish between governments, armies, and peoples will scarcely surprise the inhabitants of Ethiopia, the Spanish Sahara, or [. . .] those of Northern Ireland [. . .]. It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that developing countries, the *locus classicus* of nontrinitarian war, have as their populations approximately four fifths of all people living on this planet. If anybody should be startled at all, it is the citizens of the developed world and, even more, the members of their defence establishments who for decades on end have prepared for the wrong kind of war."

26 Stephen Morillo, "A General Typology of Transcultural Wars – The Early Middle Ages and Beyond," in *Transcultural Wars from the Middle Ages to the 21st Century*, ed. Hans-Henning Kortüm (Berlin, 2006), pp. 29–42, at p. 29.

27 Ibid., pp. 29–30.

28 Ibid., p. 31.

and methods of [the] enemy."[29] It is by necessity the latter kind of warfare that, over time, fostered the highest degree of military adaptation and "unconventional" military thinking between two culturally dissimilar opposing parties.

As already suggested by the examples of "irregular" and "unconventional" (in the post-Clausewitzian sense) forms and protagonists of medieval warfare cited at the beginning of this paper, we can witness this adaptation most clearly at the fringes of larger systems (Morillo's "Big Cultures"), such as Western Christendom's frontiers with Islam in Spain and the Latin East, or at the borders of Anglo-Norman England with the Celtic world. Warfare within these frontier regions was characterized by a considerable degree of mutual assimilation of tactics, including the development of new units adapted to local conditions and the employment of foreign fighters familiar with the enemy's military culture. In the tenth century, efforts were being made by the Byzantine military to codify instructions for soldiers stationed along the empire's frontier with the Bulgars on how to use guerrilla tactics in mountainous terrain.[30] In Iberia, local conditions produced the Almogavars (Spanish *almogáveres*), a socially homogenous and culturally distinctive group of low-class frontiersmen with a fierce reputation for banditry and a highly aggressive guerrilla fighting style.[31] On the Celtic fringe, the English deployed hobelars, a new class of light cavalry, against the Scots in the Anglo-Scottish wars of the early fourteenth century and possibly before against the Welsh and Irish. And in the Latin East, the Franks used turcopoles and indigenous troops as skirmishers or spies.

29 Ibid., p. 34.

30 Pseudo-Nikephoros II Phokas, "On Skirmishing," *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, ed. and tr. George T. Dennis (Washington, DC, 1985); McMahon, "The Past and Future of *De velitatione bellica*."

31 A good description of the Almogavars can be found in Bernard Descot, *Crónica del Rey en Pere e dels seus antecessors passats*, ed. Joseph Coroleu (Barcelona, 1885) at pp. 148–49: "Aquestes gents qui han nom Almugavers son gents que no viven sino de fet de armes, ne no stan en viles ne en ciutats, sino en muntanyes e en boschs; e guerreien tots jorns ab Serrayns, e entren dins la terra dels Serrayns huna jornada o dues lladrunyant e prenent dels Serrayns molts, e de llur haver; e de aço viven; e sofferen moltes malenances que als altres homens no porien sostenir; que be passaran a vegades dos jorns sens menjar, si mester los es; e menjaran de les erbes dels camps, que sol no s'en prehen res. E los Adelits quels guien, saben les terres els camins. E no aporten mes de huna gonella o huna camisa, sia stiu o ivern; e en les cames porten hunes calses de cuyro, e als peus hunes avarques de cuyro. E porten bon coltell e bona correja, e hun fogur a la cinta. E porta cascu huna llança e dos darts, e hun cerro de cuyro en que aporten llur vianda. E son molt forts e molt laugers per fugir e per encalsar. E son Catalans e Aragonesos e Serrayns. E aquelles altres gents que hom apella Golfins son Castellans e Salagons, e gents de profunda Spanya; e son la major partida de paratge. E per ço com no han rendes, o u han degastat e jugat, o per alguna mala feyta, fugen de llur terra ab llurs armes. E axi com a homens que no saben altre fer, vehent se en la frontera dels ports del Muradal, qui son grans montanyes e forts, e grans boscatges, e marquen ab la terra dels Serrayns e dels crestians, e quens passa lo cami qui va de Castella a Cordova e a Sivilia, e axi aquelles gents prenen crestians e Serrayns; e estan en aquells boscatges; e aqui viven; e son molt grans gents e bones d'armes, tant quel rey de Castella non pot venir a fi."

The twelfth-century English chronicler Gerald of Wales, for one, was clearly aware of the necessity of adaptation in transcultural warfare. If the Anglo-Normans ever wanted to conquer Wales and Ireland, he believed, then they had to begin fighting like the Welsh and Irish or start relying on men who did; because the problem as he saw it was that whereas the Anglo-Normans took pride in their heavily armed knights whom they sought to employ in open battle, the Irish and Welsh relied on raids, ambushes and swift hit-and-run attacks, the mainstay, in short, of tribal warfare.[32] Thus,

> It is an old saying, that every man is most to be believed in respect of his own art; and so, as regards this expedition, their judgement may be best relied on, who have been longest conversant with the similar state of affairs in the country, and are most acquainted with the manners and customs of the people ... In all expeditions, therefore, either in Ireland or in Wales, the Welshmen bred in the marches, and accustomed to the continual wars in those parts, make the best troops. They are very brave, and, from their previous habits, bold and active ... Such men and soldiers were they which took the lead in the conquest of Ireland, and by such men it must be finally and completely effected. Let each class of soldiers have its proper place. Against heavy-armed troops, depending on their strength and complete armour, and fighting on a plain, you must oppose, I admit, men equal to them in the weight of their armour and strength of limb; but when you have to do with a race who are naturally agile and light of foot, and whose haunts are in steep and rocky places, you want light-armoured troops, and especially such as have been trained by experience to fighting under such circumstances.[33]

Gerald's description demonstrates awareness that between the English and the Celts there existed different fighting styles, which were culturally determined, shaped by geography and surely considered "conventional" and "regular" within their respective cultural contexts. Similar realizations are echoed by Latin chroniclers and eyewitnesses of crusaders' encounters with Turks, Bedouins and Saracens, and likewise by Arabic writers in their reports on Muslim encounters with Latin armies. We must acknowledge these points of view, which merely reconfirm that different cultural systems produced different military norms, which within their own cultural contexts determined what constituted "regular" or "conventional" warfare. It would have been only after adaptation across cultural borders had occurred that labels of "irregularity" and "unconventionality" rightfully applied.

32 Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1996), p. 6. On tribal warfare, see e.g. Keith F. Otterbein, *How War Began* (College Station, TX, 2004), pp. 199–202. See also Ruben M. Mendoza, "Tribal Warfare," in *Magill's Guide to Military History*, ed. John Powell (Pasadena, 2001), pp. 1559–61.

33 Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Conquest of Ireland*, tr. Thomas Forester. Revised and edited with additional notes by Thomas Wright (Cambridge, Ontario, 2001), chapter xxxvi, p. 81.

"Irregular" Forces in Transcultural Contexts

The problem of categorizing the military actors involved in transcultural warfare is closely linked to that of categorizing warfare, but deserves special treatment. Over the last decade excellent research has emerged on the use and importance of mercenaries and other "paid men" in pre-modern warfare.[34] As a result, mercenaries are now the most frequently mentioned category of "irregular forces" recognized to have existed in the Middle Ages. However, as Kelly DeVries has pointed out, exactly what determined whether a fighter receiving payment for services rendered should be labeled as a mercenary or as a regular soldier receiving payment is still a matter of debate.[35] Sarah Percy has illustrated the wide spectrum of private violence that existed in the Middle Ages, thus showing that the scale from purely mercenary violence to ideologically determined violence was a sliding one that allowed for various combinations of motivations and degrees of legitimate oversight and therefore for considerable movement even by individual actors.[36] Mercenaries fighting solely for profit occupied the lower end of the spectrum; they were the vagabond soldiers-for-hire known across France as *routiers* or *coteraux*, who followed no cause other than that of individual gain and who developed into a real menace from the twelfth century onwards, causing Pope Alexander III in 1179 to announce their excommunication, thus manifesting their "irregular" status according to the military conventions of Latin Christendom. At the same end of the spectrum we also find the more or less loosely organized associations of mercenaries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries called the Free or Great Companies. One example is the Catalan Company, which had been formed by the renegade Templar and pirate Roger de Flor after the Peace of Caltabellota on 31 August 1302, which ended the twenty-year-long conflict between the Aragonese kings of Sicily and the Angevin kings of Naples and left large numbers of mercenaries and veteran soldiers stranded in the Eastern Mediterranean. First unleashed on Asia Minor in 1304 by the Greek Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus to fight the Turks in Anatolia, the company – which included, apart from Catalan and Aragonese soldiers, Italians, Sicilians, Franks, Greeks and, later, Turks and turcopoles – eventually went rogue. Wreaking general havoc across Macedonia and Thrace, it quickly developed into one of the main destabilizing forces in mainland Greece. In 1311 the Company succeeded in

34 Pars pro toto: *Mercenaries and Paid Men. The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France (Leiden, 2008).

35 See Kelly DeVries, "Medieval Mercenaries. Methodology, Definitions, and Problems," in *Mercenaries and Paid Men*, pp. 43–60.

36 Sarah Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations* (Oxford, 2007). Although John R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450–1620* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 146–47 argues that "except for the gentlemen volunteers, because all soldiers fought for pay, it was not receipt of a wage that made a man a 'mercenary', or indifference to the faith or cause he served in arms, but the size of the unit that comprised him (commonly between 600 and 4000) and his dependence not on a political authority but on a contractor who had negotiated his own bargain with government."

capturing the duchy of Athens from Walter of Brienne, which the company held until 1379, and in 1319 it created the duchy of Neopatras, to be held in the name of the Aragonese Crown.[37]

However, the differences between these and other types of military entrepreneurs are gradual and not always easy to determine, especially once the importance of non-monetary motives for fighting are also acknowledged. As Ciarán Óg O'Reilly has shown, Irish mercenaries were ubiquitous in seventeenth-century continental European armies, for example, but upon closer inspection seem to have served only Catholic powers, which strongly suggests that their business decisions were driven by religious sentiment.[38] This prompted John France to ask whether it was "proper to call somebody who is ideologically motivated a mercenary" in the first place.[39]

Again, the problem of finding appropriate labels for individuals whose motivations transcended those determined by scholars for the purpose of easy classification is further exacerbated if the individuals' involvement in military action transcended cultural boundaries, as was the case, for example, with the band of Berber warriors called *jenets* who by the 1280s were serving the kings of Aragon as skirmishing troops along and across the kingdom's border. These were hired soldiers, and for all intents and purposes they functioned as yet another mercenary element in the kings of Aragon's military toolbox. However, as Hussein Fancy has demonstrated, far from being secular-minded soldiers of fortune, these recruits belonged in fact to a religiously highly motivated group of Muslim Berbers known as "the Holy Warriors" (*al-Ghuzāh al-Mujāhidūn*), who, robbed of opportunities to exercise holy war against Christians under the banner of a Muslim ruler, had agreed to fight against Christians on behalf of a Christian ruler instead. Their contracts stated clearly that they would be employed only against Christians and the records show that they were furious when asked to raise their weapons against Muslims, which has led Fancy to conclude "that these men may not have seen themselves as mercenaries, as historians have taken them to be, or as slaves and bare life, as the Aragonese kings imagined them, but rather as holy warriors, invoking their own claims to and about divinely sanctioned law and violence."[40] In short, as well as serving as manifestation of the Aragonese kings' authority to employ Muslim proxies in their wars against Christian neighbors, the *jenets*, by fighting for a Christian

37 On the Catalan Company see David Jacoby, "The Catalan Company in the East: The Evolution of an Itinerant Army (1303–1311)," in *The Medieval Way of War. Studies in Medieval Military History in Honor of Bernard S. Bachrach*, ed. Gregory I. Halfond (Farnham, 2015), pp. 153–82; Kenneth M. Setton, *Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311–1388* (Cambridge, MA, 1948); idem, *Los Catalanes en Grecia* (Barcelona, 1975); *Els Catalans a la Mediterrània oriental a l'edat mitjana*, ed. Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol (Barcelona, 2003).

38 Ciarán Óg O'Reilly, "The Irish Mercenary Tradition in the 1600s," in *Mercenaries and Paid Men*, pp. 383–93, and John France, "Mercenaries and Paid Men. The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages: Introduction," in *Mercenaries and Paid Men*, pp. 1–13, at p. 10.

39 France, "Mercenaries and Paid Men: Introduction," p. 10.

40 Hussein Fancy, "Theologies of Violence: The Recruitment of Muslim Soldiers by the Crown of Aragon," *Past & Present* 221 (2013), 39–73, quotation at p. 66.

ruler, were also advancing their own agenda of holy war, which from their perspective defined them first and foremost. They are, therefore, a prime example of the multilateral cost-benefit relationships between proxies and their "masters" which must have been commonplace in all kinds of transcultural engagements but are too easily overlooked if examined from a mono-cultural (Western) perspective.

A second example that helps to illustrate this point is that of the military role and status of the Bedouins in the Latin East. Both Latin and Arabic sources for the history of the crusader states are rich with references to Bedouins aiding or obstructing the military endeavors of Muslim and Frankish armies. Bedouins were generally recognized as a source of trouble and much of the lawlessness that plagued the parts of the Kingdom of Jerusalem bordering modern-day Jordan and Egypt was attributed to them and other nomad populations. For Western observers such elements had no role to play in a civilized society that prided itself on having overcome the primitive stage of pastoralism and created cities, towns and governments instead. Just like the pastoral societies on the fringes of Christendom,[41] the Bedouins were regarded as wild men.[42] In a sedentary society like that of the Franks in the Latin East, where jurisdictions and legal relationships were geographically defined, nomadic lifestyles indicated backwardness, non-compliance with societal rules and, by extension, lawlessness. Bedouins were frequently described as rash, reckless, disloyal to anyone but their own tribe and treacherous. They were also regarded by Muslim and Latin rulers alike as potentially destabilizing elements, for their peripatetic lifestyle caused them to ignore political borders, which made it impossible for authorities to control and monitor them.[43] At the same time, however, their geographical knowledge, military propensity for hit-and-run warfare, and inter-tribal connectedness rendered them excellent spies and informers and therefore necessary elements in any desert campaign. By all accounts, Bedouins aligned themselves willingly with any crusader army for the promise of plunder and booty, and as willingly they abandoned it for better prospects elsewhere.

The Bedouins' (seemingly) lawless existence and eagerness to offer their military skills in return for material gain caused at least one thirteenth-century Latin observer, the German pilgrim Thietmar, to liken them to the kind of western mercenaries known in France as *routiers*, and I think it is likely that this is exactly how they were regarded by the Frankish princes and warlords who engaged with them. Here is how David Crouch described late-twelfth-century

41 See e.g. Gerald of Wales' description of the Irish as a *gens silvestris* in Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica, et Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. James F. Dimock (London, 1867), p. 151. *Historia peregrinorum*, pp. 155–56.

42 See e.g. Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The *Tractatus de locis et statu sancta terre ierosolimitane*," in *The Crusades and their Sources*, ed. John France and William G. Zajac (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 111–33, at p. 131.

43 Jochen G. Schenk, "Nomadic Violence in the First Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Military Orders," *Reading Medieval Studies* 36 (2010), 39–55.

opinion of the *routiers* as depicted in the *History of William Marshal*: "They are only interested in money; they are incompetent soldiers useful only for the more sordid aspects of warfare; they are dishonest, and oppressive if given power; but in particular they stand outside the network of relationships between king-duke, magnates and knights. They were not loyal either, despite owing their living to fulfilling short-term military contracts efficiently."[44] Twelfth- and thirteenth-century commentators on the Bedouins' character and role in warfare could not have come to a very different assessment. In fact, to some extent the comparison cut both ways, for in 1179 Pope Alexander III condemned Brabançon, Aragonese, Navarrese and Basque mercenaries for waging war against Christian folk "in the manner of the pagans," thus drawing a cultural comparison between these soldiers of fortune's conduct in warfare and that considered prevalent within the culture to which the Bedouins were thought to belong.[45]

However, if it was indeed the case that Latins, like Thietmar, regarded Bedouin tribes as the indigenous answer to the *rotte* back home, then this might have – at least to some extent –determined the context in which they expected to engage with a considerable part of the indigenous population. *Routier* was decidedly not a compliment, but a term that carried numerous unfavorable social and cultural connotations, not least that of "conscienceless violence" and "lack of social responsibility,"[46] which would have been reflected in all manner of Latin–Bedouin interactions. Any attempt at understanding the Bedouins' conduct within the context of their own culture is thus necessarily rendered hopeless by the use of a loaded terminology which inevitably situated the subject within a predetermined discourse of private violence. The important point to make is that from all of this the Bedouins emerge as independent players whose pastoral way of life and tribal rules, customs, expectations and desires subjected them to different norms of behavior than expected by the Turkish and Latin foreigners who had come to dominate the political landscape. Although it is easy to comprehend why Thietmar likened the Bedouins to the bands of roaming mercenaries whom he had encountered in the West, his terminology also reveals a mono-cultural perspective that completely ignores the subject's own cultural reality and societal influences, which is why we should best avoid it.

To sum up, although pre-modern historians have no difficulty pointing out similarities between post-modern "new warfare" of our age and the warfare of the periods they study, the question that needs answering is whether these similarities are in fact substantial or merely structural. Like transcultural warfare in our post-modern age, transcultural warfare in the Middle Ages attracted its fair share of ideologically motivated volunteers. But should twenty-first-century and medieval religiously motivated fighters be considered in any way similar in

44 David J. F. Crouch, "William Marshal and the Mercenariat," in *Mercenaries and Paid Men*, pp. 15–32, at p. 18.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., pp. 16, 22.

substance if one group is mainly made up of professional warriors whose life-style centered on military activity and the other mostly of what has been labeled a "disaffected youth"? In some cases the similarities in substance might be easy to find, in others not. The second point I wanted to make is that if we get into the business of categorizing military actors and their actions in a transcultural (or even global) context then we need firstly to move away from a mono-cultural perspective and terminology by studying actors within their cultural contexts and secondly to acknowledge the mono-cultural bias of our sources. Lastly, it is time to discuss what the terminology customarily employed to describe the "new wars" of the twenty-first century ("irregular," "unconventional," "non-state actor," "proxy" etc.) should mean for us and how we should engage with it if meaningful comparisons across the Westphalian divide are to be drawn.