Govaerts, Sander.
Armies and Ecosystems in Premodern Europe: The Meuse Region, 1250-1850.
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Using the ecosystem concept as his starting point, the author examines the complex relationship between premodern armed forces and their environment at three levels: landscapes, living beings, and diseases. The study focuses on Europe’s Meuse Region, well-known among historians of war as a battleground between France and Germany. By analyzing soldiers’ long-term interactions with nature, this book engages with current debates about the ecological impact of the military, and provides new impetus for contemporary armed forces to make greater effort to reduce their environmental footprint.

Cover image: Map of the lordship of Montfort (detail), drawn by the engineer Philippe Taisne in 1625 (Brussels, ARA, Cartes et plans manuscrits, no. 73). Reproduced with permission of the Algemeen Rijksarchief / Archives générales du royaume.

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“This is an impressive interdisciplinary study, contributing to environmental history, the history of war and historical geography. The book advances an original and intriguing argument that armed forces have had a vested interest in preserving the environments and habitats in which they operate, and have thus contributed to environmental conservation long before this became a popular cause of wider humanity. The work will provide a template for how this topic can be researched for other parts of the world or for other time periods.”

Peter H. Wilson, Chichele Professor of the History of War, University of Oxford

War and Conflict in Premodern Societies is a pioneering series that moves away from strategies, battles, and chronicle histories in order to provide a home for work that places warfare in broader contexts, and contributes new insights on everyday experiences of conflict and violence. It encourages scholars of the medieval and early modern periods to push at the boundaries of the study of war, and shed new light on the practicalities that were so critical to its success or failure. It also provides a home for studies of war’s cultural and social significance.