



Being World Power and Economic Utility: The Economic History of Germany's African Colonies

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Abstract:

As a late colonial power, Germany was seeking to conquer territories in Africa and Oceania in the last third of the 19th century. The two major purposes for founding colonies were 1) to reduce the immigration of Germans to America; and 2) to represent the young German nation state as a mature power, which can compete with the United Kingdom (called simply England in the historical sources) and with the despised Western neighbour France. The most important lobby and pressure group of German colonial aims was the German Colonial Society (Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft), a group of widely respected intellectuals, influential businessmen and politicians. After the accession on the throne of Emperor Wilhelm II, the colonial lobby became more influential, and the process of colonial expansion was accelerated. Nevertheless, there was an Achilles' heel in this policy: gaining territories did not seem to be profitable in the short term. Thus, theorists and propagandists of colonization, such as Paul Rohrbach, published papers about possible measures that could have made the colonies financially fruitful territories. This thought remained vivid in the National Socialist era as well: Germany's right to have colonies was explained on the base of the need for raw materials and the overpopulation of the German fatherland. This study has been written for the purpose to summarize the colonial economic policy of the German Kaiserreich and to briefly explain the economic plans of National Socialist German state regarding Germany's former colonies in Africa.

Keywords:

Burundi, Cameroon, Colonization, Economic History, Germany, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo.

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Before the First World War: Ideas, Plans, and Outcome

The German expansion in Africa began in the Bismarck-era. Bismarck viewed Germany rather as a European continental power; hence, his ideas were not compatible with the imperial dreams of Emperor Wilhelm II. The German monarch, who admired absolutistic and imperialistic ideas, intended to build a colonial empire as the representation of German strength. For this reason, Chancellor Bismarck was forced to leave his office in 1890.

This idea of colonialism in Africa needed support from influential intellectuals. The governing coalition of conservative and national liberal parties of the Reichstag had strong anti-colonial opponents: the left-wing SPD and the catholic Centre Party called up the government to allocate public money to relieve social issues in Germany. Thus, the pro-government public intellectuals and college professors took a considerable role in the discussion regarding the colonies. Paul Rohrbach, a Lutheran theologian and contributor of various pro-government newspapers, published books on the economic opportunities of German colonies in Africa.

Paul Rohrbach is considered to be one of the most prominent pro-government advocates of German colonization. He was also working as a colonial official (e.g., colonial commissioner for settlement in German South West Africa) in the early 1900s. (Anker, 2005, pp. 5-6) Since he travelled a lot across Germany's colonies, he gained a remarkable amount of knowledge about the local people and circumstances. His book *Wie machen wir unsere Kolonien rentabel?: Grundzüge eines Wirtschaftsprogramms für Deutschlands afrikanischen Kolonialbesitz* (How Do We Make our Colonies Profitable? Fundamentals for an Economic Program for Germany's Colonial Properties), published in 1907 (almost simultaneously with the crush of the Herero and Nama revolt in German South West Africa and with the Maji Maji Rebellion in German East Africa), can be considered as a collection of ideas for a government program. These thoughts were taken into account by the change of German colonial attitude when Bernhard Dernburg, the first colonial minister, who had his own portfolio separated from the Foreign Office of Germany, took his office.

The liberal banker Dernburg saw economic opportunities in the German colonies that the German state needed to exploit. (Press, 2021, pp. 10-12.) Chancellor Bülow, who managed to establish a stable coalition with help of the various conservative and liberal parties (Bülow-Block), became devoted to creating a new colonial policy; therefore, the traditional Prussian militarism lost some of its relevance.

Togo

On 5 July 1884, Germany and Togo made a contract about the German imperial protection. Gustav Nachtigal signed the contract in the name of German Emperor, while



Chief Plakkoo represented the African monarch, King Mlapa III. (Som, 2021, pp. 41) As the smallest German colony of Africa, the establishment of colonial administration happened in a fast and efficient manner. With the aid of successful private investments, Togo became the most fruitful project of German colonization in Africa. The ‘model colony’ (Musterkolonie) concept recommended profitable agricultural and commercial activities to the German colonial masters.

Rohrbach characterized Togo as a tropical country, which is “relatively densely populated, and [where] the indigenous peoples are living quite well exclusively of agriculture”. (Rohrbach, 1907, pp. 52, 56) The colonial bureaucrat saw the dense flora of this colony as an advantage; however, he also marked that “Togo’s land is not fat”. (Rohrbach, 1907, p. 56.) He initiated to develop railway and routes, the introduction of cotton cultivation for the indigenous people, since “The indigenous tribes of Togo are peaceful and hard-working”. (Rohrbach, 1907, pp. 248-249).

The German colonial administration implemented practice from abroad in cotton cultivation: John W. Robinson, a graduate of the Tuskegee Institute of Alabama, established an experimental cotton farm in Togo in 1904. “Between 1901 and 1909, cotton exported to Europe from Togo improved in quality and increased in quantity by almost sixty-fold.” (Zimmerman, 2005, p. 1362) The Colonial Economic Committee (Kolonialwirtschaftliches Komitee), an organisation responsible for increasing investment in Togo, was the main sponsor of cotton production. Introducing the cultivation of cotton also brought a change in the local and traditional Togolese agricultural technique: domesticated animals started being used in cotton production, and women and children took over the entirely men-dominated old Togolese agriculture. (Zimmerman, 2005, p. 1386)

Besides the cotton fields, the Togolese monocultural agriculture was based on the production of palm kernel, palm oil, rubber, copra, cocoa and corn. Rohrbach’s thoughts about the construction of a colonial infrastructure, i.e., railroads, routes, etc. seemed to be a very clairvoyant idea, since the export of agricultural products mentioned above almost tripled as a result. (Haan, 1983, pp. 132.) It is a remarkable fact that the British colony Golden Coast (today’s Ghana) participated in a customs union with Togo from 24 February 1894; hence, merchant activities enjoyed a free market-alike level of freedom of commerce. (Zimmermann, 1914, p. 218)

In a longer term, Togo could have become a profitable colony. According to Alfred Zimmermann’s statistics from 1913, the total expenditure was 4,060,000 German marks, and the total income was 3,380,000 German marks. In 1911, the total import to Togo produced 9,620,000 German marks, and the total export revenue amounted to 9,318,000 German marks. Togo’s five most important export products were palm kernel (3,579,000 German marks), palm oil (1,688,000 German marks), rubber (832,000 German marks) cotton (554,000 German marks), and cattle (414,000 German marks) in 1911. (Zimmermann, 1914, pp. 269-271)

Cameroon

Cameroon's German colonization was also started by Gustav Nachtigal, who arrived from Togo to this territory. King Ndombe Lobe Bell and other eleven Duala chiefs signed a treaty on 12 July 1884 regarding exclusively German-owned commercial rights, and two days later, the German imperial flag was flown. (Som, 2021, p. 68) The colony was established to help the German expansion eastward to the Congo Basin. In the late 1890s, the German plans for a Central African colonial empire became obvious. In the wake of the Second Moroccan Crisis, in 1911, the borders of the colony were established, the colonizers gaining direct access to Lake Chad. (Som, 2021, p. 76)

The First and the Second Moroccan Crisis was connected to the German expansion in West Africa. Spain suffered from loss of colonies in America and Oceania. Selling the Spanish colonies in Africa was taken into consideration in Madrid. Germany and Austria-Hungary were both interested in purchasing Rio de Oro's territory. Viktor Dubský von Třebomyslice, who was the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Madrid, played a keyrole in this task. "Dubský asked the German ambassador in Madrid about the rent of this territory, who pointed out that his country has right for preemption for the Spanish African colonies, however, he did not confirm whether they are interested in Rio de Oro's emption." (Besenyő, 2018, p. 870) In 1899 the German plans changed connected to this Spanish African colony. "Karl Liebert, who was the chair of German Colonial Society, did not show any interest in the [purchasing of this] territory; hence, he proposed for the Spanish to look up the Austro-Hungarian Colonial Society [Österreich-Ungarische Kolonialgesellschaft/Osztrák-Magyar Gyarmati Társaság]." (Besenyő, 2018, p. 873.)

In Cameroon's colonization, the Germans preferred the involvement of private companies and entrepreneurs. These companies owned the cocoa and rubber plantations. Cameroon was labelled as Germany's 'cocoa colony', which was of a considerable level of importance, as cocoa consumption showed a growing tendency in Germany. Emil Zimmermann hoped that Cameroon could supply Germany's entire cocoa demand, but the labour shortage made the colony unable to produce the required amount. (Zimmermann, 1918, p. 10) Contrary to Togo, there were no free indigenous peasants involved in the cocoa production, as all the plantations were owned by Germans. (Westermann, 1909, p. 26)

In Cameroon, Rohrbach also initiated the construction of colonial railroads, which ensured contact between the mainland and the port of Duala. He saw the indigenous peoples quite similar to the Togolese ones, and considered that "they do not shy away from work" either. He also held a favourable view of the structure of the local indigenous society in Northern Cameroon, as he appreciated that the local tribes were led by strong chiefs who were the owners of the land at the same time, a circumstance that provided opportunity for a fast development. (Rohrbach, 1907, pp. 231-232, 234, 244) This statement is in accordance with the well-defined property rights that could be



a significant advantage in this ethnically very diverse colony. It also must be emphasized that Rohrbach criticized the concessions in Cameroon and the land companies (Landesgesellschaften) in German South West Africa, as he viewed them as a hindrance to free development. (Rohrbach, 1907, pp. 258-259)

Cameroon was not suitable to be a cotton producer. Based on its climate and soil, rubber trees could be planted more efficiently than other trees, which were also cultivated in a monocultural way. Experiments were made in the northern region to convince the local indigenous people about the benefits of cultivation of cotton, but they were not interested in working for German colonizers. They could supply their demand on their own, since they had their own handicraftsman culture for making clothing. (Fabarius, 1911, p. 22)

Besides cocoa, plantations of cola, palm, and rubber were established. In 1911, Cameroon's five most important export products were rubber (11,030,000 German marks), palm kernel (4,168,000 German marks), cocoa (3,307,000 German marks), palm oil (1,424,000 German marks), and ivory (581,000 German marks). The total import in 1911 was 29,318,000 German marks, while the total export brought 21,251,000 German marks. The colony could not be turned profitable in the long term, since the financial differences were considerably disproportionate: In 1913, the total expenditure was 15,340,000 German marks, while the total revenue from the colony amounted to 8,900,000 German marks. (Zimmerer, 1914, pp. 263-265)

German South West Africa

Traditional colonial powers such as England and Portugal considered South West Africa (today's Namibia) as a worthless place, full of dust and lacking opportunities for naval activities (with the exception of Walvis Bay, which belonged to the British sphere up to 1948, and to South Africa until the first free and democratic elections in 1994). (Dierks, 2000, pp. 254)

Adolf Lüderitz, an adventurous merchant from Bremen, bought land from Frederiks, the chief of Bethany Nama, in Angra Pequena via his contractor Heinrich Vogelsang on 9 April 1883. Lüderitz was afraid of a possible British expansion; hence, he wrote several letters to Bismarck asking him for German imperial protection, which he was granted on 24 April 1884. (Som, 2021, p. 105) This date can be considered as an official beginning of the German colonization of South West Africa, a territory that was meant to become a settler colony (Siedlungskolonie). (Rohrbach, 1907, pp. 208-209)

The German imperial national budget suffered a lot due to this idea. The territory was originally inhabited by Khoisan tribes, namely by the Nama and the San people (Bushmen in the old sources). The Nama lived with the Bantu Herero tribe in the central

area. In the northern region, the Ovambo, a people with a staunch anti-Christian attitude, was the majority ethnic group. The Western or coastal part of the colony was populated by the Damara or Bergdamara people. Another considerable group was the coloured population: the Rehoboth Basters were the descendants of white (mainly Dutch) settlers of Cape Colony and indigenous Africans; they migrated toward the northwest from Cape Colony in the 18th century. Some Afrikaner families also migrated to this territory in the period of the Great Trek, also called Thirstland Trek (Dorsland Trek). This ethnic plurality and the permanent hostility between these groups caused huge difficulties in the colonization of South West Africa. (Kienetz, 1977, pp. 554-564)

The indigenous groups lived in a semi-nomadic way. Breeding livestock was their the most important economic activity, since the number of cattle he owned was a status symbol for a Herero or a Nama man. (Gewald, 1999, p. 12.) Their interethnic conflicts were mainly connected to looting cattle from each other. The Herero were waging war on Damara until the German colonization, as a result of which the Damara became slaves of the Herero. The main source of the interethnic conflicts changed after the beginning of German colonization: the German settlers gradually took the land from the indigenous peoples, and their methods were often unethical e.g., entering into a contract with an alcoholic indigenous man. (Silvester and Gewald, 2003, p. 91.)

Samuel Maharero, the paramount chief of the Herero was also notorious for his alcoholism, and the German settlers exploited his weakness. Losing land, legal conflicts and the pro-white bias of German courts of justice led to the Herero and Nama revolt. The warfare began in January 1904 and was crushed by the Schutztruppe, a German military expedition that arrived to help the German Colonial Forces. General Lothar von Trotha ordered to annihilate and to expel the Herero and the Witbooi Nama insurgents to the desert (Vernichtungsbefehl), and many of them were transported to concentration camps. (Silvester and Gewald, 2003, pp. XXI, XXVII, 70, 180) The colonial infrastructure was rebuilt with force labour after 1907. The Herero lost 70-75% of their total population, while the Witbooi Nama had a 30-35% loss.

As a colonial bureaucrat, Paul Rohrbach was also a witness of the colonial war. He was involved in the issue of German South West Africa's economics. In his book written in 1907, he proposed a publicly financed settlement policy and detailed research by experts, which could help to establish a farm culture in the colony. (Rohrbach, 1907, pp. 227-229) Nevertheless, a truly remarkable change took place in the mining sector.

Even though the Germans assumed that South West Africa was as rich in metals and gemstones as South Africa, the searching expeditions could find only copper, and the mining concessions were owned by British companies. (Press, 2021, p. 49.) The summer of 1908 brought a great breakthrough for the Germans, since diamond was found on the territory of the colony. In the following year, the Forbidden Zone (Sperrgebiet) was established, which functioned up to 1989 as a territory exclusively segregated for diamond mining, where the indigenous people worked as contract



labourers. Diamond was attractive for adventurers and the new settlers. Several companies were established (Koloniale Bergbau-Gesellschaft, Vereinigte Diamanten Minen AG, Pomona Diamantengesellschaft, Bahnfelder-Abbaugesellschaft mbH, Lüderitzbucht, Lüderitzbuchter Bergbaugesellschaft mbH, Kolmanskop Diamond Mines Ltd, Diamantengesellschaft Grillental mbH), most of them under the ownership of Germans. (Dierks, 2000, pp. 103-104) Regie, however, was the most important company, as it had the responsibility of selling the diamonds mined in South West Africa. The Regie was established in January 1909. The gems were sold in the Belgian city of Antwerp, which led to a severe criticism of the Colonial Minister Dernburg. Since several German liberal politicians and magnates of Jewish ancestry were involved in the diamond industry and trade, antisemitic rumours started circulating as well. (Press, 2021, pp. 57, 80, 86, 93, 103)

Ultimately, diamond mining could not equalize the expenditures and the revenues of German South West Africa. The hopes and the future plans were all overestimated. According to Alfred Zimmermann's statistics, in 1913 the total expenditure was 54,140,000 German marks and the total revenue was 15,880,000 German marks. It is worth remarking that from 1907 the expenditure was almost always the double or even more of the revenue in each year. The total import in 1911 was 45,302,000 German marks, while the total export brought 28,573,000 German marks. Diamonds had the most prominent role in the total export, bringing a revenue of 23,034,000 German marks. Copper export was in the second position with a revenue of 3,754,000 German marks, while lead export in the third position, bringing a revenue of 346,000 German marks. (Zimmermann, 1914, pp. 279-280, 307) While fighting against the challenging climate and the dry soil of the colony, the German settlers modified the flora and the fauna by growing potatoes, wheat, grains, various fodders and breeding camel and Karakul sheep (Jürgens and Bähr, 2002, pp. 78-79), a sheep breed originating from today's Uzbekistan. Despite the efforts to make agriculture profitable based on farms owned by German (and occasionally Afrikaner) peasants, the mining sector remained the most important economic sector in South West Africa even after the German rule ended.

German East Africa

This colony had a rich history before the arrival of German colonial masters. Its intensive relations with the Arabic world gave an opportunity for the spreading of the Islam religion on the coastal part of today's Tanzania and in Zanzibar. The Arab merchants exploited the opportunities for slave trade, selling Africans in the Muslim world. On the other hand, a form of Folk Islam and religious syncretism (traditional African religion with Muslim elements) was born on this territory. Rohrbach described German East Africa in a different way: based on the strong presence of Arabs and East Indians, he

compared its “level of civilization” to the Rehoboth area in German South West Africa, which belonged to the Baster people. (Rohrbach, 1907, pp. 260-261)

The intensive relations with the different neighbouring civilizations created a solid base for the German East African economy. Agricultural activities developed on this territory, especially in its eastern regions. Local indigenous tribes produced the food for their own needs. Copra, rubber, nuts, rice and cotton were all cultivated before the arrival of German colonizers. The neighbouring island, Zanzibar was the centre of commerce, especially the worldwide known city Dar es Salaam. (Rohrbach, 1907, p. 259; Som, 2021, p. 186)

The colonization of this region was led by Carl Peters, who did not enjoy Bismarck’s support. For his colonization purposes, Peters established the Society for German Colonization (Gesellschaft für Deutsche Kolonisation). He signed a treaty on 26 November 1883 with Sultan Mangungu of Msowero about the complete cessation of the latter’s rights to rule in favour of Peters. The territory was growing, and Bismarck decided to send the so-called protection letter (Schutzbrief) to Peters, which took effect from 27 February 1885. This event signalled the beginning of colonization by official German presence in East Africa. (Som, 2021, pp. 144-145)

The German rule modified the economy and the administration of the colony, which caused resistance. Indigenous tribes were forced to work in the cultivation of cotton plantation and to participate in the various communal works for free. In June 1905 the Maji Maji uprising broke out. The insurgents came mostly from villages, and people of different non-African ethnic backgrounds, such as merchants from India and the German Bishop of Dar es Salaam, were often considered by them as enemies. The southern region, inhabited by the Hehe tribe, became the centre of this uprising. The Germans crushed the uprising, and the warfare ended in 1908, after approximately 75,000- 120,000 uprising indigenous people, 400 ‘pro-German African’ and 15 European civil people died. (Som, 2021, pp. 158-159; Búr, 2009, pp. 10, 20) It is not only the simultaneity that created a contact with the Herero uprising: the ‘rinderpest’ in the 1890s, which killed a high number of cattle of the Herero tribe, appeared firstly in East Africa. The disease originated from China, although the mutation happened in the neighbouring British Eastern African colonies, especially on the territories where the Indians were present. (Youde, 2013, pp. 44-49)

Regarding the economic development, Rohrbach proposed the very same idea as for other German colonies: the importance of building railroads and a better exploitation of the fat lands. Agriculture in German East Africa involved the production of coffee, coconut, cotton, cardamom, sisal, rubber and vanilla on plantations established at the turn of the century. (Sabea, 2008, pp. 415-416) Also, because of the increasing number of labourers more food was needed, which meant – according to Rohrbach’s conviction – the cultivation of corn, millet, rice and wheat. (Rohrbach, 1907, pp. 273-275)



The colony was also visited by Colonial Minister Dernburg, a key figure in the reformulation of Germany's colonial policy. Dernburg and his fellow thinkers were convinced that cotton production had to remain the number one good produced in German East Africa; hence, the procedure became more industrialized. As a result, Germany (with its colonies) became the third biggest producer after the USA and the United Kingdom in 1909. (Sunseri, pp. 31, 35)

Another agricultural product, sisal, was considered as “the gold of Tanzania” by a Tanzanian politician in the 1960s. In 1893, German colonizers planted sisal in Tanzanian soil for the first time. The leader of the project was a German botanist, Dr. Hirndorf, who was employed by the German East Africa Society (Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft). Hirndorf brought the sisal plants from Florida. The North-eastern Tanga region became the centre of sisal cultivation. (Sabea, 2008, pp. 411, 413-418)

According to Alfred Zimmermann's statistics, in 1911 the total import to German East Africa in 1911 was 45,892,000 German marks, while the total export was 22,438,000 German marks. The five most notable products of the colony in 1911 were rubber (5,414,000 German marks), cotton (1,277,000 German marks), fibre crop (1,129,000 German marks), coffee (856,000 German marks), and wood products (380,000 German marks). The ratio of expenditures and revenues showed a very depressing tendency: In 1913 54,760,000 German marks were allocated, while the treasury gained only 13,780,000 German marks. (Zimmermann, 1914, pp. 253-256)

After the World War I, the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist Era

Crushing the Boxer Rebellion in China after the Hun speech, the Herero revolt in German South West Africa, and simultaneously the Maji Maji Rebellion in German East Africa ruined Germany's international reputation.

The plans to establish German Middle Africa (Deutsch-Mittelafrika) collapsed in the first half of the World War I, as the overwhelming majority of German colonies had to surrender due to the dominance of Belgian, British, French, and Portuguese troops. (Memba, 1991, pp. 162-163, 169-173) However, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, who deserved the nickname Lion of Africa, fought two days longer than the official capitulation of Germany in German East Africa. (Som, 2022, p. 45)

The bad reputation of German colonization in Africa contributed to the dissolution of the German colonies by the Treaty of Versailles, since Germany was portrayed as a colonial power unable to govern colonies. There was a communis opinio in the Western political discourse according to which Germany had no routine and good practice necessary to be a colonial power.

Even though the German state lost all its colonies, colonialism was not eradicated from the German legal system, and the German thinkers and some political parties intended to maintain the issue. The Weimar Constitution also preserved the legislation over colonial issue. (Weimarer Reichsverfassung, Article 6 (2)) Theorists of German colonialism saw Germany without colonies as a “one-handed giant”, which can only be an equal member of the great nations by regaining its colonies. Wilhelm Solf, the Colonial Minister of Germany between 1911 and 1918, emphasized that the goal of Germany in Africa is to provide “common freedom for commerce and economic activities”. (Solf, 1919, p. 86) A hero of the World War I, Major Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck intended to wake up the enthusiasm for colonies in his fellow countrymen, and therefore he emphasized that having colonies is Germany’s economic need. As he wrote, “Here is the question, which deeply determines the future of our fatherland.” (Lettow-Vorbeck, 1919, pp. 5, 16) This statement was the core of all form of German colonial propaganda after 1919: Germany needs raw material, Germany is overpopulated; hence, Germany needs colonies. This idea was crystallized in Hans Grimm’s book *Volk ohne Raum* (People without Space) published in 1926.

Besides the conservative and liberal politicians, there was a party that declared that the Treaty of Versailles would be annulled after their takeover: the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. Hitler and the propaganda of his party viewed losing colonies as an immense injustice. (Kunze, 1938, pp. 180-191) After Hitler took it over, the German Colonial Society became the Reich Colonial League (Reichskolonialbund), and it was meant to be an umbrella organization of all colonial associations. The official authority for relations with the German population of the former colonies was the NSDAP/AO, the Foreign Organisation (Auslandsorganisation) of the NSDAP, which had its headquarter in Hamburg, the most prominent city of German colonialism. The Reich Colonial League, led by Franz Xaver Ritter von Epp, had many plans for the colonization of Africa, and popularized this idea via propaganda materials and the German Africa Show (*Deutsche Afrika-Schau*). (Walther, 2002, p. 170; Linne, 2008, pp. 29, 48-51)

In fact, however, the Nazi leadership was never really interested in the colonial issue, and as the World War II caused more and more losses, the colonial propaganda became even more redundant. In November 1942, Martin Bormann made it known to Ritter von Epp that there was no need for a German Africa policy, and the Reich Colonial League was merged with the NSDAP Office of Colonial Policy in 1943 (Kolonialpolitisches Amt der NSDAP). (Linne, 2008, pp. 153-154) Although this event practically meant the end of German colonial aspirations for Africa, the actual end of German colonialism took place on the 8th May 1945 with the German Instrument of Surrender. As András Karácsony wrote, “in National Socialist Germany the Weimar Constitution was in fact never repealed.” (Karácsony, 2021)

Evaluation and Conclusion

The German colonization was a delayed project. Its main aim was to demonstrate the greatness of a nation, which was very successful in industry, had many widely-known scientists, military personalities and philosophers.

These prominent figures, often led by romantic nationalism, were convinced about the idea that Germany was meant to be the leading power of the world. Even though the achievements of German art and science were never questioned, the lack of colonial practice and the experiment to make a German *Sonderweg* based on British colonial experience clearly demonstrated that some issues could not be solved by the military.

As a late colonizer, Germany could not conquer financially profitable territories. Hence, an expansion in Central and Eastern Africa was planned by military strategists. After the collapse of the German troops on the Western front in 1918, the colonial dreams in Africa also dissipated. The high public expenditures and the bloody wars made the colonization a loss-making period of the German economic history and prestige.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on Contributor

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