

Defining Victory in Victorian Warfare, 1860-1882.

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Abstract:

The British launched numerous punitive expeditions in the decades before the international scramble for Africa. 'wars against nature', such campaigns in fact posed considerable challenges, not least because they were conducted under tight deadlines and were expected to result in low-cost victories. Yet it was often difficult to define clear military objectives. This article explores punitive expeditions' demands upon their commanders and the ways in which commanders found suitable points, in the absence of decisive battles, when victory might be declared and celebrated. Victory had to be defined in the absence of an intervening army, for the people and leaders of the country being attacked, and for politicians and the public at large. Victory was thus a complex process, reflecting the range of military, political and public pressures upon commanders.

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