„Weathering War: Snow, Rain, and the Conduct of Mughal Military Campaigns“

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Abstract:
What is the relation between war and environment? The present paper investigates this question in the context of Mughal empire-building by focusing specifically on one environmental factor – climate. The first part of the paper studies Mughal military campaigns in Kashmir, Balkh, and Qandahar. It argues that in these parts, campaigns had to constantly negotiate the threat of extremely cold winters and abundant snowfall. The second part explores the dynamics of military operations in Bengal and Assam. It shows that in these parts, imperial armies struggled a lot against the annual monsoon rains and the resultant extensive floods. The third part of the paper highlights how these challenges posed by climate became all the more serious because of their constant interaction with other environmental factors like terrain and ecology as well as the way Mughal adversaries exploited these factors against them. It highlights the role of environment as something that deeply moulded the trajectories of Mughal war-making and empire-building. The paper concludes by arguing that a focus on this dynamic relationship among environment, war, and empire pushes us to think about early modern warfare while going beyond the Military Revolution paradigm, something that has dominated the writing of the history of early modern warfare for the last six decades.

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