

# The Spaces of Civil War

From a global  
typology of civil war  
to a  
topography of violence  
in South Africa  
1976, 1986, 1996

by  
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# INTRODUCTION

What is civil war?

In this book I suggest two ideas in order to answer that dauntingly complex question. The first idea is to base a typology of civil wars on the weapon used by the state-attackers; the second idea is to build a topographic model of the state on state space, ethnic space, town space, and house space. The first idea addresses the counting of civil war events, the second idea the interpretation of civil war space; in other words a typology and a topography of civil war. This method may be termed a comparative, spatial analysis; it is applied briefly to selected twentieth century civil wars using secondary sources, and to anti-state violence in South Africa in 1976, 1986, and 1996, exploring primary sources. Thus the tentative answer developed in the course of the book to the question 'what is civil war' applies to civil wars in twentieth century nation states only, and not to the state *tout court*.

Focusing only on fatal violence I attempt to draw up a topography of civil war in South Africa covering all the spaces from the human body to the state. I am not presenting a history of civil war in South Africa. Such a history would have to include, for example, the state's defence against the attacks of children, squatters and Zulus, of which I hardly write anything. Nor do I write about all the non-violent struggles in trade unions, civics, student organisations and so on. I am only considering violent attacks on the state, that is attacks where people got killed.

Wherever it devastates the land civil war is a drama with two main characters: a state and a human being. A subject at war, a citizen taking up arms, a neighbour killing a neighbour, someone actually killing somebody else is the plain truth of civil war. Yet for every individual act, for every human body hacked, stoned, burnt, shot, or tortured there was an extreme situation, a crushing political condition, an enraging historical harvest, compelling people to perpetrate their terrible acts. To grasp the historical phenomena of civil war it is important not just to concentrate on its terrifying, bloody, violent features. Civil war should not be equated with Thomas Hobbes' brutish stateless condition. On the contrary civil war reveals the state at its most extreme, waging war against its own citizens, and most paradoxically, as



citizens waging war against their own state. State rule of citizens, and citizens resisting state rule will be the main theme throughout this topographic enquiry into civil war.

## Background

I have been there. I have felt the fear of having a Kalashnikov pointed at me, smelt the sweet stench of decaying flesh, seen the ruins, and listened to refugee's stories of the lost land of peace. For thirteen years I travelled with my wife Nina and our children Emil and Ida on motorcycles through Latin America, South-East Asia, the Soviet Union and Africa. We did not travel to study civil war, but civil war was a fact of life in many of the places we visited, among them El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Malaysia, Timor, Irian Jaya, Georgia, Nagorny Karabakh, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, South Africa, Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Sudan. Upon our safe returns to Denmark Nina and I were confronted with the problem how to convey other people's misfortune, agony and pain in a respectful manner both compassionate and detached. We have tried to recreate in the genre of travel novels the authenticity of our personal encounters with strangers, some of whom were caught up in the turmoil of civil war, on the person to person level, respecting the individuality of people we met, refusing to generalise, admitting our empathy to show yet without hiding our own points of view.<sup>1</sup>

However, I have also visited the other protagonist of the civil war drama, tracked down, to be sure, by other means than a motorcycle. In my academic work the state has been the main subject of theoretical enquiry.<sup>2</sup> While civil war was a

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<sup>1</sup> *Held og Lykke. På motorcykel med Emil og Ida gennem Sydamerika*, [Good Luck, on motorcycle with Emil and Ida through South America] (with Nina Rasmussen), København: Gyldendal, 1983, (German edition 1986);  
*Sommer Hele Året. Med Emil og Ida i det vilde østen*, [Summer All Year; with Emil and Ida in the Wild East] (with Nina Rasmussen), København: Gyldendal, 1986, (German edition 1987);  
*Hos Fremmede Venner. På motorcykel gennem Sovjet*, [With Unknown Friends; On Motorcycle Through the Soviet Union], (with Nina Rasmussen), København: Gyldendal, 1989, (German edition 1989);  
*Fra Cape til Cairo. På motorcykel gennem Afrika*, [From Cape to Cairo, On Motorcycle through Africa], (with Nina Rasmussen), København: Gyldendal, 1993, (German edition 1994, Swedish edition 1995).

<sup>2</sup> *Statens Historie år 1000 - 2000*. Vol. 1: [History of the State, year 1000 - 2000. Vol. 1] (with Thomas Andersen), unpub. disertation,

very peripheral concern, I began in the mid 1970s to contemplate the spatiality of social structure. In a critique of the political abstractions of my Marxist friends, I searched for what I called 'the smallest real life' [*mindste virkelighed*] of money and capital, the two basic concepts in the critique of the political economy. Money's modern spatial presence, the territorial state, I suggested, began life in a faltering way with the first royal and urban mints in the thirteenth century. Capital's smallest real life today are the facilities making up each transnational branch of production connected by an international rate of profit; the first such branch springing to life was the Dutch and English shipping industries in the seventeenth century. The nation state was, and has remained, the crucial interface between these two geographies, which by the twentieth century came to cover the Earth.

Yet the state conceptualised as an economic-political process was clearly inadequate to capture the civil wars that seemed suddenly to unfold after 1989 with the end of the Soviet Union, intervention in Iraq and Somalia, and the break up of Yugoslavia. Reflections on these developments, some of which I experienced first hand, led me to regard violence as constitutive of the social, in particular in the core relation of rule between state and citizens. Violence proved to be the third pole I had missed in setting up a topographic analysis of civil war, linking space and the subjectivities of man and state.

I thus returned to the moral question of how to deal with other people's death, agony and pain from a direction opposite of the personal encounter with the human beings, that is from the direction of the state. To probe the problem of individual freedom and agency in a violent and unjust society probably takes a work of fiction rather than a scientific inquiry. The South African author, J.M. Coetzee's famous novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*, brought me, an outsider from a distant and snug country, close to the individual terror of living in times soaked in violence.

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Roskilde University, 1976; second edition RUB 1980; "Den borgerlige stats subsumtionshistorie, den feudale fase." [The history of the subsumption of the bourgeois state; the feudal phase] (with Thomas Andersen and Jens Herskind) in *Historievidenskab* 10/11, København, 1977;  
*Statens Historie år 1000 - 2000*, Vol. 2: [History of the State year 1000 - 2000.Vol 2] (with Thomas Andersen and Jens Herskind), unpub. disertation, Roskilde University, 1977; second edition RUB 1980; "Kapitalismens Alder og Vitalitet." [The Age and Vitality of Capitalism] (with Thomas Andersen and Jens Herskind) in *Kurasje* 19/20. København, 1979;  
*Statens Historie år 1000 - 2000*. Vol. 3: [History of the State year 1000 - 2000, Vol.3] (with Thomas Andersen and Jens Herskind), unpub. disertation, Roskilde University, 1979.

Yet it is important to know the large scale of violence, the scale of states because that is *also* the reality of our lives. How shall I, for example, deal with a South African police statistic revealing that more than 250.000 persons were murdered in South Africa in the two decades from 1976 to 1996? How can anyone multiply the ultimate reality of violence, death, with 250.000? I will argue that it is impossible to comprehend so many individual lives cut short.

One has to go through endless compilations of horrific facts. To do that respectfully, compassionate and detached necessitates, I think, a shift in genre from fiction (or travel novel) to an academic text. Only in academic fashion could I hope to probe and comprehend large numbers of death. Any kind of generalising individual lives is a reduction of the fullness of lived life, but when dealing, for example, with 250.000 murders I found it *desirable* to remove my text one step from the people making up the statistics not to end in, what the anthropologist Valentine Daniel, discussing how to write on the violence in Sri Lanka, called a ‘pornography of violence, with one’s account fattened up into prurience’ (Daniel, 1996:4). Respect for individual pain constituting only one iota of state-size violence I take to be respectful of the facts as far as possible. Respect for people suffering civil war, I think, furthermore demands a measure of compassion, an effort not to end in a professional cynicism, that is identifying fully with the state and obliterating all the possible liberating anarchy in the attack on the state. Finally, it is a virtue to be detached, because everybody screams at you to take sides, that is to compromise the respect of facts and the effort to maintain compassion undivided by allegiance. I feel this is an urgent problem trying to interpret all the suffering, baseness, courage, endurance, and indifference that make up the history of South Africa in the two decades ending the twentieth century.

## **Empirical material**

When I began working on civil war in 1994 my first surprise was that hardly anything was written on civil war. Many accounts are written, it is true, on individual civil wars, and a whole lot in particular on the American Civil War, but works attempting to give a theoretical explanation of the general phenomena of civil war were practically non-existent, as I detail in Chapter 1.

In this study few new data will be presented. The first three parts build fully on theoretical works and other secondary sources; in Part Four the main stock of my empirical material are interviews, newspapers, autobiographies, official and NGO data including crime-statistics, forensic evidence and social surveys;

documents, such as laws, Hansards and white papers from the apartheid state; documents from the ANC including just released confidential material, and propaganda material; and documents from the IFP, mainly speeches by Mangosutho Buthelezi. Yet, little will be new to those familiar with South African affairs. I have gone over that old ground attempting to explore some of the ignored dimensions of *where?* that may, hopefully, add new knowledge to the well-known answers to the respectable questions of what, who, and when.

### **The structure of the book**

**Part One**, the shortest, sets out in Chapter 1 the typology of civil war in a discussion with existing works on civil war, mainly stemming from the academic discipline of international relations theory, epitomised in the important counting done by SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), as war used to be, but has ceased to be, synonymous with international war. Part One argues that the weapon in itself is an index to the ‘social weight’ of the group opposing the state, and that it is possible and advisable to construct a typology of civil wars based alone on the weapon deployed against the state *before* discussing the issues of contention. The purpose of the typology at this stage is to be able as unambiguously as possible to count civil wars, but not yet to interpret them. The methodological point of counting *without*, or rather *before*, reference to the issues of contention is not to forget what wars were fought about, of course, but to distinguish counting from interpretation, as mixing the two steps of scientific understanding have lead to confused and vague categories, such as ‘ethnic war’. I propose four types of weapon: ‘household weapons’, light, heavy, and air- and seaborne weapons. They define four types of civil war: intifada, guerrilla, frontal, and intervention civil war; and four types of attacks on the state of sub-war intensity: riot, terrorism, coup, and preventive action.

**Part Two** in Chapters 2 through 9 gives a comparative introduction to the four civil war types and the four types of sub-war attacks on the state, building on accounts written mainly from a political science perspective. No single country has experienced all eight different types of civil war. To demonstrate my typology of civil war I present eight brief sketches, covering household-weapons attacks with the cases of riot in Los Angeles and intifada in Palestine; light weapons attacks with terrorism in Brazil and guerrilla war in China; heavy weapons attacks with a coup in Bolivia and frontal civil war in Afghanistan; and finally air- and seaborne weapons

attacks with preventive action in Somalia and intervention civil war in Bosnia. In particular the chapters on the first three types, riot, intifada, and terrorism are very brief, because these types are discussed in detail in Part Four, interpreting violence in South Africa.

The format of these eight examples are brief summaries of events; they are not meant to be interpretations of civil war space. The purpose is an introduction to the morphology of the different kinds of civil war, addressing question such as: how to account for in-between cases; can one type of attack on the state develop into another; how do different types of attack relate to variations in the spatiality of nation states? However, in order to suggest a concise comparative perspective, I introduce, in as a kind of preview the spatial categories explained and developed in Part Three: state space, ethnic space, town space, and house space.

**Part Three** moves from counting war and examples of events to the interpretation of civil war space (Chapter 10 through 16). Or put differently, after the splitting (the types of civil war), and the lines of fracture (the events of civil war), focus now shifts to *the whole*, the unit which is broken by civil war. This is the state. Civil war poses some very tough questions to any theory of the state in terms of subjectivity, violence and space. Confronted with war inside society prudent notions of state-citizen subjectivity becomes ambiguous; war amongst civilians contradicts ideal notions of the social externality of violence; war inside the state tests the iron law of enemy and friend as the foundation of the political.

Part Three opens with an outline in Chapter 10 of the lineages of the idea of civil war going back to the classical notion of *stasis*, the medieval-revolutionary notion of *insurgentia*, and the early-modern, national notion of *guerre civile*. Chapter 11 collects building blocks for a spatial theory of the state from amongst others Hannah Arendt, Pierre Clastres, Carl Schmitt, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault. They all in their different ways address the clash of state rule with human subjectivity. It appears that rule was violent in origin as well as violent in the last instance when challenged. Civil war can thus be defined in the most general terms as an attack by sub-state groups on the state, a reversal of rule.

One aim of the present study is to establish a spatial model of the state suitable for a topographic interpretation of civil war. The model should be wide enough to conceptualise the heterogeneous spaces that cannot be reduced to the state, in particular ethnicity, towns and houses. On the other hand it should sensitive enough to grasp complex individual identities, for example, that people are not just 'ethnic' but has at least generational, gendered, occupational-functional, ethnic-

religious, and national strands in their identity, which all are important in a cataclysmic situation such as civil war.

Chapter 12 presents the model in rough outline. It is dubbed S.E.T.H. from the four spaces it is composed of (state, ethnic, town, house); each of them is discussed in more detail in the subsequent four chapters (Chapter 13 through 16). All four spaces are global structures and in arguing for their pertinence a range of literature from anthropology, cultural studies, history, and sociology is reviewed. The model does not claim to be more than a vehicle for a tentative topography of violence. Its heuristic value will be put to the test in Part Four when the main empirical case of the book shall be interpreted.

**Part Four**, taking up half of the book attempts to bring together the three preceding parts in a more detailed analysis of attacks on one single state, South Africa in 1976, 1986, and 1996. Chapter 17 counts the violence of 1976, Chapter 18 is an interpretation of the attack on the state in 1976, focusing on the children of the townships and the link between the rule of apartheid and the rule of patriarchs. Chapter 19 counts the violence of 1986, followed by Chapter 20 interpreting the dual attacks on the apartheid state by the intifada in the townships and ANC's 'people's war' counterpoised by Nelson Mandela's secret negotiations. Chapter 21 counts the violence of 1996, and finally Chapter 22 offers an interpretation of the complex violence in KwaZulu-Natal based on a sample of newspaper-reports, focusing on the paradoxical claims of defending Zulu-ness and the Zulu nation; the uses of ethnicity in ending the civil war in South Africa concludes the chapter. A topographic interpretation of violence may tentatively answer questions such as why the children of 1976 were so dangerous, why the 1986 township intifada could not start a guerrilla war, and why the civil war ended with a disturbing displacement of ethnicity in 1996.

To pick South Africa as an example of civil war in a general treatment of the subject struck many friends in the country as distinctly odd 'as the civil war never came'. Probably most people, both black and white, had a nightmare of an all-consuming race-war, against which the actual wide-scale violence appeared minimal and trivial. Yet in a study of civil war South Africa has at least three features to recommend it beyond the fact that there *was* a civil war in South Africa: the complexity of South African society makes it possible to analyse a perplexing variety of conflict-types in one state; from the vantage point of 1994 (when I decided to concentrate on South Africa) the civil war seemed to have ended in a uniquely civilised manner not least through the charismatic contribution of Nelson

Mandela; finally the apparent triviality of a civil war not very different from crime, made it more suitable than an all-out tanks-and-jets civil war for the study of the growing criminalisation of civil war, which points to the disquieting future of many countries not really in war, yet not peaceful.

Almost all studies of contemporary South Africa have been organised to answer the question of dynamic change: how did the country get from one social condition (apartheid, racialism, etc.) to another (democracy, nation building etc.). I am not addressing that question, important as it is, of how and why South Africa moved from apartheid in 1976 to the democratic dispensation in 1996. My purpose is *not* a diachronous narrative of two decades of South Africa's development, but to explain how state rule was challenged in three radically different ways in 1976, 1986, and 1996. My aim is to *contrast* the three different attacks by mapping their spaces of violence, and not to explain why South Africa developed the way it did.

The selection of the years of 1976, 1986, and 1996 is basically arbitrary. I am not purporting to pick 'typical' years. The idea of a 'typical' situation is directly at odds with my idea of exploring contrasts and difference rather than similarity and continuity. The choice was first of all practical: 1996 was the present now of my field work in South Africa; 1976 was chosen for Soweto, June 16, in many ways the apogee of apartheid and the first year of violent resistance. 1986 was the simple halfway point between 76 and 96. But it was an important year in its own right too, the peak of the township rebellion, met by state of emergency and secret negotiations alike. 1996 seemed from the vantage point of 1998 still to be the (fragile) end of the civil war. Let me add, that I have seen no point in adhering religiously to the three chosen years. I have tried to be reasonably strict in concentrating on data from the three years only, but still some contextualising of longer developments have been appropriate.

Thus, my analysis is extremely narrow in the historical direction, as it eschews analysing the process, the history and the development of 'the struggle' not to speak of the broad march of South African history. In fact, I take a lot of historical context for granted knowledge. What I present here is leaving out very important strands of recent South African history. Of course, I am not arguing that the history of the last two decades can be written solely by looking at the years of 1976, 1986, and 1996. However, in the structural, spatial direction my analysis attempts to be very broad, and pack into each of the three topographies every kind of violence perpetrated against the state.





# Part One.

## To Count Civil War Events

# 1

## A TYPOLOGY OF CIVIL WARS

Suddenly after 1989 states appeared to collapse. With the Soviet Union violently breaking apart, endless terror in Yugoslavia, and then an African holocaust in Rwanda, civil war as an agent of state destruction was put on the global agenda. An observer of the civil war in Afghanistan wrote: “The developed country does not, as Marx thought, show the backward country its future; the fragmenting countries show the integrating ones the dark side of their common present.” (Rubin, 1995:5)

### 1. “A world not fully understood”, the academic ignorance of civil war

There were still more than 20.000 nuclear warheads in the world’s arsenals (SIPRI, 1995), and no assessment of global security could afford to forget them, but below the level of nuclear war, civil war rather than interstate war was becoming the most realistic military threat to national security. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, director of SIPRI, wrote in his introduction to the 1995 yearbook, that “the main sources of threat in the world today are not conflicts *between* states, but *within* them... among the 31 major armed conflicts in 1994 no ‘classic’ war was being waged.” (Rotfeld, 1995:4-5; italics in original). Of the 82 armed conflicts occurring 1989-1992 only three were interstate, while the rest was intra-state. More than half of the armed conflicts in 1993 had been going on for ten years or more, with a toll of four to six million human lives. (UNDP, 1994: Chap. 3). The often repeated fact of the coming of the civil wars had profound implications for the understanding of contemporary armed conflict, and of policies attempting to reduce them.

At the end of the twentieth century the international community was confronted with the challenge to prevent or at least to contain civil wars; a rapidly

growing number of national armies were faced with the acute problem of learning to fight civil wars, either in their own country or as participants in UN-operations targeted for somebody else's civil war. If your resources were limited you had to prioritise for the internal war. In Russia the Red Army, Navy and Airforce intended for conventional interstate war were tottering along without pay, housing, or new weapons while the so-called 'other forces' deployed in intra-state war, i.e. the Ministry of the Interior special forces, border troops and security forces still got paid, trained, and equipped (*Weekendavisen*, Nov. 15-21, 1996). In only seven years, from January 1988 to December 1994 the intervention of the world community in civil wars grew from 5 peacekeeping operations involving 9570 military personnel with a budget of US\$ 230,4 million to 17 operations involving 73.393 military personnel with a budget of US\$ 3610 million.<sup>3</sup> Beyond the pure numerical escalation was the move towards peace *enforcing* operations and the fateful revolution of the Westphalian nation state.

This brave new world of civil wars, "is still a world not fully understood" as Boutros-Ghali said. (Rotfeld 1995:10). Indeed not. In fact, when I began working on civil war in 1994 I could not come across a single book-length academic treatment of *what* a civil war was.

Since Thomas Hobbes published his *Behemoth: The History of the Causes of The Civil Wars in England, and of The Counsels and Artifacts By Which They Were Carried On From The Year 1640 To The Year 1660*, in 1668 (17 years after the first edition of "Leviathan") not much ink had been wasted on civil wars. The rare animal of civil war had hardly left any traces in the forest of lexicons.<sup>4</sup> In the works listed the only approximation of a conceptual analysis of

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<sup>3</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, second edition, p. 8. United Nations, New York, 1995; cited in SIPRI, 1995:2.

<sup>4</sup> *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart: Ernest Klett, 1972 ff.: no CW entry;  
*Marxism and Communism*. N.Y. 1972: no CW entry;  
*Encyclopædia of Modern War..* by Roger Parkinson. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1977: no CW entry;  
*The Encyclopædia of 20 cen. Warfare*, ed. Noble Frankland. London: Mitchel Beazley Pub, 1984: no CW entry;  
*Dictionary of Geopolitics*, ed. John O'Loughlin. Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1984: no CW entry;  
*Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften*: no CW entry;  
*Zones of Conflict: An Atlas of Future Wars*, by John Keegan and Andrew Weatcroft. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1986: no CW entry;  
*The Penguin Encyclopædia of Modern Warfare*. by Kenneth Macksey and William Woodhouse. New York: Viking 1991: no CW entry;

civil war is found in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* in the article “Aufnahmestand” and under “Krieg” in the sub-article “Revolutionäre Bürgerkrieg”. In 1993 Hans Magnus Enzensberger published his vitriolic essay *Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg*, (English translation 1994), the western public was shocked by the appearance of the 'New World Order' in journalistic accounts like Robert D. Kaplan's article *The Coming Anarchy*, (Kaplan, 1994; reportedly read with great concern by Bill Clinton and later extended to a book), and Linda Schuster's grisly *The Final Days of Dr Doe* on gang-war in Liberia (Schuster, 1994).

In 1996 John Keane published his *Reflections on Violence*, a reply to Enzensberger on behalf of civil society and humanism. Literature reflecting upon the anatomy of civil war grew to a short but promising list from 1994 to 1997; one of the most important of these new analyses of civil war was Kalevi Holsti's *The State, War and the State of War* from 1996. Thomas Hobbes witnessed how The English Civil War created the first true nation state<sup>5</sup> while Holsti saw the break down of 'weak' nation states three hundred years later. Indeed, with civil wars igniting from Bosnia to Liberia, the collapse of weak states and the accompanying march of 'globalisation' it became a commonplace to predict an imminent post-nation state period in world history.<sup>6</sup>

While the body of literature on civil war theory still was extremely minute by 1997, the pile of books telling the story of a *particular* civil war stood tall, running into several hundreds. More than two thirds of all these studies dealt with

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*The Dictionary of Modern War*, by Eduard Luttwak and Stuart Koehl. New York: Harper Collins, 1991: no CW entry;  
*Dictionary of Military Terms*, compiled by Trevor N. Dupuy, Cur Johnson, and Grace P. Hayes. New York: H.W. Wilson, 1986: contains a CW entry of only one line: “a war between indigenous factions in a single country.”  
*Int. Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*. New York, 1968: boasts a short article on civil war by J. K. Zawodny; while the  
*Encyclopaedia Britannica* contains no less than two “civil war” entries, one about the American and one about the English civil war, but not a word on *what* a civil war is.

<sup>5</sup> I discuss the English Revolution/Civil War from the perspective of the evolution of the nation state in my, *Statens Historie, år 1000 - 2000*, [History of the State, year 1000-2000] Vol 1, RUB 1976, p. 277-310; and Vol 2, RUB 1977, p. 128-197.

<sup>6</sup> I sketched the outlines of a possible post-nation state, the 'commission-state' in, *En Model for Statens Historie år 1000 - 2000*. [A Model of the History of the State, 1000- 2000], Working paper 23-95, Centre for Cultural Research, Århus University, 1995.

the American Civil War (1861-65) a lot of which were pure “bugles and buttons history”.<sup>7</sup> The English Civil War (1640-60) made a very small number two, and way down on the civil war hit-list came the two most studied twentieth century civil wars, the Russian (1918-21) and the Spanish (1936-39). The monographs repeated the lack of theory found in the lexicon-articles on civil war; empirical stuff of individual civil wars was scattered chaotically under diverse headings, hiding blissfully the total non-existence of a conceptual understanding of civil war.

The three hundred years of near-silence from Hobbes to Enzensberger on civil war is a very strange fact; John Keane found the virtual absence of reflection upon civil war 'scandalous', and it is certainly surprising considering the sheer bloody bulk of ‘real existing’ civil wars; one research-team counted 106 civil wars from 1816 to 1980 claiming more than 9 million lives (Small & Singer, 1982). It is tempting to interpret this anomaly as a reflection of the way war developed in our ‘long century of violence’ (Keane). The victory of the nation state in the twentieth century resulted in the hegemony of ‘realist’ thinking on matters martial.<sup>8</sup> Even Lenin jettisoned - as fresh-born ruler of a nation state - his long-held view that revolutionary civil war, that is the global war of the working class against the capitalist class, was superior to the imperialist wars amongst states, and he foresaw instead war between two camps of nation states,

“We are living not merely in a state, but *in a system of states*, and it is inconceivable for the Soviet Republic to exist alongside of the imperialist states for any length of time. One or the other must triumph in the end... If the ruling class, the proletariat, wants to hold power, it must therefore, prove its ability to do so by its military organisation [as a nation-state, H.T.].”<sup>9</sup>

World Wars of a terrifying scale made the experience of, say, the Spanish civil war seem irrelevant to the problem of war and peace. The oceanic movements of total war among nation states washed out the cross-currents of civil wars. “Fat Boy” introduced a frightening new meaning of war in Hiroshima. World War

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<sup>7</sup> See Peter Paret’s revealing essay on American military history; Paret, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Realism takes legitimately the state as the basic unit in any analysis of international relations and national security, but tends to disregard other actors in particular internal sub-state actors. Writers such as Hans J. Morgenthau, Edward Hallet Carr, Henry Kissinger and Hedley Bull are prominent; for an introduction see Viotti, 1990.

<sup>9</sup> Lenin, 1919, Collected Works vol 29, p.153, quoted in Marxism and Communism, New York 1972, p. 311.

Two-like warfare became “conventional war”, and civil wars disappeared below the icy crust of an ‘exterminist society’ busy preparing atomic war; the key term in E.P. Thompson's eloquent, desperate, and influential book from 1982. Even where civil wars were noticed as such, as in Russia or Algeria, their internal dynamics were re-read as ‘revolution’ or ‘national liberation’. For military and political writers civil war seemed to be utterly dated.

Yet civil wars continued to happen,<sup>10</sup> and below the fragile nuclear deterrent established in the 1950s Washington and Moscow jockeyed to subordinate the dynamics of ever more internal military conflicts their own bi-polar struggle. Civil wars were denied intrinsic meaning and became proxies for “Third World competition between the U.S. and Marxist-Leninist states.” (Odom, 1992:224). William E. Odom, until 1988 director of the National Security Agency in Washington, was in complete agreement with the “Marxist-Leninist camp” on this score. Soviet military doctrine during the Breshnev era also used the two-camp formula with ‘national liberation struggle’ reduced to a proxy for the global war between ‘imperialism’ and ‘revolution’. “Imperialist intervention against revolutionary forces in a civil war would convert the war into a national liberation struggle against the imperialists.” (cit. in *Marxism and Communism* 1972:315).

Right up until the Soviet Union lost the Cold War academic treatments of civil wars, in the ‘free’ as well as the ‘revolutionary’ camp, was limited to utilitarian manuals on how to *win* an “internal war”, “local war”, “low intensity conflict”, “unconventional war”, “wars of the third kind”, “insurgency”, “revolutionary warfare”, “guerrilla war”, “wars of national liberation”, or even a “dirty war”. A recent addition to this line of hands-on literature is the avalanche of literature on humanitarian intervention, spurred by the post-1989 interventions in Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia. Several academic journals are devoted to the discussion of this new international practice of interventions ranging from humanitarian aid and traditional peacekeeping to peace-enforcing and other actions rubbing against the limits of national sovereignty.<sup>11</sup> Yet all the tags put on incidents of non-international war in the literature only added up in the most inconclusive way to a *concept* of civil war or any real understanding of how military and political, state and individual forces co-

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<sup>10</sup> Small and Singer list 49 civil wars 1946-1980 world-wide; Small, 1982:222.

<sup>11</sup> At the time of writing the latest addition to the field of civil war-relevant journals is *Civil Wars*, with the very first issue appearing in April 1998, edited by Caroline Kennedy-Pipe and Clive Jones, both from University of Leeds.

determine the outcome of civil wars. Civil war remained in a grey zone between the interstate war, the preserve of realist international relations theory, and violence, the preserve of the mainstream social sciences.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Realist problems: SIPRI counting civil war

The standard realist or neo-realist approach to international relations has the great advantage to policy-makers that global processes may be conceptualised at a state-to-state level immediately relevant to their decision-making. It is thus no surprise, but not given, that surveys like the SIPRI yearbooks use a realist methodology. Yet civil war is very difficult to conceptualise in the realist tradition because wars waged inside states used to be invisible to the international relations gaze.

SIPRI struggles to quantify this new and enigmatic war-within-states based on a standard realist state-centred definition of war (government action - effective army resistance - non-civilian casualties etc.) that is rather insensitive to exactly the crucial civilian aspect of civil wars. In this they seem to follow the influential statistical work by David Singer and Melvin Small whose 1982 publication *Resort To Arms, International and Civil Wars, 1816 - 1980* still stands as one of the most comprehensive compilations of statistics on the incidence of civil (and international) war. Singer and Small, however, do not attempt a theoretical explanation of the phenomena of civil war, but simply define civil war in nation-states with a view of maximum statistical precision as: “military action, (a) internal to the metropole (mother country), (b) with the active participation of the national government, and (c) with effective resistance by both sides” (Singer and Small, 1980: 210).<sup>13</sup> The first criterion of internality rules out many conflicts normally seen as civil wars, such as colonial wars and wars of national liberation. The second criterion excludes regional (sub-state) conflicts and communal violence because the state is not involved. Thirdly they do not consider a massacre or genocide a civil war because it lacks ‘effective resistance’. Finally, to make it onto their list a civil war

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<sup>12</sup> Ted Robert Gurr has been very influential since the 1970s in the mainstream; a massive summary (not synthesis) of Non-Marxist social and political science findings on political violence and revolutions is Zimmermann (1983) with 150 pages of bibliography.

<sup>13</sup> Many slightly different compilations of war-data exist; using a broader concept of armed conflict than Small & Singer is Holsti, 1996, pp. 210-225, listing major conflicts globally 1945-95.

must have had a total of more than 1000 battle deaths (the arbitrary but standard threshold in this kind of investigations).

Based on those criteria they end up with a global list of 106 civil wars in the period 1816 - 1980 (49 in the period 1946 - 1980). China with 11, and Colombia and Spain both with 7 civil wars top the list. The 106 civil wars together claimed 9 million battle-deaths and had a duration of 3000 nation-months. China, Nigeria, Spain, USA and Russia top the list of casualties. They remark "almost all civil wars were between members of the same ethnic or linguistic family" (ibid., p. 233), but they do not specify what they mean by ethnic or linguistic family. During the same period they list 67 interstate and 51 imperial wars, with a duration of 6000 nation-months claiming 31 million battle-deaths; 1917 and 1943 were the most war-intense years, and First and Second World Wars the bloodiest wars of the period. European states were by far the most war-prone in the world. They conclude that all tendencies to an increase in number, duration, severity or intensity for interstate as well as civil wars through the period 1816 - 1980 disappear if the figures are normalised for the growth in size of the nation state system. It remains an open question, however, if their conclusion would remain the same, if they had included the next two decades of wars, and thus the 'new' civil wars of the 1990s.

In a similar vein Margareta Sollenberg and Peter Wallensteen from SIPRI define a 'major armed conflict' of which there occurred 31, waged on 27 locations in 1994, as

"..prolonged combat between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organised armed group, and incurring battle-related deaths of at least 1000 people during the entire conflict." (Sollenberg 1995:21)

They define the conflicts in terms of two types of incompatibility:

"..contested, incompatible positions regarding government (i.e., the type of political system or a change of central government or its composition) and territory (i.e., control of territory, secession or autonomy)." (ibid., p. 21).

This is very sensible and could equal 'revolutionary' and 'ethnic' civil wars. But closer inspection opens up some problems. Basically the reasoning behind both the definitions of Small and Singer and SIPRI (and all realist writing) is the unitary nation state, which has been the dominant state-form in most of the twentieth century. But if precisely the apparent proliferation of civil wars today signals a transformation of this state, it may signal the need of a transformation of our thinking about the state too. At this stage I will only point to some obvious



problems arising from the transfer of concepts from the study of interstate war to civil war in the work of SIPRI.<sup>14</sup>

The Table 1A of conflicts in 1994 (ibid., p. 28ff) lists the state territory on which the conflicts take place, type of incompatibility, longevity of conflict, participating armies, their numerical strengths, total deaths, deaths in 1994 and change from 1993. This procedure is developed from listing interstate wars, characterised by rough symmetry between armies, relatively short duration, battle-related deaths being the majority of all conflict-related deaths, contending parties being identifiable armies, and finally located within existing states. However, what their table documents is an alien world very far from the text-book conventional war.

*State territory:* collapsed states without a government pose a serious problem for categorising civil wars according to SIPRI's criteria insisting on at least one government being party to the conflict. Clearly there was a civil war raging in Afghanistan in 1992, to take but one example, and the 1993 Yearbook add to the entry for Afghanistan: "No general 'vs' or Govt. can be distinguished for the entire year 1992." (SIPRI, 1993:123), so *strictu sensu* it is debatable whether Afghanistan should be on the list at all - or the criteria are deficient.

*Longevity of conflict:* Another striking feature of the listed conflicts are their extreme longevity, which again pictures a war radically different from a conventional war with a beginning and a definite end. These conflicts seem to be both unwinnable and unstoppable, hinting at a state structure very different from the proper unitary nation state which should not be able to accommodate an ongoing war on its territory for decades.

*Participating armies, their numerical strengths:* The wild inequality in strength between large national armies like the Turkish or the Indian army and minute guerrilla groups also contradicts a conventional war. This produces a picture of an impossible conventional war. Sollenberg and her team know of course very well that the war in Turkey is a guerrilla war and only a fraction of the Turkish army of 600.000 is deployed against the 12.000 PKK guerrillas, but it is not reflected in the table.

*Incompatibility:* This criterion refers to discursive data very different from the numerical data the other criteria refer to. I comment on this below. Related to this problem is the criterion of 'organized armed group' which excludes conflicts

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Rupeshinghe, 1998, p. 25-27 for a discussion of similar quantitative definitions of civil war including those suggested by PIOOM, Leiden.

with groups that do not resist in a military fashion. Thus the victims of the Rwanda massacre of 1994 do not appear in the yearbook as “these were not immediately related to the respective parties [Hutu ‘extremists’ and the Rwanda Patriotic Front] and the incompatibility.” (ibid., p. 22). This is a very unfortunate skewing of the dynamics of the conflict and clearly indicates that the criteria used are problematic to say the least.

*Total deaths, deaths in 1994 and change from 1993:* there are two important problems with SIPRI’s definition of war-intensity as “the battle-related deaths of at least 1000 people during the entire conflict.”(SIPRI, 1995:21). First, how to define the beginning and end of the ‘entire’ conflict. The example of Northern Ireland is instructive; violence on a war-like scale began in 1969, but in 1994 only 17 ‘battle-related deaths’ occurred, and on average 60 deaths occurred during the 25 years of conflict (SIPRI, 1995:29). Nevertheless the conflict is still listed as a ‘major armed conflict’. To me, this is a very questionable classification. I can understand SIPRI has a desire to be comprehensive, and I do not advocate ignoring small conflicts like Northern Ireland; but the classification adopted should not lump everything together as ‘major armed conflicts’.

Secondly, the misleading low casualties stemming from the criteria used to define ‘battle-related’ deaths raise a further serious political and theoretical question. The root of the problem is not technical-statistical but how the state-at-war is perceived: what are the limits to ‘battle-related’ violence in a civil war: deaths by bombs, bullets, machetes, or empty plates? I agree with SIPRI that a theoretical distinction should be made between civil war and genocide (including hunger used as a weapon against segments of a state’s own population), but weighed against the urge to reflect statistical precision in the tables (and so exclude deaths-by-genocide) is the political reality of a population victim of a mixed civil war-genocide conflict. I think it is impossible and impermissible to select deaths in this manner. What should be distinguished is the (rare) situation of ethnic cleansing or genocide taking place *without* accompanying civil (or international) war. In the case of Rwanda genocide and civil war was clearly mixed. The distinction SIPRI makes between battle-related deaths and ‘political violence’ as in the case of Northern Ireland, is also a politically questionable selection of deaths resulting from one interlinked conflict. Adam Rotfeld is justified in calling for a more inclusive concept of security, and this new inclusivity certainly should be extended to the statistics as well.

An example of the magnitude of the problem is the discrepancy between the SIPRI 1993 entry for Afghanistan quoting the total deaths as “1.000.000

(estimated direct and indirect deaths 1978-1990).” (SIPRI, 1993:123) versus the SIPRI 1995 entry for Afghanistan now two years later quoting the total deaths for 1978 - 1994 as “> 14.000.” (SIPRI, 1995:31).

My discussion of SIPRI should not be read as a critique of the important and very useful work they are doing, nor of the quality of their findings. On the contrary, to find these problems even in SIPRI’s work should alert us to fundamental shortcomings in the realist understanding of civil war. So are there any better alternatives? This is not an easy question to answer.

### **3. Empirical parameters of civil war: intensity, locality, polarity, and weapon**

Certainly there is no agreement on a typology of civil wars today, with every researcher proposing his or her own well-argued list of types. To develop a typology of civil wars in nation-states we must first establish a procedure to define whether a given episode of violence is a civil war at all. To do so, three empirical parameters could be used: (i) intensity of violence; (ii) locality of violence ; (iii) polarity of violence. I suggest we are dealing with a civil war, *if* the number of persons killed in the conflict during one calendar year exceeds 1000; *and* the conflict is internal to a state; *and* the conflict is an attack on the state-government by sub-state groups.

But what kind of civil war? Most researchers of war and peace at this question jump from counting events of violence to interpreting *motives* and attempt to classify internal war, for example by looking at the ‘types of incompatibility’ (SIPRI) or ‘contentious issues’ (ECOR). But the data on motives of violence differ fundamentally from the data on incidents of violence: you can count corpses but perforce enter a hermeneutical circle when trying to understand why people kill and get killed. The ‘why’ is like a black hole; it will suck in any number of motives and crush them; we need to approach the interpretation of motives carefully and circumspectly and preferably after the counting.

My suggestion is to leave the *why* unanswered for a little while, and return to the ‘hard facts’ of violent incidents. *How* people are killed, the technology of violence, i.e. the types of weapons used, is much easier to record unambiguously than why people kill and get killed. The weapon is potentially a key signifier in the classification of civil wars. Any reporting from a civil war will include information on weapons: were tanks, fighter aircrafts, guns or stones used by the *state-attackers*? Weapons are a solid index of social complexity; any mob can throw

stones but it takes a highly differentiated industrial community to field aircrafts. I will argue that a significant correlation exists between the degree of sophistication of a weapon, say a tank, the 'social weight' of a group capable of deploying tanks, and finally the type of civil war ensuing where the state is attacked with tanks. For these reasons I will suggest adding as a fourth empirical parameter for the classification of civil wars *the most complex weapon deployed by the state-attackers* to the already-mentioned criteria of intensity, locality, and polarity.

Of course, a full exploration of civil war must move beyond the bare counting and classifying of violence to an interpretation of meaning. To do so demands mapping the strategic field of the state, revealing the tactical strengths and weaknesses of the state-attackers along the territorial borders of states, ethnic spaces, towns, and houses; and finally endeavouring to trace how discourses develop inside each of these overlapping spaces, producing antagonistic meanings of violence: why it becomes right to kill your neighbour; I return to the possibilities of a spatial interpretation of civil wars to address these questions in Part Three.

#### **(a) Intensity of violence**

In this study I shall adopt John Keane's very restrictive definition of violence as 'the unwanted interference with the bodies of others' (the implications of this definition are discussed in Part Three); not addressed by Keane, however, is how to measure the quantities of violence. Forensic medicine breaks down mortality into natural and non-natural deaths and the latter into deaths caused by violence and by injury. Murder arguably is violent death in its most raw form. The incidence of murder is a solid pointer to the degree of violence in almost any society. The difference between being murdered by somebody in peacetime and being killed in a war is not the terminal harm inflicted on the human body, but a matter of the social structure of violence.

I propose to count the intensity of a civil war in 'battle-related deaths', which can include violent deaths caused by 'war', 'political violence', 'genocide', 'deliberate deprivation' and 'enforced hunger' depending on the event, well aware that many statistical sources on violent deaths at the present time are not always prepared to yield this kind of information. Perhaps particularly problematic is the break-down of murders into 'crime' and 'political violence'. In my attempt in Part Four to interpret violence in South Africa I shall return to the difficult question of assigning collective meaning to individual incidents of violence.

Most analysts define war in terms of intensity as a violent event causing a thousand or more battle-deaths. The virtue of this definition is double: because the

threshold is arbitrary it postpones the discussion of meaning; and it rates all human lives equal and not, for example, relative to the size of the state at war. However, I have a problem with the way the thousand battle-deaths are counted. SIPRI and everybody else measuring wars count cumulatively per conflict, adding casualties from one year to next, as in the example of Northern Ireland mentioned above.

Keeping in mind the purpose of summarily listing wars normally is to sketch the (global) state of war, and not explaining individual conflicts, I would advocate producing comparable figures by isolating *quantitatively* arbitrary time-frames of, say, one year instead of the normal procedure of establishing comparative figures by isolating *qualitatively* arbitrary continuity-frames of single conflicts. I suggest it would give much more reliable figures if they are generated from one area/event *synchronous* inclusive within an arbitrary time-limit rather than accumulated *diachronous* exclusive based on the vague continuity of 'one' conflict.

Even a highly sophisticated analysis such as Kalevi Holsti's runs into the problems inherent in diachronic counting. In his entry for South Africa he lists a 'major armed conflict' running from 1960 to 1994 between the South African government vs. ANC/MK, PAC, AZAPO and APLA rebels. (Holsti, 1996:212). This is rather misleading as there was no war in any meaning of the word at least until 1976 and not really before 1986. Had Holsti compiled his list in 1975, South Africa would presumably not have been included at all. Only after 1986 was there obviously an armed conflict in South Africa; and only then could a genealogy be constructed stretching back to 1960 construing a few isolated terrorist attacks in the 1960s as part of three decades of 'major armed conflict'.<sup>15</sup> Worse than Holsti's commission of early terrorism is perhaps his surprising omission of the most lethal part of the conflict, that involving the Inkatha Freedom Party.

By taking as our criteria 1000 battle-related deaths *per annum* and not *per* entire conflict we would highlight ongoing wars, and downplay (but not eradicate) the problematic historical question of continuity: how to determine beginnings, lulls, ends, and resumptions. A sub-war class of 'minor conflicts' having an accumulated total of more than 1000 deaths within, say, a decade could perhaps be added to the 'major conflicts' with more than 1000 deaths within a year.

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<sup>15</sup> This is, of course, only a neat little example of a fundamental historiographic problem of writing history backwards as a proof of the present; national histories are particular striking examples of this; cf. Uffe Østergård, *Europas ansigter*, København: Rosinante, 1993, for an extended discussion of this problem in an European setting.

**(b) Locality of violence**

All states must enforce a boundary between internal order and a different external order, whether understood as Hobbesian chaos or any variety of supra-national concert. Civil war is war inside this boundary; in a civil war the state is being attacked from within. The present analysis is confined to nation states, and the supreme importance attached to the national border by this kind of state makes the question of locality easy to answer in most cases (the exemption is intervention civil wars). Civil wars are not unique to nation-states; in various kinds of states like tribal polities and empires the structure of the boundary differs from nation state borders and the historical dynamic of civil war differs accordingly. The spatiality of violence *inside* the state is central to interpreting civil war; Part Three of my study is devoted to this question.

**(c) Polarity of violence**

Whether any specific episode of violence killing more than 1000 people *per annum* inside a nation-state is a civil war should be judged by the three possible polarities of violence: (i) does the episode of violence not involve the state ('communal' violence), (ii) is the state attacking sub-state groups (ethnic cleansing/genocide), or (iii) is the state defending itself against attacks by sub-state groups? Only case (iii) count as civil war. A simple empirical indications of this situation obtaining is a state deploying the army against its citizens. From being the attacker of citizens by law backed up by (police) violence, the state finds itself in a situation where it must defend itself against violent attacks from groups of citizens by its armed forces. During a civil war a complicated sequence of attacks and counter-attacks can take place, shots can be fired in both directions; the point is the reversal and breakdown of state *rule* in terms of violence and legitimacy. In Part Three I develop the theory of how a civil war can be analysed as a historical event where the direction and meaning of state rule is reversed; in Part Four I apply this in a detailed analysis of civil war in South Africa.

**(d) Weapon**

An episode of violence determined as civil war in terms of intensity, locality and polarity can now be classified by the most complex weapon used by the attacker. Weapon used as index to the type of civil war builds on the assumption of a straightforward relation between the complexity of a weapon and the complexity of a social organisation deploying the weapon.

My notion of the weapon as index of social complexity differs fundamentally from the now ridiculed technology-first ideas like Lynn White's suggestion in 1962 that the stirrup was the cause of feudal Europe. Charles Martel's victory in Poitiers 732 over the Muslim forces advancing north of the Pyrenees was due to his knights' superior fighting capacity, mounted firmly as they were in saddles with stirrups; the upkeep such formidable armies prompted the subsequent development of vassals and feudalism.<sup>16</sup> I do not take the weapon as the cause of social structure, but as a signifier. To field a particular weapon takes a historical conjecture and a certain degree of societal development (the stirrup, for example, spreading from its possible Persian origins apparently reached Europe less than hundred years before 732 finding reception among knights in a centrally-led royal army). Yet, every weapon does have a technological horizon, that materially effect the tactical and strategic possibilities of any army and thus the war-fighting capability of any state. Since a historical conjecture has an infinite number of predicates, and societal development many, while a class of weapons only has few predicates, I suggest using the weapon as an index to the two-way relation between weapon and society.<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that the military horizon of an attack with different types of weapons, (for example light weapons and heavy weapons) is determined by the most complex weapon, but the total impact (including casualties) will depend on the cumulative effect of all weapons fielded. A few complex weapons deployed amid a mass of simple weapons (for example a single firearm fired from within a mob of stone-throwers) will not change the military horizon of the attack and thus not the classification. Further it is important to note that the weapons used by the state in defending itself cannot be used to classify civil war because they do not necessarily reflect the weight of the state-attacking group or the seriousness of the attack.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Keegan, 1993, p. 284-86

<sup>17</sup> The anthropologist Marshall D. Sahlins is well-known for his work connecting warfare and cultural development, taking the Americans Indians as his case. He writes, "Using a general perspective, however, we classify types of warfare as representatives of stages in the overall development of that aspect of culture, and then trace the progressive trends in war as they unfold through successive stages." Marshall D. Sahlins, "Evolution: Specific and General", in M.D. Sahlins and E.R. Service, eds.: *Evolution and Culture*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960.

<sup>18</sup> For example when Anastasio Somoza used fighter aircraft against unarmed demonstrations in Managua 1979.

I will now propose the following four types of weapon:

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Types of weapons

HOUSEHOLD WEAPONS  
LIGHT WEAPONS  
HEAVY WEAPONS  
AIR AND SEABORNE WEAPONS

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**Household weapons** can be defined as objects that are readily available to everyone like rocks, stones, urban scrap, kitchen and farm tools, rods, sticks, petrol and bottles, tyres, car wrecks and so on. Hunting rifles and small arms in general possession by the citizens belong to the category of household weapons as do “traditional weapons”, but they are insignificant in attacks on the state compared with other household weapons.

**Light weapons** basically comprise two groups, explosives and military issue light weapons regardless of technological sophistication. There is no standard definition of small arms and light weapons. Chris Smith in the SIPRI Yearbook 1995 uses the following working definition,

“‘Light weapons’ refers to crew-portable land-based armaments. This definition includes small arms such as pistols, rifles, assault rifles and sub-machine-guns; light weapons and medium machine-guns, heavy machine-guns (HMG) with a calibre not exceeding 14,5mm; anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles; light mortars; mines and grenades.” (Smith, 1995:581)

These weapons are normally not available in households, and should be distinguished from firearms used for private sport and self-protection purposes. They are, on the other hand, relatively easy to procure for militant groups on the international market, steal from military stockpiles etc. With their abundance, relatively high firepower and unlimited mobility they represent the second level of technological-social organisation of violence.

**Heavy weapons** can be defined as every land-based weapon above the level of light weapons (as defined above), and below the level of airborne or seaborne weapons. A typical heavy weapon like the tank is a highly sophisticated piece of technology with great destructive capacity signifying the complex social-industrial organisation necessary for their production, the powerful state-military organisation necessary for their procurement and finally the diversified army necessary for their effective deployment. Heavy weapons have evolved since World War Two as the centrepiece of a non-guerrilla strategy of frontal or conventional



warfare. Heavy weapons are developed today for high-tech, high-speed *inter-state* warfare, integrating ground-, sea- and air forces like in the Gulf-War. This differs from the low-tech, low-speed *intra-state* deployment in frontal civil war without sea-, and air force.<sup>19</sup> Heavy weapons represent the third level of technological-social organisation of violence.

**Air- and seaborne weapons** are (i) Household, light or heavy weapons carried by merchant or naval ships, or by civilian or military aircrafts. (ii) Land, air or sea launched un-manned airborne weapons-systems: planes, missiles and rockets; excluding handhold weapons-systems regardless of their sophistication, i.e. Stinger-missiles which belongs to the 'light-weapons' category. The common trait of air- and seaborne weapons is not their destructive capacity which ranges from the non-direct war-impact possible with humanitarian aid to the extreme destruction possible by atomic (and bacteriological and chemical) weapons, but their technological and social support and delivery systems giving attacks with air- and seaborne weapons strategic possibilities reaching beyond the military horizon of land based weapons.

#### **4. A typology of civil war: intifada, guerrilla, frontal, and intervention**

Recounted very briefly: household weapons are household items that become weapons by being used violently against other persons; light weapons are every weapon that can be carried by a person on foot; heavy weapons are all land based weapons above light weapons; air and seaborne weapons are the rest. It is important to note that these categories are cumulative: when you use heavy weapons you do not stop using light weapons; the heavy weapon is added to the light weapon. But it is still the most complex weapon deployed by the attackers which determines the type of war fought.

I will now suggest that it is possible to link a specific type of civil war to each type of weapon. The four classes of weapons will then designate the following four different types of civil war:

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##### Typology of civil wars

##### Type of weapon

##### Type of civil war

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<sup>19</sup> Cf Fredriksen 1994 for a one of the rare participations of Danish officers in academic debate; their critique of Paul Virilio's far-fetched dromological theories is very reasonable.

HOUSEHOLD.....	INTIFADA
LIGHT.....	GUERRILLA
HEAVY .....	FRONTAL
AIR AND SEABORNE.....	INTERVENTION

In an intifada no light, heavy, or airborne weapons are used by the attackers; in guerrilla war household and light weapons can be deployed, but no heavy or airborne weapons; in a frontal civil war all weapons except air- and seaborne-borne can be used; and in intervention civil war all four classes of weapons can be used by the state-attackers.

However, individual attacks on the state using any of the four classes of weapons resulting in any of the four types of civil wars progress from sub-war levels of violence, and only in certain historical circumstances reach war-levels. We can thus more accurately understand the four types of civil wars as each running through a low-to-high range of intensity and at a certain point turning from a sub-war conflict into war. In other words, they are typological continuums, and only the intensity of violence differs.

The full typology of civil wars including the sub-war range will look like this:

Typology of civil wars including sub-war conflict

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>Sub-war</u>	<u>Civil War</u>
<u>Household</u>	RIOT —————	INTIFADA
<u>Light</u>	TERRORISM —————	GUERRILLA
<u>Heavy</u>	COUP —————	FRONTAL
<u>Air- and seaborne</u>	PREVENTIVE ———	INTERVENTION

**Riot to Intifada:** Attacks on the state experienced with household weapons range from a flash riot to the sustained uprising, *intifada*. I have chosen this word as a generic term for the maximum attack on the state with household weapons.<sup>20</sup> The urban riot is a powerful threat to the state, even with its very short duration because it instantly reverses the meaning of violence between state and citizen. Intifada is the creation of a grassroots-organised urban population with a

<sup>20</sup> Edward W. Said noted in passing that this was the only Arabic word to enter the vocabulary of twentieth-century world politics; Said, 1989:5.

specific combination of young front-line groups willing to engage state riot-forces and a supportive rear difficult to penetrate by the state.

Both riot and intifada are urban forms of violence, manufactured weapons are not used, and a centralised organisation are not important and can in some ways compromise the resilience of the intifada. Normal counter-insurgency measures used against guerrilla armies are ineffectual against the intifada as the population cannot be relocated away from the 'insurgents', the intifada will always be 'armed', and there is no central organisation to crush.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand is it has so far been impossible for intifadas to conquer the state with household weapons. The result has been a stand-off, with the state continually violently harassing the population, and the population continually reaffirming the illegitimacy of the rule of 'their' state, as it happened, for example, in South African townships in 1986.

**Terrorism to Guerrilla War:** Attacks on the state experienced with light weapons range from isolated terrorist actions to sustained guerrilla war. Voluntaristic violence below war-level intensity, limited to light weapons, violating state rule, bombings, robberies, extortions, kidnappings, hijackings, but few direct attacks on the state, perpetrated by groups without a territorial base, are basic features of terrorism. Terrorism is private, quite unlike the public intifada in the streets or an open battle of soldiers in the fields. Terrorism has not yet started a guerrilla war, and it even have not killed a lot of people compared with other kinds of violence.

Guerrilla-war is rural, armed and hierarchically organised in contrast to the urban, unarmed, grassroots-organised intifada. The guerrilla-army typically is inferior to the state-army, they do, however, control a base area and wield some political power but still far from that of a fully fledged state. How to win a guerrilla war has not yet been solved because the capital city appears to be impregnable when attacked only with light weapons; successful guerrilla armies have had urban political allies.

Terrorism and guerrilla war are degrees on a continuum of light weapons attacks on the state. I shall argue in Part Two, that while particular conflicts can move up and down on this line, it demands a qualitative jump, externally induced, to change weapons-type down to household weapons or up to heavy weapons. Such a jump is only possible by radically changed political circumstances, as we saw it, for example, in South Africa.

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<sup>21</sup> See the competent discussion of these and other counter-insurgency strategies and tactics in Buchsbajew, 1984: 299-375.

**Coup to Frontal Civil War:** Attacks on the state experienced with heavy weapons range from coup to frontal civil war. Most coup-makers are military officers; the use of heavy weapons in a coup imply a pin-point geography, with attacks on central discursive installations like airports, TV-stations, government buildings, a symbolic battle culminating at the presidential palace. A coup not succeeding within hours is either defeated or escalates into civil war.

The maximum attack on the state with heavy weapons is the frontal civil war fought with a strategy of positional warfare rather like conventional international war. Current frontal civil wars include the conflicts of Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Angola. They are not asymmetric like intifada or guerrilla war; with heavy weapons deployed by both sides the cities are not impregnable; and the firepower is so expensive and so destructive that whole nations can be devastated economically and physically.<sup>22</sup>

**Preventive action to intervention civil war:** Attacks on the state experienced with air- and seaborne weapons range from NGOs airlifting humanitarian aid to direct military air strikes by third parties; they take place in on-going conflicts, shifting the relative strategic possibilities of the state and its attackers.

Preventive action is defined here as (i) cross-border intervention, (ii) with air- or seaborne weapons, (iii) in a violent anti-state conflict, (iv) of sub-war intensity. The outside intervening party can be state or non-state actors, intervening in complex emergencies where the titular state is attacked or collapsed, trying to prevent mass-hunger, disease, dislocation or killings (for example Operation Lifeline Sudan). When hunger and deprivation deliberately is used as a weapon by a state against groups of its own population, airlifted aid can become an airborne weapon by default regardless of donor intentions, and a non-coercive humanitarian interventions will become part of the violent conflict. Preventive action can also be interventions in situations of acute political destabilisation (for example the interventions in Haiti, Macedonia and Albania).

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<sup>22</sup> The MPLA government in Angola mortgaged the oil-revenues until the year 2000 to pay for Soviet arms; most physical structures have been destroyed or damaged, as is easy to see if you travel through the country; I relate my first-hand impression of an overland journey through Angola in 1992 in, Hjalte Tin og Nina Ramsussen, *Fra Cape til Cairo. På motorcykel gennem Afrika*. [From Cape to Cairo. On motorcycle across Africa] København: Gyldendal, 1993. (German edition, München: Frederking und Thaler, 1994; Swedish edition, Göteborg: Annama Böker, 1995).

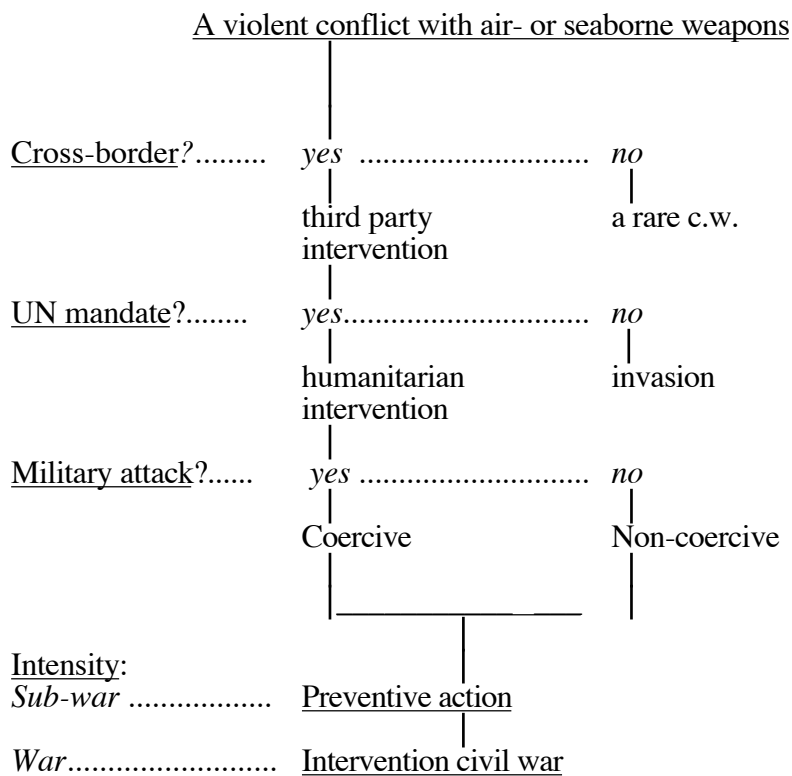
A civil war is classified as 'intervention civil war': (i) by having a total of thousand or more battle deaths per annum inflicted by all kinds of weapons; (ii) by taking place inside a national territory and the intervention force being a consortium with a (UN)-mandate from the international community; (iii) by attacking a state, that is, for example, weak or collapsing causing regional destabilisation, or ostracised for human rights atrocities; and (iv) by air- or seaborne weapons being the most complex weapons used by the state-attackers.

It is not impossible, of course, to imagine factions in a civil war fielding sea- or airborne weapons. Nevertheless, in contemporary civil wars it is extremely rare. As far as I know, only the Tamil Tigers have used seaborne weapons in isolated speedboat-attacks against naval vessels and seaside installations of the Sri Lankan state; and only the Bosnian Serbs and the Afghan mujahidin have managed to get a few old captured planes in the air, but with little military effect.

The classification of violent conflicts with air- and seaborne weapons is shown on the table below. It should be noted that both military, coercive and non-military, non-coercive interventions can reach war intensity, and thus constitute intervention civil war.

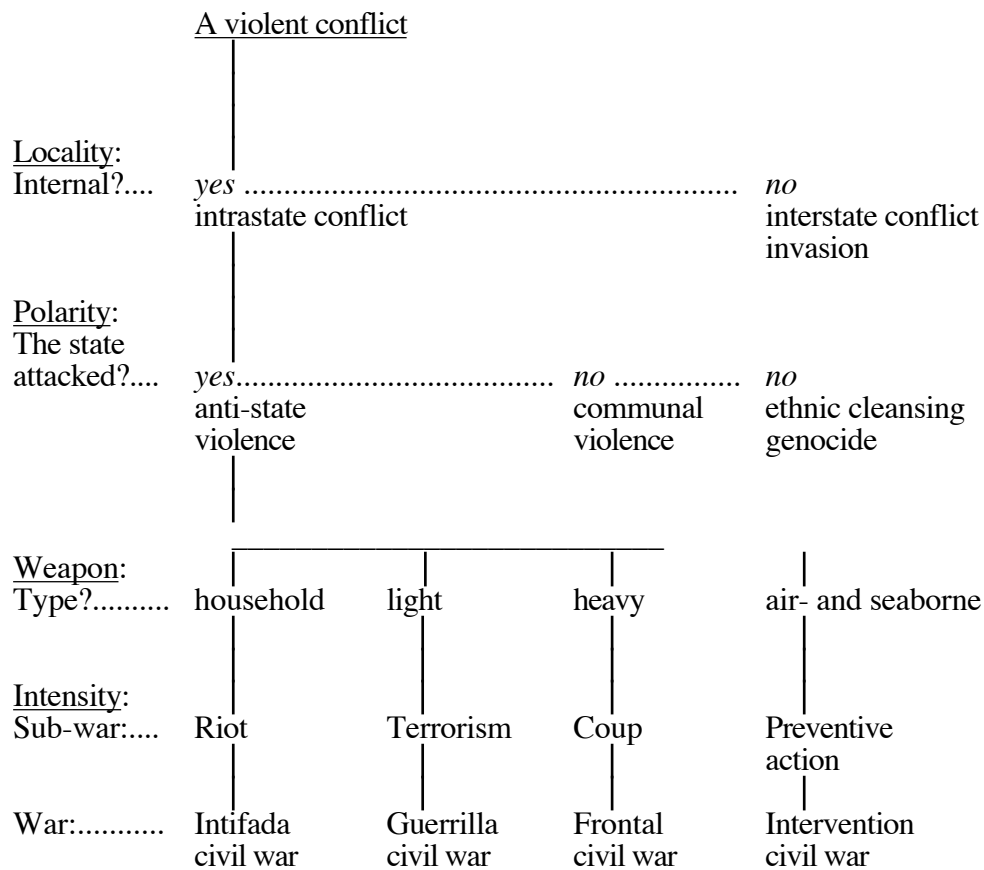
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Typology of violent conflict with air- and seaborne weapons



No civil wars have begun by sub-state groups attacking the state with sea- or airborne weapons; they have been introduced in ongoing conflicts by outside powers. Outside intervention in (impending) riots, terrorism, or coups will often be of a police or preventive, peace-

Typology of violent conflict and civil war



keeping character; only in civil wars of the intifada, guerrilla or frontal types are intervention likely to use military firepower coersively, peace-enforcingly. However, once introduced they change the military horizon of conflicts waged by household-, light-, and heavy weapons in two important ways. First, they dramatically reduce the strategic depth of the defending state by control of the air and sea space; secondly, they promise an immense 'political depth' to the attacking group by a favourable link-up with the international community providing as the case may be, everything from foodstuffs and medicine to coercive military action and international political recognition. Preventive action and intervention civil war are poles in a continuum, with individual cases registering everywhere along the line; most cases will change intensity and thus shift position across time. The UN-mandated interventions in Macedonia and Haiti are examples of sub-war preventive action; the UN-interventions in North Iraq and Bosnia are examples of intervention civil wars.

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Part Two presents brief, empirical examples of the four sub-war conflict types and the four civil war types; Part Four discuss riot, intifada, terrorism and gurrilla war based on the experience of South Africa in 1976, 1986, and 1996.



# Part Two.

## Events: From China 1935 to Bosnia 1995



# 2 |

## HOUSEHOLD WEAPONS: RIOT IN LOS ANGELES, 1992

Household weapons was defined above as objects that are readily available for everyone like rocks, stones, urban scrap, kitchen and farm tools, rods, sticks, petrol and bottles, tyres, car wrecks and so on. They only become weapons by being used violently against other persons. Attacks on the state possible with household weapons range from a flash riot to the sustained uprising, *intifada*. Both riot and *intifada* are urban forms of violence, manufactured weapons are not used, and a centralised organisation are not important; this sets *intifada* apart from guerrilla-war, which is rural, armed and strictly organised.

Unarmed mass-protests like demonstrations, marches, boycotts and civil disobedience are closely related to riots, but they belong to the category of non-violent, political struggle. From Ghandi's marches to Havel's velvet revolution and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the world has seen unarmed protesters with able leaders under favourable circumstances substitute numbers and organisation for weapons and successfully attack the state. To ignite non-violent mass-action by armed struggle has often been attempted by terrorist- and guerrilla-groups but has never proved to be easy. They engage the state at different levels<sup>23</sup> and in many cases they contradict each other in relation to the legitimacy of violence, and point to non-compatible futures.<sup>24</sup> In this study, however, I am only discussing a typology of violent attacks on the state and will not consider non-violent forms of struggle.

### 1. Riot in Los Angeles, 1992

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<sup>23</sup> I conceptualise this difference as 'capacity of rule' versus 'capacity of violence' in my discussion of South Africa in 1986; cf. chapter 19.

<sup>24</sup> On non-violent action cf. Toni Liversage, 1987; on civil disobedience cf. Christian Bay, 1968.

The 1992 Los Angeles riot was the most serious riot in the United States since World War Two.

“On Wednesday, April 29, 1992, at 4.00 PM, four policemen accused of beating motorist Rodney King were found innocent by an all-white jury in suburban Los Angeles. By 6 PM relatively peaceful demonstrations had begun in front of the headquarters of the L.A. police department. These protests escalated into rock-throwing... By night fall Los Angeles was paralysed by rioters.” (DiPasquale, 1996:1).

The riot was explained as a racial revenge, and this picture seemed to be confirmed when less than one hour into the riot Los Angeles and the world could watch on live TV how a group of angry Afro-Americans pulled a white truck driver Reginald Denny out of his truck and almost killed him.

In a matter of hours the riot picked up momentum and quickly spread to large areas of Los Angeles. Around midnight three new fires were reported every minute and fire-fighters were desperately requesting armed escort as they were attacked with automatic rifle fire. Most civic and state functions that could not be protected by armed force ground to a halt: Red Cross blood delivery to hospitals, trucks delivering fuel to fire-fighters in the field, telephone communication, water and electricity utility repairs, delivery of food. Public installations such as power facilities and radio-towers broke down, transport, telephone, and electricity stopped. All civic functions seized to function, post offices, public libraries, shops, and schools closed. More than 4300 firearms were stolen during the riot, some by gangs holding ordinary looters away with armed guards, while they emptied gun shops.

52 persons were killed, of whom none were from the state forces deployed; 249 suffered critical injuries and a further 2250 persons were injured. 9925 serious crimes were reported. Damage were valued at \$446 million with 377 buildings completely destroyed, and 1120 buildings damaged including 764 retail shops, 70 restaurants, 5 churches, 5 hotels but only 2 public offices and 85 residential buildings (DiPasquale, Table 1). It was a flash-attack on the US-state with a instant discursive impact sustained by massive news-coverage. Throughout the six days of riot television networks constantly kept helicopters in the air to feed the ongoing live coverage. The discursive impact was nation-wide and crowds in 22 cities throughout the USA took to the streets within 48 hours of the outbreak of violence (DiPasquale, 1996).

Massive armed force was used to stop the riot. The American state deployed 7000 National Guard troops, 3500 U.S. Army and Marine Corps troops,

2200 federal and other police officers, and the 8190 sworn officers of the L.A. Police Department; an armed force of more than 20.000 persons. The most extreme legal measures was taken: state of emergency was declared, curfew was imposed on the entire city of L.A., the president of the USA declared L.A. national disaster area and more than 6500 persons were arrested. But the dynamic was spent after looting the local shops. After a few days it was all gone, the National Guard contained the riot and no organisation carried it further.

Could it have continued? Could the riot then have turned into an intifada if some kind of organisation had developed within the first 48 hours of the riot and had managed to direct its explosive discursive impact deliberately against the legitimacy of the state? I don't think so. The main reason was the inability to transform the discourse of racial antagonism into a coherent territorial front. Without a coherent front on the ground riot could never seriously challenge the legitimacy of the US state.

Racial antagonism may have given the riot its original meaning and immediate cause, but after watching the unfortunate Denny's on TV whites presumably took extra care not to stray into the black neighbourhoods. Even the "racist" L.A. Police Department disappeared from the streets. Given the vast distances and the racially segregated structure of L.A. Afro-Americans would have had to organise transport into the affluent white areas to stage a race-war. It may be noted that during the last twenty years the non-white 'minority' population has grown from 25% to 60% out of Los Angeles' 3,5 million inhabitants. But as the geographic distribution of arrests indicates (Webster, 1992:134ff) the rioters had a very limited mobility. People were arrested where they lived, and very few from South Central LA were arrested in white, affluent areas of Los Angeles. In any case, there was very little violence on the ethnic front. Violence in Los Angeles took place mainly against the defenders of private property and not against the ethnic Other or the state. Of the 1120 buildings damaged only 2 were public offices while 764 were retail shops looted and gutted. The particular front between state and attackers in the Los Angeles riot was house against house: private space invaded by individuals; and the state was only indirectly attacked as the protector of private space. Every private property became a segment of the violent front of the riot and could demand protection by the state in the name of law and order.

It is strange to compare this chain of events with the official US Army "Riot and Disaster Control" manual. Here the mob is always presumed well organised and armed with light weapons; attacks with household weapons is ignored, as is the decisive fanning importance of media-coverage. (Field Manual 19-

15, Washington D.C.1958/68). The result is a largely useless riot control preparation, demonstrated in L.A.

No discriminated ethnic group had a *state-declared* ethnic territory to repossess like the Gaza refugees or the Soweto blacks, and thus they confronted the state as individuals, and then looting and arson was the only avenue of attack left open. But the public meaning of individuals stealing and burning is crime. The riot therefore rather than weakening the legitimacy of the state came to strengthen it. On top of this the looting had to take place in the only area with a tactical advantage, that was on home turf. But in this area shop-owners were mostly of Korean extraction, which further deflected the attack on the (white) state with two subaltern groups fighting each other.

Ironically if the LA police had not bogged down in utter confusion (revealed embarrassingly in the official report; Webster 1992), but used the method of “containment” recommended in their own Tactical Manual, to seal off neighbourhoods and then “pacify” them house by house, the police itself and not some hypothetical “Afro-American Liberation Front” would have been the organisation beginning to create an ethnic front. The police appears to be aware of this,

“We are mindful of the allegation of some that 'containment' is an inherently racist concept... The containment strategy discussed here is intended only to be a temporary public safety measure... to isolate any area of a city where a dangerous condition exists due to... an outbreak of mob violence.” (Webster 1992:141).

But containment is, of course, what the ethnic violence of the apartheid state had produced for thirty years, and the Israeli state still produces on a national scale.

## **2. Contested neighborhoods**

In her fascinating study of the urban landscape of Los Angeles as public and contested history, Dolores Hayden writes of the 1992 riot,

“What shocked Americans, and the rest of the world, was the spectacle of urban people setting fire to their *own* landscape, destroying the only neighborhood they had.” (Hayden 1995:243; italics added).

But her book, in my view, demonstrates how they did not in fact “have” a neighbourhood.

“In places like these, especially for women and members of diverse ethnic groups, memory [of urban landscape] is inevitably going to involve issues of isolation and exploitation.” (ibid.)

Exploitation and isolation general to the American society prevented any particular possession of South Central LA by the inhabitants. The neighbourhood did not belong to them in a *functional* sense as their private property, not for racist reasons, ‘only’ because of economic inequality, because of exploitation. But South Central LA neither belonged to them in the *essentialistic* sense as a ghetto. The state did not violently defined that certain persons should live in certain areas, the state was not a common enemy to the neighbourhood, only poverty was. And poverty in Los Angeles isolated more than it connected, Koreans shot at Afro-American looters and everybody shot at multi-ethnic teams of Los Angeles fire-fighters. Hayden advocates creating a public history within the urban landscape that would connect ethnic identity with space and somehow give exploited and isolated groups cultural ownership of their own territorial space, “Choosing to engage the difficult memories, and the anger they generate, we can use the past to connect to a more liveable urban future.” (ibid., p. 246). I find this positive, but unlikely, because no collective violence, neither from the state nor from the marginalized groups, have bonded the space to be repossessed and re-membered.

Not even a full-scale riot could do that. No coherent ethnic front could be established on the socio-political terrain of South Central LA. The urban landscape of some run-down houses on the corner of Florence and Normandie streets could not be transformed from a random segment of Los Angeles into a particular ethnic space without a political organisation. Without an organisation to challenge the individual intent and official meaning of looting and destruction as a purely individual crime the riot could not develop into a collective discursive act with a new symbolic content. The state managed to act swiftly and with full force. At no point was the legitimacy of the state questioned outside the rioting neighbourhoods. Just at one short instant did the state appear to be attacked; a flash riot and not a civil war. Three days of rioting was not enough to reverse rule in America.

# 3 |

## LIGHT WEAPONS: THE PALESTINE INTIFADA, 1987

The Israeli-Palestine conflict is complex and bitter; and the Intifada is but one episode in the long struggle. I shall not tell the story of the intifada here; I will relate only a few features from the beginning of the Intifada in 1987. Intifada is defined above as a *civil war* i.e. it is an internal war; with more than 1000 deaths; and it is an attack on the state reversing the meaning of violence between state and citizen where the state-attackers only use *household weapons*. The Palestine intifada took place at the ethnic front; a comparison with sub-war attacks on the state with household weapons at the house front (Los Angeles 1992) may put the intifada into perspective. I mention how the Palestine intifada confronted the ambiguous territoriality of the Jewish state; and I briefly consider whether intifada could be extended to the next level of civil war, guerrilla war. The many striking similarities in the Palestine and South African intifadas are only hinted at in this short chapter; Part Four deals more extensively with intifada. PLO's and ANC's parallel problems in linking intifada with terrorism and guerrilla war are considered in the South African context, in particular in Chapter 19 on the violence of 1986.

### 1. The beginning of the Intifada

The Palestine Intifada started with a small spark at an extremely flammable ethnic border:

“An Israel merchant was stabbed to death on Gaza’s main square on Dec. 7, 1987, the next day an Israeli army tank transporter drove into a line of cars of Arab workers who had just passed the Erez military checkpoint at the northern entrance to the Gaza Strip. Four workers were crushed to death and seven were seriously injured in the accident. Three of the dead men were from nearby Jabalya refugee camp. The funeral that night turned into a huge demonstration of 10.000 camp residents, who charged that the accident was a retaliation for the murder of the Israeli merchant the day before.” (Lockman, 1989:46)



The intifada was a surprise to everyone including the PLO. While the intifada grew spontaneously from day to day it took the exile leadership of PLO a full month to come up with a response. They broadcasted their first communiqué from Baghdad on January 8, 1988. Five days later they issued the second communiqué, reading in part,

“O heroes of the war of stones and Molotov cocktails: In escalation of our people’s glorious uprising; out of loyalty to the pure blood of our people’s martyrs; to promote the revolutionary epics written by the sons of Jabalaya, Balata, ‘Askar, al-Maghazi, Qalandiya, al-Am’ari... and all the camps, towns, villages of Palestine, which are united in the daily war and rose against repression, terrorism, mass detention, poison gas, tracked vehicles and the closure of cities and camps; and to boost our firm and absolute cohesion with the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of our Palestinian people...

Friday, 15 January 1988... is to be a day of prayer and symbolic funerals for our martyrs, and of tumultuous popular demonstrations... O youth of Palestine, O throwers of incendiary stones, clearly the new fascists will be forced to admit the facts entrenched by your ferocious rebellion... enabling the flag of Palestine to flutter over the walls of holy Jerusalem.” (cit. Lockman, 1989:330).

Anita Vitullo reporting for the Middle East Report filed this eyewitness-account, here quoted from a book-version,

“Gaza Strip residents fuelled the uprising with demonstrations that sometimes numbered in the tens of thousands, waving flags and carrying symbolic coffins, chanting every variety of nationalist slogan and vowing to revenge the latest martyr. Youths controlled whole neighborhoods in the cities and closed off the entrances to their camps with stone barricades, garbage and burning tires. When soldiers entered, residents pelted them with stones, debris and, occasionally, petrol bombs.” (ibid., p. 47).

An intifada presents the same picture all over the world: the *weapons* used by the state-attackers are ‘stones and Molotov cocktails’; not firearms let alone heavy weapons. *Space* is essential to reading any intifada; there is a front of violence drawn by ‘repression, terrorism, mass detention, poison gas’, bounding the home ‘Palestine’ which has a repossessive and eschatological dynamic ‘[our] rebellion enabling the flag of Palestine to flutter over the walls of holy Jerusalem’. And significantly in the *discourse* of the intifada the ‘enemy’ state is delegitimised as violating the (universal) law, they are ‘the new fascists’, and it is eradicated by being denied spatial specificity (Israel is never mentioned). I suggest these are common features of intifada-type of civil war.

In purely military terms no intifada ever equals the power of the attacked state. The Israelis of course had vastly superior military might, and the intifada

never threatened Tel Aviv or Jerusalem in a military way. But if the flag of Palestine was unlikely to be planted on the walls of Jerusalem by stones and Molotov cocktails the David's star only remained hanging in Gaza and the West Bank protected by guns and barbed wire. Almost all wings of the civilian Israeli state-apparatus (including the parts staffed by Palestinians) collapsed in the occupied territories blown apart by the vortex of violence, intimidation and radicalisation. In any intifada a generational conflict fuels the reversal of violence. Schoolchildren and young people fearlessly put themselves in the firing line, willing to perform acts their parents hesitate to do, revolting both against the repressive state and the adult moderation of their parents. The "generation of occupation" stood at the centre of the intifada in a very youthful society: 46 percent of West Bankers and 48 percent of Gazans were under the age of fourteen in 1987. (ibid., p. 34).

The initial Israeli reaction to the intifada was a beefing-up of the military occupation, but not war. Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin gave his military commanders the power to deport 'troublemakers', order administrative detentions, declare curfews and close schools and the Israelis arrested 1200 people in the three first weeks of uprising in December. Troops used tear gas and rubber bullets as well as live ammunition, but in the first three months of the intifada only 29 persons were killed (ibid., 35-36). The intensity of the L.A. violence was far higher than in the initial phase of the intifada; more than 50 people were killed and 6500 people were arrested during only five days of rioting in Los Angeles. Yet the Israeli official denial of the intifada as more than isolated criminals and troublemakers did not ring true, and the Israeli state could not fight it at this level. The Israeli Defence Force deployed more troops during the first weeks of the intifada in the Gaza Strip alone than it used to occupy the West Bank and Gaza in 1967.<sup>25</sup> But the intifada could not be repressed, and in the next nine months a further 361 Palestinians were killed. SIPRI lists the number of total deaths in the Israeli government versus PLO struggle since 1964 as more than 12.500; for 1992 <250, and for 1994 300-600. (SIPRI, 1995). In intifada 1990 lead to the Madrid-talks and then to the Oslo agreement in 1993.

## **2. The ethnic and house fronts of Palestine**

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<sup>1</sup> Jerusalem Post, Dec 28, 1987; N.Y. Times, Jan 1, 1988; cit. Lockman, 1989: 35.

For the Israelis the fundamental problem brought to a head by the intifada was the founding contradiction of the Israeli state between a Jewish ethno-state that exclusively belongs to the Jewish people and on the other hand a spatially defined Israeli nation-state by necessity incorporating some amount of Palestinians. History and geography have made it impossible that ethnic borders ever would equal state borders.

“...the idea of a Jewish state is that the *state* can be defined over and above its mere geographical identity. In particular it can be defined in relation to a particular ethno-political structure... The ethno-political structure of the State of Israel gives it its Jewish character.” (Claude Klein, Hebrew University, cit. in Butenschøn, 1993:17).

The occupied territories (or the homelands in South Africa) were never meant to be part of the state as anything more than a strategic wasteland between the Jewish (or white) core ethnic area and the defensible frontier - put to practical use as a crammed reservoir of cheap labour. Although extreme divisions of wealth exists to this day within the Palestine areas they were secondary to the dominant ethnic contradiction. Thus while looting and burning of shops was such a prominent feature in Los Angeles in Palestine the local shops supported in one way or another the intifada and they were never the target of looting but harassed by the Israeli military together with the rest of the population.

The looting and burning at the house-front in South Central L.A. never created a liberated zone, but only a majority of individuals desperate for protection by the armed state against more riot. Thus, when the state eventually used massive force to stop the riot in Los Angeles it (re)gained legitimacy and in the end even the most angry Afro-Americans remained part of the American nation.

The Israeli state used a kind of force different from the Americans. Serious army occupation dispensing violence economically but never-ending and not for a minute pretending to deal with fellow citizens, but in the business of protecting the Jewish state against an external enemy out there in sprawling, dangerous Palestine. Violence at the ethnic front in the occupied territories only exacerbated the divided legitimacy of Israel and Palestine (the occupied territories): one state for the Jews, legitimised by parliamentary elections among the Jews (and the minority of enfranchised Palestinians), and another state-in-being legitimised by a rather undemocratic struggle amongst groups of Palestinians.

In the Gaza-strip, unlike in Los Angeles, the practice of ethnic/racial dominance had a direct spatial reality with the barbed wire, the entrances, the camps etc. This direct dominance and oppression could be reversed equally directly by

taking possession of territory. Everybody had space to defend, and the Palestinian youths managed to repossess territory: a street for some hours, a camp for days and so on. Even armed only with household weapons they developed a coherent sub-state front, deriving its coherence exactly from the state's own violently drawn ethnic boundaries. They forced the state to defend itself and then the meaning of the ongoing violence between the Israeli state and second-class Palestinian citizens was reversed. After a month, "Israeli pronouncements were suddenly acknowledging the conflict as one of physical control of the streets and ideological control of the political agenda." (Lockman 1989:36). Every fence, every signifier of coercion was inherently ambiguous, and the meaning could be reversed. The stone throwing youngster of Gaza challenged the Israeli state because they managed to reverse the meaning of occupation to that of resistance and relative unfreedom to that of relative freedom. A central symbolic reversal happened at the funerals (and exactly the same phenomena took place in South Africa): Israeli soldiers killing people lost the meaning of defeat and became instead manifestations of martyrdom and endurance.

### **3. The ethnic and state fronts of Israel**

The Israeli state is still caught in a dilemma trying to preserve the ethnic border. An ethnically pure Jewish state can not be a defensible Israel because it is too small, and an Israel behind defensible borders will have to incorporate a majority of Palestinians and then ruin the ethnic purity of the Jewish state. The only solution is an ethnic border separating Jews and Palestinians inside Greater Israel - apartheid however disguised. This is the conclusion Nils A. Butenschøn reaches in his very perceptive paper,

"If this "Greater Israel" [Israel including the occupied territories] comes into existence, the Israelis will have to choose between a Jewish apartheid-state - and forget about democracy - or a democratic state - and forget the idea of a separate Jewish state." (Butenschøn, 1993:30).

In a recently published book by a very authoritative voice on the security of the Israeli state Benjamin Netanyahu argues very hard for defensible borders in contrast to Israel's pre-1967 vulnerability. He warns against PLO's "phased plan" as a policy seeking "to reduce [Israel] to *its former indefensible frontiers* and proceed to destroy it from there." (Netanyahu 1995:100, italics in original). To him continued military occupation of the Palestinian areas is a far better option than a Palestinian neighbour-state. Not once in his discussion of the Israeli-Palestine relations does Netanyahu mention the intifada.

Why? We may advance three possible reasons for this: (i) Israel is a forward bastion of Western democracy; the enemy comes from a hostile external environment, and 'defensible borders' take on paramount importance. (ii) Israel is a strong state, unarmed children cannot be a real problem, some outside power manipulating them must be the real threat, again 'defensible borders' is the solution. (iii) Israel is a Jewish entity, whole and undivided, and Netanyahu cannot share the Holy Land of Israel with the Other.<sup>26</sup> He declares the Oslo-agreement a sell-out, and since the intifada is eradicated from Netanyahu's discourse the culprit must be the Labour Party compromising the 'defensible borders' of Israel. PLO can only be perceived as a foreign threat.

This is of course a direct repetition of PLO's othering of the Jews. One more reflection in the endless mirroring of the Other, where they are delegitimised as violating the universal law, they are 'terrorists', and denied legitimate space. Netanyahu fails to credit the dynamics of the intifada: that exactly the forward 'defensible borders' reproduces the enemy within. Ultimately a state faced with an ethnic riot or intifada has only got two long term options: it can either exclude the ethnic Other by annihilation (ethnic cleansing) or secession (Israel accepting a Palestine state), or by pragmatic accommodation of the ethnic Other in a common secular state-nation (like in South Africa). Apartheid did not work in South Africa, and it is unlikely to work in Israel.

#### **4. Intifada and the next level of civil war**

Neither the shaky South African nor the more comprehensive Palestine exile organisations could extend the civil war attack on the state with household weapons to the next level of civil war. They both used terrorism (as defined below in the next section) and hoped at some stage to start a guerrilla war and develop a military threat to the state. The Unified National Leadership of the intifada declared, "Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians across our beloved homeland declare today that there is no going back, that the revolution of stones will not stop before the establishment of our independent state." (Communiqué no 12. April 1988, cit, Lockman 1989:341). But militarily both ANC and PLO remained restricted to

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<sup>2</sup> In the present study, I use the term 'Other' in a simple sense as the ethnic out-group, without deploying or implying the full arsenal of Lacanian analysis; presented, for example by Slavoj Žižek in part II of his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Žižek, 1989:85-151).

erratic terrorist actions that posed no threat in themselves to the respective states. It was the intifada with household weapons, supported by spontaneous unarmed mass actions and favourable international developments that built up the pressure by which they both managed almost a decade later to create a negotiated, political, non-violent take-over of state power.

How to control the militancy of the youths and the popular mass movements at home has been a central political problem for exile terrorist-guerrilla organisations like the PLO and ANC. In my estimate it has only been possible both in South Africa and Israel by ruthless repression of the weak internal leadership of the intifada, and by *abandoning* the initial hopes of a guerrilla war in favour of a later non-military bid for state power.

In a review of Hanan Ashrawi's book *This Side of Peace* M.E.Yapp writes on Ashrawi's assessment of the Cairo agreement of May 1994, "The interests of those inside the occupied territories, she believed, had been sacrificed by the leadership outside." and he adds, "Palestinian nationalism grinds painfully through the transition from its futile infatuation with the gun and martyrdom to the boring details of negotiation and administration." (TLS, August 23, p.31). What is left out, however, in this assessment, is the other half of the change, the fate of the popular participation. Both the ANC and the PLO now appear to have transformed the violent *and* popular energy of the intifadas into non-violent *and* non-popular state-powers (in Palestine approaching a dictatorship).

The historical lesson seems to be clear: intifada cannot develop into guerrilla war. On the contrary, intifada can swallow up terrorism. Terrorism can initially help but not start an intifada. (Networks of command, radio transmissions, leaflet distribution etc. only appeared several weeks after the beginning of the Palestine intifada). And at some point however, the leadership must abandon terrorism and the hopes for a guerrilla war and try to appropriate the flame of the intifada, in order to win state power politically.

# 4 |

## LIGHT WEAPONS: TERRORISM IN BRAZIL, 1970

Light weapons are all the weapons light enough to be carried by a person on foot, basically small calibre firearms and explosives. They are easily available, have a relatively high firepower and unlimited mobility. Attacks on the state with light weapons range from isolated terrorist attacks to sustained guerrilla war.

### **1. Voluntarism**

Everybody can choose to be a terrorist. People can choose to begin the end of the world in the Tokyo metro with poison gas; groups can choose to spearhead the liberation of Naga-land by gunning down bus-passengers; Danes can choose to murder in order to help African liberation; mature political organisations can choose to hijack passenger aircraft to further the creation of their new nation state. This have all happened, yet there is no single motivating reason for terrorism, no average political profile, no social or historical conditions common to all terrorism. Terrorism is unpredictable, it can strike everywhere and everyone, it abides to no civilised rules, and it is unstoppable. Terrorism is violence from the dark, hidden until it strikes, and it strikes only with an anonymous face. It is private, quite unlike the public intifada in the streets or an open battle of soldiers in the fields. Terrorism is attacking from the house, the private house, the secrecy of the private space. This is true too for 'international' terrorism fostered in some secret training-camp beyond the border of the attacked state.

Modern terrorism, sometimes called 'international terrorism' started in the late sixties with international hijackings, armed hostage-taking, and nationalist bombings; connected with the acronyms PLO, RAF, and IRA. The famous Tricontinental Conference in Havana 1966 is seen by some (like author Claire Stirling) as the first fountain of international terrorism to be associated with names

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like Che Guevarra, Regis Debray and Carlos Marighela. In February 1968 Havana Radio broadcasted Marighela's call for armed struggle in Brazil against imperialism and capitalism. This became the start of the Brazilian terrorist group Acao Libertadora Nacional [Action for National Liberation].

“The privilege of receiving the first bomb of the revolutionary war fell in March 1968 to the US Consulate in Sao Paulo...Sticks of dynamite was used”

Jose Quartim continues his comradely critique of the armed struggle a little bit proud,

“The police and army realised immediately that this was not the work of amateurs. The bank raids began soon after... commandos, armed with one or two sub-machine guns acted rapidly and with precision.” (Quartim 1971: 143-144).

After experiments with liberation of comrades in prison through direct attacks Marighela was killed 1969 by the Brazilian police, the same year as his very popular *Handbook of Urban Guerrilla Warfare* was published. ALN only survived a few more years, but at that time most of the metropolitan cities of Latin America had got their own urban guerrillas perfecting bombings and kidnapping of vulnerable diplomats and business-men. Accompanied by very vague and ritual political statements the hostages were released for a ransom or freeing of comrades in prison. In this game the state and the terrorists raised the bids continually. Successful groups, like Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo in Argentina, developed efficient urban networks for extortion and crime. In the period 1971-74 the ERP by kidnapping politicians, diplomats and businessmen netted 30 million US\$ and became the “capitalists of the Latin American terrorists” (Hauge, 1989:89). Globally in the years 1970-78 a total of 404 terrorist kidnappings occurred, 92% was a success for the kidnappers and the known sum paid out was 305 million US\$. (Hauge, 1989:84). In Europe too the secrecy of the terrorist groups made them very well suited for crime to pay for political violence or otherwise. 1978-79 the IRA got 5 million pounds from bank robberies, they traded in marihuana, laundered black money through a racket of taxis etc. (Wilkinson, 1983:120 ff). Middle East groups added hijacking of planes to the international inventory of terrorism. From 1969 to 1978 IATA counted 393 air hijack attempts, 201 of them successful. (Friedlander, 1983:140).

This list of terrorist bombs, robberies, extortions, kidnappings, hijackings, but very few direct attacks on the state, is common to all terrorists and brings out the



basic features of the violence that constitute 'terrorism': voluntaristic violence below war-level intensity; violating state rule and personnel; limited to light weapons, and perpetrated by a group without a territorial base.

What to do next? What to do after poisoning the Tokyo metro, after blasting bus passengers, after murdering a Danish policeman, or hijacking planes? All terrorists have to ask themselves this question. And to ask this question reflects the peculiar origin of terrorism and its specific relation to history. I think this is the point where we can define the one common denominator of terrorism: it is the *voluntarism* of its perpetrators. All acts of terroristic violence are *private* acts of violence carried out for any reason the perpetrator may care to invent and present or not present to a terrorised public. Terrorism can act or react to real or invented social grievances; terrorism can be imported and exported; terrorism can be crazy or coldly calculated to further political goals. But terrorism is always voluntary, with only a haphazard relation to the social currents and agendas of the surrounding society.

## 2. What to do next?

The Brazilian student revolutionaries from the ALN now well stocked up with bank money travelled thousands of kilometres looking for the right 'strategic' zone to start a guerrilla war, *a foco*, but after a car crash, where the police discovered arms in the car, the whole network was ripped up through use of torture. Most of the Latin American terrorist groups had a go at starting a *foco*, all with equally disastrous results of which Che Guevara's Bolivian suicide of course is the most famous. In Brazil and the other Latin American countries all the money, arms, equipment, urban infrastructure, and trained cadres were destined, directly or indirectly, for a future rural guerrilla war, yet none of the terrorist "urban guerrillas" was able to start a real guerrilla war. The extreme voluntarism of Régis Debray's *foco*-theory was discarded by the ANL in 1970 with the rather obvious conclusion, "It is the *foco* that must correspond to reality and not reality that must correspond to the *foco*." (Quartim, 1971:156). Gérard Chaliand later commented,

"If the Leninist conception of the vanguard party made up of professional revolutionaries suggests a certain voluntarism, the Cuban conception of a vanguard cut off from the start from the population it intends to involve and lead into the struggle is going as far in the voluntarist direction as it is possible to go." (Chaliand, 1977:46).

Quartim pinpointed what he saw as the inherent 'revolutionary' contradiction in the urban guerrilla theory,

“Up to what point did the tactical detour that urban actions represented correspond to the objective requirements of the guerrilla war as a whole? Were bank raids not rather a pure and simple deviation from the principle, always recognised in theory, that only the rural guerrilla detachment can become the embryo of the peoples' army?”(Quartim 1971:147).

Terrorism however, has a more complex relation to guerrilla war than just being a provider of money and means for a nebulous rural war, a relation Quartim missed altogether in his Leninist perspective: the step from voluntarism to collective social processes. Everything the terrorists had done up to this point only differed from organised crime in one respect: the self-declared meaning of the violence. Terrorism has not grown into a guerrilla war anywhere, and it even has not killed a lot of people compared with other kinds of violence. Since the late 1960s the number of people killed in acts of international terrorism is "in the low thousands." (Guelke, 1995:7). It has proved to be almost impossible to cross the fine line between voluntaristic terror and social revolution.

Only when the terror was grafted on to a struggle against the state on the *ethnic front* could terrorism transcend its voluntaristic origin. How this took place was specific to each historical environment. As indicated in the cases of PLO and ANC terrorism was swallowed up by the intifada. Sendero Luminoso in Peru on the other hand dropped all the Maoist niceties and terrorised the endemic struggle of the Altiplano Indios by direct coercion; here voluntarism doubled up and created a guerrilla army based on large scale drug trafficking waging war both on the state and the peasants.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Fear

Adrian Guelke in his book on terrorism locates the discursive power of terrorism "...in the Western public's discovery of its vulnerability to political violence emanating from other societies." (Guelke, 1995:192). I do not find this convincing, and for example his own exposition of the RAF-saga does not bring out this international link. I think it rather was the discovery of western societies' vulnerability to political violence from *within* their own societies. When the private

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<sup>27</sup> See the important collection of studies in Poole, 1994; I briefly discuss some of the new anthropological-philosophical studies of violence below in Chapter Eleven.

citizen attacks the state - no matter if he is paid to do so by a foreign power - the legitimacy of the nation state's monopoly of violence, the protection of its disarmed citizenry, is in jeopardy. Oklahoma and Waco were attacks not just at the US state, but at the American social compact, and ultimately put everybody in peril, both the state and every citizen.

Not just because you could be unlucky and stand next to a blasting bomb, but because wild, private violence erodes civilised public life permitting a minimal presence of violence in public relations, in particular between state and citizen. And then a moment may come where the majority of a population will support *Verfassung Schutz* and let the state go beyond the constitution and civil liberties in order to protect them, i.e. re-introduce violence in public affairs. Benjamin Netanyahu celebrates in his second book on terrorism (Netanyahu, 1995) this "moment of truth" as it came after periods of terrorism to most Western democracies. That American constitutionalism and civil rights were not abrogated after Oklahoma in an all-out war against terrorism is a fact he uses many pages of his book to lament.

Terrorism always takes the individual citizen hostage, directly or indirectly. Any hostage-taking places the state in a dilemma between the safety of the individual citizen and the safety of the state: not to negotiate and use violence against the terrorists may vindicate the power of the state but kill the hostages; to negotiate and save the lives of the hostages compromises the rule of the state. The citizen loses both ways, first his or her life, and secondly the security of life guaranteed by the rule of law.

But terrorism goes further, it makes a spectacle out of putting state and citizen in this impossible dilemma. The spectacle of a few human lives put on the line reveals glaringly to the world that rule is the business of the state and that rule can be challenged and reversed. Terrorism is significant as a discursive phenomena, an extremely threatening statement. This cannot be explained only by the killing of innocents. By simultaneously pinpointing and reversing interpellation terrorism is a frightening powerful generator of meaning. Few events outside of the world of sports can rival terrorism in discursive impact, and no other political manifestation. That is why terrorism produces such fear both in the state and the citizens.

The terrorists impose themselves on several discourses with their message of fear. Not to be confused in particular are the discourses of the house and discourse of the state; however, this happens in all normative definitions of terrorism. Benjamin Netanyahu and his Jonathan Institute were key exponents of the dominant western understanding of terrorism, and they defined terrorism normatively as "the

deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends.” (Netanyahu, 1987:9) I find this very common definition of terrorism noteworthy because it encapsulates the conflation of the fear of the individual with the fear of the state. Murder, maiming and menacing strike only the human body and induce fear in everybody regardless of 'innocence' or 'political ends'. Ask the people of Dunblane in Scotland about that: the fear that another madman may gun down children has nothing to do with political ends. However, Netanyahu is defining terrorism not crime, which shifts the focus to the fear of the state. Fear is defined according to 'political ends', i.e. whether or not the deliberate murder etc. is attack on the state. The definition is a licence to label any kind of violence terrorism which the state fears.

Yet a striking omission from this definition is terrorist attacks on targets other than innocent humans: non-human objects (houses, installations), and 'non-innocent' humans (military personnel, police, politicians) - in short attacks *directly* on the state. The reason is pretty obvious: attacks directly on the state do not induce fear in the individual citizen in the way attacks on her or him do. To include attacks on the state in the definition of terrorism would diminish, not enlarge, the pool of fear available for political ends.

Because of Holocaust, the struggle with the Arab world, and the Jewish diaspora in the United States the Israeli state became prominent in combating terrorism. This may explain the two crucial moves Netanyahu made in his definition of terrorism in order to appropriate the diffuse fear of the individual citizen in the 'western world' and conflate it with the focused fear of Israel's security.

First, he located the well-spring of terrorism *outside* the countries affected, and thus construe terrorism inside Israel as an attack on the West in general. The problem of terrorism is disengaged from any local origins, and re-embedded into a battle between states,

“Terrorism... is not a sporadic phenomenon born of social misery and frustration. It is rooted in the political ambitions and designs of expansionist states.. “ (Netanyahu, 1986:7).

Read the Soviet Union. Next step is the concept of “war by proxy”. Terrorism is seen as “war by proxy” and this puts Israel in the front line of a common battle of the West against communism and its proxy PLO. It is an obvious historical fact that some radicals in the West were being used by the USSR for a kind of proxy war of low scale destabilisation against their own states. Nevertheless, I will argue that terrorism can only attack the state on the home front and thus the

notion of 'international' terrorism is misleading. For Benjamin Netanyahu, boasting eloquently of his own central role in selling the proxy-war approach to terrorism to George Schultz and the Americans the real issue for Israel was not the sporadic terrorist attacks by PLO, but international recognition of the permanent occupation of the West Bank, the Golan heights and the Gaza strip. Netanyahu and his high-powered friends from the Jonathan Institute subsumed the fear of the western individual under the fear of the state, a particular state at war. It made sense for groups in Israel but perhaps less so for the rest of the world to focus the problem of terrorism on securing the borders of Greater Israel.

#### **4. A definition of terrorism**

So what is terrorism? I think terrorism can be defined quite accurately within the framework outlined above as violence meeting all of the following four *non-normative* criteria: (i) attacks on the state on the house front, below war intensity; (ii) using light weapons; (iii) perpetrated by groups; (iv) with no territorial base. With this definition many forms of violence often called terrorism are excluded. Let us look at them in turn.

##### **(a) Attack on the state.**

All kinds of "state-terrorism" and dirty war are excluded from the proposed definition of terrorism because they are not attacks on the state, even if the actual violence perpetrated by state agents and death squads against the opposition physically looks like terrorism. Attacks on the state is terrorism, while attacks by the state is not. Why? Because the state defines who is innocent or guilty and attacks on the state will reverse this meaning of violence. I suggest to disengage the normative signification from the concept of terrorism, not to condone state-'terrorism', but in order better to understand how the state interpellates its citizens and how interpellation is reversed.<sup>28</sup> We can now see that it follows from Netanyahu's definition of terrorism as "the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends," that the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the *guilty* to inspire fear for political ends is not terrorism but legitimate as defined *by the state*. And this is exactly the

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<sup>28</sup> See Stohl, 1986 for a good empirical discussion of 'state-terrorism'. However, elevating individual terrorism to a concept of 'state terrorism', is fundamentally flawed, I think, because it obscures the fact of interpellation in the state-citizen relation.

policy advocated by Netanyahu against the PLO in his book and apparently in his government policy too a decade later. Netanyahu was scarily consistent on this score.

**(b) Light weapons**

Attacks on the state by groups using either household weapons or heavy weapons has an altogether different structure. Only a mass of people can attack the state with household weapons; it will never be secret. Only an organised army can attack the state with heavy weapons; again it cannot be secret. In both cases the reversal of the meaning of violence is not obtained by the fear of terrorism emanating from the darkness of privacy.

“Terrorist” attacks using heavy weapons, like in South Lebanon or USA bombing Libya, should be classified as frontal civil war or inter-state aggression.

**(c) Organised groups**

The individual maniac “terrorist” taking hostages and going berserk committing mass-killings is not terrorism because he (it is always a he) is acting on his own without an organisational affiliation. It is not a question of a having a “political” motive or not but of belonging to a group.

**(d) No territorial base**

“Terrorist” attacks staged by guerrilla-groups with a territorial base inside the attacked state have in almost all cases been episodes in a civil war of the guerrilla type. Groups attacking across the border with light weapons should on the other hand be classified as terrorists (if there are no war already in the attacked state). Of course, groups carrying out this kind of attacks on the state, often hope to spark a guerrilla war. The ANC, for example, strategically saw their terrorist attacks inside South Africa as “armed propaganda”, inspiring the majority of black people to fight apartheid. If it actually worked this way, or the ANC in reality just struggled to keep up with a spontaneous development in the townships, is still very much a matter of debate (and will be considered in Chapter 20).

Both the PLO and the ANC attempted to wage armed struggle against the state, and they developed organisational structures to do this. It is important not to confuse these attempts with the intifada violence. The dynamics in the two types of attack on the state are very different. While the intifada draws its strength from a spontaneous and widespread open participation, the armed struggle on the contrary draws its strength from secrecy and centralised command, military training of small

groups and careful execution of attacks on the superior armed state. The combination of intifada and armed struggle posed fundamental problems both for PLO and the ANC.

In Ulster the Provisional IRA and the UDF do have territorial bases in the sense they “belong” to segregated neighbourhoods, but they have never been able to create real no-go-areas for the British state-power. It can be argued that the Irish Republic functions as an PIRA rear base, and the UDF under the present political situation enjoys some degree of indemnity in Ulster. The historically varying political-military scope of their actions, member base and intensity of violence let them oscillate between terrorism and guerrilla war.<sup>29</sup>

Terrorism and guerrilla war are degrees on a continuum of light weapons attacks on the state. While particular conflicts can move on this line, it demands a qualitative jump to change weapons-type down to household weapons or up to heavy weapons. Such a jump is only possible by radically changed political circumstances, as we saw it for example in South Africa.

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<sup>29</sup> Allen Feldman's book on political violence in Belfast is persuasive in lying bare how ethnic terrorism (not his word) generates a ritualistic and sinister territorial fragmentation of Belfast terrorising both state and citizens; see Feldman 1991.

# 5 |

## LIGHT WEAPONS: GUERRILLA WAR IN CHINA, 1934-35

‘Small war’ as the Spanish term puts it, has wrongly been understood as a particular ‘political’ kind of war with guerrilla forces swimming as Mao’s proverbial fishes in the sea of the people. In fact this is a very inaccurate rendering of Mao’s perceptive writings on guerrilla war. Guerrilla war is first and foremost an *asymmetrical* war between the state and groups attacking the state. Henry Kissinger once remarked that a guerrilla force wins if it does not loose, while a conventional force looses if it does not win. And William Zartman writes in his introduction to *Elusive Peace. Negotiating an end to Civil Wars*, “The most striking characteristic of internal conflict is its asymmetry: one party (government) is strong and the other (insurgents) is weak.” (Zartman, 1995:7). This is not altogether true, as he can see in an other book he has contributed to, (Licklider, 1993), in the chapter dealing with the American civil war. This civil war was *not* a guerrilla civil war and it was not asymmetrical - even if one side in the end proved to be the strongest - but a frontal civil war. (Stedman, 1993). Asymmetry is not the *differentia specifica* of civil war; *only of some types* of civil war.

Any guerrilla war are likely to be characterised by Mao’s three basic parameters of asymmetry: the army of the state attackers is much inferior to the army of the state, their base area exists but is very small, and the political power of the state attackers are still far from that of a fully fledged state. I will argue that these particular socio-political limitations in the state attackers position are summed up in their restriction to light weapons. Thus, a civil war where the state is attacked by light weapons only will be a guerrilla war with its special strategic conditions. How to wage a sustained asymmetrical war has been the basic strategic problem solved by a few successful guerrilla commanders in history; how to win a guerrilla war has not yet been solved.

### 1. The Long March



The Long March of China's Communist Party is arguably the supreme guerrilla campaign of the twentieth century. On October 16, 1934, about 100.000 Chinese Communists abandoned their base area in the south-central province of Kiangsi, managed to cross the encirclement of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces and set out on their epic trek. A year later a much reduced force reached Yanan in the north after more than 10.000 kilometres on foot through some of China's wildest regions and fighting an almost continuous battle against enemy forces.<sup>30</sup> The Long March had nothing to do with intifada, no household weapons were used, there were no spontaneous initiatives, it was lead by a small circle of persons controlled by Mao especially after he defeated his rival Chang Kuo-tao of the Fourth Front Red Army at the meeting at Moukung.<sup>31</sup> It was totally limited to light weapons; no motorised weapons were used, or any motors at all for that matter. It was wholly rural without any support from the cities. It was primarily military; the Communists had only transitory contact with the local populations, which in large areas were hostile.

What Mao wrote on guerrilla war is still, I think, highly relevant to an exploration of civil war.<sup>32</sup> In his *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War* one section is devoted to China's civil war. It was written in 1936 in Shensi after the Long March and before the national front against the Japanese invasion, to be used for cadre-education in the Chinese Red Army. He argues in favour of guerrilla war as the only possible strategy for the Chinese Red Army at that juncture,

"In a revolutionary civil war, there cannot be fixed battle lines... where an army faces a much stronger enemy, as is the case with the Chinese Red Army in its present stage... positional warfare is generally inapplicable in attack as well as in defence...

Today we are still in the period of strategic defensive in the civil war, the form of our political power is still far from that of a fully-fledged state, our army is still much inferior to the enemy both in numbers and technical equipment, our territory is still very small... this guerrilla character is precisely our distinguishing feature, or strong point, and our means of defeating the enemy....

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<sup>30</sup> *The Long March. Eyewitness Accounts*, 1961, is one of the few printed sources to the march; overtly propagandistic, melodramatic and absolutely riveting.

<sup>31</sup> In his book *The Long March*, Dick Wilson only scratches the surface of the deep struggles within the leadership of the March; the meeting at Moukung in a remote part of Szechuan province is covered in chapter 18; Wilson, 1971:185ff.

<sup>32</sup> Unlike doctrinaire fossilizations of the type found in the Soviet/DDR treatise on *Lokale Kriege*, Schawrow, 1983.

“Fight when you can win, move away when you can’t win” - this is the popular way of describing our mobile warfare today.” (Mao, 1967:240-41).

Yet the crucial asymmetricality that really summed up the unequal power-relation between Mao and the state was Koumintang's control of the cities. Mao and the Communists were expelled from the cities already with the debacle in Shanghai in 1927. However fragmented by warlords Koumintang’s Chinese state was in the 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek, and not Mao, defined Chinese national politics. So the war was not won by reaching Yen-an, and it is unlikely that Mao could have conquered Peking from the remote base area in Yen-an by continued guerrilla war.

Mao lists six conditions of which at least two shall be met before the guerrilla army can go over to “the counter offensive”, that is to frontal civil war with fixed battle lines, positional warfare, and a prospect of winning the cities:

“(1) The population actively supports the Red Army. (2) The terrain is favourable for operations. (3) All the main forces of the Red Army are concentrated. (4) The enemy’s weak spots have been discovered. (5) the enemy has been reduced to a tired and demoralised state. (6) The enemy has been induced to make mistakes.” (Mao, 1967:216)

Except for the first, these are not primarily political, but military-strategic conditions. It is unlikely that any of the six conditions listed could have enabled a transformation of guerrilla war into frontal war. And it is interesting that the factor which eventually swung the pendulum in favour of the Communists was none of these.

An American academic later wrote,

“In the Eastern revolution [the revolutionaries] withdraw from central, urban areas of the country, establish a base area of control in a remote section, struggle to win support of the peasants through terror and propaganda, slowly expand the scope of their authority, and gradually escalate the level of their military operations from individual terrorist attacks to guerrilla warfare to mobile warfare and regular warfare. Eventually they are able to defeat the government troops in battle. The last phase of the revolutionary struggle is occupation of the capital.”<sup>33</sup>

Samuel Huntington’s reading of the Chinese revolution is a one-dimensional stages-of-growth of civil war, which, I think, does not fit well with historical realities. There was *not* a gradual growth from military pressure to political gains back to expanded military pressure and so on; the jump from light to heavy weapons entailed a radically altered political situation *not* created by the guerrilla

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<sup>33</sup> Samuel Huntington, 1968:267, cit in Zimmermann, 1983:320.

war. Dick Wilson gives a very positive account of Mao in his book on the Long March, but nevertheless concludes,

“The Japanese occupation of Manchuria gave the Communists their chance to disarm the Koumintang, to court the warlords, to consolidate their Shensi base and to plan more thoroughly their blueprint for taking over China. One cannot see, looking back over the decades, any other *deus ex machina* which might have saved the Shensi soviet base from collapse at the hands of an ultimate Kuomintang encirclement in 1936 or 1937.” (Wilson, 1971:279)

It was Mao's own assessment too. When Kakuei Tanaka visited China in 1972, and attempted to apologise for Tokyo's war crimes, Mao said the Japanese invasion had been a good thing; without it the Communists would never have won power and he would not be greeting the Japanese Prime Minister!<sup>34</sup>

## 2. Can anyone win a guerrilla war?

Active support of the population, mobile warfare, fluidity of base areas and the premium to preserve one's own forces have historically characterised all guerrilla armies since the original Spanish guerrilleros fighting Napoleon. Eric Hobsbawm describes the archaic guerrillas and their pre-Napoleonic roots in his 1959 classic on primitive rebels. He distinguishes here between the social bandit, the mafia, millenarians, the city mob and labour sects. What they all had in common with the archaic guerrilla were their non-national scope, they were pre-national. (Hobsbawm, 1959)

Modern guerrilla forces have two additional and very novel features, as Hobsbawm notices in a later book, the

“..nationalisation not only of support for the guerrillas but of the guerrilla force itself.. The partisan unit is no longer a purely local growth.. They also link up with the non-combatant national movement in general, and the politically decisive cities in particular.” (Hobsbawm 1977:166).

The points Hobsbawm raises here are central to the understanding of the limits inherent to guerrilla civil war. What actually happened when guerrilla forces “linked up” with the non-combatant national movement and the cities? Can the answer to this the question also explain why guerrilla wars cannot be won?

The guerrilla force is faced with a double problem: (i) militarily they cannot win the cities with light weapons, and (ii) politically their rural policies of land-

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<sup>34</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*, October 25, 1996.

redistribution etc. carry no weight on the scene of urban-national politics. Only two routes seem to promise a victory, either the attackers escalate their military pressure up to frontal war with heavy weapons, by grabbing any fortunate circumstances (like a Japanese invasion), or they abandon the armed struggle and shift to political struggle (as in El Salvador and now recently in Guatemala). But neither route can be blazed by the guerrillas themselves, they can not change the external military-political environment; all they can do is react in a clever way to national developments.

Historically, since the two routes lead in opposite directions, guerrilla commanders have tried not to choose, but somehow combine military and political pressure by adding a few heavy weapons from the national army won in battle or by political defection on the one hand, and on the other hand to politically erode the unity in the defending cities and their resolve to fight to a point where they could be won without armed struggle. But going a little bit in both directions never made it possible to win, it was only an indefinite holding operation. The dilemma of guerrilla war could only be overcome when national history made a link-up with the national politics possible, and thus to leave the guerrilla war behind. The 'political' nature of guerrilla wars is a sign of military weakness, not of strength.

During the twentieth century two links with national politics have been the dominant options for guerrilla commanders: a discourse of ethnic essentialism could graft the rural guerrilla war onto the discourse of national self-determination, and an urban discourse of class could subjugate the rural guerrilla to the national discourse of revolution/nation-building. The latter had at least during the 'second cold war' the attraction of combining a national discourse with a promise of heavy weapons delivery for the fidel satellite.

#### **(a) Guerrilla civil war at the town front.**

Even guerrillas fighting in a remote rural district could link up with the politically decisive cities if they could imitate or impose a 'revolutionary', urban class-discourse on rural politics. If the peasants only were made to understand that they were proletarians like the urban under-class logically they would march hand-in-hand behind the Party towards revolution (and recalcitrant peasants could be singled out as right-deviant class-enemies). André Gunder Frank is a well known provider of academic arguments for this 'class-link',

“Arguing that capitalism can only be said to exist where production is entirely or predominantly undertaken by wage labor, and denying that

category to hundreds of millions of people employed in agriculture in India and Latin America.. is, of course, entirely unacceptable." (Frank, 1978:255)

Why? Because otherwise they would be lost to 'the socialist revolution', that is national politics dominated by an urban discourse of classes. In an example from Africa the well-known authority on Southern Africa Terence Ranger tries hard to establish a rural class struggle as the *leitmotif* in the Zimbabwean guerrilla war, but he concludes honestly,

"During the war itself peasant aspirations were focused upon the recovery of land lost to the whites and upon the exclusion from communal areas of administrative coercion...

I am *not* saying that the Zimbabwean peasantry emerged from the war in a state of total and unreconstructed individualism... [but it was] yet a peasantry rather than a body in transition towards a revolutionary proletariat." (Ranger, 1985:284, 290; italics in original).

I will argue that the same can be said for peasant guerrilla soldiers in most other Third World countries. In the bush and on the ground the rural 'class struggle' was fought against those that did not belong to the land, the whites, the colonists, the townspeople or whatever mask the Other was made to carry. But for the national leadership these archaic and local struggles were always subordinated to the struggle to win the cities. "Rural class-struggle" has everywhere been a no-starter, or a means to coerce the peasantry into 'solidarity' with the privileged urban 'proletariat' and their revolutionary vanguard. From Lenin to Haile Mariam Mengistu this way of overcoming the limitations of guerrilla war leaves a bloody red trail.

### **(b) Guerrilla civil war at the ethnic front**

If the 'class-link' subordinated the rural guerrilla to urban-revolutionary politics in a crude way that did not work, there was still another option. The 'self-determination-link' promised to solve the problem with impregnable cities in a much more subtle manner. The cities were slowly shredded into pieces by ethnic-national antagonisms, the foreigners and ethnic Others were ever more weakened and isolated until the cities would simply fall as rotten fruit. The colonial border between (European) metropole and colony was often constructed as an ethnic border by the European imperial power refusing the colonial towns a true urban status; this is one of Benedict Anderson's main arguments for the Ibero-American nationalism. In this case the metropole itself linked the rural and urban areas of the colony in a united struggle against the metropole. But often the colonial towns were much closer to the

metropolitan way of life than to the colonial countryside. They served as a bridge-head for metropolitan colonialism; Algiers is an example. In this situation the commanders of the national liberation struggle could construct a guerrilla-ideology linking peasant struggles with national politics. The guerrilla (confined by military weakness to the countryside) suddenly became the vanguard in a *national* war of liberation against the imperial metropole and its urban allies.

"Contemporary history provides virtually no instance of class struggle in a backward country managing by itself, with no recourse to nationalism, to mobilise the population to achieve the proclaimed goals of socialism. On the contrary, patriotic exaltation in circumstances of foreign aggression, occupation, or general domination proved to be decisive." (Chaliand, 1977:180).

The same ethnic withering of the cities works for ethnic separatism inside an independent state: instead of trying to link up with the capital and its inhabitants you can try to split the country and establish your own capital or purge the urban population of the 'enemies of the nation'. But the nationalistic link between rural and national politics only lasts until the day of independence in the colony or the break-away province. When the new flag flutters in the newly named capital the urban dominance of the countryside re-emerges and rural politics will again be forced to take the back seat.

#### **(c) Guerrilla civil war at the house front.**

A guerrilla war fought at the house front will not amount to more than terrorism due to the lack of a proper base area. The violence in Northern Ireland with more than 3500 deaths normally counts as a guerrilla war, but it cannot really grow from terrorism into guerrilla war because the base area of the guerrilla army is only safe houses separated by enemy streets and isolated in a population probably growing solidly hostile to the guerrilla forces (proven by the 1998 peace agreement and elections).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Feldman 1991, presents a complex analysis of the how the meaning of the state-citizen violence is reversed in and on the human body; a frightening interpretation of political terror in Northern Ireland. Cf. Ignatief 1994:162ff for a journalistic insight at the atmosphere of ethnic strife. In mine and Nina Ramussen's account of a journey through the Soviet Union in 1988 (Tin and Rasmussen, 1989), I recount the vortex of ethnic hate and fear that gripped Tblisi and Baku in that summer, and soon escalated into war.

**(d) Guerrilla war at the state front**

In his analysis of why the South American guerrilla struggle failed, Quartim asked,

“Up to what point can it be said that the guerrilla movement is *in itself* (and not just by virtue of its future programme) a ‘red power’ co-existing antagonistically with the ‘white power’? In military terms this question is the question whether guerrilla warfare is really revolutionary civil war.” (Quartim, 1971:157).

Mao’s term “revolutionary civil war” has an ambiguous double meaning: in the defensive mode it can survive as guerrilla war, but in the offensive mode it can only survive if it develop into war of positions, that is frontal civil war and win. If we understand by ‘revolutionary’ the winning of state power, however, there can be a ‘red power’ in the countryside, as Mao’s Shensi base, but it will not as such be a threat to the ‘white’ power in the cities, *eo ipso* it is not ‘a revolutionary civil war’. The answer to Quartim’s question, therefore, is negative: neither in Europe, Africa, Asia nor in America were guerrilla wars revolutionary civil wars. In fact no light weapons civil wars - that is guerrilla wars - have ever defeated the state in the twentieth century because they have not been able to win the cities. This assessment is borne out by one of the leading experts on revolutionary war,

“During the last fifteen years some hundred and twenty military coups have taken place whereas only five guerrilla movements have come to power; three of them result of the Portuguese military coup in 1974; Laos and Cambodia fell after the collapse of Vietnam.” (Laqueur, 1976:408, cit., in Zimmermann, 1983:345).

And even these cases are questionable. Timor got independence politically and the improvised Timorese ‘revolutionary army’ immediately lost Dili to the overwhelming Indonesian invasion forces on December 7, 1975;<sup>36</sup> in Mozambique Frelimo had waged a long guerrilla war, but won Maputo June 25, 1975, because Lisbon had changed politically;<sup>37</sup> and in Angola the guerrilla war had become a frontal civil war by an external Cold War-induced escalation almost before the exit of the Portuguese on November 11, 1975, with MPLA in control of Luanda.<sup>38</sup> For

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<sup>36</sup> See Kohen, 1979, for information on the Indonesian invasion and the politics of East Timor.

<sup>37</sup> See Harding, 1994:237ff, on Mozambique; the book contains also well-informed first-hand reportage from Angola, Namibia, Western Sahara, South Africa, and Eritrea.

<sup>38</sup> Karl Maier’s intimate account of people and places shows the terror of frontal civil war with heavy weapons, fronts and *limpeza*, ethnic cleansing.

some reason, Laqueur forgets Guinea-Bissau, also with a guerrilla-force coming to power politically on September 9, 1974, (see Chaliand, 1977:74ff). Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea may be the only guerrilla force 'winning' a capital, but then only by genocide or 'urbicide' when they took Phom Penh on April 17, 1975, and drove out the two million inhabitants of the city. The closest to an independent guerrilla force actually winning state power may be the Eritrean People's Liberation Front entering Asmara on May 24, 1993, but on closer inspection they had already by 1985 "redeployed large quantities of captured armour... [and become] ... a fighting force as structured as any national army in the Horn, and more adept at conventional warfare." (Harding, 1994:355).

### **3. The neo-archaic guerrilla**

Guerrilla war still seems to be the maximum attack possible on the state with light weapons, but the nature of guerrilla war has changed dramatically since 1970 when Hobsbawm assured us,

"Wherever the guerrilla army goes, it will apply the essential principles of guerrilla war which are, almost by definition, inapplicable by orthodox forces: (a) To pay for everything supplied by the local population; (b) not to rape the local women, (c) to bring land, justice and schools wherever they go; and (d) never to live better than, or otherwise than, the local inhabitants." (Hobsbawm, 1972:167).

Yes, Mao laid down rules like this, but we know from modern writers such as Jung Chiang from China (Chang, 1991) and Bao Ninh from Vietnam (Ninh, 1993), that this was not an entirely accurate picture of reality.. And if it is doubtful whether this was a true picture 30 years ago when Hobsbawm wrote his piece it is absolutely off the mark describing today's guerrillas. Something terribly has happened in places like Liberia<sup>39</sup> and Bosnia (considered below).

While light weapons still can be carried by a soldier on foot their fire power have increased violently. When you can buy Stinger missiles in the arms bazaars in north Pakistan, then technology begins to replace social organisation and numbers. Today, "modern light weapons can change the balance of power between the state and sub-state groups, such as insurgents and drug traffickers and other criminals." (Smith, 1995: 581). The technologies of destruction and of livelihood have never been so far apart. Politically the nationalist project has gone from a

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<sup>39</sup> Lynda Schuster's account of Liberia is truly horrifying (Schuster, 1994).



revolutionary phase to an ethnic phase, from wars over government to wars over territory. This is well known, but it is further exacerbated by a third factor combining the technical and political.

The political economy of guerrilla wars has degenerated into mafia-like crime.<sup>40</sup> Many of the small ethnic guerrilla wars have ended in a kind of permanent stalemate, where the state cannot completely eradicate the well armed, highly mobile and profusely bribe paying mini-armies, and they, on their side, neither have the political vision nor the military power to bring the armed struggle to any kind of decisive conclusion.<sup>41</sup> But these stagnated guerrilla units are perfectly suited to large scale crime, mostly drug related. And then we get these viscous militias playing their criminal trade disguised in the tatters of some long-forgotten Peoples-United-National-Liberation-Patriotic-Revolutionary-Front. What we see is a general collapse of the national project which, as Hobsbawm pointed out, distinguished the modern guerrilla from the archaic. Now the guerrillas revert to a kind of neo-archaic state remote from the cities and politics of national change.

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<sup>40</sup> See Duffield, 1996 and 1998; Chapter 22, below considers the criminalisation of civil war in South Africa.

<sup>41</sup> See Lintner, 1989 for a first-hand account of the bizarre South-East Asian example of the Golden Triangle statelets of drug-lords and guerrillas.

# 6 |

## HEAVY WEAPONS: COUP IN BOLIVIA, 1971

Heavy weapons are defined as every land-based weapon above the level of light weapons and below the level of airborne, or seaborne weapons. They represent the third level of technological-social organisation of violence. Attacks on the state possible with heavy weapons range from coup to frontal civil war. The deployment of heavy weapons like armoured vehicles, canons and tanks in a coup depend on pre-existing army stocks, trained personnel available to the coup-makers, which therefore makes coups a privilege of army officers.

### **1. Hugo Banzer's coup, July 21, 1971**

Juan Jose Torres was president of Bolivia from September 1970 to July 1971. Himself a general he was made president by dealings in the officer corps when the previous president general Alfredo Ovando stepped down for personal reasons. Torres survived a left wing riot in October 1970 and a coup attempt in January 1971 led by the right wing general Hugo Banzer. During the next months he was perceived by the right-wing military of going left in particular when he tried to set up a secret "People's Military Vanguard" within the army. By July 1971 general Hugo Banzer had won the support of the division commanders outside La Paz and everybody was expecting a coup. Crucial was the support of the most dangerous unit, the "Tarapaca" Armoured Regiment up on the Altiplano, about an hour's drive from the city and equipped with a number of new V-100 Cadillac armoured cars, "...against which the rest of the army had no effective weaponry." (Farcau, 1994:181)

Jorge Gallardo, the minister of the Interior, tried to forestall the coup on July 19 by arresting Banzer and other coup-plotters in the lowland town of Santa Cruz and immediately take Banzer to La Paz on a plane the same day. When a

crowd of 4000 later the same day stormed the police barracks in Santa Cruz and the local 8th Army Division sided with the protesters against orders coming from Gallardo the coup was on.

In La Paz the next day workers and trade unions demonstrated and demanded arms to protect the legal government against the right wing. In the very early hours of July 21, Gallardo personally arranged the delivery of over 300 rifles and 22.000 rounds of ammunition. (Farcau, 1994:183). As the morning broke over La Paz only one army regiment proved to be loyal to the president and he was fighting a losing battle through the day. The improvised workers militias armed with a few rifles was no match for Banzer's troops and in the evening the armoured cars and infantry from the "Tarapaca" regiment was closing in on the centre of La Paz. When they were 300 meters from Palacio Quemado, the presidential palace, Torres escaped and got asylum in the Peruvian embassy. The coup-makers respected the extra-territoriality of the Peruvian embassy and did not try to arrest Torres. Hugo Banzer could not risk to ruin his international legitimacy by violating an international border, not even the weak and purely symbolic embassy border.

## **2. Coups and the strong state**

Coup differs from revolution in the way the state attackers gain legitimacy. To succeed, a revolution must establish a new foundation of legitimacy, building on a power-base outside of the old state apparatus.<sup>42</sup> The coup makers have to be part of the old state apparatus, and only in the act of the coup itself attack the constitutional legality of the state. And then, as quickly as possible, the coup-makers will appropriate the trappings of state legality and declare that the coup was in defence of the state against whatever enemies they might care to invent. That is, the period of attack must be extremely brief, only a couple of hours, if the coup is to succeed. And that is only possible if they well before the *pronunciamiento* have secured the support of central army units.

Because a coup is such a rapid affair and it may change so little, it is easy to overlook the basic connection between coups and civil war. A coup is violence at the front of town space with a flash reversal of rule. A coup is always an attack on the state violently and discursively no matter how brief and how close to the

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<sup>42</sup> See Seegers 1992, for a convenient and competent review of theories of revolution. Tilly 1993, is a sweeping survey of European revolutions the last five hundred years, but problematic in its generality.

incumbent the plotters may be. A coup cannot travel; it must start and finish at the territorial centre of the state, the capital. If it has to travel from the provinces it cannot be brief, and it will have to escalate into civil war in order to reach the capital. To win the capital the attackers must overwhelm the state in a matter of hours on both the discursive, symbolic level and violently: tanks in front of the presidential palace, the parliament, and essentially controlling radio and TV-stations, the telephone-exchange and the airport, in order to paralyse the leadership and assure the population, including provincial military units, of the *fait accompli*. The successful coup-makers rely on a few loyal officers commanding the overwhelming firepower of heavy weapons concentrated against locations of crucial discursive importance. This is a dangerous game if coup-makers do not have a tradition for coups as we saw when Jeltsin shelled the parliament of the Russian Federation in Moscow 1993; and it can become a tradition, and develop into a peculiar kind of statecraft.<sup>43</sup>

Importantly successful coups can be seen as a sign of a strong state. Strong in three ways: (i) it is flexible enough to accommodate the coup, adjust to the new leadership and continue ruling the population; (ii) the state does not split into regional fighting; (iii) few or no groups oppose the state at its weakest moment. But it can go wrong. Miscalculation and insufficient support is a danger for any coup-maker (see Horowitz, 1980:217ff), but worst of all, the sudden weakening of the state can be exploited by other groups. It can unleash social forces difficult to control if the state or the coup-plotters mobilise “the people” either at the ethnic front in defence of the “honour” of the nation or at the town front in defence of the “revolution”.

There is a typological continuum from the coup to the frontal civil war; all along heavy weapons are used to attack the state and no-where does it become a guerrilla war. A slightly theatrical Bolivian coup against a resilient state can escalate into the endless horror of a frontal war against a fragile state, as we will see below in the case of Afghanistan.

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<sup>43</sup> It is a treat to learn the six formal stages of a proper Latin coup in Farcau, 1994:14.

# 7 |

## HEAVY WEAPONS: FRONTAL CIVIL WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, 1990-96

The maximum attack possible on the state with heavy weapons seems to be a frontal civil war fought with a strategy of positional warfare rather like conventional international war. The first modern frontal civil war was the American Civil War 1861-65, and it still ranks as one of the most bloody civil wars ever, with 650.000 deaths out of a population of 30 millions. Current frontal civil wars include the conflicts of Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Angola. They are not asymmetric like a guerrilla war; with heavy weapons deployed by both sides the cities are not impregnable; and the firepower is so expensive and so destructive that whole nations can be devastated.

### **1. The territoriality of power in Afghanistan**

I have defined civil war at its most basic level as violent attack on the state by sub-state groups reversing state interpellation. In the case of Afghanistan an obvious question must be: was there any Afghan state to attack, in particular after 1992? And if the Afghan state had collapsed, how can we then talk about civil war according to the definition just mentioned? In order to answer these questions we must first consider the problem of the territoriality of power in the Afghan state.

Barnett R. Rubin's book on Afghanistan is very well informed on Afghan matters including the political economy, but beyond that his book is distinguished by a perceptive discussion of the disintegration of the state from a theoretical perspective. Rubin argues that the fragmentation of Afghanistan mirrors a historical tendency of global magnitude,

“The modern or postmodern world is not absent or weak in places like Afghanistan, but exerts itself in ugly ways we prefer to deny. The fragmentation of postcolonial and post-Cold War states is the other side of the postmodern...” (Rubin, 1995:5)

In his book Rubin tells many different stories of fragmentation of Afghanistan: long before modernity Afghanistan was fragmented by 'micro segmentation' at local level between peasants and landlords, conflicts between secular and Islamic authorities, old rivalries at tribal and ethnic level, fragmentation in dramatic inequalities between town and countryside, and the ultimate destructive game of influence between regional neighbour states and the superpowers. Rubin's book explains in distressing detail how the external pressure from the world of nation states interacted internally with tribal Afghanistan, both modern and postmodern forces of fragmentation continue to penetrate all levels of Afghan society,

"These [tribal and particular] interests, however, do not represent "traditional" forces overpowering the "modern"... tribes or local strongmen were often created or mobilised as agents of control by colonial or postcolonial states...

The 'traditionalism' and 'localism' of Afghanistan are not survivals of ancient traditions but rather the results of the country's forced integration into the contemporary state system." (Rubin 1995:15).

Afghanistan's twentieth century international borders were the result of somebody else's violence, the stand-off between foreign powers dating back to the British-Russian rivalry in the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> The rulers of Kabul never fully ruled the national territory; the provinces often proved to be a world beyond their reach. The state never successfully removed social power from the sub-state fronts of town and ethnic space nor did it vest sovereignty in the citizens. Violence in Afghanistan entrenched the sub-state fronts of house, town, and ethnic space, and not national borders. For a would-be national discourse emanating from the cities this has proved an impossible obstacle, and neither the Marxist-modernist nor the Islamic conservative-revolutionary organisations have been able to constitute a discourse reaching beyond the borders dug by internal violence. Interpellation of the house, in particular the position of women in Afghan society is still an important site of the struggle between contending centres of power in state, town, and ethnic space. Interpellation of the town has direct bearing on modernisation and economic development of Afghanistan. Interpellation of ethnic space is crucial to the survival of the nation state, and it touches upon a core regional problem, that of Pashtunistan and the border with Pakistan.

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<sup>44</sup> In the twentieth century prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979 the Afghan state had violent conflicts at her international borders with Britain in 1919 and with Pakistan in 1949, 1950, and 1955.

Three cycles of violence can be distinguished in Afghanistan since the fall of the kingdom in 1973. First a cycle of coups 1973, 1978, and 1979 with symbolic use of heavy weapons; then a terrible cycle of guerrilla civil war 1980 - 1990 with the mujahidin guerrillas attacking the state forces of the Afghan Communists and their Soviet allies with sophisticated light weapons; finally the inconclusive cycles of frontal civil war 1990-1996... between mujahidin armies using heavy weapons.

## **2. The coups**

In 1973 Muhammad Daoud Khan, prime minister of Afghanistan 1953-63, staged a coup d'état against his cousin the Afghan king Zahir Shah while the king was in Italy. Daud proclaimed Afghanistan a republic and himself president. Daud's coup led to the communist coup five years later, then the Soviet invasion, and finally the war. The Parcham and Khalq communist fractions penetrated Daud's Soviet-trained military. The Saur Revolution, the name given the communist coup of April 27, 1978, displaying a traditional show of heavy weapons in front of important state-buildings was staged by army and air force commanders, members of the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

On a personal level there has been a remarkable continuity throughout the war. Burhanuddin Rabbani, then a junior professor of the Sharia Faculty of Kabul University started around 1973 the first of the Islamic movements Jamiat-i Islami (Islamic Society). Gulbuddin Hikmatyar was put in charge of political activities and Ahmad Shah Massoud became a member of the Muslim Youth. He was later related with Rabbani through marriage. Today [1996] Rabbani, Hikmatyar and Massoud are still key mujahidin leaders. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was launched privately in 1965 by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal with Najibullah as student leader. Taraki later became president of the first 'socialist' government in Kabul by the coup April 27, 1978, only to be killed by Hafizullah Amin, another leading communist, in September 1979. Amin was subsequently killed by KGB-agents on the first day of the Soviet invasion December 27, 1979 and Karmal, who came back with the Soviet troops, was made president in yet another coup. He ruled until 1986, when Najibullah took over in the next coup. Karmal is now in Mazar-i-Sharif and Najibullah has been killed.

What is important in the present context, however, is the original *non-guerrilla* war dynamics of the Afghan violence. From the outset violence took place in the capital: first the coups and then revolutionary terror against people close to the centre of power. With the Soviet invasion the old pattern of outside interference

through intrigue and coup in Afghan politics exploded in a full-scale civil war of heavy weapons.

### **3. The guerrilla civil war**

To the Russians their invasion may have been a logical continuation of masterminding earlier coups,<sup>45</sup> but with more than 100.000 Soviet troops engaged on Afghan soil the whole enterprise got a dynamic totally different from coups. It is important to note that this shift was the result of an invasion, not of an internal evolution of the coups. The mujahidin fighting against Karmal and his Soviet masters were a multitude a guerrilla armies, only united by a common enemy. The guerrilla war was triggered by an invasion, and it did not become what I have termed an 'intervention civil war' for the simple reason that the Russians did not have an international mandate and they supported the Afghan state (however corrupted it was).

Rubin describes in well documented detail how the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia controlled the mujahidin and corrupted all local power structures in a aggressive involvement mirroring the devastating Soviet invasion. In particular the Pakistani secret service ISI manipulated the mixture of colossal military aid and intense internal ethnic rivalries in order to prevent a united exile Afghan government to develop in the refugee communities which they perhaps would not been able to control; with the obvious result that after the Soviet exit no strong Afghan government could be installed in Kabul.

Was there an Afghan state after 1979? Yes. Was the Karmal and Najibullah regimes acting only as puppets for Breshnev, Andropov, Tjernenko and Gorbachev? Yes. In Afghanistan no free national discourse, no democratic political process had ever decided the legitimacy of the Afghan state. The state was the rulers of Kabul. In this situation coups was a useful vehicle in the political process and in some ways the only. The question of legitimacy was only solved through violence. No political agreement was stronger than the armed force supporting it. Popular co-operation or resistance could only be measured in terms of violence because the channels of discourse above local level never had been constructed.

In 1989 most observers predicted that the state of Najibullah would collapse when the last Red soldier left Afghanistan. But Kabul retained its minimal

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<sup>45</sup> This is Fred Halliday's view; see Halliday 1983:99.



statehood, and Najibullah soldiered on until 1992 partly thanks to continued heavy aid from USSR and partly because of ethnic disagreements amongst the mujahidin. The intervention had cost the Soviet Union about US\$ 5 billion per year (Rubin, 1995:179). After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 the aid continued at about US\$ 3-4 billion per year until the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The combined US-Saudi Arabian assistance to the mujahidin reached about US\$ 1 billion per year in the late 1980s. In 1989 the United States and Saudi Arabia supplied a total of US\$ 1,3 billion to the mujahidin. The Pakistani secret service was able to offer a reward of two new Stinger missiles to any mujahidin commander shooting down a Soviet aircraft. The weapons now included besides Stingers, heavy artillery “and other arms considered appropriate for a shift from guerrilla to conventional warfare.” (ibid., p. 182) correctly expected to break out once the Russians had left.

Import of weapons on this scale made Afghanistan the world's third-largest importer of weapons equalling Japan and Saudi Arabia. (ibid., p. 109). In 1992 Afghanistan had accumulated more light weapons than the combined stockpiles of Pakistan and India. (ibid., p. 196) Today this proliferation of light weapons is upsetting the security of the whole South Asian region (Smith, 1995). The enormous inflow of resources washed away all traditional social relations. No Afghan structures were unmarked by the scramble for external resources of violence and the effects of their use. This was an perverted version of state autonomy. In specific circumstances the state may to draw on “internationally supplied money, weapons, and training etc. making it ‘overdeveloped’ or ‘autonomous’ with respect to the society under its rule.” (Rubin, 1995:12). The war made the Afghan state ‘overdeveloped’ only in terms of destructive capacity. Perhaps the most striking example of destructive 'overdevelopment' was the use by the mujahidin of sophisticated aircrafts left behind by the Soviet forces, a technology totally beyond with the general level of productive forces in Afghanistan (and soon grounded due to the lack of technological and social support systems).<sup>46</sup>

The guerrilla war against the Soviets ended as guerrilla wars have to do, without taking the capital in an outright military victory, but with a politically produced break down in the will to fight, an evacuation. The victory - the Soviet pull-out - was as much an outcome of the internal resistance as the shifting, post-

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<sup>46</sup> Left behind was at least 130 jet fighters including advanced MiG-27 and Su-25, 800 helicopter gunships including Mi-24 with rapid-fire machine-guns and multiple fragmentation rockets, and seven airbases in Bagram, Kabul, Shindand, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Feyzabad and Kunduz. (Amnesty, 1995:22, 27)

Berlin Wall global geopolitics. Once the war against the invasion had ended Afghanistan and her leaders immediately terminated the guerrilla war and went back to the unfinished business of the coups.

#### **4. The frontal civil war**

Mujahidin waging war against the Red Army had been asymmetrical war: guerrilla civil war against the Kabul state and its Soviet 'supporters'. Now with Najibullah alone in Kabul and the mujahidin armed for conventional war he could be removed from power by direct attacks on his military positions by an army like his own: by frontal civil war. Pakistan and the United States tried to turn the mujahidin guerrillas into a conventional military force by improving their command and control capabilities and increasing their supplies of rockets and other heavy weapons (Rubin, 1995:252). From 1990 to 1992 three military forces developed into 'national' armies in the sense that "they bypassed local and tribal (though not ethnic) segmentation" (ibid., p. 252). Najibullah's army of the Afghan (Kabul) state, Hikmatyar's *Lashkar-i-Isar* (Army of Sacrifice) drawn from the Pashtun refugees in Pakistan, and Massoud's Islamic Army in the north with affiliation to the Uzbek and Tajik peoples in the now independent Central Asian Soviet republics.

The first battle with this non-guerrilla forces very revealingly was a coup attempted by a defector from Najibullah's army, Shahnawaz Tanai. He bombed the presidential palace on March 7, 1990, and tried to open the defence around Kabul to let Hikmatayr's army in, but failed. In August of the same year Hikmatayr tried again to bomb Kabul with forty thousand rockets backed up by seven hundred trucks of ammunition but was stopped by US diplomatic pressure. What we see here was a return to the logic of the coups from before the Soviet invasion. Even the persons remained to some extent the same: Hekmatiyar, Rabbani, Massoud, Karmal. Now with the major difference created by the mad arms build-up, which meant that the fundamental discursive aspect of a coup had been replaced by war-violence practically without limit.

Two examples: in March 1995 President Rabbani's forces used jet fighters bombing residential areas in Kabul allegedly populated by people supporting an opposing faction; in May 1995 the forces of Ismail Khan bombed residential areas in Farah province with cluster bombs using MiG-21, MiG-23, Su-17 and Su-18 jet fighters. In neither case were there any military resistance. This use of airborne weapons did not differ strategically from shelling by artillery, and did not change the military horizon of the frontal civil war.

After difficult international negotiations Najibullah told the nation in a TV-speech on March 18, 1992, that he would step down. One month later unable to leave Kabul he got asylum in the UN-offices where he remained until the Taliban forces entered the city in October 1996 and killed him. Coup-like violence with the traditional violent fighting at the airport, the Interior Ministry and the presidential palace had by the end of 1992 escalated into full frontal war with Hikmatyar's Pashtun forces bombarding the town and forcing perhaps a million people to flee (Rubin, 1995:273). The battle of Kabul and the other cities was to be repeated again and again during the next years. The country was grinded to dust in a frontal civil war between "hyperarmed networks of power" (ibid., p. 264) of which different networks alternated in the role as the state of Afghanistan.

## **5. A difference from the frontal civil war in Bosnia**

In the terrifying compendium of human rights atrocities and gross brutalisation of the Afghan people there seems, nevertheless, to be one item luckily missing.<sup>47</sup> Ethnic cleansing so dominant in Bosnia significantly seems not to have taken place in Afghanistan. Individuals were killed, abducted, tortured and mistreated for reasons of ethnicity, especially people belonging to minority groups, yet I have not found evidence of the concerted drive to complete ethnic cleansing of whole states, witnessed in the former Yugoslavia. On the other hand, the near total destruction suffered by Kabul did not strike Sarajevo, let alone Zagreb or Beograd. Why?

Frontal civil wars are always extremely destructive because heavy weapons are deployed. Yet frontal civil wars can differ crucially depending on the territoriality of the attacked state. The war in Afghanistan had a dynamic very different from the frontal war in Bosnia (discussed briefly in Chapter nine).

In a general way, I suggest, the difference can be explained by the diverse territorialities of the two states. A nation state is embodied in its national territory and the bodies of all its citizens; the ethno-state of the Bosnian Serbs was embodied in the true Serbian land and in the privileged bodies of the ethnically pure Serbs. Accordingly the civil war in Bosnia was fought at the ethnic front for possession of the land 'belonging' to the Serbs and for 'cleansing' of that land of non-Serb bodies. In Afghanistan too ethnic discourses were very strong and basic in peoples lives, but no single ethnic discourse correlated with the territory and human bodies

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<sup>47</sup> *Afghanistan*. Amnesty International: 1995.

making up the Afghan state. There was no such thing as an 'Afghan' ethnicity and nobody fought for an ethnically pure Afghanistan. The territoriality of the Afghan state was not land nor bodies, (whether the pragmatic totality of citizens or the exclusive *volk* of the pure), but embodied in the capital or even just in the presidential palace: in the physical locus of state rule. Possession of that house *was* possession of the state; the group or the man possessing Kabul or just the presidential palace *was* the Afghan state. Furthermore, it is important to stress that logically there *was* an Afghan state all along.<sup>48</sup>

The point for the state attackers was not to 'cleanse' Afghanistan,<sup>49</sup> but to use the state to maximum benefit for their own ethnic, tribal or clan group - as the Pashtuns had done for two hundred years. The frontal civil war in Afghanistan was fought at the town and non-town front and not at the ethnic front. To reach Kabul and the site of state power the victorious army had to fight its way across the country, along the roads, in the valleys and the mountain-passes, but the climax of the war had to be in Kabul, only here could the attack on the state be carried home because the ruins of Kabul was the supreme embodiment of the Afghan state. Frontal civil war can thus take place both at the town front and at the ethnic front with two very different dynamics. It is possible to speculate that ethnic cleansing was meaningless in Afghanistan because the state was not embodied in human bodies; because they had no national elections they did not get ethnic cleansing...

Now, it does not follow from this that Afghanistan could not fragment into several states. In fact this would be likely to happen, had the country not been part of an international system of states. The outside world insisted on the preservation of a national entity called Afghanistan for their own strategic reasons. Only one example: Abdul Rashid Dostum had created a new capital in Mazar-i-Sharif for a possible separate state of the north. After 1992 he claimed to have more diplomatic representations in Mazar than Kabul had, among them the major UN-office for Afghanistan. But all the neighbouring regional states put pressure on him to retreat from his separatist talk and to recognise 'the unity' of Afghanistan. And so the destruction of Kabul continued. Anybody holding Kabul could claim to be winner of the battle of Afghanistan, but of course, violence on the ground made a mockery

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<sup>48</sup> Chapter thirteen briefly considers the difference between the state as a house or apparatus or institution, and as a totality of citizens and state space.

<sup>49</sup> At least not of the ethnic Other, rather of the sexual Other: women were terrorised out of public space and into patriarchal house space. A recent Taliban decree in Kabul ordered all street-level windows painted white so men could not get a forbidden glimpse of a woman not belonging to his own house.

out of the claim of ruling a nation. A national discourse and a national political process including elections from which alone a legitimate state can grow had never emerged.

What is left is the contradiction between a national fiction produced and conserved by the international community, and the internal realities of violence currently [1996] splitting up Afghanistan in at least a northern non-Pashtun Massoud-Dostom ruled part, and a southern Pashtun Taliban-ruled part with Kabul uneasily on the border between them (and at the time of writing part of the Taliban-area). For the non-Pashtun population in the northern half of Afghanistan this was the first time in almost two hundred years without Pashtun rulers. Taliban, which means pupil of a Koran-school, propagated a kind of village Islam opposing the sinful cities, even more restrictive than the university Islam of the old mujahidin-leaders. They waged war against women at the house front, against modern urbanity at the town front and against non-Pashtun groups at the ethnic front. The assault on all the non-destructive elements of modernity (only the weapons of modernity were not *haram*) was sinister, almost surreal.

By the end of 1996 most of Afghanistan was reportedly destroyed, almost 2 million people were killed, and almost half of the entire population, estimated by the last census (1977) to be 16 million, were refugees. Around 2 million Afghans were internal refugees, some 3 million still lived in refugee-camps in Pakistan and some 1-2 million in camps in Iran. There had been singularly little will to a national political compromise between the clan-leaders. It took the world ten years, something like \$ 50 billion worth of military and civilian aid and a force of 100.000 troops to destroy a living Afghanistan. It will presumably cost even more to bring "Afghanistan" back to life.

# 8

## AIR- & SEABORNE WEAPONS: PREVENTIVE ACTION IN SOMALIA, 1992

Air- and seaborne weapons were defined above as household, light, and heavy weapons carried or launched by merchant or naval ships, or by civilian or military aircraft.<sup>50</sup> Even if it is possible in theory to imagine a civil war being fought with air- or seaborne weapons by domestic factions only, this has not yet happened on a decisive scale; arguably the military horizon of non-intervention civil war have remained up to the present that of heavy weapons. This includes the examples mentioned earlier of Tamil Tigers using speedboats and the Afghan mujahidin bombing civilians with jet fighters.<sup>51</sup> To consider air- and seaborne weapons in a civil war context, therefore, raises the complex question of third party or cross-border intervention in civil war.

### **1. Intervention with air- and seaborne weapons in civil war**

The present typology is based on (a) the most complex weapons used, i.e. operations including airforce as well as ground forces should be indexed by the use of airforce; and (b) by the forces attacking the state, i.e. when Anastasio Somoza

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<sup>50</sup> Atomic, bacteriological and chemical weapons have so far not been relevant to civil war, but they cannot be ruled out in principle.

<sup>51</sup> This is the conclusion reached by Judy Graffis Chizek in her "Toward a Theory of Insurgent Airpower" in *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Winter 1997. A curious precedent was the American Civil War duel between the experimental steamboats Merrimach and Monitor on the Potomac river in 1862. The Federal steamboat Monitor "was the most striking technical innovation of the war. Heavily armoured, with little more than an enormous turret showing above the water, and equipped with two powerful guns, the Monitor rendered obsolete the wooden and lightly armoured warships of the world." William R. Brock, *Conflict and Transformation, The United States 1844-1877*. London: Penguin Books, 1973. p. 263.

ordered his fighter aircraft to bomb demonstrations demanding his resignation in Nicaragua in February and August 1978, it did not put the Nicaraguan civil war on the fourth level.<sup>52</sup>

Civil war air attacks *on* the state, not *by* the state, have in almost all cases signified external intervention of some sort. The social complexity of airborne weapons is so high that it is nearly always impossible for the state-attackers to establish their own airforce or to win over parts of the national airforce. Until the final victory they will have no airforce and if they conquer the state they will inherit it all, and even then they might not be able to get planes in the air. But other states may find it in their interest to get involved, and for them air- or seaborne weapons will always be a strategically superior weapon, able to transcend the logic of frontal civil war, and for this reason spearhead the escalation of frontal civil war to intervention civil war.<sup>53</sup> Cross-border interventions in civil wars without air- or seaborne weapons happen, but do not raise the military horizon to intervention civil war; the conflicts will remain guerrilla or frontal civil wars as the case may be. UN-mandated multi-national coercive operations without air- or seaborne weapons are unlikely.

Use of seaborne weapons in civil war by cross-border intervention forces range from merchant ships bringing foodstuffs to a besieged population up to the deployment of hangar-ships providing bases for attacking aircraft including unmanned missiles.<sup>54</sup> However, I will focus my discussion on the use of airborne weapon, and the specific role of seaborne weapons in intervention civil war will not be considered further at this point. Cross-border interventions with airborne weapons in civil wars range from using planes to airlift humanitarian aid to population groups in conflict with their state ('weapons-by-default'), escalating up to direct military attacks against the troops, positions, installations etc. of a state at war with groups of its own population.

Neither aid nor weapons arrive unaccompanied: from NGO-personnel in white four-wheel drive cars to NATO-troops with a UN-mandate their presence

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Jung, 1979:73

<sup>53</sup> In Danish military lingo: "De naturlige barrieres hindreværdi... ændres ... af ... luftbårne transport- og kampsystemer." (Fredriksen, 1994:111).

<sup>54</sup> The hangar-ship can perhaps be seen as a functional equivalent of the imperialist cannon-boat, and thus raise the question whether intervention civil war has historical precedents. However, to pursue this interesting discussion falls outside of the scope of the present investigation.

embody the concerns and legitimacy bestowed by the international community upon the intervention. What these weapons of intervention have in common are a strategic reach going beyond land based weapons; they can traverse the fronts of a war fought with heavy weapons. This reach is not only technological, but essentially political: deployed in a civil war they will in most cases establish a profound asymmetricality between the defending state and the attacking party having access to superior weapons. But crucially the attackers in the civil war will get access to the humanitarian support and violent capacity of a consortium of friendly states and gain the recognition of the international community. Weapons imported and used by internal factions in a civil war thus do not constitute intervention as I use the concept here.

## **2. Complex emergencies and preventive action**

When hunger deliberately is used as a weapon by a state against groups of the population, food aid by default becomes a weapon as well regardless of donor intentions. In their important book on hunger and war Macrae and Zwi criticises,

“the fundamental misconception within the international community of the nature of complex emergencies, which systematically ignores the inherently political dimensions of these disasters, and subsequently fails to acknowledge that these situations are characterised not only by groups of losers, but also groups of winners. Not recognizing the winners in particular means that the forces perpetuating the violence are not identified...

Humanitarian crisis are intentionally created, and powerful political and economic pressures strive to ensure that they are sustained in order to achieve their objectives of cultural genocide and political and economic power. It is this potent combination of political and economic factors driving and maintaining disaster-producing conflicts which creates what are increasingly referred to as ‘complex emergencies’”.<sup>55</sup>

In this situation *any* help will have a bearing on the outcome of the conflict. That is why the category of air- and seaborne weapons should include military as well as humanitarian ‘weapons’.<sup>56</sup> When, say, planes land in southern Sudan with

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<sup>55</sup> Macrae and Zwi, 1994:25,21. In Somalia, for example, it was clear that the crisis killing perhaps 400.000 people in 1992 also produced winners: "Faction leaders, freelance gunmen, and merchants had grown rich as a result of famine and did not want to see an end to the chaos and anarchy that had characterized Somalia for the previous two years." (Makinda, 1993:74)

<sup>56</sup> An interesting attempt to conceptualise complex emergencies is Väyrynen, 1997. He suggests a complex emergency has four



food and medicine for civilians in the Sudan People's Liberation Army-controlled areas it is tilting the total balance of power by giving the SPLA access to the complex social resources of which the aircraft itself is only the transmitter. A classic example of humanitarian aid counteracting hunger used deliberately as a weapon by a despotic state was the clandestine help to the Tigray People's Liberation Front in 1984-85, brought in from Sudan behind Mengistu's lines by the Norwegian Church Aid and other NGOs.<sup>57</sup> However, aid transported in on trucks rather than on planes to groups starved by their state needs overland access from adjoining countries, and a liberated zone stable enough to allow trucks to operate; it will not transcend the strategic limits of frontal civil war. Only aircrafts can completely transcend the strategy of frontal civil war as the enormous airlift into besieged Sarajevo demonstrated.

Preventive action, or what Mark Duffield calls "the internationalisation of public welfare",<sup>58</sup> imposed on a state by circumventing official channels and distributing aid behind the lines to insurgent groups, in itself, of course, does not constitute a war. It may take place in the context of a war or other kinds of complex emergencies. What distinguishes preventive action from traditional aid is the element of violence used to enforce a policy of universal human rights, including the right to food if need be against the will of a nominally sovereign state. The legal foundation for this new assertiveness is the declaration of food as an universal human right from the International Conference on Nutrition, in Rome 1992: "Food aid must not be denied because of political affiliation, geographical location, gender, age, ethnic, tribal or religious identity." (FAO/WHO 1992, cit. in Tomasevski, 1994:71). It is humanitarian but also intervention potentially transgressing national sovereignty and pressurising the relation between state and citizen, ultimately

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dimensions: civil war, disease, hunger, and displacement of people, of which "violence has a more instrumental and catalytic role in humanitarian crisis than its other aspects." (Vaärynen, 1997:19).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Hendrie, 1994. See also on another case involving Norwegian activism, the report to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs by COWI Consult, discussing the highly controversial linking of humanitarian aid and efforts to secure a political settlement of the Sudan civil war: *Evaluation of Norwegian Humanitarian Assistance to the Sudan*, Evaluation Report 11.97 (1997)

<sup>58</sup> Duffield, 1994:64; see also his sharp statement "The Symphony of the Damned: Racial Discourse, Complex Emergencies and Humanitarian Aid" in *Disasters*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1996).

building up “a new international framework for military involvement, albeit justified under a new humanitarian rubric.” (Macrae, 1994:9).

Preventive action was defined above as intervention in a situation with cumulative battle-deaths below a thousand per year; not only that unleashed by the intervention itself, but including the total level of violence in the conflict prompting outside intervention. The difference between preventive action and intervention civil war is the intensity of violence. Preventive action can seek to prevent all four dimensions of complex emergencies: war, disease, hunger and displacement. In practice preventive action takes far-sighted, early action<sup>59</sup> before violence spirals out of control and hits public and politicians of the international community with outrageous television footage of death. Somalia, December 1992, was an example of action taken by the international community at a very late stage when a complex emergency had reached extreme severity; Albania, April 1997, was an example of early action taken before violence reached civil war proportions.

### 3. Operation Restore Hope<sup>60</sup>

Warlords and Siad Barre had jointly brought Somalia to a desperate state by 1991 when Siad Barre, dictator of Somalia since 1969, lost power to attacks by a group of warlords.<sup>61</sup> Without pause they continued the civil war for control of Mogadishu, seat of Somali state power. Between November 1991 and February 1992, 14,000 people are estimated to have been killed by light and heavy weapons in the capital.<sup>62</sup> In any case, it was not directly the civil war, which were several

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<sup>59</sup> On early action cf. Rupesinghe 1998.

<sup>60</sup> Since selecting the case of Somalia to illustrate preventive action I have modified the definition to include battle-deaths caused by the intervention forces *and* the ongoing civil war; thus Somalia should be classified as an intervention civil war as the total number of battle deaths both in 1992 and 1993 was higher than a thousand. Operation Alba in Albania, 1997, is a good example of preventive action; however, time did not permit me to write on Albania.

<sup>61</sup> Samuel Makinda defines a warlords as "leaders of political factions and paramilitary groups. Their power is acquired through arms, intrigue, intimidation, and harassment. It is these leaders who wrecked havoc on Somalia. The term, however, does not apply to clan "elders", the legitimate clan leaders whose power stems from age-old traditions." (Makinda, 1993:16)

<sup>62</sup> Patman, 1995:97 quoting Africa Watch. However, SIPRI 1993, gives a much lower figure of 3-4000 fatalities in 1992; SIPRI 1994, gives no figures at all for 1993 or 1994.

years old by 1992, but the breakdown in food supplies and the resulting famine which caught the attention of the international community.

The centrepiece of the media campaign for a aid intervention in Somalia, culminating in weeks just after the presidential election in the United States in November 1992, was "the erroneous claim... that two million Somalis faced imminent death by starvation. In fact, all evidence indicated that the peak of excess deaths was well past." (de Waal, 1996:152). In America and Europe the media simplified the Somalia story down to a handful of basic elements: helpless starving victims, cruel gunmen and warlords, and brave and compassionate foreign aid workers. The solution to the Somali famine was portrayed as foreign food, the solution to the political problems was portrayed as sending in foreign soldiers.

"“The international community, backed by the UN troops ... [should] move in and run Somalia. ”declared Philip Johnston, President of CARE-US. By the end of November 1992, New York Times and Washington Post said “Let’s do it” and “Let it be Somalia!”" (de Waal, 1996:154).

The American public swung around, George Bush and Colin Powel said yes. It was a clear victory for the NGO industry in the United States.

“What turned Operation Restore Hope from a mere dream into reality was that there were powerful institutional interests ready to support any such initiative for “humanitarian intervention” (many of them seeing it as a precedent for Bosnia and Haiti), and little immediate prospect of serious military resistance on the ground...

With characteristically simplistic thinking, the US government and media identified the conquest of famine with the logistics of international food-aid shipments. Hence the intervention was sent to protect foreign aid workers, rather than Somali civilians... The US-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) from December to May was the first modern case of the military occupation of a country for avowedly humanitarian reasons alone. The UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) from May [1993] onwards was the first use of UN forces under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows for the use of force to make peace.” (de Waal 1996:154-55).

The intervention did not, of course, create the frontal civil war in Somalia, but it was nevertheless an attack on the despotic Somali state, even in its weak presence as warring factions in Mogadishu. Many Somalis supported this attack, and hoped it would bring a measure of democracy to the country. When the American troops arrived Somalians thought the warlords would be arrested, but instead the warlords were embraced by the US representative and "gained a spurious legitimacy as political leaders," (Patman, 1995:104). Initially violence was used hesitatingly against the warlords because no other sources of political legitimacy was found. As it turned out nobody in the international community

behind the intervention force really wanted to “run” Somalia, i.e. to take a direct long-term responsibility for helping the Somalis establish power structures not based on naked violence and intrigue.

This made the use of violence, like the hunt for Mohammed Farah Aideed, random and in the end meaningless. On October 3, 1993, 18 US soldiers died in a battle with warlord Mohammad Farah Aideed's guards. During the hunt for Aideed more than hundred Somalis, including women and children, were killed (Makinda, 1993:12). The American military's use of helicopter gunships and high-tech firepower in suburban environment was bitterly criticised by leaders of other national contingents in the UNOSOM force as "disproportionate, inaccurate and politically counter-productive." (Patman, 1995:109). During the whole UN-operation in Somalia more than 100 peacekeepers were killed. In the end everybody wanted to get out and put the blame on somebody else for achieving so little; significantly “the military intervention launched in December 1992 played virtually no role in conquering the famine.” (de Waal, 1996:140). Aideed was not caught, indeed he was once more accepted as a political leader and flown by the US military to renewed, and useless, peace talks in Addis Ababa. On July 24, 1996, he was wounded in faction fighting in Mogadishu and he died on August 1, 1996. His son Hussein followed him as clan-leader; ironically he is a former US marine.

The Somali complex emergency precipitating the UN intervention was fuelled by a long arms build-up on the Horn of Africa numbering millions of light weapons, thousands of tanks and other heavy weapons and hundreds of sophisticated aircraft (Clapham, 1995:77). The territoriality of power in the Somali state in many ways resembled the Afghan state: the national boundary was the result of somebody else's (colonial) violence and the national space, a historic amalgam of two territories, British Somaliland and Italian Somalia, was ready to break apart. The Somali ethnic space incorporated 3,6 million in Somalia (1980) and a diaspora of more than one million Somalis in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti.<sup>63</sup> No democratic polarisation of power between state and citizens took place either in the first independent government 1960-69 or under Siad Barre 1969-91. Instead power was concentrated at the front of the clan-house. The Somali writer Nuruddin Farah pointed to the important gender aspect of the civil war, where men's fighting only is

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<sup>63</sup> Somalia unsuccessfully tried to extend the international borders to incorporate parts of the Somalian diaspora in Ethiopia and Djibouti in armed conflicts in 1960-61, 1963-64, 1976-77, 1977-85 and 1987.

one aspect of a patriarchal rule of women. Women of Somalia were subjected both to the men's rule in the clan-house and to the men's war between the clan-houses.

"Somali clans are based on male bonding, reaffirming the power of men over women. This explains why women interpret the current community-based mutinies that characterize current Somali politics in ways antithetical to views held by men. Where men mystify politics, glorifying their role in it, women are distrustful of the warring and peacemaking processes. Women are aware of the importance of the multiplicity of connections the warring communities have, seeing themselves now as mothers to children of one family, now as daughters of another, and on remarriage, as mothers to offspring from yet another lineage. The men remain true to their father's ancestral identity, the women do not."<sup>64</sup>

With the fall of Barre in 1991 internecine fighting escalated between the clan-based factions. The Somali National Movement reactivated the old colonial border and declared a secession of the northern region as the Republic of Somaliland. In the south clans loosely united as the Somali Patriotic Front and the United Somali Congress fought for control over the capital gutting and dividing it in the process. Mogadishu, like Kabul in Afghanistan, was the embodiment of the Somali state and anybody occupying the houses of the state in Mogadishu was the state of Somalia.<sup>65</sup>

"In the final analysis, however, while the UN "humanitarian" intervention in Somalia was poorly conceived and mistake-ridden, it failed ultimately because of the truculent and myopic leadership of a dozen or so Somali warlords. Having started the civil war which ravaged the country and the lives of so many of its people, these power-hungry faction leaders spurned the opportunity to make peace under UN auspices." (Patman, 1995:114)

In the end the question is how, and with what mandate from the Somali population, the international community, itself divided with many agendas, could side-track the warlords.<sup>66</sup> To move in and save a population from its own despots is a fundamental challenge to the political wisdom and military staying power of the international community staging an intervention civil war. Unfortunately the Somali intervention civil war did not produce the blueprint which many had hoped for such ambitious interventionist practice, made possible by the unique use of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

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<sup>64</sup> Nuruddin Farah, The Women of Kismayo. Power and protest in Somalia. *Times Literary Supplement*, Nov 15, 1996.

<sup>65</sup> See John Marakis, *Ethnic Conflict and the State in the Horn of Africa* 1994: pp 220.

<sup>66</sup> A perceptive discussion of the effort by the EU to do precisely this in Somalia is: Hippel, 1997.



# 9 |

## AIR- AND SEABORNE WEAPONS: INTERVENTION CIVIL WAR IN BOSNIA, 1994 -1995

Intervention civil war was defined above as a cross-border attack deploying air- and seaborne weapons by a UN-mandated consortium of states on a state fragmented by civil war. Intervention civil war is a reactive escalation of an ongoing civil war (whether of intifada, guerrilla or frontal type) claiming in excess of one thousand battle-deaths per year including those killed by air- and seaborne weapons. Preventive action can be proactive, and will have less than a thousand casualties per year.<sup>67</sup>

Intervention civil war is intervention in a nominally sovereign state by outside forces where the meaning of violence is inverted from invasion to legitimate intervention. This is possible if the UN declares that the precipitant situation constitutes a serious threat to the human rights and survival of a population as well as to international peace and security. Interventions have so far been against collapsed states (i.e. Somalia) or against states with ambiguous authority (i.e. Bosnia-Herzegovina/Republika Srpska). The world has not yet seen a hostile intervention against a functioning, sovereign state. Intervention in Kosovo against the will of the Serbian government could be the first case of a direct breach of sovereignty by a UN mandated consortium, while intervention by NATO without a mandate would be a serious disruption of international law, i.e. an invasion.

Intervention civil war blurs the distinction between intra-state war and inter-state war in two movements: first by imploding sovereignty, an internal collapse of the state interpellating the national territory; second by exploding sovereignty, transgressing from the outside the sovereignty of a state by subjecting it to unwanted, but intervention deemed legitimate by the international community. It

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<sup>67</sup> See the diagram of 'typology of violent conflict with air- and seaborne weapons' in Chapter one.

should not be forgotten that from the point of view of the international community the state may have collapsed, leaving a vacuum in the global system of nation states; from the point of view of the population, however, they are still ruled even if it is by arbitrary and despotic warlords in conditions of warfare and gross insecurity; as in Somalia.

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia has brought home maybe more than any other post-1989 conflict the complexity of civil wars, and exposed the poverty of existing theories of war, peace, security, and states in dealing with them. Håkan Wiberg from COPRI once remarked that a person trying to explain the disintegration of Yugoslavia without referring to at least ten major causes either must be a propagandist or a novice. My purpose here is not an attempt to explain or trace the war in the former Yugoslavia. I will only mention two episodes that make it possible, perhaps, to glimpse the still cloudy military horizon of intervention civil war.

The frontal civil war breaking up Yugoslavia became an intervention civil war when the international community intervened early 1992 in Croatia and in Bosnia later in 1992. The UN mission in Macedonia was a separate preventive action. Direct deterrent use of air- and seaborne weapons began with naval blockade of the former Yugoslavia and declaration of no-fly zone over Bosnia in October 1992; coercive use of air power began on a very small scale in April 1994 and massively in September 1995.

### **1. The Sarajevo Market I & II.**

On February 5, 1994, in the third year of the war and after atrocity following atrocity one particular bomb exploding at the Sarajevo market square prompted a revision of strategy. Reportedly killing 68 people it was insignificant in a war with more than 200.000 deaths, but it bore the mark of terrorism and charged the discourse of the war with its obscene statement. What the bomb said was: the United Nations' Protection Force is useless, impotent and utterly unable to protect the civilian population of Sarajevo! It brought the well known contradiction between demands and mandate of the UNPROFOR to a head.<sup>68</sup> It was an unbearable humiliation, produced by the well-tested, powerful, and cheap terrorist generator of meaning.

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<sup>68</sup> The UN military commander in Bosnia had asked for 34.000 troops. By March 1, 1994 only 5.000 out of 7.600 troops were deployed. (Solli, 1996:12)



France immediately called for the use of air power against the besiegers of Sarajevo. Two days later on February 7, Boutros-Ghali requested air support from NATO, and five days after the bomb, on February 10, NATO issued an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs: withdraw all heavy weapons from a twenty kilometre exclusion-zone around Sarajevo within ten days, or place it under UNPROFOR control - or it will be destroyed by air strikes. At the same time general Rose negotiated a cease-fire agreement in Sarajevo, and after February 17 a Russian battalion was redeployed to Sarajevo. All these moves brought an end to the bombardments of Sarajevo, but not to the siege nor to the war. The ultimatum worked in Sarajevo, but with less success shortly afterwards. In Goradze Nato carried out the first real-world, air-to-surface strikes in its history on April 10-11, but the Serbs had quickly sensed that the political will to a follow-up on the ground had petered out, and the air strikes were largely ineffectual, and later in Bihac the use of air power was a failure because of 'asymmetrical response' i.e. hostage-taking and hindering of humanitarian aid.

Eighteen months later, on August 28, 1995, another artillery piece, allegedly fired by Bosnian Serbs, hit the market in Sarajevo, killing 41 persons this time and wounding more than 80 persons. During the period between the two attacks on the market violence had firmly established the new ethno-states. The UN had been forced to leave Croatia and subsequently the United States had discretely approved the violent expulsion of the whole Serb population from Kraina. Also in Bosnia the Serbs was on the retreat: between August 1, and October 1, 1995 they lost app. 30% of the territory they previously controlled (Solli, 1996:8); the continued siege of Sarajevo was unlikely to break the Bosnian Muslim control of the city. On the other hand, no force available to the Bosnian Croats and Muslims was likely to roll back Republika Srpska completely. In this situation the terrorist provocation exploded in an environment different from 1994, but again a clear-cut act of terror proved to be a terribly powerful generator of meaning.

Only 36 hours after the bomb detonated NATO retaliated with two days of heavy air strikes against Serb positions around Sarajevo. They were resumed on Sep. 6, when the Serbs threatened the French UN commander in Bosnia and continued for two weeks. 3115 sorties were used to attack and support operations against 48 pre-selected targets in Bosnia. A total of 1026 munitions were delivered including 708 precision munitions (Solli, 1996:66). On September 14, US negotiator Richard Holbrooke met Radovan Karadzic and Mladic. After 14 hours of negotiations the Bosnian Serbs agreed to lift the siege of Sarajevo. This led to the peace negotiations at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, cease-

fire in Bosnia October 5 and signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement on November 21, 1995.

## 2. The asymmetry of intervention civil war weapons

The weapons of intervention civil war are asymmetrical in two ways: (i) the asymmetry of weapons available to the state attackers and state defenders; (ii) the asymmetry of land-based and air-borne weapons.

A threshold had been crossed with the use air and seaborne borne weapons. But when? Clearly already in the very first stages of the intervention with the use of aircrafts for transport of UN-troops and delivery of humanitarian aid, and monitoring the no-fly zone.<sup>69</sup> From Operation Deny Flight enforcing the no-fly zone from April 1993 to Operation Deliberate Force bombing the Serb positions in September 1995 there was a gradual extended use of air power in reaction to a developing complex situation. The NATO-fighters were a sign of the new equation of forces - the world against an illegitimate state. From the point of view of civil wars, airborne weapons reintroduced a crucial *asymmetricality*. While intifada and guerrilla wars are asymmetric in favour of the defending state, and there can be a rough symmetry between the attackers and the defending state in a frontal civil war, the defending state in an intervention civil war is fundamentally technologically and socially inferior to the attacking international consortium. Still, the defending state can have a superior *political will* to fight, which it can use against the attacking party with ruthless 'asymmetrical response'.

States participating in a UN-mission will for good reasons be extremely reluctant to have their own soldiers killed. Pictures like Farah Aideed's men dragging a dead American soldier through the streets of Mogadishu or Mladic taking UN-personnel hostage, may swing the public opinion in the soldiers' home countries into saying no to intervention in other people's civil wars. That amounts to saying no to use of available force against an inferior opponent, which, however, is perceived as no threat to own, home security.

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<sup>69</sup> UN Security Council Resolution # 781 of October 9. On October 14, NAC authorised the operation Sky Monitor. Operation Deny Flight was initiated April 12, 1993. A total of 23.021 fighter sorties were executed; yet only once was Serbian planes shot down. Feb. 28, 1994 four small Galeb jets attacking Bihac from Kraina were shot down by US F-16C fighters. (Solli, 1996:24,27)

Grave breaches of law of international armed conflict, genocide and preservation of state borders...was never sufficient to compel [the international community] to do whatever was necessary to bring the conflict to an end." (Gow, 1995:80)

In spite of the terrible intensity of the destruction, suffering and displacement of the population the intervention forces in the former Yugoslavia even did not use all the air power they *had* deployed to stop the war. James Gow noted in 1994 that on the airstrike-ultimatums in Goradze and Bihac,

"Crucially, all three instances in which air power was used made clear that it was vital to have suitable personnel on the ground. Exploiting the ultimatums based on aerial threats was inevitable manpower intensive." (Gow 1995:90)

In his analysis of UN and NATO air power in Bosnia, Per Erik Solli returns time and again to problems arising from the discrepancy between the overwhelming NATO air power and the inferiority of the UN land forces relative to the Bosnian armies. There was no coercive options between infantry and jet fighters (before the Rapid Reaction Force was deployed late 1995), and this narrowed down the *politically* feasible use of force.

"A major problem was that no cohesive doctrines and pre-established concepts existed when NATO air operations were undertaken in support of the UN peacekeeping mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Solutions were ad hoc but revolutionary for the UN and NATO." (Solli, 1996:6)

Revolutionary was in particular the rethinking of air strategies developed to fight interstate war, to fit civil wars. Perhaps the most difficult aspect turned out to be the handling of the essentially political limits to the deployment of overwhelming air power. However superior NATO air power was to all Bosnian forces, there was very narrow limits to the use of violence imposed by the extremely high political costs in the intervention force's home countries of *own* casualties and the consequent high vulnerability to 'asymmetrical response'. Two strategic responses seems to have developed to this impasse which is a general problem not confined to the conflict in Bosnia: an air strategy and a land strategy.

The political reality of the home-front makes the use of air power more attractive than the use of manpower on the ground for the intervention forces. The question is, however, if not the high-tech capabilities of modern air power is seductive. 'Decapitation' by 'smart-bombing' has for some politicians become a cure-all in international crises doing what many believed had to be done by vulnerable infantry troops. In a detailed analysis of air war the leading US expert on air

strategy Robert A. Pape argues against the belief in 'decapitation', expressed amongst others by John A. Warden, Air Staff's Deputy Director of Plans for Warfighting Concepts, and one of the architects of the "Instant Thunder" air war against Saddam Hussein in 1991.<sup>70</sup> Pape writes,

"The key question is not whether air power has become extremely powerful but whether it has become so powerful that it can decide international disputes, not simply without costly ground campaigns but even without deployment of any credible ground threat. The answer is no. [...] Decapitation's worst feature, however, is not its ineffectiveness but its seductiveness. Decapitation advocates promise to solve conflicts quickly and cheaply with few aircraft, little collateral damage, and minimal or no friendly casualties. History shows that air power can coerce but not without a lot of it and a lot of ground power to back it up. Western political leaders should resist the decapitation temptation." (Pape, 1996:211,253)

This assessment fits well with the lesson from Bosnia, and points to the need for intervention forces in civil war to be equipped adequately for land war, i.e. with APCs and heavy weapons to make a gradual and fine-tuned coercion possible (as the IFOR was). But most of all, it points to the essentially political nature of civil war, which sets the limits for use of violence by the intervention forces. Only a reasonable plan and a long-term *political* commitment could change these limits, witness the Dayton agreement. The confusion and lack of political vision in Somalia, on the other hand, dissipated the impact of violence applied by the hope restorers even though their use of air power in terms of the direct casualties they inflicted was higher than in Bosnia. This double asymmetry appears to be an important characteristic of intervention civil war and indicates its military horizon

### **3. The attacker in intervention civil war**

In intervention civil war there are basically two attackers: the original internal attacker and a subsequent external attacker. Intervention civil war is thus at least a triangular conflict: the defending state and an internal and an external attacker. The ambiguous features of the external attacker in Bosnia will briefly be

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Warden, 1996 for his enthusiastic advocacy of skipping "serial attacks" on the enemy's front troops, and instead to launch a "parallel" high-tech, high precision, information dense and rapid air power attack on the enemy system from the inside "When one views the enemy as a system and when one has the technical wherewithal to strike any place in the enemy system, it clearly makes sense to begin at the inside and work to the outside only as required." (Warden, 1996:217)

considered; the problem of who was the defending state in Bosnia will be addressed below.

How to combine coercive intervention in civil wars with national sovereignty is a major legal problem, which has not found its solution yet. There is a vast literature on the question of humanitarian intervention in general,<sup>71</sup> and on the issues of peacekeeping/peace-enforcement in particular.<sup>72</sup> Forced by complex emergencies a tentative modification of international law is currently developing, where 'humanitarian' defence of human rights and international security under certain conditions have been allowed to override national sovereignty; this ongoing development is spelled out in the UN security council resolutions among others on Libya, Iraq, Bosnia, and Haiti.<sup>73</sup> To gain international legitimacy the intervention must have a UN mandate, without this, intervention will be invasion.

In practice intervention will be executed by a consortium of states. Based on the experience of Yugoslavia James Gow and others argue against a strict dualism of either peacekeeping or peace enforcement. Gow adopts the term 'peace assertion', which reflects the political ambiguities of going halfway into peace enforcement without escalating into war fighting, but with a capacity to sometimes enforce compliance (Gow, 1995:77). This is nevertheless a substantial escalation of violence up to "mid-size" forces of 20-50.000 from the traditional small peacekeeping with forces of only 1-2.000. The step up to the 100.000 plus necessary for full-blown enforcement operations is still in the future.

More problematic than obtaining international legitimacy for intervention is how to secure local legitimacy. Intervention in a ongoing civil war cannot be peacekeeping as there is no peace to keep; any action will effect the conflict and make impartiality very difficult to sustain. However, impartiality cannot be the ideal

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<sup>71</sup> One researcher in the field counted 1800 titles on humanitarian intervention; Weiss, 1997. For introductions cf. Knudsen, 1995; Eknes and McDermott, 1994 .

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Eide (co-editor of the journal *International Peacekeeping*), 1995; Jakobsen, 1998.

<sup>73</sup> Resolution # 731 on the Lockerbie-bombing, charging Libya for responsibility, and #748 demanding the extradition of two suspected men from Libya; resolution #678 mandating USA to lead operation Desert Storm against Iraq, and #678 stipulating the peace-conditions including the no-fly zones in south and north Iraq; resolutions #836 and #958 on the safe havens in Bosnia, and #808 and #827 on the international court on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia; and finally resolution #940 authorising member states to intervene in Haiti against the unlawful government.

for intervention in a civil war. A majority of the population in the attacked state must be found accepting the intervention as legitimate because it enforces peace against the interests of groups maintaining and benefiting from the conflict. How to ascertain popular, local mandate will be difficult because in situations where peace assertion/enforcement is relevant, the population will often be terrorised and silenced with maybe only a few exiled voices audible to the outside world. If a majority of the population is actively against external intervention it will become a hostile invasion regardless of a UN-mandate and the peace enforcement effort will revert to interstate war.<sup>74</sup>

UNPROFOR was designed to support by armed force different forms of non-coercive humanitarian intervention, sustain populations under siege and put a brake on ethnic cleansing. Despite the fact that some heavy weapons were deployed in the UN forces, it was never meant to do peace enforcement. The most contradictory aspect of UNPROFOR's mandate concerned the protection of the six 'safe areas' in Bosnia. It tried to protect Muslims against Serbs, but in a manner which had no long-term perspective and inadvertently put the Muslims in immediate danger. UNPROFOR was taking sides with a half-hearted mandate. We know now that the safe areas was never meant as a serious plan. The Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, in 1993 chairman of the EU council, Mr. Niels Helveg Petersen later told a Danish newspaper,

"But the decision on the safe areas was absolutely wrong, empty rhetoric without action. The UN Secretary General was quite right in saying that to safeguard the safe areas he needed more than 35.000 men, without them the decision gave no meaning. But these troops never came - in Srebreniza only some 80 Dutch were deployed to secure the area and of course were they routed. Indeed it was ridiculous."<sup>75</sup>

The international community had recycled Bosnia's Titoist borders as the country's new international boundaries and legal signposts for the intervention, but inside the new nation violence had created real and different territories. A procedure

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<sup>74</sup> This almost happened for the Ecomog-operation in Liberia. The complexities of peacekeeping in such an environment is described in Adelke, 1995.

<sup>75</sup> "Men beslutningen om de sikre zoner var helt forkert, tom retorik uden handling. FN's generalsekretær sagde ganske rigtig, at hvis de sikre zoner skulle være sikre, skulle han bruge over 35.000 soldater, ellers gav beslutningen ingen mening. Men de soldater kom aldrig - ved Srebreniza var der omkring 80 hollændere til at beskytte zonen og selvfølgelig blev den løbet over ende. Det var jo latterligt." (*Jyllandsposten*, December 30, 1996).

of cease-fire, demilitarisation, civilian reconstruction and development, and finally national elections were designed to launch the new Bosnian state structure and erase the ethnic fronts which de facto divided the territory. In the opinion of a Norwegian security-expert, by March 1996 there was a hesitant shift in the IFOR from military peacekeeping to a state-building perspective. The hope was to influence the Bosnians to confront their problems by non-violent means and to do that it was supposed crucial to kick-start a local civilian development. This involved two major tasks for the international force in Bosnia: securing 'macro security' by blocking the return to a military option for the parties, and 'micro security', i.e. provision of basic law and order functions to civilian society. NATO realised in the spring of 1996,

“that the alternative to mission creep was mission erosion which would lead to mission failure...  
If you cannot evolve you will become irrelevant... a holistic success criteria was emerging...  
The international community must remain in the loop but shall try to make itself unnecessary.”<sup>76</sup>

To 'remain in the loop' and yet become unnecessary remained a noble contradiction and a tacit acceptance of the fact that a new state had been created by violating all international norms. Misha Glenny noted on the eve of the first post-war elections in Bosnia,

"Notwithstanding the protest of its architects to the contrary, the Dayton Agreement sets the final seal on the principal aim of those who started and prosecuted these wars: the permanent transfer of populations, with national groups established on their own territory... The presence of three armies in the tiny state... specifically recognised by the Bosnian-Croat Federation Agreement of March 1994 and the Dayton Agreement, precludes the possibility of Bosnia becoming a unified country." (Misha Glenny, "Why the Balkans Are So Violent", in *The New York Review*, September, 1996).

#### **4. The attacked state in intervention civil war**

Already at an early point did the war change from a frontal civil war inside Yugoslavia to a double-layered conflict. Two substantial Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia separated from Serbia created a triangular interstate conflict between Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia, and two linked frontal civil wars, one inside Croatia and one inside Bosnia. Both the internal and external actors in the conflict could then shift politically between civil war and interstate war according to what level of the

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<sup>76</sup> Espen Barth Eide, personal communication from a NSU-Europe-seminar in Florence, April 1996

conflict at any moment promised a tactical advantage. Legally the intervention was supporting the internationally recognised state of Bosnia-Herzegovina to end the frontal civil war on its territory. Yet, it can be argued that there was a state de facto attacked by the UN-force.

“The main axis of [the] international policy was the suppression of the conflict.. in particular the ...Serbian [effort] to create the borders of a new entity in which only Serbs would live.” (Gow, 1995:81).

But what kind of state was the ‘entity’? And where was this state?

#### **(a) The capital.**

A comparison with the civil war in Afghanistan may illuminate the problem. For the sake of contrast I may paint the political structures of Afghanistan a little too pre-national autocratic and of Yugoslavia a little too participatory national. In Afghanistan the drive of the frontal civil war was towards Kabul the capital, but in Yugoslavia it was in the *opposite* direction away from the capital, from Belgrade to Sarajevo and then to Pale (and lately to Banja Luka). In Afghanistan the war was an escalation of coups, amplified insanely by the weapons glut after the guerrilla war against the Soviet invasion. The result was frontal civil war fought at the front of town space amongst the warlords over rule of the capital, the territory bestowing the privilege of rule. This was never the situation in ex-Yugoslavia, there was no war in Belgrade and the siege of Sarajevo probably never was meant to install Karadzic as the warlord of Sarajevo but to destroy the city as a symbol of a Muslim, non-Serbian ethnicity as far as possible. The frontal civil war in Bosnia was fought amongst national armies, at the front of ethnic space about rule over the land. It was fought for the privileged territory of the pure population.

I cannot therefore agree completely with Bogdan Denitch’s interpretation,

"The current wave of nationalism strikes me as the revenge of the provincial language and history teachers and all who insist that they must preserve that which is specific to their nation. The war in Bosnia is obviously also an urbicide - cities have been relentlessly bombed into shambles. This is the revenge of the local red-necks who have always hated the cities. The cities were massive intermarriage and denationalisation take place, where various national groups mix and make friends, where women enter professions, where the young reject tradition. They are seats of political authority and the source of modernity. The villagers have always hated and envied the cities and this war permits the destruction of these dangerous places." (Denitch, 1994:184-85).

He mixes, I think, three different contradictions, ethnic-pure vs. ethnic-impure, rural-traditional vs. urban-modern, and provincial-subject vs. capital-ruler, of



which only one applies to Bosnia. The other two would apply to Kampuchea and Afghanistan respectively. The Bosnian destruction of the cities was not, I think, a revenge of the countryside on the cities as cities, it was not a Khmer Rouge-like destruction of the urban, of *urban functions*, of trade, industry, money, academic knowledge, but on the ethnicity of people living in the city. What characterised the inter-Yugoslav razing of cities was their fundamental *cultural-ethnic* aim. Remember that a part of Sarajevo all along the siege was part of the ethnically pure Republika Srbska. The attack on the towns in Bosnia including the vile sport of targeting places of worship was a struggle at the ethnic-essentialist front, not the town-functional front. Of course, the ethnic front crossed both the rural and the urban landscape, and towns could differ ethnically somewhat from the surrounding countryside. When the Serbs shelled Sarajevo or the Croats ravaged Mostar it was about dividing the land ethnically. Unlike Pol Pot they did not fight to annihilate all the functions that constitute a town, and unlike the Afghans bombing Kabul they did not try to possess the space privileged with all the functions that constitute a town, especially rule. Neither Serbs, Croats nor Bosnian Muslims were pre-modern city-haters. And neither of them had a problem declaring a provincial town their new capital. Why?

#### **(b) The ethnic border**

They could move their capital because the site of the Republika Srbska was the human bodies of the Bosnian Serb *narod*. They could be living in the city or in the countryside, they could be living in the capital or in the province, Republika Srbska was everywhere the *narod* was. Of course, given the ethnic logic of the *narod*, it was a contradiction-in-terms with several Serb states. From this point of view, the Bosnian Serbs were a diaspora population, and following this idea they should enter a Greater Serbia together with the Croatian Serbs, but that was unacceptable to the international community. Not least because this could lead to an even worse war over diaspora groups in Macedonia involving Albania, Greece and Bulgaria.

Yet, ethnic homogeneity as such was no problem, it was how to get it. Slovenia was lucky enough to have a very homogenous population at the eve of independence, *and* Titoist borders. Had this been the case for Republika Srbska it would probably have had international recognition today. The status of the borders and hence the sovereignty of the Yugoslav successor states, was all-important for the international reactions to the war. "Within a month of the war's outbreak, Croats had become completely committed to the defence of their republic's borders *as*

*defined by Tito's Yugoslavia.*" (Glenny, 1992:116; emphasis added). Use of violence to defend an established international border was legal, while use of violence to create a *new* border was illegal. The German logic was if the Titoist borders were elevated to international borders the JNA-Serb aggression against Croatia would be invasion of another country and thus illegal. The tricky point was to convert all internal Titoist border into international borders. Hans-Dietrich Genscher just lumped them together without explanation in his fateful letter to Perez de Guellar, December 13, 1991, where he refused to stop Germany's impending recognition of Croatia.

"Ich darf darauf hinweisen, dass für Europa nach der Schlussakte von Helsinki und der Charta von Paris gilt, dass die Grenzen unverletzlich sind und nicht mit Gewalt geändert werden dürfen. Die EG hat deshalb die Respektierung der inneren und äusseren Grenzen Jugoslawiens gefordert." (cit. from the Danish edition of Glenny, 1993:188; not in the first English edition)

The Bosnian Serbs had no borders left over from Tito; there was no administrative border ready to be used as a border for Republika Srpska and the Serbs were spread in Bosnia. When Bosnia became independent in April 1992, inside its federal borders it was by default: not Croatia, not Serbia but also not ethnically 'Bosnian'. Democrats in Sarajevo celebrated this as a virtue, as the last space free from ethnic bigotry. But Sarajevo cosmopolitanism never got a chance to develop into a democratic Bosnian nationalism. No polarisation of power between state and citizens got time to develop before war broke out on the eve of independence, March 22, 1992. When the Bosnian Serbs (helped by JNA forces and Serbian militias like Arkan's) attacked the new Bosnian state Sarajevo was violently reduced to a 'Muslim' state at war with a 'Serb' state (and on-and-off with a 'Croat' state). All violence was concentrated along the front of ethnic space.

Yet, in his valuable first-hand report on the fall of Yugoslavia Misha Glenny discounts ethnicity as a factor behind the war,

"To a large degree, the wars of the Yugoslav succession have been nationalist in character. They are not ethnic conflicts, as the media would often have it, as most of those doing the killing are of the same ethnos... it is the awful recognition that these primitive beasts on the other side of the barricade are their brothers which has led to the violence assuming such ghastly proportions in Bosnia. The only way the fighters can deal with this realization is to exterminate the opposite community." (Glenny, 1992:168-169)

To me ethnicity does not imply that people are intrinsically different, ethnically or otherwise, but that they think they are, and express this believed

difference in an exclusive, essential relation between them and the land. Nationalism can be like that, but it depends on the character of the state. Glenny quotes a report by Andrej Gustincic from Foca, a small town just gutted by Serbs, which illustrates the ethnic front very well,

“‘Do you see that field?’ asks a Serbian woman, pointing to a sloping meadow by the Drina river. ‘The jihad (Moslem Holy War) was supposed to begin there. Foca was going to be the new Mecca. There were lists of Serbs who were marked for death,’ the woman says, repeating a belief held by townspeople and gunmen. ‘My two sons were down on the list to be slaughtered like pigs. I was listed under rape.’ None of them have seen the lists but this does not prevent anyone from believing in them unquestioningly.” (ibid., p.166)

The meadows of Foca could no longer be shared by Serbs and Muslims; the front of ethnic space traversed them, violently contested.

After four years of ferocious fighting, 200.000 killed, more than 2 million refugees and a chilling list of crimes against humanity the Titoist borders remained with only one exemption. In Bosnia alone a new post-Tito border had survived the Dayton peace. Republika Srpska was a fact on the ground if not a recognised sovereign state. The frontal civil war between Sarajevo and Pale produced a *new* and an *ethnic* border, that is why the Karadzic's statelet has been so unacceptable to the world. Republika Srpska is a pariah state but still a real existing state of some kind and like all states interpellating its population inside borders drawn by violence.

In the pre-national case of Afghanistan I argued that the state was embodied in the capital and not in the citizens. To win the frontal civil war then meant winning Kabul, but *not* to 'ethnically cleanse' the state. The case of Bosnia was radically different because the state was embodied in the ethnic border *and* the citizens (state power was ethnicized). To win the frontal civil war in this case meant violently creating an ethnic border *and* 'cleanse' the population.

### **(c) The *statelet***

It has become fashionable to speak of 'collapsed states'; Robert D. Kaplan used this term to describe a threatening world of spreading diseases, rampant international crime, urban meltdown and escalating civil wars, all just a few hours on a plane away from the West. (Kaplan, 1994) The perception of collapse has been echoed in terms like "junk nations" by Gidon Gottlieb in Newsweek, November 1995, or "bandits-in-power" by Edward N. Luttwak in TLS June 16, 1995. However, the notion of collapse is not entirely accurate.

There are no quantitative limits in time and space as to what counts as a nation state. Andorra and China are nation states; Charles Tilly proposed a month as the minimum life span of a 'state', i.e. a power block wielding state power. (Tilly, 1993:9) Qualitatively the same criteria are relevant for large and minute nation states: the capacity to enforce a national border, separating internal interpellation and external violence. Civil war can reach a stalemate of ongoing violence fragmenting the state into several fuzzy 'entities'. I suggest to call them 'statelets'. Statelets might be very small and short-lived, and in every way deficient after the historical norms for nation states, but still they exist in reality, and interpellates the lives of people unlucky enough to live within their borders. On closer inspection most cases of collapse turn out to be states fragmented into extremely complex and fluid systems of ruling groups which at a distance looks absolutely collapsed.<sup>77</sup>

A *statelet* maintains some kind of short-term internal interpellation of the population on its territory, but it enjoys no external recognition. The minute it gets recognition by the international community it is on as a nation state, no matter of its size. The difference then, between a nation state and a statelet is not violently drawn borders and the power to interpellate the population, even if it may be of short duration, but the lack of recognition from *other* states. Statelets can survive for some moments without recognition from the international community only in the interstices of the world of nation states, in the temporary fissures of fragmenting states. Fragmentation is not a state-less situation, but a situation where authority is becoming too small, too contested, and too short-lived to count as a viable, 'non-collapsed' state. The notion of collapse is essentially normative and it is problematic to use 'collapse' descriptively.

At a conference on the security of southern Africa, Brigadier Richard Ruwodo from Zimbabwe said, only half jokingly, that Mozambique had for all practical purposes collapsed, and it would be better for the security of the region if it was sliced up and divided amongst the neighbours. The representatives from Mozambique (Maputo) did not find the suggestion funny.

#### **(d) Ethnic cleansing and the genocidal state.**

The singularly appalling inhumanities perpetrated in the Yugoslav conflict have not been explained. Perhaps explanations of such violence is morally

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<sup>77</sup> A highly interesting and detailed account from Brazzaville of the complex order in 'the anarchy of collapse' is Kajsa Ekholm Friedman, 1995.

impossible at the level of individuals.<sup>78</sup> However, we may choose to focus on the state instead, and try and position 'ethnic cleansing' in the civil war, not as a brother-killing but as *creation of a state*.

A militia carrying out ethnic cleansing with household weapons is different from an army establishing new boundaries with heavy weapons. The army may come first, but the militia may also prepare the ground for the army and they may mix. Nevertheless, we should not confuse the two types of violence. Frontal civil war produced the new borders of the Republika Srpska statelet deploying heavy weapons, fighting for control of strategic locations along conventional fronts separating 'national' territories. But symbiotically intertwined with the frontal war was the pogrom, the cleansing, the purifying of the territory with fire. Also, ethnic cleansing must not be confused with the tactic of the scorched earth leaving nothing behind a retreating army or the effort to starve out a guerrilla army.

Because the Bosnian Serb state was defined ethnically the frontal civil war was complemented with a special kind of violence attacking every impure human body *inside* the borders, each of them the site of the fantasmatic enemy state - "The New Mecca". The most formidable enemy was in this sense not across the border but living in the disguise of 'old friends' and had to be annihilated both from amongst the living and from living memory. We may recall that this was not the case in the Afghan frontal civil war, where the site of the state was the capital, not human bodies. The Serb struggle for their ethnic state had simultaneously to be a struggle at the ethnic border for a privileged 'Serb' territory and at the house border for a privileged 'Serb' people. But they did not have to wage war against alien bodies with tanks. It could also be done by personal intimidation, exclusion from jobs, removal from homes, terror and killings executed with stones, knives, and fire. The perpetrators were seldom proper armies, but militias, gangs, frenzied groups of civilians. And the double fronts of 'ethnic' civil war is probably why they often become more bloody than international war.

It is important not to equal civil war with ethnic cleansing. The latter is an attack on the population and *not* on the state, and does not constitute civil war in itself but *murderous interpellation*. The cleansing must not be seen as state-destruction but as the warped creation of the new state. Of course, it is inflicting untold suffering and destruction upon the 'impure' human bodies and poisoning the

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<sup>78</sup> At least within the genre of an academic text; for an contemporary attempt to convey the mad meaning of murder in fiction cf. Vidosav Stevanovic: *Sneg u Atini*, Danish edition *Sne i Athen*, København: Gyldendal, 1994

future for the 'victors' for generations to come. It is the new state constructing itself through the means of Serbian militias, Rwandese *interahamwe* or Nazi auxiliaries. Such a state will seldom get a long life because purity is illusive, whereas the hunt for polluters is endless and ultimately self-consuming.

A frontal civil war fought on the ethnic front is violence doubled up: creation of new, ethnically defined state borders, plus creation of a clean, ethnically defined population; the first through use of heavy weapons, the second with the use of 'heavy discourse' creating a frightened 'pure' population ready to rescue itself by attacking the 'alien' population. This raises the very disturbing prospect of the nation state waging war *to constitute itself* on what pragmatically is part of its own population, but what from the essentialist point of view is the enemy within. From Rwanda, Mahmood Mamdani warned,

"We learnt from Europe that a nation is a cultural community living on a common territory, and that self-determination requires that it creates its own state. We forgot that, in the making of nation-states, Europe went through an entire history of ethnic cleansing... if we are to adopt the paradigm of a nation creating a state, are we prepared to follow Europe into a future of ethnic cleansing, or one of ethnic apartheid?" (Mamdani, 1996b: 34)

In the history of the world's nation states there are many examples of this murderous interpellation, but few parallel the extreme cases of Burundi and Rwanda. Unlike the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the mass killings in Rwanda and Burundi are called genocide. The UN Genocide Convention of 1948 defines genocide as "acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." (cit. in Lemarchand, 1996). Yet there is no consensus on,

"...how many have to be killed before the killings can be called "genocidal"? Where does self-defence or righteous anger end, and cold-blooded annihilation begin? Are social and political criteria to be included in a definition of the victim group? On none of these issues is there anything like a clear consensus of opinion among jurists, international lawyers, and social scientists, and even less so, of course, among the actors concerned, victims or perpetrators." (Lemarchand, 1996:3)<sup>79</sup>

*Figures?* It is difficult to set figures on a phenomena like genocide, but I would venture this suggestion: massacre is killings in tens of thousands; genocide killings in hundreds of thousands. Genocide is nearly always killings on a scale that points to the state as the perpetrator together with smaller or larger parts of the population; to me, that is the important point. It would be a very rare genocide not

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<sup>79</sup> See Harff 1986, for a short, useful introduction to the discussion of genocide as state-terrorism.

perpetrated by a state against parts of its own population, and this makes genocide the extreme case of murderous interpellation, of 'ethnic cleansing'.

*Annihilation?* Self-defence or righteous anger may cause a massacre, as we have seen it in the Muslim-Hindu cycles of violence in India, but not genocide. Genocide has in all known instances included some degree of state-planning and 'cool-blooded' premeditation.

*Victim group?* Barbara Harff argues that the Geneva-definition of genocide would leave out Pol Pot's genocide because the victims were not a group. To define an act of mass-violence as genocide cannot, she argues convincingly, depend on whether or not the victims have a common socio-political profile. It is the profile of the perpetrator, i.e. the state, that is decisive.<sup>80</sup>

Many standard compilations of war-statistics like SIPRI follow Singer and Small in their argument for excluding genocide and massacres from civil war, namely that no organised resistance is present, i.e. it is not a war. (Small, 1982:210). My argument is different. It is not a question of organised resistance (which in any case is difficult to measure). Genocide is in itself not a civil war because the state attacks its subject population; but it will often take place as part of a civil war as it did in Rwanda. The 1994 genocide-and-civil war in Rwanda constituted one

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<sup>80</sup> On Burundi, see Lemarchand 1994 and 1996; Sindaye, 1997; on Rwanda, see Mamdani (1996b); Alex de Waal, *The Genocidal State*, in *TLS*, July 1994; and the *Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda* (1996). On Kampuchea, see the travel account by the Danish author Carsten Jensen: *Jeg har set verden begynde*. His discussion in particular of the cruelty of the children soldiers is important and points to a general feature also found in many other contemporary conflicts of juvenile lack of adult compassion. Children seems to make particularly merciless soldiers; I return to this question in chapter 17 below. Jensen writes on the 'liberation' of Phom Pen by Khmer Rouge in 1975, "'Livet har lært os, at intet er sort-hvidt, og vi ved, at vi heller ikke selv er det. Men nu er børnene, de uskyldige og rene, kommet for at dømme os.'" Hvis de har tænkt sådan, må der være gået en gysen igennem Phom Pens indbyggere. For så har de kunnet regne ud hvad der ventede dem...I et samfund, der i tusind år havde været stærkt patriarkalsk, blev de[børnene] med et slag deres fædres og mødres anklagere, dommere og bødler i en og samme person. De var ikke engang ungdomsoprørere, de blev bevæbnet statsmagt, før de nogensinde havde været i opposition, og deres eget formørkede barnesind blev lov og ret og dets vilkårlige indfald eneste institution der var tilbage i et samfund der havde afskaffet alle institutioner." (Carsten Jensen, *Jeg har set verden begynde*, København: Rosinante, 1996:259,261).

historical episode of violence and the genocide must count as part of the civil war, and not be left out misrepresenting grossly what happened.<sup>81</sup>

Holocaust is seen by most specialists on genocide as the ultimate case and for some the unique case somehow by implication exonerating other genocidal regimes. But

"the psychological satisfying notion that the readiness to commit genocide was peculiar to Nazi Germany simply does not stand up in light of the evidence." (Harff,

1986:166). On the one hand it is evident that other genocidal mass-killings have

occurred in modern times from Armenia to Rwanda; on the other hand the

uniqueness setting Nazi Germany apart from modernity has been questioned with, I

think, a conclusive 'No'.<sup>82</sup> Genocide is an inherent possibility in the nation state.

Interpellation is the basic relation between state and citizen, and it includes always an element of violence. And interpellation can turn murderous, it can become ethnic

cleansing and in extreme cases explode in genocide.

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<sup>81</sup> This misrepresentation is unfortunately common. It also guided the UN Security Council in the weeks after the genocide commenced, "The decision to withdraw the bulk of UNAMIR on 21 April was taken accordingly in a context of a situation depicted by the Council as civil war with related 'mindless violence', rather than organized genocide accompanied by a smaller civil war." Joint evaluation., 1996:42.

<sup>82</sup> See Lindquist, 1992, on racism; Copjec, 1996, on radical evil and Holocaust.



# Part Three.

## To Interpret Civil War Spaces

# 10

## LINAGES OF CIVIL WAR: *STASIS, INSURGENTIA, GUERRE CIVIL*

Civil war is a self-contradictory term. How can war be civil; how can the civil be war? John Keane argues that we should drop the term ‘civil war’ in favour of ‘uncivil war’, “It would be a scandalous euphemism to call them *civil* wars... today’s battle zones are best described as *a new type of uncivil war*.” (Keane, 1996:137; italics in original). But is that a good solution? On the face of it, ‘uncivil war’ has a somewhat platitudinal ring; in a broad sense any war is ‘uncivil’, and thus the distinction between war as a general phenomenon and civil war as a particular phenomenon is lost. *Civil war, guerre civile, guerra civil, Bürgerkrieg, borgerkrig, inbördeskrig, grasjdanskij vojna*; they all keep the contradiction between civil and war. I think it is important to keep the contradiction, because it is here we find the key to what civil war is.

How does civil become war? Not by annihilating civility or the civilians, or even civilisation, but by revealing the complementarity of *civitas* and violence. To grasp the historical phenomena of civil wars it is important not just to concentrate on their terrifying, bloody, violent features. Civil war should not be equated with Hobbes' brutish stateless condition. Even the most horrible recent slaughters in Rwanda were not just that; they also revealed the *civitas* of Rwanda.

The antonym to war is not civil but peace; and the antonym to civil is not war but military: civil-military, and war-peace. Just as civil war questions the externality of war to the *civitas*, it also questions the divide of military matters from civil life. In a sharp and wonderfully wide-ranging critique of Clausewitz's thinking on war as an ethnocentric reflection of nineteenth century regimental culture with its extreme isolation of the soldier from European society, John Keegan writes,

"What [Clausewitz's 'war as the continuation of policy'] made no allowance for at all was war without beginning or end, the endemic warfare of non-state, even pre-state peoples...

In short, it is at the cultural level that Clausewitz's answer to his question, What is war?, is defective.... war embraces much more than politics: that it is always an expression of culture, often a determinant of cultural forms, in some societies the culture itself." (Keegan, 1993:11)

Not only non-state or pre-state peoples experience endemic warfare. Civil-war is a contemporary example of war fundamentally transgressing Clausewitz' notion of war as a continuation of politics, but becoming culture itself. In a messy assault civil war breaks down the water-tight separation of soldiers from civilians and ruins the notions of a polar difference between civil and military or society and war; cherished as it was, both by the regimental officer and the pacifist.

Civil war is not just violence amongst humans, individuals, but people bonded in a particular way by war. They are part of a community, and not any community, but of a state; they are interpellated persons, 'civilised' human beings being always-already part of a *civitas*.

All definitions of civil war can be summed up in three components: the parts, the splitting, and the whole.<sup>83</sup> Most modern attempts at an explanation of civil war have started with the parts (the individual rebel), proceeded to the splitting up (the rebellious assertion of an angry, frustrated, pathological, etc. individuality), but rarely spent too much energy on the whole because "society" was taken as an linear aggregate of individuals.<sup>84</sup> In my view, however, the whole should be the point of departure for an attempt to unravel the contradiction between civil and war: How can you be part of a community and at the same time wage war against it; what are the historical and structural limits to internal violence before the unity of the *civitas* breaks down?

Nation and national unity cannot be taken for granted but often are in circular arguments like the United States or England escaped undivided from their civil wars because they were strong nations. But what constitutes the cohesiveness of a national entity despite and beyond the ravage of civil war? How can the nation state be an entity when it is deeply divided by war? What is the source of the civic strength that can bond a war and keep it a civil war? And on the other hand, what

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<sup>83</sup> Or faction, war, and country: "Civil War: A war between political factions or regions in a country."; *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*. New York: Random House, 1989. Carl Schmitt defined civil war in similar simple terms: "War is armed combat between organized political entities; civil war is armed combat within an organised unit." (Schmitt, 1996:32)

<sup>84</sup> Paradigmatic is Ted Robert Gurr's first book, *Why Men Rebel*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970.

can make the bond snap and turn civil war into interstate war? Or how can a re-united entity emerge from a cessation of hostilities?

The pre-modern understanding of civil war was 'holistic'. One can discern at least three strands in the development of the concept of civil war, (i) the ancient Greek concept of *stasis*; (ii) the medieval concept of *insurgentia*, and (iii) the early modern concept of *guerre civile*. They all share the view that civil war is the breaking apart of what is meant to be together, but they differ radically on what nature of the whole was.

## 1. *Stasis*.

Aristotle meant that man was an animal living in cities, *zoon politicon*, and therefore the *polis* was the natural whole. The unity of the free men with their individual wills was expressed in the common will to defend their *polis*. The opposite to unity was *stasis*, factional fight or forms of civil war.<sup>85</sup> *Stasis* was the central concept for breaking apart the whole in Ancient Greece.

"All levels of intensity [of political struggle] were embraced by the splendid Greek portmanteau-word *stasis*. When employed in a social-political context, *stasis* had a broad range of meanings, from political grouping or rivalry through faction (in its pejorative sense) to open civil war." (Finley, 1983:105).

Carl Schmitt notes that real war for Plato was a war between Hellenes and Barbarians only, those who are "by nature enemies", whereas conflicts among Hellenes were for him discords, "*stasis*". (Schmitt, 1996:29) One famous and still moving indictment of civil war breaking apart what was meant to be together is Euripides's tragedy *Phonician Women* written around 411 BC and narrating how the brothers Eteocles and Polynices destroy their *polis* Thebes in fratricide.<sup>86</sup> This was the ultimate *stasis*. In his detailed historical investigation of *stasis* in 5th and 4th century Greece, Gehrke notes on the instrumentalities of political struggle that,

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<sup>85</sup> *Stasis* is translated into Danish in J.C. Berg's complete *Græsk-Dansk Ordbog*, København, 1864, as: "a, Opstillen; 2a, Staaen, Faststaaen; 2b, Stilling, som En indtager, Standpunkt, Plads; 2c, Tilstand, Stilling, Beskaffenhed, politisk Stilling, sædelig Tilstand; 2d, Opstand, Oprør, Partiskiften, ogsaa politisk Parti, derfor overhovedet Strid, Tvedragt, om selve det oprørske Parti; 2e, Skare." [2d, rebellion, revolt, change of party, the political party, thus strife, dissent, the rebellious party itself].

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Jacqueline de Romilly, *Phoenician Women* of Euripides: Topicality in Greek Tragedy," in *Bucknell Review*.

"Verhaftungen, Verban-nungen, Tötungen, Ent-eignungen und Verfassungs-änderungen waren die gebräuchlichsten Mittel." (Gehrke 1985:266-67)<sup>87</sup>

Later, in Rome the unity of the *civitas* was broken by *bellum civile*. One of the classical descriptions is Julius Cæsar's book *De belleum civile* about his campaign against Pompeius in the year 49 BC.<sup>88</sup> But unity was nevertheless the baseline of the *polis* or *civitas*, attainable with political wisdom and prudence in this life. Sparta had three hundred years without *stasis*. Unity was not an ideal condition only to be reached in Paradise.

## **2. *Insurgentia*.**

The medieval notion of a true community of men was not anything resembling the Greek *polis*, or the modern notion of a nation, but the kingdom of God. Before classes, before lords came upon the Earth, there existed a Paradise given by God, where all men were equal. A sermon text attributed to the radical priest John Ball, one of the leaders of the great English peasant rising of 1381 expresses this, "Whan Adam dalf and Eve span... wo was thanne a gentilman" (Hilton 1973:211)<sup>89</sup> The uprising was understood by John Ball as fundamentally re-active, an undoing of earthly wrongs and the re-creation of the true Christian community, the Paradise lost by the fall from grace and the Paradise promised by the death of Jesus Christ.

"We pray that all bonde men may be made ffre for god made all ffre wt his precious blode sheddyng." (From a petition by Robert Kett and his followers, 1549; cit. in Hilton, 1972:8).

*Insurgentia* was caused by a pre-historical divide of men into classes, and it was legitimated by the final struggle which would abolish classes and herald the ever-lasting post-historical peace. In the shape of Bauernkrieg, Jaquerie, rebellion, or revolution *Insurgentia* is of course the root of Marxist notions of class struggle

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<sup>87</sup> See also Lintott's lively account of civil wars in Ancient Greece, "In the Classical Period of the city state the centre of any *stasis* was for the most part a small group of powerful men at loggerheads with one or more other groups." (Lintott, 1982:82). Finley is rather critical of Lintott's use of the sources.

<sup>88</sup> I. M. Finley mentions the civil wars of Rome in the last years of the Republic in Finley, 1983:117.

<sup>89</sup> The relation of The English Rising of 1381 to the development of the state is considered in mine and Thomas Andersen's *History of the State*, Vol 1, p. 187-218.

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and world revolution. Expressed a bit anachronistic: 'the mother of all wars' was the war between the classes and thus the abolition of classes would guarantee an end to war.

This wonderful promise was repeated again and again by the socialist movement; Proudhon said “Le seul risque de guerre:... le pauperisme” (cit. in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, p. 610). Karl Marx said the workers had no fatherland: proletarians of all countries unite! and the Second Internationale declared in Zürich 1893,

“Mit der Aufhebung der Klassenherrschaft verschwindet auch der Krieg. Der Sturz des Kapitalismus (der historisch letzten mit einer Klassen-gesellschaft verzahnten Wirtschaftsordnung) ist der Weltfriede.” (ibid., p. 611).

Every socialist had hoped to avoid the war by invoking the international solidarity of working men destined to become cannon-fodder for the imperialists. But on August 4, 1914, the SPD voted yes to the war, and on that day, only 66 years after the Communist Manifesto, the German Kaiser could declare, “I know of no classes, only Germans!” Beyond the millions killed in World War One one victim of the war was the *insurgentia* concept of civil war. The World War killed the eschatological meaning of *Insurgentia* as the ultimate terminator of war. ‘Revolutionary’ civil war was reduced to a noble hope and a prostituted Comintern word. In Spain only two decades after 1914 civil war was the confusing label put on a terrible war where communists fought against revolutionary fascists to restore a bourgeois republic.

### 3. *Guerre Civile.*

For reasons still hotly debated amongst historians the development of the state took divergent paths from Antiquity in West, Central and East Europe. In France and England an early development of territorial states began bonding secular communities of men. In the emerging territorial states of early modern Europe civil war got or regained a meaning echoing the classical republican notion of *bellum civile*, and very different from the Christian-eschatological notion. Now whom should 'act in concert' , was not the religious, millinaristic whole of God’s children, and not yet the citizens of a nation,<sup>90</sup> but the sovereign of the realm. Civil war came

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<sup>90</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, 1970:44; where she expressly links the *polis* with the republican revolutions of modern Europe.

to be seen as a strife internal to the King's body politic, the *corpus reipublicae mysticum* elevated from subject classes below and separated from neighbouring sovereign nations.<sup>91</sup> Christine de Pizan describes it very aptly in her epistle to the French king, *Lamentacion sur les maux de la guerre civile* from 1410:

"Oh noble French princes...where is now the sweet natural blood among you...the noble knights and youth of France, all of one nature, one single soul and body, which used to defend the crown and public good, are now gathered in a shameful battle...father against father, brother against brother...and what will follow, in God's name? Famine...from which will spring revolts by the people which has been too often robbed...by soldiers, subversion in the towns because of outrageous taxes which will have to be levied...and above all, the English will obtain checkmate on the side.." (Pizan, 1410:85-87).

The conflict between peasants and nobles had nothing to do with civil war for her.

Since early modern times the concept of *guerre civile* developed as a reflection of the contested transformation of the royal sovereign into the popular sovereign: creation of citizens inside national boundaries. Two century after Christine de Pizan, Thomas Hobbes' concept of civil war was the natural condition before the social, before the community, "one against every one", where the life of man is "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short," as in savage America. (Hobbes, 1996:82ff, Chapter xiii). But when Hobbes described a situation of brutish warre it could not at the same time be a description of civil-war in a modern sense, of war within a political commonwealth. As Hobbes defined the commonwealth as a remedy against war of one against every one civil war was *before* the commonwealth; civil war *in* the commonwealth was a contradiction in terms.

"The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another... is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon an assembly of men...

This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS. This is the generation of the great LEVIATHAN." (ibid., p. 114).

Obviously, this does not explain the contradiction of civil-war *in* the state, because how can the citizen remain a citizen and yet wage war against the

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<sup>91</sup> See Ernst Kantorowitz' deeply fascinating book, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Theology*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959.

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Commonwealth? Civil war is the political limit of the state in Hobbes' sense because the *rule* of Leviathan breaks down. Carl Schmitt remarked that,

"The *protego ergo obligo* is the *cogito ergo sum* of the state. A political theory which does not systematically become aware of this sentence remains an inadequate fragment. Hobbes designated this as the true purpose of *Leviathan*, to instil in man once again "the mutual relation between Protection and Obedience"". (Schmitt, 1996:52)

Yet, exactly civil war fragments Schmitt's theory of the state, because it is a state of both protection and attack, of obedience and revolt. Twentieth century positivist philosophy of law solved the dilemma by obliterating civil war altogether. If people rebelled it was now an individual problem, not a state problem: they must be deviant, sick, too violent. It was a practical problem for the police to stop and it became a job for psychiatrists to answer why men rebel.



# 11 |

## SITUATING CIVIL WAR IN STATE-TEORY: SUBJECTIVITY, VIOLENCE, SPACE

Civil war compels social scientists to ask new questions about the state, which are pertinent also to states without civil war: What is the ‘glue’ that make citizens stick together even in deeply divided societies? Which historical forces can dissolve this glue? Where are states likely to fragment? As I have indicated in the introduction, the existing literature on civil war often has a rather limited vision, focusing on the parts and the splitting but almost completely ignoring the whole, and more often than not purely descriptive with very little interpretative power. Although the state is seen by most observers as a defining element of civil war the understanding of *the state itself* is often narrow and descriptive. I will argue that in order to understand civil war better the way to go is rethinking state-theory. A theory of civil war with an ambition of both generality and interpretative power must be ‘holistic’ and keep alive all three components: the *whole*, the *splitting*, and the *parts*.

Rephrased in a more general way, to set up a theory of civil war we have to confront our theory with the basic questions of *subjectivity* (‘the glue’), *violence* (‘the solvent’), and *space* (‘the lines of fracture’). The problems of subjectivity and of violence points to the paradox of agency and structure: how shall we grasp the subjectivity of any one person simultaneously agent of her or his own life and subject to the structures of society? How can we interpret violence as simultaneously individual acts and acts of a historical subject like the state? One direction of investigation gaining increased importance in the 1990s is to map the interaction of subjectivity and violence in *space*, to map the *spatiality* of the social phenomena of subjectivity and violence.

In the works that I will discuss briefly below, *state* territory and human *body* are taken as the two spatial poles by which to navigate the dark waters of the

agency-structure paradox. Through acts of violence the subjectivity of states and humans structure space and sequence time. My emphasis will be on structured space rather than on sequenced history, for reasons I have set out in the introduction.

However, a substantial treatment of the problems of subjectivity, violence, and space falls outside the scope of the present study, and the capabilities of the present writer! My argument will take the form of an eclectic voyage ransacking diverse disciplines for clues to the spatiality of violence on a field stretching from the human body to the state. Based on this haul of theories on subjectivity, violence and space, in the following chapter I will outline a spatial model of the state that can serve as foundation for an interpretation of civil war.

I start out on my voyage with a brief encounter with Hannah Arendt and John Keane for a restrictive definition of **1. Violence different from power**; I next stop to sample some examples of the ‘new anthropology’ treating **2. Violence as constructive**, as a constitutive aspect of society. Turning to the question of subjectivity I travel onwards for quite a distance to a neo-Hegelian position on **3. Violence creating states** where I take onboard the state as a structural subject defined by *external* violence in a system of states. My next port of call is Althusser for the concept of interpellation, **4. Violence and interpellation**, defining subjectivity *internal* to the state as a violent relation between state and citizens.

The highlight of my little journey will be, of course, visiting Foucault on the shores of **5. Violence and space**. On the question of subjectivity he seems to throw overboard the notion of the state as a central subject; secondly, he opens up the crucial question of space as a strategic field of power relations. Before ending my little excursion I make a critical detour into a currently fashionable area of thought on state-society conflicts, **6. The fatal attraction of ‘civil society’**. Finally I arrive at a preliminary and very general definition of **7. Civil war defined as attack on the state**.

## **1. Violence different from power**

To me Hannah Arendt’s distinction between violence and power is basic for any discussion of violence, and I find it very unfortunate that her essay on violence is more or less ignored by the current research (even now when other parts of her work are receiving renewed attention). In *On Violence* she wrote,

“Behind the apparent confusion [of the precise meaning of power and violence] is a firm conviction in whose light all distinctions would be, at

best, of minor importance: the conviction that the most crucial political issue is, and has always been, the question of Who rules Whom? Power, strength, force, authority, violence - these are but words to indicate the means by which man rules over man; they are held to be synonyms because they have the same function. It is only after one ceases to reduce public affairs to the business of dominion that the original data in the realm of human affairs will appear, or, rather, reappear, in their authentic diversity.” (Arendt, 1970:43),

and she continued,

”To sum up: politically speaking, it is insufficient to say that power and violence are not the same. Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power’s disappearance.” (ibid., p. 56)

With Hannah Arendt’s important distinction between power and violence, we can begin to see that violence in social affairs cannot be a continuation of power in Foucault’s sense, but rather it’s opposite. Hannah Arendt would not agree that power is “a multiform production of relations of domination” (Foucault, 1980:143), stressing as she does that power springs from “the human ability to act in concert” (Arendt, 1970:44).

For Arendt to rescue power from the non-political realm of violence is a restoration of the political project of republicanism. Throughout her book she stresses that people can act in concert and constitute a republic, and thus has a responsibility to do so. She evokes the Athenian *polis* and the Roman *civitas* and the eighteenth century revolutionaries that,

“.. had in mind a concept of power and law whose essence did not rely on the command-obedience relationship [but]... constituted a form of government, a republic, where the rule of law, resting on the power of the people, would put an end to the rule of man over man, which they thought was ‘a government fit for slaves.’” (Arendt, 1970:40)

In my estimate her distinction of power and violence not only reveals what must be the true politics of power: republicanism, as it has been developed amongst others by Jürgen Habermas; it also allows us to gauge the 'pre-discursive' structure of violence. John Keane’s definition of violence in his essay *Reflections on Violence* perfectly captures this pre- or non-discursive quality,

“Violence is the unwanted physical interference by groups and/or individuals with the bodies of others.. death is the potentially ultimate consequence of violence.” (Keane, 1996:67)

Keane adds, and I quote approvingly,

“..I want to insist on the need to preserve its [violence’s] original and essential core meaning, untainted by loose metaphorical allusions.. or unhindered by questions of motivation.. or legality.” (Keane, 1996:66)

Keane could have referred to Carl Schmitt on this point, arguing for a very similar non-discursive, or as he puts it, 'existential' definition of violence or 'combat' in his famous book *The Concept of the Political*, from 1932,

"Just as the term enemy, the word combat, too, is to be understood in its original existential sense...The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy." (Schmitt, 1996:33)

## 2. Violence as constructive

In the 1950s and 1960s Konrad Lorentz and behavioral science suggested a fundamentally ahistorical answer to the problem of violence in human affairs by reductive analogies with our animal present. In her essay *On Violence* Hannah Arendt, in my opinion, effectively demolished the behavioristic study of violence, fashionable at the time. In the early 1970s Johan Galtung became famous for locating violence in the over-all structure of society.

“I see violence as avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible.”<sup>92</sup>

Paradoxically, both the behaviouralistic and the peace research concepts of violence, despite all their polar political implications, shared a level of generality which made their efforts to explain the function of violence in human society equally unable to grasp historical specificity. Johan Galtung has since extended his already very broad definition of violence from 1969 into all-pervading ‘structural’ and ‘cultural’ forms,

“Direct violence is an *event*; structural violence is a *process* with ups and downs; cultural violence is an *invariant*, a ‘permanence’.” (*Journal of Peace Research*, vol 27, no 3, 1990, p. 291)

In my view this is the wrong way to go. While Galtung deserves credit for insisting on the social dimension of violence amidst the beastly howling of behavioral science and the prudent silence of the humanities, in his latest blown-up

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<sup>92</sup> Galtung, 1990:292; summarising his important 1969-article, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol 6, no 3, 1969.

version 'violence' has become just another word for inequality or injustice, and thus left with little historical explanatory power. The concept of violence needs to be trimmed down as proposed by Arendt, not extended, in order to interpret the specificities of violence.

Pierre Bourdieu once defined the 'unthinkable' as that which a certain world view does not let one think, but, instead, silences. "In that sense," wrote a Norwegian anthropologist, "violence has been 'unthinkable' in social and anthropological theory..." (Krohn-Hansen, 1994:382) If Galtung started with a pre-conceived conclusion: inequality in all disguises is violence, a new generation of anthropologists have started with the productive question: how does violence constitute multiple, ordered social inequalities? From a status as an ahistorical condition of human affairs either found in the human genes or in the deep invariant structure of human society violence has come to be regarded as a historically constitutive aspect of human society. This fundamental re-evaluation of violence has perhaps been most noteworthy in sociology and anthropology. In anthropology paths began to be charted through the conceptual desert separating the individual and the state in works like Pierre Clastres, 1974; Michael Taussig, 1987; Allen Feldman, 1991; Brian Ferguson, 1992; Frank Graziano, 1992; and Deborah Poole, 1994. Violence no longer could be understood solely as destruction of the social fabric but demanded serious attention as the stuff it's made of. Summing up this sea-change Deborah Poole wrote,

"Many social scientists have begun the task of rethinking [the] traditional divide between violence and social order. No longer seen as a merely destructive or "anti-social" force, violence, as a form of power, has come to be viewed as productive of subjectivities, truths, histories, and identities - productive, in short, of the social order itself." (Poole, 1994:1)

Considering this new agenda it is a surprising fact that we find no concise definition of violence in these works. Definitions of violence start off from the physical use of force against humans, but unfortunately hurry on to add discursive predicates of legitimacy. An example of such a definition of violence is proposed by Christian Krohn-Hansen in his study of violence and border-formation in the Dominican Republic,

"Unlike forms of domination defined through confirmed authority, violence may be seen as infliction of physical hurt or damage, and a special case of power in which illegitimacy and subsequent struggles surrounding legitimacy are the prime defined features; violence is necessarily associated with a number of different discourses concerning reasonableness and fairness of actions." (Krohn-Hansen, 1994:22).

The problem with this definition, as I see it, is the blurred mix of violence and power (power in Hannah Arendt's terms). The consequence of this very common conflating approach is to specify violence in discourse (legitimacy) and not in space. However, I will submit that violence is a spatial phenomena; and thus an opposite approach seems more promising to me: to understand violence we must *empty* it of meaning. What we need is a definition of violence *without* discourse, *before* discourse, in order to examine how violence constitutes the *space* available to discourse, to politics, to legitimacy, but not of discourse, politics, or legitimacy *itself*: "The surfaces - those sites, stages, and templates upon which history is constructed as a cultural object." (Feldman, 1991:2) We should ask *where* violence hit the flesh before we ask why, before interpreting how meaning creates out of violence an event, a cultural artefact. Let me add, not to be misunderstood, that no violence ever is meaning-less; the space of violence is always filled with significance, but, and this is the point I want to make, violence and significance are not the same, they are not identical. To understand them we should pull apart analytically what historical time pulls together into one event.

Allan Feldman's book on political violence in Northern Ireland is an extremely subtle and persuasive work of cultural anthropology lying bare how violence fragments the territory of Belfast into ethnic-sectarian sanctuaries separated by violent interfaces, the event of violence is what he calls a cultural artefact generating its own universe. In his view a plurality of agencies construct and deconstruct the unified individual person in multiple relations of power, dominance, and violence. But as the human 'individuality' dissolves as a possible focus for analysis, the physical presence of the human body in the violent space of Belfast becomes the locus to be analysed. "I look to bodily, spatial, and violent practices as forming a unified language of material signification." (Feldman, 1991:1) Unfortunately, but characteristic of anthropology, I am afraid, Feldman almost totally ignores how the British state (and the Irish state) frames the conflict by reflecting pressure from the system of states into the local dynamics.

Frank Graziano's analysis of the Argentine "dirty war" in a very suggestive way uncovers the violent dynamics at the point where state meets human body. Power has to touch the body to affect it: the human body is the quintessential arena of state rule, yet he cannot explain why this 'divine violence' constituted a single 'cultural artefact' confined to the territory of the state 'Argentina' and limited to some six years in the stream of time. He invests the state with a subjectivity decipherable within a Lacanian paradigm. To me, this is utterly unconvincing because it cannot account for the borders both in time and space of

the national narrative. The *lack* in Graziano's Lacanian approach is the constitution of the state as a subject.

As analysis of violence between state and citizen, however, many anthropological works on violence share with Foucault (and Lacan) an insufficient attention to the state itself. This can perhaps to some extent be explained by the development of the discipline of anthropology focusing as it used to on 'primitive', 'state-less' societies. To advance the understanding of violence we must 'bring the state back in' as Theda Skocpol urged (in another department of academia) in 1985. But how?

### **3. Violence creating states**

We need to move beyond the general question of violence as constitutive of human society to the specific question of how violence *creates* states. Two fundamentally different approaches have been followed to answer this question. The active subject of violence is either perceived as the *person* in a society of humans or as the *state* in a society of states. The former approach has been the choice of political science, sociology, and to some extent of anthropology, constituting violence in a negative mode, as *rule* internally in the state. The latter approach has traditionally been the reserve of international relations theory, constituting violence in a positive mode, as *war* externally to the state. While the space of violent society in the former approach went from minute social groups of family and neighbourhood up to the state, the space in the latter approach went from a simple friend-enemy grouping of two states up to the global society (system) of states.

Following Max Weber the functional sociological approach is to see the state from the bottom up as the apex of differentiated social and political institutions with the state as the locus of the legitimate monopoly of violence, used negatively against the violence emanating from society whether ultimately stemming from animal aggressiveness in man or social inequalities. From this perspective war is an aberration from civilised statehood, very much like violence is understood as an individual aberration in a civilised society.

A radically different genealogical approach is to view the state as a warring subject, a sovereignty-maintaining member of a state-system, and thus understand sub-state groups and institutions *top-down*, premised on the iron law of states: the distinction between friend and enemy.<sup>93</sup> One of the principal advantages of the top-

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<sup>93</sup> "The concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political...The specific political distinction to which political actions

down approach, in my opinion, is to reconnect conceptually violence external and internal to the state. 'Historical-' or 'macro-' sociologists such as Charles Tilly and Michael Mann has successfully broken the icy crust separating the global drama of states at war from the internal horror of violent groups.<sup>94</sup> Charles Tilly sees war as the essential engine of European (world?) history. His book *Coercion, Capital and States in Europe 900-1992*,

“..takes up the problem [of state formation] where Barrington Moore, Stein Rokkan, and Lewis Mumford left it... by placing the organisation of coercion and preparation for war squarely in the middle of analysis, arguing in its rasher moments that state structure appeared chiefly as a by-product of rulers' efforts to acquire the means of war; and second by insisting that relations among states, especially through war and preparation for war, strongly affected the entire process of state-formation.” (Tilly, 1992:14)

The full theoretical implications of the primacy of war takes one, in my view, logically to a neo-Hegelian notion of state subjectivity. Thomas Højrup's book *Omkring livsformsanalysens udvikling* ["Towards the development of the analysis of life-forms"] is the most elaborate, if hermetic, formulation of this neo-Hegelian anti-realist and anti-sociological standpoint yet published in Denmark. In the English summary he writes:

“From considering the state as an association of individuals, classes or institutions, based on the maintenance of internal functions in the individual society, a basic idea since Hobbes reintroduced functionalism in the social sciences, the state should rather be seen as a sovereignty-maintaining and recognised member of a state system. Instead of viewing the state from below and from inside out, it must be viewed from without and above...

Without the struggle for recognition or defensive war, there is no mutual recognition of sovereignty or state system. Without sovereignty there is no state. The state concept's other theoretical determinants, its predicates, presuppose this defence capability and from a theoretical point of view derive from it.” (Højrup, 1995:211)

Stepping from external war to internal war, the challenge for Højrup's theory then is to show how the state (the independent subject) is able to interpellate society within (the dependent subjects) *against internal resistance* in order to defend its sovereignty against competing states. How to conceptualise a clash of interests between the state and citizens or groups of citizens? The theme in Højrup's book is to present the theory of "survival of the superior defence", and

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and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy.”  
(Schmitt, 1996:19,26)

<sup>94</sup> Tilly, 1975 and 1990; Mann, 1986; Giddens, 1985.



civil war is only mentioned once in a brief sentence.<sup>95</sup> Still, his book is important for developing the controversial position that societal violence originates in the struggle for recognition between states, and not in an inter-personal biological disposition or sub-state sociological compulsion towards violence.

Analytically, in this position, the state comes before society: the state is not a product of society, but society is a product of the state. But 'the state' only in a very specific spatial meaning. Pierre Clastres, in his path-breaking work on war in primitive societies, characterises the space of a community in a fashion applicable also to states,

"The community is thus more than the sum of its groups, and this establishes it as a political unity. The political unity of the community is inscribed in the *spatial unity of the habitat*: the people who belong to the same community live together in the same place... The exclusivity in the use of the territory implies a movement of exclusion, and here the properly political dimension of primitive society as a community including its essential relationship to the territory clearly appears: the existence of the Other is immediately posited in the act that excludes him; it is against the other community that each society asserts its exclusive right to a determined territory." (Clastres, 1994:153; italics added)

Now, the point of Clastre's analysis<sup>96</sup> was to show how war in primitive society prevents the development of the state, by which he understood a community divided into Master and Subjects.

"What is a state? It is the total sign of division in society, in that it is a separate organ of political power: society is henceforth divided into those who exercise power and those who submit to it" (Clastres, 1994:165)

However, the point here is not to debate whether or not the warring primitive society was a state, but highlight how the modern state combines the spatial characteristic of primitive society and the structural feature which Clastres argued negated primitive society: it is both a spatially bonded, warring unity *and* an internally divided society. In reality, then, the state is more than a Master-Subject division; it is more than rule. It is also a space which can structure violence in a highly particular manner as positive violence (war) outside this space, and as negative violence (rule) inside this space. War is positively defining the subject of

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<sup>95</sup> "The opposite of accord is stasis, e.i. factional strife or civil war, meaning the collapse of the defence and of the state." [Det modsatte af overensstemmelse er stasis, dvs. fraktionsstrid eller borgerkrig, som er det ensbetydende med forswarets og statens sammenbrud]; Højrup 1995:154; trans. H.T.

<sup>96</sup> See also his extended analysis in *La Société Contre l'état*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974.

violence: the state, while rule on the other hand, is a negative relation: the state as a social unit preventing and repressing violence amongst subjects other than itself: the citizens. It is precisely this duality which civil war brings into focus by contesting the unity of space and the division of rule.

### 3. Violence and subjects , interpellation

Yet, to move analytically from war to state-formation is still not sufficient for developing a theory of civil war. What we need to know is how subjects inside the state can be actors in a civil war: how can the 'dependent subjects' suddenly become independent and turn against the structuralist iron-grip of the state? It may seem ironic to seek an answer to this question in the work of the arch-structuralist Althusser, nevertheless he does provide part of an answer. For Althusser *interpellation* is the process by which the state creates its subjects as subjects. He writes in his famous article from 1970, "As a first formulation I shall say: *all ideology hails or interpellates individuals as concrete subjects*." and he provides the well-known example of the policeman hailing a man on the street:

"Hey, you there!" The individual in the street will turn around. By this... he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognised that the hail was "really" addressed to him, and that "it was *really him* who was hailed."<sup>97</sup>

He becomes a subject for state because he recognises himself in the hail. This recognition is what Althusser calls ideology. "The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing." (ibid., p. 131) Now, the policeman is not hailing as an individual, he is the voice of the state, of what Althusser terms the central Subject interpellating everybody. This is a formulation of how the whole or the one-ness of the state exists; we may say that the central Subject only exists when everybody are interpellated; even the policeman is interpellated and not above the law. The ideology of the state or the idea of the nation exists only insofar as the state interpellates its subjects. In Althusser's notion of interpellation the state can hail its subjects both by ideology (in the 'ideological state apparatuses' belonging both to the public and private spheres) and repression (in the state apparatuses centrally commanded by the state).

Althusser then remarks,

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<sup>97</sup> *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. (Notes towards an Investigation)* first published in 1970; Althusser, 1994:131.

"I might add: what thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it...  
Which amounts to saying that ideology *has no outside* (for itself), but at the same time *that it is nothing but outside* (for science and reality)."  
(Althusser, 1994:130-3; italics in original)

What is the crucial point here? Not so much the science-ideology opposition, which Althusser himself stresses, but something which is obscured completely by his general concept of class struggle. The outside which ideology does not have for itself, and the reality of which it is nothing but outside, is the *violence* which in the first place creates the topography of the state. In a note Althusser defines topography as "a definite space [representing] the respective *sites* occupied by several realities: thus the economic is *at the bottom* (the base), the superstructure *above it*.." (ibid., p. 139; italics in original). Of course, a topography can be structured differently from base-superstructure. In the next chapter I shall suggest a non-abstract topography based on the relation between human body and space.

However, the crucial point is that the space of the state, of interpellation, is *limited*, and the violence creating the limits in reality, are outside of ideology, of interpellation. The policeman's hail works only inside the cultural sphere of the national community, within the reach of the law. The boundary is created by the war amongst states. Althusser locates the ultimate social contradiction in class struggle; the neo-Hegelians in the struggle between states; this allows for a much more satisfactory, I think, understanding of interpellation. It is possible to transport this notion from Althusser's theoretical environment of class struggle to a neo-Hegelian environment of a state-system totality.<sup>98</sup> As I intend to show below, the notion of interpellation can support a theory of civil war. I use, then, Althusser's concept of interpellation without buying the 'revolutionary' schema of class struggle or Althusser's ill-conceived 'Marxist theory of the class-state'.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> In spite of Althusser's express protests, "On a number of occasions I have insisted on the revolutionary character of the Marxist conception of the 'social whole' in so far as it is distinct from the Hegelian 'totality'; Althusser 1970:104-5.

<sup>99</sup> Marx himself never developed a theory of the state. In *Das Kapital* the world is abstractly taken to be one nation, because the plurality of nations was considered a condition less abstract than *Das Kapital im Allgemeinen*, the object of his critique; a point I discuss at length in my *Statens Historie. Vol 3*.

Central to my use of Althusser is his insistence on the non-identity between state and citizenry and violence as the basic condition of state-citizen relations. The state force people to become citizens, overtly violently by repression, or covertly violently by 'ideology' (I will refrain from defining 'ideology'; at this point it simply means 'not violently repressive'). Because interpellation works most of the time and the citizenry says "Yes, it is our state" the state don't have to kill. But if interpellation breaks down, and citizens say "No" and threatens the survival of the state, the state will kill in the last instance. Democracy can approximate state-citizen identity, but never remove violence as the bedrock relation between state and citizens. What is still hidden is how to unlock the paradox of the state being both external to the citizens and nothing but the totality of citizens, or put differently, the relation of state (nation, citizens) and government (state-power, state-apparatus).

## 5. Violence and space

A revolution in the scientific perception of human violence gathered momentum in the 1980s inspired by Michel Foucault. While his thinking was to searching and mobile to form a doctrine, it has exerted a profound and lasting influence on most branches of human and social sciences. In his large and varied oeuvre, it is in his writings from the mid-1970s that Foucault most profoundly explores the spatiality of power and dominance. Foucault was not alone in investigating social space. In 1957 Gaston Bachelard published his pioneering *La poétique de l'espace*; Henri Lefebvre's book *La Production de l'espace* (1974) has been influential (and more so after its translation into English 1991) for the *Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, the title of Edward Soja's programmatic book from 1989. Besides Soja the social production of space has been investigated as by Marxist and post-Marxist geographers like Derek Gregory and David Harvey.<sup>100</sup> Soja enlisted every spatial aspect of Foucault's work in his battle against the hegemony of historicism (Soja, 1989:10-43), and there is no doubt that Foucault can support his case. In an article Edward Soja wrote, "The space of physical nature is *appropriated* in the social production of spatiality - it is literally made social." (Soja, 1985:93; emphasis in original). Today after some of the more far-flung writings on cyber-space one could almost find it necessary to argue the opposite case, that socialised space indeed has material reality.

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<sup>100</sup> A perceptive use of spatial theory is John Western's critical analysis of apartheid Cape Town; in particular chapter 3, 'The dialectic of person and place'; Western, 1981.

For Althusser state-power was expression of a Subject interpellating subjects. Foucault expressly rejected this view and did not talk of interpellation but of domination, limited in the sense that it did not refer to a Subject, to a centre. Foucault's rejection of any kind of central repressive agency, his insistence that in the centre of the carceral city one will find no Subject, no will, no plan, but a multitude of strategies and relations of power, is an important step for a theory of the state capable of grasping civil war because it insists that the space where power is articulated is heterogenic, multi polar, and bodily. It is worth quoting at length the magnificent concluding paragraph of *Surveiller et punir* for his evoking of power as decentralised, multiple power relations working on the human body,

“The carceral city, with its imaginary ‘geo-politics’, is governed by quite different principles [than the country of tortures and the city of punishments]...some of the more important ones [are]: that at the centre of this city, and as if to hold it in place, there is, not the “centre of power”, but a multiple network of diverse elements - walls, space, institution, rules, discourse; that the model of the carceral city is not, therefore, the body of the king, with the powers that emanate from it, nor the contractual meeting of wills from which a body that was both individual and collective was born, but a strategic distribution of elements of different natures and levels....

That in the central position that it [the prison] occupies, it is not alone, but linked to a whole series of “carceral” mechanisms which seem distinct enough - since they are intended to alleviate pain, to cure, to comfort - but which all tend, like the prison, to exercise a power of normalization... And that ultimately what presides over all these mechanisms is not the unitary functioning of an apparatus or an institution, but the necessity of combat and the rules of strategy. That, consequently, the notions of institutions of repression, rejection, exclusion, marginalization, are not adequate to describe, at the very centre of the carceral city, the formation of insidious leniencies, unavowable petty cruelties, small acts of cunning, calculated methods, techniques, ‘sciences’ that permit the fabrication of the disciplinary individual. In this central and centralized humanity, the effect and instrument of complex power relations, bodies and forces subjected by multiple mechanisms of ‘incarceration’, objects for discourses that are in themselves elements for this strategy, we must hear the distant roar of battle.” (Foucault, 1977:307-8).

Thus he concludes *Discipline and Punish*. A year after the publication of *Surveiller et punir*, Foucault said of his ‘geo-politics’,

“People have often reproached me for these spatial obsessions, which have indeed been obsessions for me. But I think through them I did come to what I had basically been looking for: the relations that are possible between power and knowledge.. Endeavouring.. to decipher discourse through the use of spatial, strategic metaphors enables one to grasp precisely the points at which discourses are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power.” (Foucault, 1980:69-71)

For Foucault to locate the points of transformation of discourse are the same as locating the contest of power in a strategic field; power and discourse, contest and transformation are articulations of one historical process. In a lecture, Jan. 7, 1976, Foucault suggested,

“Should we not analyse [power] primarily in terms of struggle, conflict and war?...

The role of political power, on this hypothesis, is perpetually to re-inscribe this relation through a form of unspoken warfare; to re-inscribe it in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and everyone of us.” (ibid., p. 90)

Power should not be understood as a relation between an active subject oppressing a passive object, but as a *multitude* of struggles between the power of discipline and the power of resistance,

“There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised.” (ibid., p. 143).

I would say that the state *is* the totality of these points; logically, the state can only be encountered by the citizen as de-centred practices. Experienced by the individual citizen inside the nation-state there is no space, sphere, or territory, fully and exclusively ‘the state’, but a heterogenic field with a multitude of clashes between the state and all the numerous sub-state groups of which the individual person is a member (family, professional union, religious community, etc.) The notion of the state should be de-institutionalised. Seen from inside the nation, the state is a multitude, but never a totality, of institutions, rules, practices and so on. There is no state outside, beyond or behind the points where relations of power are exercised. The state is not somewhere, rattling like a dry kernel inside the nut-shell of society. It is important to note, finally, that only in *interstate* interaction is the state present as the *totality* of these clashes. Only in the extreme external interaction, war, is the oneness of State and society manifest; ironically reversing Clastres' dictum on society-state relations, "the best enemy of the State is war" (Clastres, 1994:166): only in war is the State fully existing.<sup>101</sup>

This de-centred understanding of the state may appear to be pulling against Althusser's Hegelian notion of a state-subject, but the de-centred state is not a state *aufheben*, Interpellation does not depend on a recognising Subject, on a central will,

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<sup>101</sup> "In its entirety the state as an organized political entity decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction...An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity." Schmitt, 1996:29.

but on the connection of violence with discourse. Foucault seems to follow two tracks in explaining the articulation of this connection. A spatial track built on the notion of relations of power in a strategic field. And a discursive track pointing to subjectivisation. In the following chapter, I will suggest a possible intersection of Foucault's two tracks at the 'point of enunciation'.

Let us conclude these Foucault cuttings with a return to Hannah Arendt. When Foucault speaks of power, I will argue with Arendt we should hear *violence*, and when he talks of knowledge and discourse we could hear *power*. The concepts do not overlap completely, however. Power as used by Foucault is not always violent and knowledge extends beyond power as the term is used by Arendt. I shall use Arendt's distinction between violence and power, which, in my estimate, adds a precision to Foucault's use of 'power'. At the end of the day, the real difference between Arendt and Foucault is not semantic, but lie in the trust they put in human agency to deal with power, in the inherent sovereignty of man. Foucault does not share Arendt's republican hope for the 'group acting in concert', i.e. the genesis and reproduction of the self-declared space for representing and executing political power within states, and he writes,

“One might thus contrast two major systems of approach to the analysis of power: in the first place, there is the old system found in the philosophes of the eighteenth century. The concept of power as an original right that is given up in the establishment of sovereignty, and the contract, as the matrix of political power, provide its point of articulation... In contrast, the other system of approach no longer tries to analyse political power according to the schema of contract-oppression, but in accordance with that of war-repression... On this view, repression is none other than the realisation, within the continual warfare of this pseudo-peace, of a perpetual relationship of force... the pertinent opposition is not between the legitimate and illegitimate, as in the first schema, but between struggle and submission.”  
(Foucault, 1980:91,92)

But is this an instrumental view of power, is it is domination to achieve an end? There is no will behind this power. I think it is very much “the essence of all government” as Arendt says. Arendt speaks of an acting humanity, that ‘constitute a government; support the laws; give their consent; have an opinion; assume responsibility’ (Arendt, 1970:40,49). About as far as Foucault goes in considering agency or a space for politics is the remark, quoted above, “There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised.” (Foucault, 1980:143) Unfortunately he does not elaborate on this. The roar of battle

is heard only in the very last sentence of *Surveiller et punir*. It seems to be very hard indeed to break out of the carceral city.

## 6. The fatal attraction of 'civil society'

Most of the currently fashionable theories of state-society relations build on the dichotomy of state-civil society. One would expect the notion of civil society, therefore, to be of relevance to the analysis of civil war as a possible specification of violent interaction of state and non-state groups. 'Civil society' is applied to historical circumstances as diverse as post-communist Eastern Europe, post-industrial Western countries, and developing nations in Africa. Yet, to my knowledge, it has not been used to explain civil war. In spite of the fact that civil war is the most serious and violent relation of the state with sub-state groups, no civil society-writer have used 'civil society' to conceptualise this deeply disturbing relation between the state and other groups in society. I will argue that the problem of civil war raises some tough questions as to the overall validity of the notion of civil society.

In Part One civil war was defined as attack on the state by sub-state groups. One may then ask, how is it possible to attack the state from 'inside society' if not from civil society, if not from 'outside' the state and 'inside' civil society? I will submit that the meaningless spatial metaphors inside/outside points to problems inherent in the state-civil society notion. There is no spatial location 'outside' the state. The problem with the notion of 'civil society' is that it satisfies an urgent need for an alternative to statist development with empty calories. The fatal attraction of 'civil society' is the false promise of social life 'outside' the state.

For different reasons in the first, second and third world doubts as to the capability of the state to secure human development have grown during the last decade.<sup>102</sup> Hope for human development has in our nationalist twentieth century been intimately linked to the interventionist state. Only this state was believed to be able to focus the social energy of nations into political, economic, and cultural modernisation. Since the 1980s disenchantment and confusion with state-sponsored development has led to a search for structures 'outside' of the state to be 'the home base' for social improvement. Two areas in particular have received attention: the market and 'civil society'. For some writers of a communitarian persuasion they are

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<sup>102</sup> A useful introduction to the vast discussion of 'development' is Manor, 1991.



opposites, and civil society must guard itself against both the interventionist, equalising state and the bulldozing, globalising market. For other more liberalist writers market and civil society are seen as allies against the state. Yet, even taken at face value the notion of 'civil society' battles with two intrinsic problems. First, the ambiguity inherent in the double normative and functional meaning of 'civil society' as both *civilised* society, and *non-state*, society 'outside' the state. Second, the strange silence on *the state* itself. No champion of civil society has paused to explicate what kind of state can possibly fit the bill as partner of civil society.

The current revival of the term 'civil society' can be traced back to Polish Solidarnosc in the early 1980s. It then moved up to the mid 1990s with works like John Keane, *The Civil Society and the State*, 1988; Lezcek Nowak, *Power and Civil Society*, 1989; Alan Wolfe, *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation*, 1989; Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 1992; Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, 1993; Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty - Civil Society and its Rivals*, 1994; and Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 1995. A convenient recent review of the discussion can be found in the volume edited by John A. Hall, *Civil Society; Theory, History, Comparison*, 1995. Let us check out four definitions of civil society from this compilation, pointing to the serious disagreement on what civil society is within the ranks of its defenders.

John A. Hall defines civil society as,

"a complex balance of consensus and conflict...Civil society is a particular form of society, appreciating social diversity and able to limit the depredations of political power...at one and the same time a social value and a set of social institutions...  
[Civil society is] The creation of social practices which make state-society interactions civilized. Differently put, civil society has everything to do with the modern world...the origins [of which] lie within Europe alone." (Hall, 1995: 2, 6, 25).

Christopher G.A.Bryant defines civil society as,

"the association of citizens - social self-organization - between households and state and aside from the market...In short, civil society refers to social relations and communications between citizens. These may sometimes be informed by the law and by state policy but even then they are not dependent on them...In Western societies the realization of civil society is a never-ending project." (ibid., p.148,154)

Philip Oxhorn, discussing Latin American history, defines civil society as,

"a rich social fabric formed by a multiplicity of territorially and functionally based units...

The strength of civil society is measured by the peaceful coexistence of these units and by their collective capacity simultaneously to *resist subordination* to the state and to *demand inclusion* into national political structures...the dual dynamic of *resistance* and *inclusion* characteristic of civil societies demonstrates that political democracy is often the result rather than the cause of civil society.” (ibid., p.252-3; italics in original)

Finally Ernest Gellner defines civil society as “a cluster of institutions and associations strong enough to prevent tyranny, but which are, nevertheless, entered freely rather than imposed either by birth or by awesome ritual.” (ibid., p. 42) Gellner’s idea is to think of the individual in modern society as free, and to some extent substitutable in institutions; he terms this “modular man”.

“The modularity of man so intimately tied up with an industrial and growth-oriented society, has two aspects, two principal social corollaries: it makes possible civil society, the existence of plural political associations; and it makes mandatory the strength of ethnic identity, arising from the fact that man is no longer tied to a social niche, but to a culturally defined pool.” (ibid., p. 54)

Civil society walks away burdened by these definitions as ‘a social value’, ‘appreciating social diversity’, ‘making state-society interactions civilized’. Where do we find these attractive features in world history? Gellner: ‘in industrial and growth-oriented society’; Hall: ‘it has everything to do with the modern world...Europe’; Salvador Giner in the concluding chapter ‘Civil Society and its Future’: ‘civil societies have only existed..in certain Western countries’. Beyond the less-than precise normative definitions civil society is defined by a fuzzy ensemble of sociological functions. Hall: ‘a particular form of society’, ‘a set of social institutions able to limit the depredations of political power’ (it sounds fine but what exactly is it?); Gellner: ‘a cluster of institutions and associations’ which are ‘entered freely’ and able ‘to prevent tyranny’; Oxhorn provides a sweeping definition: ‘a rich social fabric formed by a multiplicity of territorial and functionally based units’; Bryant suggests a narrow definition: ‘associations of citizens - social self-organization - between household and state and aside from the market’; Giner on the other hand tries to define the enigmatic civil society in plural and within both state and market: ‘a group of specific civil societies which have developed within liberal states and market economies’.

Common to all these writers is the idea of a sphere somehow outside the state, a sphere in John Keanes’s words: “market regulated, privately controlled or voluntarily organized”. When you peel away the normative criteria distinguishing civil society only the simplistic institutional kernel remains: civil society equals

society less state. *Functionally* it is very hard to pinpoint civil society inside a modern society. Take, for example, a political party: where does it belong, in civil society or in the state? Philip Oxhorn argues that political parties can suffocate civil society (p. 270), while John Hall praises political parties as a precondition for civil society (p. 24).

*Historically* civil society is ruled out in early societies, such as the classical agrarian civilisations, because state and society were institutionally non-differentiated with a low degree of social communication. But it is not clear when and how civil society developed from non-civil societies. Applying the functional and normative criteria on current societies such as Communist and African countries is highly questionable: is the Western view that a totalitarian or customary state can snuff out civil society a useful analysis of societal self-organisation fighting the state? I will return to this question in a moment.

*Normatively* too, civil society has problems. It is hard to overlook the contradictory content of civil society. Religious fundamentalists, neo-nazis etc. are just as autonomously self-organised as feminists or co-operatives. In a recent Swedish discussion of civil society Mats Dahlkvist asks, "What is that which is not governed by politicians?... Beyond the constitutional state - lawlessness begins [Vad är det som inte är politikerstyrt?...Bortom rättstaten - där börjer laglösheten.]" (Lindkvist, 1995:201; trans. H.T.) and *not* the sphere of freedom, as we have seen so many places, and quite graphically in Albania, April 1997. In his excellent review of the history of the idea of 'civil society', Mats Dahlkvist counterpoises the current neo-Marxist and neo-liberal usage to the tradition of 'civil society' in Western political theory from Aristotle to John Stuart Mills.<sup>103</sup> His main point is to dispute any canonical backing for the state-civil society 'two-sphere' reading of the concept. In Western political theory 'civil society' refers to the *whole* of society, and not a segment, being *civil* in the double meaning of not in the state of nature and not among the rude nations. Only in the work of Hegel finds Mats Dahlkvist a notion of a separate civil society, sandwiched between the state and the family, but without the democratic content it is currently invested with. Now, even if we could find no support for the state-civil society dichotomy in the canon of Western political thinking surely this would be a moot point if it could help us understand current social conflict, such as civil war. But in the distortion of the tradition of civil society Dahlkvist sees a hidden agenda aimed at defaming the (welfare) state,

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<sup>103</sup> "Det civila samhället" i samhälsteori och samhällsdebat. En kritisk analys", in *Civilt samhälle kontra offentlig sektor*, ed. Lars Trägårdh. Göteborg: SNS Forlag, 1995, p. 153-231.

“By the merging of the term “civil” with the cognitive mapping of society as composed of only two spheres, one of liberty and one of control, a negative valuation of the state and a positive valuation of what is termed “civil society” is automatically produced... The concept “civil society” in its current usage is adapted to a mode of thinking, which in its extension is destructive for the vision of a politically organised social order, and thus for democracy.”  
(Dahlgvist, 1995:155-56; trans. H.T.).

Dahlgvist’s conclusion is unequivocal: Civil society in the current meaning can only be used for one purpose, that is to erect a pseudo-autonomous platform from which to criticise certain policies of current states.

The problem for which civil society presents no answer is rather central: what is the state? Where is the state? Where does it end? Without a concept of the state it is difficult to see any meaning to propositions such as civil society is non-identical with the state; is civil society, for example, within or without the reach of law, and if it is within, then how is civil society ‘outside’ the state? One can easily continue this list of paradoxes exposing civil society’s poor concept of the state. After all, is it possible to skip these questions and yet hope to establish a sphere somehow ‘outside’ the state? Yes it is, as a practical, political struggle for power working inside the state, as there is no outside the state. The question of violence and power can conveniently be obscured by an imagined sphere of citizens’ democratic communication. Because this is a respectable political project ‘civil society’ has been reinvented. Let us finally return to the opening question: can civil society help explain civil war? I doubt it; civil society defined by normative and functional criteria as separate from the state has to date shed no light on the question of civil war: how is war possible between the state and groups in society?

## **7. Civil war defined as citizens attacking the state.**

Three variations of the state-citizen opposition stand out from the review above of theories on subjectivity, space, and violence. *Subjectivity* spanned from the human individual to the state. Man was understood as subject, citizen, individual etc. How to conceptualise the subjectivity of the state was a major problem, ranging from suggestions of a neo-Hegelian historical subjectivity to the decentered a-historical subjectivity suggested by Foucault and many others. Obviously there are many intermediate 'actors' between man and state, different groups of people including various state-apparatuses, for example the army. The *space* of the state-citizen opposition was clearly polarised in the human body and the state territory;

there was no violence not touching the body, and no state without a territory. *Violence* was defined by space and subjectivity: between two states it was war, between state and citizen it was a relation of rule and resistance.

Register	<u>Man</u>	<u>State</u>
<u>Subjectivity</u>	CITIZEN -----	GOVERNMENT
<u>Space</u>	BODY-----	TERRITORY
<u>Violence</u>	RULE/RESITANCE-----	WAR

Interpellation is always violent in the last instance. Between the state and the citizen or any group of citizens, a condition of potential or explosive violence reigns. This is a common condition to all states. When it comes to survival the state will use violence against its citizens. Of course, “the question, how much difference a political system can tolerate and still survive,” (du Toit, 1996:6) is answered differently by each historical state.<sup>104</sup> We like to think a democratic state is strong because it can accommodate opposition, while a totalitarian state cracks like glass, or that even state-rule can be abolished altogether by a proper dose of civil society communitarism. Yet, no state is likely to survive *without* violence as a recourse in the most extreme situations.

Civil war can be thus defined in the most general terms by relations of attack and defence between state and subject. Attack is conditional, but defence is unconditional. The subject defending itself against state-violence proves its will to exist. This is the relation of violence in a nation-state in ‘peaceful’ historic conditions. However, during a *civil war* the attacker/defender relation becomes ambiguous and may be reversed. When subjects violently contest interpellation and the state defends itself against attacks from sub-state groups, they wage civil war.

Thomas Højrup took ‘the superiority of the defence’ to be a conclusive argument why war between states does not lead to a single world-state, but remains a ‘true infinity’ of a multi-polar state-system. Let us for a moment transpose his argument on the superiority of defensive over offensive war<sup>105</sup> to the *internal*

<sup>104</sup> David Apter has in several works discussed attacks on the state from terrorists and other violent groups. In his book on the Japanese Sankuriza movement fighting against extension of the Tokyo airport he claims to be combining “functional, structural and phenomenological interpretative schemes” (Apter, 1984:14) but to me it does not help to specify the limits of interpellation.

<sup>105</sup> “An attacking subject can thus only deploy the forces freely available for mobilization, while a defending subject can deploy

situation between the state and subjects (sub-state groups). The parallel to the world-state would be the absolute totalitarian state, but that has never been. Foucault said the state is never able totally to conquer the subjects because at every point where power is exercised resistance is formed. Hannah Arendt located the weakness of offensive violence in power, in the denial of legitimacy to violence.

“No government exclusively based on the means of violence has ever existed. Even the totalitarian ruler, whose chief instrument of rule is torture, needs a power basis - the secret police and its net of informers.” (Arendt, 1970:50)

The notion of the superiority of the defence adds precision to that statement. There is a strategic depth - a defensive force - in the interpellated sub-state groups. When soldiers don't obey orders and refuse to open fire on an unarmed demonstration, the marchers are protected by the superiority of the defence. When people in the Soviet Union listened to prohibited western radio they struggled successfully against the state protected by the strategic depth of a million homes. But again in parallel to the 'real' war, the superiority of the defence does not mean that interpellation cease to function, except, perhaps in the parallel to total war, total anarchy: everyone against everyone.

Resistance to interpellation implies that a front is established between the state and sub-state groups. We normally see violence in the state-citizen relation as the exemption, and not as the norm because the state pauses in its use of violence. The modern 'civil society' notion is a whole theory built on pauses in violence.

“Even if war by its mere possibility is always virtually present, it is such a crucial feature of war that it ends, that we regard the *pauses* of war to be the normal condition of the world, and the war itself as breakdowns of this condition.”  
(Højrup, 1995:146; trans. H.T.).

Civil war seems to question the body-state polarity of all three registers of subjectivity, space and violence. In particular the monolith of the state, taken for granted in all the reviewed theories. Somehow civil war is in-between and going beyond the state, undermining the digital concept of state violence as either rule inside or war outside the state border. In order to interpret civil war beyond the simple dichotomy of attack and defence of state rule, I suggest returning to the distinction between power and violence and from that point search the vast 'strategic

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the forces freely available for mobilization plus its purely defensive forces.” Højrup, 1995:144.[trans. H.T.]

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terrain' between human body and state territory for intermediate spatial structures:  
the social fronts of attack and defence in civil war.

# 12 |

## A TOPOGRAPHIC S.E.T.H. MODEL OF THE STATE

“A whole history remains to be written of *spaces* - which would at the same time be the history of *powers* (both of these terms in the plural) - from the great strategies of geo-politics to the little tactics of the habitat.” (Michel Foucault)<sup>106</sup>

In Part Two the notions of State-, Ethnic-, Town- and House spaces were used without presentation or explanation. In this chapter I give a general introduction to the S.E.T.H. model of the state, and in the next four chapters each of the four spaces will be discussed in detail.

### 1. The spaces of state, ethnicity, town, and house

The nation-state does not rule free-floating individuals, but individuals structured also by forces *other* than the state. Some of these forces have historical roots much older than the nation-state, and they cannot in any meaningful way be reduced to one dominant logic like “nationalism”, “ethnic-strife”, “class-struggle” or “patriarchy”. Quite distinct historical processes are active simultaneously, all with diverse departures, trajectories, forms of identity-formation, and very different promises for the future.

In a nation state I suggest we will find four super-imposed topographies or spaces: the individual person is living simultaneously in a *state*, an *ethnic space*, a *town* (or rural non-town), and a *house* (in whatever shape: high-rise, tent, palace, long-house etc.) State, ethnic space, town, and house are all territorial realities ordering human bodies in an internal space divided from external space. What is defining the four spaces are their respective relations between human body and space. Let us assume we could freeze all the world’s borders of states, ethnic

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<sup>106</sup> 1977, in a preface to a French edition of Jeremy Bentham’s *Panopticon*; Foucault, 1980:149; italics in original.



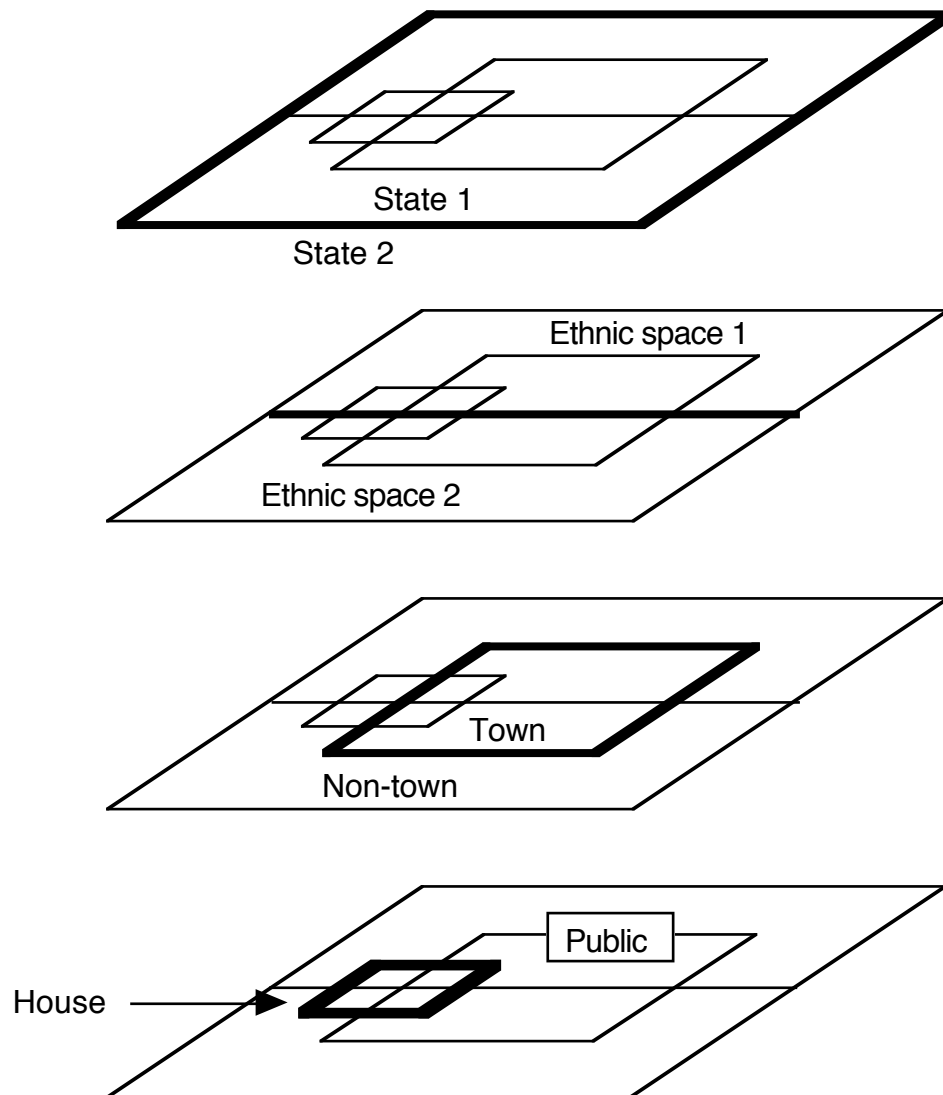
spaces, towns, and houses at a given point in time: all these borders drawn and re-drawn by violence ('unwanted physical interference with bodies') taken together would constitute the global topography of state rule *and resistance to state rule*. The point about this general statement is to emphasize the duality of any particular border: any spatial border will represent the conflict of state rule (ultimately originating in the state-system) and resistance to state rule (ultimately originating in the human individuality). However, the local topography of conflict is strikingly different at the four borders of SETH. Visually the four spaces can be pictured as grids superimposed on the same piece of territory (see fig. 1).

The relation between state and body is *pragmatic*: practically everybody living on the state territory are citizens, members of the state-nation. It is an inclusive relation: nation follows state. Outside the state are the other states, the global system of states. At the end of the day, the pragmatic relation is pro-active: we are what we *can* to let our state win.

The relation between ethnic space and body is *essentialistic*, forged by the belief in a determinant essence of the body: ethnicity, faith, decent, language, or historic mission, constituting the chosen community; only the pure bodies belongs on 'our' soil. Outside the ethnic space are the aliens, the enemies; ultimately a global structure of we and all the others. The essential relation is not pro-active, but retro-active: we are what we *believe* we were.

The relation between body and town-space is *functional*: Bodies are related to non-town by the functions of growing food and to town

[fig. 1] THE FOUR SPACES OF A S.E.T.H. TOPOGRAPHIC MODEL OF THE STATE



by the functions of appropriating, accumulating, and diversifying food. The functional relation is not pro-active nor retro-active, but active: we are what we *do*.

Finally, the relation between body and house-space is *organic*. Belonging to the house are the bodies ordered as patriarch, wife, children, and slaves. The categories of the house refer to biological differences revealed at marriage, birth, and capture, and defined by society as gender, generation, and race; they are applied to all house-members, not just the nuclear family. Outside the house is the wilderness. The organic relation is in-active: we *are* the family.

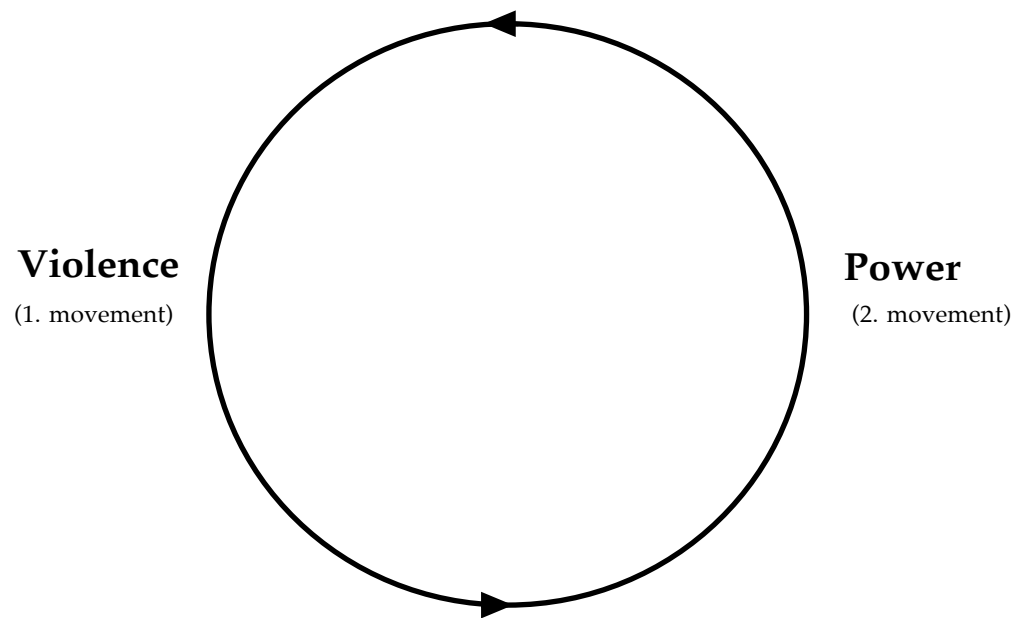
Ultimately, all four topographies are global: any particular state is only one element in a planetary system of states; any ethnic space is surrounded by the world of others; the towns of the world are differentiated from the countryside of the earth; any individual house is alone in the wilderness stretching from one end of the horizon to the other.

## **2. The circular movement: violence--power--violence-- power**

All four spaces of state, ethnicity, towns, and houses are created and re-created by a circular movement between power and violence. Violence and power are not identical; violence is the physical, spatial interference with bodies; power means communication, discursive praxis and forms of knowledge. Violence and power are connected in space, on a territory, rather than in time, in two movements: first by violence producing the space available for power, and second by power producing the legitimacy available for violence; it is a circle, a never-ending historical process turning over and over. Violence is simultaneously before power and after power; power is both following violence and preceding violence. The interconnection is cyclical, not linear. Perhaps a very simple model can illuminate the point I want to make on the circular relation of violence and power (see fig. 2).

When Michel Foucault analysed the antagonistic state-citizen relationship as ‘the fabrication of the disciplinary individual’ he

[fig. 2] THE CYCLICAL RELATION OF VIOLENCE AND POWER



*internalised* violence into power. Beyond the ‘insidious leniencies, unavowable petty cruelties, small acts of cunning’, is the violence that makes possible the state as *different and external* from the individual, yet it is ignored in Foucault’s grand project. In this sense he is radically anti-historicist: there is no state before it hits the body.

Hannah Arendt, on the other hand, separated, as we saw, violence and power, but then *externalised* violence from the political sphere. She said “Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow,” (Arendt, 1970:52). Is this possible? To me, her notion of an ‘initial getting together’ is very problematic. She is postulating an initial ‘big-bang’ of the political, but I doubt there ever was a primordial revolution let alone a constitutional beginning of a community of people. All revolutions, all spaces invested with a new meaning have limits, borders, rubbing against other older spaces of meaning. Both 1776 and 1789, the two great eighteenth century revolutions Arendt referred to, took place within boundaries created by previous colonial or absolutist violence (and the revolutionaries themselves used violence to extend the boundaries). Prior to any initial getting together goes violence demarcating the community.

The cyclical interconnection of violence and power contains the twin movements of violence-to-power, and the power-to-violence. Some studies of violence inspired by psychoanalysis (Lacan) tend to focus one-sided on the second movement. Slavoj Žižek, ‘the giant from Lubljana’, commented on the violence-power duality,

“Symbolic violence is no substitute or prolonging of the real one: it is rather real violence itself which erupts when a certain impasse arise in the midst of the symbolic order - the place of real violence is always-already marked out in the symbolic order... the problem is that the subject is never “empty”, confronted with “pure” external violence, but always -already situated within a fantasmatic space which frames his space of meaning and which is disturbed by the outbreak of violence,” (Žižek, 1995:13,14)

This is true, but *only*, and this is important, from the point of view of the individual. From the point of view of the interpellated human body only, not from the point if view of the interpellating state. The practice of violence is the first movement. The practice of power within these territorial limits is the second movement. Violence is reflected in power, producing legitimacy for the renewed use of violence (potentially or explosive), to recreate once more the territoriality of power. For the state the circle starts with the first movement, from the position of

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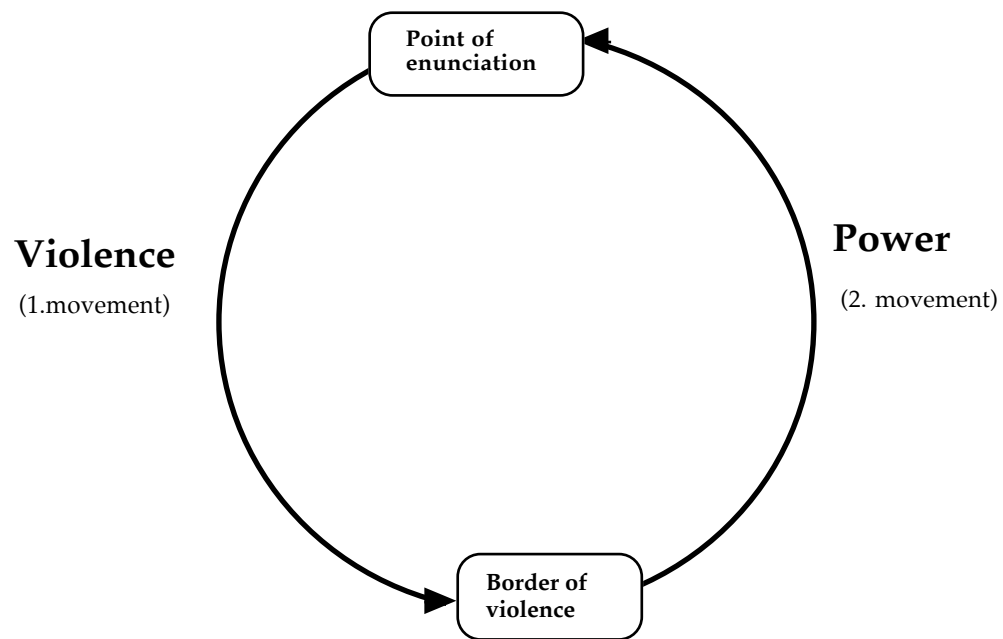
interpellating subject positioned as it is, in the ever on-going war with other states, that is the never-ever marked out space of real violence.

### **3. Points of enunciation of power**

The identity of any individual person is a composite of the identities produced in all four spaces. For example, a person may be a *South African*; she may be a *Zulu*, she may be living in a *town*, and in a *house*. Now, each of these four spaces trace their own lineage. The nation state did not produce ethnic space, towns or houses, but on the contrary found them to be there as historically produced parameters of human existence in that particular South African situation. Surely, a state may build houses, plan towns and invent ethnic nationalisms, yet ethnicity, towns, and houses *as such* are not creations of the nation state. In order to rule, the state must rule humans always-already structured differently from, or in excess of itself.

We must now look closer at the intersection of violence and power. What we are looking for is not just violence and power, but specifically how *space* intervenes, facilitates and limits the transformation of violence *into* power, and of power *into* violence (see fig. 3).

[fig. 3] THE CYCLICAL RELATION OF LEGITIMATE VIOLENCE AND BORDERED POWER



The first, violent, movement produces bordered territory, and in the same movement establishes, I suggest, a spatial *point of enunciation*.<sup>107</sup> Discourse is transformed twice by space: first by the space available to the discursive community, *and* secondly by the privileged point in space from where the different discourses of power in states, ethnic spaces, towns and houses can be enunciated. What violence has created must be named for violence to be renewed; naming, I suggest, presuppose a privileged vantage point from where to enunciate the name of violence's creation, i.e. the bordered space, for example, the national space of the Soviet Union. Only spoken from this prominent point in space can the name set in motion renewed acts of violence defending the borders of the national community, that is safeguarding the power of the community of the Soviet Union.

A 'throne' must be raised, enabling a discursive representation of the territory demarcated by the borders of violence. Speaking from that point in space, a discourse defines what violence has created; for example a 'Fatherland'. The 'throne' can be a parliament, a balcony on a presidential palace, a tree or a stone. In the first movement the violent creation of a border trust upon the 'throne' a person privileged to enunciate the name of violence's creation: We are a Fatherland! In the second movement the diffusion throughout the community of the Fatherland-discourse trust legitimacy upon the institutions and users of violence: Let us defend the Fatherland! *Za Stalina, Za Rodinu, Na Vojnu! Na Vojnu!* For Stalin, For the Fatherland, To War! To War! as the Red Army battle-cry went. The name returns to violence as legitimacy.

It is not a new process. Thousand years ago on Iceland, the Vikings met each summer on Thingvellir, a grassy plain with a formidable rock-wall, a giant rostrum, from which the law was enunciated. Only from this point could Iceland be named and men outlawed, that is expelled to the wilderness outside the space of violence constituted by all men legitimately bearing arms. 'Politics' is the struggle to get to the rostrum and give violence a name and legitimacy. Democracy is one

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<sup>107</sup> Enunciation is a central concept in discursive analysis, proposing that only certain discourses can be enunciated from certain positions. These positions range from spatial positions to linguistic positions. Foucault developed his ideas on enunciation and 'positions of subjects' in *L'archéologie du savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1970; and in *L'ordre du discours. Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France*. Paris: Gallimard, 1971. For a subtle interpretation of the first text, see Ifversen, 1996:443-650; and of the second, see Damsholt, 1996:53-68.



way to organise this struggle, state of emergency another, in the end even democracy is confronted with the question of blood, sweat and tears.

Violence, then, is transformed into power at the *point* of enunciation when violence is named. Power is transformed into violence at the *border* when bodies are interfered with. If we turn our attention from state space to ethnic space, town space, and house space, we notice that all four spaces of S.E.T.H. share the same circular movement between violence and power; there is a border of violence and a point of enunciation for the discourses of power. Each of the four spaces are named from their particular point in space. The state is named from the *throne* (such as parliament, presidential palace, forum); the ethnic space is named from the *grave* (the terrestrial point of contact with the dead); the town is named from the *square* (the urban public space with municipality and market); the house is named from the *head of the table* (such as carpet, stone, fireplace in table-less civilisations). We may call the person uttering the name of the state-law *king*, the person uttering the will of the forefathers *priest*,<sup>108</sup> the person uttering the mood of the market *rich*, and the person uttering the bond of the family *patriarch*. In a schematically fashion we can now draw up the relationship between socially produced space, point of enunciation, and ruler.

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<u>Space</u>	<u>Point of Enunciation</u>	<u>Ruler</u>
STATE	THRONE	KING
ETHNIC	GRAVE	PRIEST
TOWN	MARKET SQUARE	THE RICH
HOUSE	HEAD OF TABLE	PATRIARCH

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A South African Zulu lady, for example, from a house in, say the little provincial town of Kranskop, then, is residing on a nation-**state** territory (Republic

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<sup>108</sup> "Georges Dumézil, in his definitive analysis of Indo-European mythology, has shown that political sovereignty, or domination, has two heads: the magician-king and the jurist-priest. Rex and flamen, raj and Brahman, Romulus and Numa, Varuna and Mitra..." Deleuze and Guattari (1987:351), in the opening of their treatise on 'Nomadology'. I would add the third and the fourth poles in the landscape of state, violence and man: the rich on the market square and the patriarch at the head of the table.

of South Africa) defended by an army and defined by a national discourse enunciated by a **king** (President Nelson Mandela) from a **throne** (Union Building in Pretoria). She is living within an **ethnic space** (Zulu nation) demarcated by the political violence raging in Natal and defined by the discourse of Zuluness, enunciated by a **priest** (Buthelezi) from a **grave** (King Shaka's grave). She is staying in a **town** (Kranskop) distinguished from the countryside by functions defined as urban in the town-discourse enunciated by the **rich** (the 'respectable' elite of Kranskop) on the **square** (the Kranskop main street from the post-office up to the bus-stop with the main traders, police, and municipality). Finally she is living in a **house** on a plot of land defended by a fence, a dog and a gun, defined as a private space by the discourse of home and family enunciated by the **patriarch** (her husband) from the **head of table** (in the dining room).

It goes without saying that the identities are results of dominance and resistance. In the house the patriarch sits at the head of the table and sets forth all of Foucault's exclusionary procedures defining the discourse of the house, and his gaze stretches outwards to the violent borders of his patriarchal rule, where his teenager son may slip away. *Simultaneously* at the three other points of enunciation: grave, square and throne, discourses are emanating. But it is important to note that from each point of enunciation only the proprietary discourse can be enunciated: from the head of the table only the discourse of the house; from the throne only the discourse of the state, from the grave only the discourse of the ethnic space, and from the square only the discourse of the town, and not those of the house, the state, or the ethnic space. Taken together the four discourses produce complex amalgamated individual identities through conflict and alliance. How this is happening will be studied in Part Four.

# 13 |

## WHY S.E.T.H.? - STATE SPACE

Above I argued that violence creates spaces distinguished by specific order and meaning separated from Otherness outside the border. My point was that this very general proposition could be specified down to four, and only four, spaces encompassing human life in a nation state: state space, ethnic space, town space and house space, each defined by borders keeping apart distinct types of Otherness. The purpose of this and the following three chapters is to discuss this specific proposition.

Stringed in by a few orbiting satellites Planet Earth marks the frontier of our species. Until the Martians attack us it is not a boundary drawn by violence, but a given condition for human life in the universe. Violence is an intra-planetary and not an inter-planetary problem. I will proceed from the largest spaces to smallest: from the planet to the human body.

### **1. State space**

State is used throughout this book in two ways, reflecting the paradoxical structure of the state: (i) it is the totality of the individual subjects on the state territory; and (ii) it is also the interpellating subject; it is simultaneously the small subjects and the big Subject. It is so easy to essentialise the interpellating state as a historical subject, somehow acting on its own. Yet, to say the state does this and the state does that is both wrong and right because the individual citizen is actually confronted with an interpellating subject; on the other hand there is naturally no secret place in space or in history where this big Subject exists differently from the many small subjects. The policeman is himself interpellated, like anybody else performing the multiple acts of ruling, administrating, servicing, and defending the state. Fundamentally, the challenge is to conceptualise how the totality of the state exists. The SETH model cannot answer that question. It can only try to give a fragment of an answer: where the state is.

**(i) State border**

The border of state space in our times is easy to locate, it is simply the international borders of the nation states. They are mapped with the utmost accuracy in treaties, on maps, and on the ground. They articulate state space with a historically uniquely rigorous absolutism: either full, undivided national sovereignty or no sovereignty

**(ii) State space**

State space is the totality of the points where the big and the small subjects clash; the totality of acts of rule and resistance. They are not all violent, by no means; but some are, and I shall argue they constitute three spatial fronts inside the state: ethnic space, town space and house space. State space is constantly reproduced by the ceaseless acts of state activity. It is not in any way abstract, but written into the structure of daily life. Therefore, every individual citizen only experiences small fragments of the state, never the totality of the state. A feature of nation state space is the polarising of power and violence between the sovereign citizens and state-institutions of violence (army and police) and power (government). However, the government, the army, the schools, and all other state institutions are only fragments of the state space, staffed by people themselves only experiencing small scraps of the tapestry of social being constituting state space.

**(iii) The throne, point of enunciation of state space**

Of course, people in different positions can perform acts of different importance for the state. I said above that politics is the struggle to get to the throne and give the violence that sustains the state name and legitimacy. It is in this political, and not spatial, sense the government or the army are perceived to be 'the state'. The vast science of politics has examined the 'political state'; I shall not venture in that direction beyond suggesting the throne as the point of enunciation of state space.

'State' is a spatial totality of the many small subjects and the big Subject, circumscribing both 'government' a set of violent and discursive practices, and nation, the political community addressed from the throne.

The next three Chapters will deal with the constitution of state space. Yet there could be, of course, terrestrial spaces *larger* than the nation state staked out by violence. Empire, civilisation, and the net of global capitalism may each warrant a brief consideration: (i) are any of those spaces defined by violence? (ii) is the nation state a sub-element in any of them?

## **2. Empire**

It may be regarded as obvious that the many historical empires were states with borders drawn in blood separating different kinds of internal rule from spaces beyond the reach of the imperial ruler. Imperial borders were distinguished by different kinds of gradual and layered sovereignty across a wide *frontier* incorporating tributary states and colonies. Uffe Østergård, the well-known Danish historian, makes an useful distinction between pre-national universalist empires and national colonial empires, for example the British and French Empires,

[They] were not empires in the real sense of the word... [but] misnamed colonies... The term Empire ought to be reserved for supra- or pre-national states with universalist pretensions.”<sup>109</sup>

The internal differences between the classical empire, the modern empire, and the nation state are reflected both in the structures of their borders and their manners of civil war. For a discussion of twentieth century civil war, the European colonial empires are of particular importance first of all because they generated so many of the modern civil wars, but also because they draw our attention to the peculiar type of state heterogeneity combining nation state and imperial colonies.

It may be recalled that Small and Singer’s world-wide survey of wars *excluded* national liberation wars from the category of civil war because they were not ‘internal to the metropole (mother country)’. The difference between civil war in an modern *empire* and civil war in a *nation state* can be dubbed ‘1776’ and ‘1861’: the American war of national liberation in 1776 and the Dixie war of secession in 1861. One question raised by civil wars inside empires is how we can tell imperial heterogeneity producing civil wars of national liberation from nation state heterogeneity producing secessionist civil war. What constituted the different of the British Empire and the United States of America?

Another example of imperial and national heterogeneity is provided by Ethiopia. With remarkable poignancy this country was both the first and (so far) last nation state of Africa. King Menelik II of Ethiopia already at the end of the 19th century borrowed the nation state from Europe, and grafted this state-form unto his archaic but expanding empire at the Horn of Africa. He did it successfully enough to repulse an Italian colonial army of 100.000 at the famous battle of Adowa (1896), one of the very few African victories over a European colonial army. Today the traveller will find a small crumbling cenotaph hidden in a wild, remote valley in

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<sup>109</sup> Uffe Østergård, *The Return of Empires?*. Workingpaper 25-95, Centre for Cultural Research, Århus University, 1995. Published also in Østergård 1995b.

Tigray commemorating this rare European defeat. The victory led to Ethiopia's recognition as a sovereign state by the European nation states. That is why Ethiopia alone on a continent of European colonies could complain of the next Italian invasion (1935 by Mussolini) as a violation of national sovereignty.

Travelling through the same wild valleys of the old Axumite kingdom you'll also pass Russian-made tanks left by the retreating Ethiopian army hundred years after the battle of Adowa. Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in 1991 and became the youngest nation state in Africa after thirty years of war. During all these years OAU was confronted with the questions: was the Ethiopian *whole* an empire or a nation state? Was the Eritrean *part* a state created by Italian colonial borders, or a nation waiting to be free? Was the *splitting* a '1776' war of national liberation or a '1861' civil war? Consistently OAU claimed it was a civil war violating nation state borders and refused to support Eritrea. When Eritrea won in alliance with the new rulers of Addis Abeba, however, OUA turned around and said it was a '1776' war of national liberation and recognised Eritrea as a state inside the former Italian colonial borders. This points to the fact that a state border only exists as part of what Carl Schmitt called a 'friend-enemy grouping'.<sup>110</sup> Henri Lefebvre expressed a similar thought in his book *The Production of Space*,

"Sovereignty implies 'space', and what is more it implies a space against which violence, whether latent or overt, is directed - a space established and constituted with violence...  
state power endures only by virtue of violence directed towards a space."  
(Lefebvre, 1991:280)

Every nation state is part of a *system* of states and finally of one *global* structure. The state in *singular* is meaningless.<sup>111</sup> Context changed the war in Ethiopia, that is the violent heterogeneity, from a '1861' civil war in a nation state to a '1776' war of liberation in a colonial empire.

The late twentieth century hegemony of the nation state is a powerful confirmation of the normalising power of the nation state-system. Any state simply had to be a nation state to survive the wars of the twentieth century; the nation state

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<sup>110</sup> This structure reflects the genealogy of the nation state. England and the Netherlands was the first modern nation state friend-enemy grouping; expressed in the English Navigation Laws (1651) and the three mid-seventeenth century wars with the Dutch; I discuss this general historical process in Tin 1977b:176-196.

<sup>111</sup> Anthony Giddens writes, "The modern state is intrinsically, not just contingently, a nation state, existing in a world of other nation states." *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984, p.198.

was the historical form available for winning freedom and independence. All territories recognised as nation states are formally alike internationally. Even the most powerful nation state only rules so much territory and so many people at any given point in time; it has to make the best of the situation. Surely racist, expansionist, or imperialistic governments may try to change population, move borders and capture resources by war; but in the twentieth century such politics have seemed to threaten the survival of the states. This is crucial because it points to the body-space relation of the nation state to be fundamentally *pragmatic*. It has to be pragmatic to survive.

Before 1914 the nation state did not rule the whole world. In his book *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said warns against the national monochrome,

“To ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrains in which colonizer and colonized co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential about the world in the *past* century.” (Said, 1993:xx; italics added.)

Precisely because the colonial empires did not fight national wars they could accommodate up to a point a very un-national cultural hybridity. But this point was reached in the *present* century when London and Paris enlisted colonial subjects to fight in their nation-state wars. These wars for national survival and metropolitan democracy exposed the reality of colonial masters and subjects and ruined the ‘interdependence of cultural terrains’. Living in the age of nation-states, most of us, I guess, are quite familiar with violence separating one state from the next, and, unfortunately, trained to the confined nationalist gaze upon the world. Nationalism and parochialism have engulfed academia and the state is treated in splendid isolation (the various euro-, afro-, and other centrism are only marginally better in this regard). The paradox of the nation state is the crushing drive to homogenise the world into identical nation states on the one hand, and the construction of absolute different national identities on the other hand.

Today, history has moved, perhaps, past the zenith of the nation state. Edward Said celebrates the hybrid counter-currents to nation state identity,

“Gone are the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprise. Instead we begin to sense that old authority cannot simply be replaced by new authority, but that new alignments made across borders, types, nations, and essences are rapidly coming into view, and it is those new alignments that now provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notion of *identity* that has been the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism.” xxv, italics in original).

Yet, is it likely that hybridity, the melange, bricolage, interstices, creolization, and all the other buzz-words used by hyper-modern cultural studies<sup>112</sup> to describe the new post (?) national situation will produce new *state* borders? Two developments point to opposite answers. Republika Srpska is an example of new state borders defined by culture, but a culture of extreme non-hybridity. Perhaps the EU is the only example of potentially new state borders based on hybridity, but hardly the kind of Orient-West hybridity Said is thinking of? In the end, the question is whether or not it is conceivable that the world has room for more than one state-system with one state-norm. Can the nation state co-exist with empires, colonies, tribal states, hybrid states, or is the homogenising pressure of the nation state too daunting to allow difference?

My preliminary conclusion to the question if there are spaces mapped by violence larger than the state, is a clear 'no': an empire is a form of state, not an entity larger than a state. My answer to the second question, whether the nation state is incorporated larger *wholes* is a qualified 'yes': the modern, colonial empires did incorporate nation states *and* colonial states into a highly heterogeneous whole.

### 3. Civilisation

'Civilisation' is relatively recent concept introduced by Voltaire and Adam Ferguson in the eighteenth century to denote an European *space*, and a movement of history towards the modern *condition*.<sup>113</sup> Yet, the philosophers of European 'civilisation' have struggled to this day to draw the borders of Europe dividing it from neighbouring civilisations in Asia, Africa, and America. An example is the map on page 30 in *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 72, No 3. illustrating Samuel Huntington's controversial article on civilisations. Does the tortured slash on the map following the early modern state-borders separating Sweden and Poland from Russia and the Ottoman Sultanate really capture the border of the European civilisation clashing with the Russian 'hinge' civilisation?

Not thoughts, not bodies, not towns, not 'peoples', not continents, not even oceans, but *states* define the coarse geography of civilisations. Surely states could, and often did, see themselves as defenders of X-civilisation, but the civilisation as such were never the agency of rule. States could obstruct bodily motion, could not.

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<sup>112</sup> See, inter alia, *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, London: Sage, 1995.

<sup>113</sup> See Jan Ifversen, *The Meaning of European Civilization - A Historical-Conceptual Approach*. Working Paper 51-97, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Aarhus, 1997b.



This does not imply, however, that no international community, law, discourse, or co-operation exist. But it is still individual states that are the founders, censors, and executors of actions agreed to in supra-statal bodies such as the UN or NATO. When Samuel Huntington speaks of a clash of civilisations, the entities with the capability to fight wars are still states, not civilisations; a point he agreed to fully in a discussion I had with him (Copenhagen, June 30, 1997). The bottom line of his argument is the old notion of a common civilisation which should make some states team up against the states of another *kulturgemeinschaft*, and the breaking apart of states unlucky enough to house population-groups from antagonistic civilisations. But again, divisions of culture only translates into territorial boundaries as state-borders, even if several states join forces against a common enemy, or a new state emerges. The structure of the front will remain statal. This indicates that a civilisation cannot express itself in the obstruction of bodily motion; they are not violently articulated spaces larger than states.

#### 4. Global Capitalism

Obviously economic power transgresses national boundaries, and there is a global flow of commodities including cultural products and information. Yet even the mightiest transnational corporation with a private security force and corrupt politicians at its call does not obstruct the bodily motion of humans on a state-scale. I am not arguing that corporations are not influencing the politics of states, of course they are, as we see them today falling over their own feet to enter the great oil-gamble of Central Asia, but the oil-companies have to secure their investments through sovereign states. People do not go to war for companies, only for states. It has nothing to do with the cause of a state being more noble than that of a company, but with the *territorial* insignificance of a company. You simply do not have to control very much land to do business. International capital does not transgress national boundaries of violence; there is no General Motors transnational territory established by violence outside states.

In my opinion, Karl Marx's distinction between *capital* and *money* provides a still valid basic explanation of the relationship between trans-national *capital*-accumulation and territories of national *money*. To cut a very long story short, I would suggest that two different geographies developed. Money led to the development of national territorial *spaces* in Europe with the first royal and urban mints in the 13th century leading up to the formation of nation-states in the 17th.

century. But capital is very different from money<sup>114</sup>, it developed transnational branches of production defined materially by their *products*, like cars, music or plastics. I have argued that the birth of capitalism can be traced to the transnational Dutch and English shipping industry in the 17th. century<sup>115</sup> competing world-wide to sell transport-services. The 'smallest spatial unit of capital'<sup>116</sup> is the transnational branch defined by competition for the sale of the same use-value: electronics, music, steel etc. and *not* the single company or the ill-conceived 'national capital'.<sup>117</sup> This means the spatial definition of, say, the electronics-branch are all the physical installations (factories, research facilities, offices, etc.) of all companies world-wide competing on this *use-value* defined market. In other words, capital has a global geography completely different from the nation state, carving out channels across the world's nation states for the global flow of capitalism.

In this perspective 'globalisation' is nothing new, but a current polarisation between global towns and marginalised rural vastness of the Earth. The world was always there, of course, with world-wide interdependencies recorded since earliest history, a point made forcefully by many writers, for example the anthropologist Eric Wolf and the historian F. Fernàndez-Armesto. Needless to say, the structure of this global interdependency develop historically, and the truth behind 'globalisation' is a new level of interdependence - so, for example, the global weight of international trade relative to domestic trade today has climbed up to reach the level of 1913... <sup>118</sup>

To sum up: neither civilisations nor global capitalism *as such* are spaces marked by violence. As such, they do not wage war and draw spatial borders. States may promote and often do, also by war, segments of the global economy and

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<sup>114</sup> Karl Marx used the whole of *Das Kapital* to reconstruct the difference between money and capital, by explaining surplus value. See in particular chapters 1-4 in Vol. 1 and 1-10 in Vol. 3.

<sup>115</sup> See Tin 1979a for a condensed presentation of this argument.

<sup>116</sup> 'Kapitalismens mindste virkelighed' as I called it in Danish. See Tin 1977b, pp 306-337; Tin 1979a; Tin 1979b, 420-438, 463-534; the most recent formulation of this theory is Tin 1995. The quest for the spatial specificity of capital and money and the Marxist critique of the political economy was my personal point of departure for developing a general spatial analysis of contemporary society, of which the present study is the latest attempt.

<sup>117</sup> The analysis of the 17. and 18. century English and Dutch shipping industry is my most elaborate analysis of a branch of industry as 'the smallest spatial unit' of capital; Tin 1979b, pp. 297-438.

<sup>118</sup> Paul Hirst, *Globalisering, Demokrati og Civilsamfund*, København, 1997.

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specific sectors of a border of civilisation, but they do so as states. Empire was a particular form of heterogeneous state and some colonial empires contained both a nation state and colonial states; nevertheless being a state, empires are not spaces marked by violence larger than states. To understand how state space is structured *inside* the state border, we must examine how the state clashes with human bodies at the borders of ethnic spaces, towns, and houses.

# 14

## WHY S.E.T.H.? - ETHNIC SPACE

Of all violent spaces on a scale from the planet down to the human body, the nation state, it was argued above, is the most encompassing and the state border the outermost. We now move inside the state searching for ethnic space (town space and house space follow in the two subsequent chapters). How does violence link ethnicity and space? A brief exploration of the topography of (i) ethnic space; (ii) the point of enunciation of ethnic space; and (iii) the border of ethnic space may provide a tentative answer.

### 1. Ethnic Space

The problem of ethnic space is the tension between state space and individual ethnic identity. To analyse the violent clashes constituting ethnic space one must cross a theoretical no-mans land. Almost all studies of ethnicity attempt to tackle the structural and historical embeddedness of human life employing an anthropological perspective moving *up-wards*, from individual identities towards, but rarely engaging state rule. On the other hand, most analyses of state rule tend to apply a political science methodology seldom reaching down to the individually lived life. My approach throughout this study is also *down-wards* from state rule, yet with an ambition of conceptualising the interface of state rule and individual identity. I suggest applying the terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic’ wider and slightly different from standard usage.<sup>119</sup> In my view, all identities structured by the belief in a human ‘essence’ are ‘ethnic’. Anything can provide the essence of somebody’s

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<sup>119</sup> “The term ‘ethnicity’ has been used”, notes an introduction to the subject, “to describe human social interaction, particularly in relation to groups that would previously have been described as ‘tribes’, and to minority migrant groups and their ‘host’ societies.” (Banks, 1996: i)

ethnicity: homeland, decent, traditions, language, religion, etc.<sup>120</sup> It is not the particular factual content of a discourse that makes it 'ethnic', but the move from individual identity to ethnic space in a violent, collective process. Ethnic space should be explored as a topography written by violent clashes of state rule and individual resistance. Paradoxically ethnicity is an individual fact *irreducible to state rule*, yet state rule demarcates the violent border of ethnic space. Ethnic discourses reveal how individuals imagine they belong to certain groups and certain spaces, but the violent clashes with the state may map altogether different spaces.<sup>121</sup>

Let me by way of an example try to make this point clear. A young man told me he was an Eritrean, born 26 years ago in Addis Abeba, in 'exile', as he pointed out. He had lived in the capital of Ethiopia until his 16th year when he went abroad to Sweden, where he still lives today. In all his life he had only spent one week in Eritrea, and he had no plans of moving 'home'. Yet he very strongly defined himself as 'Eritrean'. I shall not discuss emigrant identities here, only note that if he says he is Eritrean, and not Ethiopian or Swedish, he *is* Eritrean. Ethnic identity is clearly a subjective matter at the individual level. Residing peacefully in Sweden, he can of course claim to have an Eritrean identity, but can he also claim to be a remote island of an Eritrean ethnic *space*? A map of the human heart charting all ethnic identities would show strange insular and non-contiguous shapes not shaped by violence and *impossible to defend*. Had he and some friends challenged the Swedish state's treatment of them as 'Eritreans' with violent collective action, for example like the train-terrorism carried out by South Moluccans in the Netherlands<sup>122</sup> they would have marked an ethnic space for a moment. As it is, his ethnic identity is respected by the state as his private business; there is no Eritrean violence and no Eritrean ethnic space in Sweden. The actual expanse of land called Eritrea today is not shaped by the spatial whereabouts of all the bodies containing individual 'Eritrean' ethnic identities, but is a space won in war against the Ethiopian state by a government claiming to represent an 'Eritrean' national identity composed officially by nine ethnic groups...

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<sup>120</sup> Among certain Tamil groups in Sri Lanka the particular way to mix curry powder can be one of the most important components in communal friendship or enmity. (Daniel, 1996:165)

<sup>121</sup> As indeed was the case with the Zulu ethnic space. The general points made in this chapter are carried further in the investigation of ethnic violence in South Africa, 1996; see chapter 22.

<sup>122</sup> Dec. 1975 a group of South Moluccans, descendants of former security forces employed by the Dutch in Indonesia, stopped a train and took hostages; see Herman and Bouma, 1981.

In his book *Charred Lullabies*, an ‘anthropography of violence’, Valentine Daniel has a chapter on “Suffering Nation and Alienation” reflecting on Tamils in Britain. I find his investigation of general relevance to the problem of ethnic space. He poignantly demonstrates the Heideggerian anxieties resulting from the non-identity of individual ethnic (Tamil) identity and Tamil ethnic space. A non-identity further compounded by each individual identity composed by several different layers (including gender, generation, class, district) jarring variously against the fundamental conflict of Tamil ethnic space and Sri Lankan national (state) space. National space is the space of the Sri Lanka nation state, and to change the borders against the will of the government in Colombo takes war, i.e. Tamil secessionism. But a state waging war against Tamils becomes unavailable to Sri Lankan Tamils, it is no longer ‘their’ state. Their state is a future Eelam, existing only in the violence of The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (and The Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front) mapping a Tamil ethnic space. Some of the salient features of ethnic identity may stand out by contrasting them with their counter-points in national identity.

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Some contrasts of national identity and ethnic identity

	<u>National identity</u>	<u>Ethnic identity</u>
Space/body relation	pragmatic	essentialistic
Violence	low	high
Political unit	state	<i>volk</i>
Collective	majority	minority
Tradition	solid	fragile
Voluntarism	low	high
Mobilisation	low	high
Flexibility	high	low

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Ethnic identity has a high degree of voluntarism because people can choose consciously to be ‘truly’, for example Tamil, by talking, eating, decorating their homes, observing the customs and rituals etc. in manner they think constitutes Tamil-ness. The point is the components of ethnic identity becoming visible and chosen. Valentine Daniel employs Heidegger’s term ‘occurrentness’ to denote this condition.<sup>123</sup> Also part of this condition is active involvement, for example, by Tamil immigrants in Europe financially supporting the ethnic war in Sri Lanka.

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<sup>123</sup>

Daniel, 1996:154-194.

Mobilisation has to be high to secure a contiguous ethnic space; this is obvious in north Sri Lanka, but also in refugee-camps and immigrant ghettos. In a violently polarised situation the readiness to compromise on ethnic identity is low, abused as treachery by those enunciating “our” ethnicity. Further characteristics is the essentialistic body/space relation, the construction of the ethnic collective always as a threatened minority, regardless of actual sizes of political groupings. Finally the collective ‘core’ ethnic tradition is projected as fragile, surrounded by enemies. It is also fragile, however, because it is the (re-)constructed ‘cultural capital’ of the community, contested and enunciated by the self-proclaimed leaders (the ethnic entrepreneurs).

Nationalism, on the other hand, is on the opposite end of the same continuums. In situations with low violence there is low voluntarism and mobilisation; the tradition is solid because it is just there, un-reflected. When the state is at war (external or internal) all the parameters will move in the direction of ethnic identity and essentialism. The state will be essentialised, inflexible, violent, with high mobilisation, involvement and voluntarism.

Ethnicity enters the house, the town, and the state; ethnic space overlaps all the other SETH-spaces (indeed, they all overlap). In *house* space ethnicity is expressed in private beliefs and customs. People are free to worship strange religions or speak despised minority languages in their homes (the state cannot prevent it). In *state* space ethnicity may fuse with expressions of loyalty to the state (the flag, the anthem, the national sports teams, the national language etc.) and produce public nationalism and ethnicity regulated by law. In *ethnic* space ethnicity is defined by not being the Other ethnic group; the ethnicity of ethnic groups violently breaking away from ‘their’ state creating a new state will become nationalism. Finally, the interaction of ethnicity with *town* space perhaps is the most complex of the four; I return to this question in the following chapter dealing with town space.

As the reader may have noticed, I have refrained from using the term ‘tribe’ in my roll-call of the four SETH-spaces, despite the fact that the noun ‘tribe’ would fit in more smoothly with the three other nouns of state, town, and house than the cumbersome term ‘ethnic space’. The problem is, however, that any noun signifying the space of ‘ethnic space’ in the substantive manner of state, town, and house, such as ‘ethnie’, ‘ethnos’, ‘tribe’ or even ‘people’ proclaim an identity between space and discourse which is closing the case even before investigation begins. Without doubt, the most durable claim to essential identity between ethnic identity and ethnic space is language. After genetics have demolished racial

essence,<sup>124</sup> revisionist historiography has rocked the foundation of core territorial 'ethnos',<sup>125</sup> and cultural studies have shown tradition to be invented,<sup>126</sup> linguistics is the last stand of ethnic essence. But it is under heavy fire from at least two sides. Groups and languages do not fit one-to-one. For example, Afrikaners and Coloureds in South Africa share language (Afrikaans) but not ethnicity;<sup>127</sup> the Han Chinese share ethnicity but not spoken language.<sup>128</sup> The growing awareness of languages as neither static nor self-contained, but highly contested and fluid make them unstable foundations for claims to ethnic essence.

The slip from the adjective 'ethnic' to the noun 'tribe' is of profound importance for the interpretation of ethnicity. In her outstanding deconstruction of apartheid discourse Aletta Norval returns again and again to 'that impossible object of identity' (Norval, 1996). The ethnicity of group 'x' is not definable in itself as a set of positive features, but only negatively, as that which it is not.<sup>129</sup> Afrikaner nationalism, for example, was a quest for a core-identity, which was forever elusive. It could only be reproduced by setting the Afrikaner apart from competing ideas of order and being, from the Afrikaner traitors, the British, the Jews, the Blacks etc. all that a 'true' Afrikaner was not (Norval, 1996:95). To this day Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Borolong, Masai, and seven more African tribes cut in stone and named by a white artist, Mitford-Barberton, decorate the Oud Mutual insurance company's famous art-deco building in Darling Street, Cape Town. On this Africa's first skyscraper, completed in 1940, they insist with their stony faces on tribal identities, on tribal

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<sup>124</sup> Genetic research has established greater variation within than between 'races'. "The demonstrated absence of large differences among the genes of human groups demolish at last one myth upon which racial discrimination is based." (Barbujani, 1996:16)

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Østergård, 1993.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. the flood of 'invention-of' books, picking up the cue from Terence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm, editors of *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

<sup>127</sup> An important voice in the discussion of the complex relations of language and ethnicity in South Africa is Neville Alexander, 1989.

<sup>128</sup> See Søren Clausen, *Kinas Nationalism*, Workingpaper 52-97, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Århus, 1997.

<sup>129</sup> The Russian linguist and ethnographer Gasan Gusienov uses the term 'verbal fetishism' to describe ethnic discourse, "A word fetish (whether "positive" or "negative") is normally not subject to examination, for its true antonym is not a word but sacral silence." (Guseinov, 1990:408)



essences. Yet, the reality these fantasmatic tribes-men of Africa picture are not 'black' ethnicity, but 'white' ethnicity mirrored in that which it is not.

The negativity of ethnicity does not mean, of course, that it cannot draw borders with violence. Quite the opposite, ethnicity is kept alive exactly by the violent drawing and re-drawing of borders dividing it from that which it is not. The perspective of Aletta Norval's deconstruction of the individual ethnic identity is terrifying, because what she is saying is that ethnic identity never can co-exist in peace with the Other. Perhaps state rule can be peaceful when it is not challenged, but ethnic rule will always challenge *itself*. The horrible truth is that 'we' do not kill to get rid of the others, but to confirm who 'we' truly are. As the Danish semiotician, poet, and cultural critic, Per Åge Brandt, wrote in a paper on ethnic passions

“‘I’ hate ‘them’, because ‘we’ have to suffer in order to be truly  
‘us’.”<sup>130</sup>

For all its insights however, deconstructing discourse only gives us half the story; the violence of the state is missing. As I stated in the beginning of this chapter, ethnic space should be discussed as a clash of individual identity with state rule. Individuals can form ethnic communities and fight for recognition, but the state can also form ethnic communities and rule through them. Violence at the ethnic border cuts both ways, it is both rule and resistance.

A crude, but effective demonstration of 'ethnicity' as *rule* was found in colonial Kenya. The British issued an order whereby every 'native' should wear a small capsule in a string around the neck, containing a tag indicating the tribal 'identity' of the person according to a schedule of tribes constructed by the colonial administration. This tribal identification confined every native to certain spaces, 'reserves'. We see here the link between state (the British Empire), state rule (colonial administration), borders (reserves), violence (policing), naming (tribe x), and essence (religion, language, tradition, etc.) adding up to ethnic spaces. But a person carrying a tag around his neck saying 'Kikuyu' may well say 'yes, I am a Kikuyu'. The state can tap deeply held individual identities of customs, religions, languages, and traditional authority, or try to impose gross constructions as the bizarre 'Ciskeian' ethnic identity in South Africa.<sup>131</sup> Ethnic space is always

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<sup>130</sup> Brandt, 1993:8.

<sup>131</sup> See Janet Hodgson, "Ntaba kaNdoda, Orchestrating Symbols for National Unity in Ciskei", in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, [1988?]; Anonymous, "Ethnicity and Pseudo-Ethnicity in the Ciskei", in Vail, 1989.

ambiguous in relation to rule because it can be a weapon against state rule, and a weapon supporting state rule. Talking already in 1976 from the point of view of the state a South African revolutionary wrote,

“Politically mobilised groups of people [such as nations and castes] behave very differently. By describing both as ‘ethnic groups’ such crucial difference are obscured, analysis becomes arbitrary, and political opportunists can have field day claiming to represent bogus ‘isms’ where there are none...

To call both collectives ‘ethnic groups’ cannot help to clarify our analysis; indeed it may prevent us from distinguishing a *legitimate* political claim from a bogus one, or *legitimate* aspects of a struggle from bogus aspects introduced by self-interested groups.”<sup>132</sup>

The pivotal word is ‘legitimate’: who decides which religious-linguistic-ethnic group-claims are legitimate? Violence does, not meaning. This has nothing to do with the inherent legitimacy or otherwise of the individual claim of belonging to an ethnic group, but with the fact that ethnic *space* always is mapped by violence. In the historical context in which Alexander wrote, violence of the apartheid state bestowed legitimacy upon ten ‘ethnic’ homelands. Today Neville Alexander has become the respected director of the parliamentary language commission in South Africa; violence has changed the state of South Africa and new ethnic claims are deemed legitimate. This is very much an ongoing process as, for example, the current [1998] struggles for recognition of Khoisan ethnic space demonstrates.

In most colonies ethnographers produced utilitarian knowledge fixing, dividing, joining, and transforming ethnic identities essential for indirect, tribal rule or endeavoured to deconstruct ethnicity paving the way for nation building. Numbering tribes/ethnic groups on a given territory illustrates the impossible positive identification of ethnic essence and space: “In Nigeria there were 125 different ethnic groups officially in 1964... in 1997 there are officially some 250.”; “The exact number of tribes in Kenya is difficult to determine. In the 1969 Population Census there were 42 Kenyan African groups.”; “There are up to 450 different ethnic groups [in Equatorial Africa, 1996]”<sup>133</sup> No figure will ever be

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<sup>132</sup> Neville Alexander, writing his pioneering study on the nation under the pseudonym of No Sizwe. (No Sizwe, 1979:135; italics added)

<sup>133</sup> On Nigeria, Mette Bovin, *From Emirs to Proletarians: Social Inequality within Fulani Societies in West Africa*, p. 2; unpub. paper delivered at Nordic Africa Institute, Sep. 1997; on Kenya, Anders Närman, *Inequality in Kenya - the Ethnic Dimension*, p. 1, unpub. paper delivered at Nordic Africa Institute, Sep. 1997; on Equatorial Africa, Espen Wæhle, *Foragers of Equatorial Africa*:

‘correct’ and all three writers (and indeed most current anthropological writing) are careful to problematise the notion of ‘tribes’. The proclaimed and believed simple tribal identity of space and essence boggles confronted with the individual human. The check-list just never seems to be exhaustive when it comes to counting *individual* persons in or out of the tribe.

But this only intensify the crushing impact of ethnicity as a tool of rule. If the Bantu Affairs officer proves my hair is curly enough to hold a pencil (one of the official apartheid tests of race) the apartheid municipality can bulldoze my house. If the militia think I have got the wrong surname on my ID-card they can kill me. If the government detects ‘impure’ blood in me they can execute me as a parasite. The rulers decide the rules of the game and violence cracks down. Ethnic space is spatial and tangible like the other three SETH spaces, because it too is defined by violence, hitting human bodies crying, running, fighting somewhere...

## 2. Point of Enunciation of Ethnic Space

I suggest the grave is a spatial point with a double function of sacred place and a non-transcendental embodiment of the life lived by the community in the past.<sup>134</sup> It is an open question what it takes concretely for a site to be a grave in the precise meaning of serving as a spatial link with the past and the present of a community. The grave probably does not have to contain a corpse, indeed most corpses are probably burnt or otherwise made to disappear.<sup>135</sup> A communal ritual on a Sunday in 1946 in a small village in Southern France described very sensitively by the French Marxist Henri Lefebvre is an example of interpellation of an ethnic community by a priest from the position of the grave.

“[A] docile, easy land which rises and falls almost imperceptibly as if with the breath of the distant mountains. Scattered farms and then, around the church and the graveyard, a few houses grouped together, the village. A green land; meadows, their brooks full with autumn rain. The village still huddles closely around its dead...

Mass begins, mundane, reduced to its bare essentials, with no grand organ, canon’s kiss or plumed verger. Basically, this Catholic Mass revives the oldest form of dramatic art, tragedy: an audience which participates in the action, a choir which responds to the protagonist, who conjures up the

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*Processes of Indigenization as Response to Inequality*, p. 2, unpub. paper delivered at Nordic Africa Institute, Sep. 1997.

<sup>134</sup> There is a large literature on sacred places inspired by Mircea Eliade’s famous *Le sacré et le profane*, Paris, 1949.

<sup>135</sup> A pioneering study on churchyards is undertaken by Johan Fjord Jensen, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Århus.

founder of the community, his life, his destiny and the inevitable catastrophe, the sacrifice and death of the hero. In the ceremony, the hero comes back to life and the participants identify with him; through him they can reform a community which is both cosmic and human.” (Lefebvre, 1991:220)

The graves were the ‘roots’ of the community, in so far as they linked the living generations of the community with its past ancestors. However, there were two levels in the ritual of the mass, the human gathering of the village community and the cosmic gathering of the religious community, negotiated by the priest. This dual human-cosmic function points back to the ambiguity of ethnic space mentioned above: it is mapped by rule *and* resistance to rule. As a focal point for ethnic space the grave becomes the focal point as well for the ambiguity between a simple enunciation of a human community of the flesh and a religious institution enunciating a cosmic community. In Central Asia, for example, communities try to re-establish their past by worshipping on the few surviving graves of Muslim and pre-Muslim Saints, a human-cosmic practice embroiled in political struggles.<sup>136</sup> Mass in the village church enunciated the essence of a community, but *which* community? Lefebvre’s account indicated how *several* communities struggled to speak from the same grave.

“Where is the human community for these people in black I see filing back to their seats, their eyes half-closed, their hands clasped piously together, absorbed in the dreariness of what their mouths and their souls have just tasted? A caricature of a community!” (Lefebvre, 1991:222)

The ritual community that Sunday in the village church was a caricature, perhaps, of at least two ethnic communities: the community of the archaic village and the community of catholic Christianity. Lefebvre pointed out that ritual, belief, and communion has been flattened, weakened, debased with the march of modernity.<sup>137</sup> From expressing the village-community’s bond with nature the ritual now only expressed the villagers alienation within the catholic church. Alienation, a

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<sup>136</sup> See Colin Thurborn’s *The Lost Heart of Asia*, London: Penguin Books, 1995, for a well-informed, well-travelled and beautifully written account of people caught up in the rival assertions of ethnic and state space in former Soviet Central Asia.

<sup>137</sup> Jeremy Boissevain, writing forty years later, has detected the opposite development, a revitalising of ritual concurrent with modernity; see his “Play and identity. Ritual change in a Maltese village”, in Jeremy Boissevain, ed., *Revitalizing European Rituals*, London: Routledge, 1992.

central concept in Lefebvre's *oeuvre*, had separated these villagers from their organic community, the village

The conflict between village and church is played out not only in a historical duality unfolding during the centuries, but also in a duality in the present spatial structure. The crypt is always the foundation for the pulpit. The point of enunciation of the human, ethnic community is not the church as such but the grave. In Malta the dead of the village were buried under the church floor until the British stopped the custom because it was considered 'non-hygienic'. The village church-house only embodied the religious institution managing the power of the local grave; the catholic church itself ultimately talks from the grave of Saint Peter.

Perhaps Lefebvre was right suggesting the village was once an ethnic community now emasculated by the church and no longer defending their borders with violence and ritual, but that was only one aspect of the ambiguity of ethnic space expressed on the grave. There was a third community in the church that morning. Symbols of the nation had found their way into the church, and the ritual had been citizen-ised and nation-alised.

"I can see Joan of Arch in her suit of amour; the Tricolour spreads its folds around her painted plaster breastplate; a plaque carries the names of the dead of the last war ( the Great War, as the old men have long called it...)."216)

In 1914 the state led the enthusiastic villagers as newly minted citizens to defend the state as the embodiment of their communities of village and Christianity.<sup>138</sup> Yet, the grave is not the proper place to enunciate the national discourse, and the Tricolour is only present discreetly in the background of the church, but it is there, lest the villagers and the priest should forget that the state rules.

### **3. The Ethnic Border**

The ambiguity found both in ethnic space and at the point of enunciation of ethnic space, the grave, is not surprisingly also found in the border of ethnic space. difference between state borders and ethnic borders and their point of enunciation is demonstrated in Roger Friedland's and Richard Hecht's interesting comparison of the political violence in Jerusalem and Ayodhya in India.

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<sup>138</sup> See Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France 1870 - 1914*. Stanford, 1976.

“In the case of Jerusalem and Ayodhya, contesting possession of a sacred site has been used by groups who wish to change the basis of governmental authority from a nation grounded in mutual consensus and democratic laws to a religio-ethnic group ground in divine providence, that draws its existence and coherence from the Gods.”<sup>26</sup>)

For the extremist ethnic-religious groups the true victory would be the day when society was interpellated from the grave and not from the throne anymore. India's parliament in New Delhi is not placed in a sacred centre and Hindi-ethnic discourse enunciated there will not carry the same weight and authenticity as the same discourse enunciated from the grave. Of course politicians can propagate Hindi-nationalism in parliament, but it will be a replay of a discourse defined at the grave. What can be enunciated in parliament is the national discourse including the national law governing the sacred centres; this discourse cannot originate outside the parliament. I will argue we see the same parliamentary ethnic impotence in Jerusalem. Even located in the holy city of Jerusalem, a speaker in the Knesset cannot enunciate the essence of the Jewish nation as a priest on the Temple Mountain could. If the Hindu-extremist groups should succeed in turning India into a theocratic state it is probable they will face the problems apartheid South Africa or Netanyahu's Israel experienced. The internal quest for purity is illusive and self-destructive; state space is structured differently from ethnic space.

To stop ethnic violence it is necessary to change the structure of the border of the violently contested space from an ethnic border to a state border. Only the pragmatism of the body-space relation articulated by the state-border can end ethnic violence. The structural difference between ethnicity (the discourse of ethnic space) and nationalism (the discourse of nation state space) is all too often overlooked (see the schema on national and ethnic identity above). When the nation state goes to war the national discourse will resemble the ethnic discourse: the 'total' violence of war will re-draw the external borders and essentialise the 'people' in a manner resembling ethnicity. Politicians will hold speeches at the monuments to the Fatherland and the graves of its dead. No discussion will be tolerated neither by the state nor by the discursive community about who 'we' are. Internal violence resembling ethnic cleansing will suddenly displace democratic rights, and round up all 'foreign elements' as it happened with the internment of American citizens of Japanese decent in USA after Pearl Harbour.

When the ethnic groups stop war, on the other hand, the ethnic discourse will move towards a national discourse. A measure of pragmatism must be displayed in negotiations with the Other suspending for some time the violent

essentialism.<sup>139</sup> The point is that ethnic peace is possible only if ethnicity is scrapped in favour of state pragmatism premising policies such as minority rights, affirmative action etc. on democratic rights shared by the *whole* population implemented by governments of national unity, reconciliation, salvation, etc. To take that step is particularly difficult because democracy cannot be the precondition only the result. And if the state manages this transition, it will still be faced with the dilemma: can you safeguard minorities as groups (racial, ethnic, linguistic, sexual) without subscribing to some kind of group essentialism? Can democracy defend group rights beyond individual human-rights, or is it a self-defeating proposition? This was one of the tough political problems facing the Constitutional Assembly drafting the new South African constitution.<sup>140</sup>

I will argue that no ethnic group has ever produced durable new borders surviving peace. Israel might seem to be the only example of durable if highly contested ethnic borders, but they rely on outside support. The original 1948 borders were colonial borders, drawn up and guaranteed by outside imperial forces; the current peace process can be seen as an effort to substitute essentialist ethnic borders with pragmatic state borders Israel itself can sustain. Ethnic warriors establish borders by gutting every trace of impure culture and ‘purifying’ their land in cataclysmic self-destruction, as we see in Bosnia or Rwanda. But in the end ethnically motivated border-contests, to my knowledge, settle along older, state-created provincial, departmental, etc. borders. The state can create ethnic sub-borders by its own volition, a careful pragmatic sham because ethnic essence is never identical with space. Look at the maps the South African homelands or the Soviet Union republics with their tortured borders full of territorial pockets belonging to neighbouring ‘tribes’ and ‘nationalities’. This discussion will be continued in Chapter 22 on the relation of Zulu ethnic space to South African state space.

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<sup>139</sup> There is a considerable literature on ending civil wars, see for example Timothy Sisk, 1995, for a formalised description on how to negotiate peace in a civil war in six steps, almost a manual on restructuring an ethnic border into an (internal) state border.

<sup>140</sup> Iris Young, 1996, has an important theoretical discussion, stopping short of a solution; Donald Horowitz, 1991, has an elaborate constitutional suggestion.

# 15 |

## WHY S.E.T.H.? - TOWN SPACE

“At the dawn of history, the city is already a mature form,”

Lewis Mumford stated boldly at the outset of his sweeping *The City in History* (1961:4). But what is this thing ‘a city’, and where is it? The point of the following few pages is not to discuss how cities developed historically, but to trace the main lines of the spatial structure of town space. (At this stage I shall not distinguish between town, city, and urban, or non-town, country-side, and rural). As we shall see, it is plausible that the town could have grown out of all four spaces of SETH: as a *functional* separation from the rural non-town, as a centre of *stately* power, as a *sacred* centre, or as a *village* of houses. Speculations on the *origins* of the urbane functions may clarify how the town is *structurally* related to the spaces of SETH today.

### 1. Town space and non-town space

I will argue that neither the relations of town space to state space nor to ethnic or to house space, constitute the town as town. The town is incomprehensible without the non-town, and the earliest archaeological remains of built structures must be understood as the antithesis of a now invisible rural life. Countryside and town develop in the same historical movement. In this sense the town is everywhere: either positively as town or negatively as non-town, the Otherness of towns. “Town” is a category only existing in unity with that which it is not, just as “state”, “ethnic space”, and “house”, and like them, it is a global structure, covering the face of the Earth.

#### (a) Town border

The constitutive town-border, and the only *spatial* border of town space, is the border separating town and countryside, town and ‘non-town’. Throughout



history this border has been marked by walls and laws. Meticulously mayors have mapped town borders by the politico-legal reach of their municipal privilege. Yet this has only on and off coincided with the walls, the functional urban edge.

If you drive from a deep rural area into any big city you know you have somewhere crossed the urban-rural divide. The functional border of town and country is always concrete, *somewhere* between the twin poles of town-square and homestead, but where exactly? Massive sociological effort has been spent on answering this question, but even the best indicators of density of population, type of dwellings, location of employment, etc. struggle to capture how the multiple functions of individual humans (for example workers - farmers ? - migrating between homestead and city) in their totality constitute town space. The Durban Metropolitan Council, for example, tried in 1995 to count how many people lived in the city. After expeditions, including aerial surveys, into the impenetrable, densely populated squatter camps ringing the city, and all kinds of intricate sociological and demographic calculations they estimated the population of Durban to have doubled-up in twenty years to 3 million.<sup>141</sup> Most of the growth was due to influx from the countryside sparking massive violence in the shacklands on the city edge. Violence such as this map the border of town space.

This violence is about *food* and access to the surplus appropriated by the world's towns. The border is established by the millennia-old functional secretion of that privileged part of humanity that eat but do not grow food. The organisation and execution of the violence necessary for anybody to live separated from the place of origin of food without dying of hunger is the condition of existence of the town. Fernand Braudel pointed out that people had always fought over food.

“The town-country confrontation is the first and longest class struggle the world has known.” (Braudel, 1973:373).

The precondition for this truly ‘mother of all class-struggles’ is the spatial separation of the mouth from the foodstuffs; the content of this class-struggle is the myriad ways invented by the town to force the country-side to feed it.

## **(b) Town space**

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<sup>141</sup> In fact the unit they ended up counting was not the politico-legal space of Metropolitan Durban, but the ‘Durban Functional Region’; see the *Settlement Areas and Population Estimate Project. Durban Metropolitan Area, 1995*, by Urban Strategy Department, Corporate Services, City of Durban, 1995.

Non-town is one possible origin of the town: not as a throne, not as a grave, not as a house, but as a square, a site slowly filled with functions of exchange, crafty labour and accumulation, a site becoming urban.

“Thus even before the city is a place of fixed residence, it begins as a meeting place to which people periodically return: the magnet comes before the container, and this ability to attract non-residents to it for intercourse and spiritual stimulus no less than trade remains one of the essential criteria of the city, a witness to its inherent dynamism, as opposed to the more fixed and indrawn form of the village, hostile to the outsider.” (Mumford, 1961:9-10)

This inherent dynamism of towns eventually led their total domination of the world's country-side. In one word, the consequence of what Fernand Braudel called ‘the miracle of the first great urban centuries in Europe’ was *capitalism*. He pointed out that here for the very first time in world civilisation,

“a new state of mind was established, broadly that of an early, still faltering Western capitalism - a collection of rules, possibilities, calculations, the art of both getting rich and of living... Capitalism and towns were basically the same thing in the West.” (Braudel, 1973:400).

Inside the town the houses condensed in functional groups along streets and in neighbourhoods, reflected in such London street names as Tanners Road, Potters Lane, and Goldsmith Avenue. Here patriarchy intersected with the need to defend common functionally defined privilege: tanners, potters, goldsmiths, merchants, guild-masters, workers, clerks, etc.; they all constituted themselves as *classes*. At the same time the urban population were united in living separated from the place of origin of food: they were the urban class. Only after exploiting the country-side did urban class-struggle pit workers against capitalists, and never with the toll of life comparable to the suffering of the world's peasants.

The members of the households in the non-town, on the other hand, did not belong to classes in the urban meaning of the word. The women, children, and slaves ruled by the patriarch did not constitute classes of their own (a class of women, a class of children, a class of slaves), but were split up in separate, rural households. In the non-town they all belonged, as it were, to the same class: those living where the food was grown. Confronting the country-side the town was always without mercy, and the taxing of rural toil has been ruthless throughout history. Terrible twentieth century examples of the urban-rural struggle are Stalin's war against the

peasants in the 1930s<sup>142</sup> and the experiment of industrialising Africa on the back of impoverished peasants supplying under-priced foodstuffs to the workers and bureaucrats in the towns.<sup>143</sup>

In his magisterial exploration of world history up to year 1800, Fernand Braudel let 'the fighting relationship' of town and state define three forms of towns: *open* towns, the towns of ancient Greece and Rome; the towns *closed* in on themselves, the medieval European cities; and finally the *subject* towns in the European early modern period.

"The state usually won and the town then remained subject under a heavy yoke. The miracle of the first great urban centuries in Europe was that the town won entirely, at least in Italy, Flandres and Germany." (Braudel, 1973:398)

Braudel's exploration ends around year 1800, but taking his insight up to the present, one may speculate if not the mega-cities of today could escape the yoke of the state like medieval Italy, Germany and Flandres and change into open, global towns incorporating zones of industrialised, agricultural Home Counties.<sup>144</sup> It is important to point out that the functional distinction between town and non-town in itself has nothing to do with states. A global town-network parting from the utterly marginalised space of global non-town is a possibility inherent in town space; up till the present, however, the state-system has set the limits for towns.

### (c) Point of enunciation of town space

Above, in Chapter 12, I suggested that the discourse of towns was enunciated by *the rich*. The rich is not a person in *singular* as king, priest, and patriarch. Why the rich and not, for example, the mayor? With a built-in spatial duality resembling how the religious house is built upon the grave as a pulpit for enunciating ethnic space, the town-hall is built adjacent to the square, as a rostrum for enunciation of the town discourse. In the town of Maastricht in Holland there is a pretty 18th. century town square with a solid town-hall. Next to the town-hall a whole flank of bourgeoisie facades express the real business of the square. The square is a market square, a meeting place of commodities and their owners

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<sup>142</sup> See Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow. Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, London: Arrow Books, 1988.

<sup>143</sup> See Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1988.

<sup>144</sup> See Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991; Manuel Castells, "European Cities, the Informational Society and the Global Economy", in *New Left Review* 204, March/April 1994.

(including labour-power). Exchange and competition is a collective process, but not taking place in a vacuum. As we have seen with the other SETH spaces state rule and human individuality clash. This is no different in town space; individuals produce, trade, and consume; the state tries to control these processes, ultimately concerned with securing rule and surviving war.<sup>145</sup> A space developed focused on the square suitable for altogether new discourses, torn free from the organic, eternal bond to the land. Self-interest, change, republic, and revolution could be enunciated on the town-square.<sup>146</sup>

The rich *burghers* of Maastricht guarded their market-square, from the town-hall, but also from the houses that circle the square and they enunciated collectively town space discourse. In an analysis of Los Angeles town space Edward Soja argues strongly for town space as a centre-periphery structured region, with a town hall in the centre and a violently defended border along the edge.

“In Los Angeles as in every city, the nodality of the centre defines and gives substance to the specificity of the urban, its distinctive social and spatial meaning...

Perhaps more than ever before, downtown serves in ways no other place can as a strategic vantage point, an urban panopticon counterpoised to the encirclement of watchful military ramparts and defensive outer cities.”  
(Soja, 1989:234, 236)

Even in Los Angeles, the paradigmatic ‘postmodern’ city,<sup>147</sup> we find the town-hall right in the middle of the central business district, at the ground zero of the market, enunciated by the signs of a new multi-media urban discourse, including the neon billboards crowning the corporate towers. It is a ‘hyper capitalistic urban geography’ faithfully updating what we found in mercantilist Maastricht and even in medieval Sienna.

## 2. Town space and state space

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<sup>145</sup> A wide-ranging source on state-town administrative interaction is Robson, 1954.

<sup>146</sup> In Sienna, the overlapping of ethnic-religious and town space got a particularly acute expression with a square for the town, piazza del Campo crowned by the tower of Mangia, and another square for the church, piazza del Duomo, with a tower that was lower. As in many other Italian towns civic life was focused on the market square; see Zevi, 1997:302.

<sup>147</sup> See Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, London: Verso, 1990.

If not as a market, the town could have begun as a site of state power; as a throne. But if it did, how did town space then differ from state space? Examples of state-generated towns can be found in many parts of the world throughout the span of history. At the dawn of history in central Mexico we find an example lending itself to this interpretation.

“The intensification of agriculture and its expansion to all of the favourable niches gave rise to the Early Formative (1500-600 BC) villages and towns known in the archaeological literature. These are located in the southern half of the of the Valley of Mexico. There were monumental buildings and public spaces in which performances of rituals were concentrated... In what was probably a redistributive economy, the agricultural centre received more goods and labour than it returned, a process of unequal exchange which led to the differentiation of residential patterns and levels of consumption... Agriculture, sedentarism, specialization, and social differentiation occurred accompanied by violence.” (De Lameiras, 1988: 94-95)

The Mexican story contains the three key components, all of whom must be present simultaneously, for a state to generate a town: a *functional border* separating those that grow food from those living without growing food; a *surplus* generated in the rural (and urban) areas accumulated exclusively in the town; a *state* comprising both urban and rural space, with its soldiers and tax men disciplining and exploiting ‘its’ peasants, and ‘its’ labourers building houses for state-rituals in the town. Presumably such a town initially could have been a site for state ritual and not for habitation.<sup>148</sup> The king on the throne enunciated a space *different* from the town, and a throne could stand without a town, but when the throne became a ‘monumental building’ a town was born, a functional separation from non-town instituted, fed by accumulating non-town surplus in the houses of the state. At this point the state had created something different from itself: town-space. The process has continued up to our own time with a modern throne like Brasilia built upon the empty *sertao* generating a town space different from the state space of Brazil enunciated from Oscar Niemeyer’s parliament.

Capital towns may have emerged as expressions of state rule at the dawn of history, but they were never just states and states were never the same as towns (and even less so secondary towns without a throne). Towns could not be reduced to expressions of state rule because the townspeople all had their own little private

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<sup>148</sup> Moore, 1996, has very detailed, if a trifle pedestrian, spatial analysis of pre-Colombian ritual plazas, which contrast fundamentally in their functions from the urban squares of town space.

schemes, desires, follies and material lives, depositing layers of sedimented material culture, meanings, and historical inertia around the grand structure of state rule. Town space bear the imprint of the clash of human individuality and state rule. There is *not*, however, a spatial border between state and town (towns are part of state territory), but as we saw, a spatial border between town and non-town. Functional body-space relations define a town; town space is where these urban functions are performed. What the state does, is to rule its subjects in the town as well as in the non-town.

On closer inspection we notice that the town's spatial relation to the state is double. The town is inside the state's territory; this relation is expressed, for example, in some urban areas being granted a municipal charter while rural areas are denied this kind of self-administration. But secondly, the state's throne-house is inside the town. When the nation state puts up quarters in the town its citadel, barracks or parliament are spatially defined by seclusion from public space: the state's house is private state space, symbiotically but always uneasily entwined with the capital town (cf. the recent discussions of moving the parliaments of Germany and South Africa to Berlin and Pretoria respectively). The private house of the nation state is kept at an safe distance from urban, popular spaces, but still a bit closer to the dreaded mob than the absolutist palace dared.<sup>149</sup>

### 3. Town space and ethnic space

“The city of the dead antedates the city of the living.”

Lewis Mumford's speculations (1961:6) on the necropolis as the forerunner of the polis of the living echoes Mircea Eliade's classical work on the sacred centre (scarcely credited by Mumford). To argue that the roots of the town may be the necropolis or sacred centre implies a function (housing of the dead) and a cosmology (transcendental location) summed up by the grave: the point of enunciation of a space totally different from the mundane town-space enunciated by the living people on the town square. It is likely that towns often developed adjacent to a grave. What is important for the present discussion, however, is not the sacred centre or necropolis as such but that they point to a crucial *heterogeneity* of town space (as the throne did too). Perhaps this is most clearly brought out by the fact

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<sup>149</sup> See George Rudé, *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century. Studies in Popular Protest*, New York: The Viking Press, 1970.

that a necropolis could be built without ever becoming a town; ethnic space alone will not engender town space.

Recent archaeological excavations in Denmark of a large built structure more than 5000 years old presumably is an example of a necropolis never becoming a town. Similar in pattern to constructions from the fourth millennium BC found on sites all over Europe, a large system of mounds and palisades was constructed around 3450 BC on a conspicuous but indefensible little cape in stone-age Denmark. No traces of battle or habitation has been found, and it has been interpreted as a site for cultic gatherings and celebrations.<sup>150</sup> A town of the dead perhaps, but certainly not of the living.

The point of contact with the dead or the transcendental realm, I suggested above, is the point of enunciation of the discourse of ethnic space. A 'holy city' like Jerusalem is holy because of a grave and a point of transcendental ascension: it has a holy centre, but the town space as such is not holy. The border between the town of Jerusalem and the countryside has no holy significance in itself; Jerusalem can continue to grow and remain holy. The space enunciated from the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Temple is the world to the believers and certainly not just the town of Jerusalem.<sup>151</sup> Ethnic space will only rarely coincide with town space. It is more common for town space to be the negation of ethnic space: the place of the sinfully, the godless, the mixed half-breeds. The exclusive discourse of religious or ethnic essence contradicts the inclusive functional discourse of towns. The man with money mix freely on the market square with strangers; only the closed circle of the pious can assemble on the grave. Religious people can live in towns, of course, but town space as such is not religious. Salt Lake City *in toto*, for example, is not the point of enunciation of the essence of the Latter-Day Saints, the Tabernacle is. The town-border of Salt Lake City is determined not by religion but by town and non-town functions.

Religiously-ethnically divided towns from Belfast to Beirut demonstrate how the resistance of town space to ethnic corrosion depend on their functions.

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<sup>150</sup> *Weekendavisen* June 27, 1997; referring to Niels H. Andersen, *The Sarup Enclosures. Sarup*. Vol 1. Jutland Archaeological Society Publication XXXIII:1, Århus: Aarhus University Press, 1997.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Karen Armstrong's probing book on Jerusalem as the sacred space of three faiths; Armstrong, 1996. For a discussion of the highly interesting early Christian non-territorial perception of sacred space, see Tod D. Swanson, "To Prepare a Place. Johannine Christianity and the Collapse of Ethnic Territory", in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LXII/2.

Polarisation begins in the residential parts of the town, proceed to industrial areas and only in the cases of complete cleavage divides the central business district. In the 1920s Los Angeles you could see signs barking 'Japs keep moving, this is a White Man's Neighborhood'.<sup>152</sup> But this sign was not posted in front of factories or in down-town Los Angeles because the functions of factories and town-centre interact differently with ethnic space than a residential area. The dominant group wanted to trade with the subaltern groups, to exploit them and on occasion summon them to their institutions of rule, but they demanded to live segregated; functions of production and circulation were more resistant to segregation than reproduction. For the subaltern group the only sanctuary where they could practice their ethnicity was their private houses. In such a residential area the houses coalesce into an 'ethnic' neighbourhood and members of the ethnic group take over more or less effectively the public space between the houses; it becomes a ghetto. However, this ethnic space will not amount to a full blown town-space, and they will still have to enter the dominant group's parts of the town when they go to work, shop, and visit municipal institutions like bus and train stations, hospitals, universities, and jails.<sup>153</sup>

#### **4. Town space and house space**

The town, finally, could have emerged from house space, as additions of patriarchal houses, as a village. The hypothetical genesis of the town as a village grown large obscures, however, the crucial structural difference between house space and town space. Above I argued that the spatial border of the town is the urban-rural functional divide. How does the house fit in? Is there a border separating house from town? No.

In nation state parlance the house border separates private space from public space, but in fact the reflexive Other of the house is the wilderness beyond the gate. The border of house space separates the organic-patriarchal whole not from the town, but from the rest of the world out there. The gate, fence, or door does not separate house from town but from the wilderness; the space of the house and non-house is *different* from the town, ethnic, and state spaces.

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<sup>152</sup> See the pictures of segregated residential neighbourhoods from 1920s and 1950s Los Angeles in Hayden, 1995:25.

<sup>153</sup> In Chapter 18, I go into the details of one particular kind of ghetto, the South African black townships and their violent relation with the 'white' towns.



I suggested above that the country-side is non-town, without classes but with parallel patriarchal households. Houses on the country-side stand alone, bonded to the land, each mastering all the tasks necessary to secure a livelihood. In every house the patriarchal unit circumscribes a complex division of labour between male and female, the generations, and the free and bond men. Of course, some houses in the countryside are big and some are small, and some eat considerably more than others, but nevertheless they all produce food, eat it, and reproduce themselves under firm patriarchal rule, far removed from the freedom of *die Stadtluft*.

The village is basically a 'horizontal' aggregate of houses and not a town. There can be a high degree of functional division *inside* the individual house, but not between the houses, and only a very limited accumulation of wealth. On the other hand, a village, in contrast to a town, often has very complex family and clan links between the houses, and a grand house can comprise many dependent small houses (in a 'feudal' manner). These are organic links, different from the functional, class-links in the town. The village-town difference has nothing to do with size, density, age, ethnic or state status. A village can be large, and indeed larger than a town. Jean Comaroff describes early 19th. century Tshidi 'towns' on the present-day Botswana-South Africa border that had up to 30.000 inhabitants,<sup>154</sup> and thus were much larger than most ancient and medieval European towns, and even larger than Cape Town at that point in time.<sup>155</sup>

There were, however, no urban-rural division since no-one lived in the wild (except for a few herd-boys). The village was a 'horizontal' collection of kraals with only a rudimentary division of labour beyond the single kraal and very limited accumulation of wealth even in the king's kraal. I would call them villages - and indeed the modern towns of North Western South Africa have settler origins; the urban-rural spatial division in South Africa is a local implant of the global development of capitalism. The non-urban character of the Tsidi-villages however, in no way removes them from state space or ethnic space: the king's village was both a sacred centre and site of the throne. To sum up: in the village, in non-town space, the houses can have three meanings: house of the patriarchal household, house of the ethnic space (for example a spirit house), and house of the state space (for example the king's kraal), but *not* a town-house separated from the food.

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<sup>154</sup> Comaroff, 1985:23-24.

<sup>155</sup> Cape Town had a total population in 1821 of 20.214 persons, including 7.090 slaves. (Shell, 1994:143)



# 16 |

## WHY S.E.T.H.? - HOUSE SPACE

Let us assume that patriarchal rule of wives, children and slaves founded the house; that house space is the realm of patriarchal rule and the locus of family life. This would locate the house at the very foundation of society, with the exogamic exchange of women honouring the prohibition of incest, with procreation and succession, and with the taking of slaves in war. However, the purpose of the following pages is not an anthropology of the house, but an attempt to specify house space.

### 1. House and family

Anthropological interpretations of the family-in-the-house have focused on family structure rather than on house space, and viewed the family as a structural and historical precondition for human society, for example in the two paradigmatic positions of Lévi-Strauss' incest-taboo and Jack Goody's inheritance-modes. Feminist studies have perhaps more than anthropology tried to conceptualise the obvious *multiple* structures of domination in the house (such as gender, class and race). Since the early attempts<sup>156</sup> to merge a psychoanalytical critique of gender domination with a Marxist critique of class domination, in the opinion of one writer, however, "no satisfactory theory been developed to analyze what happens when these systems of oppression intersect." (Glenn, 1994).<sup>157</sup>

Instead of discussing families I am looking for the house enmeshed in multiple identities and dominations in its interaction with state space, ethnic space,

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<sup>156</sup> See, for example, Zillah R. Eisenstein, ed. *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979.

<sup>157</sup> For a review of feminist theory, see Bente Rosenbeck, "Intet nyt under solen. Refleksjoner over feministisk teori", in *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning*, 1-97, 1997.

and town space. To me, house space is not peculiar to certain societies, but a basic structure in every society; on the other hand the house alone cannot define a society. My approach to the house therefore differs from Lévi-Strauss' combination of house-lineage and house-architecture.<sup>158</sup> To explore the house inside the nation state, and in particular to interpret how the house can become a front in a civil war, I suggest shifting the analytical perspective from the inside to the outside, from family to house, from the structure of conjugality and the history of production and inheritance to the spatiality of violence and power mapping house space. The following pages are a first, incomplete and tentative exploration of this approach.

## 2. The house space

My argument for including patriarchs, wives, children, slaves and other dependants in the house is the simple fact that this big, old house shows us the full extent of patriarchal rule, of house space. Throughout history the house has often been smaller, of course, slavery, for example, is not a necessary condition for patriarchal rule, but a possibility of rule inherent in house space. I will claim that even a contemporary single parent family or household can be understood as a house, as a patriarchal house in ruins. Only by gauging the full extent of patriarchal rule can we gather the amount of rule deposited elsewhere in societies with small houses and big states. Let us therefore go back in time and search for a source to the rule of old, big houses.

One such source is *Justinian's Digestas*, the main surviving source to Roman Law. In Book 1, three sections (5, 6, & 7) are devoted to the discussion of power-relations in the house. The *pater familias* ruled over minors and slaves alike,

“Slaves, then, are in the *potestas* of their master, this form of *potestas* being in virtue of the *jus gentium*. For we can observe that equally among all nations masters have had the power of life and death over their slaves.... Also in our *potestas* are our children whom we have begotten in lawful wedlock...”<sup>159</sup>

Heads of households are those who are in their own power... For whoever is born of me and my wife is in my power: likewise, whoever is born of

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<sup>158</sup> A highly interesting volume of anthropological studies of the house is Carsten & Hugh-Jones, 1995. They pointedly build on the work of Lévi-Strauss. See also Roy Richard Grinker, “Reconstructing the House in Anthropology”, in *American Anthropologist*, vol. 98, no. 4, Dec. 1996.

<sup>159</sup> 1, Gaius, *Institutes*, book 1.

my son and his wife, that is my grandson or granddaughter, is by the same token in my power... and so on down the generations.”<sup>160</sup>

Gaius and Ulpian argue here for a house space crystallising around the patriarch’s claim to rule a number of people because of an organic belonging to his house.<sup>161</sup> *Patriarch* and *organic* are the twin poles in my concept of house space. ‘Patriarchy’ can include not just male exploitation of females (as in a standard definition like Sylvia Walby’s “a system of interrelated social structures which allow men to exploit women,”<sup>162</sup> but *all three* expressions of house-rule, along the gender axis, the decent axis and the slave axis. The person wielding one, two, or three dimensions of house rule is the patriarch (which do not necessarily biologically have to be a man).<sup>163</sup> Confronting the patriarch’s claim to rule his house are claims originating in town space, ethnic space, and state space, such as the state’s claim to rule its citizens. Below, these conflicting claims are briefly considered.

The bond between body and space in the house is ‘organic’, which denotes a rootedness that goes beyond the blood. The organic body-space relation includes all members of the household, rooted together as they are in house space. Individuals can be planted in the house by birth, marriage or servitude. Relations inside the house are indexed by cultural representation of the biological markers of decent, gender, and race, and not by functions, ethnicity, or nationality. One does not belong to house space because of an essence, conceived abstractly and embracing a whole *volk*, but because of one’s root, experienced concretely with a small number of people known individually. Belonging and relations inside the house are organic; marriage is the key variable controlled by the patriarch.<sup>164</sup> Patriarchal rule extend to people not related by blood, but nevertheless organic parts of the household, such as servants, serfs, or slaves.<sup>165</sup> This makes the difference from ‘family’ clear. As Heidi

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<sup>160</sup> 4, Ulpian, *Institutes*, book 1

<sup>161</sup> See Jack Goody, 1990:420ff, for a family-oriented investigation of the classical Roman house.

<sup>162</sup> Sylvia Walby, *Patriarchy at Work*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986:51; cit, in Gordon, 1996:18.

<sup>163</sup> On non-male patriarchs, see Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, London: Zed Books, 1987.

<sup>164</sup> “The exogamic exchange of women founds society as such in the prohibition of incest.” (Clastres, 1994:160)

<sup>165</sup> Peter Laslett coined the term ‘houseful’ to refer to ‘all persons inhabiting the same set of premises’ P. Laslett, ed. *Household and Family in Past Time*, Cambridge, 1972.

Rosenbaum notices in her work on family and social structure, the 'family' is a young concept compared with the 'house'.

“[Otto Brunner] hat darauf hingewiesen, dass erst im 18. Jahrhundert der Begriff “Familie” Eingang in die deutsche Umgangssprache gefunden hat. Zuvor wurde vom “Haus” gesprochen, in dem, wie z.B. bei Bauern und Handwerkern, gefühlsmässige und sachbezogene Beziehungen durch der Einheit von “Haushalt” und “Betrieb” untrennbar verbunden waren.” (Rosenbaum, 1974:15).

The patriarch interpellates every single individual in his house space: as wife, as children, and as bonded. The key problem to be explained about the house is not exploitation (there is not exploitation in all patriarchal houses), but why and how wives, children, and slaves are bonded to the house of the patriarch. The productive functions are secondary to the structure of *rule* inherent in the organic relation of body and space. Together the household constitutes a community conferring legitimacy upon the violence protecting/separating them from the wilderness beyond the gate. Of course, gender and age are also important outside the house. However, outside the house the conflicts of gender and age are transformed by functional, essentialist, and pragmatic discourses: producing, for example, lower wages for women in town space, rape wars in ethnic space, and no female vote in state space. In all these cases men harm women, *but not as patriarchs* because they are outside house space: they do it as industrialists, militias, and politicians. It is when these men go home and rule their 'own' women, they enjoy their patriarchal prerogative.

Just as sexism and 'age-ism' may explain why men and women, or older and younger generations living together *naturally* must be unequal, racism in its most basic form is a social order and a discourse explaining by 'natural' arguments why people living *together* in an exploitative relation must be master and slave.<sup>166</sup> It is probable that the racism was born already before the earliest recorded history with the practice of slave-taking in war.<sup>167</sup> This connection is also the starting point for Orlando Patterson's work on slavery.<sup>168</sup> The nexus of conquest and slavery is clearly stated in Digestas,

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<sup>166</sup> I discuss the differences between race and ethnicity in a historical analysis of ethnic space in South Africa in Tin, 1998.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Keegan, 1993:166 on the chariot rulers of Asia Minor as slave masters.

<sup>168</sup> For an early introduction, see his "On Slavery and Slave Formations", in *New Left Review*, 117, September-October 1979.

“Freedom is one’s natural power of doing what one pleases, save insofar as it is ruled out either by coercion or law.

1. Slavery is an institution of *jus gentium*, whereby someone is against nature made subject to the ownership of another.

2. Slaves (*servi*) are so-called, because generals have a custom of selling their prisoners and thereby *preserving* rather than killing them: and indeed they are said to be *mancipia*, because they are captives in hand (*manus*) of their enemies.”<sup>169</sup>

To me, the all-important corollary of locating racism in the house is suggesting why master and slave most of the time *shares* racism (and women sexism and children age-ism): It is a discourse which can generate *herrenvolk* ideas at one pole and simultaneously at the opposite pole an inferiority complex. Most of the time the slave was a good Uncle Tom, the wife devoted to her husband and the children respectful of the older generation; what J.M. Coetzee has called ‘the embedded patriarchal order’.<sup>170</sup> The shared Janus-faced racism of master and slave was the explosive point of departure for Fanon’s critique of racism.

### 3. The house border

The *wilderness* is the constitutive Other of the house. House space is separated from the wilderness by a spatial border. Perhaps the earliest separation of house and wilderness was the flickering light radiating from the hunter-gatherers camp-fire carving out a little sphere in the dark, endless night. House-and-wilderness is a global structure: beyond the camp-fire is the rest of the world, the mountains, the oceans, the stars. It is important to keep this in mind because in most societies the house-border has been overlaid by other spatial structures: state space, ethnic space, and town space. None the less, the basic structure of the house-border separating house from wilderness remains intact to this day in any society. Inside my door is my house, outside my door is the world, cut up by many borders, yet a global expanse. My little sphere is still alone in the endless night.<sup>171</sup> The

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<sup>169</sup> 4, Book 1; Florentinus, *Institutes*, book 9.

<sup>170</sup> *The New York Review*, Nov 6, 1997.

<sup>171</sup> Thrillers endlessly exploit the existential anxieties generated by the house-wilderness loneliness. Edward Said, referring the work by Gaston Bachelard on space, remarked, “The objective space of a house...is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel: thus a house may be haunted, or homelike, or prisonlike, or magical.” Edward Said, *Orientalism*. *Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Penguin Books, 1995:55.

house, of course, does not have to be a rectangular structure, it can have any shape, it can be a tent, a flat, a villa, a palace, a hut or several buildings on a homestead. You can see it, enter it, smell it, it can even be ‘a bed called home’.<sup>172</sup>

The border of house space is always precisely defined and well-known to the house-dwellers even if it is as complex as the combination of male and female spaces in a Tswana-house described by Jean Comaroff (1985,:54ff). In all societies strong traditions govern the crossing in and out of house space for different categories of people, where to do it, how to do it, and when it is admissible or an infringement upon the sovereignty of the house. Often the border is marked by defensive structures, and intrusion from the wilderness is met with violence. Any way, house space should be understood in practical, non-abstract terms. The Comaroffs tell the story of how in 1817, soon after he arrived among the Tlhaping, James Read from the London Missionary Society erected a house, making sure that he was widely observed. Read succeeded in implanting square house-living as a norm for the proper life in Tswana society. The Comaroffs interpret this domestication of the Africans as an essentially imperialistic enterprise effected by “recast[ing] the tangible shape of the “home” itself.” (Comaroff, 1992:272).

Sure enough, half a century later the Tswana peoples had been swallowed up by the British Empire. The Comaroffs focus on the home, on what happened inside these novel rectangular walls, but perhaps we should shift the perspective to the outside, from home to house space. The significance of James Read’s house was not just the domestication of family-life but also the transformation of wilderness into public space. What James Read did when he built his house was not just inaugurating the transformation of Tswana house space into ‘civilised’ private space, but more importantly, by planting a British house in a Tswana village, he created a magic extension of the street in front of his house in London, of British imperial public space. Subsequent waves of traders, soldiers, miners and public servants washed away Tswana wilderness. The civilisation of the rectangular house border carried a double meaning: imperialist public space outside and *therefore* domestic privacy inside.

However, the historical sequence in which the house border became overlaid by the other SETH spaces, is not my concern here. If we leap to the present *nation state* situation, we may ask whether the distinction between the private and public domains is a historical transformation of the house-wilderness

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<sup>172</sup> The title of Mamphela Ramphele’s book on hostel-dwellers in Cape Town, for whom a bed literally was their house.



structure? Has the house in other words become private space and the wilderness public space? 'Private' is linked with private property, but also with private abode and private jurisdiction; the three often but not necessarily overlap. House space can combine all three, but it always builds on some autonomy of private jurisdiction. House space is not only residential, it also includes houses for production and circulation, and not to forget the private houses of town space (i.e. town hall), ethnic space (i.e. church), and state space (i.e. parliament). Even parliament is a house space with rules restricting public access.

Public space is everything in-between the houses inside the state border. Public space ends at the state border; outside the border a new set of public-private spaces begin. Wilderness and public space are not the same, public space is sub-form of wilderness. There is an all-important structural difference between the organic house-wilderness border and the statal private-public border. The first can be understood as a human evolution of the nest and the burrow, where the band or the family is the structuring agent and the wilderness the rest, the unstructured. The latter is the opposite; here the structuring agent is the state and 'private' space is a legal form encapsulating the rest, the organic left-over of biological functions not formed by the state. The house is that which the state has not (yet) digested for reasons I will return to in a moment. Because the global source of violence is the state-system, the wilderness confronts the house cut to state-size as so many national public spaces.

#### **4. House space and town space**

The relation between house and town spaces has historically evolved in two directions: house dominating town, and town dominating house.

We saw above that the house included persons ruled by the patriarch but not of his blood (but often mixing with his blood). Beyond being a reproductive unit, the house was a productive and exploitative unit. Slavery was a prime example of this. In slave-societies the house was the central unit shaping the total social structure. Slavery was not per se urban or rural, it developed in both environments through a continuum of variations from the house slave in a town (as Lisbon or Cape Town) to the field slave on the country-side (from a US-plantation to a South African frontier *Boer*-farm). In his book *Children of Bondage* on the slave society on The Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838, the historian Robert C.-H. Schell stressed the centrality of the house, even in the rare, urban and modern slave-society of Cape Town. He shows this with a wealth of details, including the architecture of the Cape

slave-house; and he concluded, “The family as metaphor and inspiration shaped the colonial society; household was the crucible of social relations in South Africa. Nearly all social hierarchies were evolved there.” (Shell, 1994:396)

Now, the house continued to contain the extended exploitative unit of the patriarch long after slavery had been abolished. With justification the medieval manor has been considered an extended patriarchal house, where the patriarch ruled despotically over his wife, children, servants, serfs, slaves, and animals. We see this in Le Roy Ladurie’s fascinating reconstruction of the life in 14th. century Montaillou, a small village in Southern France, where the unit of social life was the *domus*, and not the individual. Some centuries later the house still is the basic unit of social life according to Max Weber,

“Die häusliche Gemeinschaft der Familie umfasste an sich schon ausser den Angehörigen der Familie noch andere Personen: auch das häusliche Dienstpersonal galt von alters her als Hausgenosse und seine Handlungen haben für die Familie rechtliche Konsequenzen.”<sup>173</sup>

The patriarchal rule of servants, farmhands, apprentices, indentured labourers etc. was based on a functional extension of the organic rootedness in the house also ruling the blood-related family members.<sup>174</sup> This was not slavery in legal terms, but in the day-to-day workings patriarchal rule continued unabated; as indeed it continued for the subjects of his blood. The grading of submission to patriarchal rule were carefully reflected in all social relation, for example in the gradual extension of the vote in England. Male village labourers and servants (functional descendants of the farm and the house slaves) got the vote long after propertied males (patriarchs); the ultimate slave, the wife, got the vote even later, and children are still not enfranchised (I shall return to the English vote in a moment).

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<sup>173</sup> Max Weber, *Zur Geschichte der Handelsgesellschaften im Mittelalter*, cit. in Rosenbaum, 1974:42.

<sup>174</sup> The conditions of a labourer belonging to a patriarchal household could resemble slavery; indeed, indentured labourers coming to America in the 18th century with the passage paid for by the new master were often treated even more harshly than real slaves as they were free when they had repaid their passage with ten or twenty years of work, whereas slaves were a life-long investment. From she was eight years old, my own grandmother was *fæstet* [indentured] on Danish farms, subjected to the rule of the house master for one year at a time, with an annual pay of 1 *krone*; this was still common practice among poor people living on the country-side around the turn of the century. See her autobiography, Marie Iversen, *Marie*, København: Forum, 1978.

The patriarchal house rubbed against the surrounding society, influencing it in a number of ways; however most of the house/society discussion has looked the other way for pressures of the large society modifying the house structure. Attempts by some feminist writers<sup>175</sup> to interpret modern family relations as capitalist relations, i.e. to transpose the categories of capital, capitalist exploitation, workers, wages etc. into the house was basically flawed (regardless of the analytical merits or otherwise of Marxism), I think, because it obscured the specificities of the house. The patriarchal family is, of course, not a creation of capitalism.<sup>176</sup> Wives, children, and slaves are indeed exploited in various ways in patriarchal houses, but in no way is this 'capitalist' exploitation: there are no capital-formation, and hence no capitalist and no wage-workers. The 'domestic labour' discussion has some parallels to the discussion of peasant 'class-consciousness' (mentioned in Chapter 5): based on a well-wishing, perhaps, but ridiculously narrow concept of the 'political' these writers tried to enlist house-wives in the ranks of anti-capitalist revolutionaries, by twisting house-space into town-space; needless to say, the specific features of patriarchy was lost in the process.

The interaction of house space with town space during the last two hundred years slowly turned around from house dominating town to town dominating house, accelerating tremendously in this century. The break down of the patriarchal house did not happen by turning the patriarch into a capitalist, but by removing his subjects from the house. Capitalist exploitation waited for the wives in the town space. They did not return, and then the patriarch had to buy the services formerly provided by the wife, on the town market (as she did too, of course). I shall return below to a more profound aspect of the ruin of the patriarchal house, which becomes apparent in the interaction with state space.

## 5. House and ethnic space

Explaining the house in class-terms was obscuring its specific structures, not helping to clarify them. A radically different explanation of the house was proposed by what I may call, a bit anachronistic, 'cultural studies'. It interprets the house, not as an empty container, but as a 'social text', a specific set of material

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<sup>175</sup> See, for example, the 'domestic labour' discussion in *New Left Review*, 1978-79, including contribution by Wally Secombe, J. Gardiner, and Maxine Molyneux.

<sup>176</sup> A point well argued by Christopher Middleton in "Sexual Divisions in Feudalism", in *New Left Review*, 113-114, April 1979.

signs mediating between the individuals living in the house and the larger society. In her book *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Jean Comaroff advocates such an approach,

“Bourdieu has argued that the symbolically ordered environment, particularly “inhabited space” such as the house, objectifies the classifications and organizing principles underpinning the wider sociocultural system....

It is in these terms that the material and spatiotemporal forms of the Tswana house must be viewed; not merely as things themselves, but as elemental signs with hidden meanings, mediating between the sociocultural system and the experiencing subjects that live within it.” (Comaroff, 1985:54).

The problem with this approach is not reading the house as a ‘social text’, the problem is not to essentialise the ‘author’ as a self-contained fountain of social meaning outside the text. An essentialist position obscures the specificity of house space by reference, not to ‘classes’ in town space as we saw above, but to ‘tribes’ in ethnic space. A famous work of cultural analysis, containing an essentialising reading of the house is the work by Oswald Spengler *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1917-1923). In his enormous project he endeavoured to demonstrate the cyclical movement of world-history from the rise of non-self-conscious *cultures* (the *Dasein*) falling as self-conscious *civilisations* (the *Wachsein*). Spengler interpreted the house (and the castle) as direct, unmediated expressions of race (culture) in opposition to the buildings of civilisation, the cathedrals.

“Das Haus ist das reinste Rasseausdruck, den es überhaupt gibt... An Anfang einer Kultur erheben sich über das Bauerndorf mit seinen Rassebauten zwei ausgeprägte Formen höheren Ranges als Ausdruck des Daseins und als Sprache des Wachseins, Burgen und Dome. In ihnen steigert sich der Unterschied von Totem und Tabu, Sehnsucht und Angst, Blut und Geist zu gewaltiger Symbolik. Die altägyptische, altchinesische, antikke, südarabische, abenländische Burg als Sitz von Geschlechterfolgen steht dem Bauernhaus nahe. Die bleiben beide als Abdruck wirklichen Lebens, Zeugens und Sterbens ausserhalb aller Kunstgeschichte. Die Geschichte der deutschen Burgen ist durchaus ein Stück Rassegeschichte.” (Spengler, 1924:vol. 2, 141,144).

To use race in the way Spengler does is clearly impossible. In a very instructive way he elucidates the problem of the house as an ethnic text. Not because of the political incorrectness of ‘race’, but because race-specific (or ‘ethnic’ in today’s parlance) relations between landscape, building, body and culture is impossible to establish; even within his own system.

“Sieht man vom Rasseausdruck des Hauses ab, so bemerkt man erst die ungeheure Schwierigkeit, dem Wesen der Rasse nahe zu kommen. Nicht

ihrem inneren Wesen, ihrer Seele, denn davon redet unser Gefühl deutlich genug. Was ein Mensch von Rasse ist, wissen wir alle auf den ersten Blick. Aber welches sind die Merkmale für unser Empfinden, vor allem fürs Auge, an denen wir Rassen erkennen und unterscheiden?" (ibid., p. 146)

Spengler is extreme, but is the position of Comaroff (and Bourdieu), understanding the Tswana house as objectifying a sociocultural system not in a modern way repeating Spengler's problem? They both end in a circular interpretations of the house as an expression of a race or a sociocultural system, and at the same time itself an integral part of that which is expressed. In other words, they cannot specify the difference between author and text, of, in this case, of ethnic space (the race-tribe) and house space (the sign of the race-tribe).

A book of immeasurable fame in Brazilian sociology, indeed a work that became central in fostering modern Brazilian nationalism, suggests a different approach.<sup>177</sup> Gilberto Freyre tackled the question of what the house expresses from the absolute opposite position than Spengler and Comaroff. Because of his political project, trumpeting the 'luzo-tropical' civilisation of Brazil, born by miscegenation of the Portuguese, Africans and Indians, he localised the world of Casa-Grande and Senzala as the place and the time where a *new* race was produced. Theoretically the house came *before* the race. Casa-Grande was the large slave estate typical of feudal north-eastern colonial Brazil; Senzala was the slave-quarters, named by an African word that entered into Luzo-tropical Portuguese with the slaves. Together Casa-Grande and Senzala constituted the patriarchal house.

Through this prism Freyre analysed a wealth of sociological, cultural, and anecdotal material. In fact his book can be read as a treatise on small-scale state-pragmatism: for a ruler how to get the most out the situation with a heterogenic group of persons on a limited territory. In his truly encyclopaedic exploration Casa-Grande itself emerges as the 'text' of the patriarchal family and the colonial history of Brazil, a revolutionary method in 1933; later developed by Braudel and the Annales School.<sup>178</sup> In Freyre's own words, with his typical evocative but rambling

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<sup>177</sup> Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-Grande & Senzala; Formacao da Familia Brasileira sob o Regime da Economia Patriarcal*, Rio de Janeiro: Maia & Schmidt, 1933; am. ed. 1956); the first volume of his "Introducao a Historia da Sociedade Patriarcal no Brasil". By 1981 it was out in its 21st edition, besides being translated to many languages. Volume two, *Sobrados e Mucambos* appeared in 1936, and volume 3, *Ordem e Progresso* followed in 1959.

<sup>178</sup> See Braudel's review of Freyre's work in *Annales d'histoire sociale*, 1943, p. 3-21.

juxtaposition of general structures such as 'system of politics' with minute household details such as the tub bath and the foot bath:

"The Big House completed by the slave shed represents an entire economic, social, and political system: a system of production (a latifundary monoculture); a system of labor (slavery); a system of transport (the ox-cart, the *bangue*, the hammock, the horse); a system of religion (a family Catholicism, with the chaplain subordinated to the paterfamilias, with a cult of the dead, etc.) a system of sexual and family life (polygamous patriarchalism); a system of bodily and household hygiene (the 'tiger', the banana stalk, the river bath, the tub bath, the sitting bath, the foot bath); and a system of politics (*compadrisimo*). The Big House was thus at one and same time a fortress, a bank, a cemetery, a hospital, a school, and a house of charity giving shelter to the aged, the widow, and the orphan." (Freyre, 1956:xxxiii)

For Comaroff the tribes (sociocultural system) was logical prior to, and subsequently expressed in, the house (spatiotemporal form). For Gilberto Freyre Casa-Grande was not the spatial expression of a particular race and its culture, but the spatial origin of a *new* civilisation. The house digested races and produced its own 'race'. What makes Freyre inspiring today, in my opinion, is not his concept of 'race', which was quite essentialistic and close to Spengler (to whom Freyre has several approving references), but his novel *use* of the race-concept in a peculiar setting where the essentialism is, so to speak, turned up-side-down as the dynamic creation of a new culture. The surprising result of this exercise is his *involuntary deconstruction* of 'race' in the ensemble of culturally mediated struggles inside the house. A concept of the house, and not of the race, is the result.

## 6. House and state space

Ever since Plato, well-wishing state-inventors has argued for the abolition of the house, home, so they claimed, to all kinds of irrational and oppressive ultra-parochialisms. Charles Fourier's plans (1820s) for the wonderful and yet prison-like 'phalansteries' is a famous example of how the house could be eliminated.<sup>179</sup> Different designs aiming at transferring a maximum of house functions to the state were to some extent carried out in the Zionist kibbutz and above all in the Scandinavian welfare-state. Yet, the house is still battling with the state at the turn of the millennium. What characterise this battle? Let me make three very general

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<sup>179</sup> Charles Fourier, *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier. Selected Texts on Work, Love and Passionate Attraction*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1971.

historic observations on the European relationship of house and state: (i) during the last thousand years of European history the patriarchal family has been the most common; (ii) the significant trend in its development has been its shrinking size; and (iii) the terrain lost went to the state.

For his women, children, and servants the patriarch was the law unto himself with precious few restrictions (most notably murder). Most patriarchs wanted to dominate his wife and children, and keep his home-rule intact. He could do so as the household in most cases was respected as an extra-territorial entity by the state. The state did not rule inside the house and ‘delegated’ rule of women and children and servant to the patriarch. Yet, the unambiguous trend in the development of the nation state has been to establish direct relations of rule with every citizen. Thus, the house-state relation was highly ambiguous as the state had to delegate rule to the patriarch, while at the same time it tried to limit the power of the patriarchal house. In a thousand ways the modern state besieged the houses of the patriarchs and tried to demolished them. Everywhere the goal of the nation state was a sovereign but atomised people in small houses. The house border became perhaps the most important front in the battle between human individuality and state rule.

The evolution of the vote in the first nation state in the world, England, provides a telling example of the house-state relationship. After the revolution of 1640-60 and the restoration of the kingdom in 1689, house-owners taxed above a certain rate had the right to vote, about 3% of the adult population.<sup>180</sup> The execution of this right naturally was the privilege of the head of the household, the patriarch. The vote symbolised a power relation between the house and the state, two sovereign territories, and it was utterly pointless to talk about granting the right to vote to women, children, servants, or other persons without houses. As we know, the vote was extended progressively during the next 250 years, with every little extension masterminded by Tories and Whigs as tactical moves in their battles to win parliamentary elections. A few women got the vote in 1918 after the state had ruined many houses by sending the men to the trenches and the women to armament factories. Despite its name “The Representation of the People Act” it still enfranchised houses and not people. Only women 30 years and older either married to a house owner or herself propertied were enfranchised. Equal vote was not attained before 1928. As a curious twist to the logic of the English vote

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<sup>180</sup> I have discussed the evolution of the vote in Tin, 1979b:519-529; some of the ideas I have developed further in Tin, 1995a.

university lecturers had until 1948 a double vote because they had two households: at home with the wife and at the college with the butler.

In the 18th century English patriarchs had the right to exercise “moderate correction upon his wife as he would correct his apprentices or children”. Two hundred years later the right of husbands to ‘chastise a misbehaving wife’ was still pronounced by the British courts, and as late as 1979 by legal definition rape could not exist within marriage in England (Freeman, 1979:177-8). But the patriarchal house had suffered a fatal blow with the declaration of universal human rights in 1945. Slowly one patriarchal privilege after the other was nibbled away by legislators. By 1996 it had even in robust South Africa become a crime for a husband to rape his wife; in 1997 the Danish parliament passed a law forbidding parents to discipline their children physically. The steady erosion of the patriarchal house was justifiably greeted as a liberation by women and children, and also by men tired of being patriarchs.<sup>181</sup> Claiming ever more of the expropriated patriarchal authority, however, was the powerful, if benign welfare-state, a state professing the goodness of unlimited social engineering.

In her work on woman migrants and marriage, the South African anthropologist Eleanor Preston-Whyte was confronted with the same displacement of authority in the house, replayed in a sinister way in apartheid South Africa. One African woman in Durban said to her, “What do I want a husband for? I can earn money and I can have a baby: I can bring up my baby myself with no trouble from a man.” (Preston-Whyte, 1981:166) The conditions forcing black female migrants in cities to live a ‘family’ life separated from their children and without marrying the childrens fathers were indeed located by Preston-Whyte to the house (conflicts along gender and generation) *and* the state (apartheid legislation). But no systematic attempt was made to link the two levels of state-racist and house-patriarchal domination; one such attempt is made in Chapter 18.

The slave-house and the rudimentary colonial state represented one extreme of the house-state relation, with a very weak state and strong house; the

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<sup>181</sup> An European example of women’s liberation is Suzanne Brøgger’s *Fri Os Fra Kærligheden*, København, 1974; an African example is Wanjiku Kabira et. al. ed. *Our Secret Lives. An anthology of poems and short stories by Kenyan Woman Writers*, Nairobi, 1991. For an example of children’s liberation, listen to the records by the ‘børnemagt’ [children’s power] rock group *Parkering Forbudt*, Christiania, 1978. An expression of male (family) liberation was expressed by David Cooper in his, *Death of the Family*; “Menn er menn. En dag vil de blive mennesker...” David Cooper, *Familiens død*, Oslo: Pax forlag, 1971, p. 121.



teenage-mother and the welfare state is the other extreme with a very weak house and a strong, interventionist state.

## 7. A violent space smaller than the house?

In 1990, single-person households had become the most common family-size on Manhattan (Wilson, 1991:152), and in 1995 only 25,5% of all American households contained couples with children.<sup>182</sup> Logically the end of the battle of state against house will be the total splintering of the house into one-person "houses", where man, woman, and children are individually sovereign subjects of the state, and the house has shrunk to the surveyed and disciplined body. All the rest is the territory of the state.<sup>183</sup> Since Foucault saw the body as the ultimate battlefield of the state, this has become the dominant discourse on 'body-politics'. However, even a person living alone maps a house space larger, and in all respects different from the human body. It is short-circuiting spatial analysis to see the body as a space created by violence. The body, even the tortured body, is not created by violence, but by nature. What I have been looking for with the SETH model are spaces created by violence, not *on* the space of a body, but *by* several bodies. Logically the smallest such space must be inter-bodily, containing at least two fighting people.

In a discussion of Van der Leeuw's theories of sacred space, David Chidester concluded that we are today confronted with a feeling of 'post-modern homelessness'.

"A spatial 'disalienation,' particularly in the midst of the endlessly signifying but essential meaningless 'hyperreality' of a postmodern world, as the critic Frederic Jameson has observed, requires more than merely developing new techniques for 'cognitive mapping.' A recovery of place, in Jameson's terms, requires a cultural politics dedicated to a 'practical reconquest of a sense of place'. It is not the home, but the battlefield, that provide the governing metaphor for such a poetics and politics of space." (Chidester, 1994:226).

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<sup>182</sup> Andrew Hacker, "The War Over the Family", in *The New York Review*, Dec. 4, 1997.

<sup>183</sup> An alternative view is put forward by Richard Sennett, arguing that a decline in civilisation today is caused by the invasion of the public space by private intimacy. "The society we inhabit today is burdened with the... effacement of the *res publica* by the belief that social meanings are generated by the feelings of individual human beings." Sennett, [1977] 1993:339. It is a suggestive analysis of *res publica*, but, in my opinion, suffering from the same defects as the civil society concept discussed in Chapter 11.

What neither Chidester nor Jameson elucidate, however, is *what* we are fighting to recover 'our' place. Maybe that elusive dark force is a *terra incognita* for the post-modern gaze; I will argue we are in fact fighting *the state*, and furthermore, that it is possible to be accurate about the ways it can be rolled back. This is the theme explored below in Part Four.



# Part Four.

## Violent Spaces: South Africa, 1976, 1986, & | 1996

# 17

## COUNTING THE VIOLENCE, 1976

Did South Africa experience a civil war in 1976? One event dwarfed everything else in terms of violence; indeed, only the Soweto uprising, quickly fanning out from Soweto and setting alight most of the country, is relevant to the question of civil war in 1976. On the state front South Africa used massive violence both in Namibia and Angola with the invasion Aug. 1975 to Jan. 1976; however the casualties were rather small, 30 killed and 100 wounded South Africans.<sup>184</sup> On the ethnic front the big event in 1976 was the ‘independence’ of the Transkei on October 26. The government moved to de-nationalise first all Xhosas and later all Black people in South Africa; yet there were no casualties on that front. On the town front shots were fired against squatters, for example on Modderdam Road in Cape Town, June 3, and informal houses were levelled by the state in Crossroads, but there were no casualties on this front either in 1976. The big drama was played out on the house front, as we shall see. But did the Soweto uprising amount to a civil war?

The initial spark to six months of almost non-stop nation-wide insurrection was provided by police over-reaction to a street procession of secondary school pupils. They were marching to Orlando stadium in central Soweto to protest against the recent insistence by the educational authorities that arithmetic and social studies be taught in Afrikaans. Police shot into a crowd of 15.000, killed two and injured many; one of the killed was 13-year old Hector Petersen (Lodge, 1983: 328). The image of the schoolboy being carried away by a crying friend quickly became the

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<sup>184</sup> Seegers, 1996:220; she does not report the Angolan and Cuban military casualties nor the very high number of civilian death in Angola.

famous icon of Soweto. Twenty years later it was reproduced in giant-size on the stone walls of the Castle in Cape Town, the cradle of white rule in South Africa, now with a new flag flying over the ramparts and June 16 inaugurated as a national holiday. Before attempting to move into the rhizome<sup>185</sup> of violence in South Africa 1976, of which the Soweto uprising was only one cluster of threads, let me count the event of the nation-wide upheaval by the four empirical parameters listed in my typology in Chapter 1, in order to answer the first question: was there a civil war in South Africa in 1976?

## 1. Intensity.

Intensity is the first empirical parameter of civil war, measured as ‘battle-related deaths’ including all violent deaths *per annum* structurally related to attacks on the state. Two related problems confront any counting of the intensity of an event: (i) are all violent deaths reported?, and (ii) are ‘battle-related’ deaths distinguished correctly from other violent deaths? Given the nature of South African statistics our base-line figure for 1976 is the number of murders given by the South African Police. Their figures exclude ‘culpable homicide’ and ‘attempted murder’. It has not been possible to determine how much the SAP-figure under-estimates the actual number of violent deaths. In particular it is unclear how many of the disputed deaths of the Soweto uprising are included in the figure.

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<u>Murders, South Africa 1975 - 1977</u>		
<u>Year</u>	Jul. 1975-Jun. 1976	Jul. 1976-Jun. 1977
<u>Murders</u>	6000	7560
<u>Murders/100.000 pop.*</u>	37	47

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Source: South African Police Annual Reports 1976 and 1977;

\* The 1976 population of South Africa less homelands is

the figure  
estimated

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<sup>185</sup> Rhizome, a subterranean stem, is a central metaphor in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, counterpoised to the tree: “There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines.” (1987:8) Below, I shall return to the rhizomatic characteristics of the Soweto riot.

I shall be using the July 1976 to June 1977 figure as it covers most of the uprising; the figure excludes the 176 persons killed June 16 to June 30, 1976 (SAIRR, 1977:58). What proportion of the 7560 murders can be attributed to 'battle-related deaths'? Data on 1976 differ from data on 1986 and 1996 because the Soweto riot so clearly stood out as an event from the background of 'ordinary' violence. It was not in a dubious manner classified 'political violence' but fully associated with one event. The day after the riot broke out 16 June 1976, a one-man commission was set up by the Minister of Justice J. Kruger, to investigate the disturbances in Soweto. The figures in the SAIRR Yearbook for 1976 (1977:85-87) are police information quoted in Rand Daily Mail September 16, i.e. less than half-way through the riot.

For Soweto, Col. J.J. Gerber, divisional Inspector of Police reported that 172 Blacks were killed by the police. 2 Whites and 120 Blacks were killed due to other causes; 2440 Blacks and 5 whites were injured. For the East Rand, Brigadier J. Wiese District Commander for the area reported that 20 people had been shot by police and 20 others died in unrest-related incidents. Col. A.P. van Zyl, Officer-in-charge of the Western Cape anti-riot squad reported that 92 people had been shot dead by the police and 5 others had died in unrest-related incidents. No Whites were killed in any of the incidents. Of these were 284 acknowledged shot dead by the police in Soweto, East Rand, and Western Cape. By May 1977 SAIRR had ascertained the deaths of 618 people directly related to the Soweto riot, 559 of whom they were able to name (Brooks, 1980:255). The official, conservative estimate was at least 575 dead and 2389 wounded (Lodge, 1983:330). Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill in their detailed discussion of the Soweto riot concluded,

"Our investigations leads us to believe that the death toll from June to December 1976 was probably over 1000, and may have been even more than that. The number of injured could be anything over 5000. One can only speculate. What is certain is that the government perpetrated a massacre of unprecedented proportions, even in South Africa's bloody history, and then made every effort to conceal it." (Brooks, 1980:256)

As a comparison it can be noted that the SAP reported no fatal casualties in the suppression of the Congress-led defiance-movement in the early 1950s, and in repression of the Sharpeville protests in 1960, 83 non-White civilians were killed between March 21 and April 9, 1960, including three African policemen.

It is doubtful whether more accurate figures can be collected. Some of the police data from 1976 are in Pretoria, but most are scattered in the 'archives' of more than 1400 local police stations, in varying states of completeness both as to

the original reporting and the subsequent filing. Death registers are highly incomplete in part because of secret burials and clandestine emigration. It is impossible to be certain of a thousand or more battle-related deaths for 1976. The Soweto riot therefore does not meet the first empirical criteria for being counted a civil war: > 1000 battle-related deaths.

## **2. Locality.**

The violence related to the Soweto riot clearly took place inside the international boundary of South Africa. In this regard the riot without doubt meets the second criteria for being counted as a civil war. For an interpretation of the violence, we must look at the spatiality of the violence inside the state borders of south Africa.

## **3. Polarity.**

Whether any specific episode of violence in killing more than 1000 people a year inside a nation-state is a civil war can only be determined by analysis of the polarity of violence. i.e. if the state is being attacked by sub-state groups. The question is not whether the attackers have a 'revolutionary consciousness' (Brooks and Brickhill) or aim at a 'radical change' (Hirson), but whether the state has to defend itself, whether it has to protect law and order against a violent challenge. At this stage we are only counting, not interpreting. It is a simple question of rule: if power is in jeopardy it has to be supported by violence. Premier Minister Vorster declared that "The Government will not be intimidated, and orders have been given to maintain order at all costs." (Cape Times, June 19, 1976) Around Soweto the army was placed on stand by, ready to intervene. Riot squads were deployed. Using the regular army against the state's own population is always a sign of the state being attacked, and this was the case in South Africa in 1976. The riot surely meets the third criteria for counting as a civil war.

## **4. Weapon.**

An episode of violence determined as civil war in terms of intensity, locality and polarity can now be classified by the most complex weapon used by the *attacker*, and not by the weapons used by the state to defend itself. Relevant to the discussion of civil war in South Africa are only two categories of weapons,



household and light weapons. All use of light weapons against the state has been recorded in detail and was in of extremely limited scope. No heavy weapons or sea- and airborne weapons was used at any time against the state of South Africa by internal groups. SAFD was confronted by enemy tanks and planes in Angola but not in the townships. The weapons used by the attackers in 1976 were household weapons only, a fact repeated again and again in the newspaper reports,

“Stoning, looting, and burning... Marauding bands of stone-throwers... Stone and brick-throwing Africans... Gangs had set up road blocks and were demanding money from motorists... Gangs of youth were demanding petrol from motorists and paraffin from shops to set fire to buildings... A hysterical mob burnt public buildings and set fire to six buses... Rioters stoned passing cars.” (all quoted from Cape Times, June 19, 1976)  
“Among the more inventive weapons of the Cape demonstrators are motor car tyres filled with petrol and rolled alight downhill towards police ranks, and tennis ball bombs already used with much effect in Soweto.” (Brooks, 1980:327)

Not a single firearm was reported used by the state-attackers. Tom Lodge however, lists two isolated explosions of home-made bombs outside a police station and a night club (Lodge, 1983:330).

The state used quite different weapons to defend itself and all available forces were summoned by the state to suppress the riot. “Police and army, civil defence and Red Cross units were standing by to subdue any further flare ups.” (Cape Times, 19 June) The police and other units used teargas to disperse crowds, and to kill R 1 automatic rifles, .38 revolvers, .32 calibre weapons, 9 mm parabellums, and shotguns; they fired 16.433 rounds of ammunition in Soweto, 17.000 rounds in East Rand, 2.815 in Mamelodi (Pretoria) and 4522 rounds in Western Cape. (Cilliers commission, cit. in Brooks, 1980:255). These weapons were fired from platforms such as armoured personnel carriers (the Ferrets and Hippos) and helicopters.

To sum up: the Soweto uprising presumably had less than 1000 battle-related deaths in one year; it took place inside the national territory of South Africa; it was an attack on the state; only household weapons were used; it should accordingly be classified as a sub-war riot, and not as civil war.

# 18 |

## CHILDREN IN A VIOLENT SPACE, INTERPRETATION OF 1976

“An entire generation of South Africans sacrificed their youth in June 1976... As the government, we have declared June the month of the youth. There are government programmes to ensure that our youth can never be described as lost, or indeed feel that they are. We know of no such thing as the lost generation... By so doing, we shall have paid a fitting tribute to the June 16 martyrs.”<sup>186</sup>

Speaking on the 20th anniversary of the Soweto uprising, Tokyo Sexwale, then Premier of Gauteng, himself a few years older than the children of 1976 and in exile a year before the riot, remembered the children as the sacrificed youth and martyrs and not as actors, creative subjects of historical change. Explanations of the children in the uprising have got stuck on a moral ground, arguing that when the police killed unarmed children it showed the moral bankruptcy of apartheid to the world, and thence sanctions and all that followed, eventually bringing the evil system down. Of course there are some truth to this, but as an interpretation it is nevertheless basically wrong, I think, because it silences the agency of the children and turns them into victims of an acting state. The whole point of interpreting June 16 is to break that silence: to explain the agency of the children forcing the state to defend itself against *children*. What has to be explained is the children as attackers: what was the stuff their power was made of?

### 1. The agency of the children of Soweto

The children are indeed emblematic in all accounts of the riot. Tom Lodge, for example, headlines his chapter on the Soweto riot “Children of Soweto”.<sup>187</sup> At

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<sup>186</sup> Tokyo Sexwale in *Sunday Independent*, Johannesburg; June 16, 1996.

<sup>187</sup> Lodge 1990 (1983), p. 321-361.

the same time, however, one can perhaps detect, below the moral outrage over police killings of children, a certain bewilderment on the role of the children. After all, how could the children be so dangerous to the state, how could they ignite this fire when adult protest, like the strikes a few years previously, had failed to do so? Conventional explanations, such as class and race, did not really capture *the children's* riot, because how do you account for a generational conflict in terms of class or race? In the many works documenting The Soweto uprising I have come across no studies of the children of Soweto in their own right.<sup>188</sup> Writers on the riot have speculated on the children's (adult) *leaders*: were they led by workers and trade union groups (Hirson, 1979), ANC-sympathisers (Brooks and Brickhill, 1980), or (older) Black Consciousness Movement students (Pityana and Ramphela, 1991)?

A closer look at the children's 'movement' did not produce easy answers, as no adult planning, no adult leadership, in fact very little planning and leadership at all seemed to have propelled the riot.<sup>189</sup> Yet, the power of the children was certainly much more than the moral power of the victim; neither was June 16 a 'simulacrum'.<sup>190</sup> The children of Soweto actually pushed back the armed state by

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<sup>188</sup> *Inter alia* South African Institute of Race Relations, *Yearbook 1976*, Johannesburg 1977; Kane-Berman, *Soweto: black revolt, white reaction*, Johannesburg: Ravan, 1978; Baruch Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, London: Zed Books, 1979; Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the storm*, London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980; Republic of South Africa, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere* (Cillié Commission Report), Pretoria: Government Printer, RP 55/1980. Peter Magubane, *June 16, The Fruit of Fear*, Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986; more or less space is devoted to the riot in all the narratives of recent South African history, for example in Tom Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983, pp 321-363; Anthony W. Marx, *Lessons of Struggle. South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990*. Cape Town, Oxford University Press, pp 32-73, 1992; Govan Mbeki, *Sunset at Midday*. Braamfontein: Nolwazi, 1996, pp 21-31; William Beinart uses less than one page on the riot in his *Twentieth-Century South Africa*.

<sup>189</sup> It took more than six weeks for ANC-sympathizers to distribute its first leaflets on July 26, calling on the pupils to broaden the concerns and constituency for the revolt.

<sup>190</sup> In a recent (unpublished) work *Discourse Theory and the Interpretation of Political Violence* from 1995, David Apter's presents the idea of 'simulacra' as an explanation of what happens when state violence are overtaken by the discursive power of weak groups. His use of the concept mixed with fashionable words

violence, and only because of that did they gain power - and were killed. In the words of Desmond Tutu, “that is real actual black suffering, not future possible suffering.”<sup>191</sup>

In the many anniversaries that have followed an idealised picture of the riot has emerged hiding the children under layer after layer of adult patronising shame and political expediency. Yet, the fact remains, that the children, *as children*, somehow found a weak spot in the rule of apartheid and were able to attack the state so successfully that 1976 became the Stalingrad of Apartheid. The Nationalists would soldier on for two decades, but never regain their confidence in the historical project of a White South Africa, the polished surface of post-Rivonia apartheid was irrevocably shattered.

## 2. The township: house space violence

“The colonial world is a world divided into compartments... if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies...

The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression...

The settlers’ town is strongly built town; all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town... its belly is always full of good things. The settlers’ town is a town of white people, of foreigners. The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute...

The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light... The colonized man is an envious man...there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler’s place.”<sup>192</sup>

Frantz Fanon catches here the essential spatial quality of the colonial antagonism. The Soweto riot seems to be a vindication of Fanon’s hope for an explosion of violence to end this manichean division of space, a liberation of space. Surveying South Africa from June to December 1976 a first conclusion is indeed

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from discourse-analysis and semiotics is unfortunately not altogether convincing; ‘simulacra’ is explained rather vaguely as “Exempting space, body, location, venue from their normal signifiers and everyday uses they become, instead, simulacra.” p. 74.

<sup>191</sup> Desmond Tutu, “Our children Are Dying, Our Land is Bleeding”, foreword to Magubane, 1986.

<sup>192</sup> Fanon, 1963, p. 37-39.

that almost all rioting took place in *townships*. Let us therefore start our move into the rhizome of violence in the space called a township.

But the children's riot was more complex than Fanon's enraged dualism captures because space was more complex: there were more compartments than the white town and the black town. Perhaps the unit of racial exclusion was not the native town after all, but the house and it is in the violent interaction of the house with town and ethnic spaces we may find a clue to the 1976 riot in South Africa. When Fanon lumped together native town with Negro village, medina and reservation he was blunting the cutting edge of his vision.

In South Africa there never was a medina, that is an indigenous urban form coexisting with the coming of the settler town. Negro villages remained of course, but they were not units of exclusion. Reservations were, but as we shall see in Chapter 22, dealing with 1996, the rural mode of exclusion was fundamentally different from the urban exclusion that produced the 'native town', or as it was called in South Africa, the township. All South African townships were racially segregated municipal housing established if at all possible at some distance from 'white' cities. To defend the white town against the threat of huge concentrations of poor, oppressed black people the state went to great lengths to segregate the townships spatially from the rest of the city, walling them in by physical barriers like highways, railroads, and industrial areas. Often the township would get an African name hiding discursively their true functional integration into the 'white' town.

Driving into Johannesburg in 1976 from the west along the R41 you would follow the slag-heap ramparts of *eGoli*, the town of gold: Durban Roodeport Deep Gold Mine, Rand Leases Goudmyn, Main Reef Gold Mine, and Crown Mines separating the white town inside the enormous ramparts from the black township outside the ramparts. Soweto (South Western Townships) was established by the white municipality on the high-*veld* ten kilometres outside Johannesburg in the 1930s, and quickly grew to be the largest cluster of townships in South Africa, a sprawling area of more than hundred square kilometres, some fifteen kilometres long and ten kilometres wide and home to one and a half million black people in 1976. This vast area was separated to the west and south from rural Transvaal and the Coloured townships of Eldorado Park and the Indian township of Lenasia by the railroad and the Kliprivier-swamps. Soweto was cut off completely from white Johannesburg to the north and east by the mountainous slag heaps and the vast slimes dams of the gold mines.

The whole twenty kilometre-long zone was only traversed by one railroad, one expressway, and two highways. There was no urban built-up connection whatsoever between Soweto and Johannesburg. This extreme town planning forced all interaction with the city to go through a few easy-to-control entry-points, bus-terminals and train-stations (in 1976 taxi-ranks were not yet important). To go to work, to go shopping, to go to town one had to exit via one of these gates. As very few blacks owned cars the roads were mainly used by the police and commercial deliveries; indeed not a single road-sign on the highways from Johannesburg read "Soweto". The South Western Townships was a non-place for whites, where their black labourers would disappear in the evening on overcrowded trains.

Apartheid laws forced black people to live in Soweto. Every town in South Africa were cut up by the infamous Group Areas Act into areas for the four official races, black, white, coloured and Indian. The Urban (Bantu Areas) law forbid black people to own property; they had to lease sites from the municipality and build one of the ubiquitous twenty-five square-metre matchbox houses after a standard municipal blueprint. Row after row of identical houses mostly lacking electricity and piped water along unpaved streets (stones everywhere and wide enough for armoured personnel carriers to operate) with the smoke of coal braziers hanging in the cold morning air was a picture often given of Soweto. State proclamations divided township space into four portions: demarcated and beacons sites for dwellings; public space such as sports fields and graveyards; streets, roads and other public thoroughfares; and commonage, unused open land; in no way did a township constitute an urban area in its own right.<sup>193</sup>

There was no industry and few shop in the township, but many municipal beerhalls and bottleshops. White tax-payers did not contribute financially to the upkeep of the townships as a system was invented long ago in Durban (the Native Beer Law of 1908) whereby Native Townships had to be funded solely by income from the municipal sale of beer and liquor to the township population. Except for schools, police stations and small offices for the local white administration of the township (in 1972 removed from local municipal control to central state administration by BAAB, Bantu Affairs Administration Boards), and the despised black councils set up by the apartheid state (UBC, Urban Black Councils, nicknamed Useless Boys' Club, United Black Crooks, etc.), all other urban functions were in the 'white' town: department shops, industry, offices, and public

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<sup>193</sup> "Regulation for the administration and control of townships in Bantu areas", Proclamation No. R 293, 1962, Chapter 1. *Government Gazette*, Pretoria, 16 November, 1962.

institutions from universities to jails. The township lacked focal public space, such as town squares, parks, main avenues or a down-town centre. As no town-square existed in the township, there was no point where a black functional town space could be enunciated, while a black ethnic space could be (and was) enunciated from the grave. Thus funerals became very important as sites for enunciating resistance to apartheid.

To live in a township was a personal limbo position for Blacks not anymore slaves, but still racially discriminated and expelled from the 'white' town: you could work in town but not live in town. It is significant that the medium of expulsion was the house, a denial of full patriarchal sovereignty of ownership, of how to build the house, of deciding who could live in the house, and most importantly of where the house could be located within the town. All these personal decisions were appropriated by the white local and central state. Slaves had lived in the white man's house, in the racist intimacy of Senzala and Casa-Grande; in 1976 many urban 'slaves' still lived in hostels<sup>194</sup> and servants quarters;<sup>195</sup> a few blacks owned property, but the overwhelming majority of urban blacks lived in the limbo of the townships. Its was pure dormitory housing annexed to a 'white' town.<sup>196</sup> Functionally and politically the township was the Senzala dependent and dominated by the Casa-Grande of the white town. Because the township house was not a fully sovereign patriarchal space, the township did not constitute a fully fledged urban space.

Townships were invented as a solution to an unsolvable contradiction in the racist project:

"The Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas which are essentially the white man's creation when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister."<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> See Mamphela Ramphele, *A Bed called Home, Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town*, Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1993.

<sup>195</sup> See Jacklyn Cock, *Maids and Madams: A study in the politics of exploitation*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989.

<sup>196</sup> Inverted commas because even if blacks and whites slept segregated most other urban functions were integrated spatially: the working, shopping, commuting and some consumption of black people took place in the 'white' town.

<sup>197</sup> The often cited passage from the Stallard Commission, 1922; cit. in Haarhoff, 1984:70; in Mamdani, 1996:93.

Already in 1922 the argument was not only racist, of course, it was also built on a false assumption - that black people did not live in towns, because while 'ministering' to the white man's need the Native obviously had to live somewhere in the town. Two fundamentally different meanings were implied in the 'entering and departing of the Native from the white man's town': a move across the town-countryside border, ie. the migrant worker solution; or a move across the white town-black town border, ie. the township solution. The first was the racist ideal, built on the utterly false and cynical notion of fathers staying in a single-sex hostel while working in town, while mothers and children happily tilled the soil back home in the homeland. The migrant-model reached its extreme form with the 'independence' of the Transkei in 1976. We will meet all the violence inherent in this ideal in the civil war of 1986. But it was not the antagonism fuelling the riot of 1976. In 1976 it was the contradictions of urban blacks living in a 'white' town, the township-model, that exploded.

### **3. What happened?**

The volume of events is overwhelming; schools were burned down, state-offices gutted, people shot and funerals held almost continuously for six months across the country.<sup>198</sup> What is central to my argument is not so much the sequence of events as their spatiality. If a pattern of the riot cannot be plotted by a 'BCM', 'ANC' or workerist (or any other) master narrative, it does not mean that violence, 'unwanted interference with bodies', took place everywhere in a random, chaotic fashion. The riot was a contest over structured space. Rioting almost exclusively took place in townships, with Soweto and the other Witwatersrand townships ahead of Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth far behind Cape Town. Durban was quiet, a strange fact which may, paradoxically, help us later to interpret the violence of Johannesburg and Cape Town. The spatiality of violence within each township is more important than the national distribution of flash points for mapping the attack on the state because the battle in one township in many ways resembled battles in other townships, without being segments of a coherent front. Each township rioted

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<sup>198</sup> For a convenient overview of the riot see Brooks and Brickhill's list of events from 16 June to 31 December, pp 307-343, and South African Institute of Race Relations Survey for 1976 (SAIRR, 1977:51-88). They are perhaps not comprehensive, in particular not on the less-reported rural events, but probably revealing the overall shape of the riot.



alone with hardly any co-ordination except for the encouragement of knowing that children were on the streets all over the country.

**(a) Inside the township**

Fully formed like Pallas Athena the riot sprang to life on the very first day in the shape of street-battle. This is a testimony both to the simplicity of this battle-form and to the universality of explosive discontent. Street battles between youths and police demanded a certain minimum town-size, while arson attacks on schools could spread to very small towns. By spontaneous repetition of the children's battles in Soweto, children across the nation had set alight townships and locations in Cape Town, Pretoria, East Rand, The Free State, Bophuthatswana and Natal within a week. Yet, after countless battles during six months a more advanced form of street-battle never emerged. Like Athena (and the rhizome) the street-battle did not grow older. But as we shall see, more elaborate forms of struggle were developed to meet the challenges of other sites of contest.

Fights with armed state-forces over street-ownership had already by the evening of June 16 spontaneously developed the forms of pupils marching non-violently and organised with placards; of children throwing stones, bricks, and bottles in running fights with police that teargassed, batoncharged, shoot and killed children; of stoning and burning all white persons, cars, and commercial vehicles encountered in the township.<sup>199</sup>

The two principal forms of fighting white control of schools were boycotts of classes and burning down of schools also begun June 16. In ten days fifty Transvaal schools were damaged by fire. In Ndwedwe north of Durban 280 girls burned down a mission school on July 27; school-burning was the primary transmitter of the riot from metropolitan to rural areas, including the homelands. The school boycott became massive in African townships when schools re-opened after the holiday on July 22 and after police raids to capture the leaders of the Soweto Students Representative Council the schools remained empty the rest of the year (and next year). Almost 100% boycott of examines was observed in Soweto in November.

Only a few hours into the riot arson spread from schools to all other buildings associated with white rule in Soweto (Bantu Affairs Administration Boards and Urban Black Councils, post offices, beerhalls, and bottlestores). Very

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<sup>199</sup> Dates are given are for the first appearance of some incidents on Brick & Brookhill's list to give a rudimentary idea of the evolution of battle-forms; see Brooks & Brickhill, 1980, pp 307-343.

quickly state presence at township level began to break down; water supplies were attacked, BAAB officials stoned; shops and houses belonging to black people co-operating with the white state were gutted, looted and burnt down. During the first three months the following damage was reported in Soweto alone: 24 schools, 3 clinics, 9 post offices, 18 bottle stores, 18 beer halls, 14 private business premises, 3 libraries, 1 court building, 19 shops, 2 community halls, 19 houses, 42 West Rand Administration Board buildings, and at least 114 vehicles. (SAIRR, 1977:85)

#### **(b) Township border**

With street-battles pushing the armed and bureaucratic forces of the state out of the townships, the contest shifted from the public space inside the township to the border between the black and the white town. Youths erected barricades to keep out the police and prevent commercial vehicles from entering Soweto; the state stopped trains and busses going from Johannesburg to Soweto. Police and border-troops used armoured personnel carriers, (Hippos) to re-enter Soweto and helicopters to ship in weapons and throw tear-gas at rioters late in day of June 16; next day they claimed to have sealed off Soweto. Buses going to town were firebombed by children from July onwards. Pupils and adults demonstrating for the release of pupils detained in Johannesburg tried to walk to the city but was turned back at New Canada Station at the border of Soweto by police using automatic rifles on August 5. The residents of Soweto erected roadblocks and confronted the police; trains and busses were withdrawn and commercial deliveries stopped to Soweto on August 6. Running battles between demonstrators and police on the entry to Soweto on August 9. Police used helicopters in Cape Town to reach barricaded and violently defended areas in the three black townships Langa, Guguletu, and Nyanga on August 12. As the riot petered out in December the police pushed back across the township border; nearly 1000 police sealed off Guguletu in Cape Town and searched each house in the township, more than were 300 arrested on December 2-3.

#### **(c) Stay-away from the white town**

Stay-aways was the first major step beyond the street-battle, and a direct children-patriarch confrontation. On August 4 the pupils called for the first stay-away; they picketed at stations and bus terminals, attempting to persuade adults to stay home, "by a greater degree of coercion than was used by the inciters of any of its successors" (Lodge, 1983:329). Children sabotaged railroad lines and signals; buses carrying workers to the city were stopped and burned. 60% of

Johannesburg's black work-force stayed away from work that day (SAIRR, 1977:66). On August 15, T.J. Makhaya from the Soweto Urban Black Council at a meeting said that children who stopped workers from going to work "should be killed". During the following week workers wanting to go to work despite student blockades were allowed by the police to carry knobkerries and sticks (SAIRR 66).

The second stay-away came on August 23. Brickhill claims the second stayaway was a greater success than the first,<sup>200</sup> while Lodge claims fewer stayed away than on Aug. 4. The stay-aways made hostel-pupil antagonism flare up. On August 24 a Zulu *impi* from Mzimhlope hostel went on a rampage in Soweto, police complicity was alleged, and in an ominous overture of violence to explode a decade later Mangosuthu Buthelezi flew up to Soweto on August 26 and held a speech for unity between hostel and township.

The third stay-away occurred on September 13; up to 70% absenteeism was reported in some areas; police made a swoop in Alexandria "to protect those who wished to go to work" arresting hundreds of people. A stay-away followed September 15 in Cape Town with up to 50% absenteeism (SAIRR, 1977:69). The fourth and last stay-away on November 1 faltered in Transvaal and the Cape. The Christmas boycott of department shops in the white town in December was a weak sequel to the stay-aways.

#### **(d) Attacking the white town**

The first attack on whites outside the township seems to be a stoning incident on July 20 where at least 20 whites were injured on the Pretoria-Witbank highway. The first major reported attack on a target in a white area was the Brakpan post office completely destroyed by fire on August 14. Drivers were stoned at motor ways outside the coloured township of Bonteheuwel, Cape Town and the first coloureds shot dead by police on August 25. Shops in Rondebosch East, Cape Town, were firebombed on September 1. But the dramatic symbolic escalation of the black-white struggle came on September 2 and 3, when black and coloured pupils two days in a row entered central Cape Town by train and successfully staged large demonstrations on Adderley Street; for the first time police used tear-gas in a white area. Factories were stoned and forced to close in Parow, Cape Town on September 8. Later in September these attacks were repeated in Johannesburg when two factories were gutted and black children demonstrated on the central Eloff

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<sup>200</sup> Brooks and Brickhill, 1980:321.

and Jeppe Streets with fierce clashes, several shootings and stabbings; police arrested 400 in a 'giant mopping-up' operation.

The children in fact for some hours symbolically conquered the very hearts of metropolitan South Africa by their violent presence, and this reversal of the attacker-defender polarity across the township border sent chock-waves into the white town. In a desperate move the Minister of Justice said on September 8 that white industrial and other areas had to protect themselves as the police was busy in the townships. White vigilante groups sprang up, patrolling factories, white schools, universities (including Stellenbosch), and residential areas. Parents guarded white middle-class suburban schools in Claremont and Wynberg; hundreds of white vigilantes patrolled Cape Town white residential areas; several vigilante incidents were reported in Cape Town and Johannesburg; 3 blacks were killed by white vigilantes on September 12 on the Cape (SAIRR, 1977:75). A week later police warned vigilantes not to kill Blacks, but still people were organising themselves into a permanent 'Home Guard' (ibid., p. 77).

Yet, it is important to note that the riot never moved into white residential areas; only two whites were killed during the entire six months of violence, and only because they were unfortunate to be caught in Soweto on the day when the riot started. On November 27 pupils for the last time during the riot demonstrated in the white city centre of Cape Town; police dispersed the crowd with batons.

#### **(e) Attacking the parents**

Finally the children challenged the parents head-on in the hearth of the townships. In a desperate bid to re-arm patriarchal rule of the children, and in September the Minister of Justice, Jimmy Kruger held a meeting with *makgotlas* (black vigilante groups of older males) to give them legal recognition by the police.<sup>201</sup> Yet, in 1976 the children were much stronger than the parents. This battle was to become ever more deadly during the next decade; see Chapter 20. On October 8 all *shebeens* in Cape Town (small informal black-owned bars and a

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<sup>201</sup> In his pioneering analysis of extra-statal social ordering in townships Jeremy Seekings writes: "The most common cases brought to the *makgotla* were parents' complaints about 'disrespectful' children: 'The only medicine for children is the sjambok thrashing, you must teach them the law.'" Jeremy Seekings, *Social ordering and control in South Africa's black townships: an historical overview of extra-state initiatives from the 1940s to the 1990s*, p. 11; unpublished paper presented to the South African History Society Biennial Conference, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, July 1995.

central source of income) were ordered by the pupils to close within a week. Oct. 11, 3000 youths (SAIRR says only 300) closed at least 100 *shebeens* in Cape Town and the liquor were destroyed (this is a spectacular difference from the looting in the Los Angeles riot in 1992). On October 18, roadblocks set were up in Cape Town to enforce the anti-alcohol drive, adults were searched and bottles smashed and several *shebeens* destroyed. By the end of October several more attacks on *shebeens* took place in Soweto by students, and people carrying bottles on the street were attacked. Operation Clean-up in Soweto was launched by pupils to clear away the refuse that had accumulated since municipal services was cut off. Extending the parenting of the parents the Soweto Students Representative Council on October 16 called for mourning over the victims of the riot until New Year and abolition of Christmas celebrations including buying of gifts in white shops.

Funerals were important for circumventing the ban on gatherings and the children-adult confrontation extended to a struggle for symbolic ownership of this only large political manifestation possible besides demonstrations. In June Jimmy Kruger banned mass funerals which the recently formed Black Parents Association had been planning for victims of the riot, but they were held anyway. On October 24, 5000 mourners attended a funeral for riot-victims; people giving black power salutes were shot by police, seven were killed and 51 injured. In an ultimate move of defiance of the perceived adult submission to apartheid children fled from South Africa and joined the small armed groups in exile. By December there were in Botswana at least 8 homes with 150 youths in each that had fled from South Africa.<sup>202</sup>

#### 4. The children

##### (a) Frontline children

We know little about the children. Photographs document pupils marching, exuberant teenagers, surging forward, school-girls in uniforms and polished shoes, shouting with clenched fists and doing the v-sign, boys running, smiling, shouting, waving placards and a few sticks.<sup>203</sup> “To hell with Afrikaans”, “Afrikaans is not a

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<sup>202</sup> Personal communication from Leonard Martin, himself a Soweto student leader living in the Botswana exile-houses at the time; Århus, March 3, 1998.

<sup>203</sup> Peter Magubane’s photographs in his *June 16, The fruit of fear* Johannesburg: Scotaville Publishers, 1986; and the pictures in Brickhill and Brooks 1980.

good subject for us” “The black nation is not a place for impurities, Afrikaans stinks”. No adults are in sight, no adults are leading, following or present at all. Then some days into the riot everybody seems to be on the streets, men appear along with small kids, grim pictures show big men with rifles running after children, belching smoke from car-wrecks and gutted houses, and this strange coexistence of dynamism and passivity peculiar to all pictures of riots. Lots of people standing still watching, some running, some throwing stones, some shooting, all within the same frame. This ‘dynamic heterogeneity’ is typical of spontaneous, uncoordinated, and un-led violence. Already on day 1 the events exploded in a way no-one controlled, not the students, not political opposition groups and not the government. The riot was a rhizomatic situation, where almost anyone could be catapulted into the role as a leader of the day, not by organisational grooming, but by the vortex of violence. Finally parents and some political leaders show up at the funerals. But still the pupils are marching with placards like,

“How long must we be kicked, choked, bitten, raped and killed?”  
“Kruger release detainees in prison or else...!”

They were variously called children, youths, pupils, students. They were certainly not university students<sup>204</sup> but pupils up to around twenty years from schools and high schools<sup>205</sup>. I call them children because they still lived at home. This is important for the dynamic of the riot because it constantly fuelled the children-parent conflict, but also because it gave the street fighters unsurpassed safe-houses, well established protective networks and logistical support, much better than any guerrilla army could hope for.

Court facts bear out the central importance of the children. It was mostly youths that were arrested and brought to trial. Of 229 post mortems done on riot-victims in Johannesburg and reported on October 13, the largest group of victims

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<sup>204</sup> “Biko was extremely sensitive to the fact that his generation - the SASO generation - was politically pivotal. Thus his observation that if his generation failed to confront governmental repression, the younger generation of students [ie. the children of Soweto], represented at the time by the South African Students’ Movement (SASM), would consider them ‘sell-outs’.” C.R.D.Halasi, “Biko and Black Consciousness Philosophy: An Interpretation”, in Pityana and Ramphele, 1991:102.

<sup>205</sup> In 1985 43,8 percent of the black population were under 15 years old. Cf. BE Hofmeyr and M Ferreira, “Demographic ageing and redistribution of the elderly in the RSA”; in Mostert and Lötter, 1990:92.

was the 10-20 years old; 224 were black, 3 coloured, 2 white; and 9 out of 10 were male.<sup>206</sup> It is likely, however, that the warning concerning figures for the 1980s apply here as well, "The most notorious instance of [official] changing categories at will, has been concerned with the number and ages of children in detention." (Tomaselli, 1989:24). By 30 October, 1976 the following cases of persons convicted for 'public violence' had been reported in the Press: 526 children under 18 years of age had been sentenced to corporal punishment and been whipped, lashed etc. against only 139 adults; in September a sentence of five lashes was imposed on an eight-year-old African child for attending an illegal gathering in Port Elizabeth.<sup>207</sup> No children, but 111 adults had been imprisoned, 393 children had received a suspended sentence or fine, against 30 adults.<sup>208</sup>

"Lawyers and legal experts argued that very often juveniles did not get a fair chance in court because they were not legally represented. Magistrates seldom delayed the cuts [lashings] to allow children to appeal... it was pointed out that youngsters under 21, sentenced to up to ten cuts, almost invariably received the punishment at the end of same court day, whether or not they decided to appeal against the sentence or conviction..." (SAIRR, 1977:145).

It is probably uncontroversial that inspiration and mental power to want and to dare demonstrate came from the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and initial leadership of the pupils came from the Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC).<sup>209</sup> More controversial, perhaps, is the role played by gangs. They played an ambiguous role in challenging the police and setting up models for

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<sup>206</sup> 1 was under 10 years, 88 under 20 years, 69 between 20 and 30 years, and 46 over 30 years, 224 were black, 3 coloured, 2 white, 210 men, and 20 women; SAIRR, 1977:85.

<sup>207</sup> The figures were gathered by SAIRR from police-sources and may under-report the real number of children sentenced.

<sup>208</sup> SAIRR,, 1977:144; a further 2368 persons, age unspecified, had been brought to trial, but their cases had not been concluded by the end of October.

<sup>209</sup> "Many high-school student leaders were active at the REESO (SASO Reef) [the Johannesburg branch of the BCM student organisation] office and were to play a leading role in the June 16 uprising in 1976. These early contacts were facilitated by such prominent SASO leaders as Onkgopotse Tiro, a history teacher at Morris Isaacson High School who taught student leaders like Tsietsi Mashinini, as well as veteran SASO and BCM leaders like Tom Manthata, Aubrey Mokoena, Fanyana Mazibuko and many others. It was at Morris Isaacson where the initial organisation of the 16 June uprising took place." Sipho Buthelezi, in Pityana, 1991:115.

resistance and admiration among youths. One of the controversial aspects of the gangs was their Coloured background growing originally out of the Cape slave society and becoming a prominent feature in the organisation of Coloureds at the Cape and Johannesburg. The gangs in Sophiatown were either Coloureds or Sothos setting the smart urban standard to be dreamt of by rural blacks coming into town. The *comtotsis* (comrade-totsi, i.e. rebel-gangster) was the norm which children aspired to, amongst other by mastering the *totsital*, the totsi-lingo. The gangsters would talk about the township as '*die kas*' a box where you could hide from the police. The *totsital* was a crucial means of survival, where you had to find ways to tell friend from enemy. Sotho '*dla*' was hip talk amongst youth and gangsters, which made it possible to move around in a violent ethnic space. It was mock-military and contained a silent hand-language as well to secure survival.

As early as 1972-73 children 12-13-14 years old would discuss armed struggle in the cities against the state.<sup>210</sup> From 1973 onwards children collected military magazines with recipes for bombs. These small BCM-groups included both coloured and black youth. The priest Dale White organised picnics where banned literature on civil war and petrol bombs and so forth was studied. By 1974-75 maps had been produced with escape routes out of South Africa. These small groups would seek confrontation with the whites, demonstrate that they were not afraid of the police and ready to name stool pigeons. Gangsters were the first to supply weapons, stolen cars and money to BCM-groups, all very young boys. Two important persons were the famous Don Matera and Jimmy Mathews. Every boy in high school had brothers or other relatives with contacts to gangsters.

"The authentic student leaders appeared to be dedicated, intelligent, militant young activists; fearless people with no family responsibilities; owning no property, thus with nothing material to lose. They had come to despise their elders for submitting too long to the entrenched system of White domination, and for continuing with the politics of reasoned argument, which had achieved small if any result. Parents and teachers were shown little respect, and lost their authority over the militant youth... many hundreds of students were arrested, but any leaders amongst them were, apparently, immediately replaced by others." (SAIRR, 1977: 25)

#### **(b) Family children**

The gangster culture and ways of organising attacks on the state (not political violence in the narrow sense) was something which the parents were totally excluded from. The parents had a way of behaving and talking suited to survival on

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<sup>210</sup> Information in this paragraph is personal communication from Leonard Martin and Lawrence McGosh; Århus, March 3, 1998.



the white workplace and in the white town. The language of the children were opposite, aimed at confrontation with white authority. “Totsi” is Sotho for rebel, one that is different, not conform, an urban rebel. The opposite word was “mogoe” country bumpkin, a dull conformist, and it was often levelled at the Zulus, new in town. The *totsi* would not just have his own lingo, also his dress would mark him. He would be a sharp dresser wearing ironed trousers and clothes telling he did not work manually. The worst he could think of was wearing blankets. The bravest of the gangsters would attack the white people.

The patriarch was by 1976 a much reduced figure, which was one of the key triggers of the riot. He was split between demands made on him by his radical children and the repressive state. Also the house he ruled had become ambiguous, because it was bursting at the seams. Any matchbox house could be home to ten or maybe seventeen people (The municipal authorities calculated with an average of 13 people pr. twenty-five square-metre house). Black Jacks, the black council police, would drive around at night-time and wake up people to control their permits and tax-receipts, and deport those without ‘exemption’ from the rules against black people in the ‘white’ towns. There was a desperate struggle for an urban foothold, and in many houses the real head of the house was a woman. Females dominated the extended families, and many young persons lost respect for the pitiful survival-strategies of their fathers, avoiding the hassle of the overcrowded house, drinking beer in some shebeen after work. Often the father was controlled by his wife’s mother. The man always had to hide his feelings. To survive they adjusted to the white demands, “to support their family”, but the children did not buy this excuse, to them the fathers had become spineless.

The youngsters lived totally outside the norms of their parents. Nobody could tell the children when to be at home or how to behave. They could return with a stolen car, but the father would be too intimidated to dare ask what was going on. Young boys got stolen taxi-vans from white areas, like Sandton. Suddenly they learned to drive, became mobile and could organise across the vast distances of Johannesburg. The coloured parents were afraid to see their children having contact with blacks, but the children did as they pleased. Coloured girls would stop strengthening their hair, and come home with black boys; they would stop attending church. It was outrageous, but the parents had lost their grip on the children. Clearly the patriarchal house was severely weakened or already in ruins.

### **(c) Urban children**

The children were presumably most of them legal townspeople, with parents having permanent urban residence permission and some of them part of the urban black elite with roots back to Sophiatown and the pre-apartheid mixed urban life. The children were black urban insiders with parents having work, many of them office-work, and able to support kids in high-school. Children from the high-schools came not from the illegal shacks, they were not the children of the streets.

“It is also relevant to point out that Soweto was not a predominantly industrial working-class community; it had a disproportionately large white collar/petty bourgeois group - numbering 50.000 - and the township’s population had been virtually untouched by the revival of working-class consciousness and trade unionism that had begun elsewhere.” (Lodge, 1983:333)

Tom Lodge is here arguing against a workerist interpretation of the riot (Brickhill & Brooks; Hirson). What is particularly important, however, is the absence of the town-border influx-issues which came to fuel the violence a decade later. In 1976 the issue was how to be a black pupil, that is functionally integrated into town space. As I will attempt to show, this issue exposed some of the most fundamental contradictions of apartheid and thus the riot could not be extinguished by back-tracking on the original Afrikaans-question; which the minister of Bantu-affairs did in vain less than two weeks into the riot.

Tom Lodge continued:

“It is likely that the bewildered and self-accusatory response of the middle-class oriented *World* newspaper was a much more generalised perception among Soweto adults than the advocates of a township-based syndicalism would have us believe:

“It may be that we have become so shell-shocked that nothing seems to touch us the raw... So many parents these days are taking very calm the horrid fact that their sons and daughters have fled the country. If parents do not shrug their shoulders with indifference when their sons and daughters are arrested, they do something very similar... They sigh wearily, they shake their heads - and they trudge off to that miserable job, travelling in those miserable trains, as if the whole world was a bed of roses.

I am able to trace this attitude back some months in Soweto. Early this year when the clouds of discontent were building ominously in our schoolyards, we shook our heads and clicked our collective tongue. Then the kids boycotted classes. Still we shook our collective head lethargically and hummed our collective disquiet. Then the boycotts began to spread.

The reaction was the same from the whole world of adulthood.

The scenario began to hot up. We were frightened. We were shocked. But all we did was despair.

The lens moves to the graveyards and this time the adults are in the line of fire. What a moan there was in Soweto! What a tearing out of hair and collective gnashing of teeth there was! And that was all.

This time they were picking up our babies right in our own homes. Oh what a clicking of tongues there was this time! So many frightened mothers and fathers dashing out in their cars to hide their children. My language spells it out very clearly - '*Singa, magwala*' (we are cowards)."<sup>211</sup>

Aggrey Klaaste confronted "we, parents, adults, mothers, fathers" to "children, sons, daughters, kids, babies". It is revealing to compare this view of the polarity of the riot with the children's own, different, version. As an example I quote two extracts from some of their pamphlets probably distributed in August and September:<sup>212</sup>

"The Black Students' Message to their Beloved Parents.

Dear Parents.

The Black students throughout Azania have shown their extreme dissatisfaction with the education that is handed out to them, an education which shackles the mind and which is only intended to create a mere efficient black labour force to be exploited by those in power, more than this, the Black students have demanded a radical change from the entire oppressive apartheid system which dehumanizes and belittles one, a system that not allow the full development of man, what we have seen in Soweto and in other areas throughout the country appears to be the first stirrings of a monster and we may be standing in the tip of a powder keg which could shake the whole of South Africa...

Peaceful demonstrations by the students have been met with force by those in power a call on workers who are also our parents by students to join them have been met with the escalation of police brutality and increase in the number of legalised murders."

"To Town!!! To Eloff!!! To That Exclusive White Paradise!!

...Johannesburg or Soweto, the Capital and supposed centre of this national drive, has already lagged behind the countryside. Where the heart of Cape Town - Adderley Street- was rocked by revolutionary demonstrators. Are we made of a different metal from them? Surely not, they are mortals like ourselves. But their discontent about the present oppressive structure has made them bold. They burnt buildings, they took possession of what was forcefully raped from them a few centuries ago. They did not plead for work anymore. They brought so much panic to the already frightened whites, that all guns obtained in public market were sold out...

...surely, a retreat is impossible when our brothers studying in other parts of the country have raised [sic] their schools to the ground and brought educational machinery to a halt. These people also value their education, but have abandoned it for a better cause, namely the elimination of oppression. We cannot retreat to classrooms unless we reverse the whole course of events this year... Let us not betray the nation by pursuing

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<sup>211</sup> Aggrey Klaaste; *Weekend World*, October 1976; cit. in Lodge 1983:333.

<sup>212</sup> "Document 2 and 4", cit. by No Ziswe (Neville Alexander), 1979:192-196. Because of the repression at the time in South Africa unfortunately not with references of their origin.

selfish ends like writing exams... do we also want Vorster's certificate? To hell with a paper! Certificate! The certificate we want now is our land, and for that we shall fight till the racists are defeated."

The pupils did not repeat Klaaste's duality. The first pamphlet confronted "Black students" with two parties, "beloved parents, workers" and "those in power, the system". The second pamphlet had a different polarity again with "brothers, revolutionary demonstrators" opposing "whites, racists". We can observe three very different oppositions, (i) children vs. parents is the patriarchal conflict embedded in the house; (ii) students and workers vs. the system (of exploitation) is a functional opposition localised to town space, and finally (iii) Blacks vs. white racists is the ethnic-racial antagonism constituting ethnic space. Now my point is that they exactly articulate the three spatial fronts where the children met the state. One opposition is not correct and the others false; quite the opposite, they are all simultaneously throats of the rhizome of violence. The spaces of state, ethnicity, town and house are always superimposed on the same territory or strategic field. However, at each point in time the relative strengths and weaknesses of state rule and individual resistance shifts between the four spaces. In the Soweto riot we can localise, I will argue, the strength of the children and the weakness of the state to the house space.

## **5. The children in the rhizome of violence**

Let me summarise my argument. The children of Soweto met the state trice:

(i) They met the state as *children* when it interpellated the house. When the state, by its laws and practices distinguished public from private space, it did so by a compact with the patriarch of the house: children were the organic responsibility of 'the father of the house' and not directly of the state. They were *minors*. This status meant the fathers could rule in the house (or mothers if he did not live there) and carried some responsibility for the children's acts outside the house. From the point of view of the patriarch he then transferred his right of rule of his minors in certain spaces outside the house to other 'patriarchal figures in a kind of reciprocal recognition between rulers: the school principal (headmaster, teacher) and the policeman. All the other state administrators controlling black lives interfered with children through fathers.

(ii) The children also met the state in the school as *pupils*. No longer as daughters and sons of the father but as 'pupils', that is determined by their function

in the educational-occupational system. In the school they learned whatever the state thought necessary for fulfilling future functions. Whatever the instrumental and ideological content of education, in the school the children were confronted with a second 'patriarch', the teacher or the headmaster, the principal. In this sense the school was also organised as a house with patriarchal domination. Yet, not based on an organic relation as in the house, but on a functional relation as the other town relations. The work of the pupils had a clear functional rationality, and it was exactly this function the imposition of Afrikaans threatened: it made it impossible to pass exams and harder to get jobs.

(iii) In South Africa the children also met the state as *Blacks* at the frontiers of the ethnic-racial space. On the streets of the township and in town the children met the state as the third patriarch, the policeman (and even the soldier) controlling ethnic space with pass-laws, influx-control etc. Common to all three fronts were a generational conflict. In all three instances the structure of rule pitted children against adults. My argument is that the three children-adult structures of rule supported each other - and when one collapsed the others would be extremely vulnerable. Further that the children shared one of the three conflicts with their parents: the racial. On this front the children also fought their parents struggle. The interlocking of generational (house), functional (town) and racist (ethnic) conflicts produced the explosion of June 16.

#### **(a) The children in town space**

First of all the Nationalist government itself had created the pupils. To meet the growing need for an educated black work force to undertake ever more complex town functions 'Bantu Education' had exploded.

"Between 1950 and 1975, the number of African children at school rose from around one million to over 3,5 million... Secondary expansion was especially dramatic between 1965 and 1975, when it increased nearly fivefold. Class sizes averaged over 60 in Soweto and reached 100. Under-trained teaching staff in acutely under-resourced schools found it difficult to cope and corporal punishment was commonplace. School became sites of expansion, of expectation, of deprivation, and of explosive political potential." (Beinart, 194:219)

Yet, no matter how poor the education was it had a core functional rationale both for the white society needing an ever better trained work-force, and for the individual Black pupil striving for an improved life-chance. Education functionally included the children in town space outside and beyond their organic belonging to house space. In the severely over-stretched Bantu Education-schools the Afrikaans-

language issue was petrol waiting for a match. When the match was struck on June 16 and it did explode the pupils did not shrink back into the house as minors, they attacked the state, and attacked successfully, they reversed state rule in schools. First day into the riot the Afrikaans daily *Beeld* tracked down Deputy Minister of Bantu Education Dr. Andries Treurnicht, in Windhoek for an urgent comment on the crisis. Faced with the most serious challenge to white rule until then his answer betrayed a stupefying narrow-mindedness.

“In the white areas of South Africa [ie. outside the homelands] the Government should have the right to decide the medium of instruction in African schools, as the Government supplied the buildings and subsidised the schools.” (SAIRR, 1977:59)

In Parliament he had earlier denied any knowledge of well documented protests against the Afrikaans-imposition. For example in the Urban Bantu Council on June 14, Councillor Leonard Mosala had warned that the enforcing of Afrikaans in schools could result in another Sharpeville. Speaking of the children he said, “They won’t take anything we say because they think we have neglected them. We have failed to help them in their struggle for change in schools. They are now angry and prepared to fight and we are afraid the situation may become chaotic at any time.” (ibid., p. 57). Afrikaans instruction was to a large degree seen as a functional problem, condemning the pupils to do badly at the exams. Critique was not centred on the content or ideology of the curriculum. Majakathata Mokoena, 39 and one of the student leaders of ‘76, visited his old higher primary school in 1996, and his comment is an example of this non-ideological, functional critique:

“The curriculum was exactly the same as before. I asked the principal, why is it that we still have nine hours per week of vernacular and you have about five hours of mathematics and science? It makes no sense. Science and mathematics are critical. We should actually be having more science hours in schools. The best-performing countries do that.”  
(Sunday Independent, June 16, 1996)

When the children burned down schools it was a very effective negation of state rule of them as pupils. Boycotts worked almost as well once patriarchal rule in the house had broken down and no one could force the children to go to school. As the SAIRR remarked somewhat at a loss, “Parents, teachers and police appeared to be helpless in the face of the continued refusal of children to go to school.” (SAIRR, 1977:64). The school-burning and boycott of exams was efficient in turning pupils into street-fighters, but it carried the obvious dilemma between collective struggle and individual improvement. The avant-garde injunction “Let us

not betray the nation by pursuing selfish ends like writing exams,” in the document cited above and later the slogan “Liberation before education” became bitterly contested within the struggle. In the end the children paid a heavy price for their boycotts. Nobody thanked the street-fighters of 1976 without education in 1996 with good positions on the labour-market.

### **(b) The children in ethnic space**

The township posed an unsolvable dilemma for apartheid. At the one hand the separation of the races, laid down in the Group Areas Act created the township as a ghetto, an ethnic space where some kind of separate and autonomous identity however suppressed would emerge. On the other hand capitalist exploitation demanded a functional unity between township and town and a racist *contact* between black and white on the job. Ironically, in order to keep the township a barren dormitory, racist exploitation had to compete with ethnic separation: each scrap of urban life added to the endless rows of matchbox houses potentially built up the fateful ethnic struggle between two towns, the ghetto and the white town. The hostels in this sense were the extreme dormitory, and closest to resemble the *Senzala*, intimately and racist entwined with the *Casa-Grande*. But the township always had this tendency too, ambiguously counterpoised to the ghetto-tendency. The difference between *Senzala* and ghetto brings out the difference between racism and ethnicity.<sup>213</sup>

We see this contradiction played out in the riot-space. The police could not isolate Soweto from Johannesburg because the black workers were needed in the ‘white’ town to continue racist exploitation; on the other hand they desperately tried to keep the black children out of Johannesburg, to uphold the ethnic border. This was the contradiction of apartheid: in functional reality create an ever growing black urban population, but fervently believing in White towns and repressing the very thought of the townships and their millions. On August 20, Minister of Bantu Affairs M.C. Botha said in a speech in Port Elizabeth after two days of riot where 33 people had been killed, that the basis on which Blacks were present in White areas was “to sell their labour and for nothing else.” (SAIRR, 19777:67). To distinguish a black worker travelling between *Senzala* and *Casa-Grande*, from a black pupil transgressing the ethnic border of the ghetto demanded the one thing which apartheid had destroyed: patriarchal control of the black house.

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<sup>213</sup> I explore this distinction in *The Slave, The Native and the Serf. Three Sites of Violence in South African Ethnic Space; 1652-1994*. Tin 1998b.

But the children reversed the meaning of ethnic space: suddenly the township no longer was the ethnic Other of the dominant white town, the township became dominant and the white town the ethnic Other defending itself against the children surging into central Cape Town and Johannesburg. A short while they could seal off Soweto from Johannesburg and standing at the *grave* enunciate the ghetto a liberated space. The funerals became central political manifestations and the police tried to re-capture control of black ethnic space by killing people right up to the coffin. Of course this only entrenched the township as an autonomous territory, cut loose from the white town. In the discursive battle between children and state, the liability of the state, the unsolvable contradiction between Sensala and Ghetto, became the strength of the children. Jimmy Kruger made a speech blaming the unrest on imported Black Power ideology from America, “but the White man will overcome it.” he promised. Premier Minister Vorster declared that,

“I can unfortunately come to no other conclusion than that we do not have to do with a spontaneous outburst but with a deliberate attempt to encourage polarisation between Black and White.” (The Cape Times, June 19, 1976)

Such as the policy of the National Party Government, perhaps? The editorial on June 18 in *Die Burger*, the main Afrikaans daily, headlined “Now it has happened” gives a measure of the racial fear the whites had for their repressed Other,

“The most alarming aspect of the event is probably the demonstration it gave once again of the unthinking, excessive, almost lustfully fierceness of which a mass is capable ... We know how a black mass at the slightest provocation can be whipped up into irrational frenzy.”

The fear was echoed in most of the headlines in the other white newspapers, *The Star*, Johannesburg: “Mobs take over” and “Drunken Tsotsis on prowl”, *Rand Daily Mail*: “Bands of marauding blacks rampaged through Soweto last night”, *Beeld*: “Hell in Soweto”, with a photo of the dead body of Dr. Melville Edelstein across the breath of the page (the white township-employee killed the first day, and one of the only two whites killed during the entire riot), *Die Transvaler*: “Shock violence - whites chopped to death”. Frantz Fanon knew this talk very well, and wrote,

“The colonial world is a Manichean world... At times this Manicheism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal... The native knows all this, and laughs to himself every time he spots an allusion to the animal world in the



other's words. For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure his victory." (Fanon, 1963:43)

After a helicopter swoop over the riot-torn areas on June 18, Jimmy Kruger declared, "that the situation would return to normal this weekend. The police are capable of handling the trouble and *the public has no reason to fear.*" (Cape Times, 19 June, 1976; italics added) 'The public' was Kruger's white tribe, and of course they did have reason to fear, because the 'trouble' was that the meaning of violence across the ethnic border was reversing; the natives were surely sharpening their weapons.

Children looking from inside a little Soweto matchbox house out on the street outside, made wide enough for a Hippo to operate and flooded during night-time with yellow light from tall lampposts, saw the beachhead of an oppressive state on their own territory. Public space was contested, there was a very real ethnic front. In the street-battles the children took ownership of township space, and by doing that they articulated for some short moments the township as an autonomous ethnic space. They created by violence the borders of that space and they picked up the power generated inside this space.

### **(c) The children in house space**

The house border separates, as I argued above, house from wilderness. Outside the Soweto house-door was a real wilderness, wild and deadly, full of dangers for children. Parents had every reason to fear for the life of their children once they darted out to join the comrades on the streets or in the far-away camps of the nebulous freedom fighters. But instead of the parents forbidding the children to roam on the streets it was the children that forced their fathers (and mothers) back into the house, forbid them to drink, and refused to celebrate Christmas. The children ruled the parents and in a most spectacular way reversed the patriarchal rule of the house during the riot. Granted, adolescents are the age-group questioning parental rule everywhere when they move from being children to being parents themselves. If anybody should revolt against generational rule in the house it must be them. Only in South Africa the rule of the elders was so violent and linked so intimately to the other vectors of rule that their generational stirrings started to rock the whole structure of apartheid. The link between state and patriarchal repression, the 'farming out' of repression from the state to the house-patriarch was inherent in the interpellation of the house. To function, apartheid

needed the deeply ambivalent co-operation from black patriarchs to rule black children.

On the intimate level, where these structures live, how did the patriarchal structure of the house become embedded into the larger structures of state rule? In works of literature we may get a glimpse of an answer. In South African (and world) literature a perennial subject is the often traumatic experiences of dominance of men over women, and adults over children. Of the three fault-lines in the house (slavery is the third) the generational in particular seems relevant to a discussion of the Soweto-riot. I will quote from three South African autobiographies, each in their own way picturing the child situated in this house-state nexus of rule. The stories, different in time and both urban and rural, show how patriarchy is a structure common to the house linking it with town, ethnic and state space.

Rolihlahla, a Xhosa boy, grew up in the Transkei in the 1920s. In his autobiography he has little to say about his father who died when Rolihlahla was nine years old and had only been Nelson for two years. In the book the father is first of all the link with the forefathers, the Madiba clan, the Thembu tribe and the Xhosa nation. Yet, Rolihlahla remembers,

“My father was a tall, dark-skinned man with a straight and stately posture, which I like to think I inherited.. [he] had a stern manner and did not spare the rod when disciplining his children. He could be exceedingly stubborn...

One night, when I was nine years old, I was aware of a commotion in the household. My father, who took turns visiting his wives and usually came to us for perhaps one week a month, had arrived. But it was not at his accustomed time, for he was not scheduled to be with us for another few days. I found him in my mother's hut, lying on his back on the floor, in the midst of what seemed like an endless fit of coughing. Even to my young eyes, it was clear that my father was not long for this world...

[After his death] I do not remember experiencing great grief so much as feeling cut adrift. Although my mother was the centre of my existence, I defined myself through my father...

After a brief period of mourning, my mother informed me that I would be leaving Qunu. I did not ask her why, or where I was going [his mother had arranged for him to spend the rest of his childhood with relatives in another village]...

But the silence of the heart between mother and child is not a lonely one. My mother and I never talked very much, but we did not need to. I never doubted her love or questioned her support.” (Mandela, 1994:5, 14, 15,)

Bloke Modisane, ten years Mandela's junior, writer on 'Drum' magazine, actor, and playwright, spent his childhood in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. In his moving autobiography *Blame Me on History* he gives an intimate picture of life in Sophiatown, the most vibrant black urban neighbourhood of South Africa, back in

the 1930s. His childhood experiences are not all that different from Nelson Mandela's rural upbringing a decade earlier in terms of patriarchal dominance.<sup>214</sup>

"My father, Joseph, was always a signal of authority, unapproachable, the judge symbol; the only time he came close to me was to administer the cane or lay down the law of Moses, and this six-foot-two giant towered above my world, the only force I ever feared, the authority I respected; perhaps I should have loved him too...

I was playing in Good Street when I saw the dread figure, a whip in his right hand; I disappeared into the nearest yard, jumping fences and cutting across to Gold Street, round into Victoria Road and into the yard. I preferred to be whipped at home. I loaded three four-gallon tins on to my push-cart and hurried to the tap, rehearsing excuses, selecting the approach most likely to soften my father...

I knocked on the door. 'I've done most of the work, father' I said, with all humility. 'I'll wait in the kitchen.' He joined me ten minutes later, locked the door and administered to me a whipping to remember, a whipping I took without a squeak, but with plenty of tears; and when it was over I dried my eyes and went into the bedroom to collect the cups. 'Would mama like another cup of tea?' She shook her head, I looked at my father and he said 'No', then I started for the door. 'He's not a bad boy', Ma-Willie said, as I closed the door behind me." (Modisane, 1963:20, 22)

In the 1950s a girl grew up in the deep rural north of South Africa. Today called "one of South Africa's most powerful woman"<sup>215</sup>, Mamphela Ramphele has a keen eye to the patriarchal dominance over women and children in the house.

"Like most of his contemporaries, my grandfather was an authoritarian patriarch. He ruled his family with a firm hand. To underline his control over his descendants, he issued an edict that all his grandchildren were to refer to him as Papa and his wife as Mama, whereas their own parents were to be called Brother and Sister. This was a major symbolic statement about the lines of authority within the family...

Children were regarded as part of the family estate - property to be handled as one pleased." (Ramphele, 1996:13)

It is important not to forget that the strict patriarchal family was shared by all races in South Africa. Annette Seegers characterises the Afrikaner family of the 1960s as,

"a strong, ordered unit and within it, men are patriarchal figures... Deference is the rule. Children indeed live with rule-making parents. Even children well into their teens are not, for example, encouraged to be present in adult company or to interrupt adults' conversation. Punishment for transgression at home range from admonitions .. to corporal punishment,

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<sup>214</sup> See also Jürgen Schadeberg's unique photos from 'Sof'town' originally published in *Drum* during the 1950s; Jürgen Schadeberg, *Sof'town Blues. Images from the black '50s*, Johannesburg: Nedbank, 1994.

<sup>215</sup> *Mail & Guardian* June 6, 1997.

the latter still a common method of dealing with males in Afrikaner households and schools... Under pressure, women support men, not children... Since relative age determines adult rank, childhood ends only with the death of the parent.” (Seegers, 1993:479, 480)

From the three (four?) autobiographical glimpses of the house quoted above, all the authors go on to describe the contradictory relation of the patriarch with the state. The house is the kingdom of the patriarch, and he may rule it as he pleases, repress his women and children subject only to the rules of tradition and laws against murder, but at the same time he has a deal with the state, he is both an agent of state rule over his dependants and he himself subject to interpellation by the state.

Nelson Mandela recalls a conflict between his father and the state without spelling out to what degree the patriarchal authority disintegrated, he only states that the status of the household was ‘severely diminished’. Mandela uses the incident to stress the legitimacy of the tribal authority in contrast to the white rule, and his own inheritance of that traditional legitimacy. But below this obvious message we can glimpse a crucial continuity of rule between house and ethnic space, of what Mahmood Mamdani, speaking of tribes, has termed ‘decentralized despotism’.<sup>216</sup> In fact, however, the true locus of decentralized despotism is the house, and only by extension the tribe. Nelson Mandela explains the clash of patriarchal-tribal rule with state rule in this way:

“When I was not much more than a new-born child my father was involved in a dispute that deprived him of his chieftainship at Mvezo and revealed a strain in his character I believe he passed on to his son. I maintain that nurture, rather than nature, is the primary moulder of personality, but my father possessed a proud rebelliousness, a stubborn sense of fairness, that I recognize in myself.

As a chief - or headman, as it was often known among the whites - my father was compelled to account for his stewardship not only to the Thembu king but to the local magistrate. One day one of my father’s subjects lodged a complaint against him involving an ox that had strayed from its owner. The magistrate accordingly sent a message ordering my father to appear before him. When my father received the summons, he sent back the following reply: ‘*Andizi, ndisaqula*’ (‘I will not come, I am still girding for battle’).

My father’s response bespoke his belief that the magistrate had no legitimate power over him. When it came to tribal matters, he was guided not by the laws of the king of England, but by Thembu custom...

When the magistrate received my father’s response, he promptly charged him with insubordination [and] simply deposed my father, thus ending the

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<sup>216</sup> In particular chapter four “Customary Law: The Theory of Decentralized Despotism”, Mamdani, 1996:109-138.

Mandela family chieftainship. I was unaware of these events at the time, but not unaffected. My father, who was a wealthy nobleman by the standards of his time, lost both his fortune and his title. He was deprived of most of his herd and land, and the revenue that came with them. Because of our straitened circumstances, my mother moved to Qunu, a slightly larger village north of Mvezo, where she would have the support of friends and relations.” (Mandela, 1994:6-7)

As we shall see in a little incident related by Bloke Modisane, interpellation and patriarchal authority very easily clash in a way which can destroy the patriarch in the eyes of the child.

“There was a Pass raid and two white police constables with their African ‘police boys’ were demanding to see the Passes of all adult African males. “Pass jong, kaffir,” demanded the police constable from Uncle George, a distant relation of my father. “Come on, we haven’t all day.” He would not dare to address my father in that tone, I bragged, my father is older than he. “And you, why are you sitting on your black arse?” the constable brawled at my father. “Scratch out your Pass, and tax.” I was diminished. My father was calm, the gentleness in his face unruffled, only a hardness came in his eyes; he pulled out his wallet and showed his documents, an Exemption Pass certificate and a tax receipt for the current year. My hero image disintegrated, crumbling into an inch high heap of ashes; I could not face it, could not understand it, I hated the young constable for destroying my father, questioning his integrity as a man... I was hard and monstrously unjust, and so he again became the harsh hand of authority, the authority I could no longer respect. I began to fear him, keeping out of his way and in the end I saw only the cruelty, never the man. I grew closer to Ma-Willie and the four of us, Suzan, Marguerite [Modisane’s mother and sisters] and I arranged ourselves against him, united by our fear of him; he must have been the loneliest man in our little black world; I knew very little about him, never got to know whether he had parents, brothers and sisters...” (Modisane, 1963:24-25)

Mandela expressly supported the legitimacy of his father’s patriarchal authority, and again and again through his autobiography he laments his own failings as a father to his children and husband to his wife, caused by his devotion to the political cause of liberation. For him, with all his generosity, the house is still standing as the ideal, his is the benign, wise, and generous patriarch. In Modisane we encounter the radical loss of all positive values in the house, only its cruelty remains; and there is no alternative. His own patriarchal house he sat up with wife and child was nothing more than a cage, a prison to him. It was a convention, dead at its core.

One landmark event in the encroachment upon patriarchal sovereignty was the forced removal of the black population of Sophiatown in Johannesburg to Soweto, described poignantly by Bloke Modisane in his autobiography. The so-called Natives Resettlement Act of 1954, tore away the protection of ownership, and

provided for the removal of owners and tenants nullifying their legal rights to urban freehold in White designated areas. Inner black owned suburbs were expropriated and the population forcibly resettled on the urban periphery. They could no longer own property and were under total control of the white municipality; a total of 750.000 people were moved to newly established townships outside the white towns all over South Africa.<sup>217</sup> After the forced removal of Sophiatown's black population and its development as a white area it was renamed Triomf. In the 1960s and up to the eve of the Soweto riot the patriarchal family was under strain from modernity promising greater opportunities for women and children, and from apartheid's twisted version of modernity denying these opportunities. Grand apartheid was a crushing blow for the adult generation of the 50s, and it was left for the next generation to strike back, the children of the 70s.

In early 1973 the apartheid state stroke against some of the BCM leaders. In an ironic full-circle the state tried to enlist support from the house it had already ruined. Steve Biko, Barney Pityana, and Harry Nengwekhulu, three BCM-leaders,

“were detained for a while by security police before being transported individually to their various places of birth... Banning orders subtly employed traditional controls to discipline errant black political activists by sending them back to their natal homes. Symbolically they can be said to have invoked parental control over political transgressors.” (Ramphela, 1996:83)

Of course it did not work in this case, but the state was later to turn the fathers against the sons on a frightening scale of ‘parental control’ with older male vigilantes trashing the adolescent ‘comrades’; discussed in Chapter 20. Mamphela Ramphela's life as an activist demonstrates how the personal transgression of house-rule leaves the patriarch without the kingdom. Liberation was a personal project, but at the same time it complemented the attack by the apartheid state on the house and the world-wide erosion of patriarchal positions due to modernity. This unavoidable but deeply contradictory confluence of pressures of the house produced strange alliances, like the initial positive reception of BCM by the apartheid state. The house-state relation evolved not in a vacuum; each individual in the house also moved in town space in a functional capacity as worker, pupil, professional etc; in ethnic space as ‘Black’, ‘Zulu’, ‘Afrikaner’ etc.; and in state space as a South African. Ramphela expresses this thus,

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<sup>217</sup> Of whom 33.000 came from Sophiatown and a further 39.000 from other inner-city areas of Johannesburg, all relocated in Soweto; Christopher, 1994:122.

“Being black, woman, mother and professional places one in a challenging position everywhere in the world, but more particularly so in South Africa. The boundaries between the various spaces which one has to traverse, and within which one has to negotiate complex relationships, impose constraints on one’s approach to life. To stretch across the boundaries of race, class and gender, whilst remaining creatively engaged in relationships across the generations, is a monumental task.” (Ramphela, 1996:153)

With Mamphela Ramphela we see the fuzzy contours of house beyond patriarchy, communal life in a ‘community centre’, but utterly unsustainable beyond the struggle. As she very candidly recounts her own story, a professional career undermined the patriarchal set-up but did not provide a durable new structure. Her life was full of confusion on the family-level and a singular determinism on the professional-political level. It was life on the frontline, and even for those that survived, communal life could not go on for ever. Somehow the house was restored, often as a single-parent household, and patriarchy modified in female headed families as ‘honorary males’, as Ramphela describes herself in her new role as a highly successful female academic.

## **6. A topography of violence, South Africa 1976**

Above I mentioned the strange fact that Durban saw almost no rioting in 1976. One possible explanation, which by contrast may support my general argument about the house, is the peculiar development of the townships in Durban. Unlike Johannesburg and Cape Town, Durban was located very close to a homeland, and traditionally African urbanisation was low and migrancy high. In 1976 the only Black townships under municipal control were the small townships of Lamontville and Chesterville. Most African squatters were removed from municipal land during the 1960s<sup>218</sup> and the state provided low cost housing for these people far out of Durban in KwaMashu and Umlazi, areas included in the homeland of KwaZulu<sup>219</sup>. 1976 Mangosuthu Buthelezi became chief minister of

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<sup>218</sup> “The number of the informally housed population on the periphery was estimated by Haarhoff to be as low as 38.000 in 1965 and already 275.000 in 1973, (of whom the majority would be living in KwaZulu)”, cit. in Mike Morris and Doug Hindson, *The Social Structure and Dynamics of Metropolitan Durban*, Centre for Social and Development Studies, University of Natal, Durban; p. 3. Part of their large work on Durban’s social structure.

<sup>219</sup> E.J. Haarhoff, *A Spatial Analysis of African Urbanisation and Informal Settlement in Natal/KwaZulu* unpublished PhD-thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1984:130.

the KwaZulu homeland government, and increasingly the conservative cultural values propagated through Inkatha came to dominate the homeland. One central effect was to strengthen patriarchal control of children both at home and in the schools.<sup>220</sup> The other effect of the low degree of African municipal urbanisation was the relative absence of Black children anywhere near the city centre in 1976. Neither fathers nor mothers migrating to the city, living in male hostels or (female) servants quarters did have their children with them. Typically the children stayed behind in the periurban or rural areas with other, older, family-members.

Let me quote just one example of how apartheid unwittingly annihilated patriarchal rule of children. In an anthropological survey of Zulu-women migrants in Durban, Eleanor Preston-Whyte describes why an urban life without a husband was preferred to a married rural life. She quoted a single mother, "What do I want a husband for? [In the city] I can earn money and I can have a baby: I can bring up my baby myself with no trouble from a man." (Preston-Whyte, 1991:166). However, apartheid laws made it almost impossible for single mothers to set up house in town. They had few city-options other than to be domestic servants, living in the servants quarters without permission to keep a child. Fathers would never show any responsibility, so migrant mothers often paid for a rural house, where their children could live, looked after by another women, often grandmothers. Preston-Whyte remarked,

"[To use] 'household' or 'family' to describe the female-linked units through which migrant woman ensure that their children are reared... is clearly inappropriate, as the woman herself is seldom present, and, over time, the children often reside in a series of different households. The term 'family' might seem equally problematic, given the lack of marriage of men cohabiting with the woman on a permanent basis. However, these [female-linked] units do perform two of the most important functions usually associated with the conjugal family: they care for, and socialize children."(ibid., p. 171)

The migrant woman living as domestic servant in town with her children in a house in the countryside and only visited from time to time by the father of the children clearly shows the conceptual difference between family and house. In town the domestic servant belonged to the masters house, and the same goes for many

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<sup>220</sup> See Johann Graaff, *Education as an Instrument of War: The Case of KwaZulu/Natal*, unpublished paper, Sociology Department, University of Cape Town, 1996. He stresses that the heavy control put a lid on the conflict in 1976, but then built up the extremely violent confrontation from the mid 1980s onwards between children and adults.



other categories like nurses or workers living in dormitories or hostels: they were also inmates of patriarchal houses not composed of their own family. The separation of the family on several houses was an anomaly causing much heartbreak but not entirely caused by apartheid - we see the same breakdown of families in many other countries - but enforced with bigoted bureaucratic zeal to ensure the proclaimed de-urbanisation of Blacks in South Africa.

These houses functioned poorly as agents of state rule over children. With the explosive growth of Durban in 1980s the children became included in the 'Durban Functional Region', and then the children-parent conflict erupted here as well. Because of the crumbling of apartheid the terrain of the conflict shifted from townships in 1976 to squatter camps in 1986. In this new terrain, for reasons investigated in Chapter 20, African patriarchal control was strengthened and the children-patriarchal struggle became more furious than in Soweto 1976.

The investigation of the topography of violence in South Africa in 1976 indicated that the children's riot posed a threefold dilemma for the patriarchs along the three faultlines of house, town and ethnicity, because like children parents were also embedded in house, town and ethnic space. When the children roamed the streets it was in defiance of patriarchal authority in house space. When they boycotted schools it was undermining the parental effort to give them the best start in life, ie. education, and their future support of parents as educated breadwinners in town space. When the children challenged the police they both exposed the timidity of their parents subjected to the same racial discrimination, and they assumed a moral prerogative by risking their lives - and losing their lives - for the common inter-generational struggle against apartheid in ethnic space.

Finally for the state the childrens' revolt posed a terrible challenge. When the patriarchal house no longer could control the children the state had to use grossly inadequate means, such as beating children, detaining minors in prison, killing children. But doing this acknowledged adult status to the children, by treating the children as adults it exposed its own weakness both morally but first of all in terms of rule. The state could only interpellate children as children of the house, either the private patriarchal house, or the state educational house. When the children no longer respected their fathers and stayed away from school the state only had two choices: it could talk with the children as legitimate citizens and in a flexible way try to accommodate the children's demands, or it could meet them as revolting hooligans with force. The first option could possibly have reconfirmed the children as minors, and the state as adult, but the doctrinaire and racist inflexibility of the apartheid leaders like Vorster, Kruger and Botha left only the second option

open. Violence and more violence, and then paradoxically the acceptance of the children as equals, to be killed, beaten and imprisoned as adults. This gave the children enormous leverage at the two other fronts: versus fathers and teachers. Just how all-powerful the children became was demonstrated when they declared stay-aways and later with the anti-shebeen drive and the majority of adults complied.

Soweto 1976 seemed to be a violent clash at the border dividing the native town from the settler town. But it was misleading to talk of a clash of two towns. Rather we must see them as two compartments of one integrated, conflictual urban form. Without the native town there would be no settler town. Digging a little deeper we encounter the house and we realise that Soweto was not a town but a modern, large-scale *Senzala* intertwined with the *Casa-Grande* of the master's white town. But just as Soweto lacked something to be a town in its own right, such as factories, down-town centre and urban focus, so did the house in Soweto lack something to be a house in its own right. The lack of Soweto as town became apparent in the lack of Soweto as houses. They lacked patriarchal sovereignty. Segregation denied this. The riot was about this lack and the struggle against racism, exploitation and patriarchal malfunction became fused in a violent struggle over the house by the only persons able to do so: the children. They fought in a racial-ethnic space as Blacks, but simultaneously they fought in a functional town-space as pupils and in the patriarchal house space as children. The ruin of the patriarchal house, the crucial input from gangs, and the BCM inspired overcoming of a black inferiority complex all contributed to the shaping of that formidable fighting force, the children.

# 19 |

## COUNTING THE VIOLENCE, 1986

“It hasn’t been the kind of year you ‘d want to remember, has it? But look on the bright side: it’s over. And you’ve survived.” (*Weekly Mail*, Jan. 1, 1987)

1986 was not a year like 1976, with a rebellious explosion contrasting with a long period of calm, but one year in a decade of ongoing violence beginning with the Vaal Uprising in September 1984 and continuing every year up to and beyond 1994 with more than one thousand battle-deaths per year (except for 1987 with ‘only’ 706 political violence deaths). This conflict had no spectacular battles, but an endless series of small-scale killings adding up to a terrible loss of life, indeed of war magnitude. These isolated, repetitive and often anonymous deaths, difficult to distinguish from criminal, ‘non-political’ murders, formed the backdrop to the ‘armed propaganda’ of the ANC.

### 1. Intensity.

The only available figure for *all violent deaths* in South Africa in 1986 is provided by the S.A. Police: they report that 9913 people were murdered in South Africa in 1986. Probably some of the most comprehensive figures on *political violence* in the 1984-89 period was published by The Indicator Project South Africa. In a discussion on the definitions and sources used by IPSA one of the IPSA-researchers warns that the published police ‘unrest reports’, “are quite often simply wrong [and] the non-uniform way in which official statistics are presented and categorised makes it extremely difficult to verify data.”<sup>221</sup>

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#### Murders in South Africa, 1985-87

Year

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Source: SAP, annual reports; the figures exclude ‘culpable homicide’ and ‘attempted murder’ and all figures from the homelands.  
\* from July 1985 to June 1986

Tomaselli fails to define ‘political violence’, which does not make it easier to interpret the different counts. After the State of Emergency was declared in June no official over-all figures were released, exacerbating executive secrecy in the South African state. “A big slice of the evidence about who coerced whom and for what reasons remains hidden”, Annette Seegers notes in her chapter on the republican state in the 1980.<sup>222</sup>

Yet, whether we take the SAIRR figure of 1296 <sup>223</sup> or the IPSA figure of 1352 ‘political violence fatalities’, these accurate figures are highly deceptive. We do not know how many of the 9913 murders were violent deaths related to attacks on the state.

IPSA presents the comparative summary of monthly fatalities in political conflict, below. As they stand, all figures on political violence rest on a highly questionable definitional basis, on shaky reporting and deliberate censored information and should be treated with care, as indeed the IPSA researchers make clear, “It must be stressed that the fatality count arrived at in this IPSA monitoring exercise constitutes a set of provisional figures that are significantly lower than the probably actual fatality count.”<sup>224</sup>

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Monthly fatalities in political conflict, 1986

1986	1352	IPSA
Jan	115	
Feb	103	
Mar	153	
Apr	169	
May	221	
Jun	188	
Jul		13
Aug	94	
Sep	50	
Oct	41	
Nov	24	

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<sup>222</sup> Seegers, 1996:173.  
<sup>223</sup> Quoted many times, i.e. by Tom Lodge, 1991, table 3, p. 91.  
<sup>224</sup> IPSA, 1988:116.

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Source: IPSA 1988:18; data from SA Police, the National Intelligence Service, Directorate of Research at the Bureau of Information (Binfo), the Institute for Strategic Studies at the University of Pretoria, newspapers and regional monitors.

However as they are unlikely to be too small there is no doubt that the attack on the state claimed well above 1000 battle-related deaths and so meets the first criteria for being counted as a civil war

## **2. Locality.**

All the attacks on the state took place inside the international borders of South Africa and therefore meets the second criteria for being counted as a civil war.

While this violence built up inside South Africa, the apartheid government was simultaneously engaged in a series of frontier wars against Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. These wars were mostly fought by supporting one side in the local civil wars (in particular Unita and Renamo), and the South African casualties were below 50 in 1986.<sup>225</sup>

## **3. Polarity.**

Both the attackers and the state regarded the state to be defending itself against a 'revolutionary onslaught'. Army units patrolled the international border defending state security against armed 'guerrilla' attack and were deployed in the townships to crush the revolutionary onslaught. There can be no doubt that the state was attacked by internal (and exile) groups; the violence thus meets the third criteria for being counted as a civil war.

## **4. Weapon.**

One major difference between the riot in 1976 and the situation in 1986 was the use of light weapons. A stone-throwing child shot dead by the police counts as a fatality in a household-weapon attack on the state because it is the weapon of the state-attacker that determines which type of civil war the fatality

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<sup>225</sup>

See Seegers, 1996:203-244, 252-265.

contributes to. Thus only people killed by state-attackers with light weapons count in the terrorism/guerrilla bracket. In South Africa very few were killed in this way. IPSA lists 203 actions by ANC 'guerrillas' in 1986,<sup>226</sup> and stress these attacks differed from those made with household weapons, "Crowd attacks involving arson and stone-throwing, even where fatalities result are explicitly excluded". Compiled from press reports Tom Lodge counts 228 attacks by 'guerrillas' belonging to various groups in 1986: 76 with hand grenades, 64 with limpet mines, 1 with RPG 7, 25 with land mines and 76 others, mainly with AK 47.<sup>227</sup>

The number of fatalities of light weapon attacks in 1986 is not clearly stated; Tom Lodge counts 160 guerrillas either killed or captured in the period June 1985 to December 1986.<sup>228</sup> IPSA only gives the figures for the period from the first partial state of emergency July 21, 1985 to the end of the first national state of emergency June 11, 1987. In this period 47 civilian fatalities resulted from land mines/bombs, and only "a few" out of a total of 113 security force members were killed in unrest incidents in townships or rural shoot-outs with insurgents. It should be noted that attacks on the state with light weapons were much more detailed documented and less under-reported than attacks with household weapons, giving a data-bias in favour of light weapon attacks.

The relative insignificance of light weapons violence is put into perspective by a list of major incidents of political violence in 1986.<sup>229</sup> Out of 23 incidents only three included light weapons; the first occurred on March 3 in Guguletu, Cape Town when 7 alleged ANC guerrillas were killed in a police ambush; the second on June 14, when 3 people were killed by a car bomb near a Durban hotel; the last on July 29 in KwaNdebele homeland when a car bomb killed Ntuli, head of the Mbokodo vigilante group. The three incidents claimed 11 out of 261 fatalities of all 23 incidents. It is fairly safe to assume that violent deaths related to light weapons attacks on the state did not exceed one hundred.

One fact brought out by the counting above immediately attracts attention: the absolute division of weapon-type between the two types of attack on the state. When firearms and explosives were used, it was connected with small, clandestine terrorist actions, and not with street fighting. It is rather obvious that terrorist attacks

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<sup>226</sup> IPSA, 1989:12.

<sup>227</sup> Lodge, 1991:178. He counts 136 guerrilla attacks in 1985 and 247 in 1987; Lodge, 1987:9. (RPG stands for rocket propelled grenade).

<sup>228</sup> Lodge, 1987:7.

<sup>229</sup> IPSA, 1988:12.

never were carried out with household weapons, but more surprising that no light weapons seemed to have been used in the intifada-attack on the South African state. Available information on the South African intifada in 1986 indicates that light weapons were used extremely rarely by state-attackers in township battles. Except for two isolated incidents no township warrior are reported to have shot at policemen, soldiers or other security-force targets. This in no way implied non-lethal battle; more than a thousand people were beaten, hacked, burned or stoned to death. For all political violence in 1986 it can be concluded that household weapon attacks were at least ten times as deadly as light weapon attacks.

To sum up: the data in terms of intensity, locality, polarity and weapon indicate that two very different attacks on the South African state took place in 1986: a substantial attack based exclusively on household weapons claiming well over 1000 fatalities, and a small scale attack using light weapons claiming a maximum of 100 fatalities. The attack on the state with household weapons reached the level of civil war, while the attack with light weapons remained far below. My provisional conclusion based on the typology set out in Part One therefore is that two different attacks on the South African state took place in 1986: a terrorist attack which never came close to being a guerrilla war and a civil war of the intifada type. At this stage I shall not evaluate the role played by the 'guerrilla' attacks relative to the township intifada; what is important here is solely to count them. One of the key questions addressed in the next section is the topographical relation between these two types of attacks on the state.

*Violence in South Africa 1984 to 1988*

<u>Year</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<b><u>1986</u></b>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
Murders July 1984 to June 1985	8.959				
Murders July 1985 to June 1986		9.665			
<b>Murders 1986</b>			<b>9.913</b>		
Murders 1987				9.800	
Murders 1988					10.631
Murders July 1984 to December 1988					44.135*
Pol. viol. July 1984 to June 1985	175				
Pol. viol. 1985		922			
<b>Pol. viol. Jan. 1, 1986 to June 12, 1986</b>			<b>815</b>		
<b>Pol. viol. 1986</b>			<b>1.352</b>		
Pol. viol. 1987				706	
Pol. viol. 1988					1.149
Pol. viol. July 1984 to December 1988					
	4.216**				
<b>Shot by the police 1986</b>			<b>412</b>		
Shot by the police 1988					34
<b>Blacks killed by other blacks 1986</b>			<b>265</b>		
Blacks killed by other blacks outside Natal 1988				15	
Blacks killed in Natal conflict 1988					912
<b>Burned bodies found 1986</b>			<b>231</b>		
Burned bodies found 1988					5
<b>Burned by necklace, Jan. 1, 1986 to June 12, 1986</b>			<b>228</b>		
Burned by necklace, Sep. 1984 to Feb. 1987 approx.			300		
Burned to death Sep. 1984 to Feb. 1987				660	
<b>Other pol. viol. 1986</b>			<b>390</b>		
Other pol. viol. 1988					183

cont.>



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*Violence in South Africa 1984 to 1988 (cont.)*

<u>Year</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<b><u>1986</u></b>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
<b><u>Killed in household-weapon attacks on the state, 1986</u></b>			<b>&gt;1.000</b>		
<u>Killed in household-weapon attacks on the state, June 85 - June 87</u>				> 2.000	
<b><u>Killed in light-weapons attacks on the state, 1986</u></b>			<b>&lt;100</b>		
<u>Killed in light-weapon attacks on the state June 85 - June 87</u>				<200	

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Sources: SAIRR and SAPS annual reports; Lodge, 1991:91, 142; IPSA, 1988:116; IPSA, 1989:6.

\* Murders Jul.1-Dec.31/1985 estimated at 50% of Jul.1-85 to Jun.30-86 figure.

\*\* Pol. viol. Jul.1-Dec.31/1984 estimated at 50% of Jul.1-84 to Jun.30-85 figure.

# 20 |

## WAR AT THE BORDER OF TOWN SPACE, INTERPRETATION OF 1986

The armed struggle of the ANC is a subject of mythic proportions. It is easy, and not in contradiction with facts, to note a striking gulf between the stated ambitions, to start a ‘people’s war’, and the achieved military impact, some two hundred small terrorist attacks in 1986. Yet, equally based on facts one could also talk of an ‘armed propaganda’ which inspired a majority of South Africans to shake off apartheid, united them in a democratic election and led to the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as their president in 1994.

Why then use the word ‘terrorism’ in connection with the armed struggle of the ANC? I am, of course, fully aware that the word carry a heavy negative meaning in ordinary discourse. The pejorative intent is understood both by those using the word to insult, and by those hearing the word as an insult. States vilify their opponents while liberation movements salute their heroes. All over the world one group’s freedom fighter is another group’s terrorist. This is nothing new. ‘Guerrilla war’ and ‘war of liberation’ were the positive labels stuck on the armed struggle of the ANC, invoking a moral superiority of MK violence over that of the apartheid government, while ‘terrorism’ was the negative label, condemning morally indefensible violence.

Two limpet mine attacks in Johannesburg on cheap fast food restaurants and bus stops used mainly by lower-income whites provoked Tom Lodge, probably the most widely respected authority on the armed struggle of the ANC, to warn the ANC for moral, political and strategic reasons, in a well-argued comment in the *Weekly Mail*, July 4, 1986, against employing terrorist tactics by which he understood “killings of civilians as a tactical objective”.<sup>230</sup> It is easy to understand

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<sup>230</sup> Mandela in his famous Rivonia-trial speech 1964 defined terrorism exactly in the same way. “The violence which we choose to adopt was not terrorism.. Umkhonto was to perform sabotage, and strict instruction were given to its members right

and sympathise with his focus on civilian targets as the essence of terrorism, but 'civilian' is a tricky category in a civil war. The conceptual problems sticking to the term 'civilian' are parallel to the problems discussed below in Chapter twenty-one on 'political violence': used in a civil war context the concepts invariably conflate normative and functional significance. Soldiers, policemen, and informers, but also township councillors, farmers, and whites in general at some point ceased being civilians standing outside the conflict and became legitimate enemy targets for the ANC or other black liberation groups. A man held up at an APLA roadblock near Alberton was told by one of his assailants: "You must know that 1993 is the year of terror. Old white people and white children will be murdered."<sup>231</sup>

In Chapter four, dealing in general with the problem of terrorism, I argued that terrorism is a useful concept if it is stripped of normative significance. Terrorism could then be defined as, a) violent attacks on the state generating public fear, b) perpetrated with light weapons, c) by groups, d) operating with no territorial home base. The ANC had no base on South African territory, they were a group, they used light weapons, and they attacked the state either directly or through its supporters in order to induce public fear. They fit this definition of terrorism. Terrorism is violence used to induce public fear, not necessarily by killing people, but so are sabotage, armed propaganda, and guerrilla actions.

Perpetrators and victims are not likely to agree on moral or political definitions.<sup>232</sup> It is taken solidly as a political statement to call the armed struggle either terrorism or guerrilla war. I think this is blocking a deeper understanding of what took place. To me the difference between terrorism and war is not one of morals, as both can be immoral, but one of scale: terrorism and guerrilla war are both light weapon attacks on the state: terrorism is only below war intensity. Although to this day no word is neutral about the armed struggle of the ANC, I shall in the following be using the word 'terrorism' in accordance with my typology and not as a political verdict; the reader is kindly asked to keep that in mind.

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from the start, that on no account were they to injure or kill people... for instance Umkhonto members were forbidden ever to go armed into operation." (Mandela, 1994:162-168)

<sup>231</sup> Quoted from Tom Lodge, *Soldiers of the storm: A profile of the Azanian People's Liberation Army*. no date. unpublished paper, p. 10.

<sup>232</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an attempt of crucial importance for the future of South African political culture to deal with this legacy.

All the myths focusing on ANC's 'guerrilla war'<sup>233</sup> has largely reduced the intifada to a side-show in the attack on apartheid. This has some very obvious political reasons, but it is unwarranted, as the counting of the violence in South Africa in 1986 indicated. A central concern in my interpretation of the 1986 attack on the state is thus to pull the intifada out of the shadow of the terrorism. A first piecing together of the strategic terrain will be done by a topographical interpretation of the violence. The storm's eye was shackland; here we encounter the children once again, but also the squatter, the deeply ambiguous adversary of apartheid *and* of the armed struggle. On this background the ANC call for "People's War" and Mandela's secret talks with the apartheid government will be considered before addressing the general question of what prevented the terrorism to blend with the intifada and escalate into guerrilla war.

## 1. Terrorism

### (a) What

All writing on the subject is based on the correct assumption of an almost total separation between the armed struggle and the intifada. The few incidents where light weapons were used against security forces in mass-street battles were clearly exceptional. Use of light weapons in incidents including vigilantes was more complicated, and will be discussed below, but were in any case not attacks on the state. Which violent acts did the ANC perpetrate in 1986? IPSA counted 203 so-called ANC-'guerrilla' attacks in 1986<sup>234</sup>. They are broken down in the following manner:<sup>235</sup>

#### ANC 'guerrilla'-attacks in 1986

Attacks and shoot-outs in security force raids, both in urban  
and rural areas (excludes sniper attacks in townships unless  
weapons used are identified as being of foreign origin, i.e. AK 47.... 31  
Armed attacks directed at police patrols and stations,  
security force vehicles and property, administrative

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<sup>233</sup> See Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley's the astute critique of 'insurrectionism and the myth of victory' written in 1993, but still highly pertinent; Adam and Moodley, 1993:45-52. For a similar critique, but coming from the left wing, see Marais, 1998:28,46-83.

<sup>234</sup> The number of ANC guerrilla attacks were: 23 in 1977, 30 in 1978, 13 in 1979, 19 in 1980, 55 in 1981, 39 in 1982, 56 in 1983, 44 in 1984, 136 in 1985 ; 203 in 1986, to 183 in 1987. Lodge cit. in Seegers, 1996:175; figures differ slightly from Lodge's in IPSA, 1988:98.

<sup>235</sup> IPSA, 1989:12.

boards, town council property, courts etc. ....	37	
Attacks on (mostly) township homes of state witnesses, police,		councillors
Attacks on hotels, supermarkets, factories, shopping centres etc. ....	28	
Sabotage actions of power substations, railway lines and		
stations, oil depots, pipelines etc. ....	20	
Land mine incidents in rural areas, both detonated and defused.....	34	
Accidental explosions .....	20	
(involving 5 amateur saboteurs, 6 propaganda pamphlet bombs,		
and 11 unspecified defused explosives, assassinations and some		
targets unidentified in reports)		

In 1986 the ANC was by far performing most of the terrorism in South Africa. Its closest rival, the PAC's APLA, had 38 insurgents either killed or captured in 1986. The first APLA attacks to be confirmed and identified as such by the police were four actions attributed to the "Alexandra Scorpion Gang" between December 1986 and February 1987 in which two soldiers and two policemen were wounded and a cafe owner shot dead during a robbery.<sup>236</sup> Tom Lodge quotes Wim Booyse at the Institute of Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria for the following incidents involving use of Soviet or Eastern European weaponry; not necessarily always attributable to the ANC.<sup>237</sup>

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Incidents involving Soviet & East European weapons, 1986

Attacks/exchange of fire on police and state witnesses .....	68
Attacks/exchange of fire on municipal police.....	10
Attacks/exchange of fire on SADF personnel .....	7
Attacks resulting in civilian casualties (mainly	
grenade or limpet mine)	
a. community councillors .....	23
b. in central business district during working hours.....	19
c. in other built-up area .....	52
d. in rural areas (landmines) .....	7
Sabotage of railway installations.....	3
Sabotage of government buildings .....	9
Sabotage of power installations .....	13
Sabotage of fuel storage facilities .....	4
Explosions with no civilian injury .....	14

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First of all it should be noted that the units counted here are attacks/incidents and not fatalities. Intensity measured in battle-deaths can not be inferred from these tables; however, as noted above, the total number of fatalities caused by light

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<sup>236</sup> Lodge, "Soldiers of the Storm...", p. 3.  
<sup>237</sup> Lodge, 1987:9.

weapons attacks on the state in 1986 probably was less than one hundred. With around 200 attacks on average every second attack would have claimed one fatality.

IPSA list 101, and ISS 117, direct strikes against the state (attacks on security forces and installations and local administration personnel and buildings). Polarity of this violence was clearly against the state. While there is no reason to doubt that the ISS list captures most of the actual ANC armed actions in 1986, it is nevertheless noteworthy to base the list on the provenance of the weapons.<sup>238</sup> ANC could have used weapons captured from the security forces, and vigilante groups could possibly have been supplied with communist-bloc weaponry. CIA, for example, at the same time clandestinely imported hundred thousands of Chinese AK-47s into Afghanistan to the mujahidin.

### **(b) Where**

Attacks located in townships listed by IPSA included the 33 attacks on township homes, the attacks on councillors, and probably most of the attacks on security forces/installations. On the ISS-list attacks in townships were probably most of the 'other built-up area' and security force incidents. The provincial distribution of guerrilla actions reflects the proximity of international borders and the relative security of large townships. Contrary to the intifada, however, the armed struggle was not restricted to townships and squatter camps. The 82 attacks in rural areas, industrial areas and downtown areas on the IPSA list took place in 'white' South Africa, plus presumably some of the direct attacks on security forces/installations. The ISS list confirms this picture with 55 incidents of sabotage and attacks in (white) rural and downtown areas, to which must be added at least some of the direct attacks on state personnel and installations. Incidents in urban areas dominate over rural violence, but the lists do not give accurate breakdowns.

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### Geographical distribution of guerrilla actions 1976 - 31 August 1986;

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<sup>238</sup> Vladimir Shubin gives the following very short list of Soviet weapons supplied to the ANC 1963-1990; "several thousand AK-47s of various modifications, over 3,000 SKS carabines, over 6,000 pistols, 275 RPG grenade launchers, 90 Grad-P missile launchers, over 40 Strela anti-aircraft missile launchers, 20 Malyutka anti-tank missile launchers, over 60 mortars etc." (Shubin, 1996:15). When compared, for example, with the war-level import into Mozambique of 1,5 million AK-47s the list of weapons tells a clear story of terrorism not war.

Source:

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**(c) Who**

With the ANC banned and working from exile, armed attacks inside South Africa demanded a combination of infiltration into the country and an underground network able to survive counter-insurgency measures. In an ANC-National Executive Committee document from 1986 it is conceded that the foreign policy of Pik Botha seriously had weakened the ANC in the frontline-states and created grave problems of access.

“We have suffered serious reverses in Mozambique, then in Swaziland, and recently in Lesotho as well as Botswana... We have been forced to withdraw many people, dismantle machineries [underground structures] and rethink our plans and programmes.”<sup>239</sup>

Lines of communication and command were long and vulnerable. Many routes of contact was infiltrated by Pretoria’s agents. Inside South Africa, “Trials indicate considerable police success in locating even experienced Umkhonto units.”<sup>240</sup> Most people in South Africa supporting the ANC had no contact with the exiled organisation. This was the case both with political activists in the UDF, but apparently also with the underground network.

Tom Lodge estimated the strength of MK inside South Africa at “400 or so trained combatants operational at any one time.”<sup>241</sup> He did not disclose his sources; but as the best informed and most conscientious observer of the ANC his estimate has been very influential. However, in the ANC-archive at University of Fort Hare I found a detailed list of underground ANC-operatives inside South Africa giving a very different picture.<sup>242</sup> In the report the *political* network was

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<sup>239</sup> ANC document “1987: What is to be done”; from a combined National Executive Committee and Politico-Military Council meeting in Lusaka, distributed in October 1986, p. 10.

<sup>240</sup> Lodge, 1987:9.

<sup>241</sup> Lodge 1987:10.

<sup>242</sup> Confidential organisational report from PHQ, 21-5-1985; Lusaka Mission, box 4. The ANC-archive in Fort Hare University in the

estimated at 500 cadres spread over 110 units with an average of 3 members per unit and 178 individual operatives. 70% were male, 30% female; 72% African, 12% Indian, 6% 'Coloured' and 10 % white. It was added, "Unfortunately we are not in a position to give a class breakdown. But we can say that the majority are youth and students."<sup>243</sup>

The strength of the *military* underground, the nucleus of the people's army, as reported to the ANC National Executive Committee was a surprisingly meagre one hundred persons of whom just seven are called 'trained'. Two units are joint politico-military groups. It is unlikely that the military underground should have grown to 400 from 1985 to 1986. A proportion of the two hundred attacks in 1986 were probably executed by units infiltrating from outside South Africa. I reprint the full list.

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ANC military underground strength, reported to NEC, May 1985.

Natal.

1. The Professor Unit, it is Solo and has acted.
2. Yusuff Dadoo Unit. It consists of three comrades.
3. The Jerome Unit, also solo.
4. Hector Peterson. This is a unit of four.
5. Jabu - He is a solo unit.
6. there is the Butterfly unit commanded by Trevor. Presently,
7. Cow - Units of one responsible for DLB's.
8. Thoele - also a new unit.

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Eastern Cape had just opened a few months previously to my visit. After long discussions the archive was located at Fort Hare (the university that Mandela and other members of the ANC old guard attended in the 1940's) and not in connection with the much larger and more accessible archive in the Mayibuye centre at University of Western Cape in Cape Town. By no means everything from the many different ANC missions and groups and individuals was present in the archive. All documents had been cleared by the ANC, and for example everything with even the most peripheral connection to Nelson Mandela was removed. Also lacking was figures, whether of finance, military strength, organisational structures etc. The archive was physically located in the basement of the library building at Fort Hare. Beside the entrance door a plaque commemorated the opening of the archive in the presence of President Nelson Mandela. However, the leader and only employee at the archive Mr. Ike Maamoe told me that in fact Mandela did not turn up for the opening because of other engagements, but as the plaque had already been made it was put up nevertheless. Whether this is symbolic of the archive I shall not judge.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., p. 11.



Transvaal from P

1. Mainstay Unit of three commanded by Mainstay.
2. Viva, Ferro, Junior Unit - problems with communication
3. Bertha Unit - a female comrade.
4. Allen Unit - also solo.
5. Wild West unit of two.
6. Motaung's brother - a solo unit.

Units handled by C.C. these are armed propaganda units

1. There are three units of 4 each in Tembisa.
2. Alexandra - there is one unit of five.
3. Soweto - One unit of three.
4. Kuruma - One unit of three.
5. Kathlehong one unit of two.
6. Cape Town [a township] - One unit of four.

Island [Transkei]

Herchel - Unit of two in Herchel.  
Mount Fletscher - Three units of three each.  
Qwaqwa - a solo unit.  
Sterkspruit - one unit of two.  
Umtata - unit of two well trained comrades.  
Mcambedlana - there is a unit of two.  
Norwood - a unit of two.  
Unitra - a unit of three. [University of Transkei]  
Pondoland - a unit of one.  
Idutwa - a unit of one.  
Cala - a unit of three.  
Border - a unit of two. [Eastern Cape]

- another  
- another

Eastern Cape - One unit (solo)

- another

Western Cape

1. A unit of two
2. A different unit of two.
3. A unit of three.
4. A unit of two fully trained comrades.
5. A unit of two trained inside.
6. A unit of two students.

O.F.S.

1. A unit of two in Bloemfontein.
2. A unit of three earmarked for Sabotage.
3. A unit of a fully trained comrade (solo).
4. Another unit of one man.

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The extreme thinness of the underground network inside South Africa is highlighted by the rather substantial number of MK-soldiers in the camps outside

South Africa<sup>244</sup> and undergoing military training in the Soviet Union, East Germany and other Communist-bloc countries. Figures of 10.000 MK-troops was mentioned in the South African press in 1986.

“I am told there are at least 400 ANC guerrillas, originally formally trained outside the country, now working within South Africa’s borders. Because all of these have been “trained to train” others, the number of people operating under ANC military structures inside the country is considerable higher. Umkhonto we Sizwe is reliably believed to have a formally trained strength of 10.000, the vast majority of whom are outside of the country.”<sup>245</sup>

While the figures for MK strength inside South Africa seems to be out of proportion with reality, the figures for MK strength outside the country are probably more reliable. A leading expert on South African military matters gives these figures for MK strength.

MK strength, 1978 - 1994		
1978	4.000	(Lodge cit
1985	2.000 - 10.000	
1989	6.000	
1994	14.000 - 16.000	(Shaw cit

Even the most conservative estimates underline the dramatic difference of the internal and external strength of MK. The figures are equivocal about the iron separation of Umkhonto from the intifada inside South Africa. The armed struggle executed inside South Africa remained isolated acts of terrorism, with no connection to the guerrilla army waiting for action outside the borders.<sup>246</sup> Some MK soldiers

<sup>244</sup> The following camps are mentioned by Mwezi Twala: Novo Catengue camp, destroyed by SAAF in 1979, Cacula camp, Viana camp, Camp 13 and the notorious prison camp Quatro, all in Angola, Dakawa camp in Tanzania, Matola and Nampula camps in Mozambique, Membesh camp in Zambia and Bokolota prison in Uganda; Twala 1994, endpaper.

<sup>245</sup> Howard Barrel in *Weekly Mail*, July 18, 1986.

<sup>246</sup> This was demonstrated by the ambiguous Operation Vula in 1990 where SACP-ANC had a lacklustre go at military infiltration. Mandela claims he knew nothing of it before de Klerk told him in 1990; Mandela, 1994:577, while Phallo Jordan claims the operation had been planned at an ANC NEC meeting, putting Joe Slovo in command of the thing; Slovo 1995:233: Allister Sparks describes the action, with Mac Maharaj as the leader inside South Africa, as a failure but with the accidental benefit of putting Mandela in

fought in other countries as auxiliary forces, for example in Rhodesia (the ill-fated Wankie-campaign) and later in Angola against Unita. Yet, none of the MK-troops ever returned from the camps to wage war in South Africa; in the end MK was peacefully merged with the SADF. But perhaps it was not because of SADF superior force that MK never crossed the border to wage war in South Africa, perhaps the ANC never wanted to cross the border *en masse*? Perhaps Umkhonto fulfilled a crucial function in the camps outside South Africa?

**(d) Why**

Why use armed struggle? What political project could terrorism further? In their message for the year 1986, the ANC declared,

“In the name of the National Executive Committee of your organisation, the ANC, we declare the year 1986 the year of Umkhonto we Sizwe - the People’s Army! Let this year of the People’s Army see us engulf the apartheid system in the fires and the thunder of a people’s war. Let the Year of MK see us mount a military offensive that will push the enemy into a strategic retreat!”<sup>247</sup>

This call for war raises at least two questions, (i) was the prospect of being able to expand terrorism into war realistic? (ii) was revolutionary war desired at all by the ANC?

Govan Mbeki, one of the top four ANC leaders, wrote in 1996, “By the end of 1986, it was obvious that the government’s attempts to crush the resistance movement had failed.”<sup>248</sup> This interpretation appears to be wishful thinking compared with the ANC’s own assessment of the situation in late 1986.

“In the January 8th [1986] Statement, we set out the tasks we had to achieve in the area of armed struggle. Nine months on, it is clear that, despite all our efforts, we have not come anywhere near the achievements of the objectives we set ourselves... We have as yet not succeeded in building up the required links between professional MK units and the mass combat groups that exist in many parts of our country... it is clear that the underground structures of the ANC inside the country are still too weak and too often we have to depend on the ability of the cadres to fend for themselves in terms of their survival.”<sup>249</sup>

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direct contact with ANC in Lusaka; Sparks, 1994:62-67. It appears to have been a dream of a military fall-back position to put pressure on the negotiations with Botha and de Klerk.

<sup>247</sup> *Sechaba*, March 1986:12.

<sup>248</sup> Mbeki, 1996:101.

<sup>249</sup> “1987: What is to be done” ANC NEC-PMC document, October 1986, p. 4.

Not just was the presence of the ANC inside South Africa acknowledged to be very weak, some of the violent attack perpetrated by poorly controlled ‘mass combat groups’, which in fact often were individuals acting outside any direct control of Lusaka, had been deeply controversial and harmful to ANC’s efforts to secure sympathy in white South Africa and win international support.

“We need to re-discuss the question of our military perspectives during the present phase. This is made particularly pressing by the reports, which are naturally exaggerated by the enemy, of operations carried out at retail outlets and hotels as well as casualties inflicted by landmines. We need to be clear about these issues to ensure that we do in fact intensify the armed struggle while not imposing political setbacks on ourselves at the same time.”<sup>250</sup>

Hinted at here was the controversial question of civilian ‘soft targets’. It was a crucial question, fundamental to what kind of armed struggle ANC strove to develop, and ultimately to what kind of society should emerge after a war. It is indeed striking to note the lack of conclusion on whether the ANC wanted to fight a war against white civilians. Three key documents suggested that revolutionary war was in fact the goal of the ANC. In 1978 the ANC leadership went on a study tour to Vietnam and a result was the so-called “Green Book” a key document setting out the strategy of the ANC armed struggle. The purpose of political and military work inside South Africa in the words of the Green Book was, “to keep alive the perspective of people’s revolutionary violence as the ultimate weapon of seizure of power.”<sup>251</sup> In 1983 a “Document on People’s War” was circulated by the Politico-Military Council to all its political and military structures as a discussion document. It suggested a move from armed propaganda towards ‘people’s war’, a “war in which a liberation army becomes rooted among the people who progressively participate actively in the armed struggle both politically and militarily, including the possibility of engaging in partial or general uprising.”<sup>252</sup> In 1985 the ANC held its first large consultative conference since 1969, endorsing the efforts to ‘launch a people’s war aiming at revolutionary seizure of state power’.

The most immediate effect of upgrading the armed struggle was a move away from the earlier avoidance of civilian casualties. “We can no longer allow our

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>251</sup> The Green Book, p. 13, cit. in Mbeki, 1996:43.

<sup>252</sup> Cit. in “Organisational Report of the National Executive Committee to the National Consultative Conference” p. 22. This report from the 1985 Kabwe conference was not published before 1989.

armed activities to be determined solely by the risk of such civilian casualties.” declared Oliver Tambo,

“We believe that the time has come when those who stand in solid support of the race tyranny and who are its direct or indirect instruments, must themselves begin to feel the agony of our counter-blows.”<sup>253</sup>

This caused a lot of discussion in South Africa, especially after terrorist killings of white civilians, which the ANC kept silent about, not claiming responsibility for but neither condemned. One of Umkhonto’s leaders said in 1986,

“Armed insurrection must figure as key way in which power may ultimately be seized... In our situation, if real change is to be achieved, we have to face up to the question of state power. How will the existing state structures and instruments of force be destroyed? How will the revolution be defended?”<sup>254</sup>

Well, a decade later Ronnie Kasrils was Deputy Minister of Defence, with a South African National Defence Force combining the old ‘enemy’ SADF, the ‘revolutionary’ Umkhonto we Sizwe, and even the bitter rivals from APLA. The words Kasrils used to characterise the situation of the ‘armed revolutionary force’ on the ground in 1986 were ‘nucleus’, ‘rudimentary’, ‘embryonic’, ‘preliminary.’ Interwoven with the revolutionary stereotypes one could perhaps hear another discourse, one of caution and a certain soberness; between the two strands there was emptiness and silence. Similarly, in the few lines quoted above from the 1986 call for people’s war, one can detect an ambiguity between militancy (‘fire and thunder of people’s war’) and political reformism (‘push the apartheid system into a strategic retreat’). At the same time the ANC called for war against the apartheid system but not war against the Boers. Who was the enemy, after all? When the people was fighting, who was then left to be the enemy of the people? The ambiguity made it impossible to discuss who would be left after a war to make peace with. One well-informed observer commented, “The Kabwe conference failed to make any clear statement regarding strategy. It appointed a committee to

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<sup>253</sup> ANC Nat. Consultative Conf. June 1985; Commission on Strategy and Tactics. p. 19. This document was not published until 1989. See also the book by Haroon Aziz, *The Power of Revolution* with a foreword by Chris Hani, Durban: Rasisa Books, 1991, for the die-hard communist version of the armed struggle.

<sup>254</sup> From a long interview with Ronnie Kasrils in ANC’s international magazine *Sechaba* (edited in London and produced in East Germany by the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee of GDR), May 1986, p. 8.

reconsider strategy and tactics, but the committee did not submit its report until 1989!”<sup>255</sup> The public position of the ANC was at the same time to make a militant call for revolutionary people’s war and to back down from militancy, stressing its ultra long-term perspective. This double-ness could be interpreted as a realistic assessment of current weakness, or as a reflection of deep divisions of opinion within the ANC on the ultimate strategic object of armed struggle hampering or preventing the plunge into a large-scale war. I find the latter explanation the most plausible.

## **2. The intifada**

The intifada was an extremely complex historical process which it is impossible to consider in detail in the present context.<sup>256</sup> This section will focus on the spatiality of the intifada in 1986, that is interpreting attacks on the state claiming casualties as a rough index to the fronts of contestation. Acts of violence, however, were only one part of the total attack on the state. The principal strength marshalled by the intifada against a state vastly superior in military force was numbers, resilience, and patience. Continuation of the intifada in the face of massive repression transformed the bare continuation of daily life into a demonstration of defiance. The intifada turned simple acts like going to school, taking a bus-ride, buying food, walking across a street into denunciations of state rule as illegitimate. Struggle-forms of the intifada in 1986 included pupils boycotting schools, commuters boycotting transport, consumers boycotting shops, township residents boycotting rent-paying, black voters boycotting elections of black local authorities (1983 and 1988), Coloured and Indian voters boycotting tricameral elections (1984), worker stayaways and strikes, and a wide variety of resistance to state-governance by organisations ranging from civics and student representative committees up to national umbrella organisations such as the United Democratic Front, co-ordinating the broad Charterist opposition to apartheid. These attacks on the central and local state were met with a wide range of military, political and social counter-insurgency measures including national state of emergency, detentions

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<sup>255</sup> Seekings, *The UDF...* p. 12.

<sup>256</sup> A useful survey of events 1984-88 is IPSA 1988; discussions of the intifada tends to concentrate on political organisations, eg. Lodge, 1991; trade unions, eg. Marx, 1992; or the state, eg. Seegers, 1996; but not so much on the confusing multitude of small events; a very good descriptions of the intifada from this perspective, covering the Edendale violence in Natal, 1987, is Kentridge 1990.

without trial on a massive scale, deployment of army troops in the townships, social upgrading of 'oil-spot' townships, and hesitant reforms of apartheid.

The levels of state repression should be kept in mind when considering the attacks on the state. After the outbreak of the intifada in 1984 the state quickly deployed large army units in the townships reaching a level of 35.000 troops. They were posted everywhere from platoons inside schools subduing children to patrols in armoured vehicles controlling township space. In the first four months of the national state of emergency (June 12 to October 1, 1986) around 22.000 people were detained without trial under emergency laws; most of whom were children.<sup>257</sup> In the period 1984 to 1988 SADF deployed 35.000 troops in South African townships and 45.000 people were detained.<sup>258</sup> Many activists were abducted and killed by state operatives; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and recent court trials are uncovering large parts of this hidden story. Widespread banning of organisations and severe censorship on political information blocked all avenues of democracy.<sup>259</sup> Parliament was reduced to "a grotesque ritual of irrelevance" as Frederick van Zyl Slabbert said when quitting as opposition leader in February 1986.<sup>260</sup> State of emergency gave the executive branch of the state almost unlimited powers,<sup>261</sup> operating through a chain of security organs from president Botha's State Security Council down to 350 mini-Joint Management Centres.<sup>262</sup> Repression was successful in rolling back the intifada, as a well-known left-wing observer of South African politics concluded,

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<sup>257</sup> Detainees Parents Support Committee estimate; IPSA, 1988:195.

<sup>258</sup> Norval, 1996:247.

<sup>259</sup> A complete list of bannings is found in, *Left-Radical Movements in South Africa and Namibia, 1900-1981*, compiled by Elizabeth W. Böhme, Cape Town: South African Library Grey Bibliographies, no. 14, 1986. It is listing official proclamations with some bizarre results, for example for Steven Biko, saying his banning expired on Feb. 28, 1978, when he was in fact murdered by South African policemen in Sep. 1977. Banning can be a key to deconstructing apartheid rule, see my *Winnie Mandela's Banning Order and the Territoriality of Power and Political Violence*. Tin, 1996.

<sup>260</sup> Slabbert continued his angry attack on the white parliamentarians, "a macabre ballad by a bunch of sinecured cowards too scared to raise their heads above their trenches to see what the world really looked like." *Weekly Mail*. Feb 14, 1986.

<sup>261</sup> Seegers, 1996, chapter 5, "Republican State and Opposition", pp. 161-203.

<sup>262</sup> James Selfe, "South Africa's National Management System" in Cock and Nathan, 1989; see also Mark Swilling and Mark Phillips, "The Emergency State: Its Structure, Power and Limits" in *South Africa Review* 5, 1989.

“The national state of emergency declared in mid-1986 marked a turning point in township politics. Severe repression and the tentative introduction of counter-revolutionary measures caused widespread organisational paralysis and broke the back of school boycotts and embryonic structures of ‘people’s power’.”<sup>263</sup>

I suggest the intifada had a cellular structure in the sense that violence in one township in many ways was similar to that in other localities, and at the same time very little direct co-ordination of violence took place on a national scale. Violence ignited independently in each area in a series of parallel attacks on the state. Based on the assumption of the intifada as violent and cellular, it should be possible to capture details of general relevance in samples of localised violence.

The first sample will be a two week slice of a national conflict-survey of the intifada, beginning May 16 and ending May 30, 12 days before president P W Botha declared national state of emergency (which were to be renewed for four years). With 170 fatalities in two weeks it was the bloodiest two week-period ever experienced during apartheid, and not surpassed before the war escalated in 1990. The survey may give an impression of, borrowing from John Keegan, the ‘face of battle’ of the South African civil war which were so utterly different from ‘real’ war-battles, and also displaying a way of killing very far removed from ANC’s textbook ‘people’s war’. An impression of the extreme short-range nature of intifada violence can be gathered from photos.<sup>264</sup> At the time ‘unrest’ pictures was banned by emergency legislation from appearing in any media, therefore very few whites at the time ever saw the intifada let alone experience it. They did not go to the townships and the intifada did not touch the white areas. A political scientist once recalled how she could sit secure and comfortable in her office at the splendid campus of University of Cape Town, high up on the slopes of Table Mountain and look down upon the Cape Flats and literally see the townships burn; at the end of the day she would drive home to her house in the white area without ever getting close to the ‘unrest’.

The second sample will be a more detailed discussion of the largest single battle in terms of casualties, destruction, and refugees in 1986. It took place in

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<sup>263</sup> Jeremy Seekings, IPSA 1988:44.

<sup>264</sup> E.g. *Beyond the Barricades. Popular Resistance in South Africa in the 1980s* Badcha et. al. 1989; an eminent collection of reportage photography,



Crossroads at the margin of Cape Town during the same two-week period covered by the first sample.<sup>265</sup>

**(a) First sample of the intifada:**

**Violent actions nation-wide 16/6/86 - 30/6/86**

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Violent actions nation-wide 16/6/86 - 30/6/86

Fatalities involving vigilante action, marked V  
Fatalities involving community action, marked C  
Fatalities involving police/security force action, marked P  
Fatalities involving terrorist action, marked T  
Total battle-related fatalities May 17 - 30/1986

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10  
5  
15

16/18 May. (12 fatalities)

In Soweto 4 youths shot dead after being kidnapped by township "Kabasa" gang.  
In KwaNdebele 2 die in clashes between Mbokotho vigilantes and youths.  
In Sekhukhuneland (Lebowa) 150 villagers charged for murder of 36 women.  
Three burnt bodies found in Tanga (Nelspruit) and one in Soweto.  
Violence erupts in Humansdorp (W Cape) with its first necklace murder.  
In Zamdela (Sasolburg, OFS) 1 AZAPO member dies and 5 injured as police disperse fund-raising event.  
Other fatalities in police action in Chesterville (Durban) and Vosloosrus (PWV).  
Mbekweni (Paarl, W Cape) residents stage stayaway as violence erupts in township.  
Two councillors from KwaGuga (, PWV) and Vosloosrus quit their posts.  
In Krugersdorp (Johannesburg), the largest arms cache so far is uncovered.

19/22 May. (55 fatalities)

Crossroads (Cape Town) official death toll now 27 with over 2.000 homes destroyed leaving 20.000 homeless, several calls made for official inquiry into alleged police support for "witdoeke".  
In KwaMashu (Durban) pitched battles between youths and *amabutho* who attempt to break school boycott, 6 vigilante die.  
In Kagiso (W Rand), key unrest witness injured and 5 of

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<sup>265</sup> It was also the only battlefield of the South African civil war that provoked debate in the UN Security Council; after a previous, and smaller battle in the Crossroads saga in April 1985 an unanimous condemnation of the apartheid government was adopted.

his family die in attack on house.  
Twelve people die near Ulundi (KwaZulu) in  
faction fighting.  
In Mbekweni, clashes between UDF, Azanyu  
and police leave 2 dead  
A landmine blast in Davel (E Transvaal) kills 3 people  
and injures 8.

*(Other events)*

A bomb explodes in Umlazi (Durban) supermarket.  
In central Durban a bomb is defused in a parkade.  
Vaal Crisis Committee investigates school crisis and  
looting, in attempt to curb township violence.  
Alexandra (Johannesburg) residents appoint their  
own committees.  
In rural E Cape, compulsory military call-up for all [white]  
men between 18 and 54.  
Rand Supreme Court sentences 4 ANC members for treason.  
*(International)*  
SADF raids ANC targets in Gaberone, Lusaka and Harare,  
2 people die and 13 injured.  
Swaziland deports 17 ANC members.

23/25 May. (39 fatalities)

In KwaMashu, death toll rises to 14 in 5 days, when 5 youths  
are shot dead by 2.000 attacking *amabutho* vigilantes. \*  
In Chesterville (Durban), 2 'comrades' die in clashes  
with 'A-team' vigilantes.  
In Mitchell's Plain (Cape Town) a man accused of being  
informers is murdered by mob after UDF meeting.  
A man in Manenberg (Cape Town) is stoned to death.  
In Zolani (Ashton, W Cape) 14 people die in opposition  
feud at funeral of unionist.  
In E Cape, 7 die in security force action.

[14 V]

[1  
[1

26/30 May. (64 fatalities)

Crossroads death toll rises to 45 in 10 days, thousands  
moved to Khayelitsha. \*  
In Soweto, Azapo member is killed on way to truce  
meeting to end Azapo/Soyco feud.  
In Kathlehong and Thokoza (Johannesburg) 8 activists'  
houses attacked, in past 2 weeks 7 fatalities  
In Brits (PWV), a Mawu organiser's wife killed in a  
handgrenade attack on house  
In Port Elizabeth townships 5 youths burnt to death.  
In Tumahole (Parys, PWV) a policeman is killed  
during stayaway.  
In Kwanobuhle (E Cape), 2 die and 3 injured in  
police shooting.  
In Soweto 2 people killed at roadblock.  
Landmine explodes in Davel (E Transvaal).

[5

*(Other events)*

Duduza residents start bus and consumer boycott to  
support demands for township upgrading.  
In Soweto Soweto Civic Association calls in residents to  
form street and defence committees to oppose vigilantes.

Boycotts and school closures now affecting 80.000 pupils in more than 100 schools nation-wide.

Development boards owes nearly R200m in debts, incl. an estimated R100m in rent/service arrears.

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Source, IPSA, 1988:190-1.

\* entries for the same location are added; classification and computation of events by H.T.

Distinctions between events involving vigilante, communal, and police action are by no means clear-cut, and did probably in most cases overlap. In the table 'vigilante action' is simply the events with vigilantes mentioned, 'police action' events with police or security force mentioned, and 'communal action' the rest. The purpose is solely to infer from a two-week sample a picture typical of the intifada; no single-case accuracy can be claimed, nor, of course, any total picture of an intifada that lasted from 1984 to 1996. Nevertheless, I will argue that this procedure can reveal significant structures of the intifada, consistent with the figures presented in Chapter nineteen.

#### **(b) What**

An intifada is a linear expansion of a riot; both are attacks on the state with household weapons. In some regards, for example in the importance of the children, there were an obvious continuity in the structure of the attack on the South African state from 1976 to 1986. However, the over-all structure of the attack had changed significantly from the township riots of 1976 to the intifada of 1986 in terms of intensity, weapon, and locality. Intensity of attack and repression reached war-level; attacks with light weapons were added to the attacks with household weapons; but above all violence in shackland-terrain in a complex way exposed a new weakness of the state (and of the child-attackers).

Of the 170 fatalities in this sample, most of the people were either kidnapped, burnt, necklaced, hacked, beaten, or stoned to death (143 out of 170); only a few were shot and bombed (27; of these 3 by terrorism, 14 by security forces, and 10 by vigilantes). Fatalities resulting from direct confrontations with the police (14 out of 170) were insignificant compared with different forms of communal violence (152 out of 170). The difference between terrorist action and the rest is both overwhelming and clear-cut (3 out of 170), involving different weapons (land mines), different location (rural), different perpetrators (clandestine organisation) and different victims (white civilians). The intifada, on the other hand, mostly involved household weapons (stones, fire, cutting knives), took place in

peripheral urban locations (townships and squatter camps), was perpetrated by visible communal groups (street fighters, 'mobs'), and had different victims (black civilians and a few white security personnel). The SAAF bombings are not counted as they were located outside South Africa.

The emergency level of repression meant that some of the battle forms of 1976 could not be used in 1986, even though the terrain of conflict remained the same to some extent. In the chapter on 1976 I investigated eight battle forms, all of them dominated by children.

Battle forms of 1976:

- 1) street fights over control of township space;
- 2) fighting control of schools by gutting buildings and
- 3) challenge of the border of township-white town with
- 4) stayaways from the white town, both with strikes and
- 5) attacking the white town by stoning cars, gutting factories,
- 6) fights over the border of house-public space with the parents
- 7) struggle funerals;
- 8) joining exile guerrilla groups.

boycotting  
roadblocks  
consumer  
downtown  
by enforce

The list of struggle-forms in 1986 was largely overlapping, but with important differences in intensity, weapons, and locality. New were the battles for land in the squatter camps on the border of rural and urban spaces shading into battles inside the townships for political turf (even if the outsider-insider conflict was prefigured in 1976 with the township/hostel confrontations, e.g. August 25, 1976, in Mzimhlope, Soweto). Some of the changes in the struggle-forms continuing from 1976 to 1986 can be summarised as follows:

1) street fights over control of township space with the security forces changed from open rioting to ambushes in response to the deployment of troops, armoured vehicles etc.;

2) fighting for control of schools by gutting buildings was impossible after deployment of troops; boycotting education spread, but the parents in the National Education Crisis Committee managed in most areas to persuade pro-UDF pupils to drop the "Liberation before Education" slogan and return to classes.<sup>266</sup>

3) challenging the border of black town-white town was impossible after the army was deployed;

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<sup>266</sup> Only one out of hundred African pupils beginning school in 1976 and surviving until in 1986, passed matric. Ken Hartshorne, *Indicator SA*, Vol 3, No 3, summer 1986. p. 20.

4) boycotts, stayaways and strikes increased dramatically from 1976, facilitated by local civics and national organisations like UDF and trade unions, peaking with 1,5 million strikers on May 1; all hitherto legal struggle-forms were hit very hard by state of emergency after June 12;

5) attacking the white town by stoning cars, gutting factories, staging downtown demonstrations was nearly impossible; attacks on the white areas shifted from intifada to terrorism; number of attacks was not affected by state of emergency;

6) fights over the border of house-public space with the parents continued, children were still the main fighting force in the townships, but the fathers fought back with vigilante action, and conditions were unfavourable to children in the shackland.

7) struggle funerals became the main open form of street confrontation;

8) joining exile guerrilla groups; the number of exiles in camps grew only slightly and extremely few returned to stage violent attacks on the state.

### **(c) Where**

155 fatalities out of 170 happened in townships/shacklands. In 1986 the minute spatial divisions inside the townships, for example between UDF territory and vigilante territory, comrade and Inkatha sections, ANC and Azapo turf, became more deadly than the spatial division between black town and white town which were so prominent in 1976. The only 15 fatalities out of 170 not taking place in a township or a squatter camp were the killings in the faction fighting near Ulundi and the landmine blast in Davel. The landmine blast were the only violence touching whites in a white area (3 fatalities out of 170). Landmine attacks were long-distance violence and in shoot-outs the attacker were still separated from the enemy at the distance of a bullet, but cutting, burning, or stoning the enemy was battle at arms length. Millions of blacks were this close to whites every day, yet never did blacks cut, stone or burn whites in a white area. Security was part of the explanation, but insufficient, I suspect. Deep psychological inhibitions, strangely absent when it came to killing neighbours, were apparently at work preventing harming the white masters in eye-to-eye violence.

### **(d) Who**

Of the majority of people not killed by the security forces most were presumably killed by someone living in the same township or squatter camp as themselves (probably as many as 150 out of 170). This is also very different from

the pattern of casualties in 1976, where direct killings by the police accounted for more than half of the official death toll. The sample moreover indicates that children and youths still were prominent in the violence, but they had got two new adversaries that were unimportant in 1976, vigilantes and other youths.

**(e) Why**

The interrelation of fatalities and localities indicates that land giving access to the towns was the main object of struggle. In January 1986 such a battle for land took place in Umbumbulu on the Natal South Coast. Described in press reports as a “bloody war between Zulus and Pondos” it left 105 dead and more than 20.000 homeless after the total devastation of the shack settlement Kwamakutha south of Durban. Errol Haarhoff, an expert on informal squatter settlements in an interview with the newspaper suggested the battle was over extremely scarce resources, and he noted there had been a massive growth in Durban’s squatter population in only six years from 500.000 in 1979 to 1.300.000 in 1985. The article quoted one Zulu man for saying, “I am coming to kill Pondos because I don’t like them. They must go because there is no place for a Zulu to make a house.”<sup>267</sup> Struggle over land as a primary recourse of livelihood had an ‘informal’ dynamic in the flux of the shackland terrain and a more ‘formal’ political aspect in the townships, where the struggle for livelihood was given political direction. “The UDF’s preoccupation with ‘territory’, with the controlling all the hearts and minds within a given street or area, implied the need for force to eject the opposition, to coerce the reluctant and to police consumer boycott.”<sup>268</sup>

**(f) Second sample of the intifada: Crossroads, Cape Town**

June 13, 1986, a South African newspaper carried this frontline report:

“First it was the satellite camps on the outskirts of Crossroads. Then there was a lull. Now it is KTC...

Following the destruction by vigilantes - the “witdoeke”, of the Nyanga Extension, Nyanga Bush and Portland Cement Works squatter camps, fear spread that KTC, a camp of some 20.000 people in the heart of Nyanga would be next...

On Monday this week, in a carefully planned military operation, the police and the vigilantes made their move on KTC. With police moving in front, the vigilantes first attacked the Zolani Centre, focal point of aid distribution to the estimated 33.000 refugees left homeless in three weeks of destruction in the Crossroads satellite camps...

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<sup>267</sup> *Weekly Mail*, January 31, 1986.

<sup>268</sup> Robin Palmer, “Militant Traditions. The Ungovernable Townships” in IPSA, 1988, p.51.

I watched as the police stood by and observed the vigilantes torching the Zolani Centre, which had previously housed more than 2.000 refugees... The refugees had no chance. They were armed with axes, pangas, sticks, AK 47s. The vigilantes were armed similarly. But on their side they had armoured monsters firing teargas, shotguns and rifles. By Tuesday afternoon the hollow boom of shotguns had given way to the flat crack of R1s and R4s. At least 22 people are dead, bringing the death toll in three weeks of violence in the squatter community to more than 67... <sup>269 270</sup>

A resident, driven out of Crossroads, gave this statement,

“At about 11 a.m. a big crowd of people - men, women and children - fled from the Portlands Cement squatter camp. We asked people what is going on, and they said to us, “The police are there, they are shooting, and the people from Old Crossroads are also there shooting.” At about 12 o’clock we saw two casspirs [armoured military vehicles] driving in front of a crowd of about 200 men armed with guns, axes, pangas [long knives] and kieries [sticks] advancing towards us. The men were wearing white doeks [bands] on their heads and around their arms. I recognised them as Old Crossroads residents who formed part of the Ngxobongwana/Ndima [two shacklords] camp.

The policemen in the casspirs did absolutely nothing to stop them in their plundering and burning of houses. We took fright and ran away to a distance of about 50 meters from where we saw them setting our houses on fire. We ran back to try and protect our property but were shot at both by members of the witdoeke [white head-band vigilantes] and the police, of whom there might have been about a hundred. We had no guns and only sticks to protect ourselves with.”<sup>271</sup>

**(g) What<sup>272</sup>**

Johnson Ngxobongwana, a former truck driver, was the foremost shack leader in Old Crossroads. He had entered into a strategic alliance with the Western Cape Civic Association (WCCA), a UDF affiliate, in 1984 in order to resist forced removals to Khayelitsha, a state-planned black township further out on the Cape Flats. Yet at the same time he controlled Crossroads as a personal fief; he and his supporters allegedly derived between R4.000 and R40.000 a month from residents payments.<sup>273</sup> The WCCA and other progressive organisations began to challenge Ngxobongwana’s economic and political control of Old Crossroads, accusing him

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<sup>269</sup> Phillip van Niekerk in *Weekly Mail*, June 13-1986.

<sup>270</sup> A higher estimate of the Crossroads destruction and killing is André Odendaal’s figure of 80.000 homeless; Odendaal, 1989:66.

<sup>271</sup> Affidavit from Cape Town Legal Resources Centre on the Crossroads/KTC conflict, 1986; cit. in Badsha et al. 1989: 79.

<sup>272</sup> The TRC have held hearings on KTC and new material is likely to be made public when the final report is published during 1998; at the time of writing it had not appeared.

<sup>273</sup> Lodge, 1991:168.

of patronage and corruption. On February 18, 1985, violence broke out in Crossroads after the new Minister of Co-operation, Development and Education (i.e. 'African affairs') said that uncontrolled squatting in Crossroads would not be tolerated. In four days of conflict 18 people were killed and 230 injured.

Nine days later, on February 27, 1985, the government announced that it would upgrade 3.000 sites for 'legal' Crossroads residents, while three quarters of the estimated 100.000 Crossroads and KTC residents would be removed to Khayelitsha. For the upgrading the government would allocate R 2 million to the persons remaining in Old Crossroads. But upgrading could not take place because land set aside for it was occupied by the satellite camps. Fights broke out again between different groups competing for the same land.<sup>274</sup> The announcement of the upgrading scheme gave Ngxobongwana an additional incentive to eliminate threats to his leadership. His former UDF 'comrades' had a strong presence in the satellite camps, while Ngxobongwana now capitalised on resentment generated by youth tactics during consumer boycotts, and was able to recruit a vigilante army of 'elders' in Old Crossroads.<sup>275</sup> Fifteen months after the first battle in 1985 the witdoeke army attacked in May 1986. Aided and abetted by the security forces, he destroyed the traditional bases of support of progressive groups in the squatter camps, viz. the satellite camps and KTC. All of the former settlements and two-thirds of KTC were burnt down. Robert Cameron estimated that 60.000 homes were destroyed and up to 200 persons were killed in the satellite shack settlements and the KTC camp in the general Crossroads area by 'witdoeke' in May-June 1986.<sup>276</sup>

#### **(h) Where**

All the battles of Crossroads took place in shackland, a terrain not contested in 1976. The genealogy of the Crossroads space can be recounted as a process of municipal (later state) emergency displacements of urban blacks to keep them at all times at the margins of the growing metropole. In the course of the twentieth century Cape Town's African population was pushed from mixed downtown slums to the most remote end of Cape Flats in five steps: from Cape Town to Ndabeni in 1901; from Ndabeni to Langa in 1927; from Langa to Nyanga

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<sup>274</sup> Platzky, 1985, p. xxvii.

<sup>275</sup> Lodge, 1991:169.

<sup>276</sup> Robert Cameron in IPSA, 1988:.



in 1957; from Nyanga to Crossroads in 1976, and finally from Crossroads to Khayelitsha in 1986.<sup>277</sup> In the early 1970s Crossroads mushroomed illegally just east of Nyanga, a black township, next to the intersection of N 2 and R 300 and Cape Town's international airport. The squatters struggled to survive on the bare sand without facilities of any kind, no water, electricity, sanitation, schools, or clinics, but subject to permanent police harassment. In 1976 the population of squatter camps in and around Cape Town was estimated to be nearly 200.000.<sup>278</sup> On June 8, 1976, the Cape Times printed an aerial photo of a large expanse of shacks, headlined, "This is Crossroads... home of 10.000." The word 'home' carried dreadful implications because everything the apartheid government did when it came to African people was to deny them a home on the Cape. The story ran,

"10.000 people wait for the outcome of the legal battle... to order the demolition of more than 2.300 dwellings<sup>279</sup>... Meanwhile a school and at least one dwelling have already been flattened since the court application in what is believed to be a joint effort of the two bodies [central state BAAB and local state Divisional Council] to discourage the growth of the squatter town."<sup>280</sup>

The judge said no to demolition and Crossroads was declared an 'emergency camp', in a telling replay of Nyanga's birth twenty years previously as an 'emergency camp' for flood victims and evicted squatters from Langa, then the only legal African township in Cape Town. Another crack in the fiction of a 'white' South Africa had been patched up for a short time. During the next ten years new squatter camps mushroomed around Crossroads, reproducing the emergency moves

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<sup>277</sup> Cape Town differed from other South African cities by having a small African and a very large coloured population. Western Cape was declared Coloured Labour Preference Area, whereby Africans only were allowed to enter the region at the lowest rung of the employment ladder, to perform jobs which coloured were not willing or able to perform. The Group Areas Act legalised the nation-wide forced removal of Indians, coloureds and Africans from areas declared white. The largest urban group affected by this law was coloureds in Cape Town.

<sup>278</sup> In a parliamentary debate on housing on May 10, 1976, the minister had said 120.000 Coloured people were living in shanties in the Cape Peninsula. Alex Boraine in the same debate estimated that if Africans were included the number was 200.000. SAIRR, 1977:155-157.

<sup>279</sup> The average number of people estimated to live in one shack was 12-16 at the time; counting people in shackland was done per shack, 2300 shacks would add up to a population of around 30.000.

<sup>280</sup> *Cape Times*, June 9, 1976.

from Langa to Nyanga, from Nyanga to Crossroads. To keep tabs on the illegal influx city engineers took aerial photographs of the mushrooming camps and counted shacks. They estimated that Crossroads alone grew by over 2000 shacks with roughly 13 persons per shack or 26.000 persons just from October to December 1984.<sup>281</sup> Soon Crossroads was surrounded by a new shackland called KTC and a ring of satellite camps. Around 1984 the government began clearing sites for a new 'emergency' black township called Khayelitsha even further away from Cape Town where all the squatters would be forced to move. Enter Johnson Ngxobongwana.

The urbanisation-process did not stop there, of course, as a small anecdote perhaps may illustrate. In 1996 I was walking in Khayelitsha with a woman living there, and she pointed to a vast area of very poor shacks and cardboard shelters and remarked that one month ago these people were not there. One month ago it was still all sand dunes and bushes. She did not know who these people were; everybody called them Mozambicans, a word now simply put on anyone assumed to be a foreigner. Behind her the shacks and matchbox houses of Khayelitsha stretched towards Table Mountain, raising above the hazy horizon forty kilometres away. Ten years ago nobody had lived out here on the sand; now it had become home to more than 250.000 people.

#### (i) Who

Youths and fathers were the two main antagonists in the battle of Crossroads. Fathers, pressed hard in the townships, as we saw in Chapter eighteen, were stronger in the shackland. This fact announces one of the key differences in the terrain of struggle compared with 1976. With the legalisation of squatting in 1986 (a change interpreted below in section 3) the now de-racialized violent fight for land invaded township politics with disastrous consequences for the youths. A glimpse of this process is captured by Wilfried Schärf and Baba Ngcokoto in their work on the people's courts in the Nyanga-Crossroads area. March 1985, youths set up a people's court<sup>282</sup> called the Nyanga Youth Brigade, Nyanga YB for short. Membership of court was more or less open to male youths only. Its main purpose was discipline among youths, looking for 'troublemakers, hooligans, and vandals',

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<sup>281</sup> City of Cape Town City Engineer's Department *Orderly Urbanisation in South Africa. Submission to the President's Council: Proclamation No. 1010, Gov. Gazette, 10 May 1985*, June 5, 1985, p. 8.

<sup>282</sup> The authors define a people's court narrowly; classification of the court is not the point here.

and the main punishment was whippings with sjamboks, as it was also used in the state legal system. The number of lashes was voted on after hearing the case. In the beginning the maximum was 30 (in state prisons it was 7), later it could be several hundred and some defendants died.<sup>283</sup> The youths running the people's court got very powerful by claiming the title of 'comrade', legitimate executor of the will of the people, and at the same time wielding unrestrained and capricious coercive power over everyone (including members of the court, which began charging each other of 'acts against the people'). Youths effectively challenged patriarchal power in several Cape Town townships. Because there was no counter current of adult radicalism (as in Eastern Cape), "the youths could thus arrogate to themselves virtually unchecked powers and legitimate this by claiming that their own interests and values were those of the broader community."<sup>284</sup>

But only to a certain limit. The comrades' thuggish way of policing a consumer boycott alienated the court from large parts of the community. "Stories about woman having to eat bars of soap, raw chickens, or drink bottles of sunflower oil spread like wildfire through the townships, and did the boycott's cause no good."<sup>285</sup> When the Nyanga YB started hearing cases involving adults, e.g. disputes between husband and wife etc. it was very widely condemned as a challenge to the cultural norms supported in the community, and it lost the YB the greatest part of whatever adult support it had left at that stage. The court may have lost its last legitimacy had it not been for an incident in October 1985 where it heard a case against four women closely related to a hated township councillor. This case was watched by 1000-3000 people in the Zolani Centre, and ended with the women, one of whom was pregnant at the time, being sentenced by vote in the hall to, and given, 60 lashes for 'disrespect of the court'.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Thokozani Xaba relates the 1989 case of Mandla, a criminal sentenced at a people's court in Kwamashu (Durban) to 700 lashes, "Mandla did not survive the lashing. He collapsed somewhere near 500. There were protests over the fact that he died without getting all his punishment. Those who felt robbed in this way, chose to douse his body with petrol and set it alight rather than call the police to take his body to the morgue. As the fire was consuming his body, some were singing songs condemning all 'enemies of the people' to death." *Transformation* 28 (1995), p. 55.

<sup>284</sup> Schärf and Ngcokoto in Manganyi and De Toit, eds., 1990:358.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

The Zolani Centre continued to be the venue of the Youth Brigade court, until, finally, in the battle of May 1986 it was burnt down by the fathers, as described above in the press report. In the KTC shack settlement next-door to Nyanga, a group of people, mostly criminals, “set up a court and ruled the area by force and fear for the next 18 months [1986-87]. The court became a lucrative venture for this group as they insisted that their constituency sustained them materially. Gifts in gratitude for the right judgement were also a common feature of this ‘court’.”<sup>287</sup> With the position of radicalism occupied by the youths, adults could only counter the youths from a conservative and-or criminal vigilante position, crystallising around power structures such as councillors, local police, businessmen, co-opted by the state through a common opposition to the comrades.

Left out in this sketch are the details of women-groups, police and security forces, various BC- and UDF youth-factions. What is central, however, is the simultaneous overlapping of different relations between youths and fathers. In house space they opposed each other as children and patriarchs; we saw this in 1976 and it continued to be important in 1986. In the town space margin youths confronted fathers as two groups of urban outsiders competing for access to town space; this was new and crucial in 1986 and led to many strange and opportunistic alliances with the urban insiders. In ethnic space, however, the militant youths struggled *for* the adults against the common racist enemy. This interlocking of unity with enmity between the youths and the fathers added to the complexity of the situation in shackland.

#### **(j) Why**

The irony of Crossroads was that on the surface it was a victory for the apartheid government in so far as the squatters were removed to Khayelitsha and the political power of the comrades were weakened. But below this victory lies a structural defeat of apartheid’s central project, the ‘white’ town. I will not further attempt to address the specifics of the violence in Crossroads, but in the following section try to use the example of Crossroads to highlight some of the major topographic differences in the two attacks on the state in 1976 and in 1986.

### **3. The squatter in the rhizome of violence**

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

Let me summarise my spatial argument. The squatters of Crossroads met the state *trice*.

(i) In house space the squatter head of household met the state as an ambiguous *patriarch*. Ambiguous because probably most of the households did not have a male head, but either a female one or were in a state of flux with no recognised authority. Secondly shacks in a squatter camp were non-recognised illegal house space. When the state recognised a house and by its laws and practices distinguished public from private space, it did so by a compact with the patriarch of the house. In the shackland this was twisted around: the fathers were neither recognised by the state as patriarchs on the basis of house ownership, nor recognised by the children as authorities in ruined patriarchal households; but these miserable patriarchs were conceded, explicitly or implicitly as the situation demanded, 'vigilantic' authority to rule the children on behalf of the state.

(ii) In town space the squatters met the state on the edge of the town as *outsiders*. No longer as patriarchs (male or female) but as 'outsiders', that is determined functionally by (lack of) job, marginality in the formal economy and precarious spatial integration in the town. Whatever the functional relation with urban space, the squatters were confronted with state laws and practices controlling town space. This often took the form of outsiders being confronted by insiders protecting their privileges in terms of land, services, and legality granted by the state.

(iii) In ethnic space, finally, the squatters met the state as *blacks* at the frontier of the ethnic-racial space. But as I will attempt to show, this conflict was only of secondary importance in the actual intifada violence.

#### **(a) The squatter in house space**

The squatters lived semi-permanently at the margins and interstices of town space, with a very low degree of security in housing, income, transport, services and rights. Squatter houses were highly diverse physically; a study of Cape Town shacklands found that household-size ranged from 1 to 11 persons; only 39% were nuclear. Squatters had low and unpredictable incomes; 36% did not earn enough always to buy food.<sup>288</sup> Squatters were highly mobile between town and rural smallholdings as indicated by a survey from Durban of 1800 shackland households, of whom 66% sent money home regularly to the up-keep of rural

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<sup>288</sup> A study from Urban Problems Research Unit at UCT among the Black population in Cape Town undertaken in 1995. Oral information from Peter Wilkinson and Vanessa Watson at the 'Housing Needs and Cultural Diversity', seminar at UCT, Feb. 27, 1996.

homesteads, stressing their ambiguous position straddling the urban-rural front. The basic illegality of shackland had profound implications for personal safety, political dynamic, and was particularly important, in the context of South Africa 1986 I will suggest, for the relative lack of importance of race in the shackland violence. A study on the Durban shacklands found that,

“internecine violence within and between informal settlements, and between them and neighbouring formal townships.. resulted in massive movements of the urban population, much of it between different locations on the periphery.. people keep moving on, either to escape violence or the threat of violence or to find a more advantageous or secure foothold in a preferential location within the metropolitan area.”<sup>289</sup>

One of the best informed researchers on hostels and shacklands in Natal wrote,

“Shack residents live in the “hope” and the “promise” that they will enter the queues on the waiting lists for accommodation into the formal townships. The other reality of shack life is that the residents live at the mercy of petty capitalist landlords who not only exploit them financially but also manipulate the client-patron relationships. This relationship utilises coercion where the landlords through their links with KwaZulu and Inkatha organise shack dwellers into vigilantes to attack political activists in the formal townships.”<sup>290</sup>

In Cape Town the same thing happened, only instead of KwaZulu it was local Capetonian police and development boards, and instead of Inkatha it was very loose civic organisations that used vigilantes to defend the state rule of the town margin. Unlike the children of the townships, shackland children were not reported to challenge the fathers. “Shack settlements remained an exception to [the children’s radicalism]: conservative “shacklords” maintained control with clear support from certain residents, especially older men.”<sup>291</sup> The KTC/Crossroads squatter communities next door to Nyanga township “were organised along very traditional, patriarchal lines, which did not leave the youth any significant role to play in the running of the squatter camps.”<sup>292</sup> Many fathers took up arms against the children. One possible explanation of the difference between shackland and township could be different levels of education with the more educated youth

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<sup>289</sup> Doug Hindson and Jeff McCarthy, 1994:9.

<sup>290</sup> Paulus Zulu, *A Crisis...* 1987, p. 9.

<sup>291</sup> Seekings “Social Ordering...” p. 16 citing Josette Cole: *Crossroads: The Politics of Reform and Repression, 1976-1986*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press.

<sup>292</sup> Schärf and Ngcokoto, 1990:358.

challenging the fathers in the townships. In any case, schools became a direct extension of the battle in house space between children and fathers about patriarchal authority. Patriarchs regrouped as vigilantes and launched a terrible counterattack on the children (not the individuals from 1976, of course, but a new generation of 1986) to protect their patriarchal interests, challenged by the children.

In the northern Free State, where the *intifada* began in September 1984, children were again the main fighting force in a manner evoking 1976. Chaskalson and Seekings reported that boycotting students were prominent in marches against rent increases; in Tumahole the '14s' (higher primary school students) clashed repeatedly with municipal police. But from late 1985 vigilante repression escalated in many townships. The Phakathi vigilante team in Thabong, OFS were led by councillors, drove a development board micro-bus, tortured their victims in the administration offices and were alleged to have police support. In several northern Free State townships vigilantes forced students back to school in January 1986. Municipal police were stationed in schools, and beat students who were alleged to have broken any rule. Students (both primary and secondary) who were identified as 'comrades' were systematically excluded from schools throughout the region. In Meloding, most visibly, many older residents participated in the vigilante groups that literally herded students back into school in 1986.<sup>293</sup>

This example shows 'students' and 'vigilantes' fighting two overlapping struggles: as children and fathers in house space, as comrades and councillors in town space. In ethnic space, however, the situation was reversed because here children fought *for* the fathers in the common struggle against white supremacy, eloquently expressed by Percy Qoboza, a Johannesburg journalist,

"If its true that a people's wealth is its children, then South Africa is bitterly, tragically poor. If its true that a nation's future is its children we have no future...

For we have turned our children into a generation of fighters, battle-hardened soldiers who will never know the carefree joy of childhood. What we are witnessing is the growth of a generation which has the courage to reject the cowardice of its parents...

There is a dark, terrible beauty in that courage. It is also a source of great pride - pride that we, who have lived under apartheid, can produce children who refuse to do so. But it is also a source of great shame... that (this) is our heritage to our children: the knowledge of how to die, and how to kill."<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Chaskalson and Seekings in IPSA, 1988:29-37.

<sup>294</sup> City Press, 20 April 1986; quoted by Colin Bundy in David Everatt and Elinor Sisulu, eds. *Black Youth in Crisis. Facing the Future*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1992:1.

**(b) The squatter in town space**

In 1986 the so-called “Orderly Urbanisation” repealed a long range of racist apartheid laws aiming at preventing the urbanisation of black people. This was spelled out clearly in the official White Paper on Urbanisation,

“Successive governments took control of settlement and with time influx control was also linked to the development and extension of a constitutional policy, namely that Black people would merely be “temporary” residents in “white” South Africa and that eventually there would be no Black South African citizens... The Government has since accepted the permanence of Black people in the RSA... The Government therefore states emphatically that influx control can no longer serve any constitutionally objective.”<sup>295</sup>

As it stands, it was a dramatic denunciation of apartheid. The schedule attached to the White Paper listing the laws repealed amounts to a terrible roll-call of instruments preventing black people crossing the front of town space. Yet, at the same time the law was a pitiful half-baked reform of apartheid, stubbornly refusing to end ‘group-based’ discrimination, racial divisions inside towns, group area acts were not repealed, only influx into towns. ‘Orderly Urbanisation’ was immediately overtaken and half-forgotten by the increasingly violent breakdown of apartheid in the following months and years.

However, the extent of the breakdown of apartheid rule in 1986 should be assessed. It can be argued that the law was of central importance for the unfolding of the intifada because, (i) it crippled apartheid’s *raison d’être*, and (ii) it took race out of violence located in the shacklands, and so radically changed the power-relations, in particular between youths that lost power and fathers that gained power.

**(i)**

Colonial segregation and later apartheid had postulated that towns were born white by grace of God, and the blacks needed for exploitation should be transient and invisible so as not to contaminate whiteness. Expressed succinctly by the Stallard Commission in 1922 in the words quoted above, “the Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas which are essentially the white man’s creation when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister.”<sup>296</sup> In fact, already in 1922 every

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<sup>295</sup> White Paper on Urbanisation, p. 15-16.

<sup>296</sup> Cit. in Haarhoff, 1984:70.



six city-dweller were black.<sup>297</sup> None the less the argument of 'white' cities was repeated time and again, only becoming ever more false; in 1960 the urban African population already exceeded the number of urban whites with more than a million.<sup>298</sup> During the sixties South Africa had one of the highest GNP growth rates in the world, and towns promised strength and white welfare based on industrial power. Everybody knew, of course, that black labour was essential to the production of South Africa's wealth, whether on the farms, in the mines, or in the factories. At the same time an overwhelming majority of the white electorate stood behind the National Party<sup>299</sup> and apartheid's imaginary of a 'white' South Africa.<sup>300</sup>

Twentieth century South African towns and farms had begun mixed and ended almost totally segregated.<sup>301</sup> To produce this outcome a ruthless policy based on forced removals was set in motion to reverse the basic trend of black urbanisation. Massive forced movement of humans caused two-thirds of South Africa's African townships to actually *decline* in size in the 1960s,<sup>302</sup> in ominous contrast to all other third-world cities at the time. The rural-urban border became the most contested border with millions of Blacks charged by the police of offending the influx regulations. Yet in spite of these massive violent efforts the African urban population reached 8,8 million in 1980, now more than twice the size of the white urban population.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> In 1921 the total population of South Africa was 6,9 million; 1,5 million whites, 0,5 million coloureds, 0,16 million Asians, and 4,7 million Africans, 9,5% of whom lived in towns with more than 5000 inhabitants; of the total urban population of 2.763.000, 446.000 persons were African. Greenberg, 1980:422.

<sup>298</sup> In 1960 South Africa's the total population was 17.122.000; 36,8% or 6.304.000 were urban of whom 3.164.000 were African and 2.093.000 white. Computed from census-figures cited by Greenberg, 1980:422.

<sup>299</sup> See O'Meara, 1996.

<sup>300</sup> See Norval, 1996.

<sup>301</sup> The dramatic increase in segregation is illustrated by the instructive maps in Christopher 1994:44-47 and 129-132.

<sup>302</sup> Lodge, 1983:321.

<sup>303</sup> 2.8 million of the black urban population lived in homeland towns; the white urban population was 4,1 million. Charles Simkins, "South African Urbanization: Experience and Prospects"; in *South Africa's Demographic Future*, ed. WP Mostert and JM Lötter, Pretoria: Human Science Research Council, 1990:139.

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Citizens forcibly removed by the South African Government 1960-1983

Removed from rural areas	
Removed from inner urban area	
Removed from shackland	
Intra-urban removals between group areas	860.400
<u>Total</u>	
Under threat of removal in 1983	

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Source: Platzky and Walker, 1985:10-11.

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Blacks charged of offending pass-laws, selected years

1969/70	643.897
1970/71	632.077
1973/74	411.163

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Source: Horrel, 1978:194.

(ii)

The inherent whiteness of towns had been the central fantasmatic proposition of white rule in South Africa. Now ‘Orderly Urbanisation in South Africa’ in a studied technical-rational language abolished it as a matter of neutral town-planning.

“‘Informal settlements’, in the form of controlled squatting of Black transitional communities, should be accepted as a way of dealing with the rapid urbanisation of South African Blacks.”<sup>304</sup>

Aletta Norval has described the breakdown the white town-black homeland “apartheid imaginary” as a “full-scale crisis for apartheid hegemony”.<sup>305</sup> I agree fully with Norval that one dimension in this crisis of hegemony was the economic and political dissolution of the black outsider-insider distinction. However, if we change our perspective from the apartheid discourse to the structure of the intifada with increasing numbers of black people getting killed, it was far from disappearing. In a non-Marxist sociological understanding of black politics the insider-outsider

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<sup>304</sup> City of Cape Town... submission, 1985, p. 3.

<sup>305</sup> Norval, 1996:217-274; p.244 on the repeal of influx laws; see also Marais, 1998:47.

dichotomy changed in the early 1990s from race to function and took on an even more deadly aspect; here in the precise words of Kogila Moodley and Heribert Adam,

“The cleavage between the early urbanised and the latecomers constitutes the most fundamental faultline in black society... With the abolition of influx control and apartheid repression, the competition over scarce goods became an intrablack affair. The conflict was transformed from one between illegals and the police to an all-out struggle for space and survival between old-time residents and those desperately seeking access, now unconstrained by the state.”<sup>306</sup>

1986 saw a transition from squatting declared illegal in terms of race (exclusive ‘white’ towns) to a mixed situation with legality of squatting within the crumbling framework of racial zoning of towns (Group Areas). Only after 1991 did all statutory racial zoning end. Instead of the BAAB and white police standing guard at the entrance to town space, in 1986 the likes of Johnson Ngxobongwana in Cape Town and Thomas Shabalala in Durban with their vigilante armies confronted rural people desperate for an urban foothold with large-scale violence.

#### **(d) The squatter in ethnic space**

Shacklands and townships interacted with ethnic space in strikingly different ways. Township was a racial space: a black town separated from a white town by race-laws. Shackland, on the other hand, was not a racial space but a functional space; by its very existence shackland was a negation of race-laws. The squatters did not stand on a front between a black space and a white space, but between two black spaces: the shackland and the township. In a large measure this took race out of the violence in the shackland.

Beyond that, however, shacklands were the practical beginning of post-apartheid towns; they pre-figured post-apartheid, with violence de-racialized and de-politized as ‘crime’. In no way did it imply less deadly violence, as the figures for 1996 will tell. Already in 1986 it was a misunderstanding (with obvious political intent) to describe shackland violence as ‘black-on-black’ because race had dropped behind outsider/insider in importance in the struggle for land and other recourses. Not to be misunderstood: in *national* politics race was still of paramount importance in 1986, precisely expressed in the halfway measures of Orderly Urbanisation which did not abolish apartheid. I will return in detail to the question of ethnic space in the final Chapter twenty-two on 1996.

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<sup>306</sup> Moodley and Adam, 1993:13-14.

#### 4. War and rule capacity

My distinction between the war and rule capacity of social groups is inspired by the state-nomad dichotomy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari partly because it challenges in a fruitful way the view I have put forward in Part Three on state and war. In their famous piece “Treatise on Nomadology-The War Machine” originally published in 1986, in their trade-mark encyclopaedic style of writing and reasoning, they argue for an initial and fundamental difference between war and state and a subsequent injection of war into the state by the nomads, in a large measure building on the ideas of Pierre Clastres, discussed in Chapter eleven.

“As for the war machine itself, it seems to be irreducible to the State apparatus, to be outside its sovereignty and prior to its law: it comes from elsewhere.”<sup>307</sup>

This notion of a radical dualism and fusion between state and nomad is largely corroborated by John Keegan in his discussion of the ‘chariot people’ in his global *tour de force* history of warfare.

“Thus the legacy of the chariot was the warmaking state.. It is this transformation of the role of kings in the civilised world that we must regard as the most significant, lasting and baleful effect of warrior domination of the ancient theocratic states.”<sup>308</sup>

The difference between the rule and war capacity of social groups can be understood structurally as the difference between institutionalised and legitimate state rule, and anarchic, rhizomatic, spontaneous execution of violence, expressed in certain historic situations by the state and the nomads. I suggest we can evaluate any group in terms of its war capacity and rule capacity.

##### (a) The children: all the war here and now

The main fighting body of the intifada was street fighting children and youths. Their war capacity was manifested in their remarkable battle-creating agency. A rough measure of their war capacity was the violence unleashed against the state in the streets. Their rule capacity, on the other hand, was displayed in structures such as the Nyanga Youth Brigade. None of these structures had any permanence, and they lacked completely the durable legitimacy of a state. In the

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<sup>307</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:352.

<sup>308</sup> Keegan ,1993:169.

months leading up to the state of emergency in June, children, youths and other intifada fighters created so-called 'people's power' structures. Only in an exceedingly feeble and short-lived manner were they organs of rule. While none survived as organs of rule, some carried on as resistance organisations. A very notable example were the civic organisations, in some areas continuing rent-boycotts well into Mandela's presidency pressing for material improvements of the townships, which were very slow in coming. Mandela launched the Masekane-campaign designed to educate people they should stop struggling against their 'own' government. It was ineffectual, and exposed the realities of rule.

#### **(b) ANC, a state-in-waiting**

The ANC proved their war capacity in the terrorist attacks, which were far below war intensity. Had they not wished to display a high degree of political restraint they could have been far more deadly, as indicated by a comparison with the PAC attacks in the early 1990s which had a size almost equal to ANC's terrorism in the 1980s yet drawing on much smaller resources. "APLA units used grenades and automatic weapons, preferring direct engagement with their targets rather than the more impersonal use of limpet mines which Umkhonto units favoured when attacking civilians. In contrast to Umkhonto, therefore, the majority of APLA's civilian victims were white, intentionally so."<sup>309</sup> Reasons for this low war capacity are debatable, and probably a combination of sound political restraint and military inability in the face of crushing repression to launch a guerrilla war which had very remote chances of success. Whatever the reasons it is close to an established fact, I think, that the ANC did not have the means to win an all-out military victory over the armed forces of the apartheid government. But that did not preclude the possibility of ruling South Africa.

The rule capacity of the ANC in 1986 can perhaps best be explored if we view the ANC as a state-in-waiting exercising state-like practices in three areas, (i) in international relations, (ii) in the exile establishment, and (iii) inside South Africa.

#### **(i)**

The full list of all the congratulations received by the ANC at their Kabwe conference in 1985 gives a picture of its range of international contacts at the time.<sup>310</sup> A few European social democratic parties sent their greetings, but the vast majority came from communist countries, liberation movements, solidarity

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<sup>309</sup> Lodge: "Soldiers of the Storm...", p. 8.

<sup>310</sup> "Messages of support received for our National Consultative Conference" telex message, ANC archive, Fort Hare, box 6.

organisations, communist parties and student organisations. This list is a picture of the cold war in its final stage, with very little middle ground between communism and the camp of Reagan, Thatcher, Kohl and Buthelezi.<sup>311</sup> That the ANC found its friends and supporters in communist countries and organisations was no proof of a communist design for a future state rule by the ANC, and it has often been denied that it was. However, when the conference declared to seek people's power through people's war, it not only subscribed to a communist (Vietnamese-inspired) road to state power, it legitimised a certain style of 'comradely' rule here and now in the exile establishment.

It can be argued that a 'Nordic vision' of social democratic governance, critical of Reagan's freewheeling capitalism as well as communism, was put forward to the ANC at the time in the mute form of substantial economical support. But, and that is my point, it was given totally uncritical of the actual practice of rule by the ANC, based on a universal critique of apartheid: anything was acceptable as long as it was anti-apartheid, even if it violated the norms of social democratic governance. The 'Nordic vision' failed to articulate its own position: insisting on the universality of democracy: both in South Africa *and* in the ANC.<sup>312</sup> In the context of 1986 such an insistence would have strengthened those arguing for negotiations. As it was, pure economic aid even if it was very generous did not swung the ANC away from communist influence. A single example may suffice.

The Soviet assistance to ANC 1963 - 1990 was 61 million roubles; 36 million worth of arms and 16 million for civilian goods.<sup>313</sup> This was negligible (even at an inflated exchange-rate of 1 rouble = 1US\$) compared with the Nordic countries' economic contribution, bankrolling the ANC for many years. Denmark donated some 285 million US\$ and Norway donated more than 300 million US\$ to the ANC and allied organisations during more than two decades of dedicated aid.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> See the pictures with Buthelezi greeting, chatting, appearing with just these people, chosen to present his foreign relations in his book *South Africa. My Vision of the Future*, London 1990.

<sup>312</sup> The later Boesak-debacle showed how sensitive the ANC was to critique, suggesting that critique of undemocratic, corrupt, and violent practices within the ANC at an earlier time could have helped the ANC better for its post-struggle responsibilities than mute solidarity.

<sup>313</sup> Vladimir Shubin, The Soviet Union / Russian Federation's Relations with South Africa, with special Reference to the Period since 1980. *African Affairs* (1996) 95, P. 15.

<sup>314</sup> Danish aid to ANC and allied organisations, and after 1994 the ANC government, was 975 mill. DKK 1965-1993, and 750 mill DKK 1994-1999; DANIDA's Årsberetning 1992, p. 106, DANIDA's

In his book *Mandela's land* the Norwegian journalist Torm Kristiansen broke the secret story of how the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs even channelled some of these money through undercover channels.<sup>315</sup>

It is a pity that the Nordic countries could not at the time contribute an articulated social democratic vision of governance, influencing the deliberations within the ANC of whether to fight war or negotiate rule. There is no doubt the ANC was searching for ways to adapt policy to a rapidly changing situation and needed inputs. Meetings with various delegations from white South Africa coming to Lusaka get an idea of ANC's vision for the future prompted the ANC leaders to think of how they were going to live with the 'enemy' after the end of the liberation war. In April 1986 Oliver Tambo commented to Archbishop Denis Hurley in Lusaka,

"We had never paid enough attention to the question of details of the post-apartheid system; we are engaged in the struggle to liberate the country. But now it has come to our notice that these issues need to be addressed quite seriously."<sup>316</sup>

A few years after 1986 the world of communist and anti-communist certainties was to be turned upside down by Michael Gorbachev; ANC's struggle for rule would shift gears radically. In the words of one bitter communist friend of ANC,

"The talk about 'de-ideologization' of almost everything - including the economy and international relations as well as the supremacy of 'universal human values', became a camouflage for the process of 're-ideologization', of uncritical acceptance of Western values in both internal and external policies... Moreover, the ANC methods of struggle contradicted the fashionable theories of a 'non-violent world', advanced by Gorbachev."<sup>317</sup>

1989 was to hasten a dramatic reorientation within the ANC away from rule through military victory to rule through a negotiated settlement (and a parallel re-orientation took place within the Nationalist government). The hand of Mandela

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Årsberetning 1994, p. 72. Norwegian aid to ANC and allied organisations 1971-1996 was close to 2 billion NKK ; Kristensen 1996, p. 151. Sweden's donations would have been on an equally high level.

<sup>315</sup> Kristiansen, 1996:151-177.

<sup>316</sup> "Minutes of Meeting Between ANC and R[oman]C[atholic]C[hurch Delegations, 15&16 April 1986", p. 11. ANC Archive, Fort Hare, Box 4.

<sup>317</sup> Shubin, 1996:22-23.

was strengthened against the 'war-party', to borrow a Russian expression, leading to the radically changed South Africa we will meet again in the final chapter dealing with the year 1996.

(ii)

ANC in exile built up an elaborate bureaucratic structure in many ways modelled on a state.<sup>318</sup> It was a bureaucratic structure fitted well to enter international state-like relations with other states and international organisations. To do so took a credible claim to represent a 'people'. ANC was very successful in getting the Nationalist government internationally outlawed and itself gaining credibility as the legitimate representative of South Africa (with the always forthcoming support of apartheid's atrocities). Competition from other liberation movements was more problematic, but ANC had the good fortune of having a leadership of much higher quality than PAC, the main rival in exile.

But really important was the state-like rule of thousands of South Africa's most dedicated civil war combatants in the exile camps. A rule documented to be totally undemocratic, repressive and violent.<sup>319</sup> When people went to the camps they almost completely stepped out of the civil war, and entered the shadowy build-up of a bureaucratic power-base to be deployed when ANC was legalised.<sup>320</sup> The main structural significance of the exile establishment was a build-up of rule-capacity, and not of war-capacity. I am not claiming nor disclaiming that leaders like Chris Hani honestly believed they were preparing a military assault on the South African state; I am merely stating the fact that the camps gave ANC a credible claim to state-like importance, regardless of the fact that MK never played any military role (apart from the terrorism). The main historical function of MK was to pre-figure ANC rule of the black South African majority before ANC could do it as a real state

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<sup>318</sup> "What is to be done" organograms of ANC structure, ANC 1986; for a details see "Organisation Report of the National Executive Committee to the National Consultative Conference", published 1989.

<sup>319</sup> From opposite political positions, Twala, 1994 and Trewhela 1995; the XX Commission, and a growing body of evidence coming out of the TRC and press-reports.

<sup>320</sup> A good account of early exile life - although not in the ANC - and its oppressive isolation both from life back in South Africa and life in the country of exile is the last chapters in Philip Kgosana's little book, *Lest We Forget*, Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1988. See also Twala, 1994 for a bitter account of camp life some years later. His experiences of rule are echoed in the gruesome accounts of Tamil Tiger camps given by Daniel, 1996:141ff.



based on elections inside South Africa; it was not a force capable of winning state power through war.<sup>321</sup>

(iii)

The rule capacity of the ANC inside South Africa is a more complex issue because in 1986 the black majority of the South African population were subjects not citizens. Disenfranchised and repressed by the Nationalist government, mass actions and the open violence of the intifada were the only non-clandestine ways possible to express political demands for the black population. Terrorist actions was a claim made by a small group to express the demands of the disenfranchised, but they could not by their conspiratorial nature be a democratic expression. The main function of ANC's acts of terrorism was to secure the legitimacy of the ANC as the representative of the majority of the South African population. The bombs were election-to-come propaganda.

At the same time the ANC could begin their rule before they had over-all state power by introducing a disciplining of the black constituency. This struggle was code-named 'unity' and included the bitter killing of revolutionary opponents. While it is beyond doubt that most blacks supported the ANC, it is also clear they were faced with stiff black opposition. This deadly competition for political turf was to intensify dramatically when the ANC was unbanned in 1990 and reach much higher levels of fatalities than in 1986. Anti-state struggles would include large-scale violent clashes between the ANC and the IFP, between PAC and BCM groups, and even between different fraction within the ANC, in particular between the de-exiled and those that had remained in South Africa. All the slogans of dual power, people's power, people's courts, liberated zones thus carried an ambiguous meaning in the rule-war spectrum, because who could rule in the name of the people, and how?

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<sup>321</sup> This assessment seems to be corroborated by Howard Barrel in his Oxford dissertation *Conscripts to Their Age: African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976 to 1986*, which I unfortunately have not seen. To *Mail and Guardian* Barrel said "By the mid-1980s the evidence strongly suggested that not only was armed struggle a failure at a military level but that popular political mobilisation including the activities of the militant trade unions, provided a more serious challenge to the state than the ANC's military campaign Much of this political mobilisation and organisation had been conducted autonomously of the ANC." *Mail and Guardian*, Aug. 23, 1996.

We can also find the distinction between war and rule in the ANC publications. In a discussion of armed struggle against apartheid as a just war, Siphso Jama writes,

“Umkhonto We Sizwe has been responsible for the assassination of notorious informers and collaborators with the apartheid regime. This is not, properly speaking, an act of war, but constitutes the administration of vigilante justice by an organisation recognised by the oppressed in South Africa as its own government. *It expresses the fact that dual power exists in South Africa.*”<sup>322</sup>

Already in November 1985 Cassius Mandla was able to announce, confusing acts of rule with acts of war,

“The masses have created some form of free zones... They have helped solve to a significant degree the question of guerrilla survival...Life in the townships is no longer like it was before. It is interesting to imagine how it feels to live and move around there [Mandla was writing from exile], in liberated townships in which maintaining order means turning them into undeclared operational [war] areas. Here collaborators and informers live in fear of petrol, either as petrol bombs being hurled at their homes and reducing them to rack and ruin, or as petrol dousing their treacherous bodies which are set alight and burned to a charred and despicable mess.”<sup>323</sup>

But the necklace was a very controversial instrument of rule. It was not a punishment used by state-like organs,<sup>324</sup> but an act of collective frenzy, perhaps with a sacrificial structure.<sup>325</sup> Nevertheless, top ANC-leaders came very close to endorsing it as legitimate. On the same day in April 1986 when former West

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<sup>322</sup> *Sechaba*, Jan. 1985, p. 20; italics in original. Already at that time it was unusual to use the term vigilante in connection with anti-state actions, but precise.

<sup>323</sup> *Sechaba*, Nov. 1985, p. 25, 26. A forensic analysis of necklace murders in Cape Town concludes that most victims were crippled by stoning but still alive prior to being set alight. 82% of the victims were residents of squatter camps; 18% were township-residents. Leonard B. Lerer, “Homicide-Associated Burning in Cape Town, South Africa.” in *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*, 15(4), 1994. New York.

<sup>324</sup> Schärf and Ngcokoto 1990, argues this in detail for the Nyanga People’s Court, p. 360-363.

<sup>325</sup> This is the explanation inspired by René Girard’s ideas on the scapegoat, offered by David Chidester in his work on South African violence, *Shots in the Streets. Violence and Religion in South Africa*, pp. 21-40. Psychological research seems to question this, “There was no evidence that participation in violence had a healing or transforming effect at the individual level.” Gill Straker, 1992:132.

German chancellor Willy Brandt met Winnie Mandela in Soweto, she held her infamous necklace-and-matches-speech, where she called for “the liberation of South Africa with our little boxes of matches”. Two days later Oliver Tambo said in Lusaka to a delegation of catholic leaders from South Africa,

“On the method of necklacing, I’ve not got used to that, but, what made people think of it, of this brutal manner! It’s the measure of bitterness resulting from the regime’s brutal actions... It has had its positive effects: e.g. many townships are absolutely disciplined; there is law and order of the right kind. We are growing out of conflict in which lives are lost unnecessarily, and going on to disciplined actions.”<sup>326</sup>

The ANC did not start the necklace and it had no way of stopping it, and so it kept silent. “The use of the “necklace” has also become a worrying issue... We need to speak with one voice on this question and ensure that the masses of our people get clear and unequivocal guidelines from the movement on the use of the “necklace”.” And then the discussion-paper outlining ANC policy for 1987 felt silent. No guideline on the issue could be formulated because condemning it openly without being able to stop it would expose the fragility of ANC’s claim to be the ‘leader’ of the struggle.

#### **(d) Negotiations**

In early 1986, at the height of revolutionary euphoria in the liberation movement, Nelson Mandela rejected the military option. He writes in his autobiography on his motives for initiating contact with P W Botha,

“I had concluded that the time had come when the struggle could best be pushed forward through negotiations. If we did not start a dialogue soon, both sides would soon be plunged into a dark night of oppression, violence and war... It was clear to me that a military victory was a distant if not impossible dream. It simply did not make sense for both sides to loose thousands if not millions of lives in a conflict that was unnecessary.”<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> “Minutes of Meeting Between ANC and RCC Delegations...”  
1986, p. 8.

<sup>327</sup> Mandela, 1994:513. Of course, Mandela’s autobiography was a statement in an on-going political battle, published when he became president, and one cannot rule out that his thoughts from 1986 on war or talks have been rearranged to fit with the objectives of 1994. However, I see no reason to believe so, as his views are consistent with what he did at the time, and with his public statement earlier and later.

Twenty-two years before, in his famous speech at the Rivonia trial in 1964, where he was sentenced to life-imprisonment, Mandela had given two reasons for beginning the armed struggle.

“Firstly, we believed as a result of government policy, violence by the African people had become inevitable, and that unless responsible leadership was given to *canalise* and *control* the feelings of our people, there would be outbreaks of terrorism... Secondly, we felt that without violence there would be no way open to the African people to succeed in their struggle against the *principle* of white supremacy.... Four forms of violence were possible. There is sabotage, there is guerrilla warfare, there is terrorism, and there is open revolution. We chose to adopt the first method and to exhaust it before taking any other decision.”<sup>328</sup>

He stressed several times the urgent need to avoid civil war, including “civil strife amongst Africans”. Violence was to be a political statement, intended to put economic pressure by sabotage, not military pressure by killing, on the whites, “compelling the *voters* of the country to reconsider their position.”<sup>329</sup>

Mandela’s position is remarkably consistent from the Rivonia trial to his secret talks with Botha’s government more than twenty years later (and in his subsequent stance as president). He tries to ‘channel and control’ black anger away from civil war into reform, struggle against the ‘principle’ of white supremacy, and not white people, reaching out to compel white ‘voters’ to reconsider racism for a common goal of an non-racial, democratic South Africa.

Yet in 1986 the strategy of stepped-up armed struggle appeared to be hegemonic in the ANC. The point is not whether the individuals advocating ‘people’s war’ believed a military victory over Pretoria was a realistic and responsible policy. How can we ever tell? The point is why did people, who patently did *not* believe in a military solution, not talk out against war? Why was the discourse of people’s war hegemonic? With an ‘iron fist’ Leninism ruled the discourse available to the writers in Sechaba and elsewhere. Everything had to be made intelligible with the petrified relics of this ‘iron fisted’ discussion: class enemy, heroic vanguard, etc. etc. There was an infatuation with militant posturing. Everything short of revolutionary over-optimism could be marginalised as a sell-out.

The flexibility and pragmatism informing the position of Nelson Mandela, and probably a number of the exile leaders could not be made public because it had

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<sup>328</sup> Nelson Mandela. *The Struggle is my Life. His Speeches and Writings 1944-1990*. 1994:162.

<sup>329</sup>Ibid. p. 168. italics added. At the same time the MK should prepare for a future guerrilla war by training recruits in friendly countries.

no language. In Lusaka an ANC Sub-Committee<sup>330</sup> was busy secretly discussing the question of negotiations. In a submission tabled November 25, 1985 they conclude,

“Talks with the enemy, are in and of themselves, not harmful... In other word we will enter into talks as a means of pursuing our political objectives employing other means [than struggle at the battlefield]... Our strategic objective - people’s power, as defined in the Freedom Charter - will remain the same.”<sup>331</sup>

But negotiations with the Nationalist government stumbled on ANC’s ambiguity on the ultimate purpose of armed struggle: Charterist compromise or Leninist revolution? Perhaps negotiations were the best way to implement the Charterist compromise of a democratic South Africa in a joint process including the whites. But on the other hand, if the strategic objective was a revolutionary take-over of South Africa could negotiations then be conducted as a tactical supplement to a ‘people’s war’ against apartheid? No clear signals came from Lusaka; silence on the question of negotiations presumably reflected deep mistrust on whether they could trust Botha to negotiate in good faith and how to keep a military fall-back position in case he bluffed. It may also have reflected the much-discussed disagreements between communists and non-communists in the SACP-ANC alliance.

However, the crux of the matter was the reality of a civil war going on in South Africa, which the ANC struggled to control but did not control. This made talk of negotiations so difficult to bring into the open because the ANC could not afford to be seen as going behind the back of the angry black majority, and undercut township militancy. There was no way the ANC could convey the subtleties of negotiations to its constituency.

But that did not mean they could not be conducted. As it happened, the discussions in Lusaka was overtaken by a secret one-man initiative, presenting ANC with a *fait accompli*. In his autobiography Nelson Mandela in some detail tells the further unfolding of the story of his secret contacts with the apartheid government. Late 1985, strangely coinciding with Thabo Mbeki’s submission in Lusaka, after being separated in Poolsmoor prison from his fellow ANC inmates by the authorities, Mandela choose to initiate talks with the government about negotiations.

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<sup>330</sup> Members were Simon Makana, James Stuart, Pallo Jordan and Thabo Mbeki.

<sup>331</sup> “A Submission on the Question of Negotiations” Lusaka, November 25, 1985. Fort Hare Archive Box 4.

Nelson Mandela started his talks without no mandate whatsoever, a fact he is very candid about.

“A decision to talk to the government was of such importance that it should only have been made in Lusaka. But I felt that the process needed to begin, and I had neither the time nor the means to communicate fully with Oliver [Tambo]. Someone from our side needed to take the first step, and my new isolation gave me both the freedom to do so and the assurance, at least for a while, of the confidentiality of my efforts... I choose to tell no one what I was about to do. Not my colleagues upstairs nor those in Lusaka... Sometimes it is necessary to present one's colleagues with a policy that is already a *fait accompli*.”<sup>332</sup>

Mandela goes on to relate the slow, frustrating beginning of the talks, with the no real contact taking place before the week of June 12 1986, when Botha declared state of emergency. Only in 1987 did he for the first time tell anyone from the ANC including Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo of his talks.

Mandela had taken a great risk of alienating himself from the movement with his approach to the government. One can only speculate what the effect had been, had his contacts become public in 1986. A very large proportion of blacks would probably not have supported him in a situation where it looked as if apartheid was pushed back by black militancy. That might have led to ANC in Lusaka to condemn his one-man efforts. And had Mandela been disowned by the ANC after trying to facilitate talks with Botha, it is difficult to see who would then dare to talk with the enemy. Much blood are likely to have been spilt before talks could be resumed with new leaders. Mandela gambled and won, and South Africa was saved from much suffering.

## **6. The impossible guerrilla war of 1986**

In Chapter five dealing with guerrilla war I suggested two problems that seem to be general for guerrilla forces: (i) militarily they cannot win the cities with light weapons, and (ii) politically their rural policies of land-redistribution etc. carry no weight on the scene of urban-national politics. To overcome these two basic problems of guerrilla war-fare, the attackers must either step up their military pressure to frontal war, or they must abandon armed struggle and win power by

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<sup>332</sup>Mandela, 1994:514, 519; only in 1988 did Mandela get a reliable, secret channel of communication with ANC in Lusaka, see Sparks, 1994:57-67.

political means. Neither course can be chosen freely, but depends on developments in the situation external to the guerrilla army.

In South Africa there was no guerrilla war in the first place, as I have argued above, and the problem of winning the cities militarily remained academic. A situation where the ANC could not only begin a real guerrilla war, but also expand it into frontal war against the Nationalist government belonged to pure speculation. One can fantasise that the only way it could have happened was by a split of the SADF for some unthinkable reason, perhaps coupled with foreign intervention.

Guerrilla war demands a higher degree of political direction than intifada because it is a more complex attack on the state; the ANC underground was far too weak to execute that direction, and the exile leaders far too uncommitted to armed struggle to inject that direction. Even the most low-scale guerrilla war would have necessitated a base area; and given the geopolitical realities along South Africa's borders, and the terrain inside the country this was from the beginning considered unrealistic by Umkhonto. Ronnie Kasrils, one of the top Umkhonto leaders, mentioned the lack of friendly borders and chances of rear bases as the negative conditions for 'people's war', while the positive was the strength in the urban areas, based on the people of the townships. But this strength was seen as lower form (stone-throwers) which the ANC somehow should develop into a higher form (gun-shooters).<sup>333</sup> It was not analysed as a developed form of battle able to do things which armed struggle could not.

In 'good' old Leninist tradition, Kasrils thought the existing state structures and instruments of force would have to be destroyed.<sup>334</sup> Kasrils ought to have pondered Lenin's use of the zarist Cheka to defend the Russian revolution. Few revolutions destroy the state they win. Mandela saw that power could indeed be seized without destroying existing structures of state power (e.g. army, police, courts, parliament, economy), and furthermore they could be used to defend majority rule. Negotiations was the ultimate road leading to majority rule of South Africa because Mandela could exploit the Nationalist government's fundamental weakness: its lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the black majority. The ANC secured the support of the majority when it demonstrated its capacity for rule. This was done by international diplomacy, by establishing the MK-camps, by hesitant terrorism, by the struggle against rival black organisations inside South Africa, and by challenging the apartheid establishment politically. With all channels of a

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<sup>333</sup>Ronnie Kasrils, *Sechaba*, May 1986, p. 4.

<sup>334</sup>*Ibid*, p. 8.

democratic political process blocked by Botha's executive-style emergency apartheid, terrorism was ANC's most effective way of winning the political support of the black majority. Terrorism did not make sense as war; it was not a war and had no prospects of ever becoming a guerrilla war.

In South Africa 1986, the street-fighting children were unique because they had such a high war capacity and such a low rule capacity, while the ANC in exile stood at the other extreme with a dismal low war capacity and a very high rule capacity. The children could wage civil war of the intifada type but not win state power; the ANC could not wage war, but rule as a state. The intifada was fundamentally different from light weapons war. It was a war but it had no army; it had no rule capacity. On the other hand it remained the only war-scale attack on the state possible without a base area, without a supply of manufactured weapons, without secure and disciplined communication and command structures, and without any clear political vision.



# 21 |

## COUNTING THE VIOLENCE, 1996

1996 was year three of post-apartheid in South Africa with a Government of National Unity under President Nelson Mandela entering its third year in office. A new constitution was adopted in May, rightly acclaimed as one of the most democratic in force anywhere. Local elections had extended post-apartheid democracy to towns and rural areas. Yet in Natal local elections were postponed three times because of unrest. Attacks on the South African state continued in 1996 even if they contrasted sharply with those in 1976 and 1986: the country did not experience the riotous forerunner of civil war as in 1976, nor a township-wide civil war as in 1986, but the strange and almost secret end of an ‘unofficial civil war’ (Kentrige, 1990) that had gone on for a decade, claiming at least 20.000 lives, most of them in Natal.

Peace, however, did not end violence in South Africa. Perhaps focused attacks on the state petered out, yet people continued to get killed on a horrific scale. As it were, only a small dip on the upwardly mobile graph of murders could be celebrated as the end of the civil war. This raises the complex question of *crime* as an unfocused, but continuing attack on the state. Surveying the topography of violence in 1996 may contribute to an understanding of continuities and displacements in state rule from 1976 and 1986 to 1996, that is from the apartheid to the new democratic version of the South African state.

Looking at the year 1996 in isolation, however, did South Africa experience a civil war in that year, and if so, of what type? This question should first be answered by counting violence in terms of intensity, location, polarity, and type of weapon deployed against the state; only then can an interpretation of the topography of the attack on the state be attempted.

### **1. Intensity.**

#### **(a) Murders**

Comprehensive, national figures for murders including the former 'independent' homelands are only provided by the police, renamed since 1994 as the South African Police Service, SAPS.<sup>335</sup> By June 1998 SAPS still used the old census-figures and not the new lower population estimate for South Africa provided by the Census -96. The difference is substantial: the census counted the total 1996 population as 37,859 million while CIMC estimated it to be 42,196 million; especially provinces with large African populations were inflated, KwaZulu-Natal for example was believed to have a population of 8,927 million, but only 7,672 million were in fact counted by the Census-96.

There was a clear difference between the three provinces in terms of overall change in the number of murders. KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa's most populous province, had the largest reduction of murders (24,1%), but stayed on first place among the nine provinces in the number of murders pr. 100.000 population (from 96,1 to 87,0/100.000). Western Cape experienced the most terrible rise in the number of murders (17,3%), but started lower and remained on fourth place (from 73,4 to 79,1/100.000). Gauteng, South Africa's economic centre and second largest province in terms of population, had a moderate reduction similar to the national fall in murders (8,3%) and dropped from second place in 1994 to third place in 1997 (from 89,7 to 80,7/100.000).

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*Murders, South Africa, 1993 - 1997*

<u>Year</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>
SA exc.. TBVC-areas	19.584	18.285	18.983		
All SA		26.832	26.637	25.782	24.588
Murders/100.000 pop.				68,1*	
Change 1994/97					- 8,3%

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<sup>335</sup> The "South African Police Service Crime Code List 6" in force in 1996 distinguished 'murder' from 'culpable homicide', 'assault with the purpose to inflict grievous harm', and 'attempted murder' (also not appearing in the statistics are killings done in self-defence; for example killing an armed thief threatening you in your own house is not counted as murder). The coding in SAP 6 divided murders along the age of victim (<12, 12-17, 18-49, >50 years, but unfortunately not of murderer), race of murderer and victim (Black, Coloured, Asian, White in all 16 possible combinations), and finally according to weapon used (small arm, commercial rifle or shotgun, military firearm and unknown firearm, i.e. home-made). This adds up to some 800 ridiculously irrelevant categories of murder (filling 20 out of the 60 page code-list).

Murders, selected provinces

<u>KwaZulu-Natal</u>	8.177	7.706	6.678	6.200
Murders/100.000 pop.			87,0*	
Change 1994/97				- 24,1%
<u>Gauteng</u>	6.160	5.707	5.789	5.645
Murders/100.000 pop.			80,7*	
Change 1994/97				- 8,3%
<u>Western Cape</u>	2.667	3.095	3.259	3.129
Murders/100.000 pop.			79,1*	
Change 1994/97				+ 17,3%

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Source: SAP and SAPS annual reports; CIMC Quarterly Crime Reports;  
<[http://www.saps.org.za/8\\_crimeinfo/397/cimc.htm](http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/397/cimc.htm)>

TBVC was the 'independent' homelands.

\*crime-rates are calculated using the population-estimates of the Census-96: <<http://www.css.gov.za/CensRes/prelim.htm>>

SAPS gives the national figure of 61/100.000, using the old population-estimate of 42,196 million.

With the post-1994 inclusion of the homelands' figures in the national South African crime statistics the murder-rates got a welcome one-time reduction because crime in the homelands was lower than in 'white' South Africa. (I can imagine that the new census-figures, shrinking the total population more than 5 million and so again pushing up the crime-ratios were a disappointment to the police). The ratios presented above, however, are computed using the preliminary Census-96 figures and differ markedly from the CIMC ratios.

SAPS reported, as we saw, that 25.782 people were murdered in 1996 in South Africa.<sup>336</sup> Yet, even this staggering figure may be too low. A forensic study of mortality in metropolitan Cape Town could indicate a disturbing under-reporting of murders. By checking the two state mortuaries in Salt River and Tygerberg servicing metropolitan Cape Town, Len Lerer and his forensic team were able to count a terrifying 1789 homicides in 1994 (Lerer, 1996:ii). The police 'only' counted 1347 murders in Cape Town Jan. - Nov. 1994, indicating more than 21% under-reporting compared with the forensic figure.<sup>337</sup> The 21 % difference is significant as the two figures refer to almost the same geographical area with Cape

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<sup>336</sup> The frightening level of murders is put into further perceptive by the appallingly low rate of convictions. Only 1,5% of all serious crimes including murder, lead to conviction in South Africa; personal communication from Chris de Kock.

<sup>337</sup> Hansards, March 15, 1995, col. 163-66; a 'police-total' of 1469 murders in Cape Town 1994 is computed by multiplying the Jan.-Nov. figure by 12/11, resulting in an under-reporting of 21,7%.

Town's 73 metropolitan suburbs covered by the forensic report, and the 48 metropolitan police stations covered by the SAPS. Indeed, since the police supplied Parliament with these figure in 1995 they have silently changed them. Now the CIMC Quarterly Crime Report 1/98 says 1.631 people were murdered in 1994 in Metropolitan Cape Town. Slight geographical incompatibility and inaccurate classification may explain some of the remaining difference from the forensic figure, but in any case a stubborn 10 per cent difference in the two figures serves as a caution for the validity of SAPS-figures, and hence of all quantitative work on South African violence.

What is beyond discussion, however, is the alarming rate of violent death in South Africa. The Cape Town murder-figure grew from 550 in 1976 to 1100 in 1986 (Lerer, 1996: 24); climbed to 1789 in 1994 with an average mortality rate for homicide in Cape Town of 67.5/100.000, equal to the national average. Among Cape Town's black population, however, the murder rate was 93.2/100.000 in 1994 (Lerer 1996: 10), similar to the war-like situation in KwaZulu-Natal enduring a murder-rate of 96,1/100.000. In 1996 the number of murders grew yet again in Cape Town to 1946, while Durban with a slightly larger population had 1696 murders in 1996 (CIMC).

South African violence was almost ten times worse than in the USA which had a murder rate of 9/100.000 in 1994, and close to hundred times more deadly than in Denmark, which enjoyed a murder rate of only 1/100.000 in 1996. (Lerer, 1996: 11; *Jyllandsposten*, Oct. 19, 1997). Even compared with other African cities South Africa was exceptionally violent. For example, in Nairobi, capital of Kenya with a population roughly half of Cape Town's the number of murders (including attempts) was only 211 in 1993, 197 in 1992, 126 in 1991 and 117 in 1990 respectively.<sup>338</sup> The figure for Abijan, capital of Cote d' Ivoire quoted by Ismaila Toure and N'Guessan Kouamé from the Ministère de la Sécurité was a dubious-looking 19 murders in 1989 (with a 57,89% resolved cases).<sup>339</sup>

#### **(b) Battle-related deaths, 'political violence'**

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<sup>338</sup> R.A. Obudho and S.O.Owuor, "Urbanization and Crime in Kenya", in Isaac O. Albert, J.Adisa, T.Agbola, G. Heraoult eds. *Urban Management and Urban Violence in Africa*, vol. 1, Proceedings Int. Symposium on Urban Management and Urban Violence in Africa. Ibadan, 7-11 nov 1994. IFRA Ibadan, Inst. Francois de Recherche en Afrique.

<sup>339</sup> Toure and Kouamé: "La Violence Urbaine en Côte d'Ivoire, la cas de la Ville d'Abidjan", in R.A. Obudho et. al. 1994:84.

Anyone trying to extract from the total figure of murders in 1996 the number of deaths related to attacks against the state, or 'political violence' fatalities, is faced with two major problems. First, the permanent problem of defining 'political' violence distinct from 'crime' seems only to have got more intractable with the advent of democracy, but secondly an unexpected and growing problem confronts the student of South African political violence, namely the unavailability of information on what is going on in South Africa's killing fields. In 1996 the police simply stopped providing figures of 'unrest-fatalities', arguing that murder was murder and what mattered was the war against crime. Indeed, in recent (1998) SAPS statistics all traces of political violence or 'unrest' have disappeared. Not only for 1997, but also *retrospectively* since 1994 unrest has disappeared from the statistics where they once were included. Is this a crude attempt to change the reality of some of the most violent years in South African history?

In March 1996, when I spoke to Chris de Kock, head of SAPS' Crime Information Management Centre this had not yet happened. He told me that the classification of violence as either 'unrest' or ordinary crime was done at the discretion of the individual police officer on the beat. It was the official procedure in early 1996 as it had been at least since 1976. There was and had never been any written guidelines as how to do this. It was done by 'feeling', according to Chris de Kock. Clearly, this made all figures potentially ambiguous and wide open to politically motivated 'adjustments'. Chris de Kock admitted a heavy institutional bias: the Security-forces had counted everything they could lay their hands on as 'unrest' in order to enhance their own institutional importance, whereas after the introduction of democracy in 1994 politically there no longer was unrest (except, unfortunately, in KwaZulu-Natal). In the governmental in-fight the police counted as much violence as possible as 'crime' in order to get funding. Chris de Kock estimated a 100% difference between security and police figures on the 'unrest' in KwaZulu-Natal,<sup>340</sup> meaning that 7-8% of all murders in KZN were political violence from a police point of view, while the figure rose to 15-20% from the point of national security.

Yet, compounding these rather obvious problems sticking to all figures of 'political violence' was a bewilderment of what the thing really looked like after the anti-apartheid struggle was over. After two decades of unrest and political violence culminating in the momentous political change that, however, failed to curb crime,

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<sup>340</sup> Chris de Kock estimated that 5 - 10% of all murders in KZN went unreported; personal communication, Pretoria, March 2, 1996.

there spread in the public a feeling of tired disgust with endless and bloody feuding. Political violence, after all, seemed to have been sucked into the rising wave of crime. 'Political' motives lost credibility, and was perceived as a thin smoke screen for personal vendettas and greed. Unlike a decade earlier, now in 1996 the critical press showed little interest for probing 'political violence' and digging up new information outside official sources. Except for some background articles on the eve of local elections in KwaZulu-Natal and sensational reports on the vigilante-like attacks on gangsters by Pagad (People against gangsterism and drugs) on the Cape, information on current 'political' murders shrunk to bare ciphers (in conspicuous contrast to the old cases brought out in the TRC with great publicity, also in 1996).

Monitor groups felt hard times coming in 1996 with less interest and funding for their work. The original motive of intervening in an emergency situation gradually gave way to exhaustion confronted with what looked more and more like a permanent crime-problem.<sup>341</sup> The net result was a steady drying up of sources to knowledge of political violence in South Africa. Poor information made assumptions on political violence little better than speculation. One researcher said to me in 1998 in a moment of exasperation that it was getting like the state of emergency clamp down on information in the 1980s. Certainly not because of political repression, but out of political disillusion and cynicism. Once again SAIRR became one of the few sources of quantitative, national data on political violence in South Africa.

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*Political violence fatalities in South Africa, 1993- 1997*

Year

South Africa

Pol. viol. fatalities (SAIRR)

Pol. viol. fatalities (HRC)

Unrest fatalities (IRIS)

Natal

Pol. viol. fatalities (SAIRR)

Pol. related deaths (HRC)

Unrest fatalities (IRIS)

Gauteng

Unrest fatalities (IRIS)

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<sup>341</sup> Personal communication from Kubz Sekhonyane, researcher at Human Rights Committee South Africa; Durban May 28, 1996.

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Source: SAIRR Yearbooks; Human Rights Committee, South Africa; IRIS figures provided by CIMC in 1996.

3794 political violence fatalities in 1993 was the highest number counted for any year by SAIRR. While I have no problem with the *trend* these figures present, I find it important to underline their *deceptive accuracy*. The figures are constructed as an average of a minimum of fatalities “assumed to be politically unrest-related” and a maximum of fatalities “where the political nature is not certain, i.e. faction-fighting, taxi-feuds, etc.”<sup>342</sup> However, the magnitude of uncertainty is enormous: Jan. 1996: min. 2, max. 75 (amounting to 3750% difference); Feb. 1996: min. 14, max. 80 (amounting to 571% difference)<sup>343</sup> Once again: I am not quoting these figures in order to criticise the conscientious work of the SAIRR, but to draw attention to the real problem of classifying violence as ‘political’.

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Murders in South Africa *per month*, 1994-97

<u>Year</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>
<u>SA National</u>				
Murders pr. month, Jan.-Jun. ave.	2.209	2.014	2.024	1.999
Murders pr. month, Jul.-Dec. ave.	2.262	2.424	2.273	2.199
Seasonal change	2,3%	16,9%	10,9%	9,1%
<u>KwaZulu-Natal</u>				
Murders pr. month, Jan.-Jun. ave.	719	614	552	468
Murders pr. month, Jul.-Dec. ave.	643	670	560	564
Seasonal change	- 10,4%	8,4%	1,5%	17,1%
Excess murders pr. mo. Jan.-Jun. ave.	228		65	
<u>Gauteng</u>				
Murders pr. month, Jan.-Jun. ave.	519	441	439	421
Murders pr. month, Jul.-Dec. ave.	507	509	525	519
Seasonal change	- 2,2%	13,3%	16,5%	18,9%
Excess murders pr. mo. Jan.-Jun. ave.	79			
<u>Western Cape</u>				
Murders pr. month, Jan.-Jun. ave.	205	237	262	246
Murders pr. month, Jul.-Dec. ave.	239	278	280	275
Seasonal change	14,2%	14,7%	6,6%	10,7%

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<sup>342</sup> Communication from chief librarian Ellen Potter, SAIRR, March 25, 1996.

<sup>343</sup> Personal communication from Ellen Potter, SAIRR, March, 1996.

Source: CIMC, Quarterly Crime Reports 3/97 & 1/98 downloaded from  
<[http://www.saps.org.za/8\\_crimeinfo/397/cimc.htm](http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/397/cimc.htm)>  
Seasonal change and excess murders computed by H.T.

SAIRR, SAPS, monitors and practically everybody else offering figures on political violence do so based on the (almost always incomplete) information on the single incident: motive, circumstantial evidence such as type of weapon etc. An alternative to the 'motive-based' classification could give a welcome possibility of cross-reference.

One such alternative is a somewhat speculative interpretation of a double pattern of seasonal fluctuations in the number of murders I suggest can be discerned in the murder statistics. Contrasting with the general seasonal swings, reflecting distinct socio-cultural patterns of unfocused criminal violence, are some distinct provincial peaks that could indicate focused attacks on the state or 'political violence'.

The seasonal differences between the first and the last six months of each calendar year are conspicuous, large and consistent in all provinces and years. Perhaps they could be explained as caused by migrant workers returning home for Christmas to celebrate and to settle accounts. If this happened to be the case in KwaZulu-Natal it would be a less convincing explanation of the similar pattern in Gauteng, where one then would expect the opposite seasonal pattern, and even less so in the Western Cape with few migrant workers. Be it as it may, it is not the reasons which are of consequence to my argument, but the consistent *pattern* of a seasonal change. Precisely the consistency highlights the only three cases where this pattern was reversed. In Gauteng and KZN, the 1994 Jan. - Jun. averages were higher than the Jul. - Dec. averages, and almost again in KZN in 1996.

The average seasonal difference (excluding the three exemptions) was 13,3%. Using this average it is possible to calculate what the number of murders 'should' have been Jan.-Jun. 1994 in Gauteng and KZN and Jan.-Jun. 1996 in KZN. The difference between the actual levels of violence and the computed averages gives the 'excess murders'. Numerically they seem to support the SAIRR estimates of national political violence and the Helen Suzman Foundation estimates of political violence in Natal. They further fit well with the periods of escalation of violence in both provinces during run-up to the general election in 1994, and again in KZN before the 1996 local election.

What is hidden, however, from these calculations is the political violence *conforming* with the seasonal changes of crime. What we see are the peaks, not the plateaux of political violence; indeed the number of 'excess murders' are a well-



fitting bit lower than the 'motive-based' figures of political violence. The relatively high degree of correlation between motive-based and season-based estimates of political violence is noteworthy. It is thus fairly safe to conclude that far less than a thousand people were killed in attacks on the South African state in 1996.

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Comparison of motive and seasonal-based figures for  
Political violence fatalities in South Africa, 1994 & 1996

(due to seasonal fluctuations monthly averages  
do not equal 1/12 of annual figures)

Year

South Africa, *annual* figures

(a) Motive-based figures for political fatalities (SAIRR)	2476	68
(b) Seasonal-based figures for 'peak' battle deaths *	1841	39
(a) - (b) difference, possible 'plateau' battle deaths		63

KwaZulu-Natal, *monthly* figures

(a) Pol. viol. Jan.-March. mo. ave. H. Suzman Found.	300	50
(b) 'Peak' battle deaths, Jan.-Jun. monthly average **	228	65
(a) - (b) difference, possible 'plateau' battle deaths		72

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\* KwaZulu-Natal + Gauteng 'excess murders'

\*\* KwaZulu-Natal 'excess murders'

Source: SAIRR, Ellen Potter; CIMC Quarterly Crime Reports 3/97, 1/98;  
KwaZulu-Natal Briefing, No. 2, May 1996, p. 8, Helen Suzman  
Foundation, Parklands. Calculations by H.T.

## 2. Locality

All the political violence considered here took place on the South African national territory and was perpetrated by groups of South African citizens; the state was not attacked by foreign forces. What is interesting then, is the spatial distribution of violence inside the country. Unfortunately, information on the locality of violence is seriously incomplete. Even in the most up-to-date SAPS statistics the minimum spatial unit is the single police station, which is not very detailed. For example, in the case of Port Shepstone in Natal, briefly mentioned below, one police station serves the 'white' town, the township, the shacklands and the surrounding tribal rural areas, but provides no statistical breakdowns. KwaZulu-Natal had 164 police stations in 1996; for a topographical analysis of violence this is not a very detailed grid. An impressionistic picture can be collected from news reports, and they form the basis of the interpretative topographic sketch of the violence presented in the following chapter.

The SAPS could easily improve their murder-statistics. In the present crime-code list the coding of robbery gives spatial information down to the micro-locations 'residential, business, financial, and vehicle' (SAPS crime code numbers 05401-05490). This kind of information is included in the first reporting of any murder, but lost in the subsequent statistics. If this information was introduced in the coding of murders (maybe instead of the unimportant and ridiculously complex racial classifications) together with a simple GIS-database-address for each police station, it would be a major improvement in the SAPS crime information service both to those politically responsible for crime prevention in South Africa and to researchers. As it is now, SAPS statistics only cater for racial explanations of murder, which is embarrassing and hopelessly inadequate.

The HSRC Geographical Information System provides a range of more than hundred social indicators down to the "enumerator" unit of app.. 150 households. This is a very fine grid, but the problem is that the only source for crime-figures available to them - as to everybody else - is the police. In order to use the GIS and SAPS information to advance a spatial analysis of violence the first and difficult step will be to correlate the area covered by each police station (which is different from magisterial districts) with the GIS-enumerator units.

### **3. Polarity**

It is beyond discussion that the South African state was attacked in 1996, and used considerable force to defend itself. Yet, the attacker-defender relation was at the same time extremely asymmetrical and ambiguous. Asymmetrical, because large numbers of army troops were deployed in a preventive police-mode, against an invisible and elusive 'enemy' in a largely psychological effort to stabilise a volatile situation. Ambiguous, because the state was deeply fragmented into central, provincial, local and traditional factions attacking each other. While very few shots were fired by the army a lot of people were shot dead. The 15 SANDF companies deployed in KwaZulu-Natal at the beginning of 1996 were increased in June for the duration of the local elections to 25 companies, comprising about 3.200 troops and 17 part-time platoons, comprising about 400 troops. Paratroopers were deployed in air-mobile units to get access to otherwise inaccessible rural villages.

Criminals without a political agenda attacked the state on a scale that demanded a defence forces even larger than the one just mentioned. President Nelson Mandela declared a "the war against criminals" when he presented the 'National Crime Prevention Strategy' in Parliament on June 20. A large army of

40.000 troops should assist the police on the national territory. The police was already in deep trouble with their own 'Sword and Shield' plan promising to arrest within a month the 10.000 most wanted criminals out of an estimated 250.000 criminals. Since January 1996 7.500 Permanent Force troops had been deployed nation-wide on a daily basis assisting the police and the South African Air Force had clocked up 1.171 operational flying hours on crime prevention duty and 730 on monitoring borders.

During this five months period the police and SANDF had arrested 22.500 people alleged to be illegally crossing the border and seized 646 illegal weapons. From June 7.700 extra troops was to be deployed in KwaZulu-Natal, 7.434 in Gauteng, 4.929 in the Northern Province and 4.017 in Eastern Province "to uphold law and order". (*The Citizen*, June 21, 1996) Where the 8.420 troops not specified should be deployed was never mentioned in the press; indeed the whole plan quickly faded away from the attention of the media, achieving no clear results. Using the army to combat crime pressed home how ambiguous the distinction of political violence from crime was: both were clearly attacks against the state, the former *focused* the latter *unfocused*, and both demanding the highest order of state defence: army-deployment.

Part of the ANC-IFP struggle was a clash of central state against provincial and local state fractions. It did not reach open violence on a clear front, but was a continuous effort by the ANC using small acts of violence, central state repressive force and judicial investigation, dealings with the Zulu King, political pressure by high profile trials, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the constitutional negotiations to undercut local IFP power. In many rural and shack-land areas the IFP-ANC struggle got an aspect of murderous interpellation, that is the wielders of local state power murdered their opponents or drove them out by terror. It was all about state power, but activated through fragmented, blurred, and opaque relations between central state power and citizens.

#### **4. Weapon**

##### **(i)**

Weapons used against the state continued to be restricted to household and light weapons, albeit with increasing proliferation of light weapons. Police figures on what kind of weapons murder victims were killed with in KwaZulu-Natal showed that most deaths were caused by 'weapons other than guns' (see table below). This category included "traditional" weapons, and are covered by my

definition of household weapons. “Traditional” weapons fielded by *impis* were in fact often ready-made sticks, pikes, spears mixed up with a few home-made guns or ordinary firearms.

This is a common picture, repeated for example in Cape Town, where stabbings were the most common mode of killing; it does not tell what weapons were used specifically in political violence. The trend of increasing use of light weapons by non-state combatants is a global one, dubbed the ‘Kalashnikov-culture’ (Duffield, 1998).

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Type of weapons used by murder, KwaZulu-Natal, 1991 - 1995

Year

Murders\*  
Firearms, %

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Source: *Mail & Guardian*, April 4, 1996, quoting SAPS.

\* The murder figures differ from those released by SAPS in 1998 quoted above; apparently the *Mail & Guardian* figures exclude the KwaZulu homeland, and the figure for 1995 obviously only includes Jan. - Jun.

What is remarkable, however, is the way firearms were used in South Africa in 1996. It was either clearly terroristic (indiscriminate firing at commuters, assassination of political candidates; execution-style shooting of political opponents) or as parts of riots, where a few persons using firearms were covered by marchers armed only with a variety of household weapons (as in the march in Durban in May 1996, discussed below). When household weapons were mixed with light weapons it was in such a low proportion that the tactical horizon remained that of household weapons (large groups attacking in the open) and not that of guerrilla battles. At no point did the use of light weapons against the state tap their full destructive force; during 1996 they never came to determine either the strategy nor the tactics of the attacks on the state.

(ii)

To sum up on the year 1996:

Intensity: all evidence suggests the number of deaths in focused attacks on the state, i.e. political violence fatalities, was well below a thousand in 1996 in South Africa. Attacks on the South African state in 1996, thus, does not meet the first criteria for being counted as a civil war.

Locality: focused attacks on the state did take place on South Africa's national territory. Violent attacks on the state meets the second criteria for being counted as a civil war.

Polarity: the South African state did defend itself against focused attacks from groups of the population in 1996; violent attacks on the state thus meets the third criteria for being counted as a civil war. However, due to the fragmentation of the South African state particularly in KwaZulu-Natal the polarity of some political violence was ambiguous, i.e. local fragments of the state attacking both the central state and groups of the population.

Weapons deployed against the state were both household weapons and light weapons. No heavy or air & seaborne weapons were deployed.

According to the typology set out in Part One, the focused attacks in 1996 on the South African state perpetrated with household weapons (including "traditional weapons") should be classified as riot and those perpetrated with light weapons as terrorism.

However the classification of all cases with violence sinking far below war intensity should be qualified: (i) data on political violence different from crime becomes increasingly unreliable; (ii) reduction of the front to isolated fragments makes the polarity of violence ambiguous; (iii) violence below war intensity may mask the ending of a civil war during the year in question.

**(iii)**

Counting the South African battle-related deaths in 1976, 1986, and 1996 in terms of intensity, locality, polarity and weapon can now be summed up in the following classification of attacks on the state:

Classification of attacks on the South African state, 1976, 1986, 1996

<u>Year</u>	1976	1986 a	1986 b	1996 a	1996 b
<u>Intensity</u>	sub-war	war	sub-war	sub-war	sub-war
<u>Locality</u>	internal	internal	internal	internal	internal
<u>Polarity</u>	anti-state	anti-state	anti-state	anti-state	anti-state
<u>Weapon</u>	household	household	light	household	light
<u>Type</u>	<b>riot</b>	<b>intifada</b>	<b>terrorism</b>	<b>riot</b>	<b>terrorism</b>

Murders in South Africa less Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda, Ciskei and  
"Self-governing Territories" 1976-1995;  
murders in all South Africa, 1994 - 1997

<u>Year</u>	<u>South Africa less homelands</u>	<u>All South Africa</u>
July 1975 - June 1976	6.000	
July 1976 - June 1977	7.560	
July 1978 - June 1979	6.913	
July 1979 - June 1980	7.220	
July 1980 - June 1981	7.434	
July 1981 - June 1982	8.084	
July 1982 - June 1983	8.573	
July 1985 - June 1986	9.665	
1986	9.913	
1987	9.800	
1988	10.631	
1989	11.750	
1990	18.569	
1991	17.812	
1992	19.384	
1993	19.584	
1994	18.285	26.832
1995	18.983	26.637
1996		25.782
1997		24.588
<u>Total</u>		<u>281.568</u>

Source: SAPS

# 22

## ZULUS IN ETHNIC SPACE, INTERPRETATION OF 1996

This chapter deals with the attack on the South African state in the year 1996; located as it were in KwaZulu-Natal. Only attacks in 1996 are considered, as the aim of the investigation is to capture the difference of the attacks on the state in 1976, 1986 and 1996, and not the development from one year to the next.

In the war-theatre of KwaZulu-Natal political violence engulfed both rural and urban areas. For more than a decade rural violence had set this province apart in South Africa's civil war.<sup>344</sup> After the 1994 general election the war faded out in the rest of South Africa while grim violence continued to flare up in Natal until the local elections in 1996. By 1996 the space of unrest in South Africa appeared to have contracted to certain black townships, shacklands and rural districts of KwaZulu-Natal suffering from particular political, social and economic stress.<sup>345</sup> As in the

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<sup>344</sup> "The trauma of KwaZulu-Natal's political violence is mainly confined to the province's rural areas. The low-intensity civil war has created about half-a-million internal refugees in the province." (*Mail & Guardian*, May 10, 1996).

<sup>345</sup> The population of KwaZulu-Natal was 77,9% 'functionally' urban, including the very large number of people commuting from rural areas to urban places of employment; comparable levels of urbanisation were Western Cape 95,1%, Gauteng 99,6%, Northern Transvaal 12,1%; the national average was 65,5%; 1993 figures, (Development Bank of South Africa cit. in Harber, 1995:364). KwaZulu-Natal is among the poor provinces of South Africa: with a national per capital disposable income index of 100, KZN scores 72, Northern Transvaal 29, Western Cape 169 and Gauteng 226. The UNDP Human Development Index for South Africa as a whole in 1992 was 0,65, just above China but below countries like Botswana, Cuba and Sri Lanka. The white population of South Africa had an index of 0,88 like Spain, while the black population had an index of 0,46 equal to Congo. KZN had an index of 0,58 equal to Guatemala, Algeria or Indonesia. (UNDP/MS, Copenhagen 1994:132).

rest of the country, white areas were practically untouched by political violence; also the Indian areas of Natal were largely quiet.

*Rural* violence had not been part of the riot in 1976 nor of the civil war in 1986. From Soweto to Crossroads to Zulu-land the topography of the civil war grew in complexity by a process of addition. First the townships exploded in 1976, then in 1986 violence specific to shacklands was added to the township-conflict; in 1996 the patches of violence flaring up in KwaZulu-Natal included townships, shacklands and rural areas.

Violence is always anchored in space because it touches the human body; incidents of violence takes place somewhere and stakes out a territory, retraceable with proper data. Individual identity may ascribe meaning to these incidents of violence, naming the terrain mapped by violence. Drawing on a sample covering approximately 20 percent of all political violence in KwaZulu-Natal in 1996, it is found, however, that a significant non-fit seems to exist between the terrain staked out by violence and the space mapped and named by the discourse of Zulu-ness. The non-fit raises important questions as to the understanding of ethnicity. It will be argued that the spatial non-fit between violence and discourse is a constitutive feature of ethnic space. Finally the post-election peace in KwaZulu-Natal and a single example from Cape Town will be discussed as the disturbing way the ethnic civil war appeared to have ended.

I am under no illusion that interpreting the structure of violence in KwaZulu-Natal by a spatial analysis rather than a political or economical analysis will absolve it from the demands of various stakeholders in a highly politicised environment. Simon Bekker's comment made in 1992 on studying the conflict of Natal is no less valid today:

"The wide range of differing interpretations of the conflict, and large numbers of allegations reported on by commentators, point not only to different conceptual approaches but also to the politicisation of these interpretations, of the evidence, and of the debate itself." (Bekker, 1992:70)

After all, one should surely add, even worse than acrimonious debate would be a hegemony of interpretation, presented as the truth about this terrible chapter in the history of South Africa.

Simon Bekker concluded his study by pointing to a number of unresolved questions: the shifting locations of violence, the roles of youth groups, gender issues, politicisation of ethnicity and the interface of state and revolt. Application of



the spatial methodology outlined in Part Three of the present study may help contribute a new perspective to the discussion of these important questions.<sup>346</sup>

## 1. What happened?

### (a) A sample of political violence from South Africa, Feb. 1 to Dec. 31, 1996.

<u>Political violence reported in a selection of South African newspapers,</u>		<u>Feb. 1 - I</u>
Numbers killed, rural/urban location, structure of attack, type of weapons used:	Newspaper citations:	
0 killed Estcourt IFP	<b>Feb 5:</b> (Argus) "Twenty-two people, believed Urban supporters were shot at by security forces after	to be supp a rally wh
8 killed Urban Umlazi while another was killed near the	<b>March 29:</b> (Sowetan) "Eight people were killed and nine injured yesterday when Inkatha Terror ownship. four commuters died and four were	Freedom injured w Unit 17 h
4 killed stronghold...Three people were	<b>March 29:</b> (Sowetan) "A local civic leader Urban	[ANC U killed at tl
0 killed March weapons earlier Inkatha	<b>March 29:</b> (Mail & Guardian) "Shell House Urban peacefully... 10.000 Inkatha supporters... Household almost all of them armed with sticks and marches."	march [in knobkerri
0 killed	<b>April 4:</b> (Sowetan) "Violence erupted during a Urban	march in
25 killed this year."	<b>April 7:</b> (Sunday Independent) "Two weeks Rural	ago, 11 pe
1 killed  escorting a group of IFP	<b>April 10:</b> (Cape Times) "An ANC supporting Rural community that the attackers were supporters through an apparently ANC-	induna M policemer dominated
2 killed of	<b>April 13:</b> (Argus) "In the Kwazela area near Rural attackers. The motive appears to be related to	Bulwer in fighting b
0 killed Rural	<b>April 21:</b> (City Press) "28 held by cops over massacre...Special investigators probing the	

<sup>346</sup> Unfortunately I have not been able to consult Anthea Jeffrey's 900 pages book *The Natal Story: 16 Years of Conflict* (Johannesburg: SAIRR 1997) probably the most exhaustive work on the conflict published to date.

Terror weapons murder suspects came under attack	Shobashobane massacre said an estimated Light 3000 attackers swept through Shobashobane	[Izingolw from resic
0 killed Urban through the show."	<b>April 26:</b> (Argus) "Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini rushed to Durban today to be at Terror Mbelebeleni palace in KwaMashu...The	the bedsic attackers,
0 killed Hostel the second	<b>May 5:</b> (Sunday Independent) "Durban street Urban Residents Association [affiliated with the IFP] attack... Police helicopters circled above...	battles pu officials n armoured
0 killed rioting marchers... and in the ensuing gunbattle,	<b>May 5:</b> (Sunday Tribune) "Gunned down, Urban Even though some marchers carried IFP mayhem broke out."	Durban ci banners, ε
Several killed (3 +)	<b>May 5:</b> (Sunday Tribune) "Heavily armed Urban were trying to force people to join them on	army pers the march
0 killed over the more strongly. They would	<b>May 5:</b> (Sunday Independent) "Buthelezi Urban attack on the Zulu king's residence last have been dead by now."	unbowed week...M
8 killed, unspecified and weapons	<b>May 7:</b> (Sowetan) "Yesterday alone eight locations people were attack, killed in election-related	violence.'
3 killed style - on	<b>June 3:</b> (Natal Witness) "ANC MPP Sifiso Rural Saturday morning...ANC local election	Nkabinde candidate
8 killed Unspecified locations, weapons	<b>June 3:</b> (AP, Johannesburg) "Up to 60 people died in violent attacks in the troubled eastern and KwaZulu-Natal attack, province over the	weekend,
2 killed fighting between	<b>June 3:</b> (Natal Witness) "About 60 men, Rural the Shayinja and Makwanyanewi factions."	dressed ir
9 killed locations Assassination weapons	<b>June 7:</b> (Mail & Guardian) "A bloody Unspecified weekend, including a shoot-out involving a self-confessed warlord who last week vowed Light to become a peacelord [was] the ninth local	governme
7 killed Rural	<b>June 14:</b> (Mail & Guardian) "Mourners at last weekend's funeral of brothers Ghulani, Terror same night, apparently by the same attackers."	Nicholas :

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Sources: *Argus* and *Cape Times* from Cape Town; *Sunday Independent*, *Mail and Guardian*, *Sowetan*, *City Press*, *The Citizen*, *Sunday Times*, and *New Nation* from Johannesburg; *Saturday Paper*, *Sunday Tribune*, *The Mercury*, and *Natal Witness* from Natal. Only *Mail & Guardian* was read systematically throughout the period.

Information from the sample on political violence fatalities in South Africa in 1996 on type of weapon, location, and type of violence adds up to the figures below:

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Sample of political violence fatalities in South Africa,  
Feb. 1 - Dec. 31, 1996 (N = 80 +)

<u>Type of weapons</u>	<u>Political violence fatalities</u>
Household	0
Light	45 +
Unspecified	35 (presumably light weapons)
<u>Location</u>	
Urban	15 +
Rural	40
Unspecified	25
<u>Type of violence</u>	
Assassination	14
Terror	50 +
Marches	0
Unspecified	16

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**(b) Three findings in the 1996 sample**

While I will claim neither comprehensiveness nor full representativity for this sample, it seems to be big enough to indicate with a relatively high degree of certainty some striking trends. Save from cases that may have been repeated in different reports the sample mentions at least 80 battle-related deaths; this is around 20% of the total number of political violence fatalities in Natal and 11% of the national figure. The purpose, however, is not to record total numbers but to interpret the topography of the violence. Three findings stand out from the sample.

**(i) Violence was perpetrated with light weapons**

Unequivocally the sample brings out the dominant role played by light weapons. In none of the 80 violent deaths recorded in the sample were people apparently killed with household weapons. None of the casualties were caused by street-fight use of household weapons. No people were reported to have been beaten, hacked, stoned, necklaced or killed in other ways with household weapons. In the sample no-one was killed by police or security forces. These are remarkable differences from 1976 and 1986. In all 45 cases with type of weapon reported were people killed with light weapons; furthermore, most of the incidents with unknown type of weapon are likely to have been perpetrated with light weapons as other, reported circumstances were similar. All political violence fatalities were either terroristic killings of residents or assassinations of individual opponents. This is

also a remarkable shift from 1976 and 1986, and leads to the question of the independent role of weapons in changing the face of political violence in South Africa.

**(ii) Violence was both rural and urban**

The sample documents the existence of a rural political violence not encountered in 1986 and 1976, and secondly that this violence was focused on KwaZulu-Natal. More than two-third of all killings specified in the sample took place in rural areas; furthermore, there are reason to believe that rural killings not amounting to massacres could go unreported in the metropolitan press thus giving the sample an urban bias. However, a third of all violence took place in urban areas. This raises the question whether this rural-*and*-urban type of violence is specific to ethnic space, *in casu* Zulu ethnic space.

**(iii) Violence could be terminated suddenly**

The third finding in the sample is the astonishing end of battle-related deaths after the June 26 election. While it is beyond doubt that political violence was high on the media agenda on the eve of elections and very dated once the political agenda shifted to 'peace' in the province, and so may account for a heavy bias in reporting, the complete absence of political violence incidents reported after June 26 is significant. For example, *Mail & Guardian* did not report any political murders in KZN for more than a year after the elections; only on July 11 and 25, 1997, on the eve of local by-elections in the volatile Richmond area did two stories appear on killings of candidates opposed to local warlord Sifiso Nkabinde. This leads to the final question: which changes in the topography of violence in KwaZulu-Natal constituted 'peace'?

## **2. Types of violence**

The first finding in the 1996-sample of political violence fatalities was that household weapons including traditional weapons caused no reported deaths. Light weapons were used to kill in two ways: groups of people were terrorised and killed, and individual political opponents were assassinated. It should be borne in mind when comparing types of violence across the three years, that the 1996 level of political violence was relatively much lower than in 1976 and 1986, partly because the level of general crime was massively higher.

Year

Murders

Pol. viol. fatalities

Pol. viol./murder ratio

8,1 %

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Source: SAPS Annual Reports; SAIRR Annual Surveys

### **(a) Riots**

The two marches recorded in the sample attacked the state by taking possession of public space deploying household weapons (including ‘traditional’ weapons) against security forces. This was a collective, non-clandestine type of violence, only possible, then, as in all other cases of riots, through the presence of large but random numbers of combatants, attacking in plain view. Riots did not aim at eliminating enemy bodies; they were completely different from light-weapons assassinations, acts of determination, organisation, non-spontaneity and non-cooperation of outsiders. Unlike the riots in 1976 and 1986, however, the riots in 1996 were relatively small, isolated incidents in a changed terrain of violence; causing no fatalities they hardly belong to the sample, and they are included to highlight the demise of large, collective forms of violence.

The carrying of dangerous, traditional weapons by Zulus was prohibited already in 1891 by the Natal Code of Native Law, making it an offence for any black person to carry “an assegai, swordstick, battle ax, stick shod with iron, staff or sharp-pointed stick or any other dangerous weapon”. Hundred years later, in 1990 at a time when civil war was escalating in the country, President de Klerk amended the law so Inkatha members again could carry their “cultural” weapons. *Impis*, warrior-bands attacking with traditional weapons, could amount to small armies. One of the largest was a 12.000 strong IFP-army under command of warlord David Ntombela, attacking ANC-areas outside Pietermaritzburg on March 28, 1990.<sup>347</sup> On many occasions these *impis* arrived in busses; often participation in these *impis* was neither voluntary nor spontaneous but forced by chiefs or hostel leaders.<sup>348</sup> However, the act of violence itself had an open, non-clandestine face (in

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<sup>347</sup> This was probably the largest battle in terms of combatants in the civil war in South Africa. Detailed information can be found in the unpublished *Political Violence in the Natal Midlands. Report from the 24-hour Monitoring group of the Midlands Crisis Relief Committee, 25 March to 28 July 1990*. Pietermaritzburg, 1990.

<sup>348</sup> Paulus Zulu has written extensively on the hostels and *impis*,

contrast to the planning of the act, which sometimes involved secret co-ordination with police and security forces).

The 1996 marches in central Johannesburg and Durban were called to protest against re-imposing the state ban on carrying traditional weapons. All marchers were armed, a few even displaying AK47s, in open defiance of state law. "Themba Khoza, an IFP MP [and warlord], said the march had been organised by traditional leaders and that it was "a spontaneous expression of Zulu feelings"." (*Sunday Independent*, March 31, 1996)

The IFP had to support this expression of Zulu-ness, but the march ran against the party-drive to shift the front of Zulu-ness from the internal violence of no-go areas to the outer provincial front, where negotiations with central ANC leaders, not confrontations in the streets and support for militant warlords were called for. Thus they tried to support Zulu-ness while at the same time distance themselves from the most militant warlords:

"IFP distances itself from maverick Gauteng official Mr. Themba Khoza...[yet]  
The IFP was furious when central government announced...that dangerous weapons, including those the party regards as "traditional", would be banned from public places in 17 magisterial districts. IFP spokesperson Ed Tillet equated the ban to the "psychological emasculation of Zulu men"." (*Sowetan*, April 4, 1996)

The Durban march some months later again exhibited the conflict between moderate, national IFP leaders and local IFP warlords, some of them elected members of national and provincial parliaments,

"The bold leadership of the illegal march by IFP MP [warlord] Thomas Shabalala belied the claim the marchers were mere "hostel residents". IFP secretary general [and leading IFP-moderate] Ziba Jiyane's failure to have Shabalala suspended from the party's national council, however, points to the continued dominance of military interests over political ones in the party's leadership." (*Mail & Guardian*, May 10, 1996)

Shabalala continued to challenge his party; in an interview in the *New Nation* he declared: "Only my people [the residents of Lindelani shackland] can oust me!" (*New Nation*, July 19). Some months later he was expelled from the party; the political landscape had changed, after all, in disfavour of the warlords.

### **(b) Terrorism**

Dominating the sample of political violence fatalities, however, was neither violence at gatherings and marches, nor assassinations of candidates, but violence

largely characterised by attempts by each party to either “purge” their area of supporters of the opposing party, or to penetrate territory controlled by the opposing party. The large-scale burning of homes of supporters was one such tactic, often combined with the shooting of people trying to escape death by burning.

The proliferation of light weapons is a global trend, particularly in areas in or close to recent civil wars, for example Afghanistan and neighbouring South Asia.<sup>349</sup> The ending of the civil war in Mozambique has been a factor in the flooding of the South African provinces close to the border with light weapons.<sup>350</sup> South Africa has a ‘gun-positive’ culture, with 3.8 million firearms in South Africa owned by 1.8 million licensed gun owners, most of them white. Guns are generally given high status and perceived to be useful in solving problems of security.<sup>351</sup> It is beyond doubt, however, that the proliferation in itself causes deadly violence to rise.<sup>352</sup>

Voluntarism and generation of fear, crucial elements in the definition of terrorism suggested in Chapter four, were characteristic indeed for the incidents of terror in the sample. Anybody could be a killer; acute fear was generated in many areas by killers even murdering sleeping children. Whoever they were, the killers would broadcast no reasons for their deeds; political allegiance was attributed afterwards by commentators based on circumstantial evidence, such as weapons type and political affiliation of the victim. IFP or ANC never declared incidents of terrorism to be their responsibility. Yet, warlords and other well-known killers were members of both parties; the ANC as well as the IFP even had documented murderers elected members of parliament.<sup>353</sup>

### (c) Assassinations

The deployment of security forces in the province and their increased visibility at flash points and gatherings had some success in reducing large-scale,

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<sup>349</sup> Cf. Smith, 1995 in SIPRI 1995.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. Cock, 1989.

<sup>351</sup> Cock, 1996:12.

<sup>352</sup> In his study of Cape Town mortality, Len Lerer concluded, “The prominence of *firearm homicides* [not only political violence related] lends weight to the theory than rather than confer protection, *firearms* kept in the home are associated with an increase in the risk of *homicide* by a family member or intimate acquaintance.”, Lerer, 1995:23.

<sup>353</sup> For example Sifiso Nkabinde for the ANC, and David Ntombela for the IFP; documented in the press, never in court.

indiscriminate attacks and clashes. However it could not prevent the well-organised assassinations of particular individuals. The main difference between assassinations and terror was the precise targeting of political opponents, in particular candidates. This was also a type of terrorism, of course, but different from the indiscriminate killing of people.

“In Mtunzini an IFP election candidate, who is also a sub-regional secretary of the North Coast Women’s Brigade was killed. According to the IFP, the alleged attackers arrived at the church service where there were about fifteen people. They asked for the candidate to identify herself or else they would shoot every person at the service. She identified herself and was shot dead.” (Human Rights Report, April 1996, p. 21)

This chilling story from the North Coast is an example of how assassinations of candidates attacked state law, obstructed democratic elections and undercut popular rule.<sup>354</sup> Assassinations were almost always perpetrated with light weapons.<sup>355</sup> Like acts of terror against random groups of people, assassinations clearly differed from riots; yet they were even more voluntaristic, more secret and closer to crime. Self-styled ‘political’ groups operating in a fully criminal fashion for personal greed further mixed up political assassinations and criminal murders, for example the violent competition of taxi-syndicates affiliated with political parties, terrorising both owners and commuters in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Northern Province and Western Cape.

The proliferation of light weapons had made it possible for small groups to launch attacks which earlier demanded much larger groups deploying household weapons; at the same time, the over-all volume of political violence dropped. Open political connection between violence and political purpose was rapidly fading away. Small violent groups had become more deadly, more secret, more unaccountable, and more criminal. With the concomitant decline in large collective actions these factors turned political violence into terrorism.

### **3. Zulus in ethnic space**

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<sup>354</sup> Assassinations, of course, were a feature of the state’s defence against the anti-apartheid groups in the 1980s; few new cases have been discovered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but terrible details of the apartheid state’s dirty war have been amply documented.

<sup>355</sup> An unusual example of attempted assassination by household weapons was a bow and arrow-attack in a political struggle between Xhosa and Ovambo speakers in a Cape Town shackland (Human Rights Report, April 1996, p. 23)



The second finding in the sample of political violence fatalities was that people got killed in political violence both in urban and rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. Deadly violence mapped a discontinuous front of perhaps a hundred no-go areas.<sup>356</sup> Contested space was a string of small territories, and not in any way a contiguous territory of a Zulu nation. From the bits reported in the press and elsewhere the politics of the no-go areas appeared extremely fragmented and opportunistic. Modern vs. traditional, urban vs. rural and other over-arching explanations captured something but seldom fitted well with the local details of the violence, where fronts and allegiances changed at a speed and a rate defying all neat sociological boxes.<sup>357</sup>

**(a) The violent “inner” ethnic front; urban no-go areas**

An example from the no-go areas of Wembezi, a township in the Natal Midlands, may convey some of the tangled dimensions of the ANC-IFP conflict. The two party leaders in Wembezi, ANC chair “Teaspoon” Mkhize and the IFP deputy mayor in Estcourt, “Spitfire” Dlamini, both school principals, briefly meet at the local police station for an interview with the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper.

“In Wembezi, one of the province’s most insatiable war-zones, three of the township’s six sections are no-go areas - C section (IFP), “5-room Depot” (ANC) and “Longhomes” (ANC). The other three - Mahashini, Nkwezela and VQ section - are fiercely contested terrain, claimed by both parties as strongholds...

ANC election candidate Petros Mtshali an IFP leader until last December, said he came under attack after the IFP accused his daughter of dating an amaqabane (comrade). “I didn’t know who this person was, but at one meeting a youth pulled a gun and said he was going to shoot me. After that, my cousin was killed and a gunshot came through my front door and a group of youths came to my house looking for the ANC. Then I joined the ANC.” he said...

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<sup>356</sup> Makhubetsi Sekhunyanane from the Human Rights Committee listed 52 no-go areas in KwaZulu-Natal in May 1996, 30 no-go areas for the ANC and 22 for the IFP; *Mail & Guardian*, June 14, 1996. IFP listed 50 no-go areas they were excluded from by the ANC in 1992; *Submission by the Inkatha Freedom Party to the Goldstone Commission, Durban, 3 December 1992*:81).

<sup>357</sup> “Indeed, the battle lines of the bloody conflict between Inkatha and the Charterist forces corresponded to the contradictions between modernist and traditional value systems, between rural, urban and peri-urban zones, and between proletarianized and ‘peasant’ communities.” Hein Marias, *South Africa, Limits to Change. The Political Economy of Transformation*. Cape Town & London: University of Cape Town Press & Zed Books, 1998:248).

The IFP's Dlamini - a relative of Mtshali - [argued]: "The real problem in Wembezi is the people who are profiting from the violence - the criminals." Dlamini blamed the constant turf battles on youths who deserted their IFP-supporting parents in Nkwezela and other sections, and fled to the ANC's Depot-section stronghold: "From there they have been terrorising people in other sections. When the victims flee their houses, these criminals take them over; they take the furniture, the stereos, everything, to make some money because they have no parents and no jobs. What is needed here is jobs, so nobody would be around to cause trouble."...

ANC supporter Phikeleli Zuma - a refugee from Nkwezela - blamed the housing shortage and urban influx from outlying rural areas for stalling the peace in the area. "We can both sign a piece of paper with some agreements. But after the agreement I will want to go back to my house. When somebody else is living in my house, I will have to fight to get it back. Then what happens to the peace?" he asked." (*Mail & Guardian* June 14, 1996)

Wembezi was racked by conflicts of house space (parents vs. youths) and town space (squatters vs. urban insiders). The topographic analysis presented in the two preceding chapters apply also here. However, in 1996 the over-arching political ordering of the no-go areas was by reference to the IFP versus the ANC, not as in 1976 and 1986 by reference to the struggle against the apartheid state. Given the politics of the IFP, Inkatha and Dr. Buthelezi, this added an ethnic layer to the conflict. Indeed conflicts of house and town spaces were central in the ongoing violence in Natal, but framed as youths-urban-non-ethnic-ANC against elders-rural-ethnic-IFP.<sup>358</sup> Yet as the example from Wembezi should make clear, and countless other examples could have been chosen, it was almost impossible to fit individual episodes of violence into the schemata of fathers and rural squatters supporting IFP and youths and urban insiders aligned with the ANC. Newspaper-reports on battles for no-go areas often were at pains to present a motive making the terrible killings meaningful.<sup>359</sup> "Faction-fights" implying tribal opponents was for a time the terms used to make meaning. IFP was not a faction, however, and it was difficult to portray IFP-ANC violence as tribal because it was an inter-Zulu struggle, at least in KwaZulu-Natal.

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<sup>358</sup> 'Suffer the Children': Refugees & Disrupted Schooling in Natal. Charlene Smith & Fred Khumalo. in *Patterns of Violence. Case Studies of Conflict in Natal*. Ed Anthony Minaar, Pretoria: HSRC 1992. *The School as an Instrument of War: Black Violence in Natal, South Africa 1985-1995*. Johann Graaff, August 1995, UCT.

<sup>359</sup> Lesley Fordred: *Journalism and Body-counting in KwaZulu-Natal*, manus 1996.

In themselves no-go areas were not expressions of specific ideologies, but brutal manifestations of the exercise of control for some time over a certain residential area by a leader and his group. It could be a homestead, a shackland or a section of a township. Whatever the links with the larger political landscape, the struggle over the no-go area tended to be about the meagre resources of the place: land, houses, votes and other forms of control.<sup>360</sup> An ideological fuzziness with no clear, coherent ideological policy went along with an urgent support of 'our' turf. Organised around fragmented and personalised political positions political violence was a matter of life and death for people living in the no-go areas.

### **(b) The violent "inner" ethnic front; rural no-go areas**

While the conflicts of urban no-go areas in Natal to some degree repeated the house and town dynamics we saw in Soweto and Crossroads, the violence of rural no-go areas framed by Zulu tribal structures of *induna* (headman), *inkhosi* (chief), and king were alien to the conflicts of 1976 and 1986. The role of tribal structures as transmitters of historic Zulu tradition and of current aspirations of the Zulu people were (and are) highly controversial. Apartheid (and colonialism) had re-used Zulu institutions in a system of indirect rule, giving chiefs power to rule on local level on behalf of the British Crown and the apartheid state.

Still in 1996 king, chiefs and headmen mattered in the daily lives of rural people; the 'KwaZulu Regulations for Chiefs and Headmen' gave chiefs full authority over people living in their area, including the granting of rights to use communal land for living and agriculture, the powers of arrest, search and seizure, and the right to prohibit any "unauthorised meeting, gathering or assembly or the distribution of undesirable literature in, or the unauthorized entry of any person into his area."<sup>361</sup> This power was still closely controlled by the IFP in 1996.<sup>362</sup> The

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<sup>360</sup> Even from the poorest sections of the population were warlords like Thomas Shabalala able to extort large sums of money; "Shabalala himself estimated that Lindelani, by then [1990] Durban's most densely populated squatter area, contained 350.000 people...Residents of Lindelani claim they have to pay R20,00 a month (R3.00 for 'rent' and R5,00 to cover the costs of the township's 'police', the rest for other charges such as water, Inkatha membership dues, etc.) for 'living under the protection' of Shabalala's private army;" Anthony Minaar, "Undisputed Kings': Warlordism in Natal", in Minaar 1992:71.

<sup>361</sup> Cit. in Maré, 1987:231.

<sup>362</sup> Writing in 1995, Peter Rauch, of the Legal Resources Centre, a progressive NGO, stated: "The Amakhosi and Iziphakanyiswa Act [of 1990 vesting the powers of chiefs and tribal structures in

tribal structures obviously had their own conflictual dynamic, and interacted with conflicts emanating from house, town, and state spaces. The following example may capture some of this,

“KwaMadlala was the scene of heavy fighting (referred to as the Madlala Wars) between 1984 and 1989 in a struggle for the chieftainship...Upon the death of the previous inkosi (chief) in 1982 the tribe split into two factions, one of whom supported the claim of the house of Gatshu, who had been appointed acting inkosi until the hereditary inkosi, Mashaba, was old enough...

Recent tensions in the area, however, seems to have been sparked by an attempt by the ANC to launch a branch there...The lower South Coast is the political stronghold of Inkosi Khawula, chairperson of the Committee on Traditional Affairs, who is unlikely to tolerate any ANC attempt to broaden their rural base. Inkosi Madlala has, indeed hinted at possible action from neighbouring amakosi [chiefs] if an ANC presence was established in his area...

The ANC argue that they have the democratic and constitutional right to organise and hold meetings wherever they want to and don't see why they should ask the permission of the amakosi for such meetings. The amakosi say the ANC must show the proper respect to the tribal authorities, introduce themselves to the inkosi and discuss any problems with the inkosi and his indunas [headmen]...

At the end of March the ANC went ahead with the launch in defiance of the tribal authorities. A group of ANC members was set upon while pitching a tent in preparation for the meeting. The ground on which the meeting was scheduled to take place was then occupied by IFP members. These in turn were forcefully ejected by the [state] security forces. Shots were then fired at the security forces who swept the surrounding houses...

Only after this major skirmish was the ANC meeting able to proceed - in an atmosphere of rancour and threat...

The area is tense at the moment...

A number of houses have been attacked, some people have left their houses, and others are sleeping in the bush at night, a sure sign that things are not well.” (KwaZulu-Natal Briefing, Number 2, May 1996, p. 10-11)

Madlala was a tribal area, and thus violence was defined in ethnic terms as action caused by disrespect of tribal authorities. However, Madlala was also part of South Africa, and the traditional structures blocked the ANC-members' constitutional rights to vote freely for the candidates of their choice at the local elections. Only the use of violence by national security forces removed the intermediate blockade between central state and citizens.

The tussle in KwaMadlala was an example of the double fragmentation of the South African state: (i) vertically in a number of tiers separating the individual

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the KwaZulu government] still applies in the area which was formerly KwaZulu.” *Indicator SA*, Vol 12, No 2, Autumn 1995, p. 35.

citizens from local, provincial and central authorities; and (ii) horizontally between 'tribal' and 'democratic' structures:

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Tribal authorities

Politi

King of Zulus

-

[Warlords]

Amakhosi, chiefs

Izinduna, headmen -

IFP-ANC members

-

-

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The ideal of parliamentary democracy is parliament as the direct, transparent and accountable expression of the electorate; indicated on the figure by the straight line between the voters and the parliament of South Africa. All the other authorities and players on the figure obstruct in different ways that ideal straight line. Both the democratic and the tribal authorities are constitutional and inscribed in the new South African Constitution. Warlords as such are not tribal authorities, but constitute a sub-group of non-democratic authorities unrecognised by the constitution. The political players from members up to leaders interact with democratic and tribal authorities at all levels of politics.

The tribal structures were under pressure. If the inkosi accepted the launch of an ANC branch he could be voted out of existence. He had to seek support from political players which could offer state backing, under the circumstances it meant from the IFP. IFP support of tribal authorities took many forms, including constitutional negotiations, where the IFP for example tried to make KwaZulu-Natal a constitutional Zulu monarchy. However, IFP was no longer as before 1994 in a position to counter ANC-violence with IFP state-sponsored violence (KwaZulu Police action, co-operation with SAP and SADF, and dirty war). Inkatha could only use violence of the most local kind.

Yet, Pretoria could not rule KwaZulu-Natal by permanent deployment of the national army, special police units etc. To rule the Natalians both President Nelson Mandela at national level and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi at provincial level had to co-operate with the *local* rulers giving access to the voters. At the local level chiefs and warlords could pledge loyalty opportunistically either to the national

or the provincial ruler depending on whether Mandela or Buthelezi could provide support for *their own* rule in the squatter camps, townships and chiefdoms of KwaZulu-Natal. Thus, when the ANC and the IFP attacked each other's no-go areas, they could at the same time implement state rule at one tier and attack state rule at another tier. IFP impi killing ANC-supporters in a tribal area was at the same time undertaking 'ethnic' cleansing of the local area to protect tribal authority, and from a national point of view committing terrorism against citizens of South Africa.

**(c) The peaceful "outer" ethnic front**

Tracing the topography of the political violence hitting KwaZulu-Natal in 1996 led to a shattered jigsaw puzzle of rural and urban no-go areas. In the section above this was interpreted as a clash between two parties aligned with different local-versus-central and tribal-versus-democratic fractions of the South African state. Obviously, this is an incomplete interpretation because it leaves out the question of ethnicity. In KwaZulu-Natal ethnicity centred on the ideas of Zulu-ness and the Zulu nation. It falls outside the scope of the present spatial investigation, however, to deal with the complex ethnography of the Zulus. The only two questions asked are: (i) where did Mangosutho Buthelezi in his discourse on Zulu-ness draw the border of the Zulu nation; and (ii) was this border of the Zulu nation marked by violence?

**(d) how did the discourse of Zulu-ness relate to space?**

Mangosuthu Buthelezi<sup>363</sup>, his fellow members of Inkatha and his KwaZulu homeland compatriots were Zulus before being either 'rural' or 'urban' (or 'South Africans' or 'patriarchs'). Ethnicity is not *per se* a rural phenomena. 'Rural' and 'urban' are terms describing functional relations of body and space. To belong to the land of Zulus, the Zulu kingdom, was not a functional rural or urban relation, but a body-space relation defined by the essence of Zulu-ness. Late 1993 and early 1994 was a high point of militant Zulu ethnic discourse; the coming new South Africa threatened the survival of the KwaZulu homeland. Buthelezi was secretly preparing a 8.000-strong paramilitary force ready to defend his homeland powerbase<sup>364</sup> and both he and the king talked about KwaZulu-Natal self-determination. A Bosnia was waiting to happen in South Africa, only averted in the last minute by frantic negotiations. In one of his speeches at the time Buthelezi expressed Zulu-ness this way:

"As His Majesty spoke I was deeply aware of the power that was locked up in the soul of the Zulu nation and in the individual soul of every man, woman and child in KwaZulu...  
His Majesty is the nation. He is the head of our Nation. He is the symbol of our unity as a people with a culture, a language and a history...  
However much the Zulus are also South Africans...the Zulus are not just ordinary every day citizens who can be treated the same as everybody else in a socialist Republic of South Africa in which anybody and everybody has as much right to Zulu dominans as Zulus themselves...  
We will not again be conquered and we will not again be subjugated. We are not prepared to exchange a white master for a black master...  
We have been told by both Mr Phosa and Mr Joe Slovo [ANC-leaders] that army tanks will roll - let them roll! We demand Zulu self-determination."<sup>365</sup>

In this bit of Zulu ethnic discourse the nation had a mythic centre, a soul and a head, expressing the cultural, linguistic and historical unity of the people;

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<sup>363</sup> He was a man with many titles, masterfully playing on his large repertoire according to circumstances and constituencies, always adjusting his dress carefully to suit the situation; among those current in 1996 were, Dr.; Chief of the Buthelezi Tribe; Minister of Home Affairs in the Government of National Unity; President of the Inkatha Freedom Party; Prince of Kwaphindigane; Traditional Premier Minister to the Zulu King. Shenge was his tribal name; used by Nelson Mandela on certain occasions as a token of African respect to a fellow tribal leader.

<sup>364</sup> *Mail & Guardian*, March 7, 1996

<sup>365</sup> Speech by M. Buthelezi, *Vote of Thanks on the Occasion of an Address by His Majesty the King of Zulus Delivered to the People at a Prayer Meeting at Isandlwana* December 16, 1993

earthly borders for this mythic essence of the Zulu nation was the state-defined borders of the KwaZulu homeland. But what was inherently 'Zulu' about the around hundred scattered territorial areas making up the homeland?

Earlier Buthelezi had declared: "All members of the Zulu nation are automatically members of Inkatha *if they are Zulus*."<sup>366</sup> Logically, the notion of the Zulu nation only gave meaning as the place where the Zulus lived (human bodies defined by the essence of Zulu-ness). Yet, Buthelezi stated there were non-Zulus in the Zulu nation, and thus the Zulu nation was not the space exclusively of the Zulus. Moreover there was no space including all the Zulus as millions of Zulus lived scattered outside KwaZulu. At one point Buthelezi even claimed parts of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique to be parts of the Zulu nation. (Maré, 1992:79) No territorial border encompassed all the Zulus, and no space was fully and exclusively Zulu. In this single sentence Buthelezi exposed the impossible object of identity between ethnicity and space. It should be added that Buthelezi never presented the violence ravaging the no-go areas and the killing of his Zulu Inkatha members as constituting the border of the Zulu nation. When he was explicit about the borders of the Zulu nation he was always talking about South Africa state borders (of provinces, homelands etc.)

The ethnic space of the Zulus is the Zulu nation; it was easy to say but hard to find. For all ethnic entrepreneurs the borders of the nation is the problem, that is *where* the privileged relation of pure bodies and true land ends, where it changes from a positive to a negative relation, from Zulu-land to non-Zulu-land. How to construct a connection from essences of individual identities to borders on the ground, how to construct a territorial line cutting through the mixtures and the mess and the contradicting claims always present in reality, has been a permanent problem for ethnic projects.

I suggest that ethnicity re-use other (state) borders and re-arrange their meanings to suit the ethnic project. For example, I would doubt that ethnicity, 'Zulu-ness', ever has defined the territorial borders of a Zulu *state*. King Shaka's state (1816-28) was, as Buthelezi never tired of repeating, an empire of conquered tribes, that is a state of composite ethnicity. Also Dingane (1828-37) and Mpande (1837-72) never ruled over a space defined by ethnicity but over state space. The Tugela river dividing colonial Natal from King Cetshwayo's state (1872-79) north of the river, was not the limit of Zulu-ness, but the battle-line where the power of

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<sup>366</sup> Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi speaking in the KwaZulu legislative assembly, April 1975, cited in Maré & Hamilton 1987:57; italics added.



British and Zulu states balanced for some years until the final victory of British imperialism. The Native reserves where the Zulus were forced to live when not working in the mines, farms or towns of the whites were not expressions of Zulu-ness, but the pieces of land left after white settlers and colonial administrators had appropriated the most attractive areas. Tribal wards and finally the KwaZulu homeland (1972-94) did not add up to more than a hundred<sup>367</sup> scattered territorial pockets reflecting how the apartheid state ruled the Zulus. The provincial borders of KwaZulu-Natal was a legacy of inter-white colonial struggles mainly between the Boers and the British around the turn of the century.<sup>368</sup> The changing borders of the Zulu nation were produced by war, not by manifestations of ethnicity; they were state borders, not ethnic borders. Politics in KwaZulu-Natal 1993-97 followed this line of history and can perhaps be summed up in one sentence: the bloody re-adaptation of Zulu-ness to another state-defined territory that of the province KwaZulu-Natal, now even less 'ethnic' as it included whites and Indians.

**(e) Violence at the border of the Zulu nation?**

The sample of political violence fatalities in 1996 presented above very clearly indicated that no violence took place at the "outer" border of the Zulu nation. At no point in 1996 did Zulus fight non-Zulus anywhere along KwaZulu-Natal's borders towards the Transkei, Lesotho, Orange Free State, Mpumalanga, Swaziland or Mozambique. Ironically, with Buthelezi's threat of large-scale civil war averted, the only violent border demarcation problem facing the new province of KwaZulu-Natal in 1994 was caused not by Zulu warriors, but by white farmers

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<sup>367</sup> Christopher 1994:69; map of Zulu lands p. 70.

<sup>368</sup> The border-case of 1982 confirms this interpretation. The apartheid government of South Africa wanted to allocate a large part of northern Zululand including parts of Kwa Zulu to Swaziland probably for strategic reasons pertaining to the war against ANC. Buthelezi successfully stopped this project at the South African courts. "As proof of the Zulu presence in Ingwavuma, Buthelezi claimed that King Dingane [1828-37; King Shaka's brother and murderer] was buried in the district, 'adding weight to the correctness of Zulu control' from Ulundi. At the end of May 1982, he announced that a tombstone would be built to Dingane 'to emphasise the Zulu presence'." (Maré, 1992:78). The end result, however, was not ethnic borders, but state-colonial borders.

around Kokstadt who for simple economic reasons refused to leave the Zulus and be incorporated into the poor Transkei and Eastern Cape Province.<sup>369</sup>

Furthermore, a look on the Natal map will reveal the non-ethnic border-oddity of Umzimkulu, a large 'island' inside Natal but belonging to Transkei (next to the Mount Curie district with the Kokstadt farmers). This territorial anomaly was not a reflection of ethnicity, (as similar 'islands' were in the Soviet Union, for example Nagorny Karabakh), but of the parochial interests of white farmers. The interesting fact is, moreover, that the extreme violence in nearby Izingolweni inside KwaZulu-Natal never spilled over into the ethnically similar Umzimkulu. Neither has there at any time been an drive to get the fellow diaspora Zulus "home to Natal".

#### (f) The paradox of ethnic space

Paradoxically, ethnic *violence* mapped a fragmented 'inner' front, while the 'outer' front conjured up by ethnic *discourse* was completely peaceful. The front of ethnic violence seemed not to fit with the front of ethnic discourse. How can a concept of ethnicity combine both the violent-spatial and the discursive-essential aspects of this case? This question can only be posed, not satisfactorily answered at this juncture.

In his model of ethnicity Leroy Vail<sup>370</sup> stressed the aspect of *control* in explaining the attractiveness of ethnicity to ordinary people.

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<sup>369</sup> Muthien, 1995, provides fascinating details on the construction of the provincial borders of South Africa, that is a front report from the interface of ethnic claims and state realities.

<sup>370</sup> The publication in 1989 of *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* edited by Leroy Vail was important in making ethnicity a respectable subject for the progressive main-stream, having only contempt for the racist *Bantoekunde*. Yet, Vail notes in his preface: "...although I canvassed African academics widely for papers for this conference [later reprinted in the book], not a single one would undertake the writing of a paper which might be seen as 'subversive' to the goal of political 'nation-building'." Two conferences held in South Africa became landmarks in exploring the pressing reality of ethnicity, not least the bloody civil war in Natal. The first took place at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, September 1992, entitled *Ethnicity, Society and Conflict in Natal*, and the second at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, April 1993. entitled *Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism in South Africa: Comparative Perspectives*. In particular the latter was important for opening up the very isolated South African discussion, and establish contact with the international debate on ethnicity, meanwhile fuelled by the break-up of the

“[E]thnicity appealed strongly to ordinary African men, not primarily because it gave them a sense of psychological comfort, as the primordialist interpretation argues, but because it aided them in bringing a measure of control to the difficult situations in which they found themselves in their day-to-day life. The word ‘control’ is crucial...The new ideologies stressed the historical integrity of the tribe and its land and, especially, the sanctity of the family and its right to land. Land stood at the very centre of ethnic ideologies.” (Vail, 1989:14)

Ethnicity in this model was articulation of the migrant man’s control of his life *upwards* through a tribal hierarchy ending with the chief at the interface with the central state. In Vail’s analysis it was the white, racist state of the colonial period, but it could also be ‘traditional authority’ interacting with the non-racial, central state of South Africa today. Yet, ethnicity was also control *downwards* from the central state of ethnically divided ‘native subjects’, articulated as defence of so many tribal customs, brilliantly argued by Mahmood Mamdani in his book *Citizen and Subject*.<sup>371</sup>

In other words there was a *complementarity* in the practice of rule within two radically different spaces: the patriarch could rule his house despotically when the state ruled its native population despotically, and the state’s control of Natives depended on the ‘farming out’ of control to patriarchs. They fed on each other’s rule. This was a structural parallel and extension of the state-chief relation of indirect rule. Women and children were subject to a double indirect rule, both by chiefs and by patriarchs. Chiefs, patriarchs and government shared the idea of a tribal ethnicity as it facilitated rule in each discrete space. This is one example of what could be termed *ethnicity’s ‘cross-over’ capacity*: the ability of a given discourse of ethnicity to mean and do different things for different people at the same time.

The fusion of control of Natives by patriarchs, chiefs, and state magistrates was grounded in what Leroy called the ethnic ideology of land, tribe and roots,

“Empirical evidence abundantly demonstrates that it is to the rural areas that one must look for most of the intellectual content of ethnic ideologies

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Soviet Union and the terrible war in Yugoslavia. See Simon Bekker *Ethnicity in Focus*, 1993 for a critical assessment of the South African research on ethnicity.

<sup>371</sup> However, the fact that today everybody are citizens under the new South African constitution which nevertheless retains tribal authorities seems to question the relevance for the current South African situation of Mamdani’s theory of the racially defined bifurcated state, where the black majority was denied citizenship.

as they developed during the twentieth century in response to such change [modernity].” (Vail, 1989:5)

Vail here hinted at the contradictory relation of ethnic space and town space, where patriarchal forms of control broke down in the urban environment and by the ethnic ideology tried to conserve forms of control associated with a rural life-style. This was certainly also how the proponents of the ethnic ideology themselves understood it.<sup>372</sup>

However, a post-modern analysis of the same traditional-to-modern historical process might emphasise that ethnic ideologies and practices or politics of identity, have become self-conscious shapers of modern, urban environments in many parts of the world. For example in Europe, where the resurgence of rituals in urban, modern sites have attracted wide anthropological interest and led to a fundamental questioning of assumptions of the de-ethnification of modern, urban cultures. Ethnic movements are in no way restricted to rural constituencies; one example is the urban Shiv Sena movement in Bombay, India, expounding a militant, chauvinistic pro-Maharashtrian (the ethnic majority group of the Bombay area) and anti-Muslim ideology for an urban constituency, including recent rural immigrants. Ethnic ideologies did develop as a response to modern situations, but they were themselves at all times parts of modern culture. One constitutive aspect of which is the ability to regard one’s own culture as a unit amongst many cultural units in a ‘multi-cultural’ setting. Thus, perhaps, the most important feature of ethnicity today is not the rural-conservative part, but the post-modern adaptation of selected rural practices to the urban conditions.<sup>373</sup>

The adaptability of an given ethnic discourse to both rural-conservative and urban-modernising constituencies is a second example of ethnicity’s cross-over capacity. Following Aletta Norval’s claim (Norval 1996) that ethnic identity is an impossible object, only approximated as a series of negatives, I suggest that ethnic

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<sup>372</sup> A famous example is Alan Paton’s moving novel *Cry, The Beloved Country*. published in 1948.

<sup>373</sup> Mamdani devotes a large part of his book to this two-way transmission of rural and urban forms of rule and resistance. His two concluding chapters discuss ‘the rural in the urban’ centred on the hostels, where tribal modes of control infiltrated the urban milieu, and of ‘the urban in the rural’ where urban militancy travelled to the countryside with the returning migrant workers undermining the tribal authorities in certain rural locations. (Mamdani, 1996: 218-303). Another example of reconsidering the monoliths of rural-urban is the debate on the term ‘peasantry’ cf. Kearney, 1996.

space too, is impossible as a positive object: it is not possible for the ethnic entrepreneur to make a positive connection from identity to space because the body is mixed and space is always occupied. *But far from being a liability, the non-identity of ethnicity and space, is the very lifeblood of ethnic mobilisers.* The adaptability and ambiguity of ethnicity is the source of its daunting strength. In this sense a lot of the academic efforts spent on exposing the inconsistencies of various ethnic discourses miss the point.

From its 1975 beginning Inkatha had large root in rural and tribal Natal, but also a small, important root among urban Zulu migrant workers, traders, professionals, and politicians. While it is true that rural violence mapped out a new terrain of violence, not encountered in Soweto 1976 nor in Crossroads 1986, I will argue that it was not in the rural area *as such* we discovered the specific space of civil war in KwaZulu-Natal. It was in the strangely-shaped and shifting space of fragmented violence *both* urban and rural. Mapping out almost any kind of territory, Zulu-ness could be articulated downwards from kingdom and Inkatha, via amakhosi and indunas to the Zulu man in an impi defending a no-go area, and upwards from the Zulu patriarch trying to rule his house and supporting a local IFP warlord fighting the disrespectful comrades. It only demanded a declaration of intent that violence at any given front was in defence of Zulu-ness. In a rather typical speech Buthelezi thus at the same time projected Zulu-ness into the individual Zulu, the Zulu cultural group, people, nation, kingdom, and homeland:

“Mr Master of Ceremonies; Your Majesty, King of the Zulus; the Minister who led devotions and other Religious leaders present; Her Worship the Mayor of Umlazi, Miss Xulu and other Councillors present; Amakhosi of the district; Honourable Ministers and Honourable Deputy-Ministers; Members of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly; Senior Officials from all Departments; Indunas and Tribal Councillors present; Members of the Zulu Nation; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, our dear sons and daughters of Africa...

As Zulus we are respected and held in high esteem by friend and foe alike...When they talk of the Zulu they will talk of bravery and courage, they will talk of the fear that we instil in our enemies...

If we do not stand up for our right to exist as a people then we will lose all the respect we have gained over the centuries. We will lose the respect that the great Zulu Kings and their warriors have been prepared to die for...If we allow our enemies to dismantle KwaZulu without offering any resistance, then we are betraying our forefathers who fought to the death, so that we could free ourselves from imperialism and colonialism. If we give in we will surely face the wrath of our forefathers.”<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Buthelezi on the Shaka Day celebration, September 26, 1993, speaking in King Zwelithini Stadium, Umlazi; he could also have added Brazzaville, where one of the civil war street armies called

The real, 'bodily' spatial border of the Zulu ethnic space was where the Zulus met and defeated their enemies at any given moment, always in the present, violent re-creation of the ethnic border.<sup>375</sup> And that border was like the spots on the sun an always fluctuating chaos of hot spots. The traditional essence of the Zulu nation was enunciated by Buthelezi the priest on the royal graves of the Zulu kings. The space thus enunciated from the grave had no definite borders, but a mythic centre, an essence.

There seems to be a significant inverse parallel between ethnic space and state space. State space is defined by borders set down in international treaties with the utmost unequivocalty, fundamental for the articulation of sovereignty,<sup>376</sup> while on the other hand what it means in terms of individual and national identity to live on that territory is left to an ongoing pragmatic adaptation.<sup>377</sup> In ethnic space the relation of identity and space is quite the opposite: the 'priest' enunciate monophonically the one-ness of individual and collective essence in terms of race and decent, culture and language, an identity which the individual cannot change but only betray. On the other hand the territorial boundaries of ethnic space are flexible in the extreme, based in the final analysis on a voluntaristic sense of belonging and a murderous urge to expel enemies. State space can be ruled democratically; ethnic space has always succumbed to the despotism of the petty warlords and the Hitlers.

#### 4. End of a civil war

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themselves "Zulus" profiting on the warrior-cliché of the Zulus (Ekholm, 1995:197). The proudness of instilling fear in the self-named enemies is a common trait in virulent ethnicity. An example from another part of the world with a dynamic in many ways resembling IFP is the Hindu-extremist, militant-criminal movement Shiv Sena from Bombay; one supporter said "In this locality nobody has the courage to stand up to the Sena. Everybody is afraid. So people pay." (Cit. in Julia Eckert, 1998:12)

<sup>375</sup> See also Chapter fourteen, with a discussion of the relation of ethnic identity to ethnic space.

<sup>376</sup> Every kilometre of South Africa's border are traced as they became encoded in international treaties since 1815 in *South Africa by Treaty*, Kalley, 1987.

<sup>377</sup> One such adaptation is the foggy notion of a 'rainbow nation' transplanted from Rev. Jesse Jackson's American campaign to South African soil by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The third finding in the 1996 sample of political violence was that violence so designated abruptly came to an end a few weeks before the KwaZulu-Natal local elections on June 26. Election day was peaceful and violence did not pick up again the rest of the year. This would indicate that much of the violence in the previous months had been organised. Whatever the chaotic structure of the no-go areas, the IFP and ANC appeared to have a grip on the perpetrators of violence making it possible for them to stop political violence; but they could not stop criminal violence. This raises the question whether violence simply changed name.

In the general elections April 1994 the IFP became the majority party in KwaZulu-Natal with 50,3 % of the votes. The homeland of KwaZulu was abolished (together with all other homelands) and in provincial and national constitutional negotiations IFP struggled, partly by boycotts, to re-create a state territory recognising Zulu traditional laws. In February, March and April of 1996, termination of the constitutional gamble in Pretoria and Pietermaritzburg, deployment of national army units in Natal, special police investigation in some high-profile political murder cases, important trials on apartheid-period political violence, and exposures in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission put tremendous pressure on Buthelezi. On the other hand, in the same three-month period, ANC's efforts to make inroads into IFP's rural constituencies partly by Mandela's personal drive to stage an *imbizo* (traditional gathering of all Zulu chiefs) using King Goodwill Zwelithini against Buthelezi to reach the amakhosi, partly by violence to force a postponement of the election date to give local ANC structures time to campaign better, all this fell through.

By May 1996 the returns of continued political violence had diminished dramatically for both parties; a presidential task force, church-leaders, monitors and independent peace groups all warned that violence could explode if elections were postponed indefinitely. In a long Cabinet meeting on May 6 a compromise was reached between ANC and IFP for postponing elections a face-saving four weeks until June 26. Elections were surprisingly peaceful; as predicted, the IFP won almost all rural wards and the ANC took almost all urban councils, including Durban and Pietermaritzburg. The voters turned down a proposal to move the provincial government to Ulundi, the Zulu capital, and make KwaZulu-Natal a constitutional Zulu monarchy. Until early 1996 the IFP had a near-monopoly on the enunciation of Zulu ethnicity; part of the outcome of the 1996 elections was opening up of a shared IFP-ANC enunciation of a less militant Zulu ethnic discourse.

Diagram of non-democratic peace in South Africa 1996

Ideal democracy

Ethnic

*Parliament of S.A.*

*Parliament of S.A.*

*Parliament*

*Voters of S.A.*

*Voters*

\* The ideal of parliamentary democracy can be pictured as a straight line between the voters and the parliament of South Africa, symbolising parliament as the direct, transparent and accountable expression of the will of the electorate.

\* Ethnic violence: primo 1996 this direct line was broken by ethnic violence on intermediate levels (warlords, violent practices by political parties etc.)

\* Non-democratic peace: ultimo 1996 ethnic violence was ended by displacing ethnicity upwards to parliament (1) and violence downwards to the voters (2); now the line of ideal democracy was obstructed by Zulu-African renaissance and crime among individual citizens.

Looking at 1996 two central processes in the ending of the non-military, victor-less, South African civil will be considered; both processes, furthermore, seems to have compromised the development of democratic governance. How this dual process ending civil war in South Africa conflicted with democracy is pictured schematically on the figure above:

1. Upwards displacement of the contested Zulu discourse to a national ethnic and racial discourse.
2. Downwards displacement of the political violence to violent crime.

**(a) Displacement of ethnicity**

Suddenly, on a Sunday morning two weeks after the elections, a shattering news was splashed across the front-page of the leading Natal paper:

**“THE MIRACLE DEAL. Party heavyweights back merger between ANC and IFP in Natal.”** (*Sunday Times*, July 7, 1996)

After more than ten years of bloody civil war in Natal a deal of party heavyweights suddenly turn feared warlords like David Ntombela from the IFP and



Sifiso Nkabinde from the ANC into 'peacelords'. What was going on? One of the chronic features of the Natal war had been an endless series of loudly trumpeted and quickly broken peace-deals; this last deal, however, had a different ring. Few facts transpired, but it was established the deal had been brokered by Jacob Zuma, ANC chairman in KwaZulu-Natal, and IFP provincial ministers Celani Mtetwa and Senzele Mhlungu. National party leaders appeared to back the deal without committing themselves in public statements. In particular Buthelezi was silent for a long time.

The call for a merger between ANC and IFP could effectively turn Natal into a one-party state, as all other parties only amounted to a small minority.<sup>378</sup> This was greeted as a miracle in Natal by local leaders promising to grant each other 'special' amnesty for gross violations of human rights,<sup>379</sup> and by everybody else preferring almost anything to continued bloody conflict. Jacob Zuma and his negotiation-partners hammering out the ANC-IFP deal appeared to have terminated the civil war by displacing ethnicity upwards, misleadingly called 'depoliticizing ethnicity'.

"There is a Zulu renaissance [renaissance was the new plus-word in South African political discourse at the time] flowing through parts of the province, bringing old enemies together in a new exploration of their common traditions...

The causes of KwaZulu-Natal 's new nationalism are dispersed and complex. Mthembu [a young journalist sympathetic to the ANC] believes members of his generation have been given the lead by ANC leaders like Jacob Zuma and Jeff Radebe who pitch up at political meetings these days dressed in traditional [Zulu] garb and shouting Bayete! [The Zulu royal salute]...

But as Zulu pride is being depoliticised, it may also be creating something new in the political mood of the province. Mthembu says the divide between militant youth and conservative traditional leaders in KwaZulu-Natal - the single most important factor underlying the sectarian violence of the 1980s - is being bridged as young people find comfort and value in the wisdom of their elders. The peace-talks between Inkatha and the ANC, which some commentators say are heading for a merger between the one-time rivals, centre around a growing sense of Zulu nationalism. One of the symptoms is that - as their colleagues delve into their common roots - white members of both parties are increasingly finding themselves out on a limb." (*Mail & Guardian*, 18 July 1997)

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<sup>378</sup> KwaZulu-Natal results of the 1994 election were IFP 50,3 %, ANC 32,2 %, other parties 17,5 %; Indians and Whites comprise 20% of the population.

<sup>379</sup> In a undisguised attempt to undermine a basic principle of the TRC-process of full disclosure as a pre-condition for applying for amnesty for gross violation of human rights.

It is remarkable, if this was an accurate description of developments in KwaZulu-Natal, that Buthelezi was vindicated so much. We see a situation where the ANC got access to the rural and former no-go areas, but with a local policy stunted by traditionalism such as defence of the Kingdom. ANC tried to 'out-Zulu' the IFP in Natal, supporting the claim for special Zulu-politics, and turned Natal up the road to the Zulu Kingdom. Indeed, as Courtney Jung observed in the influential journal *Indicator SA*, "The ANC is not talking about sidelining the chiefs and ensuring that the rural areas are represented by democratically elected representatives. It is talking about paying the chiefs more than the IFP does." (*Indicator SA*, vol. 13, no 2, autumn 1996, p. 50) In a political comment to the 'miracle deal' Iain Edwards from University of Natal, Durban pointed to,

"...the growing signs of an emergent, cross-political-party, black élite within the provincial parliament...reflecting a modern variant of the old Natal ANC's staunchly pro-Natal perspectives on progress, development and the specific needs and characteristics of Zulu politics... If the national disputes between the ANC and IFP are settled and one does see the rise of a new political élite in this province, then the Zulu monarchy may well become the titular figurehead and possible also acquire substantial constitutional authority." (*Cape Times*, July 26, 1996)

Crucial for the acceptance by national politicians of this development in Natal was a parallel trend in the national discourse towards so-called Africanism. Indeed, several observers had interpreted Deputy President Thabo Mbeki's famous speech in parliament on the African Renaissance at the inauguration of the new constitution in May 1996 as an indication of the ANC embracing Africanism.<sup>380</sup> Zulu renaissance and African renaissance were provincial and national versions of the same trend, and this probably explained why Zulu politics could be pacified by being co-opted by national politics. Ethnicity had been displaced upwards and contained by the trend of Africanism. Indeed, included in the new constitution were clauses guaranteeing the right to separate provincial constitutions, laws, monarchies, traditional leaders and customs, including "recognition of the right to self-determination of any community sharing a common cultural and language

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<sup>380</sup> For example Charlene Smith in a long comment in *Mail & Guardian*, July 4, 1997. Conflicts in interpretation concerns the place for whites: are they un-African, harbouring disloyal allegiances to Europe? Nobody in the Africanism-debate seemed to be asking this question of middle-class Africans embracing for example American consumerism.

heritage”.<sup>381</sup> The constitution made it possible to contest ethnicity democratically; nevertheless, the constitution also reflected the historical weight of political forces trying to use ethnicity to block free, transparent and accountable democracy.<sup>382</sup>

Before the KwaZulu-Natal local elections the ANC coined the slogan “Democracy or feudalism!” The ‘miracle deal’ made the slogan ambiguous. The deal itself was a hundred percent top-down secret decision taken without any democratic consultation; its far-reaching implications were running against democracy as well. The deal would entrench undemocratic political structures and practices and could sideline critics as un-Zulu or un-African. Powerful voices grabbed at the ‘miracle deal’ to get rid of ‘western’ democracy, and heralded the ANC-IFP merger as a restoration of true African politics on a national level.

“Let us form a government of national unity of African people. In so doing we can cure the diseases in the politics of the African community, which shows itself in Africans displaying disrespect and lack of love for one another and for anything African in politics. Attempts to allay the ANC and the IFP are a first step in the right direction for this country. Only Africans can do this, uninfluenced by non-Africans...

Africans should be the leading spiritual and intellectual force in this endeavour; non-Africans can only be part of the supporting rank and file, not the leaders...

Neither whites, coloureds nor Indians can bring about reconciliation among Africans... Remember the [aborted peace-] meeting between King Goodwill, Nelson Mandela, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and Amakhosi of KwaZulu, which was derailed by Western norms and the English language!” (Herbert Vilakazi, executive director of the Council for African Thought, Professor at Zululand University; *Sunday Times*, July 21, 1996).

What the ‘miracle deal’ heralded was not the demise of political fronts based on ethnic constituencies, rather it was a shift upwards on a provincial ANC-IFP ethnic ticket of local ethno-politics to a national politics of identity. Peace in KwaZulu-Natal hinged on a mutual national understanding between ANC and IFP on the territorial integrity of South Africa and recognition of un-democratic Zulu-politics. From the point of view of the ‘miracle deal’ the ethnic border seemed to be consolidated and tamed at the same time. Consolidated, because the border of Zuluness now had made the historical move from the scattered fragments of the KwaZulu homeland to the solid territory of the KwaZulu-Natal province. Tamed, because nobody at that juncture wanted to challenge provincial borders by violence,

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<sup>381</sup> §§ 31, 143, 211, 212, and 235 in the new constitution; included after heavy pressure from the white Volkstaaters and Inkatha.

<sup>382</sup> Bekker, 1997, is a good discussion of the constitution as an ambiguous experiment with cultural pluralism.

i.e. the IFP threat of secessionism had been shelved for the time, and the ANC threat to throttle Zulu-tribal structures was put on hold.

By late 1996 Zulu-ness was not violently contested. Zulu-politics co-existed with Africanism at national level because ethnic difference was lifted out of any particular provincial territory and transformed into racial difference of individual bodies.<sup>383</sup> But just as the forced recognition of national laws in KwaZulu-Natal, of course, framed provincial politics, then Pretoria's opportunistic recognition of Zulu-ness will, I suggest, greatly influence national politics and be likely to impede the future development of democratic governance. First of all, people living in rural KwaZulu-Natal faced continued undemocratic rule; they may support tribal authority, but they have not been asked. Secondly, other local rulers may copy in different ways the example of KwaZulu-Natal and entrench top-down deals of their own; again people may support the deals, but the practice will undermine democratic governance.

Perhaps the June 1996 end to political violence was just a lull and not a permanent end. By mid 1997 political violence appeared to be picking up once again, both in KwaZulu-Natal and in other provinces.<sup>384</sup> By mid-1998 the miracle deal was still under negotiation and KwaZulu-Natal ANC and IFP had not merged; both parties were believed to be secretly preparing for a new violent show-down at the 1999 general elections. Violence remained an option not ruled out.

#### **(b) Fragmentation of violence**

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<sup>383</sup> The process of dissolving ethnic space into a sea of racialised bodies did not always work. For example, affirmative action, a key policy of redress for past racial injustice aiming at individual job-seekers, was in the Western Cape perceived as African discrimination against the Coloured community. Here racial politics of individual identity provoked a counter-politics of collective ethnic space; probably resulting in a 1999 repetition of ANC's election-defeat in 1994. Cf Maré, 1995; Seekings, 1996; James, 1996 for discussions of the specific political situation on the Western Cape.

For a discussion of the colonial origins of the different spaces of race and ethnicity in South Africa, and their implications for Apartheid, see. Tin 1997b.

<sup>384</sup> By 1998 political violence was rising again, particularly in Northern Province, Gauteng, Eastern Cape; in KwaZulu-Natal political violence had been rising since July 1997, as the general elections of 1999 approached. Personal communication from Ellen Potter, SAIRR, June 29, 1998.

I argued above that two processes could be discerned in ending the conflict in KwaZulu-Natal: on the one hand a displacement of ethnicity upwards to central state level; on the other hand a downwards displacement and fragmentation of violence which made it disappear inside crime; the ‘criminalisation of civil war’. Before investigating what happened at the interface of ‘war’ and crime two related methodological problems should be addressed. To talk of ends and beginnings of a conflict presuppose it is possible to identify what constitutes the conflict and isolate this event from the march of history. In this study I have chosen not to do so; instead of focusing on the development of a specific event across time, I have focused on the difference between three cuts through the structure of South African violence. However, using, for practical reasons of data, cuts with a duration of one year, inevitably re-introduces some of the problems of diachronicity. With the empirical methodology set up in this study it is only possible to conclude whether or not civil war obtained in a given country in a given year, but not on beginnings and ends. Yet, this hurts the eye as most every-day discourse of social phenomena is structured as narratives of discrete events. This is perhaps most painful with the 1996 cut because of the ‘end’ of a civil war is believed to be hidden somewhere along the line of these particular 365 days.

The historical proof of the claim that civil war ended in 1996 is, of course, that 1996 was the first year in a decade with less than a thousand political violence fatalities. But when did it actually end? At the day the 683th person was killed in political violence or on Dec 31, 1996 when it could be concluded that 683 indeed was the tally of political violence fatalities in 1996? Nobody, I believe, would claim this. Annual figures of casualties only permit very simple conclusions: in 1995 there was a civil war in South Africa, in 1996 there was no civil war in South Africa.

But even more serious is the methodological problem of recognising what it was that actually ‘ended’ in 1996. How do we conceptually and empirically recognise that particular structure of violence which we identify by the term “civil war”?<sup>385</sup> As discussed briefly in the preceding chapter, a key problem in establishing the event of violent political conflict in South Africa (or for that matter, in any other country) is to distinguish ‘political violence’ or ‘battle-related deaths’ from crime (murders). Locating and maintaining this distinction, which I believe is

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<sup>385</sup> In Part One I defined civil war empirically in terms of intensity, locality, polarity and weapon; in Part Three I suggested that civil war could be conceptualised as citizens’ violent reversal of state rule.

essential for a scientific discussion of civil war,<sup>386</sup> confronts any student of contemporary violence with strange conditions such as violent peace and discursive war.

#### **(d) Criminalisation of civil war**

The sample of political violence fatalities discussed in this chapter indicated a shift in KwaZulu-Natal violence around the election in June. Some killings surely stopped, for example assassinations of political candidates; but terroristic killings presumably continued under a new name, not anymore ANC-IFP, Zulu-Xhosa, rural-urban, youth-elder, but simply and bluntly crime, for example 'taxi-violence'. After June, assassinations were robbed of their political garment and stood back as murders; acts of terror became indiscriminate killings; IFP and ANC affiliation could no longer function as a shorthand for meaning. Warlords and others who had benefited directly from the violence of civil war were quick to follow the lead of the miracle deal and shift their activities to the twilight-zone of politics and crime. A year after the election a top-secret report which was produced in the head-quarters of the National Intelligence Agency showed that,

"...armed groups are active in many parts of the province [KZN] as a number of warlords who mobilised around political issues in the past have now turned to various forms of underground crime to retain their power and privilege." (*Mail & Guardian*, June 6, 1997)

This local development followed a global trend for political terror-groups to become purely criminal. For many groups bank-robberies, extortions ('revolutionary tax'), drug dealing and other crimes may originally have been a means of financing political violence (for example the Brazilian urban guerrillas mentioned in Chapter four), but sooner or later it became the main rationale in practically all cases. Some did extremely well.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Enzensberger's notion of 'molecular civil war' was extremely suggestive and important in training the public eye to new forms of violence from Los Angeles to Bosnia; it was also far to all-embracing to bring out what constitutes a civil war.

<sup>387</sup> The Colombian Army reported in 1998 that 'left-wing' insurgents in 1997 netted 910 million US\$ by kidnappings, extortions and drug dealing; their combined income exceeded the total turnover of Colombia's seven largest companies. FARC (Frente Armado Revolucionario Colombiana) was top-scorer with 515 million US\$. (*Information*, Copenhagen, July 8, 1998)

Sub-war\*/crime interface, South Africa 1996

Violence		De
Fatalities		---
Weapon*		no
Target*		spa
Discourse*		op
Attack on state*		focused -
<hr/>		
* Sub-war: political violence below 1000 battle-related deaths		p.a.
* Crime in this connection = murder.		
* Weapon:		
- Demonstrations were mostly unarmed.		
- Hh. = household; (l.) = a few light weapons could be present,		but violen
- Hh./l. = terror was perpetrated using both household and		light weap
- L. = light; (hh.) = a few household weapons could be present,		but violen
* Crime (murders) was perpetrated mostly by light weapons.		
* Targets ranged on a sliding scale from space to bodies.		
* Discourse ranged on a sliding scale from open to secret.		
* Attacks on the state ranged on a sliding scale from focused to		un-focuse

Yet, the criminalisation of civil war was a process more complex and gradual than a few opportunistic warlords shifting tack around the June elections. Political violence and crime (murders) had been converging for years ahead of 1996. Political violence, as we saw, moved in a direction away from collective, open and unarmed street fights towards small-group, secret, armed terrorist attacks on people. Crime became steadily more violent and lethal and the use of firearms spread. The politics of political violence was personalised, diffuse and opportunistic, while crime used networks of patronage and political influence; the interface of political violence and crime was messy.

On the diagram above, crime (murder) is characterised as violence aiming at bodies not space *and* with a discourse of secrecy *and* attacking the state in an unfocused manner. Political violence on the other hand, at least takes possession of space *or* states openly its case *or* attacks the state in a focused way. All three criteria are sliding scales with armed marches, terror and assassinations somewhere in-between demonstrations and murder.

Murder is always an attack on state monopoly of legitimate violence, but un-focused, transient and silent, while demonstrations can be focused and articulate. Focus is not inherent in the act of violence, but in the public discourse. Many forces, actors, and interests are engaged in shaping a discourse, and the perpetrators of political violence did not always got the reading they had intended; discourse also changed over time. The downwards displacement of violence from the collective politics of ethnic space to the individual crime of house space took place as the

long-term convergence of political violence and criminal murders. It became noticeable once the discourse of ethnicity was de-armed by the political peace-process in KwaZulu-Natal.

#### (e) The criminalisation of peace

The peace brokered by the ‘miracle deal’ of 1996 was a strange kind of peace. There was no real war to end and no real peace was achieved as far as people continued to get killed. 683 people were killed in political violence out of 25.782 people murdered in South Africa in 1996;<sup>388</sup> accordingly 97,3 percent of all murders were not counted as political violence fatalities. 13.638 people were killed after June 30; in fact this was 1.494 more than in the first six months of 1996. We are faced with the paradox that the ‘war’ ended but the number of people killed went up. Four examples of some of the 25.099 ‘non-political murders’ on a farm, in a factory, in a taxi and at a hospital may illustrate the impact of ‘criminalisation of peace’ on the life of the average South African citizen.

**The farm** On October 16, 1994, the chicken farmer Piet Hendrick Smit and his son Piet caught five men from the Lusaka shack settlement inside their farm stealing chickens and shot them all dead. After a pathetic two year investigation police decided not to charge them,

“as they had protected their property” (*City Press*, July 7, 1996)

In a letter to the editor a Mr. Ron McGregor, Cape Town defended the verdict:

“Are five lives worth more than the millions of rands of stock and goods that are stolen every year? Are lives worth more than the basic rule of civilization that we respect the property of other people?... We should not loose sight of reality - the Smits were defending their property against intruders.” (*Sunday Times*, July 21, 1996)

**The factory** “AK-47 Bloodbath. 10 die as Reef gunmen fire on job-seekers in pre-dawn factory attack...Massacre on job-seekers in front of the East Rand factory of NF Die Casting... The factory was filling 200 new jobs and several thousand people had queued for days in front of the gate. At 2.30 AM seven or eight attackers tried to cut to the front of the queue. When those already in the line objected, the interlopers opened fire. They instantly killed eight people and wounded 23. Then they got back into their cars and fled. Within an hour police had removed the dead and people lined up again waiting for the lottery to start. Trade unions and management had decided to fill the vacancies by lottery. In the East Rand squatter camps unemployment was estimated at 70%. Last time the company filled vacancies between 6000 and 7000 people turned up for 10

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<sup>388</sup> Including 6.678 murders in KwaZulu-Natal with 347 political violence fatalities, or 5,2%. All figures from SAPS Annual Reports and SAIRR Annual Surveys; sources detailed in the preceding chapter



jobs. The exact motive for the killings was not established... (*Argus*, Jan. 29, 1996)

**The taxi** “Months of peace between the city’s volatile taxi factions ended last night when running gun battles erupted all over the Cape Flats. One man was killed and up to 25 commuters were injured...Police were investigating the possibility that rival taxi groups Cata and Codeta had resumed their war for control of the routes...

A man identified as Sibota described how the attackers fired at almost point-blank range into the taxi he was travelling in between Lansdowne East and Khayalithsa. He was shot in the side but was too weak to give more details from hospital last night.” (*Cape Times*, March 3, 1996)

**The hospital** “Make hospitals gun free...Police this week reported 333 murders and attempted murders at Baragwanath [the largest hospital in Johannesburg] since January, excluding attacks on staff. A place of healing is turned into a slaughter-house by gun-toting thugs and irresponsible staffers.” (*Citizen*, June 21, 1996)

Obviously, to count these murders as non-political violence depends on the frame of reference. From the point of view of the *citizen* these murders had everything to do with the struggle for recourses, the lack of protection by the law and the remoteness of democratic governance: all essentially political problems. The basic social contract between state and citizen where the citizen obeys the laws of the land and the state then guarantees to protect the citizens was in rags. Private security firms employed six times the number of regular policemen in the SAPS.<sup>389</sup> Democracy neither could protect people’s lives, nor could it uphold the law. But that was not necessarily invalidating state rule.

From the point of view of the *state* the 25.099 murders were in fact the non-political casualties in a fragmentary battle neither aiming at territory, nor articulating and focusing an attack on the state. From the point of view of the relatives of 25.000 victims it was certainly killings of war-magnitude. But they are an abstraction as a group because all these people never, precisely, constituted an articulated, focused collective confronting the state. There seems, therefore, to be no upper limit to how much crime a state can take before it collapses as long as crime remains un-focused. Many people, I believe, would ten or twenty years ago have predicted South Africa’s collapse with a murder-rate ten times that of America’s. Most of the time it is somebody else that gets killed<sup>390</sup> and life goes on. People with

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<sup>389</sup> See Marks, 1996 on the grave problems of changing the police force from being a political police to a force capable of protecting the citizens.

<sup>390</sup> Yet for the black population of Cape Town homicide was simply and brutally the most common cause of death. Lerer, 1995:7.

money protect themselves and survive, as, in the cynical words of pathologist Len Lerer: "Murder is a disease of the poor."<sup>391</sup>

Losers were everywhere the ordinary, law-abiding citizens, at the mercy of criminals and bereft of protection from a corrupt, inefficient, and un-democratic state. That is why the ending of 'civil war' in KwaZulu-Natal by the downward displacement of violence compromised democracy. It was a two-pronged attack on the South African citizens: on the one side criminalised 'war' with threadbare political justifications of criminal behaviour; on the other side criminalised 'peace' reaching proportions where it undermined the security of large sections of the population. The two prongs met in the rule of gangs.

## **5. A new beginning at the Cape of Good Hope?**

In 1996, Western Cape, and Cape Flats in particular, was the prime gang-land of South Africa. A police force reputed for low efficiency and corruption, probably combined with a complacent feeling among whites that gangs did not pose a direct threat to their privilege had let the problem grow wildly. The number of young men enrolled in gangs just on the Cape Flats was estimated at 80.000.<sup>392</sup> To ask whether gangs are criminal or political is to miss the point: we are dealing with a violent, but highly ambiguous attack on the state. This was not a new phenomena, but an escalating problem. Discussing the gangs operating in Sophiatown, Johannesburg, during the 1950s, Tom Lodge wrote,

"These gang were frequently very large, often had a quasi-military structure and... were to be found in the vanguard of any communal confrontation with the police. [ ]. the gangsters must have been a source of considerable anxiety to the authorities. They represented an anarchic, violent and elusive current of resistance which lay beyond the capacity of the state to control, co-opt, or suppress." (Lodge, 1983:102).

Much the same could be said about the gangs of the 1990s. Effectively the state had lost control. Interpellation was broken, but not - yet - reversed. It was dangerous for the state and it was dangerous for the citizens living in gang land; and it was very dangerous for the gangster that seldom lived long. Crime levels were extremely high without directly challenging the state, but entrenching an undemocratic political culture. It was not easy for the state to react to this situation because it lacked an efficient, honest, well-paid police force, it lacked credible

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<sup>391</sup> Personal communication, University of Cape Town, May, 1996.

<sup>392</sup> *Mail & Guardian*, Sep. 13, 1996.

policies for upgrading the poverty-stricken gang lands, and it lacked the political clout needed to win political legitimacy in the coloured communities. All it came up with was grand plans and fitful actions more posture than lasting effect, epitomised by an alleged crack-down on “The Vietnam Rats” and “The Vietnam Mice”, two gangs terrorising a little township 30 kilometres from Cape Town.

“Armed forces swoop down on Boland gangs... Combined army, airforce and police operation in the squatter camp outside Stellenbosch... In a somewhat “down-market” section of Lindida, dubbed Kreefgat, where the gangs were believed to have their strongholds, children and their pets were running around in a play park moments before two air force helicopters swooped down on the grass with earshattering noise and poured out heavily armed soldiers. More troops, in camouflage gear reached the “flash-point” of the exercise in armoured vehicles which thundered down the narrow streets... Major Burger said the “boots-and-all” operation had not resulted in any major arrests or great weapons find, but succeeded in getting the message across. “We want to show the community that the government and its security forces are serious about fighting crime.”” (*Argus*, April 13, 1996)

What message? This absurd re-taking of Boland gang-land was grossly ineffectual and ambiguous: it hauled in one single pistol, a few bullets and some grams of dagga. The state tried desperately to re-invoke interpellation, but the children only laughed and giggled at the whole exercise. After the troops withdrew they left an even more ambiguous situation with interpellation broken down, jacked up for a moment with this kind of show-off force, but no patient, serious police-work. Instead of demonstrating state power the exercise exhibited lack of power which only for some moments could be replaced by violence; fleeting, theatrical violence, acknowledging that another kind of violence seemed to be permanently installed, that of the gangs.

The recently formed political party Core, led by self-confessed gangsters on the Cape Flats takes the political violence-crime ambiguity of the gangs one step further and closer to a focused attack on the state. Core was started after the Islamic vigilante group Pagad (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs) had firebombed several houses of well-known gangsters and lynched one of the most notorious criminals, Rashad Staggie, leader of the Hard Livings gang. In the streets Pagad directly confronted the state with violent demonstrations including firebombings by their armed members (the G-force). At least one person was killed, and during Pagad’s first six months of existence the state met their marches with a total of

4.328 members of SAPS and 2.075 soldiers from SANDF (*Mail & Guardian*, Nov. 1, 1996)

“In the Western Cape, where the coloured community is first prize in the votes struggle between the ANC and the National Party, the gangs have tremendous potential to secure for themselves - or to deliver - constituencies. Gangs arguably have better organisational networks on the Cape Flats than either party and have shown themselves adept at “winning hearts and minds” by providing livelihood where government is still struggling to fulfil its promise of a “better life for all”. (*Mail & Guardian*, May 9, 1997)

If a political leader of Buthelezi's calibre was able to focus the terrible social dynamic of Cape Town, expressed in 2000 murders a year, by politicising the “ethnic” space of the coloured community and incorporating the “tribal” structures of the gangs in a political movement, he could launch a dramatic attack on central state rule. This could be the beginning of a new South African civil war. As it were, in 1996 the real Dr. Buthelezi helped end a civil war in KwaZulu-Natal - or did he? The fundamental question as to how we can understand violence as either ‘war’ or ‘peace’ remains unresolved. From the point of view of the *state* South Africa in 1996 clearly saw the end of a civil war, but only ambiguously for the *citizens* as 25.000 were killed. The conclusion cannot be equivocal, but has to reflect the role of violence in the constitution of the state and its rule of citizens. This relation has been the main theme throughout this topographic enquiry into civil war.

## CONCLUSION

“What is it that makes a man human?

I say that it lies in his ability to draw boundaries.”

(Xunzi)<sup>393</sup>

“I wanted to live outside history. I wanted to live outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects. I never wished it for the barbarians that they should have the history of Empire laid upon them. How can I believe that that is cause for shame?”

(J M, Coetzee)<sup>394</sup>

Man<sup>395</sup> is inscribed in space and time; more than that, historical man is always already counterpoised in space and time to that enigmatic big Subject, the state. Xunzi, writing 2300 years ago and Coetzee writing in our age express the two opposite interpretations of that double subjectivity: man and state. Xunzi's boundary-drawing subject could not be an individual, but only a social, collective extension of man; only man-as-state permitted the full expression of man's humanity. Coetzee doubted this, and saw the state, the Empire, as the imposing subject, that which reduced and ultimately annihilated man's humanity. We have met a modern variation of Xunzi's positions in Hannah Arendt's trust in man's original enlightened constitution of himself as a political collective, and heard an echo of Coetzee's fear of Empire in Michel Foucault's grim mapping of the state's carceral and all-pervading dominance of the subject human. Taken alone each position is

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<sup>393</sup> The Confucian Xunzi is cited from Robin Yates: “Body, Space, Time and Bureaucracy: Boundary Creation and Control Mechanisms in Early China”, in John Hay, ed. *Boundaries in China*. London : Reaktion Books, 1994, p. 56.

<sup>394</sup> J M, Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, London: Penguin Books, 1980:154.

<sup>395</sup> English language lacks a convenient gender-neutral single word for “human beings” similar to the German word *Mensch* or the Danish *menneske*; the use of ‘man’ should, of course not, be read as excluding the female half of humanity.

incomplete, taken together they are a contradiction, truly reflecting the problem at hand.

In the present study, the relations of rule and resistance between man and state has been investigated at its most acute and violent: as civil war. Precisely civil war exposes the possibilities and limitations for human beings, the individual subjects, to change, destroy or reconstitute the big Subject, the state, which is nothing but the totality of themselves. To move beyond the very general assumption of civil war as a clash of state and individuals I developed two ideas, first to base a typology of civil war on the weapons used by the state-attackers; secondly to build a topographic model of the state on state space, ethnic space, town space, and house space. How far did they advance the understanding of civil war?

### **Typology of civil war**

From the outset the typology was conceived as limited historically and structurally to civil wars in twentieth century nation states. It was conceded that this peculiar form of state became the global norm at a systemic level, duplicated on practically all state territories during the twentieth century. The typology could accordingly be applied to cases stretching from China in 1935 to Bosnia in 1995. Of course, civil wars fought in this century have not all been waged inside nation states, and civil wars fought in nation states have not all taken place in the twentieth century. The aetiology of civil wars taking place inside colonial empires differs profoundly from civil wars in nation states, because they were different *wholes*. Probably less so, civil wars in nation states in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as the English Civil War, the French Vendée, or the American Civil War. However, it was going beyond the scope of the present investigation to discuss how far back in time the typology could be applied. As it stands, it thus claims no universal application but is limited to civil wars in twentieth century nation states.

Four empirical parameters of civil war, intensity, locality, polarity and weapons were suggested in order to count whether an event of violence was a civil war. The main difference from standard procedures of counting (e.g. SIPRI) was to count and classify civil wars *before* interpreting issues of contention. The arbitrary definition of war-intensity as a thousand or more battle-deaths was maintained, but counted per year and not per entire conflict, shifting the focus away from difficult assessments of beginnings, lulls and ends to currently perpetrated violence. Locality inside a nation state was straightforward to count. Polarity, i.e. the state being

attacked, was determined by the state deploying army troops against its own population. It proved relatively straightforward to classify attacks on the state according to the *most complex* weapons deployed by the state-attackers (not by the defending state) from *household weapons* (everyday items that only become weapons by being used violently), to *light weapons* (all crew-portable weapons), to *heavy weapons* (motorised, land based weapons), up to *air- and seaborne weapons*. The parameter of weapons is cumulative as one particular attack often includes several types of weapons. The four categories of weapons capture the military horizons of four different possible attacks on the state.

Based on the four types of weapons, I thus identified a war-level attack on the state possible with each type of weapon, each constituting a basic type of civil war. The civil war possible with household weapons is *intifada*, a sustained urban uprising. The civil war possible with light weapons is *guerrilla war*, a sustained rural military opposition without fixed fronts. The civil war possible with heavy weapons is *frontal civil war*, fought as positional warfare. Finally the civil war possible with airborne weapons is *intervention civil war* where a consortium of UN-mandated states extends an attack on the state begun by internal groups.

In reality, however, any civil war will begin with violence less intense than war. The full typology of civil war therefore includes sub-war attacks on the state. For each type of weapon the typology suggests a minimum to maximum range of attacks on the state: The minimum-to-maximum range of attacks possible with household weapons is riot-to-intifada; with light weapons it is terrorism-to-guerrilla war; with heavy weapons it is coup-to-frontal civil war; and finally with air- and seaborne weapons it is preventive action-to-intervention civil war. Civil wars are dynamic and do change; the proposed typology defines types in one-year brackets; any given civil war may, of course, change its type from year to year.

Intervention civil war might be somewhat controversial as a category of civil war because violence moves across a national border. However, I think the double violation of national sovereignty taking place when a state is attacked by its own citizens and simultaneously subjected to intervention civil war by a consortium of foreign states accurately reflects the tendency to implosion/explosion of Westphalian national sovereignty which can be observed today. Intervention civil war starts as a 'national' civil war, often of the frontal type; at some point, however, gross violations of human rights, fragmentation of the state and threats to regional security create a new front, longer and more complex than the front between the internal groups and the state, now confronting the general good, embodied in the UN-mandated force, and the particular evil, embodied in the illegitimate state. This

front will traverse established national boundaries, yet it is not an invasion but a civil war, partly because it is fought in continuation of a civil war inside the territory of a (nominal) nation state, but more importantly because by fighting the intervention civil war the consortium of states are momentarily creating a new whole, a new state-in-being. Repeated several times, a state of a new type will emerge, interpellating and mapping with violence its new continental (?) territory. Perhaps this state will enjoy a post-national or imperial fluidity of territorial sovereignty; we do not know yet.

### **Comparison of events**

The key purpose of proposing a typology was to facilitate comparison of cases. While it would have been preferable to compare a large number of cases, my study contained only on a limited sample of eight events, and a broader topographic analysis of one specific case. Nevertheless the limited comparison allowed some trends to be identified. First the frequent *shifts in intensity* up and down between sub-war levels and war levels but *within the same weapons category* in the history of individual conflicts. Riot can become intifada; terrorism can become guerrilla war; coup can become frontal civil war; and preventive action can become intervention civil war. All the in-between cases were somewhere on the continuum of violence within one specific type of weapon, for example in the case of Northern Ireland, where violence oscillated between terrorism and guerrilla war on the range of light weapons attacks on the state.

The South African case clearly indicated that different people could attack the state in different ways at the same time, yet intifada and terrorism did *not* merge despite the constant efforts of the ANC to do so (a similar non-merger between intifada and terrorism could be observed in the Palestine case). This seemed to be a second general trend, also found in the other cases of my limited sample. Escalation seemed unlikely to happen across weapon types: riot would not become, say, guerrilla war, coup would not become intifada, etc. Each weapon-type signified a specific social complexity or 'weight' of the attacking group and a corresponding limited military horizon. No gradual shifts from, say, light to heavy weapons seemed to be possible. On the contrary it was only by radically changed *external* circumstances, not generated within the military horizon of the attack by the attackers themselves, like the Japanese invasion of China, or the end of the Cold War, that permitted shifts up and down the weapons-type ladder.

One conclusion drawn from these trends is the *rejection of a gradualist conception of civil war*, i.e. of a steady escalation from political agitation to isolated



terrorist-like attacks, on to guerrilla war, conventional war and finally culminating in the capture of the capital. When escalation does occur, it reflects (i) the limited *military* horizon of the violent attack, and (ii) the limited *political* legitimacy of the state's violent defence. How to exploit that difference depends on the type of civil war, because they are not asymmetrical in the same way. In intifada and guerrilla war the state attackers are militarily inferior to the defending state; in frontal war there may be a rough equality, while a group attacking their state backed up by an international consortium will be militarily superior to the defending state. In the first two cases the attackers can only hope to win if they can exploit a possible illegitimacy of the state. Rioters, intifada street fighters, terrorists, and guerrilla armies are never likely to win militarily; nor do they have much of a chance of a political win if the state maintains legitimacy. In frontal civil war arms speak very loud, and legitimacy counts for little because of the rough military symmetry; therefore frontal civil wars are the most destructive of civil wars. In intervention civil war the attacked state can only hope to off-set its military inferiority by exploiting a possible weak political will to war in the attacking consortium of states.

### **Topography of violence**

Civil war is a very special case of violence. The typology of civil war captured, it is hoped, the specific features which distinguish as civil war certain violent events. However, when I next wanted to turn from counting to interpretation of civil war, the perspective had to shift radically from violence as civil war to civil war as violence. This shift put into focus the absolute centrality of violence to human society. Thus, in order to inscribe civil war into the weft and warp of human society the topography had to be of violence in general and not of civil war in particular.

Body and planet were assumed to be the existentially given inner and outer spatial limits of human social life. This granted, the challenge for a topographic analysis of violence was to map every border in between body and planet, to chart the spaces upon which human social life is staged. To do so in a meaningful way, bearing in mind that the purpose was a topographic study of civil war, necessitated a drastic reduction of human social life to a set of common denominators while on the other hand extending as far as possible the spatial reach and sensitivity of the analysis. I argued that the common denominators of 'human social life' could be subjectivity and violence. A topographic analysis, then, should capture subjectivity and violence in space; in other words, a topographic analysis has three legs: subjectivity, violence, and space.

The concept of violence had to be trimmed of all kinds of symbolic content, leaving only direct physical harm and interference with the human body. Violence in the exact and narrow sense of ‘unwanted physical interference with the bodies of others’, and distinguished from power, was the first step in preparing the ground for a topographic model of the state. The constitutive function of violence in human society had to be acknowledged, in particular in the creation of states. As the state only exists in a system of states, as ‘friend-enemy groupings’, rule is logically imposed from the outside-down upon society, and does not grow from the inside-up positing the state as the pinnacle of a differentiated society (for example a class-society).

Subjectivity was thus conceived to be doubled up into individual subjects and the totality of the individual subjects, the big Subject, the state. I could now define civil war in general as an attack on the state by sub-state groups, as a *violent reversal of rule*. Civil war was not just certain levels of violence inside a country, but violence with a specific polarity. Ethnic cleansing and genocide were not civil war as such but murderous interpellation, i.e. creation and not destruction of a state; surely, such state practices were more often than not met with resistance, with civil war. Paradoxically, a civil war is at the same time an attack on the state and itself a part of the state. What is attacked is never more than a fragment of the state, like the parliament or army, but at the same time there is no society-space outside the state. To dissolve this paradox by talking of state (institutions) and (civil) society obscures rather than explains the problem of war within the state.

With violence defined as harm to the body and subjectivity defined by the relation of rule between individual subjects and the state, I returned to the question of the spaces between body and planet. The spaces I was looking were all defined spatially by hurt bodies. Inside these spaces power, acts of communication, gave name and legitimacy to violence, which could then be repeated; thus each space acquired a degree of permanence whereby specific relations of body and territory developed historically.

I argued that the largest space of this kind was the state, and the smallest was the house, framing patriarchal family life. Between the pragmatic state space and the organic house space two more spaces could be identified: the functional town space and the essentialist ethnic space. Finally I suggested that there was a cyclical relation turning violence into power, space into subjectivity, and act into name. A space with borders marked by violence was given a name and legitimacy at a privileged point in space, the point of enunciation by a person privileged to do so. State space was enunciated by the ‘king’ from a ‘throne’; ethnic space was

enunciated by the 'priest' from the 'grave'; town space was enunciated from the 'square' by 'the rich'; and house space was enunciated by the 'patriarch' from the 'head of the table'.

All four spaces were superimposed on the same territory as one complex heterogenic social structure. Together they made up the state. The state was the totality of points of rule and resistance, whether in the house, the town or the ethnic space. They were all inside the state as distinct terrains with localised struggles, interacting in complex ways, not subject to one overriding 'logic' such as 'capitalism' or 'modernity'. All moments of rule, whether by patriarchs in the house, by the rich in the town, by the priests in ethnic space or the kings in state space, together constituted the state. In particular the linking of house space and state space proved to be a fascinating extension of the concept of the state.

This totality was reflected in individual people as composite identities. The challenge of the topographic analysis was to grasp the interdependence *and* non-identity of all the spaces any individual human being lives in and which are reflected in the multiple and conflicting identities of real people, easily combining supposed monoliths such as 'nationalism', 'age-old ethnic hatreds', 'religious fervour', 'class-consciousness', and 'sexual orientation'.

At a seminar in London, where I presented some of these ideas, the anthropologist Bruce Kapferer criticised the four spaces for being a-historical. This is a highly pertinent criticism of a structuralist study. It is true that I assume the four spaces of states, ethnicity, towns and houses to have a trans-historical existence, that is that they are not above history as Hegel's *Geist*, but found in every historic society. Each space is reproduced in the specific historical context of people living in a certain time and space, and thus not a-historical. I have tried to show this in detail for South Africa. By drawing freely on historical examples of states, ethnic spaces, towns and houses from the most diverse human societies, I cannot, of course, *prove* the correctness of my model of the state. The brief chapters arguing for the relevance of the four spaces can only indicate that the four spaces may have existed in all historical societies, and thus that the S.E.T.H. model of the state could have general historical plausibility. Within the framework of the present book, however, it remains an untested suggestion. As it stands, the S.E.T.H. model is assumed to be valid for twentieth century nation states. The argument for introducing the topographic S.E.T.H. model of the state is not, therefore, that it is a 'true image of reality' of South Africa, let alone of all history, but its heuristic value, hopefully making it possible to conceptualise the heterogenic social structures of the state and multiple human identities of the individuals.

## **Interpretations of violence**

Counting the violence in the three selected years in South Africa provided the basis for the topographic interpretation. Counting intensity brought out the problem of distinguishing battle-related deaths ('political violence') from crime (murders in this connection), and exposed the deceptive accuracy of the political violence figures used as foundation for interpretations of 'struggle' history. The problem, furthermore, was found to be growing from 1976 to 1996, and raised the question how to conceptualise the criminalisation of civil war *and* criminalisation of peace. A tentative suggestion was to distinguish between 'focused' and 'unfocused' attacks on the state. Violence was unambiguously localised inside South Africa's national territory. Whereas the anti-state polarity of the attacks in 1976 and 1986 were beyond doubt, the polarity of the attacks in 1996 on the post-apartheid state were contradictory. This reflected the peculiar provincial dynamics of KwaZulu-Natal, where the provincial state could attack the central state, which again could be allied with the local state against the provincial state; a situation furthermore complicated by the division into democratic and traditional authorities.

Counting weapons, finally, proved to be very revealing. In 1976 only household weapons were deployed against the state, and with casualties below one thousand it was a riot. In 1986 light weapons were deployed but in almost total separation from the much larger attack with household weapons. The ANC carried out a very limited series of terrorist attacks, while other groups launched a war-scale attack exclusively deploying household weapons. In 1996 hardly any household weapons were deployed against the state, only light weapons terrorist attacks below war-level were counted. It shaded into crime, i.e. murders, which had grown by more than 400 per cent from 1976 to 1996, outstripping the civil war casualties of 1986 twenty times.

While the investigation did not bring into focus the possible historical reach of the topographical analysis, the shift in emphasis away from historical movement unto spatial difference had some obvious political implications. Topographic analysis is particularly suitable for capturing chaotic violence, and this gave a slightly different perspective on recent South African history, I think, than studies focusing on political movements, the transformation of the state and other subjects telling a story of development and change. It can be argued that the narrative structure of historiography is normally retrospective-prospective, that is you go back in time to tell a story of which you already know the end. This is

particularly striking with national history, of course. In these narratives there first was a tree and then a root is added as 'the beginning' of the nation's march to become itself. Contrasted with the tree-root structure is the *rhizome*, the flat, chaotic web of stems, a metaphor for social structures extending in space rather than in time. In South Africa neither the Soweto riot in 1976, the intifada in 1986, nor the criminalised civil war in 1996 had tree-structures, they were all rhizomes; non-linear, chaotic structures difficult or impossible to narrate as development, as beginning-to-end stories of political movements.

The main characters in my interpretation of 1976 were the children. The topographic analysis made it possible to trace some of the confusing stems linking the children as minors in house space, as pupils in town space, and as blacks in ethnic space. The interpretation reflected how rule was 'farmed out' from the state to the other 'local rulers' and created a chain of mutual dependence between state rule and patriarchal rule; thus state rule could be broken by the children by breaking patriarchal rule. Situating all the structures of state, ethnicity, town and house within one common topography made it easier to grasp the contradictory and many-layered relations of children and parents. The topographic analysis of where the children met the state may have contributed a new dimension to the understanding of Soweto 1976.

Central in the interpretation of 1986 were the squatters, agents of the violence in shackland. It was argued that the issue of race was secondary to the issue of urban access; thus the shackland violence prefigured the conflicts of the post-apartheid city. The topographical analysis located the real violent threat to state rule in 1986 in the township and shackland intifada, but it also brought out the highly ambiguous structure of this attack, suppressed by state of emergency and vigilantes. The state-like practices of the ANC, including the terrorist 'armed propaganda', stood out in contrast to the rhizomatic violence of the intifada. It may be controversial to some, but it is certainly not new to stress the independence of the intifada from control by the ANC; internal ANC-documents presented in this study only support this interpretation. The crucial one-man initiative of Nelson Mandela, going squarely against the vacillating official ANC policy of 'people's war' showed how the state could be won politically and many lives be saved from death in an impossible guerrilla war.

South Africa in 1986 is a prime example of the difficulties encountered by political movements aiming at state power to appropriate the immense political capital generated by riots and intifadas, and on the other hand, the total inability of rhizomatic violence to capture state power. War capacity could not be translated into

rule capacity, and neither could the ANC add the war capacity of the children and the squatters to their own rule capacity. Later, when South African politicians, helped by political scientists, tried to claim ownership of the real civil war, the intifada, they first had to disperse, punctuate, deny and roll back the anarchic rhizome, and hammer the surviving scraps into a look-alike tree by ascribing to the intifada a root and a trunk that was not there originally. This is typical of all political 'tree'-analysis, allowing political power-holders to fatten on the charisma of a rhizomatic event by grafting it onto the root of - surprise, surprise - the politicians' own tree. As history shows, the intifada and the Soweto riot shares this fate with most of history's popular revolts: they are appropriated by political trees because there is neither no past nor future in a rhizome, only explosive *now-power*.

Most controversial in my interpretations seems to be the concept of ethnic space. The interpretation of 1996 brought out the paradox of ethnic space: the space imagined by the individual identity and the space marked by collective violence did not overlap. This seems to confirm the assumption of the impossible identity of territorial ethnic space and individual imaginary of ethnic space. It can only be approximated in the very act of ethnic violence, that is violence declared to be ethnic by the perpetrators. As soon as violence ends, the border of ethnic space will dissolve or snap into boundaries created and upheld by other agencies, normally the state. However, if only individuals can produce an ethnic border by declaring a violent act to be in defence of some ethnic essence like belief, decent, or language is ethnic space then a structural, social reality? Yes, because violence in itself exists beyond the individual imagination, and because ethnicity violently produces borders different from those marking state, town, and house spaces. Obviously ethnic space does not correlate with a solid spatial structure such as a town or a house, and this points to the need for further discussion of whether ethnic space has a methodological status different from state space, town space and house space.

Xunzi spoke of boundaries, Coetzee of history. But where does man actually draw boundaries, and when do barbarians live outside imperial history? Is there a place outside state boundaries and a moment outside imperial time? Civil war is just such an open time and such an open space where people may stop the march of imperial time and move the boundaries of states. Xunzi's unity of man and boundary implied the perfect, invisible state; the individual, the rebel, confronting the Empire made the time and the space of the state visible because it broke down totality, ultimately into everybody against everybody.

Finally Coetzee spoke of shame. We have gone full circle and returned to the other side of the moral problem hinted at in the introduction: not at this point how to deal with the pain and murder of other people, but how to deal with people who find it necessary to cause pain and murder. The Empire was above morals as Carl Schmitt showed all states must be, but man has a moral impulse, as Coetzee emphatically argues. Yet man left alone in the wilderness beyond the state is also above morals, as I think the violence of riot, intifada and crime in South Africa unrestrained by rule testify. Precariously poised between the iron law of state security and criminal anarchy morality in social matters can apparently only be attained in an ongoing civilised communication between citizens. Let us call it democracy. The person that uttered Coetzee's words quoted above was the Magistrate, a character living at the edge of the Empire, in equal measures a doubting functionary of the state and a hesitant rebel against the state. This is probably the only position possible to defend morally; alas it is all too easily overrun by the violence of states and criminals.

The challenge of the topographic analysis was to capture the fleeting moment of manifest non-identity between state and man: civil war. I suggested that this could be done in space rather than in time, in a topographic analysis of the heterogeneous space, rather than in the coherent historical time. This assumption gave the structure to the book and its focus on spatial structure and difference, rather than on temporal process and continuity, summed up in a typology of civil war and a topography of violence.

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