

‘In another time-zone, the bombs fall unsafely....’
Targets, civilians and late modern war*

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‘It’s an amazingly relentless and terrible thing, war from the air.’
Gertrude Bell, letter from Baghdad, 2 July 1924

Orientalism and war

My title comes from a poem by Blake Morrison, ‘Stop’, which was reprinted in an anthology to aid children’s charities in Lebanon compiled by Anna Wilson after the Israeli assault on that country during the summer of 2006. The poem speaks directly to the ideology of late modern war – to what Christopher Coker praises as the ‘re-enchantment’ of war through its rhetorical erasure of death¹ – and to its dissonance from ‘another’ time and space where bombs continue to ‘fall unsafely’. It begins like this:

* This is a revised version of a Plenary Address to the Arab World Geography conference in Beirut, December 2006. I am extremely grateful to Ghazi-Walid Falah for the invitation to deliver the address and to the conference participants for their helpful comments.

¹ Christopher Coker, *The future of war: the re-enchantment of war in the twenty-first century* (Oxford UK: Blackwell, 2004). The most succinct statement of this ideology is the extraordinary remark attributed to Donald Rumsfeld when he was US Defense Secretary: ‘Death has a tendency to encourage a depressing view of war.’

‘As of today, the peace process will be intensified through war. These are safe bombs, and any fatalities will be minors. The targets are strictly military or civilian. Anomalies may occur, but none out of the ordinary. This release has been prepared by official Stop.’²

Morrison perfectly captures the hypocrisy of war – the malevolent twisting of words to mean the opposite of what they say, the cosmetic face of public war put on to conceal the harrowing face of private death – and also the intimacy of the furtive, fugitive relationship between ‘targets’ and ‘civilians’ in late modern war.³ In what follows, I will try to lay that relationship bare by reconstructing its historical geography. In doing so, I will also show how our meeting in Beirut to discuss ‘the European-Arab encounter’, less than six months after Israel’s war on Lebanon, must confront the connections between the political and military strategies mobilized during the summer of 2006 and a series of colonial encounters between Europe and the Arab world in the years surrounding the First World War.

² Blake Morrison, ‘Stop’, in Anna Wilson (ed), *Lebanon, Lebanon* (London: SAQI, 2006) p. 27.

³ For the political contours of late modern war, see Vivienne Jabri, ‘War, security and the liberal state’, *Security dialogue* 37 (2006) 47-64. She asks: ‘How, then, do we begin to conceptualize war in conditions where distinctions disappear, where war is conceived ... in terms of peace and security, so that the political is somehow banished in the name of governmentalizing practices whose purview knows no bounds, whose remit is precisely the banishment of limits, of boundaries and distinctions [?]’ Her answer will be familiar to readers of Foucault (and Agamben): even as these boundaries are dissolved and distinctions rendered indistinct, so quite other boundaries and distinctions – exclusions – are installed and, as I seek to show here, literally put in place.

To speak like this is to invoke the spectre of what Edward Said identified as Orientalism. In my view, both the term and the terrain have since been colonized – by art history, cultural anthropology and postcolonial studies among others – and in the process what Said saw as the sheer force of Orientalism has often been subjugated and its violence domesticated. For this reason, we should remember its proximity to war. Said’s critique was a belated response to the jubilant reaction he encountered on the streets of New York to the Israeli victory in the 1967 war and its occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. But the book opens with another, later war:

‘On a visit to Beirut during the terrible civil war of 1975-1976, a French journalist wrote regretfully of the gutted downtown area that “it had once belonged to ... the Orient of Chateaubriand and Nerval.” He was right about the place, of course, especially so far as a European was concerned. The Orient was almost a European invention...’⁴

For Said this process of ‘invention’ – fabrication might be a better term – involved two crucial imaginative geographies. First, ‘the Orient’ was conjured as a space of the exotic and the bizarre, at the limit the monstrous and the pathological: ‘a living tableau of queerness.’ Second, ‘the Orient’ was summoned as a space to be disciplined through the forceful projection of the order that Europe presumed it to lack: ‘framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual.’⁵ Both operations depend on visualizations, to a greater or lesser degree, and it is through these that

⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978) p. 1.

⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 103, 41.

Orientalism assumes much of its performative force: these ‘geo-graphings’ enable Orientalism to bring into being what it claims the power to name, to show, to make visible. Yet there is nothing ineluctable about these spaces of constructed (in)visibility. Elsewhere Said reminds us that:

‘Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.’⁶

So it is. But I fear that many of us – I include myself – have been in too great a hurry to reach the end of that last sentence. We have concentrated on ‘images and imaginings’ in spheres seemingly distant from the clash of arms – the worlds of high and popular culture – without recognizing that the production of imaginative geographies is centrally involved in the actions of soldiers and cannons too.

Although Said’s own mapping of Orientalism was shot through with visual images, these remained largely metaphorical, whereas in what follows I focus directly on the visual registers and practices on which the exercise of military violence depends. Nick Cullaher has shown how modern wars have been defined and shaped by their visual representations, how ‘each provided a distinct optic which set the limits of leaders’ sights and determined what strategy and victory would look like’: never more so, perhaps, than in our

⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993) p. 7.

present age of ‘virtual war’ and mediatized politics.⁷ But as those twin outriders of late modernity imply, the political and military imaginaries that now make war possible spiral far beyond the desks of prime ministers and the computer screens of generals. And so I also focus on the circulation of imaginative geographies through briefings, statements and media reports that are designed not only to produce public support for the conduct of war – by categorizing enemies in particular ways and legitimizing military actions against ‘them’– but also to produce the public itself: ‘us’. Seen thus, these imaginative geographies not only install regimes of knowledge that are intended to nullify competing ways of knowing the enemy other as anything other than irredeemably Other: they are also vital instruments through which people far from the ostensible space of war are implicated in the transactions of a ‘practical Orientalism’.⁸ It is by revealing those implications that I hope we can rejoin Said’s struggle over geography.

Targets

The concept of the target has a complex history. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a ‘target’ was a light, defensive shield. In the eighteenth century, it was an object used for individual shooting practice, and by the end of the nineteenth century ‘targets’ were objects selected for military attack. These objects were never purely military designations, however, because their modern identification

⁷ Nick Cullaher, ‘Bombing at the speed of thought: intelligence in the coming age of cyberwar’, *Intelligence and National Security* 18 (2003) 141-154: 141.

⁸ Michael Haldrup, Lasse Koefoed and Kirsten Simonsen, ‘Practical Orientalism: bodies, everyday life and the construction of otherness’, *Geografiska Annaler* 88 B (2006) 173-184.

was shaped by both the templates of colonial power and the doctrines of international law. Colonial power and international law developed in close concert, but the rise of aerial warfare, and in particular bombing from the air, brought their choreography of targeting into lockstep.

Aerial bombing and rewriting geography

As Sven Lindqvist has shown with terrible clarity, bombing has a history.⁹ But it also has a geography, and I begin by sketching three of its defining contours. First, the initial experiments in bombing from the air were overwhelmingly conducted by European states attempting to bomb their colonial subjects into submission. Secondly, these episodes rewrote the geography of modern war, threatening to annul the distinction between the front line and the home front, between combatant and civilian, which in turn provoked a concerted attempt to rewrite the laws of war to protect European (and American) civilians from aerial bombardment. Thirdly, this holding operation, desperately seeking to reinscribe the line between the space of law – what Carl Schmitt called the European *nomos*¹⁰ – and the space of exception, was blown apart during the Spanish Civil War when Germany's Condor Legion, acting in close support of Franco's fascist forces, devastated the Basque town of Guernica in April 1937. I will consider each in turn.

⁹ Sven Lindqvist, *A history of bombing* (New York: New Press, 2001).

¹⁰ See Mitchell Dean, 'A political mythology of world order: Carl Schmitt's *Nomos*', *Theory, culture and society* 23(5) (2006) 1-22.

Bombing from the air was considered in fiction long before it became fact, and the military imaginary developed in tandem with the literary one.¹¹ The first air raid carried out from an aeroplane (rather than a balloon) took place during the war between Italy and the Ottoman Empire (1911-12), when Lt Giulio Gavotti dropped grenades over ‘Arab encampments’ outside Tripoli in Libya. The action seems to have been spontaneous, but Gavotti made several more raids in the course of the war and an Italian communiqué observed that bombing ‘had a wonderful effect on the morale of the Arabs’. The raids attracted widespread public criticism, however, and most military planners believed that the proper role of aircraft in war was reconnaissance. But in 1913 Spain’s fledgling Servicio de Aeronautica Militar dropped shrapnel bombs over the village of Ben Carrich, south of Tetuan in Spanish Morocco, and the die was cast for the use of aircraft in offensive, combat operations. There were air raids over Britain, France and Germany in the First World War, carried out by both aircraft and airships, which together killed around 2,000 people and caused widespread panic. Philip Meilinger describes the Zeppelin raids on military and industrial targets in Britain as ‘the first strategic air campaign in history’, but it was the psychological effects rather than the physical destruction or loss of life that captured the imagination of military planners.¹² The most sustained and spectacular use of bombing during and immediately after the war continued to take place outside Europe. Although it was by no means alone, Britain took the lead. In 1915 Britain bombed Pathan villages on India’s north west frontier as part

¹¹ See, for example, Michael Paris, ‘Air power in imperial defence, 1880-1918’, *Journal of contemporary history* 24 (1989) 209-225; for their continuing associations after the First World War, see Paul Saint-Amour, ‘Air war prophecy and interwar modernism’, *Comparative Literature Studies* 42 (2005) 130-161.

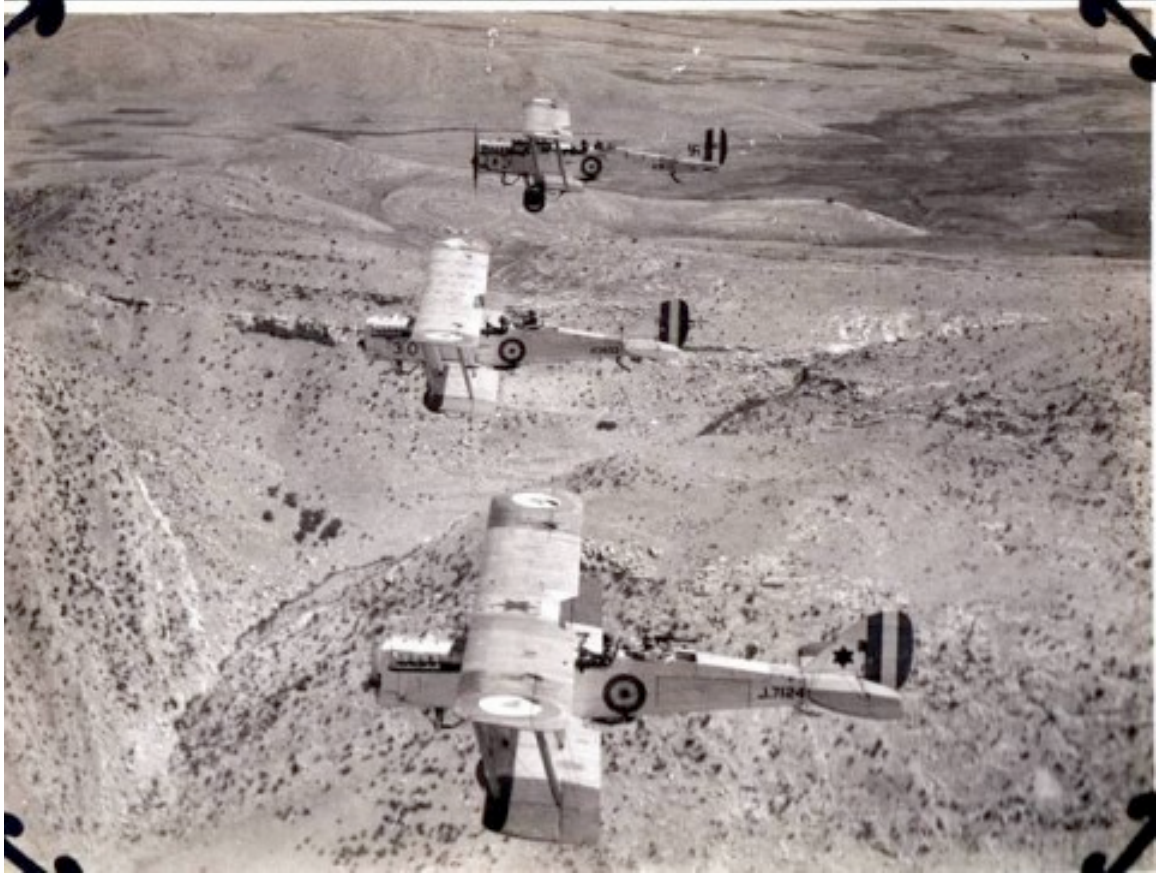
¹² Philip Meilinger, ‘Trenchard and “morale bombing”: the evolution of Royal Air Force doctrine before World War II’, *Journal of military history* 60 (1996) 243-70.

of an emerging colonial doctrine of ‘air control’; in 1916 its sphere of air operations was extended into Egypt and Ethiopia; in 1917, India; in 1919, Afghanistan, Egypt and the Sudan; and in 1920 Iran, Transjordan and Somaliland.¹³

These campaigns made three crucial assertions. The first was that they were cost-effective: that it would be extraordinarily difficult to assert colonial authority over these vast spaces by ground forces, and the trackless deserts of the Middle East in particular were ‘made’ for aerial surveillance and control. The second was that colonial populations were peculiarly susceptible to the magical power of bombing from the air, its so-called ‘moral effect’, because they had no comprehension of its technical basis and so viewed it as divine retribution. The third was that they were more humane than conventional ‘pacification’ measures involving troops and artillery, and the Royal Air Force vigorously rejected the charge that its operations in the Middle East were ‘bloody and remorseless attacks against defenceless natives’ (though it failed to explain how they could have defended themselves). Priya Satia has shown that all three assertions depended on the cultural mobilization of imaginative geographies of ‘other’ spaces. All three were different ways of drawing the same racial divide that separated them from ‘our’ spaces. As David Killingray explains, ‘bombing and machine-gunning people and cattle were acceptable for what was called

¹³ Spain, France and Italy were also actively engaged in bombing colonial populations: Spain in Morocco, France in Morocco and Syria, Italy in Ethiopia.

“uncivilized warfare” but not for ‘civilized warfare’, which is to say war between white people. ¹⁴



These operations reached their apotheosis in Iraq. During the British invasion of what was then Mesopotamia, Winston Churchill, Minister for War and Air, declared himself

‘strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes. The moral[e] effect should be so good that the loss of

¹⁴ Priya Satia, ‘The defense of inhumanity: air control and the British idea of Arabia’, *American historical review* 111 (2006) 16-51; David Killingray, ‘“A swift agent of government”: air power in British colonial Africa, 1916-1939’, *Journal of African history* 25 (1984) 429-44: 432.

life should be reduced to a minimum. It is not necessary to use only the most deadly gasses: gasses can be used which cause great inconvenience and would spread a lively terror and yet would leave no serious permanent effects on most of those affected.’¹⁵



A 520 lb bomb being dropped over Suleimaniyah, 27 May 1924

¹⁵Churchill Papers 16/16, 12 May 1919. On 6 February 1922, Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the United States signed a treaty recognizing that the use of gas in warfare had been ‘widely condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world’ and agreeing to renounce its use ‘as between themselves’: which is to say that ‘it would not be considered as binding upon one of them in a war with a non-adhering Power’ or, by extension, with ‘uncivilized tribes’. James Garner, ‘Proposed rules for the regulation of aerial warfare’, *American journal of international law* 18 (1924) 56-81: 58-9.

Bombing raids were carried out during the Shi'a rebellion of 1920, and again during the Kurdish rebellion of 1924-5. 'They know now what real bombing means, in casualties and damage,' reported Squadron Leader Arthur Harris. 'They now know that within 45 minutes a full-sized village (vide attached photos of Kushan al-Ajaza) can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or injured by four or five machines that offer no real target.' The objective in all these cases was an assertion of colonial rule, in which bombing was enlisted as a modality of colonial power that brooked no argument but equally, as Toby Dodge wryly remarks, 'could neither explain nor negotiate.'¹⁶

It was one thing to treat colonial space as what Rashid Khalidi calls 'a laboratory where the military high-technology of the post-World War One era was first tried out, and where the textbook on the aerial bombardment of civilians was written.'¹⁷ But it was quite another to repatriate those experiments to Europe, and the capacity of the aircraft to rewrite geography set off warning sirens on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1921 Giulio Douhet, one of the 'prophets' of aerial warfare, had already shared his vision of the future:

¹⁶ Lindqvist, *History of bombing*, p. 48; Toby Dodge, 'The imposition of order: social perception and the "despotic" power of airplanes', in his *Inventing Iraq: the failure of nation building and a history denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) pp. 131-156: 156. See also David Omissi, *Air power and colonial control: the Royal Air Force 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990). Britain's final and most protracted application of the doctrine was in the Aden Protectorate from 1928 to 1966 (sic).

¹⁷ Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting empire: Western footprints and America's perilous path in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004) p. 27.

‘By virtue of this new weapon, the repercussions of war are no longer limited by the farthest artillery range of guns, but can be felt directly for hundreds and hundreds of miles... The battlefield will be limited only by the boundaries of the nations at war, and all of their citizens will become combatants, since all of them will be exposed to the aerial offensives of the enemy. There will be no distinction any longer between soldiers and civilians.’¹⁸



This was an alarming prospect. The ‘bombardment of undefended towns’ was already prohibited under the Convention with respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague I) of 29 July 1899, and reaffirmed on 18

¹⁸ Giulio Douhet, *Il domino dell'aria*, trans. as *The command of the air* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1942); quoted in Saint-Amour, ‘Air war prophecy’, 137. That this was a Euro-American anxiety bears emphasis. In 1932, the British High Commissioner in Iraq was still insisting that ‘the term “civilian population” has a very different meaning in Iraq from what it has in Europe’ so that European sensibilities about civilian casualties there were literally misplaced: ‘The whole of its male population are potential fighters,’ he explained, ‘as the tribes are heavily armed.’ The same grotesque rationale was still in action seventy years later during the ‘war on terror’.

October 1907 (Hague IV), but these articles concerned artillery and naval barrages. New 'Rules of aerial warfare' were drafted by delegates from Britain, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and the United States in February 1923 that limited bombing to 'military objectives' and explicitly proscribed 'aerial bombardment for the purpose of terrorizing the civilian population, of destroying or damaging private property not of military character, or of injuring non-combatants'. The signatories agreed not to use such tactics against one another. But colonial populations could not be party to undertakings between sovereign states and so the doctrine of air control was largely unaffected; and since the priority was to prevent the bombing of towns and cities, Churchill's 'uncivilized tribes' were denied not only the right to the city but also the right to protection from aerial bombardment. The new Rules were never formally adopted, but Beau Grosscup is surely right to draw attention to the contradiction between the consistent diplomatic effort to protect European populations and the willingness to bomb colonial populations: 'In the two decades after the Great War, aerial bombing was used exclusively to "civilize and liberate" the imperial other.'¹⁹

In 1937 Europe's world was turned upside down. The theme of the Exposition Universelle that was due to open in Paris later that year was the celebration of modern technology, 'Art et technique dans la vie moderne', and Pablo Picasso had been invited to paint a mural for the Spanish Pavilion. By the spring, he was still casting around for a subject. 27 April was market day in Guernica (Gernika), and the Basque city was crowded with refugees from the Civil War and people from out of town attending the market.

¹⁹ Beau Grosscup, *Strategic terror: the politics and ethics of aerial bombardment* (2006) p. 27.



Towards the end of the afternoon, the town was attacked from the air: first by a single German aircraft, then by three Italian aircraft, then by three waves of German and Italian aircraft. Later, in the early evening, the attack was resumed with astonishing ferocity by squadrons from the German Condor Legion whose high explosive and incendiary bombs set off a firestorm that destroyed three quarters of the town and left as many as 1, 600 people dead and over 800 injured. The next day a passionate eyewitness account of the devastation by journalist George Steer was published in *The Times*. His report was syndicated around the world and set off a firestorm of its own. Franco's immediate response was to deny that an air raid had taken place, and to blame the destruction on Republican and Anarchist forces defending the town. The commander of the Condor Legion, Wolfram von Richthofen, claimed that the raid had been directed against a military target, the bridge over the Rio Mundaca, and that its purpose was to cut off the Republican line of retreat; but his own standing orders required military targets to be attacked 'without regard for the civilian population', and in a

secret report to Berlin he described ‘the concentrated attack on Guernica’ as ‘the greatest success’ in extinguishing resistance to the Nationalist-Fascist forces.²⁰

Picasso now had his subject:

‘It was an enormous canvas, so large that Picasso needed a ladder and brushes strapped to sticks in order to paint its heights... Working from the ladder when he needed to, and sometimes on his knees, the artist began to paint on May 11, 1937, and he did so with a hot and focused intensity that was unusually keen even for him. He was determined to transform the vacant canvas into a monumental mural that would disturb and shock its viewers, reminding them ... that people similarly suffered unimaginable terror in every place and time.’²¹

‘Guernica’ as both place and painting became a symbol of a technological sublime terrifyingly different from that anticipated by the organizers of the Exposition Universelle.²² It was a sort of imaginative counter-geography

²⁰ César Vidal, *La destrucción de Guernica* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1997). For the (brief) deliberations of von Richthofen’s Target Selection Committee that identified Guernica as a potential defensive position for Republican forces, and his own discussion with the Spanish chief of staff, General Vigón, on the need to ‘further destroy enemy morale and quickly’, see Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts, *Guernica: the crucible of World War II* (New York: Stein and Day, 1975) 105-7, 121.

²¹ Russell Martin, *Picasso’s War* (New York: Penguin, 2003) p. 1.

²² One story has the poet Juan Larrea suggesting the subject of Guernica to Picasso, and Picasso replying that he had no idea what a bombed town looked like, to which Larrea is supposed to have said: ‘Like a bull in a china shop, run amok’: Gijs van Hensbergen, *Guernica: the biography of a twentieth-century icon* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004) pp. 32-3. This is rather too convenient, but Picasso’s painting – in which the bull and the

that wrenchingly displaced the complacent Euro-American fiction that aerial warfare was always waged in ‘their’ space and that its horrors could remain unregistered.



On 30 September 1938, the League of Nations unanimously accepted that the bombing of civilian populations was forbidden by international law, and called for new regulations to protect them. One year later the outbreak of the Second World War heralded thousands of even more devastating air attacks – Warsaw, London, Coventry, Hamburg, Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki among them – that together confirmed Picasso’s apocalyptic vision of modern war and the capacity of aerial bombing to rewrite its geography.

corrida loom large – was, of course, not a realist work but a haunting and complex metaphor of suffering and disintegration. Art historians have offered a dazzling range of readings, but see in particular Werner Hofman, ‘Picasso’s “Guernica” in its historical context’, *Artibus et historiae* 4 (1983) 141-69; Jutta Held, ‘How do the political effects of paintings come about? The case of Picasso’s “Guernica”’, *Oxford art journal* 11 (1988) 33-39; Herschel Chipp, *Picasso’s Guernica: history, transformations, meanings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). On the multiple meanings of Guernica as a place, see Pauliina Raento, Cameron Watson, ‘Gernika, Guernica, *Guernica*? Contested meanings of a Basque place’, *Political geography* 19 (2000) 707-36.

History may be (re)written by the victors too, but the received history of bombing in Europe in the Second World War, in particular its endorsement of military necessity and the philosophy of the lesser evil, has been sharply questioned in recent years. No sooner had W.G. Sebald drawn attention to a persistent silence in post-war Germany over the logic, morality and effect of Allied air raids – so grave that it turned what was a profoundly cultural history of destruction into a natural history – than a series of revisionist studies appeared from both sides of the conflict.²³ Sebald had noted that in Germany the Allied air raids ‘never became an experience capable of public decipherment’, whereas many of these later studies have centred precisely on recovering the experience of those attacked from the air and, through this, raising a series of acutely ethical questions about bombing. This is also why they have attracted such controversy. Probably the most contentious of them, Jörg Friedrich’s *Das Brand*, has been praised even by its critics for its ability ‘to provide powerful descriptions of the face of mass death’ so that ‘human suffering does not vanish into charts and numbers’. Thus Robert Moeller conceded that Friedrich ‘delivers powerful reminders that bombs do not just target enemy defences or destroy enemy factories. They kill

²³ W.G. Sebald, *On the natural history of destruction* (New York: Random House, 2003); the title essay first appeared in German in 2001. Sebald’s title was taken from an essay Solly Zuckerman was to have written but never did. Cf. Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: the bombing of Germany 1940-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) (first published in German in 2002); Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and reality in air warfare: the evolution of British and American ideas about strategic bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); A.C. Grayling, *Among the dead cities: was the Allied bombing of civilians in World War II a necessity or a crime?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006); for earlier studies see, in particular, Stephen Garrett, *Ethics and airpower in World war II: the British bombing of German cities* (New York: St Martins Press, 1993).

human beings.’²⁴ This is not merely an empirical, evidential fact; it is also an ethical, existential claim. Kenneth Hewitt recovered the contours of this viscerally human geography of bombing – a hidden geography of faces and bodies, of pain and terror – in a series of seminal studies over twenty years ago.²⁵ But in the heat of the war itself geographical knowledges were invested in the production of quite other maps, in the identification of targets and mathematical plots of bombing runs, whose logics were calculative rather than corporeal and which relocated the sites of destruction in an abstract rather than an affective space.²⁶

These supposedly clinical, forensic and objective procedures, whose medico-scientific discourse was a vital armature in the sanitizing logics of military perception, were developed still further during the Cold War and its successor projects. In 1985 a tapestry version of Picasso’s ‘Guernica’ was donated to the United Nations by the estate of Nelson Rockefeller, and – in an attempt to dispel such demons of detachment – hung outside the Security Council as a permanent reminder of the horrors of war. When US Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared before the Security Council on 5 February 2003 to make the Bush administration’s case for war with Iraq, the tapestry

²⁴ Robert Moeller, ‘On the history of man-made destruction: loss, death, memory and Germany in the Bombing War’, *History workshop journal* 61 (2006) 103-134: 109-110.

²⁵ Kenneth Hewitt, ‘Place annihilation: area bombing and the fate of urban places’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 73 (1983) 257-284; idem, ‘The social space of terror: Towards a civil interpretation of total war’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 5 (1987) 445–474; idem, “‘When the great planes came and made ashes of our city’: towards an oral geography of the disasters of war’, *Antipode* 26 (1994) 1-34.

²⁶ Cf. Trevor Barnes and Matthew Farish, ‘Between regions: science, militarism and American Geography from World War to Cold War’, *Annals Assoc. Am. Geogr.* 96 (2006) 807-826.

was covered with a blue cloth. By then, as I must now show, late modern war had refined three further geographies of bombing.

Targeting and late modern war

Late modern warfare has revised the concept of a target in three crucial ways. First, as Samuel Weber puts it, ‘every target is inscribed in a network or chain of events that inevitably exceeds the opportunity that can be seized or the horizon that can be seen.’²⁷ Weber is most exercised by the incorporation of time as well as space into targeting – the transformation of ‘target’ into a verb – and in particular the taking of ‘targets of opportunity’ on the wing. Two years after the invasion of Iraq, for example, the United States Air Force switched from deliberative targeting, where targets are identified by air-operations centres, to adaptive targeting in which cruising aircraft are directed to emerging targets of opportunity by ground forces. According to one senior military planner, ‘the bulk of what we do today is adaptive, and it’s divorced from any operational planning.’ Ground troops call in targets that pilots are unable to verify and whose selection is not integrated into an overall view of the battle space, so that adaptive targeting may be a technical advance but it is rarely a logistical one: the same officer described it as a ‘reversion to the Stone Age.’²⁸ It capitalizes on advanced

²⁷ Samuel Weber, *Targets of opportunity: on the militarization of thinking* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005) p. 1.8

²⁸ Seymour Hersh, ‘Up in the air’, *New Yorker* 5 December 2005; cf. Cullaher, ‘Bombing at the speed of thought’, on the instantaneous integration of the battlespace into a single master-narrative by a multi-service C4ISR backbone. It is in the spirit of the Stone Age that I recall US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s proposal just one day after 9/11: ‘There are no decent targets for bombing in Afghanistan, and we should consider bombing Iraq [because] it has better targets.’ The tempo of air attacks in Iraq has not slackened as war bleeds into occupation and occupation bleeds back into war: see Nick

telecommunications systems, on localized connections between ground troops and aircraft, but it fails to realize the wider network possibilities of late modern warfare. In contrast, deliberative targeting places a logistical value on targets through their carefully calibrated, strategic position within the infrastructural networks that are the very fibres of modern society. The complex geometries of these networks then displace the pinpoint coordinates of ‘precision’ weapons and ‘smart bombs’ so that their effects surge far beyond any immediate or localised destruction. Their impacts ripple outwards through the network, extending the envelope of destruction in space and time, and yet the syntax of targeting – with its implication of isolating an objective – distracts attention from the cascade of destruction deliberately set in train. In exactly this spirit, British and American attacks on Iraqi power stations in 2003 were designed to disrupt not only the supply of electricity but also the pumping of water and the treatment of sewage that this made possible, with predictable (and predicted) consequences for public health. Similarly, on 28 June 2006, during the IDF’s Operation Summer Rains, Israeli missiles destroyed all six transformers of Gaza’s only power station (which provided over half of Gaza’s power). Being powerless in Gaza was as devastating as in Iraq:

‘The lack of electricity means sewage cannot be treated, increasing the risk of disease spreading, and hospitals cannot function normally. It means ordinary Gazans cannot keep perishable food because their fridges do not work. At night, they are plunged into complete darkness when the electricity

Turse, ‘Bombs over Baghdad: the Pentagon’s secret air war in Iraq’, at <http://www.tomdispatch.com>, 7 February 2007.

cuts off. They rely on candles and paraffin lamps. Many residents have also been left with an irregular water supply as they need electricity to pump water up from nearby wells or from ground floor level to higher floors in blocks of flats.’



As the Projects Manager of the Gaza Power Generating Company explained, in the modern world ‘there is no regular life without electricity.’ And yet at any one time he reckoned one half of the residents of Gaza were without electricity.²⁹ In September the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem reported on the continuing effects of the attack:

²⁹ ‘Powerless in Gaza’, Report from IRIN, UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article5716.shtml>, 10 September 2006.

‘Three months have passed since the attack [but] for the 1.4 million residents of the Gaza Strip, who have been forced to live without electricity for long parts of the day and night, the harsh effects of the attack continue to be felt. The effects of the attack are apparent in all areas of life. As a result of the lack of electricity, the level of medical services provided by clinics and hospitals has declined significantly; most of the urban population receive only two or three hours of water a day; the sewage system is on the verge of collapse; many inhabitants’ mobility has been severely restricted as a result of non-functioning elevators; and the lack of refrigeration has exposed many to the danger of food-poisoning. Small businesses reliant on a regular power supply have been badly affected...’³⁰

The second refinement of late modern war has been to produce an electronic disjuncture between ‘the eye’ and ‘the target’ that acts as meridian and membrane between ‘our space’ and ‘their space’.³¹ But this electronic disjuncture is an extraordinarily labile medium that sustains both a radical separation – a sort of time-space expansion – and the most acute time-space compression. On one side, ‘their space’ is reduced to a space empty of

³⁰ B’Tselem, *Act of Vengeance: Israel’s Bombing of the Gaza Power Plant and its Effects* (September 2006). The report’s authors noted that ‘aiming attacks at civilian objects is forbidden under International Humanitarian Law and is considered a war crime’, and concluded that ‘the power plant bombed by Israel is a purely civilian object and bombing it did nothing to impede the ability of Palestinian organizations to fire rockets into Israeli territory.’

³¹ Rey Chow, ‘The age of the world target: atom bombs, alterity, area studies’, in *The age of the world target: self-referentiality in war, theory and comparative work* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2006) pp. 25-43: 36.

people; the visual technology of late modern warfare produces the space of the enemy as an abstract space on an electronic screen of co-ordinates and pixels. These high-level abstractions sustain the illusion of an authorizing master-subject who asserts both visual mastery and violent possession through what Caren Kaplan calls the ‘cosmic view’ of air power. This is vertical geopolitics with a vengeance: ‘Outside the wire of Balad Air Base [north of Baghdad], the insurgency still rages and sectarian war looms,’ reported Michael Hirsh in May 2006, ‘but the sky above is a deep azure and, no small thing, wholly American-owned.’³² These high-level abstractions deploy a discourse of objectivity – so that elevation secures the higher Truth – and a discourse of object-ness that reduces the world to a series of objects in a visual plane. As I have argued elsewhere, bombs and missiles then rain down on on K-A-B-U-L but not on the city of Kabul, its innocent inhabitants terrorised and their homes shattered by another round in the incessant wars choreographed by superpowers from a safe distance. And the IDF can render the landscape of southern Lebanon as a ‘kill-box’, so that during the night of 29 July 2006 its forces can attack only ‘structures, headquarters and weapon facilities’, ‘vehicles, bridges and routes’, and the combat zone is magically emptied of all human beings. The result, fervently desired and artfully orchestrated, is optical detachment. ‘Remote as they are far from “targets”,’ Zygmunt Bauman once observed, ‘scurrying over those they hit too fast to witness the devastation they cause and the blood they spill, the pilots-turned-computer-operators hardly ever have the chance of looking

³² Caren Kaplan, ‘Mobility and war: the cosmic view of US “airpower”’, *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006) 395-407; Michael Hirsh, ‘Stuck in the hot zone’, *Newsweek* 1 May 2006. On vertical geopolitics, see Stephen Graham, ‘Vertical geopolitics: Baghdad and after’, *Antipode* 36 (2004) 12-23.

their victims in the face and to survey the human misery they have sowed.’³³ Just like Mr Barrow venturing into ‘the land of the Bushmen’ in the early nineteenth century, who, according to Mary-Louise Pratt, recorded not the Bushmen but merely ‘scratches on the face of the country’, so these screen images reveal scars on the face of the country but never on the faces of those who have been injured and killed there.³⁴

On the other side, this erasure of corporeality is twisted into another dimension through late modern war’s annihilation of space through time. The United States has increasingly deployed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles as part of the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs. In both Afghanistan and Iraq extensive use is made of Predator drones that carry three cameras and two Hellfire missiles. Take-offs and landings are controlled by pilots from Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadrons based at Bagram and Balad Air Bases, but once the drones are airborne the missions are flown by pilots from Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field, part of the Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, some 7, 000 miles away. When Robert Kaplan visited Indian Springs, he saw the trailers from which the missions were flown. ‘Inside that trailer is Iraq; inside the other, Afghanistan,’ he was told. ‘Inside those trailers you leave North America which falls under Northern

³³ Derek Gregory, *The colonial present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Oxford UK: Blackwell, 2004) p. 54; ‘Summary of aerial activity in Lebanon’, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 July 2006; Zygmunt Bauman, ‘Wars of the globalization era’, *European journal of social theory* 4 (2001) 11-28: 27; cf. Tom Engelhardt, ‘Degradating behavior: the Middle East and the barbarism of war from the air’, at <http://www.tomdisptach.com>, 28 July 2006.

³⁴ Mary-Louise Pratt, “‘Scratches on the face of the country’: or what Mr Barrow saw in the Land of the Bushmen’, *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985) 119-43.

Command, and enter the Middle East, the domain of Central Command [CENTCOM]. So much for the tyranny of Geography.’³⁵

The irony of that last sentence evidently escaped its author, but the contortions of time and space that it conveys are given renewed force by a third refinement of late modern war: its mediatization. War reporting has a long history, but the emergence of a military-industrial-media-entertainment complex at the end of the twentieth century has sought to elevate late modern war from the virtual to what James Der Derian (fully conscious of the irony) calls the ‘virtuous’. By this, he means to signal both the priority attached to the visual and also the determination ‘to commute death, to keep it out of sight’: to produce war as a space of both constructed and constricted visibility.³⁶ News media and video games work hand-in-glove with the military to naturalize the reduction of the space of the enemy to a visual field through satellite photographs, bomb-sight views and simulations, and feed in to the staging of late modern war as spectacle. A public is produced that is made accustomed to seeing Baghdad and other ‘alien cities’ as targets; their people, their neighbourhoods, all the mundane geographies of everyday life are hollowed out.³⁷ These imaginative geographies work in the background to disable any critical politics of witnessing. Civilian casualties are rendered as unseen and uncouned (hence General Franks’ less than frank insistence that ‘We don’t do body counts’); as inevitable but irrelevant (‘collateral

³⁵ Robert Kaplan, ‘Hunting the Taliban in Las Vegas’, *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 2006.

³⁶ James der Derian, *Virtuous war: mapping the military-industrial-media-entertainment complex* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001) p. xvi; see also idem, ‘Imaging terror: logos, pathos, ethos’, *Third World Quarterly* 26 (2005) 23-37.

³⁷ Gregory, Colonial present, pp. 199-212; Stephen Graham, ‘Cities and the “War on Terror”’, *International journal of urban and regional research* 30 (2006) 255-76.

damage’, the unintended and unforeseen consequence of military action); or as legitimate targets through complicity or even ‘unworthiness’ (Agamben’s *homines sacri*).³⁸ In these ways the public is at once brought close to the action (the spectacle, the thrill) while being removed from its consequences. As Weber argues, this too involves a simultaneous reduction and maximization of distance. When a domestic audience watches video of a missile closing on its target, he writes,

‘The distance to the image, the target, is reduced and eliminated, and with it, the target-image is itself eliminated, vanishes from the screen. At the same time, everything is more distant than ever before. For we “know”, or think we know, that the target has been destroyed, and with it, everything that we have not seen: all the things and people presumably behind those walls. At the same time, we, who have followed this elimination of distance through the eyes of the camera, which is also the eyes of the missile, we are still whole, safe and sane in our homes. We are exhilarated at the sight of such power and control, we are relieved to be still in one piece, but we cannot entirely forget what we have seen without seeing it: enormous destruction and death.... This gnawing suspicion is what makes us relieved to be returned to the familiar and reassuring framework provided by what is aptly called media “coverage”;

³⁸ The concept of ‘collateral damage’ is not a recent American invention; it was devised by British military planners during the Second World War. ‘Civilian casualties had to be accepted as a by-product of attacks on physical plant used for war production or even related civilian production’: Charles Maier, ‘Targeting the city: debates and silences about the aerial bombing of World War II’, *International review of the Red Cross* 87 (2005) 429-444: 432.

something is indeed being “covered”, the way a “carpet” covers a floor, or the way “carpet bombings” cover an area. What is being covered is ultimately that which technology has always potentially covered: the frailty and limitations of the human body.’³⁹

It is time to turn to those frail bodies.

Civilians⁴⁰

Like the target, the concept of the civilian has a complex history. In the English language in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a ‘civilian’ was a student or practitioner of Civil Law. The use of ‘civilian’ to mean the opposite of ‘military’ did not emerge until the second half of the eighteenth century, when it referred to a covenanted European servant of the East India Company, in effect a colonial administrator. Its modern application, as I want to show, reactivates both these legal and colonial genealogies. By the nineteenth century ‘civilian’ was commonly used to mean a non-military person but, as opposites so frequently do, it danced a fateful gavotte with its counterpart. In the process, the civilian became entangled in the historical geography of war through the choreography of international law. The figure of the non-combatant has a long and troubled history in international law –

³⁹ Samuel Weber. ‘The media and the war’, *Surfaces* 1.13 (1991); cf. Lisa Parks, ‘Satellite views of Srebrenica: tele-visibility and the politics of witnessing’, *Social identities* 7 (2001) 585-611.

⁴⁰ This section elaborates my ‘The death of the civilian’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006) 633-8.

its most influential delineation was by Hugo Grotius (1583-1645)⁴¹ – but the formal concept of the civilian only received express definition through the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 that was addressed to ‘the protection of civilian persons in times of war’, which was based in part on the Hague Convention of 1907, and through the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 8 June 1977 ‘relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts.’⁴² In what follows, I identify two crucial geographies that have been folded into the concept of the civilian and then trace the convergence between these and the geographies of bombing and targeting that took place in Lebanon during the summer of 2006.⁴³

Placing the civilian

The Protocols additional to the Fourth Geneva Convention were drawn up in 1977, and by August 2006 those relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts had been ratified by 166 states and those relating to non-international armed conflicts had been ratified by 162 states. Israel and the United States have declined to do so, but it is possible to provide a critical reading of the Protocols from a position removed from

⁴¹ For a succinct review of the Grotian tradition, see Karma Nabulsi, *The traditions of war* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1999); see also Edward Keene, *Beyond the anarchical society: Grotius, colonialism and order in world politics* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

⁴² Geoffrey Best, *War and law since 1945* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁴³ There are of course other geographies that connect civilians to military violence in the region. Eyal Weizman has shown, with exemplary clarity, how the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank involves, in substantial measure, a civilian as well as a military occupation in contravention of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (‘The Occupying Power shall not ... transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies’) and in defiance of UN Security Council Resolution 242: Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman (eds), *A civilian occupation: the politics of Israeli architecture* (London: Verso, 2003); Eyal Weizman, *A Hollow Land* (London: Verso, 2007).

the self-interest that motivated these twin refusals. I restrict my comments here to two problematic geographies that are implicit in the discriminations made by the Protocols: one *feminizes* the civilian by dispersing the figure among women, children and the elderly, while the other *disables* the civilian by excluding the figure from the body politic altogether.

The Protocols distinguished permissible and impermissible targets through a distinction between combatants and civilians, but Helen Kinsella has shown that they did so by turning a Janus face. On one side, the distinction was made an indistinction. Combatants only had to distinguish themselves from civilians during military deployment and engagement, and civilians were no longer entitled to protection while they engaged in hostilities. In fact, this recognition of the shifting roles assumed by those involved in modern warfare has a particular significance for Israel, despite its refusal to endorse the Protocols, because its military operations rely on thousands of reservists who ‘shift from civilians to soldiers in a day.’⁴⁴ On the other side, in order to fix these shape-shifters and thus give the civilian a clearer outline, the Protocols drew directly on the Fourth Geneva Convention whose commentaries fastened on the shared ‘suffering, distress or weakness’ that rendered civilians – ‘by definition’ – incapable of taking an active part in hostilities. Kinsella emphasizes that it is only women who are supposed to bear these signifiers permanently: the others – the sick, the wounded, the old – do so transiently.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Laura King, ‘Israel’s reservists shift from civilians to soldiers in a day’, *Los Angeles Times* 24 July 2006.

⁴⁵ Helen Kinsella, ‘Gendering Grotius: sex and sex difference in the laws of war’, *Political theory* 34 (2) (2006) 161-191: 182-3.

The significance of Kinsella's analysis, even in this skeletal form, is twofold. First, it shows how discourses of gender are mobilized not only to denote but also, crucially, to *produce* the distinction between combatant and civilian. This could only ever be a holding operation. Although it was a convenient fiction to assume that women and children were safe in places far from the front lines, it rapidly became impossible to sustain a separation between feminized civilian and masculinized military spaces. It was already difficult to do so during the Second World War, by which time aerial bombing had turned 'the home front' into a killing field. Mass mobilization ensured that most men of martial age were fighting on other fronts, and so women and children died in disproportionate numbers in air raids that were none the less consistently justified in military terms. By the end of the twentieth century the gendered geography of war had all but disappeared: even more women served in militaries and so-called 'new wars' were fought through non-linear spaces.⁴⁶ And yet its humanist rhetoric has survived in horrified media reports of the deaths of women and children from military and paramilitary violence. This is a vital function in wars where death is airbrushed away, but its affective geography is also profoundly selective: it works to render the deaths of men and teenage boys less worthy of remorse or grief.⁴⁷ Think, for example, of the cordon thrown by the US military around Fallujah in November 2004. Only women, children and the elderly were allowed to pass through; men and teenage boys were trapped in the

⁴⁶ Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, 'Gender and conflict in a global context', in Giles and Hyndman (eds) *Sites of violence: gender and conflict zones* (California: University of California Press, 2004) 3-23: 5.

⁴⁷ Cf. Judith Butler, *Precarious life: the powers of mourning and violence* (London: Verso, 2004). See also Colm McKeogh, *Innocent civilians: the morality of killing in war* (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); R. Charli Carpenter, *Innocent women and children: gender, norms and the protection of civilians* (Aldershot UK: Ashgate, 2006).

beleaguered city, which was then systematically levelled. When asked whether he intended to allow humanitarian supplies through the cordon to aid non-combatants caught in the cross-fire, one US Marine Colonel replied: 'I don't think that is the case.' The war machine had marked them all as insurgents without discrimination and their deaths were dismissed as being of no account. This dismissal was reinforced by media images of 'the battle for Fallujah' that consistently represented the city from the air as yet another target in a purely visual field.⁴⁸

Second, Kinsella concludes that the marking of the civilian by these signifiers means that:

'To be innocent in war, in the terms set by the laws of war, is to be deficient or lacking in a multitude of ways that in the end, implicitly if not explicitly, cites an incapacity for politics... Equally significant, an incapacity for politics is also, at least for Aristotle, an incapacity to become fully human. This is not benign, for it shows how the rights and protections of international humanitarian law are genealogically derived or grounded in what some might call "subhumanity". What this portends is that international humanitarian law requires and produces "subhumanity" as the predicate for extending recognition of its rights or offering its protections.'⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Stephen Graham, 'Remember Fallujah: demonising place, constructing atrocity', *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 23 (2005) 1-10; *Learning from Fallujah* (Oxford: Oxford Research Group, 2005).

⁴⁹ Kinsella, 'Gendering Grotius', p. 185.

‘Subhumanity’ here means those placed outside the political community, and classically, as Giorgio Agamben reminds us, outside the *polis*. They retain voice – they can certainly express pain – but they are refused speech. They are pre-political subjects denied political agency who may nevertheless become the (conditional) *objects* of political action.⁵⁰ At least two sets of conditions are typically imposed. Most fundamentally, the protections of international law are extended to civilians on condition that they not only refrain from fighting but that they also remain outside the political process. Their intrinsic innocence is guaranteed only by their passivity; others must act on their behalf. They cannot represent themselves, it seems, they must be represented.⁵¹ This etiolated geography of responsibility is contorted still further when their protection is afforded through so-called humanitarian intervention. For then a second perimeter is typically drawn to separate internal actors who are directly and immediately party to the conflict, and by extension civilians who are suffering or at risk, from external actors who are represented as intervening *ex post facto*. This imaginative geography thus removes (and absolves) those ‘external’ actors from any prior involvement in or responsibility for the formation of the crisis itself.⁵²

These observations treat the civilian as a product of the operations of sovereign power, but this needs to be qualified in two further ways. First, the figure of the civilian is rendered still more vulnerable through what

⁵⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: sovereign power and bare life* (trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen) (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998) pp. 7-8.

⁵¹ This is, of course, Marx writing in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Said used it as his opening epigraph to *Orientalism*, and the colonizing force of its paternalism will surely be as clear to his readers as it was to him.

⁵² Anne Orford, ‘Localizing the other: the imaginative geography of humanitarian intervention’, in her *Reading humanitarian intervention: human rights and the use of force in international law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 82-125.

Achille Mbembe has identified as a ‘necropolitics’ whose ultimate site of deployment, he suggests, ‘is no longer the body as such but the dead body of the “civilian”.’⁵³ Secondly, it follows that in late modern war the civilian has also become a biopolitical product whose security may be displaced by a series of highly selective topographical and topological manoeuvres. I now want to demonstrate how these transformations work by wiring the preceding arguments to Israel’s war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006.

Displacing the civilian

Operation Just Reward was the largest operation carried out by the Israel Defence Force in Lebanon since 1982. I cannot trace the long history that lay behind this bloody episode here. Its regional templates include the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990); the overlapping Israeli invasion, occupation and forced withdrawal from Lebanon; Israel’s festering conflict with Hizbollah; the unresolved and largely symbolic dispute over the Sha’aba Farms area; and the uneasy post-war settlement in Lebanon. There was also an outer ring of state actors who were intimately involved in the conflict, especially France and the United States, Iran and Syria. The Bush administration repeatedly described Hizbollah as a puppet of Iran and Syria, which was a wilfully superficial representation of its politics and its programme, but the role of the United States is itself highly suspect. There have been credible suggestions that Israel’s war plan was devised in concert with the White House and the Pentagon to prevent Hizbollah from retaliating

⁵³ Christian Hoeller, ‘Interview with Achille Mbembe’, *Springerin Magazine* 3/2002 at <http://www.springerin.at>; see also Achille Mbembe, ‘Necropolitics’, *Public culture* 15 (2003) 11-40.

to any future air strike on Iran. Journalist Seymour Hersh claimed that the United States had agreed to support an Israeli bombing offensive against infrastructure in southern Lebanon in response to the next provocation from Hizbollah.⁵⁴ Whatever one makes of this, Israel's offensive was remarkably swift and out of all proportion to the excuse provided by Hizbollah's capture ('abduction') of two Israeli soldiers from northern Israel on 12 July. Hizbollah's stated intention was to exchange its captives for three Lebanese prisoners held by Israel, but that same day – and in full acknowledgement that Hizbollah was likely to respond to any military attack with rocket launches – the Israeli cabinet authorized air strikes on Lebanon. After the first raids, which killed or injured over Lebanese 100 civilians, Hizbollah launched its Katyusha rockets against northern Israel.⁵⁵

Yitzhak Laor's mordant rendering of the moral meridian drawn by the Israeli government, the IDF, and their protagonists inside and outside Israel captures the double standards that were involved:

'We have the right to abduct. You don't. We have the right to arrest. You don't. You are terrorists. We are virtuous. We have sovereignty. You don't.... We are angels of death.'⁵⁶

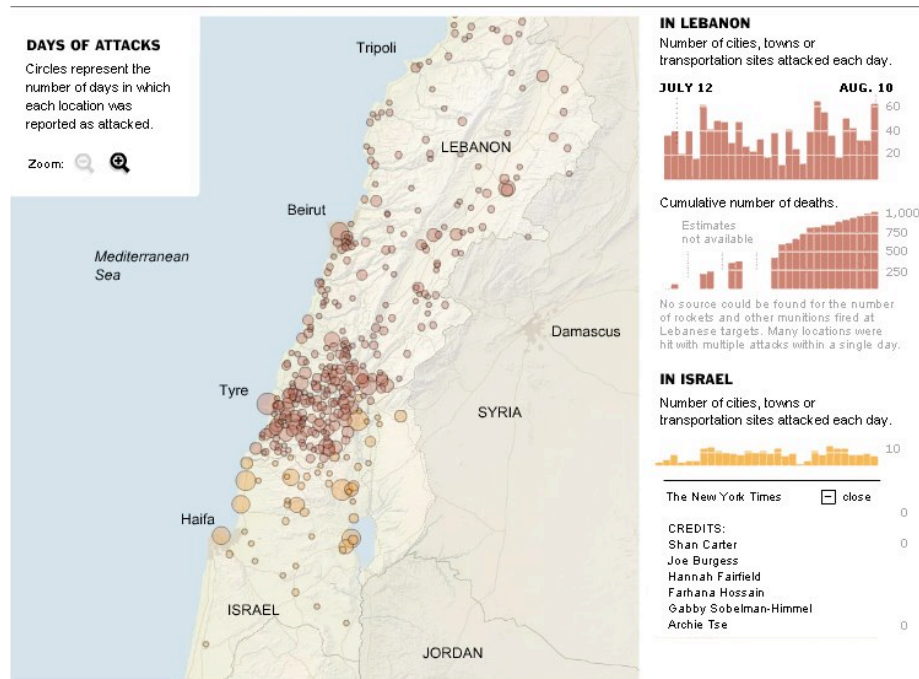
The objective of this moral cartography is to invert the algebra of death and destruction, and so render Israeli deaths more grievable than those of their

⁵⁴ Seymour Hersh, 'Watching Lebanon', *New Yorker* 21 August 2006.

⁵⁵ Tanya Reinhart, 'Burning Lebanon: Israel's new Middle East', *Counterpunch* 27 July 2006.

⁵⁶ Yitzhak Laor, 'You are terrorists, we are virtuous', *London Review of Books* 17 August 2006.

antagonists. The figures might otherwise speak for themselves. From 12 July through to 14 August 2006, the IDF launched more than 7,000 air attacks and 2,500 bombardments from the sea against Lebanon; over 1,000 people were killed and more than 4,000 injured. In retaliation, Hizbollah launched 3,970 individual rockets against Israel; 43 civilians were killed and 1,500 injured. My purpose is not to reverse the balance sheet, however, setting these deaths against those deaths, but to reveal the asymmetry of representation and responsibility. In particular, I seek to show how the war in Lebanon worked both to widen the scope of a permissible target and to displace the concept of the civilian in ways that disclose the biopolitical project that has become central to late modern war and, most of all, to the ‘war on terror’.⁵⁷



⁵⁷ Cf. Elizabeth Dauphine and Cristina Masters (eds), *The logics of biopower and the war on terror: living, dying, surviving* (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Julian Reid, *The biopolitics of the war on terror: life struggles, liberal modernity and the defence of logistical societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

On 17 July the US ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, rose to the public defence of Israel. He insisted that there was no ‘moral equivalence’ between ‘civilians who died as the direct result of malicious terrorist acts’ – the rocket attacks launched on northern Israel by Hizbollah – and ‘the tragic and unfortunate consequence of civilian deaths as a result of military action taken in self-defence’.⁵⁸ The Iraq war had shown how strained the White House’s sense of self-defence was, and Bolton had been instrumental in its prosecution through his involvement in the Project for a New American Century and his service as Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. But now he was doing more than endorse the Israeli claim that its exuberantly disproportionate response to the capture of two of its soldiers was a defensive act. He was also drawing a line between Lebanese civilians and Israeli civilians. Several days later Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz raised the stakes by railing against what he called ‘the increasingly meaningless word “civilian”’. Dershowitz’s credentials as an apologist for hardline Israeli governments are well known, but in this instance he was proposing a thoroughgoing ‘reassessment of the law of war’ to recognize what he called ‘a continuum of “civility”’.

‘Near the most civilian end of this continuum are the pure innocents – babies, hostages and others completely uninvolved; at the more combatant end are civilians who willingly harbor terrorists, provide material resources and serve as human shields; in the middle are those who support the terrorists politically or spiritually.’

⁵⁸ United States Mission to the United Nations, Press Release 174 (06), 17 July 2006.

The laws of war must adapt to these new realities, he insisted, a refrain that is all too familiar in the Bush league where the ‘war on terror’ is supposed to have installed a new paradigm that trumps pre-existing international law. Dershowitz also wanted casualty figures to be recalibrated. Arguing that those who voluntarily remained in southern Lebanon had ‘become complicit’ and that ‘some – those who cannot leave on their own – should be counted among the innocent victims’, he demanded: ‘How many of the “civilian casualties” fall closer to the line of complicity and how many fall closer to the line of innocence [?]’,⁵⁹

These were obvious attempts to minimise in affective and actuarial terms the deaths of hundreds of people during Israel’s assault on Lebanon. During the war, Lebanese civilians were more or less erased from the vocabulary of the Israeli government, the IDF and their supporters. The IDF dropped leaflets throughout southern Lebanon instructing the population to leave their homes and move north of the Litani River: ‘Pay attention to these instructions! The IDF will intensify its activities and will heavily bomb the entire area from which rockets are being launched against the State of Israel.’ By the last week of July, Israel’s Minister of Justice had concluded that ‘Everyone in southern Lebanon is a terrorist and is connected to Hizbollah’, and the IDF was given permission to expand its target envelope. As it did so, the connection between ‘targets’ and ‘civilians’ that emerged in

⁵⁹ Alan Dershowitz, ‘Arithmetic of pain’, *Wall Street Journal* 19 July 2006; Alan Dershowitz, “‘Civilian casualty’? It depends”, *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 2006. For a devastating critique of the terminus of these reductions, see Juan Cole, ‘Dershowitz and grades of human beings’, *Informed Comment*, at <http://www.juancole.com>, 24 July 2006. For Dershowitz’s wider views on Israel, see Alan Dershowitz, *The case for Israel* (New York: Wiley, 2003); cf. Norman Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: the misuse of anti-Semitism and the abuse of history* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

war-torn Lebanon raised three vital questions that speak directly to the concerted attempt to rewrite the boundaries of late modern war.

First, Israel consistently emphasized that it deployed precision-guided missiles, and repeatedly described its strikes as ‘surgical’, in an attempt to obscure the network effects of its deliberative targeting and to draw a clear distinction between its military machine that supposedly minimized civilian casualties and Hizbollah’s indiscriminate assault on northern Israel. As Table 1 shows, however, these claims also derive from a particular structure of legitimation:

State actors	Non-state actors
<p data-bbox="256 1031 776 1115"><i>claim a monopoly of the legitimate means of violence:</i></p> <p data-bbox="461 1157 571 1192">‘WAR’</p>	<p data-bbox="834 1031 1377 1115"><i>disqualified from the use of political violence:</i></p> <p data-bbox="987 1157 1224 1192">‘TERRORISM’</p>
<p data-bbox="282 1310 753 1436"><i>claim to use ‘smart bombs’ and ‘precision-guided missiles’ to minimize civilian casualties:</i></p> <p data-bbox="386 1478 649 1514">‘LAW-ABIDING’</p>	<p data-bbox="844 1310 1367 1436"><i>restricted to low technology, crude and hence indiscriminate weapons systems:</i></p> <p data-bbox="948 1478 1263 1514">‘LAW-BREAKING’</p>

Table 1

The ‘smartness’ and ‘precision’ of advanced weapons systems are subject to considerable margins of error (‘tolerance’), and I have already shown how

their effects surge out from the initial points of impact, but what is at issue here is the rhetorical consequences of deploying ‘a discursive technology of validation to which only a privileged few have recourse’.⁶⁰ In this case, its moral cartography is also suspect on more pragmatic grounds. If the IDF were so assiduous in its selection of targets, how did its barrage kill so many more civilians than Hizbollah’s crude Katyusha missiles?⁶¹ And if its senior commanders were so scrupulous, why did they deploy notoriously inaccurate and unreliable cluster bombs, over 90 per cent of them in the last 72 hours of the war by which time it was clear that a cease-fire was imminent?⁶²

⁶⁰ J. Marshall Beier, ‘Discriminating tastes: “Smart” bombs, non-combatants and notions of legitimacy in warfare’, *Security dialogue* 34 (2003) pp. 411-425: 422-3; see also Thomas Smith, ‘The new laws of war: legitimizing hi-tech and infrastructural violence’, *International studies quarterly* 46 (2002) 355-74: 362. I do not make these arguments to excuse Hizbollah. Amnesty International concluded that ‘the scale of the rocket attacks on cities, towns and villages in northern Israel, the indiscriminate nature of the weapons used, together with official statements, specifically those of Hizbollah’s leader, show that Hizbollah has committed serious violations of international humanitarian law’: *Under fire: Hizbollah’s attacks on northern Israel*, 14 September 2006.

⁶¹ Hizbollah had thousands of Katyusha missiles, which were originally developed for the Soviet Army in World War II: most of them were BM 21s, which are easily mounted on trucks, mobile and inexpensive; they have a limited range (around 20 km) and little guidance capacity. Hizbollah also had hundreds of Iranian-supplied Fajr-3 missiles, which have a longer range (20-45 km), and some Fajr-5 missiles (75 km).

⁶² Declan Walsh, ‘Unexploded cluster bombs prompt fear and fury in returning refugees’, *Guardian* 21 August 2006; Scott Peterson, ‘Israeli shelling left carpet of bomblets’, *Christian science monitor* 24 August 2006; Rory McCarthy, ‘Cluster bombing of Lebanon “immoral” UN official tells Israel’, *Guardian* 31 August 2006; Ben Russell, ‘Pressure for ban on cluster bombs as Israel is accused of targeting civilians’, *Independent* 31 August 2006; Patrick Cockburn, ‘Deadly harvest: the Lebanese fields sown with cluster bombs’, *Independent* 18 September 2006. During the war Israel fired over 1,800 (mainly American-made) cluster bombs containing over 1.2 million bomblets. One Israeli rocket unit commander described the action as ‘insane and monstrous: we covered entire towns in cluster bombs.’ Meron Rappaport, ‘IDF commander: we fired more than a million cluster bombs in Lebanon’, *Ha’aretz* 12 September 2006; see also ‘Israel opted for cheaper, unsafe cluster bombs in Lebanon war’, *Ha’aretz* 14 November 2006. Here too the effects are dispersed and delayed; cluster bombs do not pinpoint but saturate, since each bomb disperses its bomblets over 20,000 square metres, and 25 per

Second, Israel and its allies made any distinction between Lebanese combatants and Lebanese civilians problematic. This is a common concern in asymmetric warfare and counter-insurgency operations (Table 2):

Why is identification and tracking so difficult?

- **Enemy leaders look like everyone else**
- **Enemy combatants look like everyone else**
- **Enemy vehicles look like civilian vehicles**
- **Enemy installations look like civilian installations**
 - Schools, mosques, hospitals, factories
- **Enemy equipment and materials look like civilian equipment and materials**
 - Biotech, chemical engineering, food processing, energy production
- **Enemy weapons indistinguishable from civilian materiel beyond an intimate distance**

*Defense Science Board, 2004 Summer Study
on Transition to and from hostilities, p. 154*

Table 2

But to say that civilians ‘look like’ combatants is not to erase the distinction. In Iraq the United States maintains the convenient fiction that the insurgency is alien (hence Thomas Friedman’s bizarre question: ‘Are there any Iraqis in

cent (and perhaps as many as 30-40 per cent) of them fail to explode on impact so that, as Landmine Action noted, ‘the rubble-filled villages of southern Lebanon have been deliberately turned into minefields that will indiscriminately kill civilians for years to come.’

Iraq?'), so that civilians are not immediately collapsed into combatants.⁶³ Although the distinction remains flexible – US counterinsurgency operations are remarkable for their reported facility in killing only insurgents – it has become an increasingly important pivot for the military's recent 'cultural turn'.⁶⁴

In southern Lebanon, however, the Israeli government and the IDF deliberately erased the distinction. According to Daniel Carmon, Israel's Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations, 'We are talking about a region where there was no distinction between Hizbollah and the civilian population.' Hizbollah does have deep taproots into local communities in the rural south and in southern Beirut, but these filiations are about politics and the provision of hospitals, clinics, schools and welfare for the poor and disadvantaged Shi'a as much as they are about campaigns of political violence.⁶⁵ Yet the politico-military argument was about more than the matrix of Hizbollah's support in southern Lebanon; it was also about the contradictory constitution of the concept of the civilian Other ('the enemy'). Even as the Israeli government condemned Hizbollah for its attacks on Israeli civilians, Human Rights Watch identified 'a systematic failure by the IDF to distinguish between combatants and civilians' in Lebanon.⁶⁶

⁶³ Thomas Friedman, 'Are there any Iraqis in Iraq?' *New York Times* 8 April 2004.

⁶⁴ I describe this in *War cultures* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

⁶⁵ Mona Harb, Reinoud Leenders, 'Know thy enemy: Hizbullah, "terrorism" and the politics of perception', *Third World Quarterly* 26 (2005) 173-97.

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Fatal strikes: Israel's indiscriminate attacks against civilians in Lebanon* (2006). An orchestrated campaign to vilify Human Rights Watch followed (and preceded) this report: see Arveh Neier, 'The attack on Human Rights Watch', *New York Review of Books* 2 November 2006. Human Rights Watch did not ignore Hizbollah's violations of international law, but its central – unassailable – point was that these crimes did not justify Israel's own indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

To show how the concept of the civilian Other was deconstructed by Israel's politico-military apparatus, I want to focus on a single incident. On 30 July, a 'precision-guided' Israeli missile smashed into a house on the edge of the village of Qana, killing at least 28 people, most of them children, and leaving 13 others 'missing'. It was a place with a fateful history. Ten years earlier Qana had been shelled by Israeli artillery; more than 100 civilians were killed and another 100 injured, all of whom had taken refuge in a United Nations compound. The IDF insisted that the deaths were an accident – a claim that was dismissed by a United Nations inquiry – and that Hizbollah had been using civilians to shield its mortar and rocket launchers. This time the IDF deployed the same arguments in its defence, only now it did so by counterposing military ignorance (read 'innocence') to civilian knowledge (read 'complicity'). First, the military insisted that the deaths were unintentional; it had no idea that families were sheltering in the house, and it regretted the loss of life. But as Israeli journalist Amira Hass remarked,

“‘We didn’t mean to’ is the cousin of ‘I don’t know’ and both are close neighbours of the double standard. What is permitted to us is forbidden to others. What hurts us does not hurt others (because they are “other”).’⁶⁷

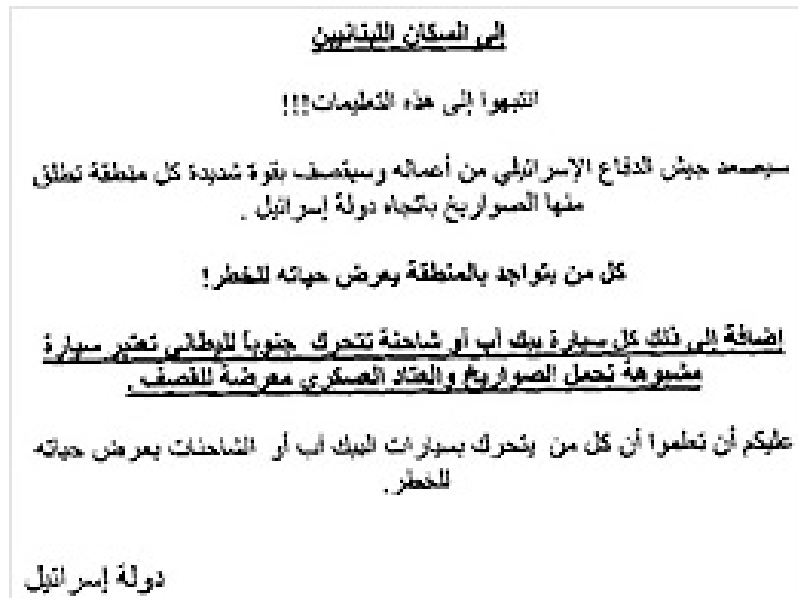
⁶⁷ Amira Hass, 'Nasrallah didn't mean to', *Ha'aretz* 17 August 2006. Hass used the Hizbollah leader's claim that civilian casualties in northern Israel were unintended to argue that Israelis ought to have no difficulty recognizing the casuistry because they used it all the time themselves.

And the IDF added its usual rider: ‘We don’t know what people were doing in the basement. It is possible they were being used as shields or being used cynically to further Hizbollah’s propaganda purposes.’⁶⁸ Yet survivors from Qana insisted there was nothing there to be shielded. If rockets had been fired from the village, one man explained, ‘all of us would have left because we knew we would be bombed.’⁶⁹ And that was the IDF’s second line of defence: the IDF may have been able to claim ignorance, but its victims were not allowed to do so; they were made complicit in their own destruction. The IDF repeated that ‘residents in this region and specifically the residents of Qana had been warned several days in advance to leave.’ In fact, the two extended families that had sought shelter in the house had repeatedly talked about leaving, but there were too many of them and they were too poor to be able to afford the \$1,000 for a taxi to take them to the less dangerous but hardly safe north of the country. They were also afraid of becoming targets if they left their basement shelter. Even clearly marked Red Cross ambulances had been attacked, including the convoy that set off after Qana was hit. An IDF leaflet was explicit: ‘You must know that anyone travelling in a pickup truck or truck is endangering his life.’ Soon

⁶⁸ Harry de Quetteville, ‘You’re all targets, Israel tells Lebanese in South’, *Daily Telegraph* 28 July 2006; Ghaith Abdul-Ahad and others, ‘They found them huddled together’, *Guardian* 31 July 2006. The same argument was repeated by Israel’s Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies in December 2006: ‘The construction of a broad military infrastructure, positioned and hidden in populated areas, was intended to minimize Hezbollah’s vulnerability. Hezbollah would also gain a propaganda advantage if it could represent Israel as attacking innocent civilians’.

⁶⁹ Mitch Prothero, ‘The “hiding among civilians” myth’, *Salon.com* 28 July 2006 ; Dahr Jamail, ‘No Hezbollah rockets fired from Qana’, Inter Press Service, 1 August 2006. Human Rights Watch reached similar conclusions; its on-the-ground researchers found ‘no cases in which Hizbollah deliberately used civilians as shields’ and reported detailed, credible and consistent testimony from witnesses who affirmed that Hizbollah was not present in their homes or in the vicinity when IDF attacks took place: Human Rights Watch, *Fatal strikes*, pp. 3, 15.

after the war began, 21 refugees were killed when an Israeli missile struck their convoy. The IDF retorted that the villagers had not co-ordinated their movement with the military, but nobody had told them they had to do so. Few of them had phones, and even then it was virtually impossible to call Israel from Lebanon. As Robert Fisk put it, ‘the people of these villages are terrified to leave and terrified to stay.’⁷⁰



IDF leaflet dropped over southern Lebanon, 19 July 2006

⁷⁰ Anthony Shadid, ‘Civilian toll mounts in Lebanon conflict’, *Washington Post* 24 July 2006; Nicholas Blanford and Ned Parker, ‘Fleeing civilian vehicles hit by Israeli missiles’, *Times* 24 July 2006; Sabrina Tavernise, ‘A night of terror and death for Lebanese villagers’, *New York Times* 31 July 2006; Robert Fisk, ‘How can we stand by and allow this to go on?’ *Independent* 31 July 2006; Sabrina Tavernise, ‘Civilians lose as fighters slip into the fog of war’, *New York Times* 3 August 2006. Later, the chief of staff of the Israeli Air Force suggested that it may not have been responsible for the deaths at all, and deliberately left dangling the suggestion that the building may have collapsed because the bombing triggered an explosion of weapons stored inside. Right-wing websites in the United States overflowed with bilious claims that the deaths were staged by Hizbollah: see, for example, ‘Hezbollywood? Evidence mounts that Qana collapse and deaths were staged’, at <http://www.israpundit.com>, 31 July 2006. Fox ‘News’ repeated the same allegations, which were refuted by Associated Press, Reuters and Agence-France Presse: David Bauder, ‘News agencies stand by Lebanon photos’, Associated Press, 1 August 2006.

Similar scenes were repeated across southern Lebanon and beyond.⁷¹ Around 970,000 people were displaced by the fighting, one quarter of Lebanon's total population, and hundreds of thousands more were trapped in the indistinction between combatant and civilian. But this indistinction was more than a clause in the ledgers of international law or even IDF doctrine. For it was given starkly material coordinates. Zionism has long cast envious eyes on the lands south of the Litani River, which several of its political cartographers (including David Ben-Gurion himself) portrayed as the 'natural' northern border of Israel, and Israel's attack on Lebanon turned this whole area into a vast zone of indistinction. The status of its inhabitants was constantly thrown into doubt. Deputy Ambassador Carmon repeated the recalibrations of Bolton and Dershowitz: 'We cannot for sure prove that all the civilians in southern Lebanon were purely innocent civilians.'⁷² If any 'innocent civilians' were glimpsed within those contorted contours, they were denied agency: ordered to run, only to find roads destroyed and bridges blown up; ordered to run, only to be shelled from the air and the ground. One refugee who survived an Israeli attack on his convoy said he felt 'that human beings had no value... The human became like animals.'⁷³ They were reduced to spectral figures in a shattered landscape where they could be killed with a click or a shrug – and above all, as Patrick McGreevy reported, with impunity.⁷⁴ They were targets, shields, terrorists; often less than that. 'There are still villages that aren't clean,' General Alon Freedman of the IDF's Northern Command declared, 'and in the coming days we will

⁷¹ See Human Rights Watch, *Fatal Strikes op. cit.*

⁷² <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/08/24/1425218>.

⁷³ Tavernise, 'Civilians lose'.

⁷⁴ Patrick McGreevy, 'Criminalizing civilians', *Electronic Lebanon*, 27 July 2006; cf. Agamben, *Homo sacer*.

apparently have to continue to clean them.’⁷⁵ They were denied the means to support the most minimal kind of ordinary, everyday life. As in previous IDF incursions into Gaza and the West Bank, civilian infrastructure was systematically targeted and destroyed. This knowingly increased the number of indirect civilian casualties as food, water and medical supplies were compromised and the delivery of aid was severely restricted. Amnesty International concluded:

‘The evidence strongly suggests that the extensive destruction of public works, power systems, civilian homes and industry was deliberate and an integral part of the military strategy... The widespread destruction of apartments, houses, electricity and water services, roads, bridges, factories and ports, in addition to several statements by Israeli officials, suggests a policy of punishing both the Lebanese government and the civilian population in an effort to get them to turn against Hizbullah.’⁷⁶

Israel’s attacks on the poor neighbourhoods of southern Beirut – al Dahiya (‘the suburb’) – were particularly ferocious. The IDF released aerial photographs in an attempt to show that the devastation was contained, but these distanced images concealed how the population was condensed. At

⁷⁵ James Strucke, David Fickley, ‘Israel extends Lebanon occupation plan’, *Guardian* 3 August 2006.

⁷⁶ Amnesty International, *Deliberate destruction or “collateral damage”? Israeli attacks on civilian infrastructure* (23 August 2006); see the cumulative sequence of maps of Israeli attacks on Lebanon and its infrastructure at <http://www.lebanonmaps.org>. Compare this assault with the IDF’s ‘Operation Defensive Shield’ in the West Bank, which I describe in *Colonial present*, Chapter 6.

least 500,000 people lived in these hardscrabble, crowded neighbourhoods, in a maze of tower blocks. Most of the people who lived (and died) there were Shiites who had fled to the city during the civil war, and it was on what commentators have called this hallowed ground – Hizbollah’s *terra sancta* – that the ‘resistance society’ was consolidated through extensive medical, welfare, educational, and development programmes. Its centre was Hrat Hreik, ‘security square’, where Hizbollah had its headquarters, together with its radio and satellite television stations, and newspaper offices. The Israeli attacks devastated ordinary lives and livelihoods, not launchers. ‘Here, I’ll show you the military targets’, the owner of a bombed out clothing store told one reporter. ‘Here are the rockets, the long-range ones,’ he said, pointing at a pile of clothes scattered with broken glass and fragments of brick, ‘and the short range,’ he added, gesturing across the store.⁷⁷ The Dahiya was a Hizbollah fiefdom, its own capital within the capital, but it was no military stronghold. The focus of Hizbollah’s activity there was on urban renewal projects carried out through public planning and construction agencies, and its political and administrative apparatus intertwined the production of local knowledge so closely with the production of urban space as to constitute a form of civic governmentality. Although Hizbollah criticised the Solidère project to reconstruct Beirut’s downtown for its reliance on private agencies and international finance capital, Ananya Roy has shown that its own development schemes are not a counterpoint to Lebanese neo-liberalism but rather partners in it.⁷⁸ The fact remains, however, that while al-Dahiya was

⁷⁷ Anthony Shadid, ‘A poor Beirut neighborhood feels brunt of war’, *Washington Post* 15 July 2006.

⁷⁸ Ananya Roy, ‘Civic governmentality: the politics of inclusion in Beirut and Mumbai’, forthcoming; see also Mona Harb, ‘Urban governance in post-war Beirut: resources, negotiations and contestations in the Elyssar project’, in S. Shiami (ed), *Capital cities:*

shattered by repeated Israeli air raids, just a few kilometres away the giant tower cranes looming over Solidère remained untoppled. At least in sparing the investments of international capital, Israeli targeting was ‘surgical’ and ‘precise’.⁷⁹

Third, and closely connected to that distinction, Britain, Canada and France (among others) scrambled to remove their own civilians from the line of fire while repeatedly stalling a cease-fire as ‘premature’. Ships converged on the harbour at Beirut to evacuate non-Lebanese civilians, while the concept of the civilian Other was placed in suspense by those who could (and should) have extended the protections of international humanitarian law to civilians irrespective of their nationality. In Canada there were howls of protest at the cost of evacuating Lebanese-Canadian citizens from those who did not regard them as ‘really’ Canadian. Soon after a resolution ending the fighting was finally approved on 11 August 2006, President Bush described Lebanon as a front in the global ‘war on terror’. ‘America recognizes that civilians in Lebanon and Israel have suffered from the current violence,’ he declared, ‘and we recognize that responsibility for this suffering lies with Hizbollah [and with] Hizbollah’s state sponsors, Iran and Syria.’ These are extraordinary words. With the end of the war Lebanon suddenly regains its civilians, and in dissolving the line drawn during the war between Lebanese

ethnographies of urban governance in the Middle East (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) pp. 111-133.

⁷⁹ On Solidère, see Saree Makdisi, ‘Laying claim to Beirut: urban narrative and spatial identity in the age of Solidère’, *Critical inquiry* 23 (1997) 660-705; C. Nagel, ‘Reconstructing space, re-creating memory: sectarian politics and urban development in post-war Beirut’, *Political geography* 21 (2002) 717-25; Heiko Schmid, ‘Privatized urbanity or a politicized society? Reconstruction in Beirut after the civil war’, *European planning studies* 14 (2006) 365-81.

and Israeli civilians, culpability for their appalling losses is attributed solely to Hizbollah, Iran and Syria.



‘Living in Lebanon today,’ wrote Ramzi Kysia, ‘I cannot forget. I remember Guernica.’ Others made the same comparison, including John Berger.⁸⁰ But Lebanon was not Guernica. As Lindqvist notes, of all the places that had been bombed elsewhere in the world before the attack on the Basque town, ‘only Guernica went down in history, because Guernica lies in Europe. In Guernica, we were the ones who died.’⁸¹ And in choosing to suspend the protections of international law from Lebanese civilians while extending them to their own citizens, Britain, Canada and the United States reactivated the imaginative geographies that divide ‘our space’ from ‘their space’ and so revealed the biopolitical project that is at the still heart of the ‘war on terror’.

Guernica and Geography

For all that, we would still do well to remember Picasso’s words in an interview at the end of the Second World War:

‘What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only eyes, if he is a painter, or ears if he is a musician, or a lyre in every chamber of his heart if he is a poet, or even, if he is a boxer, just his muscles?’

‘Far from it: at the same time, he is also a political being, constantly aware of the heartbreaking, passionate, or delightful

⁸⁰ Ramzi Kysia, ‘The distance from Guernica to Lebanon’, at <http://www.commondreams.org>, 17 July 2006; John Berger, ‘After Guernica (1937) – Beirut, Qana, Tyre (2006)’, in Wilson, Lebanon, p. 109.

⁸¹ Lindqvist, History of bombing, p. 74.

things that happen in the world, shaping himself completely in their image.

‘How could it be possible to feel no interest in other people, and with a cool indifference to detach yourself from the very life which they bring to you so abundantly? No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war...’⁸²

Geography too is an instrument of war. As Yves Lacoste reminded us an age ago, ‘La géographie, ça sert, d’abord, à faire la guerre.’ I think it is high time to rejoin Said’s struggle over geography, not least by fostering imaginative counter-geographies that can resist the deadly embrace between ‘targets’ and ‘civilians’, that underwrite a vigilant politics of witnessing, that join affect with analysis, and work towards a geography dedicated to peace. In doing so, we might help Blake Morrison’s ‘Stop’ to become something far more than a punctuation point.

⁸² Van Hensbergen, *Guernica*, pp. 24-5.