

# Strife

ISSUE 1 Hilary Term 2013



Guy Fawkes Redux - Between a European Greece and a Greek Europe  
Women and the Intifadas - On 'Empire', Imperialism, and Sovereignty  
A 'Dark Underbelly' of Humanitarian Relief Aid? - Painting Conflict



# *Strife Journal*

## Strife Journal, Issue 1 Hilary Term 2013 (March 2013)

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Cover page: *Los fusilamientos del tres de mayo* (AKA *The Third of May*) by Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, oil on canvas, 1814, currently at the Prado Museum, Madrid. This is a faithful photographic reproduction of an original two-dimensional work of art. The work of art is in the public domain.

## **Foreword**

This first issue of *Strife Journal* marks an important moment since the launch of our blog [strifeblog.org](http://strifeblog.org) on Guy Fawkes Night 2012. Our aim in this first issue is to explore the theme of strife as conflict from a variety of conceptual and analytical standpoints. This publication is the result of efforts by graduate students and researchers at King's College London to provide a multidisciplinary publishing platform for academics of various ranks to engage in discussion on conflict, war, politics and international affairs without limitations as to institutional affiliation.

Our immediate ambition is to provide a new platform for academic dissemination that is less formal, shorter, and more accessible for authors and readers. This publication strives to achieve this by including contributions of around 3000-4000 words. These are shorter than the majority of journal articles but much longer than blog posts, allowing for accurate referencing and depth. This issue is editor-reviewed, but in the next issue we will move to a peer-review model. We aim to publish twice a year, to coincide with Hilary and Michaelmas terms.

In this issue, after launching Strife blog with an explosive article exploring the parallels of cultural and religious confrontation between Guy Fawkes and contemporary terrorist Osama bin Laden, Jill Russell is back, contributing an exceptional opening piece to our first *Strife Journal* issue. Her essay explores the implications of the lethal trinity of the insurgent, city and mob for 21<sup>st</sup> century conflict. Dimitrios Machairas investigates the roots of Greek identity in the midst of major economic crisis, questioning to what extent modern Greek identity is compatible with European experience and culture. Maura James' contribution explores the changing role of women's organisations in Palestine during the First and Second Intifadas. The piece conveys the serious dilemma women's organisations in Palestine face when attempting to combine nationalist and feminist agendas within intifada movements. Revisiting the notions of sovereignty, imperialism and 'Empire', Pablo de Orellana argues that the current international system, rather than imitating former imperial practices, constitutes a new and developing form of imperialism. Under the guise of international institutions and hegemonic force, the international system is experiencing 'economic terraforming', whereby the global landscape is altered and adapted to Eurocentric practice and norms. Amelia Sundberg's work questions the assumed benevolence of humanitarian aid, revisiting the relief campaigns during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and Sudanese famine of 1983. The article argues that such programs have both entrenched conflict and contributed to conflict mitigation and peace building. Whilst relief aid can indirectly resource conflict, legitimise complicit parties, and influence its scale and location, Sundberg questions whether humanitarian aid need be so swiftly indicted in an environment where other 'drivers' of conflict are more far more obviously culpable. Painter Tom de Freston provides an animated commentary on Goya's 'Third of May' which graces our cover, and the 'Disasters of War' etchings. Drawing parallels with the desensitising effect of pornography, his essay critiques the distancing of an image-saturated public from the gruesome realities of war. Tom de Freston's work is a poignant and gripping indictment of both art's depiction and society's engagement with war. Finally, the two blog entries included in this issue are accounts of two major events that have shaken the African continent, written by individuals deeply linked with the ongoing situations. Nesma El Shazly writes about her experiences of the Egyptian revolution and the marches in Tahir square that led to the downfall of the Mubarak regime. Fred Robart shares his own perspective on the capture of Goma by the part Rwandan funded M23 rebels.

Special thanks are due to Dr. Christine Cheng, Prof. Vivienne Jabri, Dr Oisín Tansey, Prof. Mats Berdal and Dr. Kieran Mitton for providing the seed funding for us to demonstrate the value of this innovative academic publishing format over this issue and the next. We thank them for this opportunity.

Whilst this first issue of *Strife Journal* has been built from a budget of only £150, we hope that its value far outstrips its cost, so as to provide an academic platform not only for War Studies at King's College London, but also for the wider International Relations and Political Science community. In order to further our aim of openness and accessibility, in contrast to most journal publications, we have decided to release the journal under a share-alike Creative Commons license. This first issue has benefited from contributions from friends and colleagues in order to test and prove the format and provide a model for subsequent calls for papers from both distinguished academics and curious unacademic beings, practitioners, and even artists interested in issues of conflict, international affairs, diplomacy war and politics. We thank them and urge you to contact us for submissions to future issues or join our editorial board.

We hope you will appreciate this novel contribution.

Pablo de Orellana and Peter Douglas  
Editors *Strife Journal*

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## Guy Fawkes Redux: Led Urban Mayhem and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security

Jill S. Russell

I opened the Strife blog to the tune of the annual chant to ‘Remember, remember...’ Returning to the subject of Guy Fawkes and the modern relevance of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, this piece is interested in the issue of led urban mayhem in the landscape of 21<sup>st</sup> century security. The insurgent or terrorist who can leverage the mob in tumult and hurl it at targets within a city in coordination with other action has mastered a primitive but highly effective weapon of mass effect. Whereas the first piece considered the motivations of the 17<sup>th</sup> century plotters and the implications of these upon the modern landscape of conflict, here the context and structure within which the plot was imagined define the focus. Specifically, we are concerned with the trinity of city, insurgent, and mob and what might be possible from their admixture.

Developments in the last two decades suggest the need for such a review. Small groups of motivated individuals have demonstrated their ability to achieve strategic effect. The power of the mob has proved itself in the modern era, to mass, coordinate and strike with near impunity across the urban landscape, as well as to provide cover for more nefarious activities. And as every report of future security concerns agrees, the city is *the* place of the future for humanity. So, we could expect 5ths of November to become a norm of conflict.

From the perspective of my own interests, the inspiration for this veer in focus is research I have been doing on the 2011 London riots. For obvious reasons, prior to my arrival to London that autumn I had no interest in paying too much attention to the events. I was happy to be moving here, and wanted nothing to interfere with that; as well, I had already committed, so there was nothing good that was going to come of getting too worked up by the chaos. However, as I became more

comfortable with the city – and learned that chaos was in its history and on its streets – I became more curious about what had happened.<sup>1</sup> And so, as the time arrived to return to Guy Fawkes for this piece, it was with the subject of urban mayhem heavily upon my mind.

To develop this scenario and examine the security implications it portends, we will review the salient factors of each point in the trinity. What are the characteristics of each that matter in this form of conflict? Further still, for each we will include consideration of how these factors came into play in four headline events of the last decade. Significant illustrative events are not in short supply. I have chosen September 11<sup>th</sup> Manhattan, Mumbai 2008, London 2011, and Benghazi 2012 simply because they are widely known, which eliminates the need to provide their narratives here. Also, each of them presents iconic and obvious evidence which directly supports the scenario.

### *The Trinity – The Insurgent, the City and the Mob*

The first element in the trinity is its core, the insurgent. Dedicated, faithful, and trained, this is the “professional” cadre of non-conventional conflict.<sup>2</sup> For the sake of clarity – as well as my sanity – to avoid having to skip around the thesaurus entries for non-conventional combatant, I use insurgent to cover a multitude of actors, and define it as one willing to fight against an established order using non-conventional or asymmetrical means. Whether the behaviour is noble (freedom fighter), criminal (terrorist),

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1 As I have read the reports and reviews, several issues have struck me. In addition to those related to urban mayhem, my curiosity is particularly encouraged by the fact that law enforcement has no scholarly historical function. As time goes by I’d like to be able to assess the events from the perspective of military history and as a historian. It will be interesting to see what can be made of those events in that context.

2 I am using ‘cadre’ here in the way that military historians or planners will speak of a trained cadre of officers, NCOs and enlisted personnel around which a larger force can be developed in times of war.



necessary (partisan), or a reflection of relative weakness (insurgent in the current parlance) is case dependent, subjective, and most importantly, irrelevant to this discussion.

When it comes to the modern insurgent fighting force, size proves nothing. Even with limited numbers, given thoughtfully chosen targets, realistic aims, and a sensible application of their skills, training and preparation, the insurgent can achieve much. This is particularly true within the urban environment, where the geographic and demographic contours of the city aid and magnify their efforts. Using a relatively simple skill set, in the city a small group of insurgents is at a clear operational and tactical advantage. Buildings become firing perches at their heights and visual cover on the ground, and side streets and thoroughfares can be easily blocked, thwarting the efforts of authorities to move about. Transportation and route nodes that feed the city with goods and people can be choked preventing movement in and out of the city. Mass, public gathering points become high value targets and the resultant public fear creates chaos which further cripples the city's functioning. And within this maelstrom, maintaining communications throughout the city and an awareness of events is nearly impossible for those who must respond, whereas the insurgent has few of such requirements.

There were only 10 terrorists unleashed upon Mumbai. 19 others were able to wreak massive destruction on 9/11. Who knows what small few there were in Benghazi whose primary mission was to storm the American consulate, but it was certainly a minute fraction of the crowds demonstrating their wrath at the insult of the film. London 2011 might point to a further problem. As reviews of those events and the police response demonstrate, too much information dumped into the police networks caused much confusion and uncertainty as to what was happening and where. One cannot help but wonder whether such information blitzes will become a regular tactic of the urban insurgent.

Nor are there any shortage of causes to inspire recruitment, indoctrination and adherence to radical, violent groups. Fault lines of religion, culture, politics and economics cut across the globe. The rising tide of environmental worry and the terms of justice and humanity are as well now adding their causes to the rolls. So, in addition to the usual suspects we have come to expect, one must wonder what others will come down the pike. Will the Occupy movement develop an armed wing if the economic crisis deepens? Will China or India's choking pollution crises spawn eco-terrorist forces? What happens when women in traditional countries and around the globe (because the west is weak here too) finally lose patience and band together for effect? Finally, one must consider to whom the gang and criminal syndicates loyalty would go. (Such thoughts give one a certain fondness for the Mafia and its assistance to the Allies in WWII.) Less drastically, it is not inconceivable that in return for significant payment these groups would be happy to hire out personnel, some of whom might just enjoy being part of the mayhem, or might want to fight the authorities for their own reasons. There is certainly no shortage of anger towards the authorities in certain quarters.

Complicating things, the groupings will increasingly defy the neat Westphalian ordering of the world. These organizations represent every level of human collection, from pan-identism to sub-state minorities, and every stop in between. Add to that, common enemies or objectives can lead to unexpected but often transient alliances. Insofar as the technological and material needs of the insurgent are concerned, there are very few hurdles. Off the shelves communications and other technological needs satisfy just about every need. Vehicles and small weapons are easy as well. What few other requirements remain should never exceed moderate bespoke capabilities. The age of the Strategic Insurgent is upon us.

Turning to the next piece of the threat, the

urban context is *the* strategic target, and it's soft. The material destruction and act of mass political assassination (really, governmental decapitation) envisaged by Guy Fawkes et al. could only have been achieved in London, the capital city and the necessary hub of a united England. And so the city today remains ideal for mayhem. The centre of society, economy and culture, the city is an ideal location for conflict. Whether the city favoured the defence or the attack under the terms of recent conventional warfare is debatable; however, in a world of insurgent and asymmetrical warfare everything about the city favours the attackers.

As ripe as ever, and promising to ripen ever more into the future, the modern city is thus a target of delightful opportunity for those who wish to unleash mayhem for effect. There are hard targets to turn to rubble and population to harm and inspire to chaos. The caverns, labyrinths, and heights of the urban context comprise a wealth of potential energy to fuel a bleak future security landscape. The raid on Mumbai in 2008 was a clear demonstration of the weakness and vulnerability of the modern city to even a small band of dedicated fighters. 9/11 NYC proved the power of rubble as our greatest accomplishments can be rendered to blinding and toxic dust and lethal debris in the short term. (It also demonstrated the potential of debilitating rubble in the long term if cleanup efforts are hampered.) London 2011 showed just how easy it is, given the size and sprawl of most cities, to tax to the point of overstretch the local authorities.

While the complexities of the city tend to aid the attackers (forces of disorder), for those meant to defend or maintain order (law enforcement or the armed forces) it is a burden. Before the rise of the COIN'dinistas the Marine Corps had begun grappling with the perils of this piece of modern (or, rather, neo-primitive) urban warfare. Their experience in Mogadishu – the 'good old days' of that intervention, before the UN mission morphed into an effort to affect the internal dynamics of the Somali conflict (best exemplified by the efforts to capture

Mohamed Farah Aidid) – and other similar missions of the 1990s led to the creation of the '3 Block War' concept.<sup>3</sup> As described by then Commandant of the Marine Corps General Victor Krulak, the demands of the modern urban battlefield were such that an armed force might simultaneously be conducting full scale military operations, peacekeeping or stability operations, and humanitarian operations, on three separate but near blocks.

The '3 Block War' concept not only conveys the complications of the conflict faced, it also speaks to the demands placed upon the security forces (military or law enforcement). Each mission is different and requires divergent skills and material assets, and this will require difficult choices. For example, which objective should have priority where resources are thin? Furthermore, to manage or lead the commitments to each mission adds to the burden by increasing the complexity of command and control.

I have no doubt that the police officers who deployed to London 2011 could understand this model as they struggled to confront rioters, stop looters and assist fire-fighters, all in close geographic proximity. Given the tough choices, if only one block could be managed, it was the rioters that the police chose as their focus. That there is not a consensus on that answer is clear from the post-disorder criticisms that the police allowed Tottenham to burn or looters to run rampant without any seeming response. In an ideal world, the Met, the UK police, and authorities globally would prefer to be able to handle all three simultaneously. In the necessary world where led urban mayhem is a

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3 Of course, being a 90s concept, the 3BW is *outré* these days. It has also recently received a kick in the validity shins as the Canadian Army has found it to be unsuitable as a strategic model. The authors review the effort by the Canadian Army to adopt the concept and adapt it to strategic purpose in Afghanistan and beyond. ("The Rise and Demise of the Three Block War," Dr. A. Walter Dorn and Michael Varey, *Canadian Military Journal*.) However, they agreed that it functioned quite well as a description of modern urban conflict, and for the purposes of this piece, that is sufficient.

fixed feature of conflict they are going to have to figure how to do more or how to mitigate the damage of not doing everything. As it sprawls and spreads outwards and teems with increasing human and structural density at its centre, the siren song of the city will continue to tickle the ears if the forces of mayhem.

Finally, the last piece in the trinity is the mob. It is within the city that the mob is born. First, to be clear about this term, this does not refer to the masses, such as “the people” in certain counter-insurgency doctrines. The mob represents only a small (if not tiny) fraction of the whole of the population, but its disproportionate power derives from being in motion – usually dangerous and destructive motion. Certainly the plotters of 1605 imagined that the human and material devastation wrought by the planned explosion would ignite some useful degree of panic on the streets of London. In addition to such hopes, they had actively intended that the destruction of Westminster would create a political vacuum into which their “army” would assert and support the claims of Princess Elizabeth to the throne. Unfortunately, the force they would have been able to assemble on short notice would not have amounted to more than a mob.<sup>4</sup>

As noted in every UK law enforcement report or manual on the subject from the last decade, the face of future public disorder is fraught. Although dealing with public order generally – that is, to include lawful assembly and protest – the sense that the chaos is always lurking around the corner is palpable. From a review prior to London 2011 conducted by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), there is this description of the public order landscape: “After a few relatively quiet years, this is a new period of public order...faster moving and more

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4 Of course, it’s paradoxical that celebration of the 5th would lead to disorder. At points in the 19th century London left the streets of the city on that day to the revellers. That is, until the chaos grew to such a level that public sentiment and security demanded that the police reassert control.

unpredictable.” As expected, the description in the Metropolitan Police Service’s initial report on their response to the riots expresses fully their awareness of a dramatically altered landscape in public order: “The events...were unprecedented in the capital’s history. The initial peaceful protest in response to the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan escalated to violent local protest and on to London and countrywide. The speed, geographical distribution and scale of this escalation set these events apart from anything experienced before.”<sup>5</sup> Emerging after more than a decade of increasing public order challenges in the UK, the riots of August 2011 demonstrated the resilience of the mob in urban terrain. Empowered and/or emboldened, crowds are thus a threat that could emerge at any moment.

Reliance upon less well-trained, less dedicated personnel as filler for missions is not new for insurgents in this era. In Iraq it was certainly the case that single or small group cadres of specialist fighters would operate with local filler. For example, in sniper ambushes, one highly skilled marksman would be supported by locals who need only ‘pray and spray’ in the general direction of the attack. It is no great leap to move from this to the even more basic use of angry crowds to tactical or strategic effect.

The mob, then, is on the march, and its effect is being felt at the tactical and strategic levels of public order and security. Whether it will maintain its ascendance is unknown, but if it continues to prove itself a worthy vehicle of action then we can be sure to see more of it. Benghazi 2012, coming on the heels of an angry Muslim Summer that was itself following the politically angry long Arab Spring, brought the trinity together to terrible effect. The success of the attack on the American consulate, the casualties, and the

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5 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, “Policing Public Order: An overview and review of progress against the recommendations of Adapting to Protest and Nurturing the British Model of Policing,” February 2011, p. 3; Metropolitan Police Service, ‘Operation Kirkin: Strategic Review – Interim Report,’ 21 October 2011, p. 4.

near shocked surprise at what had been accomplished, amply demonstrated the risk presented by the combination of the insurgent, the city and the mob.

Separately, each piece of the trinity is an area of future security concern. Together they could combine to create a prospective nightmare of mayhem, destruction and carnage. Taken from this perspective, I can still maintain that we remain English henceforth and should certainly “Remember, remember...”

## Between a European Greece and a Greek Europe: The Elusive Hellenic Quest for a Modern Identity

Dimitrios Machairas

Greece is still in the midst of a major economic crisis, brought to its knees attempting to implement a fierce austerity program imposed by the European Union. According to the most recent data, the gross domestic product continues its freefall, contracting by 7.2% on an annual basis and to an overall level that is 20% lower than what it was in the third quarter of 2008, when the downturn began.<sup>1</sup> Unemployment is soaring, reaching 26.8%, the highest in the EU, and<sup>2</sup> consecutive waves of salary and pension cuts and tax hikes are not simply crippling consumer strength, but actually driving to poverty a constantly increasing number of people, currently 31% of the population, which translates into 3.4 million people living on 60% less than the national average disposal income.<sup>3</sup> In this economic context, certain crucial questions come to light. Is the crisis only financial, or are we dealing with a crisis which permeates the fundamentals of the Greek society, its ideologies and institutions, its collective mentality and cultural character? Is this perhaps a crisis of the Greek identity as a whole? And towards what ultimate goal are all current sacrifices being made, what do Greeks really want? A Greece modernised through political and institutional Europeanisation, or a self-created modern Greece as a distinctive, yet integral part of Europe's political and economic

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- 1 'UPDATE 1-Greece sinks deeper into depression in third quarter', *Reuters*, 14 November 2012, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/14/greece-gdp-idUSL5E8ME4WM20121114>> [accessed 5 February 2013].
  - 2 'Greece unemployment hits EU high', in *BBC*, , 10 January 2013, section Business, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-20968845>> [accessed 5 February 2013].
  - 3 '3.4 million Greeks near poverty line in 2011, Eurostat reports', <[http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_ws1\\_1\\_03/12/2012\\_472690](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_ws1_1_03/12/2012_472690)> [accessed 5 February 2013].

mainstream setting?

Greece's relationship to Europe is one of the oldest political debates in history, a debate which has been primarily contrastive in its discourse, distinguishing between Greeks and the 'other', whether stereotyped or not. From ancient times, and particularly from the period between the 8th and 6th centuries B.C., when an Hellenic<sup>4</sup> ethnic self-consciousness apparently originates, the Greek has defined himself in contrast to barbaros (barbarian, meaning foreigner or of a foreign language). The works of ancient Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides both reveal a clear recognition of the Hellenes' subjective distinction between themselves and the non-Greek 'other'. Although Herodotus assumed a more relativistic approach to this dichotomy, a more neutral and tolerant view of foreign ways as merely expressing different cultural systems regardless of their apparent strangeness, Thucydides was more critical, presenting the barbarians as a polar opposite, based on three elements which informed the Greeks' sense of identity. The colonial perspective through which Greeks viewed certain communities inhabiting the periphery of Greece, the geographical factor involved in their conception of the boundaries of 'their' land, and the system of social and political organisation (in his case, the democratic city-state), which reflected, particularly in the Athenians' opinion, a superior cultural outlook in evolutionary terms.<sup>5</sup>

In the age of the Byzantine Empire (330-1453 A.D.) the relationship perhaps becomes more ambiguous. Especially from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantium was essentially a Greek empire of the Christian East.<sup>6</sup> At its cultural core were

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- 4 The term then used to refer to the inhabitants of mainland Greece
  - 5 I Xydopoulos, 'The Concept and Representation of Northern Communities in Ancient Greek Historiography: The Case of Thucydides', in J Pan-Montojo & F Pedersen, *Communities in European history: representations, jurisdictions, conflicts*, Plus, 2007, II, , pp. 1-22.
  - 6 E Glykatzi-Arveler, *The Political Ideology of the Byzantine Empire*, Toula Drakopoulou trans. Athens: Psychogios, 2007, pp. 22, 60.

the Greek language and the Greek-Orthodox religion, the two basic components of 'Greekness'.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Europe is, according to Paul Valéry, those peoples who throughout history have undergone the influence of the Greek rational and scientific thought, the Roman institutional and administrative model, and Christianity.<sup>8</sup> These were the main characteristics of the Byzantine Empire too, so Byzantium was European inasmuch as the heritage of Athens, Rome and Jerusalem provided the pillars of its foundations.<sup>9</sup> The Great Schism between the Western and Eastern Christian churches, however, and the sacking of Constantinople by Western Crusaders in 1204 considerably undermined this feeling of commonness in the eyes of Greeks. Enough to bring about great political division over the potential reunion of the Orthodox and Catholic churches, even in the face of imminent total destruction by the Ottomans in 1453 when the now immortalised phrase 'better the Turkish turban than the Papal tiara' expressed anti-Western sentiment and reflected the seemingly eternal Greek vacillation between East and West. Highly indicative of the long-lasting effect of these historical landmarks in the Greek psyche is Pope John Paul II's, 2001 visit to Athens, in which he expressed what came to be considered in Greece as a formal apology for the crimes of the Catholics against the Orthodox, 800 years after the event. This was hailed by a prominent Greek scholar as the greatest victory for Hellenism since the battle of Marathon against the Persian Empire in 480 B.C.<sup>10</sup>

The Modern Greek state was established in

7 E Glykatzi-Arveler, 'We Are All Byzantines', interview, *To Vima*, April 3, 2010 [my translation] 'tovima.gr - ΕΛΕΝΗ ΓΑΥΚΑΤΖΗ - ΑΡΒΕΛΕΡ<br>Είμαστε όλοι Βυζαντινοί', in *TO BHMA*, <<http://www.tovima.gr/culture/article/?aid=324009>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

8 P Valéry, 'But who, after all, is European?' excerpt from P Valéry et al., *History and politics*, Routledge & K. Paul, 1963.

9 'Tovima.gr - ΕΛΕΝΗ ΓΑΥΚΑΤΖΗ - ΑΡΒΕΛΕΡ Είμαστε Όλοι Βυζαντινοί'.

10 'Tovima.gr - ΕΛΕΝΗ ΓΑΥΚΑΤΖΗ - ΑΡΒΕΛΕΡ Είμαστε Όλοι Βυζαντινοί'.

the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the Greek War of Independence, through such conditions that rendered it a quasi-protectorate state. The fact that the so-called 'French', 'English', and 'Russian' Parties constituted the three dominant forces in the political life of the newly founded state provides a blunt indication of the degree of foreign influence, if not control, and of the dependence on outside support for the continuation of the liberation struggle against the Ottoman Empire, as that dependence was perceived by the Greek political elites of the time. Subsequently in 1832 the Great Powers installed Otto, Royal Prince of Bavaria, as King of Greece. The measures undertaken by his representatives and committees to reform the country and its identity were inevitably condemned by Greek public opinion, since they were coming from people foreign to the Greek nation, and hence failed to take into consideration its peculiarities, traditions and strong political customs, as well as its fervent aspiration to liberate the rest of the Greek lands still occupied by the Ottomans.<sup>11</sup> This sense of distinctiveness, however, was not enough to distance Greece from Europe. In his famous speech during the proceedings of the Greek National Assembly of 1844, politician Ioannis Kolettis argued: 'Because of its geographical position, Greece is the centre of Europe. With the East on its right and the West on its left, Greece is destined to enlighten the east through its rebirth as it enlightened the West with its decline.'<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the East-West controversy, with the advent of the nation-state in European history, the issue of the modern Greek identity has been further complicated by the distinction between ethnicity and nationality because it begged the question of the origins

11 EK Vogli, *Ellines to Genos: I Ithageneia kai I Taytotita sto Ethniko Kratos ton Ellinon (1821-1844)*, 2<sup>nd</sup>ed., Irakleio: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis, 2008, pp. 31-2.

12 'The Speech of Kolettis on Aytchthons-Heterochthons', Foundation of the Hellenic World website 'DOMESTIC POLICY [1833-1897]', <[http://www.fhw.gr/chronos/12/en/1833\\_1897/domestic\\_policy/sources/index.html](http://www.fhw.gr/chronos/12/en/1833_1897/domestic_policy/sources/index.html)> [accessed 5 February 2013].

and character of the assumed national identity. Widely accepted definitions explain ethnic identity as belonging to a group of people who perceive themselves as culturally distinct from other groups, usually maintaining myths of common origin and prescriptions of endogamy. National identity, on the other hand, refers to affiliation and allegiance to a particular state, be it a state of origin and/or residence. As is the case with ethnicity, a sense of commonness in terms of any combination of elements like history, ancestry, language, religion, and customs usually underlies nationality as well. What is sometimes considered an added characteristic of national identity we here find at the centre of an ethnic group's right to a political organization and self-determination delineated by the cultural boundaries responsible for its distinctiveness.

Writing from a modernist perspective, Constantine Tsoukalas argues that the national identity promoted since the establishment of the Modern Greek state, often referred to as 'Helleno-Christianity' is based on a constructed continuity from a mythical past through Byzantium to our days, initially imported from the West as a product of the Enlightenment, when Europe sought to justify its expansionist tendencies by tracing its origins back to a supposedly racially superior and largely idealized cradle in Ancient Greece.<sup>13</sup> Lured by this very flattering, European version of their ancestors, Greeks were led to believe that they were different from the other ethnic groups which were seeking self-determination in the context of the general national awakening in the Balkans, and went on to connect themselves to that glorious past, a difficult task that implicated ideas of exceptionalism, historical continuity, and a problematic fusion of pagan classicism and Byzantine Christianity as the basis of the emerging national identity.<sup>14</sup>

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13 C Tsoukalas, 'European modernity and Greek national identity 1', in *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, vol. 1, 1999, , pp. 8, 12–3, <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14613199908413983>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

14 *Ibid.*, , pp. 9–13.

Tsoukalas's view presents an internally incoherent Greek identity stereotype, and hints to an inherent controversy that exists on a seemingly twin axis. He writes that:

The opposition between East and West was to develop into the main cultural issue of Modern Greece. It reflects a profound dichotomy of the discourse over national identity and goes far beyond the mere antithesis between tradition and modernity. The specificity of Greece resides in the fact that both tradition and modernity are traceable to the opposing conceptions of the national 'essence'.... The struggle between tradition and modernity is not reducible to an opposition between domestic and imported cultural tenets, simply because they are the chief constituent elements of modern Hellenism.<sup>15</sup>

From a similar perspective, Antonis Liakos points to another dimension of this oscillation: an apparent contradiction of the Greek national historiography, which aimed at protecting national history from Eurocentrism – with the integration of the Byzantine Empire into the concept of national continuum – while at the same time considering it an essential contribution to European history, ultimately supporting a delineation of Greek citizenship and national identity based on ethnocultural grounds.<sup>16</sup> This modernist view of the nation as being the product of the nation-state naturally assumes that the Greek nation was 'artificially' created by the Modern Greek state and it did not really exist before that.

From an opposing angle, George Contogeorgis asserts that the Greek nation has existed for more than three thousand years, inasmuch as it is based on a Greek identity that had taken shape since at least the Creto-Mycenaean age (circa 1600 – 1100 B.C.) and

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15 *Ibid.*, , p. 13.

16 A Liakos, 'The construction of national time: The making of the modern Greek historical imagination', in *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 16, 2001, 27–42 (pp. 32–3, 35).

evolved continuously transforming until the present day. Hellenism was constituted as a 'cosmosystem', i.e. a system of many polities of a small-scale character, with its fundamental societal entity being the *polis* (the city, and its subsequent political manifestation, the city-state), and on anthropocentric, that is, humanist foundations. This was the first instance in human history when alongside autocracy, a system of societies bound by common determinants like anthropocentric freedom and the monetary economy is created. In fact, current Western anthropocentric system is the modern, large-scale version of the Greek one, and is still in its early phase, lacking the latter's historical depth and experience. The Greek nation is essentially a 'nation-cosmosystem', with multiple collective sub-identities (eg. the local, the polity, the ethnos/ethnicity, the overarching national, etc.), and the Greek nation-state is merely one of its expressions, a particular manifestation of the Greek identity in the context of the anthropocentric paradigm of the modern world.<sup>17</sup>

The incompatibility of the Greek system and the Western European model lies in the fact that the former had an ultimately ecumenical, all-encompassing character in virtue of its long historical evolution through the whole spectrum of political organisation (from the smallest scale of the city-state to the multi-cultural empire), while the latter was only materialising the anthropocentric, and hence democratic, vision of society for the first time, and most importantly, on principles like the sovereignty of the state over society and national homogenisation, to which the Greek cosmopolitan system was inherently contrary. According to this rationale, the Modern Greek state established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – with the foreign dependencies described above – was essentially asking a politically mature Greek society to regress in order to adapt and

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17 G Contogeorgis 'Ο Ελληνισμός ως Ethnos-Cosmosystema', 'Cosmosystème -Cosmosystem-Κοσμοσύστημα: Ο ελληνισμός ως έθνος-κοσμοσύστημα', <[http://contogeorgis.blogspot.co.uk/2008/02/blog-post\\_2952.html](http://contogeorgis.blogspot.co.uk/2008/02/blog-post_2952.html)> [accessed 5 February 2013].

synchronise itself to the 'proto-anthropocentric' steps of the West.<sup>18</sup> Considering this thesis, the subsequent resistance of Greek society against such efforts, whether domestic or foreign, against what the West calls 'modernisation' can be explained, as is the apparent paradox that what appears to work successfully in Europe repeatedly fails when it is applied in Greece. I argue that broader Greek society is perhaps subconsciously aware of such a fundamental incompatibility and thus tends to be sceptical of the notion that modernisation requires emulation of the Western European model.

In light of this historical and theoretical framework, how are we to interpret the insistence on the part of Greece to accept, at whatever cost for the last three years, almost all the measures that have been imposed by its international lenders and the EU to rescue the country from default and remain in the Eurozone? Is it an indication that, finally, Greece has realised the necessity of following Europe's socioeconomic example, and by extension, perhaps adopting a more European identity as well? At this point, it should be stressed that there is not a single 'Greece'. This crisis has brought to light a seemingly serious divergence between the country's political establishment and Greek society as a whole. On the one hand, all governments since 2009 have evangelised the necessity of the austerity programme and of staying in the Eurozone as the only solution to the economic crisis and to a long-overdue modernisation of the country. According to mainstream discourse, there is no other viable alternative, only total economic destruction. It was Greece's last chance to rebuild itself through monumental reforms, which would bring an end not only to its current economic ailments, but also to its general lack of credibility and transparency, to the populism of the political system, to the corruption, favouritism and clientelism of the state apparatus, and ultimately transform the mentalities and practices of the past.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the

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18 *Ibid.*

19 Papandreou, George. Speech in the Greek Parliament. November 11, 2011.



majority of Greeks have opposed the economic measures with a series of demonstrations and general strikes taking place since 2010 and occasionally involving violent clashes between protesters and the riot police. Since the June 2012 elections, anti-bailout radical left Syriza and the extreme right-wing Golden Dawn parties have gained considerable strength in public opinion polls, with the former now being the most popular party, and the latter coming third behind the conservative New Democracy party, which leads the three-party coalition government; the polls also show the majority of Greeks believing that the country will not remain in the euro.<sup>20</sup> Officially, Syriza supports the view that Greece should remain in the euro, while the nationalist Golden Dawn claims that if the current crisis boils down to a dilemma between keeping the euro and preserving a free, sovereign Greece, the latter has precedence.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, there is a general sense of unfairness in Greece. Public opinion shows deep distrust of the country's political class, which has governed for the last 30 years and is in the greatest part responsible for the current situation due to its self-serving handling of the economy in its endless strife for political power. Furthermore, a clear condemnation of the policies being pursued, which, despite all the sacrifices, have failed to recover the economy; and finally, a resentment of the fact that Greece is wrongly accused as the sole or main culprit for the Eurozone crisis and Greeks being presented

as lazy and living at the expense of European taxpayers, whilst Germany, the central protagonist of the euro crisis, is handling it according to its narrow national interests and is consequently undermining European integration.<sup>22</sup>

The exact degree to which Europeanness is crucial for the modern Greek identity is difficult to ascertain – the task of collective psychoanalysis seems unrealistic – yet, certain points can be ascertained. To begin with, Greeks do not appear convinced that modernisation equals Europeanisation. The recent rise of political parties which have been known to be sceptical or outright critical of the EU and its federalist trajectory indicates that there is a considerable proportion of Greeks for whom membership of the monetary union and the EU is not an end in itself. A modern country indeed constitutes a persistent aspiration of Greek society, and Europe is geographically, culturally and ideologically the closest example. But Greeks seem to feel European insofar as Europe maintains a character that is compatible to and respectful of the Greek collective temperament. Greeks have historically preferred Europe to imitate them, rather than the reverse. And ideally, they would perhaps prefer a distinctively Greek modern identity than a largely imported one. Of course, a clear and solid theoretical conceptualisation of such a modern Greek identity has not yet gained traction, so we find Greece still struggling to find a balance between, at times, a pathetic, ludicrous mimicking of foreign ways and, at others, a reactionary and completely myopic disregard of international developments or paradigms. Perhaps the only thing that is missing is a state that can finally put our idiosyncratic uniqueness to good use.

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<<http://www.primeminister.gov.gr/2011/11/04/6932>> [accessed 5 February 2013]; "Samaras: Telos stin Avevaiotita - Diasfalistike I Paramoni mas to Euro". *Ethnos*. November 27, 2012.

<<http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=22767&subid=2&pubid=63744679>> [accessed 5 February 2013]

20 'Greece's Syriza Party Holds Lead, Greeks Gloomy on Economy - Poll', in *Wall Street Journal*, <<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20121128-701619.html>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

21 "Tsipras to Amanpour: We Don't Want Greece Outside the Euro...". *CNN Pressroom*, May 17, 2012.

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<[http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_wsit\\_e3\\_1\\_14/02/2012\\_427869](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsit_e3_1_14/02/2012_427869)> [accessed 5 February 2013]

## Women and the Intifadas: the Evolution of Palestinian Women's Organizations

Maura K. James

This contribution seeks to explore the role of Palestinian women during the first and second intifadas from a gender perspective by tracing the changing role of women's organisations in Palestine. Since the end of World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Palestinian women's organisations have been active and productive components of a vibrant civil society. In the early and mid-twentieth century, the organisations provided charitable and institutional support to local communities in the form of orphanages and schools. After the Naqba in 1948 these organisations became more formal and extended beyond individual villages. From 1948 until the Six Day War in 1967 women's organisations served the Palestinian community in mainly charitable ways. Their work focused on education and refugee support.<sup>1</sup>

Amal Kawar's book, *Daughters of Palestine: Leading Women of the Palestinian National Movement*, outlines three generations of Palestinian women leaders who shaped the national struggle and added to the vibrant civil society that ultimately initiated the first intifada. Most of the first generation leaders were born and came of age in, what is today, Israel. In 1948, during the Naqba, many of them became refugees who fled or refugees who remained in Israel. The first generation's political consciousness was formed by the Naqba, and this generation articulated a female political voice and allowed for greater participation by the second and third generations. Some in the second generation, born between 1935 and 1948,<sup>2</sup> remember the Naqba. Their political consciousness was formed by Nasser through the 1950s and 1960s and they 'were full of hope and dreams of change.'<sup>3</sup> These women craved political

independence and a state for Palestine. They dreamed of returning to their homeland and were bolder than the first generation in asserting women in the political struggle. The third generation came into political consciousness during the 1967 war. The Six Day War had a galvanising effect on all three generations. 'If the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was *déjà vu* for the first generation, reviving dormant pain from the 1948 catastrophe, for the second and third generations, it was a confirmation of long-held fears – that Israel could reach them even in the mighty Arab capitals.'<sup>4</sup> The majority of the third generation was born as refugees in diaspora outside of Israel and of what became the Occupied Territories after 1967. The '67 war was a message to all Palestinians that they could not rely on Arab leadership or armies to take back their homeland. It was an awakening of the Palestinian political consciousness. From '67 onward, these three generations of women leaders focused on the national struggle and became a strong network of women that provided politically and socially for their communities in diaspora.

A fourth generation of Palestinian women leaders, composed of academics, is critical of the older generations' commitment to the national cause at the expense of women's rights. 'The academics were a new element in the coalition of women's nationalist groups... and were previously unorganised but had gained visibility during the Intifada.'<sup>5</sup> In the 1990s, as women lost gains made by the three early generations in the political area, the fourth generation offered a new agenda focusing solely on gender issues. 'Their contribution to the Palestinian cause centered on speaking and writing about the social, health, and economic situations of Palestinian women under occupation.'<sup>6</sup> This kind of rhetoric was instrumental in securing international funding, which was needed as the women's organisations depoliticised after the first intifada. As women were

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1 A Kawar, *Daughters of Palestine: Leading Women of the Palestinian National Movement*, State University of New York Press, 1996.

2 *Ibid*, p. 10

3 *Ibid*, p. 11

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4 *Ibid*, p. 16

5 *Ibid*, p. 121

6 *Ibid*, p. 121

marginalised from the political arena following the first intifada, they found new niches in communities offering trainings on women's legal and social rights. Though the fourth generation gained international support, women's exclusion from the political dialogue and the stifling of civil society during the Oslo period ultimately led to an unsustainable peace.

Before the first intifada in the period after 1967 women's organisations became very active. The Palestinian Women's Union was an organisation created by many of the first generation leaders in 1965. Though it was banned for 1966 to the mid-1990s, women's federations and charities created a network across the diaspora 'to participate in the Palestinian liberation effort and to represent women's interests in national and international forums.'<sup>7</sup> By the early 1980s this network had four main unions sponsored by the four major political factions in Palestine.<sup>8</sup> Their membership numbers and participation as of 1990 'symbolise the ability of women from the main PLO factions to navigate past Israeli suppression of political activity in the Occupied Territories.'<sup>9</sup> One of the unions, the Women's Action Committee, was more decentralised than the other unions and encouraged local leadership and initiative. The style of the Women's Action Committee was useful because, even before the 1987 intifada, it was difficult for women in remote villages and members in Gaza to participate in operations centralised in Ramallah, Nablus, and Jerusalem. The Women's Action Committees across Palestine were active throughout the first intifada and integral in the uprising. Even after Israelis banned civil society activities in 1988, many of the informal Women's Action Committees were able to continue operations. Unfortunately, 'That movement [local women's committees] came to an end in the early 1990s, reduced to a few local committees....'<sup>10</sup> With the

disbanding of the Women's Action Committees came the silencing of female voices in Palestinian political parties.

Women's participation in the first intifada 'brought a greater visibility to the women's committees.'<sup>11</sup> In 1987 the occupation was everywhere and the intifada was in every community. Women participated in civil disobedience alongside their male counterparts. Not all women's participation came in the form of formalised committees. 'Enthusiastic support for the uprising came from organised and unorganised women alike, but was ultimately sustained by widespread networks of Palestinian institutions – including women's committees and charitable societies....'<sup>12</sup> While women all over Palestine participated in what Penny Johnson and Eileen Kuttub call "'mother activism"... when older women sheltered youth and defied soldiers'<sup>13</sup> the formal societies kept the intifada in motion from the top. The women's unions 'participated in distributing the secret communiqués of the Unified Leadership, delivered PLO funds for social relief, visited prisoners and their families, and performed other activities....'<sup>14</sup> This involvement resulted in higher visibility of women's programs. After the 1988 ban of committees by Israel, women's groups were marginalised. The ban coupled with a shift from grassroots Palestinian leadership to outside, more formal leadership by the PLO led to the steady decline of women's political participation in the 1990s.

At the same time women's organisations were becoming more visible and vocalised opposition to the occupation politics within the Occupied Territories was evolving. The shift from internal territorial leadership to external leadership by those in exile was

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*Gaza and the West Bank*, Indiana University Press, 1998, p. 237

11 Kavar, 1996, p. 112

12 *Ibid*, p. 112

13 P Johnson and E Kuttub 'Where Have All the Women (and Men) Gone? Reflections on Gender and the Second Palestinian Intifada', *Feminist Review*, No. 69, Winter, 2001 p. 37

14 Kavar, 1996, p. 113

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7 Kavar, 1996, p. xiii

8 *Ibid*, p. 102

9 *Ibid*, p. 102

10 A Kavar, 'Palestinian Women's Activism after Oslo' in Sabbagh, Suha *Palestinian Women of*

exacerbated by the intifada. The pivot towards Yasser Arafat and the PLO within Israel and Palestine followed by the endorsement of the PLO by the international community proved fatal to the once vibrant women's unions and committees. The effect of the first intifada on women's movements was 'paradoxical'. 'Women were politically visible in clashes with Israeli soldiers and in leadership podiums... At the same time, the Intifada brought about a new political reality in the Occupied Territories that caused the Women's Committees' Movement to unravel.'<sup>15</sup>

As the peace process lurched forward after the first intifada, the women's leadership realised that 'Women had lost out and become politically marginalised after the first few months of the Intifada... there was an underlying realisation that grassroots mobilisation of women had slowed tremendously.'<sup>16</sup> As evidenced by the second intifada, during the Oslo years women's grassroots civil participation came to a screeching halt. Even the charitable works provided and established by the women of the first generation were suspended. The PLO became responsible for the welfare of the Palestinian people and took over roles such as education and health care that used to be administered by women's organisations.

Towards the end of the first Intifada, as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad expanded, an event shocked the leadership of women's organisations and caused the eventual shift from political activism to social welfare. Palestine observes a conservative culture, but it was the seat of secular liberalisation in the Arab world in the period prior to the first intifada. The nationalist movement grew out of upper-middle class liberals. In fact, many of the women leaders Kawar studied espoused the importance of a secular nationalist movement. Between 1988 and 1989, however, the women's groups were met with conservative backlash. What Kawar calls 'the veil affair'<sup>17</sup>, was a period when women,

mostly in Gaza where Hamas had taken root, were forced to veil. This coercion was not written into law nor was it endorsed by the PLO. Initially, though, it was not opposed by the PLO nor did the women's organisations, based in the West Bank and Jerusalem, present a unified voice against the oppression of women. Women's activists in Gaza rejected the unofficial veiling, since they '...understood that the campaign was about the type of political and social future the intifada would lead to.'<sup>18</sup> In 1989, after months of rampant discrimination and scare tactics, the PLO finally ended the campaign even if it was to be renewed with minimal success in 1990. This incident weakened the women's organisations and illustrated that nationalism could not be won at the expense of gender issues nor would gender issues ever follow the creation of a state. The two, political activation and gender equality, had to be realised simultaneously.

After the first intifada it was apparent that the national movement would not safeguard women's liberties and many in the women's organisations realised they could no longer ignore the gender inequalities within their society. Once Arafat returned to the Occupied Territories in 1994 and began appointing other exiled men and outsiders to government offices the gender imbalance was highlighted. 'The early stages of setting up self-rule confirmed that undoubtedly a deep tradition of sexism still prevails among the comrades in the national struggle, as evidenced by their initial appointments.'<sup>19</sup> Aside from the appointment of Hanan Ashrawi as spokeswoman for Arafat during the peace process, which checked the gender box for the international community, few women were to be found in the PLO.

As the women's committees' movement died in the early 1990s, the fourth generation of academics started the women's centers movement. 'The central strategic goal of the

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15 Kawar, 1996, P. 114

16 *Ibid*, p. 123

17 Kawar, 1996, P. 119

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18 R Hammami, 'Women, the Hijab and the Intifada', *Middle East Report*, No. 164/165, May-August 1990, p. 27

19 *Ibid*, p. 126

women's centers movement is women's empowerment, and the agenda focuses on women's political education and women's rights.<sup>20</sup> The fourth generation understood the failure of the earlier generations to further a rights agenda. Instead of working toward a rights agenda combined with the nationalist banner, the fourth generation has focused on women's issues and legal rights. Since women are still marginalised in the PLO and the Palestinian nationalist movement has yet to result in statehood, this approach has seen a decline in women's political and economic grassroots organisations. 'The mass activism that marked the women's movements' experience in the [first] intifada has largely been replaced by an NGO model of lobbying, advocacy and workshop-style educational and developmental activities....'<sup>21</sup> The academic secular approach of the fourth generation is appealing to international organisations. Alienation from the PLO led many in the fourth generation to turn to NGOs for funding. The groups, already politically marginalised by the PLO, distanced themselves even more from the politics of the uncertain peace agreements in order to secure support and funding from the international community. 'This transformation has had contradictory effects on potentials for advancing gender equality in the transitional context.'<sup>22</sup> Although the women's centers movement is led by feminists and is effective in reaching out to marginalised women in rural villages, the movement did not retain the grassroots mobilisation of the women's committees' movement that resulted in political and economic returns for the nationalist cause. Instead of giving women tools to fight the occupation, the women's center movement has prepared women for a democratic state that has not yet come to fruition. Although nationalism and rights education are equally important, the women's movements in Palestine have been unable to supply both tools simultaneously.

The second intifada was a completely different experience than the first intifada. The hope of the first intifada culminated in 1993 on the White House lawn when Arafat and Rabin signed the Oslo accords. By late 2000, when the second intifada erupted, the hope of 1993 had diminished and was replaced by militarised fear. Not only did women's roles decrease in the second intifada, there were conditions present to heighten gender role stress.

Johnson and Kuttub draw contrast between the 'site of the struggle' in the first and second intifadas. 'The community, its street, neighborhoods and homes...'<sup>23</sup> was the site of the struggle. During the first intifada women, along with the rest of the community, were surrounded by the resistance. One could not avoid the first intifada. In contrast, due to the PLO's piecemeal control of the Occupied Territories, in the second intifada:

...the confrontations take place at border and crossing points between areas in the Oslo checkerboard... In this context, women's roles in direct resistance are minimal, given the absence of community context, the militarised environment and the differential impact of restrictions on mobility on women.<sup>24</sup>

The militarisation of the second intifada versus the first intifada made the conflict more like a war than a struggle of resistance. 'The second intifada... is... closer to war, albeit an uneven one in condition of belligerent occupation, than it is to the 'low-intensity conflict' of the first intifada.'<sup>25</sup> The escalation of militarisation on both sides led to the decline of civil society in general. 'The greater level of militarisation and militarised violence, the less participation from women and the wider community.'<sup>26</sup> Whereas the first intifada was the result of civil society growth and hope for state realisation of nationalist aspirations, the second intifada illuminated

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20 Kavar, 1998, p. 237

21 Johnson and Kuttub, p. 25

22 *Ibid*, p. 25

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23 *Ibid*, p. 31

24 *Ibid*, p. 31

25 *Ibid*, p. 32

26 *Ibid*, p. 31

the broken dreams and repression of Palestinians during the Oslo period.

Just as the first intifada offered lessons to the early generations of women's leaders, the second intifada provided the women's centers movement with feedback. Their feminist agenda, sans national rhetoric and political involvement, was failing. By rejecting the previous generations' nationalistic discourse they had failed the essence of the women's struggle since 1948. The roles of women in the two intifadas mirrors the two approaches to feminist discourse in Palestine: the nationalist agenda and the gendered agenda. 'Many activists in the women's movement are deeply aware of the contrasts in women's roles in the two Palestinian intifadas – and clearly articulate the urgent need to develop new strategies that link their gender agendas to national goals and struggle.'<sup>27</sup>

Beyond the need for a more unified agenda lies a deeper female struggle. When women are marginalised and banned from civil society, government, and, in the Palestinian case, from the peace process society as a whole suffers. With the steady decline of women's political networks, civil society in Palestine decreased. The instability and frustration of the Oslo period resulted in the second intifada. The lack of representation led to a decrease in grassroots political participation while political activism and representation relies on vibrant local civil society. This resulted in a weaker second intifada that did not force negotiations, as the first intifada had. 'Women's representation in the political arena is weakened by the absence of women's political or economic grassroots organisations....'<sup>28</sup> When women are weak, local and national communities are also weak.

A Palestinian activist of the fourth generation during the first intifada said, 'After all, if women on both sides of this conflict held real political power, we probably would have had peace a long time ago.'<sup>29</sup> How do women's

organisations on both sides of the green line reclaim both the nationalist and feminist agenda? It is a daunting task but one that must be undertaken. There is no better time to usurp the dialogue. Mahmoud Abbas' PLO is slowly dying and Hamas is coming to a standstill with both the Israeli government and the PLO. This may be the beginning of the third intifada.<sup>30</sup> If that is the case, women must not let this intifada sink into despair. It is time to revive the grassroots women's committees' movements so those in the women's centers can put their rights training to use. Until the international community intervened during the Oslo period, the women of Palestine always found ways to organise around the obstacles of occupation. They can again harness their power to throw off the yoke of Israeli and international colonialism and insert themselves again as the leaders of their communities.

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27 *Ibid*, p. 39

28 Kavar, 1998, p. 243

29 Morgan, p. 167

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30 A Bregman, 16 Jan. 2013, lecture

## On 'Empire', Imperialism, and Sovereignty

Pablo de Orellana

From the advent of Christianity in late Antiquity to the onset of early colonialism, debates about empire have revolved around divine and natural right. Vitoria rejected that monarchy derived its sovereignty 'from the commonwealth or from men'.<sup>1</sup> In a paradoxical parallel, it is interesting to consider that pre-Christian Roman sovereignty was occupied by the containment of the demands of the plebs, a concern that Marxism and Hardt and Negri brought back to thought about political sovereignty. Vitoria's main concern on sovereignty was territoriality, and he was at pains to discuss whether savages in the Americas were *infideles*, *amentes* or *insensati* and thus liable to enlightened *dominium*.<sup>2</sup> It is precisely this view of sovereignty, as based on the unreadiness of entire populations for self-rule and peace, that underpinned European colonial discourse. Classical notions of empire first and foremost include the projection of military, political and economic power outside the nation-state. This projection might be direct or indirect, informal or formal, but in any case does not necessitate the imposition of sovereignty upon other territories.

If one is to consider the contemporary international order, it seems unavoidable to at least consider it as a system dominated by a hegemon. The Project for a New American Century seeks to reaffirm 'American global leadership' for the purpose of 'extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles'.<sup>3</sup> Ferguson argues that "hegemony" is just a way to avoid talking about empire, "empire" being a word to which most Americans remain averse. But "empire" has never exclusively meant direct

rule over foreign territories'.<sup>4</sup> All of these notions of empire regard power, its exercise and *modus vivendi* as the utmost expression of the modern state. The modern state is thus the main producer of subjectivities through discipline and especially biopower with which it has an existential nexus through the very protection of life.<sup>5</sup> The state is also the most observable actor in the conduct of international relations, being both the container and defender of its biopolitical subjects.

Hardt and Negri, however, challenge this perception and argue that the international is mutating into an order of economic globalization that engulfs and supersedes the crisis-stricken modern state under 'a single logic of rule' that creates the condition of possibility for action by agents within Empire.<sup>6</sup> In this contribution, I explore the extent to which the notion of 'Empire' is useful in understanding contemporary international politics. The thesis of Empire shall be outlined first. The analysis will then focus on their conception of modern sovereignty and imperialism, which are the most contentious issues of *Empire* in considering the contemporary global political order. I shall not, however, explore the Marxist contradictions of 'Empire' or its reformulation of the proletariat as 'Multitude' given the priority of the purpose of this analysis. Finally, I shall attempt to offer an alternative conceptualisation of the role of power projection in the international in relation to economic globalisation as one based on economic terraforming as a form of economic conditioning.

### 'Empire'

The state as producer of subjectivity is, in Hardt and Negri's view, experiencing a moment of crisis and challenge. *Empire*

1 F De Vitoria, A Pagden & J Lawrence, *Political writings*, Cambridge Univ Pr, 1991, p. 14.

2 De Vitoria, Pagden and Lawrence, , p. 240.

3 'Statement of Principles', 2011, <<http://www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm>> [accessed 31 March 2011].

4 N Ferguson, 'Hegemony or Empire', in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, 2003, 154 (p. 160).

5 'The Birth of Biopolitics' in M Foucault & P Rabinow, *Ethics: subjectivity and truth: the essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*, Penguin, 1997.

6 M Hardt & A Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 154/xii.

details the forces and new subjectivities that they consider as symptomatic of change currently underway. Most important for their thesis is the globalisation of world markets that 'tends to deconstruct the boundaries of the nation-state'.<sup>7</sup> They see the recreation of enemies through subjectivities in the Western discourse of fundamentalism as an essentially anti-modern depiction: 'counter to modernism's dynamic and secular society, fundamentalism seems to pose a static and religious one'.<sup>8</sup> The creation of subjectivity, they argue, like that of the world market, and with fundamentalism as an enemy, is one that de-emphasises the state in favour of post-modern, global, and non-state actors. The demise of the Soviet Union led to the creation of paradigms for good and evil that are global, hence spinning the wheel of a global-level biopolitical technology of power.

Empire is not a continuation of imperialism for it relies on a subjectivity not based in sovereignty;<sup>9</sup> it does not depend on state subjectivity but on a de-centralised, de-territorialised, unjuridical, economic capitalist power machine: the ultimate evolution of capitalism beyond imperialism. Empire creates subjectivities that are based on the biopolitical nexus of production, life, and peace as first articulated by Michel Foucault. 'What Foucault fails to grasp finally are the real dynamics of production in biopolitical society', they argue, and needs the addition of the Marxist's focus on production: 'life is made to work for production and production is made to work for life'.<sup>10</sup>

Empire is a producer of subjectivities currently coexisting with modern ones. These are centred around an immanent inner biopolitical circle linking labour (of the Multitude, the subject of biopower) and production, and an outer circle, at the global level, of action and consensus with a biopolitical need for peace, stability and the market.<sup>11</sup> Empire is thus a 'globalized

biopolitical machine' that renders its power absolute through the 'complete immanence to the ontological machine of production and reproduction, and thus to the biopolitical context'.<sup>12</sup> Ontologically, Empire creates the condition of possibility for agents (capital) to act. This global order is defined by its very virtuality, its dynamism and 'its functional inconclusiveness'.<sup>13</sup> This double circle also explains, in their model, the subjectivity behind the articulation of intervention: an exception to the peace etc. pertinent to the biopolitical circle can result in intervention, moral (NGO's and other 'moral' forces) as well as forcible.<sup>14</sup> The 'symbolic production of the Enemy' arises from its particularisation as an exception to the peace of the biopolitical regime, and therefore military intervention 'is presented as an internationally sanctioned police action'.<sup>15</sup> Interventions 'are always exceptional even though they arise continually' and Hardt and Negri see its form as policing 'because they are aimed at maintaining an internal order'.<sup>16</sup>

Globalisation is a most pertinent obstacle for the consideration of sovereignty in late modernity: it escapes the control of the state as the primary human and spatial unit, it is a major factor in the relative welfare of any individual and interconnects states and people the world over. The positioning of the globalisation of world economy in IR is problematic to the point that Empire is helpful in reconsidering our position in regards to the limits, theory and subjectivity of the state as the unit of analysis and demarcation. Barkawi and Laffey suggest that the challenge of Empire has highlighted that IR's central categories of sovereignty and the nation-state 'generate a systematic occlusion of the imperial and global character of world politics'.<sup>17</sup> Taking the imperial seriously, they

7 *Ibid.*, p. 150.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 39-41.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 38

17 T Barkawi & M Laffey, 'Retrieving the imperial: empire and international relations', in *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, vol. 31, 2002, 109 (p. 110).



argue, allows for an understanding of sovereignty located 'in histories of European expansion and engagement with the world outside the West'.<sup>18</sup> This is in tension with a view of world politics focused on the state that leaves the international as a small space of strategic, diplomatic and economic interaction: the 'territorial trap'. Hardt and Negri see the international as a wider space of social relations and struggle that results in a mutually constitutive perception of the formation of modern sovereignty. Europe is thus contextualised and provincialised: The Westphalian state appears thus the result of interaction and mutual constitution in the international. Their understanding of globalisation as a new form of global power is, at least, helpful in understanding the current global political order as interconnected, mutually constitutive and decidedly transnational and also significantly "updates" and challenges notions of power projection in the international.

#### *The end of Modernity?*

Hardt and Negri argue that state sovereignty in its modern sense is being absorbed and smoothed into a global continuum such that 'at the highest level, one could say that only Empire (and no longer any nation-state) is capable of sovereignty in a full sense'.<sup>19</sup> This is highly problematic, not only with regards to US hegemony, but most importantly from the theoretical claim in that it appears to assume that Westphalian sovereignty was ever perfect, impermeable in its borders, permanent in its contents, in the preceding times of imperialism. I would argue that the modern state has never been in stasis, but is rather constantly relative and relational, responding to its own perceived existence, constantly reproducing its national subjectivity.<sup>20</sup> This happened in France with Sarkozy's brutal claims and legislation concerning French identity; David Cameron

has recently claimed that multiculturalism has failed in the UK and that "britishness" must be demanded of migrants.

The borders, both geographical and theoretical, of the modern state, were not, and are not, in a stasis of containment of their peoples. Even when they were not responsible for the movement of masses, movements happened, often on a massive scale; one has only to think of the great Irish and Italian migrations of the nineteenth century. The movement of 'the multitude' is no freer in contemporary times than hitherto: even though the EU might seem like an Imperial example of multitude movement, though making internal frontiers more fluid, it has made the external ones more impermeable than before. This brings us back to the role of the state and in the EU each development is a state-negotiated treaty - which explains the endemic impotence of the European Parliament. 'Undesirable flows' are being controlled not only in terms of migration but also in trade; the EU keeps stringent restraints on imports of food stuffs that might compete with European agriculture. Even the world of capital is not 'smooth'.

The state remains firmly grounded in its modern role as guarantor and provider of space for rights, citizenship, political action (taxation and welfare for instance).<sup>21</sup> So much so that many social groups around the globe seek statehood as the guarantee of rights and political part-taking for their peoples - as we have seen in the Balkans, Kurdistan, Burma, Spain, France, etc.<sup>22</sup> The state, I contend, is still the main producer and reproducer of identity, historicity - the antithetical "other" - and the ultimate zone of inclusion and the defence of life. Sovereign state subjectivity, within the epistemological condition of Westphalian modern capitalism, like power, is not possessed but rather practised through the

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18 *Ibid.*

19 M Hardt & A Negri, 'Adventures of the Multitude: Response of the Authors', in *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 13, 2001, 236-243 (p. 238).

20 DL Blaney & N Inayatullah, 'The westphalian deferral', in *International Studies Review*, vol. 2, 2000, 29-64.

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21 L Rofel, 'Discrepant modernities and their discontents', in *positions: east asia cultures critique*, vol. 9, 2001, 637 (p. 638).

22 see for part-taking J Rancière & S Corcoran, *Dissensus: on politics and aesthetics*, Continuum Intl Pub Group, 2010.

ontological conditioning of its biopolitical subjects.

Walker highlights the issue, claiming immanence 'in the philosophical struggles of early European modernity with a claim about the imminence of a new form of political order arising from a process of internalisation of interstate system'. He contents Hardt and Negri's 'founding binary' of 'transcendence and sovereignty as a counter-revolution against immanence'.<sup>23</sup> I am convinced by Walker's counterargument that 'the immanent critique of modernity does not automatically translate into an account of a politics that involves bringing the outside inside'.<sup>24</sup> This renders unsustainable the narrative in 'Empire' of enclosure and unity towards Imperial unity and organised difference. This is seriously limiting, for it not only invites a counter argument based on Imperialism, but also seems to ignore the contemporary practice of sovereignty itself, novel forms of governance and resurrected/ new/ revolutionary claims to sovereignty.

#### *The Empire Strikes Back: Economic Terraforming*

The actualisation of a state's international practice is thus still relevant to the point that major powers can still provide sponsorship to other actors - a projection of power.<sup>25</sup> The capacity of a state to provide sponsorship to another brings us to question Empire's claim that imperialism has collapsed in the face of the 'attempt to quench an insatiable thirst' of capitalism towards 'being a world power, or really *the* world power'.<sup>26</sup> They see Empire as the response of capital to the subjectivity of class struggle through a process of internalising the international.<sup>27</sup>

America, the usual suspect, is in their view

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23 RBJ Walker, 'On the immanence/imminence of empire', in *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, vol. 31, 2002, 337 (p. 343).

24 *Ibid.*, p. 344.

25 P de Orellana, 'On International Sponsorship', in *E-IR*, , 2009, <<http://www.e-ir.info/?p=1456>> [accessed 12 December 2010].

26 Hardt and Negri, p. 222.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

defeated in its imperialism in 1968.<sup>28</sup> This, as Barkawi and Laffe argue, did not stop the US from interventionism. Indeed, the view that Western imperialism is static in form and practice is misleading and deeply Eurocentric. Imperialism evolved in a mutually constitutive development with its opponents with an infinity of US and European interventions, direct, indirect, formal, covert, and in the form of international sponsorship, for decades in all parts of the globe.<sup>29</sup>

I remain unconvinced that there is no continuity between imperialism and Empire. This is because I am unready to accept American exceptionalism in regards to imperialism. Most importantly, due to their historical narrative linking a static notion of European sovereignty abroad 'as a machinery of borders and limits' whereas the US is instead replicating its constitution globally.<sup>30</sup> It is problematic that they link the break from modern imperialism to post-modern Empire with separation, inclusion and exclusion, and this rests mostly on Empire's consideration of the US within the world.

American exceptionalism, especially as coded in their openly anti-colonial constitution and national discourse and debate from the late 1800s, is rooted on a Eurocentric notion of sovereignty and imperialism associated to colonialism.<sup>31</sup> Said acknowledges that US imperialism utilises other means, informal rather than territorial colonialism, but 'the tactics of the great empires, which were dismantled after the First World War, are being replicated by the US'.<sup>32</sup> Hardt and Negri charge Said with not taking a step further and recognising that the US is not imperialist but it's rather a crucial part of 'a fundamentally new form of rule'.<sup>33</sup>

The expansion of capital markets and loci of

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28 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

29 Barkawi and Laffey, 109 (p. 124).

30 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

31 TG Paterson, JG Clifford & KJ Hagan, *American foreign policy: a history*, DC Heath, 1977, , p. 205.

32 E Said, 'Arabesque', in *New Statesman and Society*, vol. 7, 1990, , p. 32.

33 Hardt and Negri, p. 146.

productions has long been the target of liberal regimes. Hence, the process of capital expansion to a global level, whilst never as intensive and extensive as presently, also informed the agenda of classical imperialism, such that even Spanish expansion in the Americas by the likes of Pizarro, Cortes and Orellana, was not only a quest to impose sovereignty abroad, but rather one led by pioneering, although brutal, seekers of wealth. The British conquest of India was initiated as assistance to the plea of the East India Company that was unable to cope with local resistance. A stark example were the Opium Wars, fought in the 1800s to force a market (China) to open to the narcotic produce of British colonies. Hardt and Negri are not the first to place the projection of political power as informed by economic ambitions. They do nonetheless propose an understanding of globalisation that at least forces us to reconsider the role of capital in the contemporary global order. Instead of absorbing markets, capital is using American influence to internalise markets abroad.<sup>34</sup>

Whilst the implications for sovereignty of the thesis of 'Empire' are unconvincing, the notion of economic conditioning as a major factor behind economic globalisation is one that needs serious consideration. I argue that this form of power projection in the international consists of "economic terraforming" through state power and the extended reach of international organizations that essentially terraform, adapt and prepare the economic landscape. This, however, is in my view an extension and latently contemporary form of imperialism, for it depends on the projection of the power of states for the favourable conditioning of foreign markets and loci of production. Contrary to 'Empire', this is a process that itself requires the collaboration of acquiescent states in order to reach implementation. This dependence on the projection of state power is not only clear in the obvious political and military interventions, but also in the asymmetrical roles of international organisations and treaties like IMF, WB,

WTO, GATT. These are ruled by inter-state treaties and are funded by its most powerful members. They do not impose Imperial sovereignty world-wide, but rather work, through sovereign states, to create economic conditions for capital expansion. This is clearly comparable to the aftermath of the Opium Wars, in which China was forced to legalise the opium trade for the benefit of French and especially British trade.

The values, influence and power of modernity in the liberal project are still politically dominant when considering the paradigm of sovereignty as well as imperialism. In 2011, The Provisional Libyan Council of Governance issued a statement of purpose coded in unequivocally modern terms: 'Wholesome sentiments about the social contract, civil society, political obligation, and the true awfulness of discrimination (in any shape or form) inform its ineffably do-gooding intent'.<sup>35</sup> There is an inescapable continuity in values and tactics in contemporary imperialism. Retuning to the Project for the New American Century, there is still will in the US for 'preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity and our principles [...] to ensure our security and our greatness'. Both of these are clearly re-framing exercises in what concerns the sovereign states, rather than an overcoming of the state paradigm. Indeed, the above examples show that the state is still the main - and essential - conveyor of normative initiatives from abroad. As is clear with the institutions and treaties governing global financial and industrial transactions like WB or GATT, they too depend upon states to terraform territories and populations for economic participation in a globalised market.

Hardt and Negri's conceptualisation of a post-modern global order engulfing state

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35 'The Libyan rebels' vision statement is a masterpiece of the genre | Simon Tisdall | World news | The Guardian', , 2011, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/29/libyan-rebels-vision-statement-masterpiece>> [accessed 31 March 2011].

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34 Hardt and Negri, p. 167.

sovereignty and, through the production of new subjectivities, heralding the slow transition away from modernity, is unconvincing. Their thesis is compromised by the Eurocentrism of their framework of sovereignty as well as the acceptance of American exceptionalism. IR is, however, enriched by their conceptualization of globalisation as an immanent producer of biopolitical subjectivities based on a link between production and life.

The contemporary global political order cannot, however, be described as Empire, for I must contend with the image of a global sovereignty and a discontinuity between the latter and imperialism. Imperialism has, however, developed its most powerful tool: “economic terraforming”. This is a development of imperialism, not a throwback to former practices of imperialism. We may speak of economic terraforming as the practice of the very essence of *imperium*<sup>36</sup>, and conclude that the contemporary political order is the result of the wielding of *imperium* by leading economic actors.

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36 Latin for 'power' or 'authority'

## Are We Overly Castigating the 'Dark Underbelly' of Humanitarian Relief Aid?

Amelie Sundberg

Because the word 'humanitarian' is loaded, assumed to be a benevolent force, it is not surprising that literature uncovering a dark underbelly to humanitarian relief aid has attracted a lot of attention.<sup>1</sup> Romanticising humanitarianism has had the perverse effect of overly castigating its results. It is important to avoid the assumption that the original purpose of humanitarian relief aid is to solve conflicts. Primarily 'humanitarianism' seeks to ensure that those most vulnerable are not foregone during crises.<sup>2</sup> Within the context of conflict, relief aid, whether from donor governments, humanitarian agencies of the United Nations (UN) or non-governmental organisations, is tailored to deal with the symptoms of violence.<sup>3</sup> Violent conflicts include civil war, ethnic cleansing and genocide.<sup>4</sup> In response to these emergencies humanitarian relief aid constitutes the delivery of food, shelter, supplies and medicine to those in need.<sup>5</sup> Recent notions that relief aid should merge with development aid as a panacea for conflict are beyond the scope of this article because the form of development aid still remains distinct from that of relief aid. Rather, humanitarian relief aid has the scope to fuel or mitigate conflict because any aid that is administered during conflict cements itself as a part of that conflict context.<sup>6</sup> Humanitarian relief aid can

influence, for better or worse, the capacity, legitimacy and scale of conflict.<sup>7</sup> Critics argue that media hype surrounding certain emergencies has stimulated unbalanced relief distribution.<sup>8</sup> But ironically they themselves have fallen victim by focusing on extreme examples such as the Rwandan genocide 1994 and the famine in Sudan 1983-1989. Humanitarian relief aid has often bolstered conflict, but these trends should not outweigh examples of mitigation.<sup>9</sup>

Humanitarian relief aid can influence the capacity of warring parties to take part in a conflict, both as an economic resource and opportunity for mobilisation. Since the 1980s targeting relief to civilians during violent conflicts has taken place against amidst the collapse of formal economic structures.<sup>10</sup> Civilians survive during these 'complex emergencies' by resorting to extra-legal activities in a parallel political economy of war.<sup>11</sup> This encourages an, 'economy of plunder' - where relief aid is both a new source of wealth and power.<sup>12</sup> The manipulation of relief by warring parties must be understood as a part of this distorted war economy.<sup>13</sup> 'Creaming off' relief supplied the

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1 D Keen, *Complex Emergencies*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2008.

2 N De Torrente, 'Humanitarian action under attack: reflections on the Iraq War', *Harvard Journal of Human Rights*, vol.17, no.74, 2004, pp.1-29.

3 D Shearer, 'Aiding or abetting? Humanitarian aid and its economic role in civil war,' in M Berdal & D Malone (eds.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic agendas in civil wars*, IDRC/Lynne Rienner, London and Boulder, 2000, pp.189-203.

4 Keen, *Complex Emergencies*.

5 A Roberts, *Humanitarian Action in War: Aid, protection and impartiality in a policy vacuum*, Adelphi Paper 305, Oxford University Press, London, 1996.

6 M Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support*

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*Peace – Or War*, Lynne Rienner, London, 1999.

7 D Keen & K Wilson, 'Engaging with Violence: A Reassessment of Relief in Wartime', in J Macrae & A Zwi (eds.), *War and Hunger. Rethinking International Responses to Complex Emergencies*, Zed Books, London, 1994, pp.209-221.

8 A De Waal & R Omaar, 'Humanitarianism Unbound? Current Dilemmas Facing Multi-Mandate Relief Operations in Political Emergencies', *African Rights*, Discussion Paper No.5, November, 1994.

9 Shearer.

10 J Macrae, *Aiding Recovery? The Crisis of Aid in Chronic Political Emergencies*, Zed Books, London, 2001.

11 Keen, *Complex Emergencies*, p.20; M Duffield, 'The Political Economy of Internal War: Asset Transfer, Complex Emergencies and International Aid', in J Macrae & A Zwi (eds.), *War and Hunger. Rethinking International Responses to Complex Emergencies*, Zed Books, London, 1994, pp.50-69.

12 Anderson, *Do No Harm*; J-F Bayart, S Ellis & B Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*, Oxford: James Currey, Oxford, 1999, p.71.

13 P Le Billon, 'The Political Economy of War. What Relief Workers Need to Know', *Humanitarian Network Paper*, no.33, 2000.

Sudanese government with an estimated £90 million in 1989.<sup>14</sup> Duffield claims Operation Lifeline Sudan accounted for half of the government's military expenditure that year. Often material goods such as vehicles, medicine and food are stolen both by rebels and government forces - either utilised or sold for a profit.<sup>15</sup> But when agencies hired local drivers or guards in order to prevent theft, these payments encouraged a continuation of the war economy.<sup>16</sup> Competition for profit from relief has even sparked conflict. During the famine in Somalia, 1992, four clans came into conflict over competitive negotiations with agencies that wanted access to a seaport.<sup>17</sup>

The true importance of relief aid as a source of funding for conflict must be placed in perspective. Shearer argues that humanitarian relief aid is less valuable in commodity-rich countries; relief aid to Afghanistan is a mere drop in the ocean compared to their estimated \$15 billion UK street value of narcotics.<sup>18</sup> Critics focus on less resource-rich countries such as Ethiopia and Mozambique where relief aid would have played a higher stake.<sup>19</sup> Keen misleadingly places Sudan in this category, which possesses an abundance of oil.<sup>20</sup> Clearly the distinction here between more or less resource-rich countries is blurred. More likely the value of relief aid varies between different groups. Rebels especially will use whatever resources are

available to them.<sup>21</sup> Relief aid could be a valuable source of income for those that do not have direct control over natural resources, such as the ex-genocidaire militias in Eastern Zaire refugee camps.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, conflicts are not only driven by greed or natural resources, and so humanitarian relief aid does not drive wars either.<sup>23</sup> Anderson argues that relief aid can actually strengthen the peace economy by buying local goods and lowering the resale value of relief goods. Measures have been taken to mitigate the use of relief for military purposes. Operation Lifeline Sudan 1989 helped for a while to mitigate warfare in the South by reducing economic exploitation, for example UN payments to railway workers outbid those from corrupt merchants.<sup>24</sup>

Opportunities to mobilise conflict occur within humanitarian relief aid space in two notable ways. Firstly, belligerent groups of authority have adopted the transport of relief as a smokescreen for military mobilisation. In 1993, 3000 Sudanese troops were transported to Wau under the guise of relief trains, before proceeding to raid and scorch the land.<sup>25</sup> This contradicts Nunn and Qian, who find food aid risks conflict less in countries with well-developed infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> Whether relief transport fuels or mitigates conflict is ambiguous. Operation Lifeline Sudan 1989 ensured that relief corridors were not accessible for military operations, creating nearby peace zones, still the corridors were

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14 F Deng & L Minear, *The Challenges of Famine Relief: Emergency Operations in the Sudan*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1992, p.94.

15 B Barber, 'Feeding Refugees, of War? The Dilemma of Humanitarian Aid', *Foreign Affairs*, vol.76, no.8, 1997, pp.8-14; Roberts, *Humanitarian Action in War*.

16 Anderson.

17 Shearer.

18 N Stockton, 'In Defence of Humanitarianism', *Disasters*, vol.22, no.4, 1998, pp.352-360.

19 Keen, *Complex Emergencies*.

20 M Ross, 'Oil, Drugs, and Diamonds: The varying Roles of Natural Resources in Civil War', in K Ballentine & J Sherman (eds.), *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict. Beyond Greed and Grievance*, Lynne Rienner, London, 2003.

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21 P Le Billon, *Fuelling War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflict*, Adelphi Paper 373, Oxford University Press, London, 2005.

22 G Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War: The 'Congolese' Conflict and the Crisis of Contemporary Africa*, Hurst & Company, London, 2009.

23 M Berdal, 'Beyond Greed and Grievance: And Not Too Soon... A Review Essay', *Review of International Studies*, vol.31, no.4, 2005, pp.687-698.

24 D Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A political economy of famine & relief in southwestern Sudan 1983-90*, 2nd edn., James Currey, Oxford, 2008.

25 *Ibid.*

26 N Nunn & N Qian, 'Aiding Conflict: The Impact of US Food Aid on Civil War', *The National Bureau of Economic Research*, Working Paper No.17794, 2012.

also used for government military supplies.<sup>27</sup> This may simply have moved the site of conflict. Comparatively, Keen and Wilson argue that the July 1992 relief corridors in Mozambique were relatively successful.<sup>28</sup> It is hard to establish the direct influence of these instances on the broader course of a conflict.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, the manifestation of humanitarian relief in refugee camps has influenced conflicts, as a 'continuation of war by other means'.<sup>30</sup> Relief aid to Darfur camps in Sudan in the 1980s helped to cement the government's forcible displacement from rebel areas.<sup>31</sup> Prunier describes the refugee camps in Eastern Zaire after the Rwandan genocide as 'war machines'.<sup>32</sup> Hutu genocidaire-militias orchestrated the movement of peoples across the border to attract humanitarian aid. Under this cover, the ex-militia prioritised food aid for the former elite, imported weapons and carried out attacks into Rwanda. One should be cautious about generalising this trend for all refugee camps. Prunier narrows his attention to the five camps around Goma, but as there were around 35 camps in Zaire alone this form of relief was not always overwhelmingly militarised.<sup>33</sup> De Waal and Omaar note that those who had planned the genocide dominated the Tanzanian camps, but they offer no direct causal relation to increased broader conflict.<sup>34</sup> A morally questionable form of organisation does not automatically nurture conflict. It has also been argued that camps limit opportunities for refugees to develop economic survival strategies, and so foster militant recruits.<sup>35</sup> Stockton refutes this

because locals often see relief aid as temporary and unreliable. A more helpful approach would be to acknowledge that there are many different practical and affective reasons for joining a war effort that cannot be pegged down to relief.

The relative importance of relief aid as transport and camps are symbolic of the inability of the state to provide basic public services. Jackson's 'quasi-states' concept can often be applied to conflict-ridden countries that have sprouted complex emergencies.<sup>36</sup> The lack of ability or will of national state structures to provide basic public services has created a situation whereby states rely on and expect private international organisations to be responsible for public welfare.<sup>37</sup> Arguably the 'internationalisation of public welfare' has created more space to focus on waging conflict.<sup>38</sup> This can help explain why warlords assume a singularly military role.<sup>39</sup> But these arguments only present a tenuous causal connection that dismiss other factors responsible for motivating collision before the introduction of humanitarian relief aid. Rather, it can sometimes stunt mitigation. In Somalia the collapse of civilian institutions was compounded by famine relief, which increased difficulties for future market rehabilitation and peacebuilding.<sup>40</sup>

'It is a truth universally acknowledged' that humanitarian relief aid influences the

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27 Keen, *The Benefits of Famine*.

28 Keen and Wilson, *Engaging With Violence*.

29 Shearer.

30 Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, p.24; H Slim, *Killing Civilians. Method, Madness and Morality in War*, Hurst & Company, London, 2007.

31 D Keen, 'Aid and Development in the Context of Conflict: Some Problems and Pitfalls', *High-Level Expert Forum*, 13-14 September, 2012.

32 Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, p.25.

33 *Ibid*.

34 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*.

35 B Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency*

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*Assistance to Refugees*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986.

36 R Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, international relations, and the Third World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1990; Macrae.

37 Keen, *Complex Emergencies*.

38 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*; Duffield, *The Political Economy of Internal War*, p.57.

39 Anderson.

40 A De Waal, 'Dangerous Precedents? Famine Relief in Somalia 1991-93', in J Macrae & A Zwi (eds.), *War and Hunger. Rethinking International Responses to Complex Emergencies*, Zed Books, London, 1994, pp.139-159; J Macrae & A Zwi, *War and Hunger. Rethinking International Responses to Complex Emergencies*, Zed Books, London, 1994.

legitimacy of a conflict.<sup>41</sup> The ‘search for a completely neutral humanitarian space is ultimately futile’.<sup>42</sup> During the Cold War, humanitarian agencies had to have the consent of a country in order to carry out relief operations.<sup>43</sup> Now sovereignty is not as stringently adhered to, but agencies still needed to negotiate both with government and rebel force.<sup>44</sup> NGOs had to deal with Charles Taylor, for his rebel forces controlled roughly 90 per cent of Liberia. ‘Neutral’ agencies overlook acts of violence and human rights abuses in order to avoid being refused access.<sup>45</sup> Although it is exaggerated to generalise that ‘today’s human rights abuses are tomorrow’s conflicts’, using belligerent parties as a conduit for aid automatically transfers a degree of legitimacy to their actions.<sup>46</sup> The government-orchestrated resettlement of civilians during the Ethiopian famine in the early 1980s killed an estimated 80,000 people but was legitimised as a drought-induced refugee crisis by the international community.<sup>47</sup> ‘Inaccessibility’ provided a fig leaf for the lack of relief agency neutrality, because needs assessments were calculated on accessibility.<sup>48</sup> By claiming ignorance, agencies often discriminated against rebel-held areas, allowed relief to be used as a ‘weapon of war’.<sup>49</sup> The government in Sudan blocked attempted neutral shipments to the ‘rebel’ South and labelled the area as ‘inaccessible’. Comparatively, humanitarian ‘safe areas’

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41 J Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p.1.

42 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*, p.4

43 M Barnett & T G Weiss, *Humanitarianism in Question*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2008.

44 Keen, *Complex Emergencies*.

45 D Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper 320, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

46 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*, p.38.

47 A De Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, James Currey, Oxford, 1997.

48 Keen, *Aid and Development in the Context of Conflict*.

49 Slim, *Killing Civilians*, p.103.

legitimised conflict in other places.<sup>50</sup> It must not be forgotten that in turn, however, relief aid has also supported and legitimised more peaceful actors. In Somalia, aid administered to elders helped maintain the loyalty of those who might have otherwise turned to violence.<sup>51</sup> Notably, Keen repeats many of his examples of misappropriation of relief by the Sudanese government, such as the discovery of a twenty truckloads that were meant for Aweil in 1988, throughout his literature and even within the same chapter.

Legitimacy lends itself to impunity, which can prolong strife. Labelling the Ethiopian famine a natural disaster instead of a calculated government counterinsurgency policy is a case in point.<sup>52</sup> Humanitarian action has often been instrumentalised for political purposes.<sup>53</sup> During the Cold War Western donor countries used humanitarian relief aid as a proxy for fighting communist forces, actively fuelling conflict.<sup>54</sup> The US funded Cambodian refugee camps, between 1978 and 1991, to support guerrillas who were fighting the Vietnamese-backed government. The politicisation of aid has continued into the twenty-first century.<sup>55</sup> During the Somali famine, 2011, US donors denounced relief efforts to the rebel South as supporting terrorists.<sup>56</sup> Even though the end of the Cold War witnessed an influx of non-governmental humanitarian agencies heavily influenced by donor government contributions, exceptions of large organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontiers were significant.<sup>57</sup> The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) claims its strict adherence to impartial distribution of relief aid prevents it from fuelling conflict.<sup>58</sup>

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50 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*.

51 Keen and Wilson.

52 Keen, *Aid and Development in the Context of Conflict*.

53 Macrae.

54 Barber.

55 Shearer, p.199.

56 K Menkhaus, ‘Stabilisation and Humanitarian Access in a Collapsed State: The Somali Case’, *Disasters*, vol.34, no.S3, 2010, pp.S320-S341.

57 Duffield, *The Political Economy of Internal War*. Duffield, *The Political Economy of Internal War: med Conflict*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder and London,



Even the UN provided food aid for both government and UNITA forces in order to mitigate plunder before the elections in.<sup>59</sup> Supporting each side of a fight might have influenced the course of conflicts, but has not bolstered them.

‘The increase of donor-funded NGO relief operations and western disengagement from poor countries are two sides of the same coin’.<sup>60</sup> This has not fuelled conflict, but the unwillingness of western donor countries to intervene in collisions has used humanitarian relief as a substitute for broader political strategies that could mitigate them. Because Rwanda was not strategically or economically important for western donors they avoided political action against the genocide.<sup>61</sup> They only responded to the ‘conventional’ crisis of Rwandan refugees after media pressure.<sup>62</sup> Huge media-inspired funds ensured that only Médecins Sans Frontières withdrew in protest to the militarisation of the camps.<sup>63</sup> Goodhand uses funding trends to prove selectivity of responses. In 1999 a huge amount was allocated to Kosovo, whereas very little went to Afghanistan. Still, some NGOs have attempted to take up the policy vacuum.<sup>64</sup> Oxfam was the first organisation to acknowledge the Rwandan genocide and call for action, and towards the end of 1992 aid workers called for intervention in Somalia, which led to Operation Restore Hope.<sup>65</sup> On the one hand the increased role of NGOs has created unrealistic expectations of what humanitarian relief can achieve, as they are not designed to develop broader policies that

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2006.

59 Macrae and Zwi.

60 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*, p.6.

61 Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*.

62 *Ibid.*; P Robinson, ‘The CNN Effect: Can the News Media Drive Foreign Policy?’, *Review of International Studies*, vol.25, no.2, 1999, pp.301-309.

63 De Waal, *Famine Crimes*; Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*.

64 Roberts, *Humanitarian Action in War*.

65 A Roberts, ‘Humanitarian Issues and Agencies as Triggers for International Military Action’, in S Chesterman (ed.), *Civilians in War*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder and London, 2001.

tackle the roots of contentions.<sup>66</sup> Omaar and de Waal regard this ‘humanitarianism unbound’ as fuel for conflict.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, de Waal’s notion of ‘debased’ humanitarianism may reflect a tendency to see red.<sup>68</sup> Now that organisations and governments are more accountable through the media, politics may have become relatively more humanitarianised.<sup>69</sup>

Lastly, humanitarian relief aid can influence the scale of a conflict. Directly, humanitarianism has been included in every United Nations military intervention mandate since 1990.<sup>70</sup> The 1992 intervention in Somalia at the behest of relief agencies failed and became embroiled in ‘warmaking’.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, areas occupied by US forces simply pushed militant violence into new areas.<sup>72</sup> The delivery of relief has also been militarised. Perceived security restraints in zones of collision inspired the safeguarding of workers and supply.<sup>73</sup> However, armed protection in a violent environment can provoke a response and legitimises the use of weapons. Moreover, locals see aid to the ‘enemy’ as a blow against them, which can spark retaliation.<sup>74</sup> In Sudan, between 1986 and 1988, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army attacked relief convoys.<sup>75</sup> Relief has often attracted raiding, which in turn escalates violence.<sup>76</sup> Attacks on distributed relief are

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66 Roberts, *Humanitarian Action in War*; M Schloms, ‘Humanitarian NGOs in Peace Processes’, *International Peacekeeping*, vol.10, no.1, 2010, pp.40-55.

67 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*, p.2.

68 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*, p.2.

69 *Humanitarian Enterprise. Discoveries and Dilemmas*, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, 2002.

70 Roberts, *Humanitarian Issues and Agencies*.

71 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*, p.19.

72 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*, p.19. *Policy*, no.91, 1993, pp.138-54.

73 Anderson.

74 *Ibid.*

75 Keen, *Complex Emergencies*.

76 Slim, *Killing Civilians*.

easy in refugee camps.<sup>77</sup> Camps are particularly volatile environments because they are often not disarmed, as seen in the Kurdish 'safe haven' in the North of Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War 1991 and the 'safe area' in Srebrenica, Bosnia.<sup>78</sup> Although prostitution and rape are common in camps, Slim makes the wrong assumption that forced displacement prevents women and children from supporting the war effort.<sup>79</sup>

Shearer argues that there is no correlation between the amount of relief and the scale of violence, pointing out that the highpoint of relief to Somalia took place between 1992 and 1994 whereas more people had died from war in 1991.<sup>80</sup> However, his use of immediate timeframes is questionable, as he disregards the impact of earlier relief aid or effects built up over time. There is a 'blurred' distinction between civilians and combatants.<sup>81</sup> Thus the distribution of relief can influence intergroup tension.<sup>82</sup> Access to relief can foster violent competition – this divided the rebel movement in South Sudan.<sup>83</sup> Marginalisation from aid can create new grievances, which can inspire a resort to violence, as seen when the Nuer attacked the Dinka clan in Sudan, 1991.<sup>84</sup> It is difficult to grasp what part these individual instances of violent theft or attack play in the broader outcome of a conflict. Accepting the risks associated with relief aid may be the lesser of two evils. In

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77 Barber.

78 Roberts, *Humanitarian Action in War*; I Smillie & L Minear, *The Charity of Nations. Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World*, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, 2004.

79 I Cohn & G Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflict*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994; C Coulter, M Persson & M Utas, *Young female fighters in African wars: conflict and its consequences*, 2008, [online]; H Slim, 'International Humanitarianism's Engagement with Civil War in the 1990s: A Glance at Evolving Practice and Theory. A briefing paper for ActionAid UK', 1997, [online] Available at: <<http://www.jha.ac/articles/a033.tm>> [Accessed on 27 November 2012].

80 Shearer, p.194.

81 *Ibid.*, p.190.

82 Anderson.

83 Keen and Wilson, *Engaging With Violence*.

84 *Ibid.*; Keen, *Complex Emergencies*.

Mozambique diversion of aid resulted in a decrease in the need to raid civilians.<sup>85</sup> Accordingly de Waal and Omaar and more recently Keen advocated delivering large quantities of grain in the beginning of a famine, because even if looted it would bring down the prices and so violent looting would no longer be a strategy of survival. Additionally, the strong attraction of relief can also convince people to opt for peace.<sup>86</sup> Keen and Wilson describe how the Mundari in Sudan agreed to abstain from violence in return for a cattle-vaccination program partly run by Oxfam, and the Special Relief Programme Angola was a key part of the political negotiations in Angola, 1990.<sup>87</sup>

It is not time yet to shed our cynicism - humanitarian relief aid has done more to fuel and than to mitigate violent conflict. But the role of aid itself has been inflated, which misleadingly outweighs more positive cases of humanitarian relief aid. The relative impact of humanitarian relief aid amongst over drivers of warfare renders the image more ambiguous. Humanitarian relief aid has influenced the political economy of war and funded conflict. But its importance is only relative to other resources and can provide a 'carrot' for peace. Transport of relief has mostly provided a smokescreen for military mobilisation, but the militarisation of refugee camps has been exaggerated as a general trend. Critics contradict themselves by first saying donors instrumentalise NGOs but then argue NGOs are too 'bold'.<sup>88</sup> In truth they coexist. Lastly, relief aid's stimulation of immediate violence may be less important for broader conflict than the build up of long term grievances amongst those marginalised from aid. Dark underbelly or not, humanitarian relief aid is neither a nemesis for mitigation nor a panacea for conflict.

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85 Keen and Wilson, *Engaging With Violence*.

86 A De Waal & R Omaar, 'The Lessons of Famine', *Africa Report*, vol.37, no.6, 1992, p.62

87 De Waal and Omaar, *Humanitarianism Unbound*.

88 *Ibid.*, p.2

## **'I saw this' - Painting Conflict.**

Tom de Freston

“Yo lo vi” (I saw this) is the phrase beneath one of Goya’s ‘Disasters of War’ etchings (1810-20). It is a collection of 82 copper plates showing the worst scenes from the Spanish uprising against Napoleon and the subsequent Peninsular War. We see a decapitated head hanging as a trophy on a tree, a man wielding an axe treating a human head like a block of wood, the use of rape as a weapon of war and the corpses of the dead being buried. In the etching labelled “Yo lo vi” we see a mother and child fleeing, the child looking back out of the frame, undoubtedly witnessing the horror from which they flee. It is a child’s eyes telling us “I saw this” which hits home more than any other image.

“Yo lo vi” is effectively what I am saying when, with one click of a button I send a photograph of myself, stood in front of Goya’s ‘2nd and 3rd of May’ paintings (1808) in the Prado, from my phone to facebook/twitter. It is me declaring, I am here, ticking off the must-see pictures and further polluting a bloated digital landscape with more white noise. Is this it? I ask myself. Are these paintings just disposable experiences, consumed as hastily and vacuously as the mass of imagery that suffocates our modern existence?

These paintings are not the ‘Mona Lisa’, a kitsch celebratory painting as empty as its reality TV descendants. You can view the ‘Mona Lisa’ through the screen of another’s I-phone in the Louvre, or in a thousand pieces in the gift shop. You can see it, tick it and move on. However, despite your best intentions Goya’s May paintings do not let you do that. They refuse your shallow glance, and force you to really “see this”.

In the ‘3rd of May’ we see an individual stare into the face of death, one clawing his eyes, like a child trying to block out a nightmare, another we see looking beyond his copper

plate, desperately seeking something beyond his nothingness. A row of anonymous soldiers punctuate the picture diagonally, repetitive beasts extending into the distance, eyesight firmly aligned down the barrel of a gun. The picture is a game of two halves, those with intent to kill, and the figure who will be killed. Paused in this moment we bounce back and forth between the two lines like a blood-filled game of tennis.

In the ‘2nd of May’ we see the moment in flux. A dead figure sliding off a horse like a slab of meat down a butchers block, knives held at arms-length, ready to strike, like a still from Alfred Hitchcock’s ‘Psycho’, a muscular, dynamic vortex of energy, horses and limbs circling around the descending figure. An orgy of violence and an ‘ecstasy of fumbling’. Outside of the picture frame an image expands beyond itself through a process of visual echoes. We see a horse immersed in conflict, reminiscent of Pablo Picasso’s ‘Guernica’, with its distorted angst-ridden horse. The role of horses in war imagery cannot be ignored. Horses are symbols of power, iconographic metaphors of the state. Military leaders and monarchs have always been depicted on horses, with perhaps no more ludicrous example than Jacques-Louis David’s painting of ‘Napoleon crossing the Alps’ (1800/1). The image depicts Napoleon in all his finery at total ease with his task of controlling a magnificent bucking horse. It is an unintentionally comical metaphor of the great leader in total control of the state. Paul Delaroche would later depict the same scene in 1850 with a far greater degree of historical accuracy, Napoleon riding clumsily through the hills on top of a donkey. For the scene of state control depicted by David we can read the opposite from that in Goya’s painting, the symbol of a power structure being attacked, the falling horse a far more eloquent and poetic image due to its relation to the pomposity of prior images such as David’s.

In ‘The 3rd of May’ we can’t help but see Edouard Manet’s ‘Execution of Maximilian’ (1867-69), a work which quotes ‘The 3rd of May’ directly. The composition is very

similar, with a row of anonymous soldiers cutting across the piece. But this time the trigger has been pulled. Attention rests on the one soldier whose face we see; he is casually reloading his gun as if the process of taking another human's life was no more morally complex than moving parts in a factory production line.

We are also reminded of Yue Minjun's 'The Execution' (1995), a lesser known quotation of Goya's 'The 3rd of May'. In Minjun's worlds everyone is the same, both the soldiers and the victims flaunting distorted laughing faces. The soldier to the far right reloads an imaginary gun; were it not for the reference we might read it as an air guitar. Either way the nod to both as phallic symbols, and thus to masturbation, is clear. The gun is a phallus which ejaculates bullets, and so war today is pornographic.

Consider Guy Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle' (1967), a Marxist diatribe on commodification's corrosive influence on our connection to reality. In regards to war his thinking has direct relevance to the Vietnam war and the public consumption of it. For the first time moving images of a war involving US citizens were being fast-tracked into the sitting rooms of an American audience. This increased awareness and access could be argued to create a greater connection between audience and victim in the theatre of war. However, a Debordian view would argue that the exactly the opposite takes place. The continuous repetition of imagery is so excessive that we experience empathy fatigue. From the safety of a sitting room we can consume this imagery, offering up a socially responsible veneer of pity without the need, desire or ability to truly connect. 'Everything that was directly lived is now merely represented in the distance', the role of the image has subordinated lived experience, the spectacle obfuscated reality, and we are left, the spectators drugged by spectacular images.<sup>1</sup>

If such a thesis is to be believed, even in part, then this condition can only have worsened. Jean Baudrillard's 'Simulacra and Simulation' is a Poststructuralist account of this evolution, musing on the neo-platonic notion that society has been replaced by a representation. It is a semantic deconstruction in which signs and symbols have become destabilised, signifier separated from the signified. Language, mass media, the technological revolution (in particular the internet) have taken us further along a path in which, paradoxically, our increased connectivity has resulted in alienation. It is the primary existential crisis of contemporary existence. Baudrillard uses an analogy from 'On Exactitude' by Jorge Luis Borges, in which a map of an empire is made that is so detailed that it covers the entire empire itself. Representation consumes reality.

Is this where we find ourselves? Is this what war is today for the consumer? Over the last few years twenty-four hour news, blog sites, twitter accounts and facebook feeds have been loaded with stories and images from across the world: Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, the Congo, Pakistan, Egypt, Palestine, Israel and Mali. But do we engage with images of conflict, pain and suffering? Or are they a mere series of incomprehensible notes in the cacophony of contemporary existence? Is this what we mean when we talk of the pornography of modern conflict? Certainly the distinction between the two, pornography and war, and the role of the internet in both should not be ignored. They both contain a similar process, in which an excess of imagery must lead to some form of abstraction.

Consider Prince Harry's recent remarks. The prince was in charge of firing an Apache's Hellfire's air-to-surface missiles. He said of his job: "It's a joy for me because I'm one of those people who loves playing PlayStation and Xbox, so with my thumbs I like to think

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<sup>1</sup> G Debord & D Nicholson-Smith, *Society of the Spectacle*, Zone Books New York, 1995, , pp. 4–5,

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<<http://zinelibrary.info/files/TheSocietyOfTheSpectacle.pdf>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

I'm probably quite useful."<sup>2</sup> There is inversion here, as computer games become more real it seems that the reality of war itself has become less and less real. This is not a criticism of Prince Harry himself but of the process, one in which drone strikes and collateral damage are two further examples of how the weapons and language of war dangerously enact a process of divorcing action from reality. This semantic distinction is not just a philosophical point; this process of alienating the action from its consequence is morally dangerous as it removes awareness and responsibility. It is this distancing which aligns war to pornography.

The changing ways in which we engage with imagery, particularly imagery of conflict, hugely impact upon our perception of past imagery. Debord and Baudrillard are obtuse and polemic at points, but within their literature we find thoughtful and important critique of how we engage with the world around us.

So, when we stand in front of Goya's '3rd of May' and '2nd of May' paintings in the Prado we are not in a bubble, neither are we transported back to 1808. We are individuals living some two hundred years later, considering an image of war and suffering and consuming under the influence of contemporary society, culture and media. Hence we take in the paintings in front of us, prior to giving it historical context; a hierarchy of viewing which is normally ignored.

The two Goya paintings are History Paintings, pictorial accounts of actual historical events. Napoleon I of France had crowned himself Emperor of the French Republic in 1804 - a wonderful piece of egotistical stage management, being both the giver and receiver of power. Napoleon then looked to spread and tighten his grip on much of Europe, through war and political

manoeuvring. Charles the IV (an ineffectual Spanish Monarch), Manuel de Godoy (the ambitious Spanish Prime Minister) and Ferdinand VII of Spain were some of the victims of Napoleon's powers of persuasion in a game of political chess, eventually resulting in Joseph Bonaparte taking control of the Spanish throne in March 1808 and giving Napoleon control of Spain. Resentment to the new regime led to the May uprisings in Madrid. The '2nd of May' depicts the uprising in Madrid, the '3rd of May' depicts the French reprisal.

Situated in this context we are forced to ask what these paintings tell us about war both historically and today. The '3rd of May' is generally held up as the masterpiece, and quite rightly, in terms of pictorial invention it is one of the key paintings of the 19th Century. It offers one of the last great death cries of History Painting. History Painting had previously depicted iconic, important individuals at key dramatic moments from high literature, the bible or History: Jesus, Napoleon and King Lear. These are the men of power who tend to take centre stage in the blockbuster theatre of narrative painting. Goya changed the script. In the '3rd of May' unknown figures take centre stage. The soldiers are all anonymous killing machines. Even more crucial, all the victims are unknown. The figure lying dead in his own blood, the Christ-like man illuminated by the lantern and all his accomplices, all nameless. The power of this is incredible, for the character is both an individual but also a symbol for everyone, there is both a specificity and a universality to his plight. It revolutionises the way such images can work and it is a device that Gericault, Courbet and Manet would all use in their key paintings of the 19th Century. The role is more than just a formal one, it has the impact of shifting the moral agenda of storytelling in painting, it declares that the histories and stories of everyman are as important, dramatic and worthy of our time, attention and pathos, as those of the figures of power who had previously dominated most forms of History Painting.

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<sup>2</sup> 'BBC News Channel - Prince Harry in Afghanistan', in *BBC*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01qkxnv>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

What could be more relevant to the conflicts of today than this. In 2011, *The Times* made 'The Protestor' the person of the year. In December 2010 Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in Tunisia, set himself on fire in protest at the increasingly draconian restrictions of the state and the abuses of local municipal officers. This sparked an uprising, and it sparked the Arab Spring, a movement that saw the citizens of countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria stand up in protest and eventually revolt against the state. The subsequent reprisals, particularly in Syria, contain the plight of the unknown individual as the central tragedy. An official estimate of 60,000 killed in Syria at the time of writing, inmates routinely raped as sexual abuse is used as a weapon of war, and two million people displaced, forced to leave their homes and become refugees in neighbouring countries.<sup>3</sup> Goya's image, with its emphasis on the plight of the unknown individual, is particularly pertinent in this respect. And Syria is not unique, the Congo and Palestine are just two other examples of conflicts in which war attacks and destabilises the identity of entire communities.

Goya's masterpiece is not morally flawless. It perpetuates one of the great myths that war is binary. In the '3rd of May' it is very clear who the enemy and the victims are. The entire painting is split into two clear realms. On the left the victims, on the right the enemy. The light and shadow dramatically cast by the lantern provide a fairly predictable device to remind us of who the good guys and who the bad guys are.

War is almost exclusively depicted in these binary terms. Look at the post 9/11 dialogue of President Bush and Tony Blair, entirely built on an *us* and *them* structure, of good and evil, dangerously sounding as black and white as a crusade. The reality of the subsequent conflicts was anything but simplistic, with the

invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan about far more than bringing the perpetrators of 9/11 to justice. Politically and ethically a whole array of views can be held on American and British foreign policy post 9/11, but any of those views that present the situation as anything other than a fragmented web of players is both inaccurate and simplistic. The same is true of the current situation in Syria. It is not heroic rebel fighters versus the evil puppet master Assad. It has descended into something far more dangerous and complex with an array of competing factions, all with different agendas.

For artists and politicians to present us with depictions of war which are simplistic and binary in their format is disingenuous and dangers. For the great tragedy of war is that it enacts entropy on humanity, reducing us to chaos.

This takes us back to 'Guernica', a work that represents the horror of the chaos of war. 'Guernica' might depict a specific event, namely the bombing of the Basque village of Guernica by German and Italian warplanes during the Spanish Civil War. It is a work that transcends specifics, as time and space are unsettled. Except for the light bulb, there are no historical signifiers. A mother, her head lopped sideways on her boneless neck as she tongues a howl to nothingness, holding her baby in her arms - a secular 'Pietà'. Hands and feet dance rhythmically across the page and the narrative of figures in space is not immediately apparent. A horse spins and screams, a floating head enters through a window and another skyward howling figure descends into a hole. The architecture of the picture, with a sprinkling of domesticated windows, doors and tiles, harks back to the shifting and fragmented space of Picasso's earlier analytical Cubist paintings. This is the reality of war, the safety of domesticity descending through a process of destruction into an almost abstract mess, the illusion of reality and humanity almost totally lost.

One of Picasso's many quoted remarks is: "When I was their age, I could draw like Raphael, but it took me a lifetime to learn to

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<sup>3</sup> '60,000 killed in Syrian war, says UN', in *the Guardian*, 2 January 2013, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/02/6000-killed-syrian-war-un>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

draw like them". This is the power of 'Guernica', it captures some of the energy of children's drawings. On the day of writing (January 14th 2013) The Times newspaper published drawings by child refugees from Syria. Martin Fletcher writes a piece that describes how Safa Faki, a young art graduate from Aleppo, had given children in a camp in Atmeh pens and paper.<sup>4</sup> She gave the children no training or guidance and just told them to draw what you want. The vast majority depict images of war, often featuring crude drawings of houses and families under attack by gun fire, helicopters and fire. The images reminded me of another series of drawings I had seen a few years earlier from the war in Darfur.<sup>5</sup> There is one image that I will never forget. Drawn in a graph paper notebook, reminding me of primary school maths, it depicts a multitude of horses and camels, often with multiple legs, with men sat facing backwards and forwards indiscriminately firing bullets across the gridded surface. There is something about the gridding, a symbol of order and control, against the flowing, random composition of a child's drawing which makes it an incredibly powerful image. In another, houses mount up across the vertical of the picture and are then coloured over in a thick red crayon, as if fire is consuming the entire community. Another of the Darfur drawings show a curved path heading towards a village. The villagers, seemingly all children and women, are gathered in a cluster as the soldiers fire a stream of bullets into the group. It takes us back to Goya's '3rd of May', the horror of a group of figures gathered together to be then shot by a group of anonymous soldiers. Yet the image goes a step further, for the victims are as anonymous as the soldiers. Goya makes the victim heroic, by giving him a status. The

child from Darfur shows the more brutal reality of war, the fact that most victims are, to the world that witnesses war from the outside, unknown.

What makes these images so powerful is that they are primary source documents, depicting the horrors of war without the neutralising impact of modern media. A child's drawing is surely for all of us, one of the key iconographic signifiers of home. Any parent takes far more pride in the numerous painted hand prints and crayon family portraits that their children do than any paintings they might own by a professional artist. As such, a child's drawing reminds us of family and of home. To see the safety and happiness of such imagery polluted by the stain of blood, a chaos of bullets or the stench of death is to set up a significant juxtaposition, and one which can't fail but to have an emotive impact. They are images which show us that war has polluted a community, ripped apart homes and destroyed families. These are images in which innocent children are screaming out to us "Yo lo vi".

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4 M Fletcher, 'Art brings solace to the children of war in Syria', in *The Times (London)*, London, 14 January 2013, section News, <<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middle-east/article3656511.ece>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

5 'In pictures: Child drawings of Darfur', in *BBC*, , 4 March 2009, section In Pictures, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7923247.stm>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

## From the *Strife* blog:

### **M23 Rebels Capture Goma**

By Fred Robarts, Posted on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2012

For the past few days, I have been glued to Twitter for updates on the situation in Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu in eastern Congo. According to the latest reports, the Congolese national army has now retreated from the city, leaving it in the hands of the Rwandan-backed M23 rebel group. An M23-associated twitter feed has just claimed “the city is safe, population should return home, shops should be open, activities back to normal, let’s wait”. Journalists on the spot say M23 commanders have been parading in Goma before crowds of supporters.

The news has sparked student-led demonstrations against the UN in Kinshasa and Kisangani: the peacekeeping force had long promised to defend Goma, and the Security Council has been unable to do more than issue a press release and apply targeted sanctions to one of the M23 leaders. That these events take place in the shadow of the crisis in Gaza may be no coincidence. It has certainly limited news coverage and diplomatic attention.

Meanwhile, countless displaced people have nowhere to go, faced with the double threat of victorious rebels and (arguably more problematic) humiliated army troops. (Oxfam have just released a report on the plight of civilians in eastern Congo generally.)

On 1st January 2013, Rwanda will take up its seat on the Security Council. Having broken just about every rule in the UN Charter by directly backing a rebellion in a neighbouring country, and not for the first time, this represents a great failure of diplomacy and does not bode well for next year’s deliberations on Congo in New York.

Here in the UK, Andrew Mitchell’s decision to overrule his officials’ objections by providing budgetary support to Rwanda is looking worse than ill-judged. Let’s hope his successor Justine Greening will recognise that UK taxpayers won’t stand for subsidising proxy wars.

### **Joining the ‘Million Man March’**

Nesma El Shazly, Posted on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2013

I was not allowed to leave the house throughout the first week of the revolution. Although my parents wholeheartedly endorsed the revolution, they feared for my life and would not let me join the protests. For this reason I spent that week documenting the events as they unfolded from my own home. The Egyptian people were revolting against sixty years of military rule, calling for three demands: bread, freedom and social justice. For eighteen consecutive days, protesters were engaged in face-to-face confrontations with President Mubarak’s brutal central security forces. Revolutionaries peacefully faced live ammunition, rubber bullets, tear gas, kidnappings and detainment with complete fearlessness.

After watching the horrifying brutality with which protesters were met on The Friday of Anger (28 January), I decided that enough was enough. I could not sit at home helplessly watching my people die. I frantically called up all my friends to see who was willing to march to Tahrir Square with me. Needless to say most of my male friends tried to discourage me out of concern for my safety. I was one of many women facing difficulty in taking to the streets and so, my friends and I, all women, decided to join the ‘Million Man March’ on 1 February.

As I walked down the stairs carrying the banner that I had spent the whole night making, my mother followed me, tightly gripping my hoodie, trying to pull me back. My brother drove me to my friend’s house,



where we had all planned to meet. That morning came to be a turning point in my life. As we were about to leave to Tahrir, my best friend called me from the airport to tell me that she and her husband were leaving for the U.S for the safety of their 2 year-old child. I experienced a mixture of conflicting emotions. I felt content that I was doing the right thing, excited that I was going to be a part of making history, apprehension of the risks I was about to take and sorrow that I could not even bid my best friend farewell.

There were three phases to our day: comedy, terror and euphoria. The first phase took place on the underground train. As we purchased our tickets the vendor looked at us with pride and said “May God be with you,” while a man standing behind us in line looked at us in disgust and told his wife that we were probably drug addicts. As we boarded the train, an old man selling copies of the Quran followed us on and tried to convince us that we should buy a copy and read it before we go to Tahrir and die. The adverse reactions we received throughout our journey put us in hysterics.

We experienced the second phase – terror – as we got off the train in downtown Cairo. We marched through the streets towards the Square alongside several other small groups. Mubarak supporters were surrounding the Square yelling out foul words at all the revolutionaries. An older woman followed me and grabbed my arm asking me where I was going. I looked her straight in the eye and said, “I’m going to Tahrir.” She tightened her grip on my arm and started hitting me and shouting out, “You are going to ruin this country! You are going to turn Egypt into Iraq!” My friends eventually realized that I had been held back and ran to my aid. It was only at this point that we realized the extent of danger we were subjecting ourselves to. We resumed our journey quietly.

As we got closer to the Square we started hearing the enthusiastic chants of the protesters, “Al sha’ab yoreed isqaat al nizam!” (The people demand the fall of the

regime!) Surges of revolutionary spirit and energy shot into us, abolishing our fear and wiping away thoughts of our encounter with Mubarak supporters. I have never felt as safe as I did that day in the Square. We were all brothers and sisters uniting for one common goal. People welcomed us as we marched in, handing us water and fruit. Nobody looked at us. No man tried to harass us. Everyone there truly believed in the cause. They knew that this was a matter of life or death.

While the world classifies the events of 25 January as a revolution, most revolutionaries have a contrary view. We ousted one brutal figurehead, and that in itself is a tremendous accomplishment. But we have yet to dissolve the ruthless military regime that has ruled our country for 60 years. The Egyptian public was manipulated into believing that the military supported our revolution. But their assumption of power following the ousting of Mubarak suggests otherwise. It seems more likely, in my eyes, that the military sought to reinstate their power, which had seen a downturn during Mubarak’s later years. Throughout that period, Mubarak shifted his focus towards the business elite, bringing prominent businessmen into the political sphere.

During November 2011, the public was voting in the parliamentary elections that the military was administering. Concurrently, protesters were being attacked and killed by central security forces in the Mohamed Mahmoud clashes. Not only were we seeing the military gradually replace central security forces, we were also seeing protesters being unlawfully detained and tried in military prisons and courts. Furthermore, we had yet to see the last of Omar Suleiman and Ahmed Shafiq, who later sought to run for presidency. Omar Suleiman, a leading figure of Egypt’s inhumane intelligence system, renowned for his direct implication in the CIA’s callous rendition programme, took on the role of Vice President on 29 January. Suleiman later sought to run for the 2012 presidential elections. However, he failed to garner enough support in the initial stages of the

race. Ahmed Shafiq, a military-backed figurehead that turned his back on the revolution through his assumption of the position of Prime Minister on 31 January, also sought to enter the race. However, unlike Suleiman, Shafiq somehow managed to garner widespread support. His support base mainly derived from ardent anti-revolutionary supporters of the Mubarak regime and the

military, as well as liberals who feared the growing dominance of the Muslim Brotherhood in the political sphere. The fact that Shafiq was even able to run for president, let alone make it to the final round of the elections, shows that the revolution is far from over

## **About the contributors**

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