

URBICIDE

Beirut

1975 - 2006



By

Isabelle Verhaert

Master thesis in Human settlements

Promoters: Lieven De Cauter & Bruno Demeulder

Postgraduate Centre for Human settlements

**Department of Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning,
KULeuven - Belgium**

2006

Close up satellite image of part of Beirut city June 2006



Close up satellite image of part of Beirut city August 2006



Before



© Copyright 2006 DigitalGlobe Inc.
All rights reserved. .

Satellite image of part of Beirut city after bombings June 2006

After



© Copyright 2006 DigitalGlobe Inc.
All rights reserved.

Satellite image of part of Beirut city after bombings August 2006

part 0 | introduction.

I write this introduction after finishing this thesis, in order to explain how I have written the rest. After coming back from Beirut on the 12th of June, I did not have a clear plan on how to structure the thesis, but I had some ideas. Some things I felt that were important to me and comments that I had on the situation. So I started writing about the civil war. One month later, when in my thesis I had arrived at the 1982 invasion of Israel, the present conflict started. In a strange way this paralyzed me and the first days I spent watching television, seeing the same comments and images over and over again on different channels and talking to people in Lebanon on msn messenger or on the phone. My whole introduction and starting point seemed irrelevant now and I was not sure how to proceed. I had chosen the text 'Le Liban' by Amin Maalouf, which Jad Salhab had given me, to show the relevance of the civil war in the world today. I had written an introduction where I compared the Lebanese civil war with the "global civil war". This term tries to define the transnational character of the American 'War on Terror'. I wanted to compare the characteristics of the civil war in Lebanon with these civil/international/extra-systematic characters of wars today. But after the 12th of July the civil war stopped being an event that had ended and that could be used to analyze a present day situation. It became the present day situation. The meaning and content of the civil war seemed to change, and the comparison with the war on terror in a clear-cut and isolated case-study suddenly became impossible. I started to rewrite my history of the 1975-1990 war, punctuating it with references to the situation today. I certainly felt encouraged because at that time I was reading about the '82 invasion and in the beginning I could relate what I read with the things I saw on the television. It seemed all one and the same conflict. So there I was writing about past, present and future at the same time, when the war started to change. Israel had a lot of difficulties on the ground in their advance to the Litani river and from the air they bombed more than ever before. Hezbollah on the other hand seemed to be more active and putting up more resistance than expected, while the international community kept quiet. And I ended up rewriting the same thing over and over again, still talking about the 1982 invasion. It became clear that I was trying to do the impossible, that I needed to find a way to separate the present conflict from the past, because of its presence and ever changing nature. I did this by splitting the thesis in two major parts, one about the civil war, with no reference at all to what was happening now and one part about the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. In the second part I used no information more recent than the ceasefire in mid August.

An important part of this thesis is the history of Lebanon and the current affairs. More than ever I see the difference between those two. While history is moulded into a story, the present tells itself only as a series of events. There are different reasons why I spent so much time writing about this. I started to read and write before I left to Beirut, for myself, to get to know a part of the country before I was there. I wrote a small part with a brief history, full of Phoenician splendor and great conquerors. This text grew when I arrived in Lebanon and I started to notice that everything people told me about their country was the same I read in the travel guides and saw in ads promoting Lebanon. So I started reading more and I found out that a lot of the Lebanese idealized their own history. By the time I came back, I wrote a great deal about the different struggles in the region, but I had not decided yet whether I was going to include all this in the thesis. But then the present conflict erupted and I found myself frustrated in front of the television wondering how little current affairs are placed in a historic context. This was also the time when I started to reread the texts about the theory of urbicide. To my surprise, none of them bothered to situate the destruction they were analyzing in a historic framework. History never should be an excuse for excessive pain and destruction, but if this destruction is isolated from its context, it quickly assumes the mythical proportions of pure evil. In postmodern times everything is questioned in Western society. Modernism's

ideologies have been criticised to bits yet if these authors talk about war or in the context of war situations, they paint a picture that is very much black and white, happily simplifying matters into a tale of good and evil, god and the devil. The more you read about actual war situations the more you realize this distinction never existed.

While writing on the civil war and the present conflict I became obsessed with the idea of objectivity. This had already started when I was reading about the civil war and was fueled by hearing contradictory accounts from different people or reading documents on the internet. Sometimes it is hard to recognize the same events in different accounts. I do not suggest people are lying, but a difference in emphasis makes for a entirely different story. I remember that in the past I always wrote a small introduction about the subjectivity of every author. This became a formality for me, required at the beginning of every text, but this got a whole different meaning in this thesis. In war situations people belong to certain groups. There seems to be no place for people who wants to remain neutral: every position is claimed by either 'side'. These parties fight each other and as a consequence the people get isolated from the other groups, locked up in their own territory. When the war ends, those groups might live together again, but their past experiences and memories remain. Their personal history is not always rewritten according the experiences and memories of the 'other side'. In this way, different stories of the same war are kept alive. Of course, this process occurs every day, everywhere, but in war situations it is far more pronounced.

In the present conflict, there was a lot of debate on how many minutes the news had spent on the Israeli side and how many on the Lebanese side, and the objectivity of it all. My experience was that during this past two months I spent a lot of time defending Lebanon. It is amazing how people can transform this conflict of Israel and Hezbollah into a 'we' versus 'they' situation, resulting in statements like "yes, but *they* started [Hezbollah kidnapping soldiers]". And there I went for the next half an hour, explaining the history of conflicts between the two countries, arguing that the conflict was merely a phase in a long enduring series of past struggles, rather than a "new" event with a clear starting point. I can't shake the feeling that I am doing the same in this thesis, trying to defend Lebanon. This is inherent to the subject being Lebanon and its capital Beirut, not Israel versus Lebanon or Lebanon versus its neighbours. Because I focus on Lebanon as a subject in this thesis, I automatically seem to side with today. Trying to change that would result in an attempt to cover things up, so in the end I simply stopped trying. The amount of rockets that landed on Israeli territory and the death and destruction they brought on is not in the scope of this thesis, but the Lebanese casualties and destruction is. This is a very blunt remark and some people might still insist my interest betrays a moral judgment, but it is in fact the only way to distance myself from moral judgement.

This thesis consists of four parts. The first part is a treatment of the history of Lebanon and the civil war. In the second part I look at the term urbicide and how this has been defined and used by different authors. I revisit some events of the war and connect them to urbicide. In the third part I look at the recent conflict that started on the 12th of July 2006 and some factors that proceeded it. In the fourth part, finally, I reconsider urbicide from a more military point of view, and focus more on aerial bombardments. Throughout these four parts I talk about my experiences in Lebanon through anecdotes and stories. My original aim was to write a more conventional thesis, with specific sources and statistics I had hoped to gather in Beirut. But when I arrived there, I found out that only little research had been done on the consequences of the war. The existing research had been started so late that Beirut had already been rebuild mostly. I possess a very detailed study sponsored by the European Union that classifies the

destruction throughout Lebanon according to the type of building. But when we look at the “Mohafazat de Beyrouth”, I read that every hospital, medical cabinet, pharmacy, school, cinema, sport facility, polyvalent room, tourist place, municipality, police station, place of culture and industry has remained intact.¹ According to the statistics the war never touched Beirut. The study was done in 1996, seven years after the official end of the war. Because of my work in Beirut, I spoke to a variety of people: politicians, people who worked in the CDR (Conseil de Développement et Reconstruction) and Lebanese architects. Everybody had his own story and opinion on the present situation and the events of the war. I got a lot of information from them, but when I tried to conduct some interviews nobody really had to say anything. Not because they did not want to speak out, but because most of the events during the war were based on stories, rumours or personal experiences that they did not want to share in any official way. So much of the information I gathered were impressions, anecdotes told in between dinner and coffee, or concerned only peculiar events. This was the only information I could gather in three months time about a subject that was never thoroughly documented and that everyone related tries hard to forget. One of the most frequent questions people asked me was “Why don’t you write about the reconstruction of Lebanon, what is there to tell about the destruction?” So I based much of my writing on personal experiences through anecdotes. These stories must underline the subjectivity of the experience as one moment in time. I have dispersed them throughout the thesis, while the four major parts are lined up chronologically, starting from the first cities along the Levant and ending with the ceasefire of the 14th of August 2006 at 07:00am.

This introduction is written as a conclusion at the end of the thesis, but placed at the beginning. Ideally, my conclusion would unite the perhaps fragmented parts of this thesis and mould them into coherent whole. In a conclusion one normally writes a synthesis of the different points touched upon throughout the thesis and highlights the most important statements. But in this thesis these statements themselves have changed while writing, and the content itself has altered alongside the changing events of this summer. They do not form a coherent body of findings in an evolving context, they have evolved themselves. This is my opinion after writing this thesis and it stops me from writing a strong conclusion at this moment, it is possible that a reader has a different view. For now, this introduction will have to function as the frame that holds the fragments together, as placeholder for the absent conclusion itself.

¹ CDR : *Habitat - Evaluation des dommages*, Synthèse et Analyse. Commission de L’union Européenne, mars 1996

Part 1 | Libanon :

Le Liban

Le Liban est un rosier sauvage. Si vous vous approchez des fleurs, gardez-vous des épines. Et si vos mains s'en trouvent lacérées jusqu'au sang, prenez quand même le temps de caresser les fleurs.

Je parle de rosiers, ayant à l'esprit cette pratique, répandue en Bourgogne et dans le Bordelais, qui consiste à laisser pousser des rosiers, justement, en tête des rangées de vigne. On a constaté, en effet, que cette fleur souffrait avant toute autre des Maladies qui s'attaquent aux plantes, et qu'elle pouvait donc servir de sentinelle pour alerter les vignerons et leur donner le temps de réagir.

Mais les hommes ne comprennent pas toujours le message. Certains, par paresse, par ignorance, par aveuglement, lorsqu'ils voient apparaître des taches sur les feuilles, se disent que le rosier est, de toute manière, une plante fragile, délicate, frivole, et que leur vigne ne risque rien.

Il y a trente ans, le Liban est entré dans l'une des phases les plus éprouvantes de son histoire. Une société qui voyait dans la diversité sa raison d'être, et dans la liberté d'expression le fondement de la paix civile, venait de sombrer dans la crispation identitaire, les massacres, la peur de l'autre et la destruction de soi. Pendant quelque temps, le pays est apparu comme une exception, affligeante pour ses fils comme pour ses fidèles amis, mais ne suscitant, chez bien des gens, que des jugements détachés et condescendants. Que voulez-vous ?, le rosier est une plante si fragile !

Puis les affrontements ethniques et communautaires se sont multipliés à travers le monde. Non seulement au Proche-Orient, en Afrique, ou dans le sud de l'Asie, mais également dans l'ancienne Yougoslavie, aux premiers contreforts de l'Europe. Et au-delà. Ce qui semblait naguère le triste apanage de quelques

banlieues de Beyrouth a aujourd'hui pour théâtre la planète entière, de Manhattan à la Tchétchénie, en passant par Londres, Madrid, et jusqu'à Bali.

Crispation, massacres, peur de l'autre et destruction de soi. Il est vrai qu'avec la chute du Mur de Berlin, nous sommes passés d'un monde où les clivages étaient surtout idéologiques à un monde où les clivages sont identitaires. Je n'ai aucune nostalgie pour l'époque de la Guerre froide, qui a causé, au XXe siècle, les drames que l'on sait. Mais elle avait pour caractéristique d'éveiller, en permanence, le débat.

-2-

Quand les clivages sont identitaires, il n'y a ni débat ni dialogue. Chacun proclame ses appartenances à la face de l'autre, chacun lance ses imprécations ; puis retentissent rafales et explosions.

Le rosier est une plante délicate, me dit-on. Le Liban est une mosaïque de communautés. Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas, il ne s'agit plus seulement du Liban, la Terre entière est une mosaïque de communautés.

Ethnies opprimées, religions chatouilleuses, nations inassouviées, elles sont chaque jour un peu plus apeurées, et tentées par le recours à la violence ; pour se protéger, pour s'affirmer, ou pour se venger.

Si l'humanité d'aujourd'hui se révélait incapable de faire vivre ensemble, dans l'harmonie et dans la dignité, sur le minuscule territoire du Liban, des communautés qui, depuis des siècles, pratiquent la coexistence ou, à tout le moins, le côtoiement, comment diable pourrait-elle gérer l'incommensurable diversité planétaire ? A cette interrogation angoissée, ce début de siècle nous apporte un début de réponse, qui n'a rien de rassurant. Ni pour les pays où cohabitent depuis longtemps des populations mêlées, ni pour ceux qui viennent tout juste de découvrir les contraintes de la diversité. Il suffit de promener son regard sur cette planète déboussolée pour constater que la violence ne recule pas, et que le fossé entre

les plus grosses communautés humaines ne fait que s'élargir. Pas un événement majeur qui ne soit vécu, des deux côtés de la faille, et notamment sur les deux rives de la Méditerranée, avec des sentiments opposés.

Amis du Liban, ne perdez pas des yeux le rosier sauvage qui a poussé précisément au bord de cette faille ! Si vous voyez s'épanouir, puis triompher, le vaste élan de liberté et de coexistence dont nos martyrs ont été les courageux porte-drapeaux, c'est que la vigne des hommes donnera demain des grappes saines. Mais si vous voyez les fleurs trembler, chanceler, puis s'abattre, si vous voyez la pourriture se former à la naissance des feuilles, c'est que la vigne entière est menacée, et que le vin de l'avenir sera aigre.

Amin Maalouf

le 1er février 2006

Translation:
Lebanon

Lebanon is a wild rose bush. If you reach for its flowers, watch out for the thorns. And even if your hands end up ripped and bloody, do take the time to caress its flowers.

I talk about the rose bush thinking of this practice, taken up again in Bourgogne and the Bordelais, of growing roses at the head of each vineyard line. Roses, more than any other plant, are vulnerable to disease and therefore make great sentries, alerting the winegrower and giving him time to react. But people don't always get the message. When the first stains on the leaves appear, some say to themselves - out of laziness, ignorance, blindness – that the rose bush is but a fragile, delicate and frivolous plant and that their vineyard is not at risk.

Thirty years ago, Lebanon entered one of the most strenuous phases in its history. A society that saw diversity as its *raison d'être* and freedom of speech as the foundation of civil peace, lapsed into tensions of identity, massacres, fear of the other and destruction of the self. For a while, the country seemed an exception, grievous to its sons and trusted friends alike, but rarely stirring anything beyond detached and condescending judgements in most people.

Then ethnic rivalries and conflicts within the communities have grown throughout the world. Not just in the Middle East, Africa or Southern Asia, but also in the former Republic of Yugoslavia, the first buttresses of Europe. What seemed to be only the sad prerogative of some Beirut suburbs can now be seen on the entire planet from Manhattan to Chechnya, from London to Madrid to Bali...

Frustration, massacres, Xenophobia and self-destruction. It's true that with the fall of the Berlin wall we left a world of ideological differences behind for a world of differences of identity. I'm not at all nostalgic after the Cold War period that caused all the drama of the 20th century we know of. But on the other hand it caused a permanent climate of debate.

-2-

When the gaps and differences are about identity there is no debate and no dialogue. Each group has its members and throws his imprecations in the face of the other. Then resound the gusts and explosions.

They tell me that the rosebush is a delicate plant. Lebanon is a mosaic of communities. Don't be mistaken, it's not just Lebanon, the whole world is mosaic of communities.

Oppressed ethnic groups, tickly religions, insatiate nations, every day they are more frightened and seduced by the call of violence, to defend or affirm themselves or take revenge.

If these days humanity seems to be incapable of living together, in harmony, with dignity, on the tiny territory of Lebanon, where different communities have been coexisting for centuries. How the hell would it be able to handle this enormous planetary diversity? To this frightful question the beginning of the century offers us the beginning of an answer, not a reassuring one at all. Not for countries where mixed populations have been living together for a long time and neither for those countries that have only just begun to discover the constraints of diversity. All you need is one good look at this lost planet to notice that violence is not decreasing and that the gap between the largest human communities is only growing. There is not one major event that isn't experienced with opposite emotions on both sides of the gap, both banks of the Mediterranean.

A | introduction

When talking to Lebanese people, one gets the impression that the civil war was a sudden outburst of sectarian violence in a country where people from different religions and cultures were peacefully living together for centuries. The same is suggested by Amin Maalouf when he speaks about Lebanon as a country “*qui voyait dans la diversité sa raison d’être*”. However, this is not true. In the history of the region there were several struggles between different religious groups. And although they were of a different character than the religious segmentations during the civil war, they most certainly had their impact. This myth of the good old cosmopolitan times is very strong and recurrent, originating even at the very beginning of the civil war:

“In 1975, for instance, journalists arriving in Beirut would invariably be told by the Lebanese of the halcyon days which had just ended, of the peaceful Phoenician land in which Christians and Muslims had shown the world that historically religious antagonists could live in peace.”²

Since its conception during the French Mandate, Lebanon always had to prove it could exist as an independent nation. Because conflicts were regarded as evidence of the opposite, the Lebanese sold themselves to the outside world as a country of peace and wealth. This myth was anchored in the public conscience so strongly that despite 15 years of violence, it only grew. Every suggestion to struggles with the exception of the war period is taboo in present day Lebanon.³ One of the reasons for such a belief in an idealized history is to be found in the way the war ended in 1990-’92. The Taef agreement, which officially ended the war, came at a time when the violent outbursts were very intense. The civil war had known calmer and more active periods, whereby focus of the fights was replaced from the capital to the south and at the end the violence had remarkably intensified in Beirut. Nevertheless the different militias, with the support of foreign powers, came to an agreement. Throughout the 15 years of the war period, a number of agreements were made and more than once the war had seemed to be over, but they never lasted. The Taef agreement however did and all but one militia handed in their arms (Hezbollah, a shia militia, claimed to fight a war against Israel and therefore was not subjected to the conditions of the peace agreement). A general pardon was given to all war crimes, reforms of the Constitution were made according to the Taef agreement and the political life resumed under control of Syria. The Lebanese people now more than ever felt the urge to prove their claims for independence, which Syria always dismissed. Nothing fundamentally changed in the relations of the different communities and the war lords of the civil war are today's political protagonists, with the exception of the PLO who left Beirut in 1982. The problem of the Palestinian refugees was all but settled, even if it played such an important role in the polarization of the Lebanese society before the war. In general it is fair to say that, although important reforms have been made to the Constitution, the memories and scars of the war divide the different communities in Lebanon today more than ever. In order to maintain the status quo, the war's origins are obscured, witness quotes the likes of

² Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 68

³ *While working in Beirut, I wrote a small introduction to the history of the country. Every part on the historical struggles in the region, even every mention of the different religious groups, were met with such resistance by my Lebanese peers that I took them out. My colleagues would frown, admit that what I had written was a proven fact, but then invariably would question the necessity of said excerpt. These repeated suggestions eventually resulted in my deleting them. In the end I got suspicious of self-censorship, but Nabil would laugh and say I wrote in a very ‘European way’.*

“to those generations who had no choice but to take up arms” which are abundant in contemporary literature on the war. Instead, a lot of weight is put on the ‘common’ Phoenician past and the tolerant cosmopolitan society before the war, through a series of excavations and studies. The present *modus vivendi* hovers between fatalism and denial, and is maintained by the fiction of the idealized cosmopolitan pre-war period. The civil war, so the story goes, was just a strange and sudden outburst in an otherwise peaceful country. The symbols of this eldorado, such as ancient Phoenicia, acquire an almost sacred status:

While working in Beirut I had the opportunity to write a small article together with Rani Rajji in the only French journal of the country, L’Orient Le Jour. The article dealt with urbanism and politics and we made some serious statements on Lebanese politicians. The article was submitted right before the deadline, but it did not appear in the next edition. The editors were not worried about the allegations of expediency, as we had expected, but they were troubled by us calling the Phoenicians “ces illustres boutiquiers du passé”⁴. It took them three weeks of discussion before they finally published it.

It is important however to discuss the civil war and the destruction of buildings disregarding these general myths about the Lebanese society and the pre-war history. Clearly they obstruct any objective understanding of the situation. When considering the consequences of violence and war, the destruction, we should situate them in a course of events, however incomplete or subjective. There seems to me a discrepancy between on the one hand the general perception in the West of the Middle Eastern state of affairs as being one big mess, and on the other hand the tendency to rationalize our own past conflicts. Therefore, I will begin with an extensive account of the history of the area which today is the Republic of Lebanon, followed by the course of the war itself.

B | pre 1975 | the ideal past

from Phoenecia until the Ottoman Empire

Lebanon was established by the French and the League of the Nations in 1921, but almost 5000 years earlier the Phoenicians built cities in the same Mediterranean coastal planes, as a base for their maritime expeditions and trading routes. Berytus (Beirut), Byblos (Jbeil), Sidon (Saida) and Tyre (Sour) originated in this period. After 450CE the power of the Phoenicians dwindled and the area was loosely attached to the Achaemenid dynasty of Persia until Alexander the Great annexed it. After his death it became part of the Seleucid empire and in the 1st century BC the Romans conquered the region. It was under the reign of the Romans that Christianity became popular, exported by the apostle St Peter from nearby Galilee, after the death of Jesus of Nazareth. The Roman emperor Constantine moved the capital from the corrupted Rome to Constantinople, a portent to the division the Roman Empire by the end of the 4th century. In 394 Christianity became the official religion in the eastern Byzantine Empire. They adopted a strict orthodoxy different from some of the local Christian communities in Lebanon. The prosecution of pagan beliefs caused the first religious tensions in Lebanon and neighboring Syria. During the next centuries the successive Byzantine emperors had troubles maintaining power in the region, and there were periods of fighting between Greek and Arab tribes. In the 7th century a Syrian Christian group followed their leader, the merit St John Maron, into Mount Lebanon to escape persecution, and an important religious minority

⁴ the illustrious petty shopkeepers of the past, translated I. Verhaert, 30th of August 2006

was born, the Maronites. They deviated from catholic and orthodox Christianity in their belief that Jesus was at the same time divine and profane but had one soul. The Maronites would isolate themselves in the Kadisha Valley until the Crusades. In the same century a new religious and political power rose in Arabia following the prophet Mohammed, founder of the Islam. In the century after Mohammed's death in 632CE his followers established an enormous empire, the Caliphate, stretching from India to Morocco. They met little resistance in Lebanon where many local people were tired of the Byzantine tyranny and welcomed the new power:

“The alienation between rulers and ruled was no doubt aggravated by misrule and high taxation. To the masses of the seventh century Syria [later Syria, Lebanon and Palestine] the Moslem Arabians must have appeared closer ethnically, linguistically and perhaps religiously than the hated Byzantine masters.”⁵

The capital of the first Muslim dynasty, the Mu'awiyah, was located in Damascus, and the nearby Lebanon flourished. In 750 the Abbasids dynasty moved the capital of the Caliphate to Baghdad, and later to Samarra, leaving the coastal region of the Levant in relative decline. Because of their loosening grip on the empire, different dynasties pulled themselves away from the central power. In Lebanon the Baghdad authority was challenged by the Fatimids, a Shiite tribe from Cairo who conquered Syria, Lebanon and the eastern part of Arabia. The sixth caliph of this dynasty declared himself the reincarnation of God on earth, and founded the Druze community. This group also settled in Lebanon and became another important religious minority up till today; they are to be found mainly in the Chouf area in Central Lebanon.

It was in this time of political struggle in the Caliphate that Pope Urban the second launched his first Crusade to free the Holy Land and to diminish the power of the Turks in the weakened Byzantine Empire. They passed along the coasts of Lebanon and Syria and established four Crusader States after the fall of Jerusalem in 1099. The north of Lebanon was in the County of Tripoli, while the south was part of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Maronites in Mount Lebanon broke their isolation and pronounced their adherence to the Catholic Pope and his principles. During the 12th century the Muslim reconquest of the coast of the Levant began and by the end of the 13th century Lebanon was conquered by the Mamluk Sultans. These slave-soldiers installed a military dictatorship for the following 300 years. Their grip was weakened by fierce attacks from Mongol tribes and in 1517 Lebanon was conquered by the Ottomans. Within the Ottoman Empire, the Lebanese were relatively autonomous. The Maronites, for example, kept their close ties to the Roman Pope and the Italian republics. Fakhr ad-Din II became the important local leader, forging an alliance with Tuscany in the export of silk and olive oil. Beirut and Saida prospered and religious missionaries were allowed to settle in Lebanon, enhancing the variety of different religious minorities in the region.

“That Lebanon under its local feudal lords fared better than Syria under its Turkish governors is indicated by the increase in its population through natural causes and immigration.”⁶

⁵ Hitti, Philip K.: *History of Syria. Including Lebanon and Palestine*. Macmillan&co Ltd., London, 1951, p.417

⁶ Hitti, Philip K.: *History of Syria. Including Lebanon and Palestine*. Macmillan&co Ltd., London, 1951, p.679

A Lebanese Emirate under Ottoman sovereignty was established and later passed on to the Shihab family. In 1788 Bashir Shihab II would become Emir of around two thirds of present day Lebanon. He reformed the taxes and tried to change the feudal system, partially to break the power of his most important rival, Bashir Jumblatt. While the family of Bashir Shihab was converted to Maronite Christianity, Bashir Jumblatt was backed up by the impoverished Druze community. Emir Bashir allied with the pasha of Egypt, Mohammed Ali and his son Ibrahim, and allowed him to invade Lebanon and Syria in their battle against the central Ottoman power. This was met by resistance from the Druze. In response the Emir armed 7000 Maronites to fight these Druze and a period of increasing sectarian struggle began. The tensions between the Druze - backed by the Ottomans and British troops - and the Maronites - supported by Bashir Shihab, the Egyptian rulers, France and Austria – built up for years and in 1841 turned into an armed conflict. The foreign powers used the struggle between the communities to fight for their own interest in the region and stirred up the sectarian side of the conflict:

”Before the 1840’s the alignment [among Christians and Druzes] was feudal and partisan rather than religious and denominational.”⁷

As a result of these hostilities and in an attempt to weaken the autonomy of Lebanon, the Ottomans divided the area in two jurisdictions, a Maronite one in the north and a Druze one in the south, after a proposal from the European powers in 1842. The dividing line was the road from Beirut to Damascus, which has remained the symbol of the territorial separation between the communities until today. But in this time the division was purely artificial, since a large number of Druze lived in the north and vice versa. This political division of Lebanon increased the tensions and gave the different communities a territorial powerbase. In 1845 these tensions escalated into an open war between the Druze and Maronite communities when Maronite troops burned down fourteen Druze villages. This came to a new climax in 1860 when the Druze, backed by the Ottoman army, murdered 12,000 Maronites living in the southern district. 360 villages were destroyed, 560 churches, 42 monasteries and 23 schools, according the report John Fadj sent throughout Europe in request for help. The French troops intervened on behalf of the Christians. The Congress of Europe forced the Ottomans to reform the administration and place the whole territory under one single Christian Ottoman governor, approved by the Europeans. Feudalism was abolished and the legal system was controlled by the governor who was advised and assisted by a council of representatives of every community, based on numeric strength. Peace was restored and in the upcoming years Lebanon prospered from the silk trade. Especially Beirut took advantage of this cultural and economical prosperity.

The Mandate

With the defeat of Germany in the first World War, their ally, the Ottoman Empire, collapsed and the territory was occupied by French and British troops. But not before 120,000 Lebanese died of starvation:

”The Allies then blockaded the Levant in order to starve the Turkish troops in Palestine and Syria of supplies. Instead, the Turks commandeered the food they needed and the civilian

⁷ Hitti, Philip K.: *History of Syria. Including Lebanon and Palestine*. quoted in Beggiani, Seeley: *Aspects of Maronite History (part 10): The 19th century*. In: <http://www.stmaron.org/marhist10.html>, consulted 25th of May 2006

population starved to death. At least 300,000 people died in Syria and Mount Lebanon in this man-made famine brought about by a war of outside powers.”⁸

The League of the Nations placed the five provinces which are present day Lebanon under the control of France, and they named it the State of the Greater Lebanon. Historically, the Bekaa Valley in the east always had had stronger ties to Damascus. During the Ottoman reign it was governed by the wali of Damascus, but since the French had more administrative control in Lebanon than in Syria, which was allocated to become an independent state soon (a class A mandate), the French sought to enlarge their territory. And by incorporating the Bekaa Valley they would double the territory where they had full power. But in doing so they seriously tipped the religious balance towards the Muslim side. The Sunni minority was multiplied by eight whereas the Shia only quadrupled: “for by adding such large areas of Muslim Syria to the new ‘Lebanon’, the French ensured that the Christians’ precarious status of the largest religious community would – once the Muslim birthrate increased – be lost. All the more, therefore, would the Christian Maronites need French protection.”⁹ The French ensured this protection in their design of the constitution of Lebanon. They installed a balance of power between the various religious groups that still exists in today’s government. But they also ensured that the Christian predominance could not be altered. Like any European power in Lebanon the French used the different minorities to play them out against each other and thereby gain the control of the country. In 1925 they repressed a Druze rebellion by arming the Armenian militia, creating a dangerous precedent for the future.

I n d e p e n d e n c e

Lebanon gained independency peacefully in 1943, but the young nation became soon under pressure, when in the aftermath of the 1948 war it received thousands of Palestinian refugees who were displaced from their home towns. But notwithstanding the regional conflicts at the time, Lebanon knew a relatively calm period and prospered in the banking and tourism industry. People have the tendency to idealize this period, but all the problems which would escalate to the civil war in 1975 were already present. Firstly, there was a sectarian division of power inbedded in the Constitution: The president should be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, the speaker of the house a Shia Muslim, the commander of the army a Maronite and the chief-of-staff a Druze. The amount of Christians versus Muslim in all state bodies was to be a 6 to 5 ratio, and the Christian president had a veto right to all parliament decision making it virtually impossible to change this rule according to the changing demography. The Christians solved the problem of a growing Muslim community by holding on to the percentages of the last census in 1932 and nobody took the initiative to organize a new one. This left the Lebanese politics dominated by the Christian Maronites:

“The last official census in Lebanon was taken in 1932. Its findings distinguished between the number of Lebanese living in Lebanon at the time and the total number of Lebanese citizens, including those living in foreign countries. Since the last century, it has been mainly the Christians who had left Lebanon to find new homes as immigrants in Latin America, North America, Egypt of West Africa, or who spend some time abroad so as to earn money and then return home wit their savings. Muslim and Druze leave Lebanon far less frequently than do Christians.

⁸ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 58

⁹ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 63

The distribution of parliamentary seats among the denominations is based on the returns of the 1932 census, taking into account all Lebanese citizens including those living abroad. Already then, the majority of Lebanese living abroad had surrendered their Lebanese citizenship.

[...]

Since 1932, only estimates of the population have been published, based on official birth and death registration. [...] During the 1960s the statistical office of the republic published only total population estimates, which were not subdivided according to religious communities. This was because the leaders of both the Christians and the Muslims feared that the publication of proportional changes in the relationship between the religious communities might cause political unrest."¹⁰

In the meantime a new nationalist movement emerged in Syria which sought to reduce the limits of Lebanon to its pre-independent territory, or abolish the independent state entirely. It had some support amidst Muslim groups and this was intensified by some contested pro-western government decisions, polarizing people into pro western and pro Arab camps.

By the 1950s, Lebanon experienced economic growth. The country refused an economic union with Syria but signed a far-reaching economic agreement with France instead. It was a difficult task for Lebanon to entertain good relations with both the west and the east, and the majority of the political decisions favoured the relation with the European and American powers, since the Maronite community was mostly pro western. This elicited serious criticism by the Muslim population mainly, who felt that they were being isolated from their Arab neighbours by the government. It also caused tensions within the Christian population between the pro-western and pro-Arab Christians. The growing tensions became evident in the Suez crisis in 1956 when the Lebanese government chose to remain neutral. President Chamoun did not support the anti-western policy of Egypt but welcomed the financial and military support of the US, in respect of the Eisenhower Doctrine. He refused to join the United Arab Republic (with Egypt and Syria) as well as its counterpart, the Arab Federation (with Jordan and Iraq). Internally he swindled the elections of parliament and tried to change the constitution to allow him to run for a second term. This stirred the Muslim and leftist crowds and violence erupted in the streets of Beirut. During these fights Christian and Muslim armed militias appeared for the first time openly in the streets and sectarian assassinations occurred. In Tripoli the militias kept government forces out of the city for weeks. President Chamoun called American troops for help, accusing the Muslim protestors of being 'international communists'. Only by passing-on the presidency to former army commander Fouad Chahab peace could be restored.¹¹ These events in 1958 are often minimized, especially outside Lebanon. But it was a situation where the government totally lost power and it could be considered as the first Lebanese civil war.

A second item that polarized the Lebanese society were the Palestinian refugees. Officially Lebanon was at war with Israel since 1948, but apart from opening the borders to the refugees, the country never actively participated in the first Arab-Israeli war. In the aftermath of this 1948 conflict an estimated 140,000 Palestinian refugees entered Lebanon, thinking they could return after a few weeks. The Lebanese government thought the same and settled them in provisionary UN camps near the largest cities, Tripoli, Beirut, Tyre, Saida and in the colonial military compounds outside the city of Baalbek:

¹⁰ Vocke, Harald: *The Lebanese War: its origins and political dimensions*. Hurst, London, 1978, p.15-16

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuad_Chehab, consulted 28th of May 2006

“From the start, the Palestinians were treated with little love by the Lebanese. Since most of the refugees were Sunnis, the Maronites correctly divined that they were potential allies of the Lebanese’ Muslims.”¹²

But this was certainly a mutual feeling as the Palestinians were fixed on the return to their homeland and saw Lebanon just as an inferior transit zone. A second wave of refugees came after the second Arab-Israeli war in 1967. The total amount of Palestinian refugees in 1975 was estimated around 350,000. They all lived in very poor circumstances in the camps. Classified as non-citizens, it was not possible for them to obtain a working permit or have any of the civil rights of the Lebanese. Camps were not allowed to expand and Palestinians could not settle outside the camp areas. This led to ever more miserable circumstances for the refugees and hence proved a perfect breeding ground for an armed resistance.

In Jordan, after the Arab defeat in the six-day-war, the Palestinian military fractions tried to overthrow King Hussein in 1970. The situation escalated and the victims were mainly civilians on both Palestinian and Jordan sides, during the course of events that is known as ‘Black September’. The Jordanian government asked help from the Americans and was able to push the Palestinian armed fraction outside Jordan and into Lebanon. The headquarters of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (the PLO) moved to Beirut. From now on, next to the thousands Palestinian civilians in Lebanon there also was an armed organization that could better coordinate the attacks on Israel from the Lebanese border:

“From 1968, the PLO sent raiding parties into Israel from southern Lebanon and the Israelis responded by launching their own revenge raids, often against Lebanese villages. The motive was simple and comparatively cost-free: if the Lebanese villagers allowed armed Palestinians to take shelter among their homes, then they would be made to pay for it in blood. The only way to avoid the Israeli attack was to reject the Palestinians from their villages. This, of course, the Lebanese could not do. The Palestinians were armed and the Lebanese were not; and the Lebanese national army was too weak – both military and politically – to remove the Palestinians.”¹³

The PLO gained more and more power in Lebanon, patrols controlled the entrances to the camps, and they could freely move around the territory. The Israelis on the other hand started to blame Lebanon for every Palestinian attack, even outside the Middle East.

“After guerillas attacked an El Al jet at Athens airport, Israeli troops landed beside Beirut airport and destroyed 13 aircraft belonging to Middle Eastern Airlines (MEA), the country’s national carrier, and other Lebanese companies.”¹⁴

The growing power of the Palestinians, the fierce retaliations of the Israelis and the inability of the government to control either sides created another polarization among the already divided Lebanese population. From 1968 onwards the government tried to restrict the actions of the Palestinian guerilla fighters but without much success. Under pressure of the pro-Palestinians the government signed the Cairo Agreement with the PLO in 1969. This granted the Palestinian fighters full control over the camps

¹² Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 69

¹³ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 74

¹⁴ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 75

and free access to the southern border. In return the PLO would enter Israel before launching an attack and would stop military training inside the refugee camps, but this was never really put into practice. A lot of people felt that the government had given in to the Palestinians and it mounted to the Maronite frustration in particular.

the militias

March 2006, Nabil and I are invited to the house of Ali Ossairan, the deputy of the Liberation and Development Front. He lives right outside Saida on a hill in the north of the coastal city. A network of new roads like I never saw in Lebanon stretches across the entire hill and the land is ready to be parceled out. There is no question that this land belongs to the deputy as his house is the only one finished and standing in the middle of the future residential quarter. The remaining land is still used for agriculture and the Syrian workers are walking to the fields as we drive past. The house is white and modern, very unlike most of the villas in Lebanon. We drive into the courtyard where a group of young men are waiting for our arrival. Five boys aged 18 to 25 are standing in front of the door, waiting to guide us to the office of the deputy. Amman Ali arrives five minutes later and a young man serves us lemonade and coffee. After a first chat we embark on our trip next to the Lebanese southern coast between the cities Saida and Sour. We walk on the dirty but beautiful beaches, visit the houses of people that were constructed illegally during the war. Some of them are dangerously close to the sea. In the afternoon the deputy invites us to a restaurant in Sour, after which we visit the piece of land he owns by sunset, while he explains his future plans for the land. Arriving in the villa again, now at night, the young men are awaiting us, carrying one basket filled with bananas and one filled with oranges. The entire visit had something unreal to it: the young men, who guaranteed his private protection and served his every wish, reminded me of times long past, and severely contrasted to everything I had seen in Beirut so far. It was only later that I could place the experience, when I came across this quote:

“For Lebanon was run by the Zaim (or, more accurately, zuama), the ‘leaders’, the powerful feudal chieftains whom the average Lebanese would describe as ‘honoured families’ but whom the average Westerner would quickly identify as mafiosi. Every community, every tribe, had produced its leaders whose pronouncements, conspicuous wealth, bodyguards, cruelty, education and private armies proved more efficacious than any electoral appeal.”¹⁵

Most sources on the civil war state that the armed fractions were formed following the Cairo Agreement or the entrance of the PLO in Lebanon after ‘Black September’. In my view however, these organizations of private armies linked with political leaders are inherent to the structure of the Lebanese society right to this day. The line between a group of bodyguards of a powerful politician that grows when tensions are becoming higher, and a private armed militia is very thin. Almost every leader had his personal army long before the 1970s and most of them were not afraid to use it in the battle against their political rivals.

With regards to military, the Palestinians were represented by the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which came from Jordan and whose leader was Yasser Arafat. The PLO was a coalition of different Palestinian fractions, among which the more moderate Fatah movement of Arafat, the DFLP

¹⁵ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 75

(Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine) of Naif Hawatmeh and Georges Harbash's PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). The PLO was often joined by smaller groups like the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front. On many occasions the organization was reinforced by leftist groups, some of them from the farthest corners of the world, but the majority consisted of Lebanese socialists and communists. Another large military power was the Christian Phalange militia founded by Pierre Gemayel. As the captain of the Lebanese football team and the president of the Lebanese Football federation, Gemayel visited Nazi Germany in 1936 to attend the Olympic Games in Berlin.¹⁶ He was impressed by the discipline and order he saw there and wanted to achieve the same in Lebanon. Upon his return he created a youth movement which would later become the Phalange Maronite Militia. Another Christian militia followed the former president Camille Chamoun, whose son Dany was the leader of the Numr or Tigers militia. Together, the Phalange and the Tigers formed the Lebanese Forces, along with some smaller militias, like the cruel Guardians of the Cedars. Until 1977-'79 when the Phalangists destroyed the Tigers, assuming full political and military power over the Christian faction. The Mourabitoun or Ambushers militia was a Sunni force and would emerge around Ibrahim Kulaylat. They were mainly Nasserites who had inherited the pan-Arabic ideas of the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Shia Muslims were traditionally the poorest of the Lebanese people and not represented on the political forum, until Imam Mousa Sadr established the Movement of the Deprived. This would later transform into the Amal militia, which in turn would produce the more religious Party of God, the Hezbollah. One of the more nonsectarian parties, especially in the beginning, was the Progressive Socialist Party, led by Kamal Jumblatt. Although supporting the Druze because of his descent of an honoured Druze family, he also convinced Lebanese Muslims with his support for political change and some other communities with his progressive and secular statements. In southern Lebanon, the South Lebanese Army (SLA) would become a powerful militia. These Christians followed Saad Haddad and stood proxy for the Israelis. These militias were the main players but of course there were smaller armed fractions and political groups, some of them very sectarian and radical like the Guardians of the Cedars, other multisectarian and oriented on a Marxist or pan-Arabic ideology.

C | 1975-1990 | the civil war

There are different versions of the beginning and the end of the war. Many cease-fires were proclaimed and many times people thought the war had ended. In my opinion there never was one single event that could be denoted as the trigger of the conflict. It is the concatenation of a series of bloody confrontations rather than fully polarized the society and dragged Lebanon in a 15 year civil war. On the political level the confrontations continued during the conflict. Von Clausewitz' famous quote "War is the continuation of politics by other means", gets a whole new subversive meaning in the Lebanese context. During the war, elections were held; presidencies and prime ministers were set into office, sometimes assassinated a few days later. Although it never fully functioned as a government because the different offices were split up between the different fighting parties, it kept functioning in a particular way.

In books about the war however, there are two different events that are marked as its beginning, the choice depending on different perspectives. The first event highlights the Muslim-leftist alliance against the Christian government over an economic dispute, while the second highlights the Palestinian-Phalange conflict.

¹⁶ Van der Leeuw, Charles: *De vermoorde onschuld*. Uitgeverij KRITAK, Leuven, 1990, p. 18

In February 1975, a demonstration was organized in Saida (Sidon) by the leftists and the fishermen community who feared for their livelihood after the arrival of a new fishing consortium run by Chamoun and other Maronite officials. This economic dispute got out of hand when violence broke out between Muslim/Palestinian gunmen and the Lebanese army, mainly run by Christian officers. In this conflict the leftist mayor of Saida, Maarouf Saad was fatally wounded. The interference of the Lebanese army was highly contested and more violent conflicts erupted between Muslim and Christian recruits. The second marked event took place the 13th of April 1975, when the Phalange militia stopped a bus and killed the 26 Palestinian passengers. Only the bus driver survived. It was their answer to the assassination of a senior Phalangist member Joseph Abou Assi earlier that day. More violence between the PLO and the Lebanese Army ensued and three days later the first of many ceasefires was called. The war itself was never one continuous event, but a patchwork of different conflicts. Roughly it can be split up in separate periods, when different coalitions were formed and with different foreign powers involved.

t h e 1 9 7 5 - 1 9 7 6 w a r

The first 17 months of the civil war are often referred to as the 'Christian-Palestinian war', but this name is somewhat limited. Back in 1976 it was simply called 'Al-Hawadess' or 'The Event'. According to Robert Fisk, it is better described as a series of cruelties than a full scale war:

"The 1975-1976 fighting may have been the beginning of the final struggle over the Covenant between Arabism and the West, although in physical terms, it involved a series of horrors rather than battles; Black Saturday on the Ring Motorway, the Palestinian massacre of Christians in Damour, the Christian massacres of Palestinians at Karantina and Tel al Za'atar."¹⁷

In general, Lebanese politicians and militias were split up in largely two groups. On one side was the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), an alliance between the leftist and the Muslim parties. They demanded the modification of the Constitution and asked for a new census. The last census went back to the 1930s. Camille Chamoun had based the balance of power in Lebanon on this census, proclaiming a majority of Christians by 52%. The current Christian population was however estimated far lower. On the other hand the Christian and conservative parties lined up in the Lebanese Forces (LF), resisting any form of political change. This led to the fall of the government and the military government that was erected lasted only four days. The leaders did not only fight on the political stage: their militias battled in the streets. In these first years of the war attempts were made to establish a division of territory. The battles in Tripoli and Zgharta in the north were at the front line of predominantly Muslim and predominantly Christian areas. The same happened in Beirut where East Beirut was proclaimed Christian and West Beirut Muslim. The green line was the dividing line between these communities and would become the most symbolic emblem of the civil war. To homogenize the Christian territory, the Palestinian refugee camps in Jisr al-Bacha and Tel al Za'atar were attacked, its inhabitants killed or deported and the houses demolished. In turn the Palestinians killed the Christians of the village of Damour, in the south of Beirut.

In 1978, the Lebanese Forces clearly had the idea to split up in different countries or federations, when Chamoun made a draft of a new constitution and a new airport was built in the Christian area. The battles intensified and moved into the heart of Beirut. The Christians attacked the downtown district of Beirut,

¹⁷ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 78

which was the business center and the most prominently mixed area of the city. Destruction was large-scale: buildings were destroyed, shops looted. The confrontation between the Lebanese Forces and the National Movement spread out over the Damascus road, creating the notorious confrontation line. This was the same road the Ottomans had used a hundred years earlier to divide the territory. The Christians entrenched themselves in the nearby hotel district and some of the fiercest fighting occurred in different hotels: the Holiday Inn, St George and the Phoenician Hotel became heavy battle grounds. The Lebanese army stood aloof from the hostilities since its commanders feared the soldiers would finally mutiny and break up into different fractions. They would only intervene in the confusion over the protection of what was called the gold souks, a quarter of jewelry shops owned by the rich. This was a pattern that would recur throughout the entire war as economical and political heavyweights still had considerable impact. In West Beirut the PLO controlled the streets, but they could not maintain a firm grip on the area. Anarchy reigned over West Beirut, resulting in looting, rape and murder.

Some people claim only the first 17 months constitute the real civil war, with Lebanese and Palestinian militias fighting over domestic matters. It was also a war on the division of territory. As a result of sectarian violence many Muslims and Christians migrated to their own sectarian territory for safety. After this period foreign forces intervened, each with their own agenda, and complicated the situation greatly. But almost all of these foreign armies were invited by some Lebanese party or another and became entangled in the complex web of the local struggles.

Syrian intervention

By 1976, the Lebanese Forces were seriously driven back by the Muslim-Leftist coalition. Yasser Arafat and Kemal Jumblatt visited Assad in December 1975, claiming they were on the verge of winning the war and taking over the eastern part of Beirut. Assad had walked away in anger, wanting to preserve the Maronite-dominated institutions for more than one reason:

“They [the Syrians] also wanted the Palestinians crushed. Assad did not want the civil war to continue, for if Lebanon suffered any more wounds some of its blood might seep into Syria, through those narrow grey wadis in the anti-Lebanon mountain range and down into the plateau beyond, perhaps even infecting Damascus, whose carefully balanced but Alawid-controlled metabolism had so far remained untouched by the epidemic on the other side of the border. Nor did Assad want a new Palestinian state in Lebanon. That was not where Palestine was supposed to be. Palestine was meant to be to the south, beyond Golan, on the West Bank, in Gaza, in Israel itself. The Syrians had no desire to have a revolutionary Palestinian state along their western frontier. Indeed, the Palestinians were soon to wonder whether the Syrians wanted a Palestinian state at all.”¹⁸

So when the Palestinians appeared on Mount Sannine in the early summer of 1976, a high point in the Mount Lebanon Range from which they dominated East Beirut and the Christian heartland, the Syrians

¹⁸ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 83

got involved. President Hafez el-Assad demanded a clear request for military advance from the Maronite government, which was granted by President Suleiman Franjeh. Some months later the Syrians had an even more powerful legitimization in the form of a clear mandate to intervene, obtained from the Arab League who were negotiating for a cease-fire through an Arab Deterrent Force. On the 7th of June the Syrians entered the capital, relieving the Christians from a part of the war zone downtown, in the port and along the green line. The Lebanese Forces now focussed on attacking the Palestinian refugee camps in East Beirut and Jounieh, because they harboured PLO fighters. But they did not stop at the defeat of the PLO: they wanted to cleanse the entire Christian territory of all Palestinian presence. On the 29th of June the camp Jisr al Basha fell, and on the 12th of August after a siege of 52 days the Tal al Zaatar refugee camp was bulldozed to prevent residents from returning.

The Syrian army advanced and took over. Under their supervision a new president, Elias Sarkis, was installed in office the 23rd of September. The Syrian army marched to the south, disarming the militias of their heaviest weapons and installing an uneasy peace. In the south, the Syrian Army had to stop at the Zahrani refinery. Initially, they had wanted to secure the whole Lebanese territory, but their presence at the southern border was seen as a threat by the Israelis. The Israeli authority drew a red line which the Syrian army could not cross. Because of this, the Palestinian guerrillas in the south were never disarmed by the Syrians:

“No sooner had the civil war around Beirut been suffocated by the Syrian army than fighting broke out again between the Palestinians and the Israelis.”¹⁹

In March 1977 Kamal Jumblatt from the Popular Socialist Party was assassinated, probably because of his critique on the Syrian presence. His Druze supporters took revenge on the Christian villages in the Chouf area. Walid Jumblatt took over his father's position as head of the PSP. Meanwhile in the south Palestinian attacks and Israeli retaliations increased significantly until the 11th of March 1978 when 30 Israelis got killed in Haifa and the Israeli Defence Force launched an offensive in the south which would cause the death of 2000 Lebanese and 20 Israeli soldiers. The offensive was named 'Operation Litani' informing the Palestinians in advance that they planned to advance to the Litani River. This was a strategy, since the Israelis hoped for little resistance on their ground offensive as it would claim too many losses. The PLO retreated as Israel had expected. And this meant that the 2000 Lebanese casualties were mostly civilians. Only in Tyre a few hundreds of Palestinians, known as the Tyre pocket, held their positions. The Israelis were reluctant to enter an urban fight. They shelled Tyre heavily but never completely drove out the Palestinians. Meanwhile an estimated 285,000 refugees left southern Lebanon and headed mainly for the southern suburbs of Beirut. This was half of the population living in the part occupied by Israel called 'Free Lebanon'.

The Americans agreed upon sending a UN force in southern Lebanon if the foreign forces pulled out. UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) had a strict peace keeping mandate - as opposed to a peace enforcing mandate - and entered Lebanon in March 1978. In reality, they relied heavily on the cooperation of both the Palestinians and the Israelis. And this cooperation was a problem. Israel pulled its forces out but supported the Christian militia of the South Lebanese Army. The SLA was a group of criminals, renegade soldiers and extremely murderous men under the command of Saad Haddad, acting as instruments of the Israeli army and controlling big parts of the south. The UN forces were bound to

¹⁹ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 103

discover that the IDF was not only supporting the SLA with money and equipment, but they were physically supporting the troops as well. On the other hand the Palestinians refused to hand over Tyre, their small success in the Operation Litani. So UNIFIL had to wedge itself between the several fighting militias, and tried to get its way through negotiations.

Meanwhile in Beirut, the different militias were rearming. Syria was arming the Sunni Mourabitoun militia, the Shia Amal and was openly supporting the PLO in southern Lebanon. The Palestinians in Beirut received their arms from Iraq and the Druze, who in their turn were armed by Libya. On the other side, the Phalange, who had invited the Syrians into Lebanon, became increasingly negative towards their presence. They allied themselves with Israel, who armed them through the port of Jounieh. The hostilities between Syrians and Christians became so severe that Bashir Gemayel and Camille Chamoun asked the Syrians to leave East Beirut in 1978. They refused and started to bomb the Christian quarter Ashrafieh. The bombing only stopped through Israeli involvement and by October of that year the Syrian troops of the Arab Deterrent Force were replaced by Saudis in East Beirut. The Phalange were by now the most powerful Christian militia. They had attacked the Tiger militia of Dany Chamoun, and killed the son of pro-Syrian former president Suleiman Franjeh, thereby eliminating all military competition. The Syrians got more and more involved in the civil war and the Syrian intelligence service kidnapped officers from both Muslim as Christian militias to smother any resistance to their presence, imprisoning them in Damascus. Journalists who criticized the Syrian regime were assassinated in car bombings:

“By late 1980, the Syrian military presence in Beirut had been corrupted; officers became involved in drug-dealing and protection rackets and large areas of the western, largely Muslim sector of the city fell once more into the hands of the Lebanese militia.”²⁰

Tensions between the Phalange and the Syrians came to a climax in a conflict over the Sannine Mountains. The same tactical area that had triggered the presence of the Syrian Army in 1976 was by now regarded as a neutral zone between the Phalange and Syria. It was a strategic higher point from which the Syrian controlled Bekaa Valley, as well as East Beirut, could be overlooked. From the moment the Phalange started to build a road over the mountain to the Greek Orthodox city of Zahle in the valley, the neutrality was broken and the Syrians attacked the Phalange. The battle of Mount Sannine was a ridiculous one but it was the first time that the Israelis actively supported the Maronite community by bombing Syrian helicopters. Israel got more and more involved in the Lebanese war. While the Palestinian raids on Israel continued, Israel retaliated by bombing the Palestinian-repopulated village of Damour. Tension increased and when the Israeli ambassador in London got shot by Palestinian assassins from Iraq, Israel invaded Lebanon on the 4th of June 1982.

1982 | Operation Peace in Galilee

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) attacked Lebanon, starting with heavy bombardments of the south and South Beirut, mainly the Sports City, Sabra and Chatilla area and Bourj al-Barajneh, the Palestinian camps. President Menachem Begin and defense minister Ariel Sharon initially claimed that the operation had limited aims, “a preventive action to secure peace”²¹. On the 6th of June, 25,000 Israeli soldiers entered

²⁰ Fisk, Robert: Pity the nation: Lebanon at war. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 169

²¹ Fisk, Robert: Pity the nation: Lebanon at war. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 201

Lebanon for a ground offensive along three axes. They advanced with enormous speed in the south, aided by the presence of the UN peace keeping force and the Israeli proxies, the South Lebanese Army. The Security Council adopted a resolution stating that Israel must immediately withdraw all troops from Lebanon, but this did not stop the IDF, for they reached Tyre and even Saida the same day. Everybody, even the Israeli soldiers themselves, suspected the IDF would stop at the Litani River, as they had done four years before, installing a 'security belt' against possible attacks into Israeli territory. But on the second day of the ground offensive, they had already crossed the river, advancing to the Chouf and Beirut. In 1978 they had never completely occupied Tyre, the only bigger city in the south. Now Tyre and Saida got bombed intensively, while the Israelis dropped leaflets to urge the Lebanese to leave their houses. In Saida however, these warnings were only dropped after the city was in ruins. The Israelis fought mainly against Palestinian and Syrian soldiers. The Phalange militia actively supported the Israeli invasion and also the Sunni militias welcomed them. The Druze kept themselves aloof in the Chouf area. The Shia population was more divided; in the south the Amal gunmen welcomed the IDF as they objected to the Palestinian rule in their region. But in Beirut, they fought side by side with the Palestinians to avoid the Israeli's from entering West Beirut. The IDF advanced rapidly and fought heavily against the Syrians in the Bekaa Valley before moving to Beirut.

By the 10th of June the IDF had besieged West Beirut. In East Beirut they were welcomed by their allies, the Phalange militia, headed by Bashir Gemayel. The Israelis started with heavy bombardments to put pressure on the PLO and Arafat remaining in the city under siege. Most of their leftist allies had abandoned them, so the only fighting powers left were the PLO, the Syrians and some Amal fighters. On the political level, president Sarkis tried to unite the government by creating a Public Salvation Committee, which included Bashir Gemayel (Phalange), Walid Jumblatt (Progressive Socialist Party, Druze), Nabih Berri (Amal), Nasri Maalouf, Chafic Wazzan (Sunni prime minister) and Fouad Boutros (Christian historian). Jumblatt withdrew a few days later. The Israeli's intensified their siege, cutting off electricity and water supplies. This only affected the civilians since the PLO were well prepared with stocks and their own generators. The bombing continued and Israel blamed the PLO for the high amount of civil casualties during the bombing in a publication the 12th of June:

“Operation Peace for Galilee' was not directed against the Lebanese or Palestinian peoples ... The terrorists are responsible for any civilian casualties since they were the ones who placed their headquarters and installations in populated civilian areas and held Lebanese men, women and children captive.”

The Muslim civilians were not held captive in West Beirut during the siege. Already 100,000 civilians had left the city, but 500,000 still remained. The main reason for this was the threat that their homes would be completely looted and taken over by the fighters if they left. Arafat for his part agreed that the Palestinians would leave the besieged city to save it. He made his statement already by the end of June, but during the negotiations for the evacuation, he delayed to bargain for better deals, knowing that a delay would be tactically unsound for the Israelis. The overall public indignation rose when it became clear that the IDF had used cluster bombs and phosphoric gas in civilian areas, the latter causing ugly burning wounds that continued to eat the flesh for days:

“According a United Nations report, between the 6th of June 1982 and the 15th of August 1982, 6,775 persons had been killed and 30,000 others wounded. Over 80% of these victims

were civilians from West Beirut. According to the same source, 2,094 seriously injured persons had been burned by phosphor bombs.”

The 23rd of August, Bashir Gemayel was elected president in East Beirut under supervision of the Israelis. As the Syrians had put forth their candidate Elias Sarkis four years earlier, so did the Israeli's favour their own Christian ally for the highest office in Lebanon. Gemayel was young and Right-Winged but also had a lot of experience already as leader of the Phalange, and was not as easily pliable as the weaker Sarkis. During the war he had allied himself with the Syrians and the Israelis, encouraging them both to come into Lebanon. But he had never fully trusted them and now his political strategy was to get rid of all foreign powers and create a strong sovereign country under his control.

Around that same period the negotiations between the IDF, the PLO and the American diplomat Philip Habib came to an end. Arafat did not want his fighters to be evacuated by the Americans because it would look like a total defeat of the PLO. But the American presence was necessary in order to assert that the Israelis would hold on to their part of the agreement. So an international force of French and Italian soldiers, under the auspices of the US marines, would escort the troops over sea to their new homelands. The Syrians would go back to Damascus over land. In the negotiations with Habib, Arafat had hoped for official recognition of the PLO by the USA. The Palestinians were scattered over Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, South Yemen, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Arafat himself left for Tunis on the 30th of August. The Palestinians could keep their weapons when they retreated to their new countries, to make it seem like a victory while in reality it was a defeat. By the 1st of September, the last soldier of the 10,876 Palestinians and 2,700 Syrians²² was evacuated, but that did not mean that there were no Palestinians or Syrians in the country still. In Beirut only a small group of Palestinian fighters remained but in the north, still occupied by Syria, there was a considerably force of Palestinian guerrilla fighters (estimations of 10,000 feyadeen), concentrated in Tripoli. The PLO obtained the verbal guarantee from the American diplomat that the Israelis would not occupy West Beirut as Palestinian women, children and elderly men were now unprotected in the camps.

During the battle of Beirut, the Israelis did not only support the election of their candidate, Bashir Gemayel, they also supported what they called the Lebanese Army, a military force de facto controlled by the Phalange militia. When the last Palestinians were evacuated, the Israelis secretly started to advance towards West Beirut. Sharon claimed that at least 2000 'terrorists' had remained in the city, a number seriously exaggerated to excuse further military deployment. Thereupon, a bomb exploded in the office of the Phalange the 14th of September, killing Bashir Gemayel and 20 others. As a reaction the Israelis advanced into West Beirut despite the agreement with Philip Habib. In the wake of the IDF, the Phalange militia entered the besieged city, thus gaining control over their enemies of the civil war that has been raging on for 7 years now. On the 17th and 18th of September, the IDF let their Christian allies, the Phalange and the SLA militias, inside the Palestinian refugee camps, Sabra and Chatilla, in search for possible 'terrorists'. This led to the most gruesome massacre of the Lebanese civil war:

“They were everywhere, in the road, in laneways, in back yards and broken rooms, beneath crumpled masonry and across the top of garbage tips. The murderers – the Christian militiamen whom Israel had let into the camps to 'flush out terrorists' – had only just left. In

²² These figures are an estimation, Robert Fisk estimates in his books 12,254 Palestinians left and 1,200 Syrians, while Shiff and Ya'ari speak about 14,398, including some women and children.

some cases, the blood was still wet on the ground. When we had seen a hundred bodies, we stopped counting. Down every alleyway, there were corpses – women, young men, babies and grandparents – lying together in lazy and terrible profusion where they had been knifed or machine-gunned to death. Each corridor through the rubble produced more bodies. The patients at a Palestinian hospital had disappeared after gunmen ordered the doctors to leave. Everywhere, we found signs of hastily dug mass graves.”²³

the Multinational Forces

The world was shocked by the images from the camps. Americans, Italians and French felt responsible for leaving so early and abandoning the Palestinian women and children to their fate. Especially the Americans had assured the protection of the women and children left behind by the PLO during the negotiations. There was an enormous demonstration in Tel Aviv against the actions of the IDF in Beirut and on the 26th of September, the army left the city quickly and in silence. This was right on time because by then, there was an attack against Israeli soldiers every five hours on average. These were mostly hit-and-run actions, conducted by unknown guerrilla fighters. The Israelis retreated outside Beirut, to the south of the Beirut International Airport. Their place in West Beirut was taken by the French, Italian and American troops who returned after the news of the massacres had spread. The Multinational Forces (MNF) stationed in West Beirut. The French occupied the center of the city, next to the eastern and Christian part, whom they had been supporting since 1860. The Americans on the other hand were stationed in the southern suburbs, around the airport. This was a Shia neighborhood, with a lot of poor refugees who had left their villages in the south of Lebanon when the fighting started. So they were neighboring now the retreated Israeli troops, mainly because of their strong ties. President Ronald Reagan had referred to the Israelis as “friends”, right before the US marines re-entered Beirut. The Italians were stationed in the middle part, the area that held the three Palestinian refugee camps, Sabra, Chatilla and Bourj al-Barajneh. There was also a very small English force stationed in this area. From the very beginning the MNF were viewed as a pro-Christian force by the Lebanese. This had several reasons, the most obvious one being that the Christian community had always been very much pro Western, in contrast to the pro Arabian Muslim community. But this was underlined even in the way the MNF got involved in the different conflicts of the sects. The Multinational Force considered the civil war at end and they wanted to support the government, so other foreign armies were ordered out of the country. The MNF would then guide the transition into a sovereign democratic country. In general it was a peaceful time in Beirut. The majority of the people hoped the civil war was over and new investors came to the city. But the MNF actively supported the Maronite government and the US marines even trained the Lebanese Army. This army was, like I mentioned before, controlled by the Phalange Militia. Troops were from different sects, but the officers were all Christian. This stirred up the old friction between the different communities, especially when the MNF allowed this army to disarm the people from West Beirut and arrest a number of people on suspicion of ‘terrorism’, while leaving East Beirut alone and armed. Only the Italian refused when the Lebanese Army wanted to enter Sabra and Chatilla, because they realized that these were the same militia who had only some months ago killed so many people in the camp. The MNF now regularly were the target of hit and run actions, bombings and even suicide bombings, which was a new phenomenon in Lebanon. The French and especially the American were now actively involved in the fights. By that time in Tripoli there were new fights with the PLO and Arafat who had returned to Lebanon through Syria. The most violent conflict

²³

Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 360

however took place in the Chouf, under the occupation of Israel, between the Phalange or Lebanese Forces, which the Israeli had brought into the Chouf, and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party. The fighting spread towards Beirut, and the east was regularly bombed from the mountains. All in all, Lebanon was clearly reverting to violence in spite of the presence of six foreign armies for peace enforcement.

The 18th of April 1983 the American Embassy was bombed by a militia member who blew up the truck he was driving. The attack was claimed by the Islamic Jihad, an organization unknown at the time. 61 people died, among them only 17 Americans. Relatively little attention was given to the assault until six months later when on the 23rd of October both the headquarters of the American Marines and the French Battalion headquarters were completely destroyed, killing 241 marines and 58 French soldiers. These attacks were carried out in exactly the same way as the bombing of the American Embassy six months earlier. Both buildings were blown up with a time difference of only 20 seconds. The attack was claimed by the same Islamic Jihad. President Mitterrand and Reagan were quick to declare that their troops would not leave Beirut. George Shultz, US Secretary of State declared the following day:

“The United States is involved in the quest for peace in the Middle East because it is a region of vital strategic and economic importance for the free world, because it is an area of competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, because we have a deep and abiding commitment to Israel and an interest in strengthening the trends of moderation in the Arab world, and because our role of leadership in Middle East diplomacy is a reflection of America’s responsibility as a world leader. [...]

If we are driven out of Lebanon, radical and rejectionist elements will have scored a major victory. The message will be sent that relying on the Soviet Union pays off and the relying on the United States is a fatal mistake. This is, of course, the opposite of the message that we want to convey in our foreign policy.”²⁴

But the attacks against the MNF grew more frequent and West Beirut came increasingly under the control of the Muslim militias. On the 14th of February the Americans left Lebanon and a little while later the Italians. The French paratroopers left one month later. Also the Israelis withdrew. At that time not a single day passed without three or four attacks against the IDF or one of the militias they had created. When the IDF left the Chouf mountain area, the ‘war of the mountains’ exploded. By now, the Lebanese Army and the Phalange militia were in violent combat with the Progressive Socialist Party of Walid Jumblatt, allied with the Shia Amal militia. This war was characterized by fierce fighting and sectarian murders and cruelties. After nine years of war, an internal Palestinian conflict developed, a conflict against the Maronite Marada militia and the Syrian Nationalist Party was fought, and confrontations between the Islamic Unification Movement and the Arab Democratic Party went on in the north of the country. In Beirut the different Muslim militias, mainly Amal, were fighting against the Christian controlled Lebanese Army. Most of the Muslim had left the army by now, since they did not want to fight for the Phalange in what was clearly a civil war again. In the Chouf Mountains Christians fought against Druze, and in the Israeli occupied areas of the south, everybody started to attack the Israelis and their militias. Hijackings of planes and kidnappings emerged, mainly by a new Shia movement that was also responsible for the attacks on the MNF.

²⁴ Shultz, George: US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs. Uitgeverij door/bij, 1983, p. 1

the birth of the Hezbollah

In Lebanon the Shia Muslim were the largest community, in a country that officially counts 17 sects. But it was also the poorest section of the population. They were mainly farmers and fishermen who lived in the south and were traditionally not represented in government. Other countries with a Shia majority were the relatively distant Iraq and Iran. Imam Sadr Mousa founded the 'Movement of the Deprived' to rally for Shia representation in the Lebanese parliament. This movement turned into the Amal militia, guided by Nabih Berri, a militia with a lot of followers but little military power in the first years of the war. In 1979 the Iranian Revolution erupted. Ayatollah Khomeini and his doctrine of the Islam were an inspiration for many Lebanese Shia Muslim. Especially the concept of the martyrdom was something new for the Muslims in Lebanon:

"Some of the Shia fighters had torn off pieces of their shirts and wrapped them around their heads of martyrdom as the Iranian revolutionary guards had begun doing a year before when they staged their first mass attack against the Iraqis in the Gulf War a thousand miles to the east. When they set fire to one Israeli armored vehicle, the gunmen were emboldened to advance further. None of us, I think, realized the critical importance of the events of Khalde that night. The Lebanese Shia were learning the principles of martyrdom and putting them into practice. Never before had we seen these men wear headbands like this; we thought it was another militia affectation but it was not. It was the beginning of a legend which also contained a strong element of truth. The Shia were now the Lebanese resistance, nationalist no doubt but also inspired by their religion. The party of God – in Arabic, the Hezbollah – were on the beaches of Khalde that night."²⁵

In 1982 the vice president of Amal, Hussein Moussavi, was expelled from the movement over a disagreement of the political direction of the party after Nabih Berri had joined the Salvation Committee of Elias Sarkis. Moussavi thought this was an act of treason and that Amal was too secular and he set up another Shia movement in Baalbek. He called it the Islamic Amal or the Party of God's predecessor. They followed the guidance of the late Imam Sadr Mousa and the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini and were very anti-western and religiously conservative. It was believed that the young Shia movement was behind the attacks on the French and American headquarters. Their violent resistance against the Israeli in the south and the Americans in Beirut made them very popular, competing for supporters with the Amal militia. Hezbollah was born out of the resistance against the IDF and backed up by the experience of Hussien Moussavi and the example of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian revolution.

war of the camps, of the mountains, liberation war, ...

On the political level, the murdered Bashir Gemayel was succeeded by his brother Amin Gemayel. In 1984, the president signed an agreement with Israel, the 17 May agreement, which incited Walid Jumblatt to leave the government and set up a parallel 'National Salvation Front'. In Beirut the kidnappings became frequent. The Hezbollah focused on western journalists and professionals and they became such a menace that by the end of April 1986 almost all Westerners had left Beirut. After the foreign teachers and journalists had left, the remaining UNIFIL soldiers in the south became the targets of the kidnappings. But

²⁵

Fisk, Robert: Pity the nation: Lebanon at war. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990,.p.227

kidnappings were not only a problem for foreigners. Every militia abducted Lebanese belonging to another community as well. The protests of the relatives of missing people became louder and louder. The indiscriminate car bombings also continued. At times Beirut became so dangerous that crossroads were blocked and schools closed. In the beginning of 1985, the Israeli army announced its total retreat from Lebanon, but several Israeli soldiers continued to occupy what they called a 'Security Zone'.

The following years the militias became more and more fragmented. Traditional allies started to fight against each other in what became more of a political power struggle than an ideological battle. In 1985 there was the 'war of the Camps', a struggle in the refugee camps once again, this time between the Amal and Palestinians. This war would last for three years and was finally ended in January 1988 when the Syrians took over the control of the area around the camps from the Amal militia. These fragmented fights against different fractions cost many lives. There were inter-Phalange power struggles between the two strong men of the militia, Elie Hobeika, the commander during the Sabra and Chatilla massacre, and Samir Geagea. There was a war between the Amal militia and the Sunni Mourabitun, the Amal against the PSP, and so forth. Even the Amal and Hezbollah militia were fighting over the control of West Beirut, in spite of the presence of the Syrian army. This cost the lives of approximately 400 people. It was a chaotic period, not only in the streets but also on a political level. The Prime Minister Rachid Karameh was assassinated in 1987 in his helicopter. In September 1988, minutes before his mandate would expire and his ministers would take over his executive power, President Amin Gemayel appointed the Maronite Commander of the Army, Michel Aoun, as prime minister of a military government in a strange political maneuver to draw all political power to the Christians.²⁶ In February 1989, Aoun launched the Harb El Tahrir, a 'liberation war' against the Syrian presence. The Muslim community did not accept this Christian prime minister and his war and elected one of their own, Selim Hoss. So now there was a prime minister in West Beirut, one in East Beirut and no president.

In the meantime, the international community was trying to reconcile the different fighting militias. Many agreements were signed and truces were made, but a general truce and lasting peace agreement was never agreed upon. In mid-October 1989, an agreement was reached between the different parties in Taef, Saudi Arabia about the reforms in the Constitution and a peace settlement. Only the withdrawal of the Syrian troops was not discussed. General Aoun rejected this agreement and dismissed the deputies who had signed it, dissolving the National Assembly. This Assembly met in secret and elected a new President of the Republic, Rene Moawad. Seventeen days later the President was killed by explosives and two days after that Elias Hraoui was elected president. In general the Taef Agreements marked the end of the civil war, but the violence lasted longer. The Phalange and General Aoun opposed the reforms and fought until Aoun was forced into exile in France. In August 1990, the National Assembly agreed on the constitutional amendments, which marked the first reforms of the Constitution. The National Assembly was enlarged and was divided equally between Christians and Muslims. In March 1991, parliament passed an amnesty law which pardoned most political crimes prior to the enactment, except for the ones committed against foreign diplomats and certain crimes indicated by the Higher Juridical Council. Aoun went in exile and Samir Geagea, leader of the Phalange, was imprisoned in 1994.

²⁶ Van der Leeuw, Charles: *Libanon: de vermoorde onschuld*. uitgeverij KRITAK, 1990, p. 135-136

part 2 | war and cities.

A | the power of words.

In 2004, Reuters complained to CanWest Publications that they systematically changed the content of their reports. Canada's biggest newspaper chain went beyond editing for style, according to Reuters, and altered the content of their news reports from the Middle East. One Reuters article for instance read: "the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which has been involved in a four-year-old revolt against Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank". This was changed by CanWest into: "the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a terrorist group that has been involved in a four-year-old campaign of violence against Israel"²⁷. By changing 'revolt against Israeli occupation' into 'campaign of violence against Israel', and by adding 'terrorist group' the bias of the article changed completely. The different use of words loaded the sentence with a moral value, or at least a different and stronger moral value than the Reuters journalist intended. This example clearly illustrates how through the choice of words a message becomes biased. It is a powerful tool because it remains largely unnoticed to the readers while at the same time it passes a certain judgment on world affairs. The word 'terrorist' in particular recently stirred much debate on objective reporting and most of the newspapers and TV stations have distributed editorial policies to their staff. In 2005 CBC for instance distributed a memo regarding the use of the word 'terrorism':

"'Terrorist' and 'terrorism': Exercise extreme caution before using either words.

Avoid labeling any specific bombing or other assault as a "terrorist act" unless it's attributed (in a TV or Radio clip or in a direct quote on the Web). For instance, we should refer to the deadly blast at that nightclub in Bali in October 2002 as an "attack", not as a "terrorist attack". The same applies to the Madrid train attacks in March 2004, the London bombings in July 2005 and the attacks against the United States in 2001, which the CBC prefers to call "the Sept. 11 attacks" or some similar expression (The BBC, Reuters and many others follow similar policies.)

Terrorism generally implies attacks against unarmed civilians for political, religious or some other ideological reason. But it's a highly controversial term that can leave journalists taking sides in a conflict.

Restricting ourselves to neutral language, we aren't faced with the problem of calling one incident a "terrorist act" (e.g., the destruction of the World Trade Center) while classifying another as, say, a mere "bombing" (e.g., the destruction of a crowded shopping mall in the Middle East). [...]

²⁷ *Newspaper accused of misusing word 'terrorist'*. 17 Sept 2004, In: <http://www.cbc.ca/story/canada/national/2004/09/17/conwestterrorist040917.html>, consulted the 5th of August 2006

Rather than calling assailants “terrorists”, we can refer to them as bombers, hijackers, gunmen (if we’re sure no women were in the group), militants, extremists, attackers or some other appropriate noun.”²⁸

Contrary to what this memo says, the BBC decided to stick to the term ‘terrorism’: “On the question of language, the Panel recommended that the word “terrorism” be used in respect to relevant events and offered a definition of what the term means.”²⁹ The CanWeb newspaper group too kept on using the word, claiming it to be a technical term, a modus operandi, a tactic and therefore not emotionally charged. It is their opinion, on the other hand that words like “militant” betray a bias, as they try to sanitize the action: “Activists for various political causes can be “militant”, but they don’t take children hostage.”

The problem with the word ‘terrorism’ is that its meaning has slightly changed over the last years. It is no longer only a technical term, describing an attack against civilians. In a way it has become a justification for any policy of the victims. After the WTC attacks, the term has been widely used to justify any action taken against a group thus labeled and their supposed environment: it became the reason to invade Afghanistan and it was one of the reasons to attack Iraq. Because of its strong connotation of evil, the word does not only entail a condemnation of the attack, but it also elicits a justification of any reaction and provide a cause for such a reaction. In a way words are used as labels that construct an image: this way of communication in the media resembles more and more that of publicity campaigns. Advertising no longer sell a product, it sells a lifestyle by triggering emotions in subtle ways. And this technique has been taken over by many politicians and some reporters.³⁰ The consequence however, is that news events are obfuscated rather than clarified towards the outside world.

Other words have been used or misused in the media in different ways. Talking about the destruction of buildings by bombs, the words ‘surgical precision’ and ‘precision bombing’ are very popular in Western media. Technically these words can be used for laser or GPS guided bombs. So the term refers only to the kind of weapons that are used, not to their effect on the ground or the capability of its users. If these bombs are dropped in the correct area and the pilot is precise, the laser guided bomb has a margin of error of 25m and the GPS guided bomb one of 12m. This margin is already considerably high in an urban environment to use the term ‘surgical precision’, but in addition to that the blast of the lightest bomb available has a range of 1 km. This means that 99% of the splinters of the bomb fall in a range of 1 km. The word precision bombings, however, and especially the word ‘surgical precision’ suggests that the target is bombed with no or almost no ‘collateral damage’³¹. This is highly unlikely in an urban environment even in the most ideal circumstances as just described. Because as always, things can go wrong. The pilot can make an error, dropping the ‘precision bomb’ in an area too far from the target, or failing to guide the bomb to its target for various reasons. The GPS system can deviate if the satellites are not lined up in the ideal position or when the weather disturbs the transmission. And then there is the question of the target itself. While in the

²⁸ *‘Terrorism’? Who’s to say?* A memo distributed to CBC staff, July 19, 2005 In: <http://www.cbcwatch.ca/?q=node/view/1178>, consulted the 5th of August 2006

²⁹ BBC Management’s Response to the Independent Panel Report: Impartiality of the BBC’s Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. BBC Governance Unit, In: http://www.bbcgovernors.co.uk/docs/reviews/israelipalestiniangovernors_statement.pdf, consulted the 5th of August 2006

³⁰

³¹ Collateral damage means damage to civilian infrastructure or wounding and killing of unarmed civilians.

past bombing was mainly used to destroy the industrial and military infrastructure of the enemy, today it is employed more and more to eliminate certain people. This means that a bomb with the above described capacity will be used for the elimination of one person (or a small group) inside an urban area. The intelligence of an army gives the pilots the time and the coordinates of the target more or less one hour in advance. This has to be a building or a car. It is a very difficult job to know the precise whereabouts of important leaders in a hostile environment and to have this information well in advance to be able to start bombing. In a large bombing campaign, up to 250 targets are being hit every day.³² The majority of these bombs target infrastructure but lets say 100 bombs will target civilian areas. Is it possible to gather intelligence on 100 amount of targets every day in hostile territory? Taking into account the questionable accuracy of both execution of the bombing and the information that precedes it, it would be legitimate to question whether the killing of civilians and degree of damage that one bomb can cause is justified. All these stages of an aerial bombardment and everything that can go wrong however is hidden behind a term that technically only covers the type of bomb being used. On the media we will hear that 'a precision bombardment' has been carried out on a 'terrorist headquarter'.

t h e n e w w a r s

After the massive anti-war movements reacting on the casualties of the Vietnam War in America, the Western forces have altered their way of fighting:

"After its disgrace and failure in Vietnam, America faced the implication that war could no longer be successfully used, without unacceptable levels of casualties both among its own soldiers and enemy civilians. These would be reported by television and so de-legitimize the use of force. This led to the idea of the 'Vietnam syndrome', with its stark consequence that the West could no longer afford real wars. [...]

By early in the new century, however, the West was fighting its third war in little more than a decade. [...] In these conflicts, American-led, Western-centered coalitions fought a new kind of war, which represented a serious attempt to escape the Vietnam Syndrome. New, more precise bombing appeared to bring war back within the limits of the 'just war' tradition, with 'collateral damage' to civilian lives that was merely 'accidental' and 'proportional' to the advantages of ending or punishing aggression."³³

In his book *War and Genocide*, Martin Shaw goes on asking himself whether this is a positive development with a new way of using controlled force, or if it is a dangerous evolution resulting in the escalation of violence. I am inclined to believe that there is no great difference in the number of casualties among civilians between this new way of fighting and the 'old wars'. But I think that words as 'precision bombing' are used by Western media to cover up the staggering number of civilian casualties, thus construction an image of a 'good war'. Or as Slavoj Zizek calls it in his book *Welcome to the desert of the real!*: "Colin Powell's 'no-casualties-on-our-side' military doctrine."³⁴

³² In the recent conflict between Hezbollah and Israel the IDF stated to have hit 9500 different targets in 33 days, this gives an average of 287 targets a day.

³³ Shaw, Martin: *Genocide as a form of war*. Second chapter of book *War and Genocide*. Polity 2003, p. 8

³⁴ Zizek, Slavoj: *Welcome to the desert of the real*. Verso, London, 2002, p. 90

What does this all have to do with urbicide then? I am well aware that this term has the potential of combining the two problems I have described above: the emotional weight and additional meaning of the term 'terrorism' and the misunderstanding of a term like 'precision bombing'. I don't mean to say that we therefore should abandon the term, or try to pin it down to a precise definition. But I think we should be aware of the power of words before trying to describe, define or even work with a term such as 'urbicide'.

Most articles about urbicide start from a very particular war situation: the 1992-95 Bosnian war, the Palestinian Occupied Territories or the American War on Terror. They then mould the word urbicide into the specificities of the events. I want to try to turn this process around, starting with a history of urbicide and a short discussion of the different meanings given to it. Afterwards, I will link that to some events during the civil war in Beirut and finally revisit the concept of urbicide. The fact that I turn around the order of the text does not mean that the patterns of destruction in Beirut don't influence my reading of the word urbicide. It is an attempt to distance myself from any moral values that might burden such a concept. When considering my own position regarding both Lebanon and the concept of urbicide, I think of the quote by Slavoj Žižek (albeit in a different context): "the only appropriate stance is unconditional solidarity with *all* victims."³⁵

B | a first look at urbicide

Urbicide is a combination of the Latin words 'urbs' (city) and 'cide' (killing), so it literally means 'the killing of a city'. Some authors adopt this strict meaning of urbicide: in *The Destruction of Memory* for instance, Robert Bevan talks about the English bombardment of Dresden which killed 25,000 to 40,000 people and destroyed the whole city:

"This was now urbicide, the murder of a city and its citizens in a continuing campaign of terror. The road to Hamburg, Dresden and, ultimately, Hiroshima followed this blighted logic."³⁶

Urbicide is a very young word, and it made already some important changes in its meaning. It was first used by some writers in the 1960s as a protest against the design of the World Trade Center. The writers argued that the dimensions of the building and the lack of good public space would completely destroy the surrounding neighborhood. And they were right, Manhattan changed completely from low rise housing into a high rise offices area. In the 80s Marshall Berman re-used urbicide in his text *Among the ruins* to describe the ruins of the Bronx after the fires a decade earlier:

"When I talk about ruins, I'm an interested party. The South Bronx, where I spent my childhood and youth, is the site of one of the greatest recent ruins today outside Beirut. The physical and social destruction of the area began with the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway in the late 1950s and early 1960s spreading gradually southward from the highway and northward from the emerging Bruckner Expressway in the late 1960s.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 51

³⁶ Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 83

Then in the early 1970s the disintegration began to spread at a spectacular pace, devouring house after house and block after block, displacing thousands of people like some inexorable plague. Those were the years when the Bronx finally made it into the media, as a symbol of every disaster that could happen to a city. 'The Bronx is burning!' resonated all over the world. [...]

No one has seriously tried to add up the victims of the latest wave of urban destruction [...]. These stricken people belong to one of the largest shadow communities in the world, victims of a great crime without a name. Let us give it a name now: *urbicide*, the murder of a city."³⁷

So Berman used *urbicide* to describe what had happened to the Bronx, to give a name to the pain of the destruction of the fires. Until today no one knows why almost half of the houses in the Bronx were set on fire and were completely destroyed and who was responsible for this. Some people thought it were the many drug users who lived there and were after the compensation for the damages. Others thought it were the landlords whose insurance policies had expired and who wanted to invest in new buildings. Berman identified the *urbicide* victims as those who were displaced because of the fires or the threat of these fires, and wanted to give their pain a name. So *urbicide* was created to address human suffering caused by physical destruction, but without reference to the reasons for this destruction.

During the Yugoslavia wars, the term surfaced again in a mutated form. This time it was used by an architect and former mayor of Belgrade, Bogdan Bogdanovic. He claimed that cities are murdered to destroy the civic values of diversity and shared cultures:

"Cosmopolitan, pluralist, ethnically mixed and liberal, they were anathema to ethno-nationalist extremists bent on territorial conquest and imposing an ideology of racial purity."³⁸

He claimed these attacks targeted on the beauty of the city by the 'ignorant peasants' from Krajina and Montenegro, "like the attack of a madman who throws acid in a beautiful woman's face and promises her a beautiful face in return."³⁹ In his questionable rhetoric, drawing on the cliché of the barbarians attacking the civilized, human suffering again is linked to the destruction of the environment. But here a motivation is added to the concept of *urbicide*: to erase any sort of plurality and install homogeneity. The article created a buzz and the concept of *urbicide* gained recognition in the architectural discourse, leading to many more essays on the topic.

Disregarding the exact origin of the word *urbicide* and the history of its use and taking into account linguistic affinity, it appears that the word was inspired by the term 'genocide'. This term was defined by the Polish Lawyer Raphael Lemkin and was recognized by the International Court of Justice in 1948. This affinity between genocide and *urbicide* connects the latter to large scale suffering. Therefore a lot of energy has been put into setting *urbicide* apart from genocide and mass murder. The general idea prevails that if

³⁷ Berman, Marshall: *Among the ruins*. New Internationalist, issue 178, dec 1987 In: http://www.viewint.org/issue_178/among.htm, consulted the 6th of July 2006

³⁸ Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 121

³⁹ Bogdanovic, Bogdan: *Murder of a City*. New York review of Books, XL/10, 27 May 1993, In: Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 121

destruction happens only in a context of mass murder, the word is useless. I would however like to reconnect the two because there are in my opinion two dominant characteristics they both share. Genocide, as recognized by the UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is defined as “Acts committed with intent to destroy, in a whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.”⁴⁰ Raphael Lemkin himself adds: “The acts are directed against groups as such, and individuals are selected for destruction only because they belong to these groups.”⁴¹ Two things are remarkable in this definition. First it mentions intent. Stephen Graham, one of the most ardent writers on urbicide, similarly describes the term as “the deliberate wrecking or killing of the city”⁴². By enclosing ‘deliberate’ into the definition, he clearly underlines the same ‘intentional clause’ as with genocide. Parallel to the difference between genocide and mass murder, it separates the ‘mere’ destruction of a city from urbicide. The problem with this clause is that intent is something very hard to prove. There has been lot of debate on the possibility to accuse individuals with the intent of committing genocide. Genocide is always disguised as ‘collateral damage’, ‘casualties of war’ or the intent to bring ‘order and peace’. The second peculiarity of the definition of genocide is the way “the targeted group is defined and identified. Whereas the targeted group in the case of war crimes is identified by its status as an enemy, the targeted group in the case of genocide is identified by its racial, national, ethnic, or religious characteristic.”⁴³ Translated to the concept of urbicide, it means that the buildings are targeted not because of their usage by the enemy (military, economic, etc.), but because the buildings themselves have become the enemy.

In later literature urbicide has been described by means of different examples. Stephen Graham, David Campbell and Daniel B. Monk organized a workshop last year November, titled ‘Urbicide: The Killing of Cities?’ in which they described urbicide as the convergence between three areas of research: firstly, “the annihilation of cities as mixed physical, social and cultural spaces.” Here they refer to urban planning processes, capitalistic speculation, terrorists and state-backed violence. The second field which they identify is “the central symbolic role of urban sites as physical targets of terrorist, counter-terror and state terror campaigns [...]” And finally, “the emergence of cities as targets of ethno-nationalist violence (as in the 1990s Balkan Wars) or as targets of Orientalist violence (as in the case of Chechenya, Iraq and the Occupied Territories).”⁴⁴ As such, urbicide becomes a collective term for everything that links destruction to cities, equally in war as in times of peace, covering singular events as well as systematic destruction:

“One central concept is emerging which offers potential to tie together all three of these areas of work: ‘urbicide’ – or the deliberate attempt to deny, or kill the city.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.27

⁴¹ Lemkin: Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress. 1944 In: <http://>

⁴² Graham, Stephen: *Lessons in Urbicide*. New Left Review 19, jan/feb, 2003, p. 63. reference to Tamari, Dov: *Military Operations in Urban Environment* In: Desch, Michael (ed.): *Soldiers in Cities*. Carlisle, PA 2001; Berman, Marshall: *Falling Towers: City Life after Urbicide*. In: Crow, Dennis (ed.): *Geography and Identity*. Washington 1996, pp. 172 – 92; Coward, Martin: *Community as Heterogeneous Ensemble*. Alternatives, vol. 27, 2002, pp. 29-66

⁴³ <http://>

⁴⁴ <http://www.geography.dur.ac.uk/conf/urbicideworkshop/Overview/tabid/866/Default.aspx>, consulted the 18th of November 2005

⁴⁵ Ibid.

In my view urbicide as an umbrella term loses a lot of its strength, because it reduces the ethical dimension of the term. The concept of urbicide came into being precisely because of an indignation of some sort, of a need to find a term for something stronger than mere destruction. In widening the scope of the concept of urbicide, we lose a level of commitment that is in my opinion vital to its reason for existence. I relate to Marshall Berman's quote on the Bronx fires, where he speaks of "interest" and emphasizes the shock and suffering of the victims. If we return to the concept of genocide, we see that Martin Shaw defines it as a type of war: he separates 'war' from 'degenerate war' from 'genocide'. Genocide as such can be seen as the "superlative" for war, deriving its meaning from its notion of extremity. Defining urbicide as a term that links three fields of studies undermines the potential power and usefulness of the word. Urbicide then no longer means "the deliberate wrecking and killing of cities", it means "the destruction of building(s)", full stop.

I therefore plead for a rehabilitation of the concept of urbicide by excluding some of the elements incorporated by Graham, Campbell and Monk in the above quote. In particular, I want to question two types of violence. In the first place, the destruction urban planning processes and capitalist speculation can bring upon a city. It is a fact that planning can highly alter the livability of a city. And it is often true that a military strategy is behind an urban renewal plan even in times of peace. The best known example is obviously that of Haussmann who almost completely erased and rebuild in the 1870s. The official motivation was to modernize the city with new roads and a sewer system, but an important hidden motive was to be able to control Paris better and move the mob outside the city centre. It is also true that some of these planning projects can be more destructive to a city than plain war. The reconstruction project of Downtown Beirut by the private company Solidere is a perfect example: more old buildings were destroyed during the reconstruction than during the 15 year civil war. I acknowledge that there are indeed arguments for a comparison of strategies used by planners in peace time and the destruction of a city during war time. On the other hand, even if the level of planning and the underlying destructive logic are often much stronger in the cases of urban planning, the emotional suffering it brings about is certainly lower. So including these practices in a definition of urbicide would weaken the term. Instead, I propose to call this type of destructive urban planning 'urbicidal urbanism'

The second group aspect of the definition that I want to reconsider is the notion of cities as the target of 'terrorist violence'. I do not argue the emotional shock such an event brings along or the amount of people it affects. But it can be questioned whether such attacks in a country that is not in war really classify as attempts to kill or annihilate a city. In my view violence of this type use the city as a stage rather for its spectacle of destruction and death. However dramatic it may be, it will never kill a city, regardless of the attackers' aim to destroy cities or even an entire country:

"This is the element of truth in Karl-Heinz Stockhausen's provocative statement that the planes hitting the WTC towers was the ultimate work of art: we can perceive the collapse of the WTC towers as the climactic conclusion of twentieth-century art's 'passion of the real' – the 'terrorists' themselves did not do it primarily to provoke real material damage, but *for the spectacular effect of it*."⁴⁶

I now have narrowed down the conditions for an event to classify as urbicide to largely three general uses. The first one is the strict interpretation of the term as the complete annihilation of the city. This is often the interpretation of writers who study related subjects as genocide or cultural cleansing and who mention Guenica, Dresden and Hiroshima (all targeted from the air) as the most famous examples. The second

⁴⁶ Zizek, Slavoj: *Welcome to the desert of the real*. Verso, London, 2002, p. 11

definition of urbicide concerns the wanton destruction of buildings. It focuses more on the destruction of constructions rather than the environment, regardless of their military or economical functions and with another purpose than mere killing. Religious or national buildings, with high symbolic value, are often the target of this sort of urbicide. Most notable examples are the Mostar bridge, the Sarajavo Library and the Kristallnacht of 1938. This form of urbicide is sometimes also referred to as 'cultural cleansing', a word derived from 'ethnic cleansing', which was a euphemism for mass murder or expulsion introduced by the Serbs during their campaign against the Bosnian and Croatian Muslims. Central is the aim to eliminate any built evidence of the presence of a group of people in a certain territory. It is therefore closely related to genocide. Cultural cleansing is described as a way to change the history by destroying the material presence of a people. In doing so an attempt is made at erasing the collective memory that is sustained by historic buildings:

"The Serbian campaign against monuments in the Bosnian war saw a simultaneous desire to rewrite the past and destroy the living and material culture of its enemies. The destruction of libraries, graves, mosques, vernacular houses, churches and archives went hand in hand with the creation of a mythological Serbian past in service to a new Greater Serbia."⁴⁷

The third interpretation of urbicide considers the entire build environment rather than individual buildings and explains it as an attempt to destroy the main characteristic of the city, or its heterogeneity:

"'Urbicide' derives its meaning from the collocation of 'urban' with the epithet '-cide'. Taken literally, urbicide refers to the 'killing, slaughter' or 'slaying' of that which is subsumed under the term 'urban'. At stake in the meaning of 'urbicide', therefore, is what is to be understood in the concept of 'the urban', what it is that is destroyed in this act of literally 'killing the urban'. 'Urban' derived from the Latin *urbanus*, refers to that which is 'characteristic of, occurring or taking place, in a city of town.'⁴⁸

In the text *Community as heterogeneous ensemble: Mostar and multiculturalism* Martin Coward goes on saying that urbanity, the way of life in the city, derives its meaning from its contrast to the rural way of life. While the city stands for the modern and progress, the rural represents everything that is being replaced by the modern and symbolizes the constraints of traditions. He further quotes Louis Wirth who said that urbanity has three characteristics: size, density and heterogeneity. Size and density are important insofar as they support the growth and confrontation with the heterogeneity⁴⁹:

"*Heterogeneity*, than, can be said to be the defining characteristic of urbanity. Urbicide, as the 'slaughter' of urbanity, can thus be said to comprise the systematic destruction of heterogeneity. Buildings, as that which is destroyed in urbicide, would thus be the conditions of possibility of the heterogeneity at stake in urbicide."⁵⁰

⁴⁷

Ibid. p. 60

⁴⁸ Coward, Martin: *Community as heterogeneous ensemble: Mostar and multiculturalism*. In: <http://www.isanet.org/archive/coward.html> consulted the 21th of November 2005 p. 5

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 6

⁵⁰ Ibid.

now Beirut

The first remark that can be made is that these three views of course do not necessarily exclude one another. The first interpretation for instance can be seen as the extreme scenario of the other views. When I went to Beirut in March, I had not exactly figured out my own point of view regarding urbicide. I was inclined to follow the discourse of Martin Coward and his view of urbicide as the destruction of the heterogeneity of the city. But when somebody would ask me for examples of urbicide, I always answered Dresden or the Mostar Bridge.

A lot has been written about the Palestinian Occupied Territories and the ex Yugoslavian wars, about the aerial bombings of Germany and the Nazi genocide of the Jews, Gypsies and other groups. Beirut is always mentioned in enumerations, but has never been a subject of its own in an article, at least not to my knowledge. In the Urbicide workshop last November there was a lecture on Beirut during the first two years of the civil war, but the article has not been published as I write this. The challenge of analyzing Beirut is that every possible interrelation between destruction, killing and war manifested there, so to speak. So many armies and militias were fighting, so many different tactics and ideologies intertwined. But this 'variety' also means an enormous complexity, making it difficult to single out individual processes. Schemes were altered, got mixed up or were never completely and systematically pulled through. When so many different actors with relatively little power fight each other, it becomes difficult to pinpoint the processes underlying their course of actions. This means that none of the actors had the power (limited in force or time) to organize a thorough cultural or even ethnic cleansing of the scale we have witnessed in Germany, Rwanda or Turkey. This does not mean that none of them tried, or that the destruction or killing was moderate. I do not suggest that the Lebanese civilians suffered less. But it is very hard, if not impossible, to prove a systematic and intentional destruction in Beirut during the war. Therefore, in my view we cannot speak of urbicide in the strict sense in the case of the civil war in Lebanon. But we can analyze the events and mechanism to get a better grasp on the relationships between destruction and war. Looking at ruins of Beirut can provide us with a better insight in the concept of urbicide. By talking and reading about the civil war, my views on urbicide have definitely changed significantly.

Some weeks before I planned to go to Beirut, Nabil sent me an email. He was worried about the situation in Beirut after the demonstrations against the Danish cartoons that had raised a storm across the Muslim world:

"Hi Isabelle

After what happened yesterday (I guess you watched it on the news), I really advise you to change your plans about coming to Lebanon as it is becoming every day more and more unsafe.

Yesterday thousands of angry Muslims went protesting in front of the Danish consulate as they felt offended by some drawings in a Danish magazine, but as they passed in my neighborhood (where the consulate is) they burnt churches, cars and shops, including the consulate.

They even went inside of houses asking us where we have hidden those "nasty Europeans".

Today the area looks like a barricade.

I know this is what you wanted to write about, and it is happening live outside my door.

I hope you can understand my position and attitude.

Nabil"

Eventually this turned out to be a one time event and everything cooled down. Nabil relaxed and let me come over and work for him. But there was some serious discussion on what had actually happened. In the first weeks of my stay I heard a lot of stories and different interpretations of the demonstration. What had appeared to be a religious manifestation on my TV screen in Belgium proved to be something completely different in Lebanon. The people that were arrested for destroying property and starting the fires turned out to be Syrians, so immediately everybody suspected this was another trick of Syria to destabilize Lebanon and sabotage its independence. But after a week, other rumours had it that the arrested Syrians all worked on fields in Lebanon and that they had been recruited by the Lebanese government as scapegoat for everything that went wrong in the country. As so many times to come, I could not say what was fiction and what approached reality. And it does not really matter now. All property damages were labeled "war damage" and were refunded by the government. But what in Lebanon had started out as a simple religious demonstration, became a complex political matter that in the end had little to do with religion.

Ironically, Lebanon let me reconsider the importance of politics in war. Although the civil war is often portrayed as a religious conflict, politics continued to fuel the fights and played a much larger part than would be expected at first sight. This became apparent especially in the latter years of the war when religion did not seem to matter anymore as everybody with interests in the same territory started to fight each other. It ended in the inter-religious battles between the Amal and Hezbollah militias, the intra-Palestinian fights in Tripoli and the division of the Phalange militia between Gaegae and Holeika supporters. By that time violence had become ingrained in politics and militias who had been allies by tradition, began to fight for the political power over shared territory.

C | Identity through destruction.

So when I went to Beirut "in search of uricide", still unsure what this word exactly meant to me, I looked mainly for physical destruction. They had a strange attraction, those ruined buildings in Beirut. They reminded me more of the gothic stories of Edgar Allen Poe than of the atrocities of a civil war:

"War overrules civic laws, and its result is an iconisation of the urban tissue. War makes forms erode. Buildings lose their edges through erosion. Lasting gunfire give rounded edges, soft, flesh-like shapes, but it very rarely produces structural collapses. Just like erosion due to acid rain, only faster. Forms withdraw and become pregnancies. Shells do not penetrate a wall, they barely touch it. The touch detonates the explosive inside the shell. The explosion creates an opening in the wall, and imprints a regular pattern radiating from the centre of the detonation, like an ornament, around the opening. After years of urban warfare the omnipresence of shell impacts take on mythical dimensions, and in the Balkan war they

were named 'Roses of Sarajevo'. The seeds of the roses came with the wind, and the weapons, from Beirut."⁵¹

the demarcation line

In Beirut, everybody smokes. Not just because cigarettes are cheap, it also is an important means in social interaction. In the parental home of Nabil, his father would always offer me a cigarette and it was almost impossible for me to refuse. It was also there that I tasted the Nargileh for the first time, the hubble-bubble. After dinner everybody would sit down for conversations accompanied by clouds of smoke and a continuous bubbling sound. I fell in love with this Nargileh. So as a farewell gift, Rita, my closest colleague and friend, wanted to buy me a portable Nargileh to take to Belgium with me. We jumped in the car and drove through the center of Beirut, in search of a Nargileh shop. She knew for sure that on this big and noisy boulevard she had seen a shop somewhere before. So we drove on looking from side to side, but the only thing we saw were destroyed buildings and garages. Suddenly she slammed on the brakes so hard that I almost smashed into the windscreen. The car stopped and Rita said "It is not over there". We were in the middle of the road, so I asked if she was sure, couldn't we drive on a bit further? She replied "No, I am sure, I am not driving there. That is a Muslim quarter." She turned her car 180° and we went back the same way we came.

I can give dozens of similar examples: another colleague who tried to explain me the obvious difference in housing between a Muslim and a Christian quarter, when I could see none. Ismae'l telling me proudly how he above all these sectarian divisions, but didn't know any street, place or building in the Christian quarter. In reality, Beirut is not one city, Beirut is two cities. And all throughout run invisible lines that no outsider can see, but that are real barriers to most of the Lebanese people. These lines had once been material, in the form of walls, when after the first sectarian assassinations people tried to guard themselves in 'friendly' territory:

"Je suis née en 1981 à Beyrouth, dans une impasse. Des deux cotés, il y avait des maisons, et au bout, il y avait le mur. Dans mon impasse, il y avait Halim l'épicière, qui offrait des sucettes. Il y avait Baron, le couturier arménien, qui jouait du violon tous les dimanches. Et en face, il y avait l'homme aux oiseaux. Je ne savais pas très bien ce qu'il vendait, mais il avait, dans son magasin, des oiseaux qu'il gardait dans de petites cages en fer. Un jour, j'avais deux ou trois ans, je jouais dans mon impasse avec un ballon gonflé à l'hélium. Il m'a échappé des mains. Il a volé vers le mur et a disparu derrière. Derrière le mur, je savais qu'il y avait la guerre. Mais pour moi, la guerre, c'était les indiens avec des plumes, des arcs et des flèches. Ils ne me faisaient pas très peur, ils ressemblaient à ceux que je dessinais dans mes cahiers de coloriage. Ce qui me faisait le plus peur, c'était les coups de feu qu'on entendait très souvent. Maman me disait que c'était des chasseurs qui tuaient les oiseaux. Alors j'ai compris pourquoi l'homme aux oiseaux les gardait chez lui. Parfois je me mettais de bout sur la pointe des pieds au haut de l'impasse. J'apercevais alors deux petits bouts d'immeubles et un minuscule rectangle de mer. Puis un matin, le mur n'était plus là. J'ai découvert que mon impasse n'en était pas une. Et qu'elle menait à un réseau d'autres rues, d'autres histoires,

⁵¹ Møystad, Ole: Morphogenesis of the Beirut green-line: Theoretical Approaches between Architecture and Geography. June 1999, p. 7

d'autres vies. Depuis, la ville est entrée en moi. Et je ne crois plus aux histoires d'indiens et aux chasseurs d'oiseaux."⁵²

For most people however the walls never disappeared. It is still very hard for them to cross to the other side, as if they were still there. It took me a month to recognize the differences between East and West of the city. In the West you recognized the slightly different looks of the people - more bearded men, more veiled women - but the difference was subtle. In the East the streets were ornamented with religious signs: a lot of little Maria statues at the side of the road - people believe she protect the drivers - neon crosses hanging over the streets, portraits of saints or church fathers over the road. But I don't think it was these differences that the Lebanese noticed. I think it was the line, the barrier that was invisible to me, but very apparent to them.

The most famous of these barriers is, of course, the Green Line. This was the same old road from Beirut to Damascus that was used in 1842 by the Ottoman Empire to make a sectarian border between a Christian and a Druze administration. Back then it was only a sectarian division line on paper, in reality there was hardly a separation. Over the years East Beirut became more Christian, West Beirut more Muslim. But before the war, Beirut still had a relatively mixed character. "4 à 10% de la population d' Achrafieh était musulmane, 30 à 40% de la population de Beyrouth ouest était chrétienne. [...] Avec la guerre, la division s'est aggravée. A l'ouest on trouve 99% de musulmans et à l'est 93% de chrétiens."⁵³ The Green Line was named after the grass and trees that grew in the no mans land, between the destroyed buildings and streets. It emerged in 1975 in the fighting between the Lebanese Forces and the Lebanese National Movement, when the fierce fighting of the Downtown district spread along the road of Damascus. The position of the fighters remained the same for almost the entire war and even if alliances and coalitions changed constantly, the line stayed the same. From the air, the line was a prominent feature and the name was given by the Israeli pilots who flew over Beirut in 1982 to bomb the western part of the city. In Arabic the line is called *Khutut at tammās*, which literally means "confrontation lines". The plural is an indication of the ever so small shifts it made over the year, from one parallel street to the other and back. But basically

⁵² Abirached, Zeina: *Catharsis, Beyrouth*. Imprimerie Naccache, 2002

"I was born in Beirut in 1981, in a dead end alley. On both sides there were houses, at the end of the street there was a wall. In my ally, there was Halim's grocery who handed out lollypops. There was baron, the Armenian dressmaker, who played the violin every Sunday. On the other side of the street there was the man with the birds. It wasn't quite clear to me what he was selling, but inside his store he kept birds in little metal cages. One day, I was about two or three, I was playing with a balloon filled with Helium and it slipped from my hands. It was flying towards the wall and disappeared behind it. There was a war behind the wall that I knew. But for me war meant Indians with feathers and bows and arrows. They didn't scare me much; they looked like the ones I drew in my coloring books. I was more afraid of the gunshots we heard all the time. My mother told me they were hunters shooting birds. That's when I understood why the man with the birds kept them in his cages. Sometimes I stood on the tip of my toes at the end of the alley. I could see the top of two buildings and a tiny square of sea. And then one morning, the wall was gone. I discovered the alley wasn't really a dead end and that it lead to a network of other streets and other lives. Ever since I have the city within me. I don't believe in Indian stories and bird hunters any longer."

⁵³ Huybrechts, Eric (ed.): *Des quartiers de l'ancienne ligne des combats de Beyrouth. Et sa proche banlieu*. Schéma d'Aménagement pour la Reconstruction, CDR-IAURIF, 1991

"4 to 10% of the population of Ashrafieh was Muslim, 30 to 40% of the population of West Beirut was Christian. [...] With the war, the division worsened. In the West one finds 99% Muslim and in the East 93% Christian."

it runs along the old road from downtown Beirut to Damascus. Beyond the roundabout Omar Beyhum the line shifts to the old route to Saida. This is also the administrative border, separating the electoral districts of the east and the west, and the suburbs Chiah and Ghobeirah. The Green Line has always been a boundary or border of some sort, and therefore is also known by a third name: the Demarcation Line.

“Ainsi, aucune conversation, aucune analyse sur la ville ne pouvait s’opérer sans que l’on précisât la position de ses quartiers constituants par rapport à un référent, la Ligne de Démarcation.”⁵⁴

But the Demarcation Line was not the only line that divided Lebanon; it is only the centre of a larger division between the Christian territory of Lebanon and the Muslim territory, between “East” and “West”. The “East” is East-Beirut and it stretched to the north, over Jounieh, Byblos, and beyond Batroun. Tripoli in the north, the Bekaa Valley in the extreme east of the country and the area under Beirut are Muslim territory:

“Cela pouvait paraître incohérent sinon très compliqué pour un observateur non initié, surtout que certaines parties de “l’ouest” étaient à l’Est, voire au Nord ou au Sud de “l’Est”...; mais le Libanais s’y retrouvait dans ce langage géographique codé.”⁵⁵

Many lines have been drawn during the 15 year civil war - green ones, red ones, blue ones - but the *Khutut at tammis* is the only one that remained and until today has a highly symbolic value. The line by itself seemed to symbolize the fighting during the entire civil war for many Lebanese and certainly to the outside world. Contrary to the abundance of books on the reconstruction of Beirut, works on the destruction during the conflict are rare, but all of them focus on the demarcation line. The first time I walked through it, it reminded me of the quote by the mayor of Philadelphia after the riots in his city in the 1964: “From now on, the borders of the Nation go through the cities.” But is this Green Line really the place where the civil war was fought? Was it a real front line - an urban version of the trenches of the First World War? Or was it perhaps a place to divert the attention from the real battle fields? A symbol for a war that was fought elsewhere?

“Was this all it meant then, the Beirut front line, a mile-wide avenue of sepulchral ruins that stretched from the port all the way out to Gallery Seman, even to the foothills of the Chouf mountains? How easily we were misled. How simply we believed that this wasteland was the immediate effect of social antagonism, community tension, civil war. How little we realized that the front line was a focus, that it was important to the Lebanese, the only way to define the indefinable. [...] It was a reference point without which the tragedy could not be

⁵⁴ Davie, Michael F: “*Beyrouth-Est*” et “*Beyrouth-Ouest*”: *territoires confessionnels ou espaces de guerre?* URBAMA, 1997, p. 1

“Therefore no conversation nor analysis on the city could be expressed without specifying the position of the composing districts relative to a point of reference, the Demarcation Line.”

⁵⁵ Davie, Michael F: “*Beyrouth-Est*” et “*Beyrouth-Ouest*”: *territoires confessionnels ou espaces de guerre?* URBAMA, 1997, p. 2

“It could appear to be incomprehensible if not overly complicated to an outsider, especially because certain parts of « the West » are in the east, or even north or south to « the East »... but the Lebanese have no problems with this geographic code.”

expressed. It represented the cruelest of all front lines, one that lay deep within the minds of all who lived in Lebanon and all who came there.”⁵⁶

Throughout the war the heaviest fighting never happened along the demarcation line, except for a brief moment in 1975 when the line was set. It was a fixed entity, probably one of the few stable things in Beirut during a very unpredictable time. It became a signboard of the war to the outside world and even more for the Lebanese people themselves.

During the longer ceasefires, many attempts have been made to reconstruct the buildings and erase the line. But these were always annihilated as soon as the truces broke. Until this day, reconstructing the green line remains a problem. It seems that an important part of its identity is composed by the destroyed buildings themselves, by the wrecked pavement and the greenery that gave it its most famous name. Of course this should not be overstated and I am not promoting the conservation of the destruction along the Green Line. The lack of funding and the emphasis that has been put on the face-lift of the downtown area explain largely fact that the reconstruction of the demarcation line has been ignored. Some new businesses appeared along the Damascus road, mainly restaurants close to the city centre. The rest is left in decay. During the civil war lots of refugees squatted the empty houses along the demarcation line. The general rule was: the poorer the family, the closer to the fights they lived. A study about the line in 1993 revealed that a third of the population living there still were displaced people⁵⁷, which also slowed down the process of reconstruction. The only functions that the government seems to allow for new projects are as nationalistic symbols of some sort. On a conference at the American University of Beirut, a professor in architecture, Georges Arbid, complained that the government used the confrontation line to glue the Eastern and Western part of the city together, but in doing this underlined the separation. The CDU has plans to build the National Library there, the National Museum is already there from before the war and there are plans of designing another memorial museum along the same axis. Professor Arbid complained that they want to drop everything with a national and common significance along the same line. He added: “I don’t mind [as a Christian] going to Hamra [a Muslim university quarter] to visit a National Library.” The Green Line is still separating the different communities, despite considerable political effort to reverse that.

Regardless of its symbolic value, this confrontation line never was the front line of the civil war, but the border of two territories. The buildings perforated with bullets, the no man’s land in between: they looked like the impenetrable borderline’s manifestation, symbols of rigid separation. Caesar said that “The greatest glory of the Empire is to make of its borders a vast desert.” But the trees, grass and stones of the demarcation line were never a desert. In reality the territories were never completely separated or closed off. But this porosity only increased its symbolic significance, locally as well as across the world. Or as the mother of Zeina Abirached told her when she was three: “the war is at the other side of the wall”:

“The 1975-1991 war in Lebanon turned identities into territories. The driving force of this process was an urge to ensure identity by ascribing it to geographical place an urge to close the space between meaning and place. The consequence was, however, a profound

⁵⁶ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 52

⁵⁷ 17% lived there before 1977, 48% after 1982 and only 5% moved to the area after 1990.

Huybrechts, Eric (ed.): *Des quartiers de l'ancienne ligne des combats de Beyrouth. Et sa proche banlieu*. Schéma d’Aménagement pour la Reconstruction, CDR-IAURIF, 1991

destabilization of the fragile multicultural coexistence and “a geography of fear”. [...] Instead of an agglomeration of culturally homogeneous safe- havens, the most dominant characteristic of Beirut’s urban geography became the Green-Line Area.”⁵⁸

The demarcation line never provided the safety it promised. But to this day it lends identity to the citizens. At the beginning of my stay someone told me never to ask a Lebanese his religion, even if this always was the first thing people asked me. But just ask their address and you know immediately.

Territories

Thus, the green line is a border, not a front. A border has a clear military function, needs permanent surveillance and from time to time requires defensive action, hence the destruction. A border is a separation line that helps to enhance the homogeneity of the two territories it separates. But this border, despite its status as the most powerful symbol of the destruction of Beirut and by extension of whole Lebanon, is of no use for the definition of the concept of urbicide. This border is more a modified feature of classical warfare. Destruction and urbicide are not necessarily related as I found out in my first month. In retrospect, this could have been expected. As mentioned above in the comparison to genocide, traces of urbicide will often be covered up. In the case of Lebanon they even seem to have been erased from collective memory. With the demarcation line in the spotlight since 1975 onwards, this meant that I had to search for different patterns and places of destruction.

The first day Kristof came to visit me we went to the Downtown District, the territory of Solidere. The plan was to walk all the way up along the Damascus road to the crossing of the museum and take a service cab on the way back. We were strolling along the streets of Downtown and stopped at a nice fountain to take pictures of the only remaining destroyed building in the centre of the Solidere area. A soldier waved us to come. He could not speak English nor French but still made it very clear that we could not take pictures of the destroyed buildings, only of the renovated buildings. Downtown had many soldiers patrolling. Whether they were there to protect the parliament or to protect the ‘public’ space from visitors was not entirely clear, but they all had one thing in common: they were bored. So it was no big surprise that every soldier allowed or forbid different things just to have something to do. Although this was one of the first areas I visited in Beirut and we had to come there regularly to visit the CDU, there was so much polish over the Downtown District that I had forgotten what was underneath: the old destroyed and dazzling centre of Beirut.

Before 1975, Beirut was a classical city with its ministries, parliament, business area and mixed residential area in the centre of the city. The busy city centre was one of the first targeted areas when the civil war broke out. Although the first armed conflicts had already cost the lives of 1000 people, many Lebanese saw the fighting still as a violent outburst that would soon calm down. But when organized Muslim and Leftist militias started to attack the downtown Qantari area in late October 1975, they realized Lebanon was engaged in a full scale civil war. The destruction of Downtown had a high symbolic value for most Lebanese civilians. The old Downtown area was not only the official political centre, but the public spaces and the souks were religiously shared, political meeting spaces.

⁵⁸ Møystad, Ole: Morphogenesis of the Beirut green-line: Theoretical Approaches between Architecture and Geography. June 1999, p. 1

The Lebanese National Movement occupied the Qantari district and in it the highest building of Beirut: The Murr Tower was still in construction when the fighting began and would become the snipers symbol in the following 15 years. After the battle of Qantari the fighting moved slightly to the east, towards the economic center of the city. It was an area of warehouses, banks, the Bourse and comprised the basis of the Lebanese service industries. But it was also the area of the souks, with their narrow streets, every one specialized in a specific trade. The souks were central to daily life in the city and many people did their shopping what was the local economical centre. It was a totally mixed area, from everybody, for everybody. So why was this area so thoroughly destroyed?

“Beirut city centre was part of the demarcation line and was closed off, its businesses and Ministries looted, its buildings transformed into military positions, its civilian population forced out. The commercial, banking and business functions in the heart of the city were stopped almost overnight; the hotels on its periphery were gutted, its port paralyzed and its Free Zone looted.”⁵⁹

What made this fighting different from the other ones that were to follow it, was the fact that the area was not fought over for a specific use. Downtown was sealed off, mined and populated by snipers during the rest of the civil war. The complete residential population was killed or chased away and their homes looted. The damage to the buildings was strikingly severe. The Phalangists in particular seemed to employ a ‘scorched earth policy’, using mortars and rockets on the souks district. They destroyed everything they could with heavy machine guns. Some sources say it was a strategy to provoke the army, which had remained neutral, into participating in the conflict. But since the high officers in the army were Christians, that explanation does not seem to account for the degree of material destruction. Could it be that the destruction was so radical because of the centre's strong communal dimension? This assumption is supported by the fact that after the fighting the area was never repopulated, unlike other examples in the East and West of the city. By the end of 1975 and the beginning of 1976 the fights had moved to the hotel district with the battle of the Holliday Inn, the fighting inside the Phoenician Hotel and the beautiful St Georges hotel. Some people claim that the different militias fought so fiercely in the wider downtown area to destroy the political and economical core of the country. This might partially explain the intent, but the destruction did not focus on national buildings alone and the economy came to a halt the moment the first bombs were dropped. It is by no means a satisfactory explanation or the excessive damage brought on the area in such a short time.

With the fighting in the Downtown area and along the later green line, the demarcation of the different communities began. The areas were more or less determined by 1976. Especially in the east of Beirut a lot of political effort went into the demarcation of a separate and autonomous territory. The Christians felt threatened as a minority surrounded by an Arab world and they were aiming for an independent state for their community, with a separate constitution that had been drafted by former president Camille Chamoun. The political core moved to Jounieh, a port city on the outskirts of Beirut, and they began the construction of a new airport:

⁵⁹ Davie, Michael F: A Post-War Urban Geography of Beirut. Abstract for the EURAMES Conference, Warwick, 1993, p. 2

“However, the ideological monopoly enforced by the militias in the eastern sector of the city was central to their endeavors of setting up a territory with few links with the rest of the country. This could only be achieved through a strict spatial control of their territory through the building or modernization of a network of strategic roads (the coast to Faraya, Jbeil to the Jurd, the coast to Bikfaiya), bridges (Jisr al Bacha), an airport (Halât in replacement of Hamât), ports (extensions at Jouniyé, Dbayyé, the 5th Basin at Beirut) and barracks.”⁶⁰

In the West similar events took place, although not as systematic and organized as in the East. The National Movement strived for changes in the Lebanese Constitution but they never wanted to separate the country into Christian and Muslim parts. The militias were politically more diverse than the Lebanese Forces of East Beirut. An important actor in the LNM was the PLO, who operated from the camps and were less interested in the creation and securing of a homogeneous area. They entered the conflict to secure the right to attack Israel, got involved so deeply that the original cause often seemed irrelevant. Lebanon was regarded as a steppingstone to Palestine and the Palestinians “regarded *their* cause, *their* country – Palestine – as infinitely more holy, more sacred than the nation in which they had been given refuge.”⁶¹ The delineation of a Christian territory went hand in hand with an attempt to homogenize it. For this reason, the Palestinian camps that were situated within ‘Christian territory’ were looked upon as a threat:

“The executions and expulsions (the word “ethnic cleansing” had not yet been invented) modified whole areas of the city. 1975 and 1976 saw the emptying and flattening of the Tall az-Za’atar, Jisr al-Bacha and Karantina camps and slums; at the same time, the Nab’a area was emptied and its population replaced by refugees from Damour.”⁶²

One of these operations is known as the battle of Tal al Za’atar, although it was more than a battle. Tal al Za’atar was a Palestinian refugee camp in the middle of East-Beirut. The Lebanese Forces besieged the refugee camp for 53 days before it fell. They then burnt down the houses or bulldozed them. A colleague of mine handed me a promotion movie from Bashir Gemayel’s Phalange party entitled ‘Liban: aggression et resistance’. The title already reveals the most important problem of the movie: the fact that they want to show they are under attack, and at the same time show off their military strength. The movie begins with several views of the beautiful landscape of Lebanon, with in the back the sound of church bells ringing. Several times the camera stops and zooms in on a church tower. We then see Bashir Gemayel who explains his view of the Lebanese situation with the aid of a map. He says that the Lebanese (the Christians) are being attacked by foreign forces - the Syrians and the Palestinians - who want to take away their liberty and sovereignty: “Nous sommes également entourés par tout le Monde Arabe qui aide la Syrie et les Palestiniens. Nous sommes donc plongés, nous baignons même dans une mer d’hostilité. Nous avons été abandonnés dans ce coin du monde mais nous sommes encore debout car ce que les Arabes et le monde entier n’ont pas encore compris c’est que nous avons combattu et continuerons à combattre tous ceux qui s’opposent à notre indépendance, tous ceux qui menacent notre souveraineté.”⁶³ The video talks about

⁶⁰ Davie, Michael F: A Post-War Urban Geography of Beirut. Abstract for the EURAMES Conference, Warwick, 1993, p. 4

⁶¹ Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, p. 80

⁶² Ibid. p. 2

⁶³ “In addition we are surrounded by the Arab world supporting Syria and the Palestinians. We are immersed, even bathing in a sea of hostility. We have been abandoned in this corner of the world but we are still standing because what the Arabs and the entire world have yet to the

sovereignty and about the Lebanese people who have been living there for more than 6000 years. But it simultaneously warns for the threat of "l'arabisme" and shows the Phalangists dissociate themselves not only from their own Arab origins, but more particularly from all the Muslims in Lebanon. Gemayel talks about national pride and sovereignty, but he clearly envisions a separate Christian country. The video speaks about ancestors, the earth of the forefathers and the nobility to fight for all this, in a semi-poetic discourse which is highly reminiscent of the German *blut und boden*-rhetoric.

The images are something completely different. In a way that comes across as very paradoxical to an outsider, images of the cruelties of the war are showed alongside footage of their own able militias. We do not only get to see the fighting and capturing of the refugee camp Tal al Za'atar, titled "la libération de Tall-Zaatar", we also see the deportation of the inhabitants, the bulldozing of the houses and the destruction of the houses with flame-throwers. In one shot we even witness the execution of what looks like an unarmed civilian by a (Christian) soldier. In between there are camera shots of dead people, and views of destroyed residential buildings, streets and the wrecked Downtown area. In what appears as strange logic, the Lebanese Forces filmed what looks like their own war crimes in order to show the world and France in particular, the threat they are facing. And in the voice-over there is a noticeable difference between references to the Palestinians and to the Syrian army (their enemies). They never talk about Palestinian fighters or PLO men, they talk about Palestinians. Clearly it is not only the PLO that they are fighting at that moment, it is the Palestinian people. The official motive for attack on Tal al Za'atar was that it served as an operation base for the PLO from which they planned their military campaigns. But they did not stop at killing and disarming the Palestinian fighters - they went as far as killing and deporting civilians and destroying their residences. So clearly the whole Tal al Za'atar camp was perceived as a threat, rather than just the PLO. And it is plausible that the idea to homogenize the east of Beirut will have played an important, albeit secret part as well.

Many ceasefires were declared, giving the Palestinian fighters the opportunity to surrender, something they did not. Later, the survivors of Tal Al Za'atar would accuse Arafat of ordering his men to keep on fighting, even if he knew full well that the camp could not hold out. The deported inhabitants said Yasser Arafat only wanted to create martyrs. A surrender could have saved many lives, but it would not have protected the houses from destruction:

"The demarcation line was the excuse for homogenizing the religious composition of its population, with the mixed areas being the main target: almost all of the Muslim population of Eastern Beirut was evicted, while the Christian element in the Western sector declined notably, being replaced by Chi'ites from South Lebanon or the Beqa'a. The unique mix of religions, nationalities, cultures and influences in Hamra have been replaced by a more uniform confessional and cultural identity; the self-closed-off Eastern sector has developed a similarly uniform identity."⁶⁴

Clearly, when studying urbicide it is the lesser known events that are the most interesting. With the camp gone and rebuild into a Christian area, no traces are left of what happened. Downtown has changed even

understand is the fact that we have fought and will continue to fight all those that are opposed to our independence and all those that threaten our sovereignty."

⁶⁴ Davie, Michael F: A Post-War Urban Geography of Beirut. Abstract for the EURAMES Conference, Warwick, 1993, p. 6

more dramatically. While it is promoted as the only multisectional area of the city, in reality it belongs to none of the sects: it is owned by a private company. All the traces of the war have been covered up in Downtown and the former Tal al Za'atar camp: it is here that we see a glimpse of urbicide.

D | urbicide

I had been in Lebanon for some weeks already, strolling around in streets with the perforated buildings, taking pictures. The ruins had an immense attraction. Some of them were by far the most beautiful buildings in Beirut and I did not feel the fear and terror of the war in these beautiful sculptures in any way. Until one rainy Sunday when I went to the movies with Nabil. They screened the Lebanese film Zozo from Josef Fares. It was a story about a boy who had lost his entire family when a mortar blew away his home. After that he had migrated to Sweden where he lived with his grandparents. When I saw the sequences of Beirut I recognized the beautiful destroyed buildings that I passed almost every day. I felt a strong sense of fear and threat. Not because of the buildings themselves, but because of the destroyed streets, pavements and squares. It was the destruction of the public space that had utterly changed the atmosphere from romantic to threatening.

“Towards the end of the war in Beirut, there were neither friends nor enemies anymore, only warriors and civilians. Moreover, anywhere public was a dangerous place to be. Under such conditions, one can imagine that public space would take on the role of an antagonistic other, and ritually to be found guilty of the destructive violence.”⁶⁵

Going back to the original meaning of the word urbicide as the ‘killing or slaughter’ of the urban, I want to question the notion of ‘urbanity’ that we have described above. Martin Coward defines the urban in opposition to the rural and refers to the three characteristics of Louis Wirth of urbanity: size, density and heterogeneity. I would like to take this further back, to the origins of the city: the Greek polis. Of course this is only a lexicographic explanation of the word and it is indeed a very Euro-centric attitude to define the Greek polis as the ultimate or pure city. But it allows me to highlight another characteristic which opens up the discourse about urbanity and urbicide. In Greek times, the polis was the place for the political body, while the oikos was a separate place for the reproductive natural life⁶⁶. So the natural body is the private body and the political body is the body of the city, the public body. Or as Aristotle explained in the *Politeia*:

« « La ville, écrivait Aristotle, ce sont d’abord des gens qui la composent, qui y naissent, y meurent, y vivent, y travaillent, s’y distraient, y souffrent. Et plus que ces personnes, la ville est le lieu où elles vivent ensemble. Plus que ces personnes, la ville est faite de leurs relations. La ville, c’est là où il y a de l’autre, de l’autre qui vous reconnaît. » »⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Møystad, Ole: Morphogenesis of the Beirut green-line: Theoretical Approaches between Architecture and Geography. June 1999, p. 7

⁶⁶ Hobbes, Thomas: *De Homine*. In: Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare-Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 2

⁶⁷ Dufour, Jean-Louis: *La guerre, la ville et le soldat*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002, p. 3
“Aristotle wrote that the essence of city are the people, the people that are born there, and die there, that live in it, work in it, have fun in it and suffer in it. And even more than that the city is

The word politics is not only derived from polis, it literally denoted the organization of daily life in the city. Later on, Hobbes made the same link when he stated “Homo enim non modo corpus naturale est, sed etiam civitatis, id est, ut ita loquar, corporis politici pars. – Man is not only a natural body, but also a body of the city, that is, of the so-called political part.”⁶⁸ The destruction of the city can in this context be seen as the destruction of the political power of the citizens.

This angle allows me to separate the discussion about urbicide from the discussion of what constitutes a city. Nurhan Abujidi and Han Verschure questioned this when they asked: “What is the urban in a world system where different cultures and discourses present varying perceptions and categorizations of urbanity as a size, quality of a built environment, legal categorization or as a process in itself?”⁶⁹ This also renders deducted terms like domicide, which addresses the systematic destruction of homes in or outside the city, redundant, and enhances urbicide as a complete concept. For me, it is unacceptable that the word ‘urbicide’ should depend on something trivial such as the amount of inhabitants, or whether or not a wall is build around the houses. By detaching the notion of urbicide from technical questions such as what constitutes a city and by retaining only its dominant characteristic - the presence of political power/possible resistance - it becomes a workable term.

Martin Coward also linked urbanity to politics in his search for the meaning of ‘urbicide’:

“It has been my argument so far that the urban environment is the basis for urbanity. Moreover, I have argued that urbanity is characterized by heterogeneity. As the basis of urbanity the urban environment is thus constitutive of shared or heterogeneous spaces. It is thus this heterogeneous spatiality that is at stake in the destruction of the urban environment. Moreover, since politics is comprised of antagonistic relations of identity/difference, the destruction of the conditions of possibility of heterogeneity represents the elimination of the conditions of possibility of politics.”⁷⁰

My argument would be a variation on Martin Coward’s: one needs heterogeneity to have the possibility of politics and differences in interests, but this heterogeneity does not necessarily comprise a heterogeneous space. One needs confrontation with differences to induce political conversation/negotiation/activity, and a heterogeneous space can be one way of confrontation, but it is not the only conceivable option.

I would now like to revisit the three interpretations of urbicide described before, approaching them from the idea of the city as a political space and with the examples of Beirut we just discussed. I stated before that these interpretations should not exclude each other, and I would like to discuss them here as three stages of one process, which ultimately leads to urbicide:

the place where they live together. Their relationships constitute its essence. The city is there where the other is and the other recognizes you.”

⁶⁸ Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 125

⁶⁹ Abujidi, Nurhan; Verschure, Han: *Establishing Urbicide between Theory and Experience*. p. 3 In: *10th Joint Doctoral Seminar in History and Theory of Architecture*. Heverlee, 5th of May 2006

⁷⁰ Coward, Martin: *Community as heterogeneous ensemble: Mostar and multiculturalism*. In: <http://www.isanet.org/archive/coward.html> consulted the 21th of November 2005 p. 9

The civil war started with the complete wrecking of the Downtown area in 1975. This was essentially the destruction of the political and civilian power, and at the same time rendered any resistance impossible, precisely through the destruction of the spaces that enables this. Any argument to explain the targeting of downtown says that it hosted the most important national institutions, which are an obvious military target in a civil war. Not just the national institutions were targets of destruction, essentially the entire political space in this mixed area was, the souks being a significant example. Not only political institutions of the government were destroyed and closed off for the remainder of the civil war, but also political spaces where people communicated, discussed and demonstrated. At this stage anyone demonstrating against the war became the enemy of all the fighting parties. Every precondition for political activity and peaceful resistance was stamped out by the destruction and closure of the spaces necessary to this sort of activities. The second stage was to divide the territory among the two main fighting parties through the construction of the Demarcation Line. "Precious little room was left for those who decided to belong to neither camp."⁷¹ New place names appeared, referring to military positions or barracks, and were quickly adopted by the inhabitants.⁷² On both sides of the line a process of homogenization occurred through the annihilation of 'foreign elements'. I discussed the destruction of the Tal Al Za'atar camp as an example. Here, a whole group of civilians are seen as possible political opponents because of their different ethnic, national or religious background. In an effort to homogenize the territory every other is considered a political opponent just because of his otherness and for that reason needs to be expelled, together with his environment. Naturally, every form of systematic exclusion, discrimination or mass killing will meet resistance from the targeted group. So the mere adherence the group becomes a political act by itself, and the group as a whole therefore needs to be eliminated. Hence the expulsion of the civilians of Tal al Za'atar and the destruction of their homes. In the examples of Beirut we can see a shift from the targeting of political opposition to the targeting of possible future resistance on the one hand, and from the destruction of public political space to the destruction of residential space on the other hand. Of course, these events are approached from a theoretical point of view: there are other possible causes for the attacks on the Downtown area and the refugee camp. But once again I want to emphasize that I focus on an explanation for the excess of destruction that clearly went beyond mere strategic purposes.

The third shape of urbicide can be considered the extreme of the previous two stages: the annihilation of a city. This total destruction can be interpreted in two different ways. Either as the physical destruction of an entire city, which can only be the case after a siege of the city by an opponent army. With the present tactic of war through aerial bombing as practiced by western countries, this siege of a city has gotten a whole new meaning. The second interpretation could be the complete annihilation of the city as a political entity through tactical destructions of the political spaces, whether it be public space, residential space of opponents or even something else. It is rare that the physical destruction from an opponent force is so thorough that the political capacity of the city is entirely rooted out, even if there are survivors. One of the historical instances of destruction on such a scale, is Carthage:

"Rome's erasure of Carthage was an act of urbicide – the murder of a city. Carthage had already been demilitarized following its defeat in battle by a treaty of 201BC, but the Romans still hankered after its total destruction. M. Porcius Cato called for *Carthaginem esse delendum* ('Carthage must be destroyed') at the end of all his political speeches. When Rome struck in 146BC the Carthaginians were given the option of retreating ten miles from the city

⁷¹ Davie, Michael F: A Post-War Urban Geography of Beirut. Abstract for the EURAMES Conference, Warwick, 1993, p. 2

⁷² Ibid. p. 1

while it was being razed, but instead they fought to the end, only to see its temples, spectacular circular dock complex, its multi-storey apartment blocks and city walls brought down to rubble. The Romans systematically flattened its ruins; the site was cursed and, according to the legend, sown with salt as a symbol of eternal sterility. Carthage, the economic powerhouse of its age, was to be erased from history. Its language, culture and religion did not survive except in the most tattered fragments.”⁷³

Although Carthage definitely classifies as an old icon of urbicide, the destruction does not have to be so all-encompassing to be eligible for use of the term. But what separates the first two stages of what I will call here 'urbicidal destruction' from urbicide, is the logic behind the destruction:

“In referring to a ‘logic’ of urbicide I am not arguing that urbicide is ‘logical’ in the sense of the necessary outcome of a particular set of circumstances or decisions. The notion that urbicide has a ‘logic’ that is not subsidiary to that of genocide is intended to indicate that urbicide is a conceptual term for a set of events that, *taken together*, amount to a ‘coordinated plan of different actions’.”⁷⁴

The set of events has to be sufficiently extensive, before one can reveal such a logic. So the line between urbicidal destruction and urbicide is the possibility to prove the logic through the systematic and wide occurrence of urbicidal destruction. This, however, is in the case of the Lebanese civil war entirely impossible.

D | excessive destruction

Many authors argue that the concept of urbicide can only have validity when it is strictly separated from its origin, genocide. If the destruction of the built environment is only to target the population, then the concept has no meaning of its own. As such it qualifies as either “acts of symbolic destruction (destruction of cultural symbols that underpin a national group); or acts of collateral damage attendant to the overall project of elimination of a national group (things that were hit whilst driving out or killing a particular ethnic group).”⁷⁵ The authors of *Mostar '92-Urbicid*, however, saw a co-ordinated plan to implement a different kind of destruction. “The use of ‘urbicide’ noted, however, that this coordinated plan, and the violence attendant to it, had a logic that was not subsidiary to genocide.”⁷⁶ So the argument of this chapter is that in some cases it is the built environment itself that is not only the target but also triggers the urge of the fighting parties to destroy it.

⁷³ Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 18

⁷⁴ Davie, Michael F: A Post-War Urban Geography of Beirut. Abstract for the EURAMES Conference, Warwick, 1993, p. 7

⁷⁵ Coward, Martin: Community as heterogeneous ensemble: Mostar and multiculturalism. In: <http://www.isanet.org/archive/coward.html> consulted the 21th of November 2005 p. 7

⁷⁶ Ibid.

“Sometimes it is as if the very bricks and stones are guilty of being the other as well as being representative of the other’s presence. Their very form can reflect an alien mode of thinking and being; a different cultural genesis – mosque, onion dome, star or steeple.”⁷⁷

I would like to go even one step further than Rober Bevan when he speaks about monuments and sacred buildings. I argue that when I speak about urbicide in this chapter, the building itself has become the enemy. This means that the projection of the ‘other’ onto the built environment is taken to such a level that it becomes the ‘other’, and therefore a target by itself. With this I want to say that behind the majority of the destruction in war situations there is a certain reasoning, a certain strategy, however pervasive at times. But when the devastation is blown up to such proportions, the official motivation seems insufficient to justify the scale of destruction. At times we see that far more effort, lives and ammunition are put into the demolishing of buildings than would be necessary if kept to the original target. Something else must motivate this destruction of the city fabric, and in my opinion that is urbicide. So in this chapter I will try to dig deeper into the mechanisms of this excessively violent strike on the city or any built environment. I will in particular explore two different directions and raise the question whether the answer perhaps lies in their convergence.

fear of the metropolis

“The space that cities allow for diversity and the exchange of ideas also means that authority cannot be uniformly imposed – power can never be absolute. Cities as a locus of tolerance and freedom are, to their detractors, dangerously uncontrollable, instinctively oppositional to authority, constantly changing and evolving in new and diverse ways. Because of this the city is also the City of Sin. Babylon.”⁷⁸

Because of this uncontrollability, throughout history cities have been considered dangerous places and were associated with diseases and crimes. From the 1870s onwards, a lot of attention has been given to something that back then was called “urban phobias”. At that time the big European cities were growing rapidly, and new disciplines like sociology and psychology were studying the social effects of this transformation of a city into a metropolis.⁷⁹ It was believed that the urban environment of the Big City invoked specific pathologies of which agoraphobia and claustrophobia are the most famous ones.⁸⁰

“Metropolis rapidly became the privileged territory of a host of diseases attributed directly to its spatial conditions, diseases that took their place within the general epistemology of

⁷⁷ Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 14

⁷⁸ Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 122

⁷⁹ Vidler, Anthony: *Warped space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. The MIT Press, London, 2000, p. 25

⁸⁰ But there were more: “strasophobia (fear of elevated or vertical stations), amaxophobia (exaggerated fear of carriages), cremnophobia (the fear of precipices), acrophobia or hypsophobia (fear of elevated places), oicophobia (aversion of returning home), lysophobia (fear of liquids), hydrophobia (fear of water [...])pyrophobia (fear of fire [...]), monophobia (fear of solitude), anthropophobia (fear of social contact), and a multitude of others, culminating in photophobia (the fear of fear itself).” In: Vidler, Anthony: *Warped space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. The MIT Press, London, 2000, p. 35

Beard's neurasthenia and Charcot's hysteria, but with a special relationship to their supposed physical cause."⁸¹

As a first observation, it is interesting that the urban phobias studied in the 19th century are corresponding more or less to the problems where soldiers deal with when they fight on urban terrain: the danger of open spaces, fear of dead end streets and passages and so on. I will return to this later. Much stress was put at that time on the fact that these diseases were directly connected to the spatial conditions of the city. Gélinau wrote in 1880 that the 'fear of the void' "strikes only the inhabitants of cities ... developing under the influence of the debilitating atmosphere of the big towns that has been called *malaria urbana*."⁸² So we see that the entire atmosphere of the metropolis was considered unhealthy and pathogenic. These studies on the aberrations of city life were in a way fed by the emergence of another general fear of the city. But the author did not only describe the illnesses of individual persons, he argued that the urban environment had also an effect on crowds:

"Of special interest was the *space* of the new city, which was now subjected to scrutiny as a possible cause of an increasingly identified psychological alienation [...] of the metropolitan individual, and, further, as an instrument favoring the potentially dangerous behavior of crowds."⁸³

The behaviour of crowds was thus placed on the same level as psychological pathologies and the instigator of this behaviour was nothing else than the urban environment itself. This feeling found its proof in the political tensions that were simmering in every big city in Europe at that time and which would erupt in social city revolutions of which the Commune of Paris, from the 18th March until the 30th of May 1871, was the most famous one. From now on the cities were known as the breeding places for socialist revolutions and political resistance. And urban crowds were without exception described as overenthusiastic, impulsive and even dangerous. This was also the time when Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann reorganized Paris, destroying the very places which had encouraged this "dangerous behavior of crowds" and had caused these revolutions: I have earlier labeled 'urbicidal urbanism'. So the urban bourgeois was affected by a variety of phobias, all linked to the spaces they lived in, while the working classes in the cities suffered from more threatening illnesses, namely "vagabondage" and "ambulatory automatism" which were linked to crimes and - in the worst case - revolutions. The city was either a pathological or a revolutionary entity.

So a permanent fear and mistrust of cities and their inhabitants has already been in existence for a long time, and more often than not overshadowed the image of cities as breeding grounds for democracy, avant-garde and liberty. In Europe, this feeling became stronger when the middle class left the cities for the suburbs while the poor moved in looking for work and lower living costs.

In times of war, these negative feelings towards the urban areas are magnified by the 'propaganda campaign' that accompanies any kind of conflict. From a military perspective, cities are dangerous places

⁸¹ Vidler, Anthony: Warped space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture. The MIT Press, London, 2000, p. 25

⁸² Gélinau, E: De la kénophobia ou peur des espaces (agoraphobia des allemands). Paris, 1880, p. 24 In : Vidler, Anthony: Warped space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture. The MIT Press, London, 2000, p. 29

⁸³ Vidler, Anthony: Warped space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture. The MIT Press, London, 2000, p. 25

to enter and casualties are always higher in an urban environment. Every great military strategist of the past has advised to either avoid cities as fighting terrain (Sun Tzu)⁸⁴ or to destroy the entire city as it is impossible to occupy (Machiavelli):

“Que celui qui deviant maître d’une ville habitué à vivre libre et ne la détruit pas s’attende à être défait par elle ; car elle a toujours pour soutien, dans sa révolte, le nom de la liberté et ses anciennes institutions, qui n’oublent ni du fait de la longueur du temps, ni des bienfaits reçus »⁸⁵

So the overall negative attitude towards the city is greatly intensified by the risks fighting in urban areas involve. If the city is looked upon as a revolutionary and criminal entity in peace time, it becomes a real pitfall in times of war. The fear for the surroundings (buildings, squares, windows, rooftops) is felt long before the fight even begins.

projection and demarcation

In the following argument I will discuss how buildings and spaces can be active elements in a war situation and evoke the killing of people and the destruction of places, instead of the other way around. In my opinion there is a process of projection back and forth between people and places during conflict situations and in the reconstruction process afterwards. I will start by giving some apparently evident examples of events that happened in Beirut between 1975 and 1990. Later I will compare this with the theory of Giorgio Agamben about *The camp as 'nomos'*.

In Lebanon, most of the fighting parties, with the important exception of the Syrian and Israeli soldiers, did neither have the intent, nor the means to occupy the entire city. Each militia had too little troops to start such an demanding battle. So there was no overall strategy for the city, rather small concentrated battle zones scattered around. Those moments of heavy fighting took often place in one big building, like the battle of the Holliday Inn. This 27 storey building comprised the entire battle scene: Outside the hotel was the ‘usual anarchy’, inside the hotel however heavy fighting took place between the Lebanese Forces and the National Movement. The Muslim-leftist coalition won the hotel, but according to the story, they celebrated their victory so thoroughly that the Lebanese Forces could sneak back inside and the battle started all over again. Because none of the militias apparently had the power to occupy and secure all areas at one time, the intensive fighting was often compressed in relatively small areas and demarcated by specific buildings. Another example was the event that for many symbolized the beginning of the civil war: the raid on the bus that killed 26 Palestinians. The bus driver was brought to the hospital with shot wounds in the head, shoulder, leg and stomach. Three days later unidentified men tried to kill him there.⁸⁶ All the passengers were dead. So all 27 passengers on that bus needed to be killed, the bus delineating the amount

⁸⁴ “Laying siege to a city is only done when other options are not available.” Sun Tzu: *The art of War*. Chapter 3. In: <http://www.sonshi.com/sun3.html>, consulted the 15th of August 2006

⁸⁵ Machiavel: *Le Prince*. In: *Oeuvres Complètes*. t. 1, p. 287, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 1987. In: Dufour, Jean-Louis: *La guerre, la ville et le soldat*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002, p. 23

“That he who becomes ruler of a city which is used to free life and does not destroy her, awaits defeat by her; for she will always support, through her revolution, the name of freedom and its former institutions, who will never forget the lengthiness of time, nor the grace she received.”

⁸⁶ Kouyoumdjian, Zaven: *Lebanon. Shot Twice*. Printing and publishing Chamas, Beirut, 2003, p.

of victims. It rarely happens that executions of this sort are not carried out into completion. Everybody inside the bus must die, and everybody outside the bus shall live.

It seems that these physical boundaries are needed to judge who shall live and who shall die. The physical border is in a way a guiding line to organize the killings. These physical boundaries enclose a space where different rules prevail. The lives of the people inside have a status different from their status outside. And here we use Agamben's description of the camp:

“If this is true, if the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of distinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography.”⁸⁷

In his text Agamben mentions many examples: the stadium of Bari, where the Italian police enclosed illegal Albanians in 1991 before they were sent home; the winter cycle-racing track where the Vichy regime held the Jews they were going to hand over to the Germans; the zone d'attentes in the French International airports where foreigners are kept who ask for a refugee status in France... The examples I have given above are slightly different in the sense that they are all war situations, and the aim of the delimitation is to kill. It is the very extreme of the examples given by Agamben, but the space works according to the same principle. So the building, the camp, the bus creates a space where a state of exception is declared and normal laws are suspended. Where the rights of the people are stripped away and all that is left is a body that can be killed.

The important remark in this particular context is that it is no longer the identity of the individual person that is important – whether he or she is a civilian or a fighter – but rather that person's position in space that becomes decisive. In this space, the normal order is suspended and “everything becomes possible”⁸⁸ The people inside this space become a “homo sacer (sacred man), who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*”.⁸⁹ In a war situation this translates into the execution of every homo sacer and the complete destruction of the camp, the building.

⁸⁷ Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 174

⁸⁸ Arendt, Hannah In: Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 170

⁸⁹ Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 8

part 3 | recent events.

after 1990

After 1990, things started to turn back to the situation before the war, with the exception of the continued presence of two foreign armies on Lebanese territory, namely The Israeli Defense Force in the South of Lebanon and the Syrian troops in the other parts of the country. This was in breach of the Taef Agreement which called for the redeployment of every foreign army by the end of 1992. So the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) could only operate in two thirds of the country and in these places they were working under the supervision of the Syrian army. It has been estimated that 20,000 Syrian men of the original 35,000 were still positioned in Lebanon at that time⁹⁰. The soldiers manned the road blockades and the Syrian intelligence marked the policy of the government. The Syrian presence was not only accepted but welcomed for its stabilizing effect in the country, but also criticized for controlling the Lebanese government and occupying the country. Meanwhile peace settled in the country, although Sunni fighters were still active in the North and Hezbollah in the South. There were still occasional car bombings, mainly directed at political leaders. An assassination attempt failed to kill the current Prime Minister in 1991, and in 2002 Elie Hobeika, the Phalange commander responsible for the Sabra and Chatilla murders was killed after he made statements that he wanted to clear his name. The Lebanese government held elections and functioned as one body again but the crash of the Lebanese currency, started during the war and continued afterwards, lead to the resignation of the Prime Minister in 1992. He was replaced by Rashid al Sulh, a veteran in Lebanese politics, but in November of that same year, Rafiq Hariri was elected Prime Minister and gave himself the portfolio of Finance. Hariri was a billionaire, who had gathered his fortune during the civil war in the country of his mother, Saudi Arabia. He was also the founder and president of Solidere, the private company that would rebuild Downtown District. In 2000, after missing one term, he took up the office of Prime Minister again.

That same year Israel pulled back from the South of Lebanon till after 'the blue one', only remaining on a small portion of land called the Sheba'a Farms. Israel claimed this was a part of Syria and of the occupied Golan Heights. This claim was supported by the United Nations, but Lebanon and especially Hezbollah claimed it was Lebanese territory. The withdrawal mounted the pressure on Syria to withdraw as well since the redeployment of these two armies were always negotiated together. The US, France, Germany and the United Kingdom increased pressure on Syria by a UN resolution but nothing changed until 2004. During this time the pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud, elected in 1998 wanted to change the constitution to allow him to run for a third presidency. He got support from Syrians, who did not want to lose their influence in the government now that their presence was being questioned by the international community. Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri opposed this amendment, but he and his party nevertheless voted in favor of the amendment on the 23rd of September 2004. After this Hariri resigned from his office. In October 2004 the main opponent of the president's extension, the Druze Marwan Hamadeh barely escaped an assassination attempt with a car bomb. Only four months later the same happened to Rafiq Hariri in front of the St George hotel, but this time the blast was so heavy that the ex-Prime Minister died on the spot. His assassination triggered a lot of protest against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. After massive demonstrations, which were remarkable because of their multi-sectarian character, the international pressure on Syria heightened and the Arab nations and Russia asked Syria to withdraw. During this time, there were also large pro-Syrian manifestations organized by the Hezbollah, who brought in Shia Muslims

⁹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Lebanon, consulted 10th of February 2006

by bus from the south of the Beka'a Valley. On the 6th of March an estimated 400 to 500,000 pro-Syrian protestors gathered in Beirut. In reaction to this display of Shia power, politicians claimed only the anti-Syrian protests were spontaneous, while the pro-Syrian were organized:

“That is where the difference between us and them lies: They asked these people to come and they brought them here, whereas the opposition’s supporters come here on their own. Our protests are spontaneous. We have a cause. What is theirs?”⁹¹

Although this reasoning is rather disputable, the anti-Syrian protesters blew every critic away when they gathered with 800,000 to one million Christians, Sunni Muslims and Druze one week later, one month after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. The stage of all these protests was principally the Martyr Square in the Downtown Area District. Ever since, Solidere promotes this event as a symbol for the use of public space in the Solidere area. Books with pictures of the gigantic manifestation are published to show that the downtown area is still the political centre of Lebanon. At the time, however, they were not too happy with the massive protests in their controlled area and they prohibited the pro-Syrian rally, which took place on the Riad Solh square. But the political effect was there, and after the protest of the 14th of March, some pro-Syrian officials resigned and the Syrians started their full evacuation.

In Lebanon, people look back on these events as the emergence of an active and multi-sectarian civil society. Everything that happened from the assassination of Hariri up until the withdrawal of the Syrian army, is named ‘the Cedar Revolution’, after the national symbol of Lebanon: the Cedar tree. Since then, the heavy influence of Syria on the government is gone, but a series of car bombings have occurred still, mainly in Beirut and the majority in the Christian areas. The targets are often shopping malls and anti-Syrian politicians and journalists. Samir Kassir and George Hawi are examples of a murdered journalist and a politician of the Lebanese Communist Party. The direct involvement of Syria or their allies was never proved but it is widely assumed that Syria tries to destabilize Lebanon and disprove its claims of independence. An International Commission has been appointed to investigate the murder of Hariri and the involvement of Syria and although several links have been made to the brother in law of President Assad, the investigation has not yet been concluded officially.

Hezbollah

As we have seen in the first part, Hezbollah is a Shia militia that formed itself during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The only existing movement that represented the Shia population back then, the Amal movement, stayed out of the fights in the south for the most part, which stirred some Shia fighters to actions on their own account. In contrast to Amal, Hezbollah is a movement that is based more on religion and which takes the Islamic Revolution of Iran as an example. From the very beginning the organization is backed up with intelligence and other support from Iran and Syria. But throughout the years it had gathered enough autonomy to coordinate and decide on their own actions. It was the only large militia that refused to hand in their weapons after the civil war, saying it was still fighting the Israeli occupation of the South. In 1995, Sheik Ibrahim al-Amin declared the group’s manifesto, but today the undisputed leader is

⁹¹ MP Akram Chehayeb in: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Lebanon, consulted 10th of February 2006

Sheikh Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, who is Secretary-General since 1992. Hezbollah has grown from a military movement during the civil war, to a group with a social, cultural and political agenda, but it never abandoned its armed section. The United States, Canada, Israel and the Netherlands consider Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization, while the United Kingdom and Australia only describe the military branch of Hezbollah as terrorists. The European Union, Russia, China and a lot of other countries do not regard Hezbollah as a terrorist organization at all, although the European Union describes some of Hezbollah's senior officers as terrorists, distinguishing between the group and its members. Hezbollah started in the 80s as a group with two aims: the foundation of an Islamic Republic in Lebanon, comparable to Khomeini's Iran, and the annihilation of the Israeli state. Nasrallah never officially denounced these two long term visions, but has treated them with considerable flexibility. On the foundation of an Islamic Republic Nasrallah said the following in an interview with Adam Shatz:

“We believe the requirement for an Islamic state is to have an overwhelming popular desire, and we're not talking about fifty percent plus one, but a large majority. And this is not available in Lebanon and probably never will be.”⁹²

Also, considering Israel, the Hezbollah leader declared that if Hamas is willing to negotiate a two state solution, Hezbollah would not sabotage this as it is still “a Palestinian matter”.⁹³ But until that day, Hezbollah trains Hamas fighters, supplies logistic aid and Nasrallah openly supports suicide bombings, saying this is the only available option for the Palestinians to fight. During the civil war, Hezbollah was the first movement to use the tactic of suicide bombings in the region against American, French and Israeli targets. Although they always renounced attacks on civilians, they made an exception concerning Israeli civilians: “in occupied Palestine there is no difference between a soldier and a civilian, for they are all invaders, occupiers and usurpers of the land.”⁹⁴ An example of their ambiguous attitude towards civilian casualties is their reaction on the 9/11 attacks on America. Nasrallah condemned the WTC attack, but kept silent about the attack on the Pentagon. In 2000, the organization gained massive support when Israel withdrew its troops from the south of Lebanon, which was seen by the Arab world as the first Arab victory over Israel. But with the Israeli army retreating, the main reason of the existence of the armed branch of Hezbollah disappeared. Consequently the organization lost many Lebanese sympathizers when it refused to turn in their arms, claiming they were still fighting to liberate the contested Sheba'a Farms and trying to free Lebanese prisoners inside Israel. Over the years, the militia grew into an important political and social movement, but initially a lot of the senior members had reserves about going into Lebanese politics. Nasrallah insisted in 1992 and won 12 of the 128 seats in parliament. The party immediately became one of the most important parties in national politics and Nasrallah confirmed its leadership. Hezbollah and its leader seem to have a double agenda in everything they are involved in and it is very difficult to judge the organization. They are a military group encouraging the bombing of Israeli civilians, but at the same time they are a political organization that has banished corruption and runs schools, hospitals, social services and agricultural centers in the poorest areas of Lebanon. They are centered on the Islam and have strong ties with Iran, but they are also supporters of Muslim female rights, appointing several women for the

⁹² Shatz, Adam: In Search of Hezbollah. New York Review of Books, April 29, 2004 In: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/17060>, consulted the 20th of August 2006

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Sheikh Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah In: Shatz, Adam: In Search of Hezbollah. New York Review of Books, April 29, 2004 In: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/17060>, consulted the 20th of August 2006

elections and promoting women workers in their own service centres. To some they are a serious threat, but they are a salvation for many others and this is what makes Hezbollah a very difficult opponent to face.

The organization continued to fight along the blue line in the south. The objective of most of these fights is to kidnap Israeli soldiers in order to exchange prisoners with Israel. In October 2000, Hezbollah kidnapped three IDF soldiers at the border and the Israeli businessman and former army colonel Elchanan Tenenbaum in Kuwait. Four years later an exchange was negotiated: 30 Lebanese and Arab prisoners, the remains of 59 Lebanese civilians and militants and 400 Palestinian prisoners against the businessman and the bodies of the three dead soldiers. This prisoner swap was seen as a big victory for Hezbollah in the Arab world and gave the organization the status of defender of all Muslims. This victory encouraged Hezbollah to keep on kidnapping IDF soldiers, but reversely also stimulated the Israeli government to keep Lebanese civilians in prisons as means of exchange. Israel can detain people without a trial since some 50 years ago when the nation was declared in a state of emergency "which gives the security forces wide-ranging powers of detention."⁹⁵ The 21st of November 2005 Hezbollah launched an attack across the Israeli border, the biggest since the withdrawal of Israel five years earlier. It was a failed attempt to kidnap soldiers on the Israeli side of the village Al-Ghajar, resulting in Hezbollah troops being ambushed by the IDF paratroopers. Notwithstanding this failed attempt, an estimated 7000 Lebanese prisoners have been released by the Israeli authorities in return of 19 Israeli and the bodies of 8 others, although not all after efforts of Hezbollah. In combat it is custom to always try and free prisoners of war or to retrieve the bodies of dead soldiers. But in the context of Hezbollah and Lebanon, this has turned into a campaign of its own rather than a side strategy. Israel is reluctant to release Lebanese prisoners because of their value in future negotiations and Hezbollah tries to kidnap as many soldiers as possible to be able to exchange them for many more Lebanese and Arab prisoners. These exchanges not only put Hezbollah in the role of the victor, due to the huge discrepancy in the number of released prisoners, it also provides the organization with a motive not to disarm after the withdrawal of Israel.

Friday 26 May 2006 A car bomb explodes in Saida, killing the leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Mahmoud Majzoub and his brother. Everybody immediately suspects that Israel is behind the attack and the Prime Minister Fuad Saniora expresses this suspicion the same day. Friday evening I go to the American University of Beirut to meet Ismae'l. Rita and I were going to discuss with him the organization of a workshop we were planning the following November. Usually I walk right into the campus, pretending I am a student, but this time the guard stops me. I explain him I am going to meet somebody linked to the faculty but he sends me to the security desk, where they let me through anyway. I was the last non-student allowed in though, Rita is denied access when she arrives, despite considerable efforts on our part to get her in. Later we hear that there were riots in the Lebanese American University and that the student leaders promised it would spread to all the other campuses across Beirut. What instigated the riots was not entirely clear, but apparently pro-Hezbollah students got engaged in fights with knives against the pro-Hariri students: an anti-Israeli group fighting an anti-Syrian movement. The next day Hezbollah fires Katyushi rockets into Israel to retaliate the car bomb. As a response, Israel fires bombs into the south of Lebanon and the situation slightly escalates. At that moment I am standing on a balcony in Jounieh, looking whether I can see some of the F16's, because we just heard on the radio that the Israelis are bombing a military Hezbollah target in the south of Beirut. But I cannot see or hear a thing. Sunday night the fighting stops after the UN hastened to negotiate a ceasefire. The next day at

⁹⁵ Israeli court frees Lebanese prisoners, the 12th of April 2000, BBC News Online In: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/middle_east/710645.stm, consulted 25th of August 2006

work we had a trip planned to the south, to the area of one of our projects, between the cities of Saida and Tyre. But Nabil does not want me to come along. He thinks it is too dangerous for a European to wander around in the south that day. I protest, arguing that Rita with her blond hair and blue eyes looks more European than I do, that it was just a small incident and that we should not exaggerate things. Nabil tries to explain to me then that with Sharon as prime minister of Israel, they knew what to expect and how he would react. But now with Ehud Olmert, people fear that he wants to profile himself as a strong leader, and nobody dares to predict what the Israelis are going to do at this point. I turned away, annoyed, saying "Oh Nabil, you are so damn paranoid, it is not like they are going to invade your country all of a sudden."

but they did.

The kidnapping and exchange of prisoners has a long history up to the 1982 invasion of the Israeli into Lebanon. But this time, it seemed that Hezbollah clearly wanted to provoke Israel by kidnapping two soldiers on the 12th of July 2006. They must have felt that the new Prime Minister Olmert would respond differently concerning the exchange of kidnapped soldiers than his predecessors. Only two weeks earlier, Hamas had kidnapped an Israeli soldier and the IDF responded the 28th of June with an invasion in Gaza to recover the captured soldier.⁹⁶ The circumstances under which the three soldiers were killed and two others captured remains unclear. Israel claims the IDF soldiers were on Israeli territory, and Lebanon stated it was on Lebanese territory. Even Al Jazeera claims the attack was "cross border".⁹⁷ Other reports say the Israeli soldiers had inaccurate maps of the border region and accidentally crossed it. Hezbollah never made a statement on the place of the assault. The truth remains unknown, but it is a fact that some parts of the Israeli-Lebanese border are wide open, while other parts are closed and heavily guarded. Considering the lasting troubles between the two countries this is a very peculiar situation.

The Israeli government blamed the Lebanese authorities for the abduction and started a military operation. Ehud Olmert spoke of a Lebanese "act of war" and promised Lebanon a far reaching response. His Lebanese counterpart Fouad Siniora immediately responded, denying any knowledge of the raid. This was affirmed by parliament during an emergency meeting. But Israel still held the Lebanese government and people responsible for the abduction. In the next month of retaliation it focused on the destruction of civilian infrastructure and buildings in 'Operation Change of Direction'. This had been announced at the beginning of the conflict in different statements by army officials such as the IDF Chief of Staff Lt Gen Dan Halutz, responsible for the operation: "[i]f the soldiers are not returned, we will turn Lebanon's clock back 20 years."⁹⁸ These and other statements clearly suggested that the upcoming war would be against Lebanese civilians. From the first day it became obvious that this conflict was not going to be solved as quickly as the one two months earlier. The Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said they would only stop the operation "when rocket attacks on Israeli cities stop, when Israel's two abducted soldiers are released and

⁹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamas#_note-52, consulted 25th of August 2006

⁹⁷ <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/35772526-C1A8-4599-868C-E513C4F29C9B.htm>,
consulte 25th of August 2006

⁹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamas#_note-52, consulted 25th of August 2006

when Lebanon implements United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559, which calls for Hezbollah to be disarmed.”⁹⁹ While on the other hand Nasrallah stated on a press conference in Beirut:

“No military operation will return them [...]. The prisoners will not be returned except through one way: indirect negotiations and a trade.”¹⁰⁰

With these statements the situation reached an impasse, and the hostilities began with little hope for a quick ending. On the 12th of July Israel had already sent a small unit into Lebanon trying to free the prisoners, but had lost 5 soldiers in the attempt. Early in the morning of the 13th of July, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) sent jets to bomb the runway of Rafiq Hariri International Airport in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Israel announced they would isolate Lebanon with an air and sea blockade, and they targeted Southern Lebanon while Hezbollah fired ballistic rockets into the northern area of Israel. In the following days this pattern would repeat itself. Israel bombed bridges, all the major roads, the power stations and the port of Beirut, together with civilian areas where according to Israeli intelligence Hezbollah kept members hidden. The IAF bombed the headquarter of Hezbollah in the Southern suburbs of Beirut, the broadcast facilities of Hezbollah’s Al-Manar television channel and approximately 25 villages in the south up to 15 times, as well as all major cities, especially Baalbeck and Beirut. In return Hezbollah kept on firing rockets into Israel every day, reaching as far as Haifa. In statements, Nasrallah declared an open war with Israel on the 15th of July, while Iran threatened to actively interfere if Israel were to attack Syria. The reaction of the international community was almost non-existent. America and its allies were saying that Israel had the legitimate right to defend itself, while France stated that Israel’s reaction was disproportional. The United Nations were not able to agree on a joint statement, but Kofi Annan spoke about sending an international force to separate the fighting parties. The US then claimed to be trying to negotiate a “sustainable ceasefire”, saying it would take some time. Condoleeza Rice said the US were against the killing of civilians but called their suffering the “birth pangs of the new Middle East”¹⁰¹. In the meantime the US supplied Israel with precision-guided bombs:

“The Bush administration is rushing a delivery of precision-guided bombs to Israel, which requested the expedited shipment last week after beginning its air campaign against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, American officials said Friday.”¹⁰²

On the 19th of July the Israeli troops began their ground offensive, crossing the border at multiple points. They headed for the Litani river as they did 28 years before, but this time they did not advance as quickly and the Israeli troops encountered considerable resistance. The air force started to drop leaflets over the Southern villages, saying the inhabitants should leave their homes. It is estimated that already 100,000 people had fled to the capital, but the destroyed bridges and routes made it difficult for them to leave. On the 25th of July four soldiers of the UNIFIL were killed in the south of Lebanon by an Israeli air strike. The United Nations gathered in an emergency meeting but could not condemn the attack due to a veto of the US. Five days later the IAF launched an attack against the village of Qana, resulting in 28 dead and 13

⁹⁹ <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/35772526-C1A8-4599-868C-E513C4F29C9B.htm>, consulted 25th of August 2006

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.albawaba.com/en/countries/Palestine/200711>, consulted 25th of August 2006

¹⁰¹ <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/69331.htm>, consulted 25th of August 2006

¹⁰² TURMOIL IN THE MIDEAST: WEAPONS; U.S. Speeds Up Bomb Delivery For the Israelis In: <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FBOB10FC3F5B0C718EDDAE0894DE404482>, consulted 25th of August 2006

missing. Initially the number of casualties was reported to be 60 instead of 40, causing great international consternation. Israel said Hezbollah used human shields to hide their rocket launchings, claiming the dead civilians were “victims of Hezbollah”¹⁰³. But they apologized for the number of victims and especially for the high percentage of children. The IDF released footage from Hezbollah rocket launchers hiding in buildings, but these buildings were not identified as the ones targeted in Qana. Hezbollah continued to launch rockets into Israeli area. One day after the Israeli government announced they were close to break the resistance of Hezbollah, the organization launched 230 rockets, the maximum in one day.

By the beginning of August the different parties were talking about a UN Resolution and a ceasefire on their conditions. Nasrallah said in a speech on the 3th of August that if Israel stopped the air and artillery attacks on Lebanese villages and cities, Hezbollah would stop launching rockets into Israel. The IDF was heading towards the Litani river and gave a general message that they wanted to enlarge the conflict by calling another 30,000 reservists. But at the same time the Israeli government was giving signals that they were willing to accept a resolution and withdraw from Lebanon. The Lebanese government said on the 7th of August they would send 15,000 troops of the Lebanese Army to the south if Israel would withdraw its troops from the region. Six days later Hezbollah and Israel announced they would comply to a UN-backed ceasefire, and one day later the Lebanese and Israeli government approved the UN resolution. The ceasefire started on the 14th of August at 07:00 am local time, but not before some final clashes.

t e m p o r a r y b a l a n c e

In 33 days, approximately 1300 Lebanese were killed¹⁰⁴ and 3698 wounded¹⁰⁵. About one million people were displaced. Hezbollah admitted the death of 74 fighters while the IDF claims 500 Hezbollah fighters died. Also 4 UN soldiers and 2 UN civilians were killed during the air strikes. On the Israeli side, 119 Israeli soldiers were killed and about 400 wounded, while 44 civilians were killed and 381 wounded by rockets fired into Israeli territory. 500,000 Israeli citizens from the north moved south in fear for their lives. In Lebanon the physical damage is enormous. Some sources say 20,000 houses are destroyed, most of them in the south, in the Beka'a Valley and Baalbeck and the Southern suburbs of Beirut. 94 roads and 70 bridges were destroyed, and the three airports and four ports were bombed as well.

At the time when this conflict began in the middle of July, I was writing and reading about the two Israeli invasions during the civil war. Inevitably, I made a comparison between the current conflict and the invasions of 1978 – and to a lesser extent – ‘Operation Peace in Galilee’. But as the conflict evolved in July, there were some important differences. In 1978, the death of 37 Israeli civilians by Palestinian attacks on a bus in Haifa triggered “Operation Litani”, while in 1982 it was the assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London. Both invasions were preceded by several warnings of the Israeli government concerning attacks on Israelis, after which the invasions began. This time the kidnapping of two soldiers was the reason to invade Lebanon. The last attempt to kidnap soldiers had failed one year before and the last successful kidnapping was to my knowledge conducted 6 years ago. The most important difference, however, is the number of casualties on the Israeli side. In 1978, the invasion deployed 25,000 soldiers,

¹⁰³ Israeli ambassador of the UN Dan Gillerman In: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Qana_airstrike, consulted 25th of August 2006

¹⁰⁴ <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/fisk/article1219684.ece>, consulted the 20th of August 2006

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.lebanonmaps.org/>, consulted the 20th of August 2006

took 7 days and stopped at the Litani river. Only 20 Israeli soldiers were killed during this short operation. In 2006 however, it took the IDF more than a month to reach the Litani river with a force of 30,000 soldiers. The IDF lost 119 soldiers during this invasion. If you add the civilians casualties, there were over 8 times more Israeli casualties during the recent conflict than during the entire Operation Litani of 1978. The Hezbollah was obviously better prepared for an invasion than the Palestinian militias 28 years earlier. The international reactions were different in 1978 as well:

“A few days later, the United Nations Security Council passed resolutions 425 and 426, calling for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, removal of the militant Palestinian forces, and establishing an international peace-keeping force in southern Lebanon, the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL).”¹⁰⁶

The same United Nations needed 30 days this summer to draw up UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and negotiate a ceasefire. The international community also reacted differently, demanding the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops in any previous invasion. Now the United States and their allies supported Israel, stating it was a justified reaction. But the difference I want to focus on in remaining part of this thesis is the physical destruction. The 2006 operation of the IDF was mainly conducted from the air: 7000 targets were hit through air strikes and 2500 bombardments were conducted by the Israeli Sea Corps. More than 10,000 combat mission and 2000 helicopter combat missions were launched over Lebanon.¹⁰⁷ An F16 fighter can carry a maximum of 4 tons of bombs, an F15 jet 8 tons, while a helicopter shoots rockets of max one ton of explosives. Of course, a considerable amount of damage was brought upon the buildings and infrastructure of Israel, but in the following part I will focus solely on the destruction in Lebanon, since this is the subject of this thesis.

¹⁰⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Litani_River_Operation, consulted the 25th of August 2006

¹⁰⁷ <http://www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=EN&id=7&docid=56765.EN>, consulted the 25th of August 2006

part 4 | thinking about war.

The last shred of romance in my perception of the ruins of Beirut during my visit to Lebanon was erased on the 13th of July 2006. That night on television I saw the images of the Damascus Road and the Cola bridge bombed and destroyed. It appeared that it was not only the destruction of the streets and squares that changed the perception of the space, it was also the abruptness of the destruction that turned a familiar place overnight into something entirely different. For the Lebanese I talked to during and after the fights, there was an additional feeling that depressed and paralysed them. A feeling of desperation:

“If the French Revolution were to recur eternally, French historians would be less proud of Robespierre. But because they deal with something that will not return, the bloody years of the Revolution have turned into mere words, theories, and discussions, they have become lighter than feathers, frightening no one. There is an infinite difference between a Robespierre who occurs only once in history and a Robespierre who eternally returns, chopping off French heads.

Let us therefore agree that the idea of eternal return implicates a perspective from which things appear other than as we know them: they appear without the mitigating circumstance of their transitory nature. This mitigating circumstance prevents us from coming to a verdict. For how can we condemn something that is ephemeral, in transit? In the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine. [...]

If every second of our lives recurs an infinite number of times, we are nailed to eternity as Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross. It is a terrifying prospect. In the world of eternal return the weight of unbearable responsibility lies heavy on every move we make. That is why Nietzsche called the idea of eternal return the heaviest burdens (das schwerste Gewicht).¹⁰⁸

The civil war had always been regarded as an exception, as transitory. The present conflict changes this view. The repetition of violence renders the civil war into an eternally recycling event.

A | International law of armed conflict.

During the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict this summer, I started to rethink the possible uses of a term like urbicide. It is not only a concept that can be applied in theoretical discourses on architecture or political science, it is also a word that has the potential of having a juridical status. This is the very reason that a lot of scholars examine the term in the context of different conflicts. It is interesting to look at the possible uses in law. Urbicide is a term that starts from the result of a conflict, the ‘excessive and logic’ destruction. Through urbicide one can examine why and how this destruction happened, instead of describing an ideal course of events, or an ideal treatment of the built environment, like the present International Law.

It is obvious that something is wrong in the current use of the International law of armed conflicts. The United States along with their allies are inventing a whole new vocabulary to avoid the international rules on warfare. They claim that their ‘War on Terror’ is not a conventional war and therefore does not have to

¹⁰⁸

Kundera, Milan: The unbearable lightness of being. HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1999, p. 5-6

conform to the different conventions of Geneva. Their detainees are no fighters, no prisoners of war, they are terrorists and 'unlawful combatants'. The American Secretary of Defence Ronald Rumsfeld said:

“As I understand it, technically unlawful combatants do not have any rights under the Geneva Conventions.”¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, the detainees have been denied the rights to access to a lawyer, to challenge the legality of their detention,¹¹⁰ and to due process.”¹¹¹

Over the years, attempts have been made to set up rules for war situations, so that it would become possible for nations that claimed to be civilized, to engage in the 'barbarian' act of killing each other. The rules turned a war into 'a just war'. The first known rule was already set up by Charles the 7th of Orleans in 1439 when he held the officers responsible for the “the abuses, ills and offenses”¹¹² of their soldiers. In time, more rules were imposed by different leaders, but it was not until the first Convention of Geneva that different countries tried to agree upon some basic rules of conduct in war situations. Such rules for conduct in times of war were obviously not exclusive to the western world. Every different society has its own codes of behaviour. But the agreement to have common rules for different nations in wars where these nations might engage at different sides, is something that started in Europe with the first Geneva Convention, the Brussels Protocol and the second, third and fourth Geneva Convention. It is interesting to note that these regulations were often reactions to the Western experiences of war. The task of formulating international agreements was taken over by the United Nations and thus became universal. Now every conflict in the world is supposed to abide to these rules, but in reality none does. War is a concept. As a word it is not so easily defined, although we use it for every armed conflict. The United Nations made a clear definition to describe a war in contrast to an armed conflict. It has to obey to three rules: the participation of minimum one regular army, the existence of a logic continuation and a minimum of one thousands deaths a year resulting from the confrontations¹¹³:

“La guerre se déclarait, elle ne se déclare plus beaucoup. Les deux dernières à l'avoir été, la guerre de Corée et celle du Golfe – deux guerres en cinquante ans, peu de chose en vérité -, ont été autorisées par les Nations unies.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Whitlock, “Legal Limbo”, *supra* note 23. In: De Zayas, Alfred: *The status of Guantanamo Bay and the status of the detainees*. 2004 In:

<http://alfreddezayas.com/Lectures/GUANTANAMOlecture2.doc>, consulted the 25th of August 2006

¹¹⁰ This is particularly worrisome, bearing in mind that the U.S. Constitution specifically stipulates: “The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it” (U.S. Const. Art. I, § 9, cl. 2). The writ of *habeas corpus* has been suspended only twice in American history: during the American Civil War, and in Hawaii during the Second World War. In: De Zayas, Alfred: *The status of Guantanamo Bay and the status of the detainees*. 2004 In: <http://alfreddezayas.com/Lectures/GUANTANAMOlecture2.doc>, consulted the 25th of August 2006

¹¹¹ De Zayas, Alfred: *The status of Guantanamo Bay and the status of the detainees*. 2004 In: <http://alfreddezayas.com/Lectures/GUANTANAMOlecture2.doc>, consulted the 25th of August 2006

¹¹² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/war/conventions.shtml>, consulted the 28th of August 2006

¹¹³ Dufour, Jean-Louis: *La guerre, la ville et le soldat*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002, p.

14

¹¹⁴ Dufour, Jean-Louis: *La guerre, la ville et le soldat*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002, p.

14

It is clear that reality and theory have lost their correlation in this definition. The same happened with the Law of armed conflicts, which is mainly written for situations where two armies are fighting each other at a clearly defined front. But the wars of today do not have a clear frontline any longer. The division between soldiers and civilians has blurred, so the International Law is not adjusted to modern warfare. One clear example is the protection of civilian life during a conflict. Since the first Protocol of The Hague, the civilian lives are legally more protected than they were ever before, but if we look at the recent wars, civilian casualties have never been higher: While there were only 5% of the casualties civilians during the First World War, this number raised to 48% during the Second World War, 84% in the Korean War and 90% during the Second Vietnam War.¹¹⁵ The legal protection of recent times clearly fails to influence the way wars are fought.

But there is not only a regulation to protect civilians, there are laws concerning civilian infrastructure and buildings as well. The first attempt to protect historical buildings from war damage was made during the Brussels Declaration in 1874. This Protocol was never ratified, but it influenced the International Peace Conference of The Hague in 1899 and 1907:

“Its preamble recognizes that: cultural property has suffered grave damage during recent armed conflicts, and that, by reason of the developments in the technique of warfare, it is in increasing danger of destruction ... damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world.”¹¹⁶

Cultural property could not no longer be destroyed, except in case of military necessity. In the subsequent Conventions this protection was extended to all civilian goods. All property that is not a military objective, is by law a civilian good and is therefore forbidden to target. In the appendix of the Fourth Convention of Geneva, we find a prohibition to attack undefended cities and villages. Every civil property is placed under protection:

“Military objectives are limited to goods that make by nature, position, destination or use an actual contribution to the military operation. And their partial or total destruction, capture or de utilization would bring a clear military advantage under the circumstances of the moment.”¹¹⁷

There is still a degree of protection inscribed in the law because of the cultural or religious value of the building, because of its humanitarian destination, the potential danger to the civilian population or its

“War used to be declared, it is not always declared nowadays. The last two which have been declared, the Korean War and the Gulf War- two wars in 50 years, not very significant -, were authorized by the United Nations.”

¹¹⁵ *Recht der Gewapende Conflicten*. Kandidaat BM, Belgian Technical Training School of the Royal Air Force, p. 3

¹¹⁶ Toman, Jiri: *The Protection of Cultural Property*. In: Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 23

¹¹⁷ *Recht der Gewapende Conflicten*. Kandidaat BM, Belgian Technical Training School of the Royal Air Force, p. 31

importance to the survival of the population and the protection of the environment.¹¹⁸ But even this special protection can be elevated under “compelling military necessity”. So every rule in the International Law of Armed Conflicts has its exception, its loophole.

I am not pleading here for a tightening or a loosening of the international law, I am calling for a complete change. Every country in peace and every citizen in this country would agree to this law, because it is based on common moral justice. But if in reality it is impossible to enforce it on fighting parties, it has no practical use. Needless to say, the problem with the law lies in its application, in controlling the implementation of the International Law and the sentencing of violations. Not every conflict is investigated by an international court. The very beginning of such an investigation in The Hague leads to a certain conviction, and as a consequence only the actions of the “losers” in any conflict, those who denounce alliance with the world powers, are investigated and sentenced. The most famous examples of international convictions are the Nuremberg trials and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia:

“Sauf à user de son droit de légitime défense, la guerre est illégale. En 1945, les Nations unies l’ont interdite. Nul ne peut plus envahir un autre pays sans encourir le courroux de la communauté internationale. Dans le cas contraire, l’ONU ou d’autres associations d’Etats décrètent des sanctions éventuellement dévastatrices sur le plan militaire (cas de la Corée du Nord en 1950, de l’Irak en 1991, de la Serbie en 1999), économique (cas également de la Serbie en 1993-1994 et de sa catastrophique inflation), politique et diplomatique (cas de l’URSS après son intervention en Afghanistan en 1979). Certes, le système international n’est pas parfait et le gouvernement du monde demeure fort peu démocratique. Les membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité sont à la fois juges et parties, définissent, promettent eux-mêmes. Interdictions et punitions sont par ailleurs plus faciles à décider et à mettre en œuvre quand il s’agit d’un petit Etat. »¹¹⁹

Without a systematic investigation of all war and destruction, there can never be a serious international system of justice and every trial will stay a staged performance and a confirmation of the US global power. In this remodelling of International Law and its juridical organ, from an ideological based to a more practical based law, I think words as genocide and urbicide can have an important use. Instead of defining the ideal course of a ‘just war’, one can specify the excess. An international law based on prevention and punishment, is in my view more workable. The impotence of any law of warfare and any Rule of Engagement in this present conflict between Hezbollah and Israel has shown me the importance a definition of urbicide can have in the future.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 32

¹¹⁹ Dufour, Jean-Louis: *La guerre, la ville et le soldat*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002, p. 274

“With the exception of legitimate self-defence war is illegal. In 1945 The UN prohibited it. No one is able to invade another country without incurring the ire of the international community. When ignored the UNO or other associations of states will declare possibly devastating sanctions : military (North Korea in 1950, Iraq in 1991, Serbia in 1999), economic (also Serbia in 1993-1994 causing a catastrophic inflation), political and diplomatic (USSR after their intervention in Afghanistan in 1979). Certainly the international system is not without flaw and the government of the world remains barely democratic. The permanent members of the Security Council are judges and involved party at the same time. In addition to this prohibitions and punishments are much easier to decide and impose when dealing with smaller states”

B | war and the city.

Most authors attribute the fact that more wars are fought inside urban areas to the growing cities in the world and the fact that almost 50% of the world population lives in such cities. But it is not necessary that people fight in the same areas that they live in. Most of the wars were fought far away from these areas and even most of the guerrilla fighters in South America left their homes to fight in the mountains or countryside. But with the technology and weapons of today the world's best-equipped army, the United States military, has established what they call a full spectrum dominance on virtually every terrain, except inside the city:

“Full-spectrum dominance is the proposed ability of United States armed forces, operating alone or with allies, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the range of military operations.”¹²⁰

Since in most cases the defender chooses the location of the confrontation, it is only normal that any militia that opposes a better equipped or larger army would choose an urban environment as a battle ground because “Cities present the ultimate asymmetric advantage to a low-tech adversary by largely negating the strengths of US military power.”¹²¹

« De tous les milieux où le soldat doit remplir sa tâche, le terrain urbain est le plus compliqué. Alors qu'une vaste plaine présente peu ou prou, à conditions climatiques équivalentes, les mêmes caractéristiques, alors que le forêt dense, les déserts, les marécages sont à peu près les mêmes partout sur la terre, aucune ville n'est semblable à une autre. »¹²²

As in a dense forest, the distances in a city are very short. One can only see as far as the next wall, but unlike a forest the structure of a city is less predictable. It is very important to know the city one is fighting in, not only its streets and buildings but also the people, the lives and habits and the spirit of a city.¹²³ The knowledge of the complex terrain is an immense advantage the local fighter has over the ones attacking the city:

“In cities the red zone – the space separating friendly from enemy forces – compresses. The zone is often thousands of meters in open battle, but only tens of meters in the urban maze

¹²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full_spectrum_dominance, consulted the 25th of August 2006

¹²¹ Nastoupil, Josef: *Urban fighting*. In: http://66.249.93.104/search?q=cache:cVmRRLOCLPAJ:194.50.64.66/avis/vojenske_rozhledy/anotace/anotace2000.doc+%22Cities+present+the+ultimate+asymmetric%22&hl=nl&gl=be&ct=clnk&cd=1, consulted the 25th of August 2006

¹²² Dufour, Jean-Louis: *La guerre, la ville et le soldat*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002, p. 37

“Of all the territories where soldiers have to perform their tasks, the urban space is the most complex. Every vast plain has more or less the same characteristics with similar climatic conditions. Dense woods, the desert, marshes are more or less the same everywhere in the world, but not one city resembles another.”

¹²³ Ibid.

of densely aggregated buildings, streets and black alleys. The traditional advantages of fighting outside the red zone disappear as cities compel soldiers to fight the enemy close.”¹²⁴

Because of the closer distances, far ranging technologies of a modern army cannot be used when fighting in an urban area. So the battle relies more on the old warfare techniques and on the determination of the fighter and less on new technologies. Because of this close-in fighting it is almost impossible for the modern army to effectively support the soldiers with heavier artillery. The precision bombs are not precise enough to assist while the infantry is inside the urban area, not because of the margin of error of their place of impact, but because of the strength of the blast. Similarly, tanks are more difficult to deploy in an urban area. Because the close range reduces the firing power of a tank, it becomes a rather slow device that has to be escorted every time by artillery.¹²⁵ The reduction of view also reduces the reaction time of the soldiers. An urban fight can quickly change from very low to extremely high intensity and rapid fighting.

Urban operations demand a large number of infantry in a highly lethal environment. The CETO (Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities) estimates that casualties reach up to 30% in urban combat.¹²⁶ The Western armies have tried to reduce the number of casualties in classical warfare by focusing more on fast-moving armoured warfare, like air and tank divisions. In the US army the infantry takes up only 5%, but in an urban environment this is the appropriate unit.

War in a city is war in three dimensions. The soldiers not only move on ground level, but also in basements and sewer systems below the ground. They have to move rapidly on stairs and attack from roofs. George Prosser summarizes the tactics of urban warfare into three fundamental principles:

- “1. No other type of terrain is either so open or so close. In every street there are coverless stretches, ideal fields of fire, deathtraps to the unwary attackers. Bordering every street are a hundred possible ambush positions.
2. It is possible to climb 30, 50, perhaps 100 feet in as many seconds. Street fighting this possesses a third dimension, not often present in field warfare.
3. Cities present exceptionally blind and disjointed conditions. In no other form of warfare are there such narrow horizons, or such ruthless division between units of the same force.”¹²⁷

The fragmentation of the urban territory also further complicates the already difficult communication between groups of soldiers. In urban warfare every soldier has a greater autonomy and responsibility than in traditional warfare. Urban areas are considered “dirty” environments because the different borders disrupt the communication lines and the nonmilitary devices interfere with the thermal, magnetic and

¹²⁴ Scales, Mj. Gen. Robert H.: *Urban Warfare: A Soldier's View*. In: *Military review*. volume LXXXV nr.1 (jan/feb), 2005, p. 9

¹²⁵ Elhefnawy, Nader: *Defensive Armor Deployments in Urban Areas*. In: *Armor*. volume CXII nr.1 (jan/feb), 2003, p. 15

¹²⁶ Burger, Kim: *US Urban Warfare: Fighting in the streets*. In: *Jane's defence weekly*. volume 38 nr 21 (20/nov), 2002, p. 24

¹²⁷ Prosser, George: *Terror in the United States: "an introduction to elementary tactics" and "some questions on tactics"*. In: Mallin, Jay (ed.): *Terror and urban guerrillas. A study of Tactics and Documents*. University of Miami Press, Florida, 1982, p. 56

electromagnetic signals.¹²⁸ To overcome these problems the biggest modern armies put a lot of money in research to develop technologies that will give the western soldier again the military predominance they have outside the city, with the development of robots, hand held sensors, vision equipment and so forth. But with all this technology and information there is a risk that the future urban fighter will become task saturated which leads to the most simple mistakes. So the full-spectrum dominance of the US Army on every terrain will not happen overnight, as the regular armies of today still have major problems of obtaining the most basic equipment to fight in a city, like accurate maps.

Avoiding the city.

In general, armies fear the city and this is the reason why they will always attempt to avoid a close contact urban combat. For the last 50 years, almost every fight over a city was started by an intensive bombing campaign of the territory preceding the invasion. This was what the Israeli air force did when they sieged West Beirut in 1982, it is what the Russians did in both attacks on the city of Grozny, the allied forces bombed cities in the Balkans, the Americans bombed every city in their War on Terror before invading with infantry and so on. One Russian soldier expressed his fears for entering Grozny, saying he would not enter the city before every building was destroyed.¹²⁹ But according to military research this has little impact on the enemy forces hiding in the urban environment. Bombing gives an illusion of fighting and winning an urban war, but in reality it only destroys:

“While assuming the capability of airpower that can go virtually anywhere and destroy anything that can be seen with precision-guided munitions, scholar Daryl Press argues, static, defensively situated forces are relatively immune to air attack for a number of reasons. One reason is they place lower demands on logistics, and communications and control systems. Because they consume fewer supplies, they suffer less from communication loss, particularly if they had the opportunity to accumulate supplies in theater beforehand.”¹³⁰

So a city requires close-in combat and heavy bombing does not win an urban war. Even worse, in most cases it has a negative effect on the attacking army, as the ruins will only increase the possibilities of the enemy force to hide and ambush the invading troops. At the same time the destruction makes the urban terrain more complex and renders maps useless. So the attacking soldier will in fact be more lost in the devastated environment. The only people who really suffer from these bombardments are the civilians, due to poorer cover and less supplies. So aerial bombing in preparation to attack an urban environment has little military use and high civilian casualties. It can be partially explained by a reluctance to enter and fight inside the city, especially in those cases where the army never even physically enters the city, like the allied forces in the Serbian campaign or the IDF in the latest bombing of Beirut this summer. An argument for such bombing campaigns can be the strategy to frighten the urban fighters and civilians through the threat of the bombs and large scale destruction. This is called moral bombing. It was a common practice during the Second World War. The idea was that one could break the morale of the enemy with massive bombing,

¹²⁸ Elhefnawy, Nader: *Defensive Armor Deployments in Urban Areas*. In: *Armor*. volume CXII nr.1 (jan/feb), 2003, p. 15

¹²⁹ Thomas, Lt. Gen. Timothy L.: *Grozny 2000: Urban Combat Lessons Learned*. In: *Military Review*. volume LXXX nr.4 (Jul/Aug), 2000, p. 51

¹³⁰ Elhefnawy, Nader: *Defensive Armor Deployments in Urban Areas*. In: *Armor*. volume CXII nr.1 (jan/feb), 2003, p. 15

causing them to surrender sooner. Today however, this is forbidden by international law, because it takes too many lives of non-combatants. Additionally, studies have pointed out that moral bombing will never result in a quicker surrender of the enemy forces:

“This description [of the life in a destroyed city], and the nightly treks to the countryside safety, certainly suggest some level of fear and demoralization, and the attack on Germany to come were to be much worse. There is no evidence though, from either side of the North Sea, that this demoralization led to defeatism or in anyway affected the outcome of the war despite the devastation caused.”¹³¹

It might even have the opposite effect, since the resistance becomes stronger when people are confronted to the destruction brought upon their cities. So rationally, there is no purpose in bombing cities before engaging in an urban war. Still, it remains the most common tactic in warfare. I will not argue that any attack in an urban environment from the air is useless. The destruction of high rise buildings as potential sniper positions for example can have a clear military purpose. But this concerns the specific destruction of particular places in preparation of the physical entry of the army in the city. It is not the systematic targeting of the urban fabric as we have witnessed in Lebanon this summer. The best example of the effect of continuing bombing is the very experience of the IDF in West Beirut in the summer of 1982. The Palestinian fighters, as a foreign force who were not as emotionally attached to the city as the Lebanese, retreated from Beirut under the threat of a military invasion by Israel (not necessarily under the threat of the continuous shelling). But when the IDF entered, the Lebanese resistance resorted to hit and run actions, an average of one every five hours, which ultimately led to the retreat of the Israeli a few days later.

And here we arrive at the last and most difficult problem in urban combat, the overwhelming presence of non-combatants in the battle arena. Although in theory civilian lives are always protected, the reality tells a different story:

“In the past, the question of civilian casualties was rarely a consideration in urban warfare. Even in allied states – such as France in 1944, the Philippines in 1945 and South Vietnam in 1968 – Western commanders (if reluctantly) ignored civilian losses almost entirely in favor of minimizing troop fatalities and achieving a rapid victory. [...] The need to limit non-military losses was also quickly forgotten by US forces in Mogadishu in 1993 when they came under heavy attack. As a result, at least 500 civilians died, compared to 18 US soldiers, a ratio of some 30:1.”¹³²

Although civilian casualties may not stop a soldier from fighting while under fire, the images of the dead bodies of ‘women and children’ in the media weigh heavily on the public opinion, causing in some cases the accelerated retreat of the troops and a victory of the urban guerrilla. Today modern armies try to react to this by keeping journalists away and fighting a so-called “war of propaganda”.¹³³

¹³¹ Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 76

¹³² The future of urban warfare. A challenge for the US armed Forces. In: *Strategic Comments*. volume 5 nr.2 (Mar), 1999, p. 2

¹³³ Thomas, Lt. Gen. Timothy L.: *Grozny 2000: Urban Combat Lessons Learned*. In: *Military Review*. volume LXXX nr.4 (Jul/Aug), 2000, p. 52

C | the southern suburbs of Beirut.

When on the 12th of July 2006 Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers, the Israeli government blamed the Lebanese government for the attack, which they called an “act of war”. As we have seen, starting a war is illegal except when exercising the right to defend oneself, precisely what Israel, with the support of the US, called upon when they invaded Lebanon. This does not give Israel the right to act on their own discretion. According to the International Law an army should comply to certain restraints, for instance to the Principle of Proportionality. Whether or not they did this is a question that exceeds the scope of this thesis. During the two previous invasions in 1978 and 1982, Israel had used the same strategy to blame the Lebanese people for the acts of an armed militia, in that case the Palestinian fighters. There are two different grounds for this strategy today. First of all, the military wing of the Hezbollah is an underground organization (as was the PLO during the civil war). It is an organization very much protected against informants, so the IDF has a very difficult job targeting Hezbollah directly. By targeting civilian infrastructure they hope the Lebanese population will turn against Hezbollah, blaming them for the destruction. This partially worked during the civil war when some Shia civilians did not embrace the arrival of PLO fighters because this would mean their village would be targeted and destroyed by the Israeli Defense Force. However, neither did this contribute to a more positive image of the IDF troops or evoke an active resistance against the PLO. This time the situation is entirely different because the Hezbollah is a native organization of the targeted Shia population and is viewed as their defenders instead of an outside militia that drags in trouble with their presence.

If we look at the patterns of destruction during the 33 days long bombing campaign of the IAF, we can distinguish three main groups of targets. First of all, the destruction focused on the Lebanese infrastructure. The amount of damage to roads, airports, ports, electricity and water network suggests this destruction was systematic. When the Israeli government stated that these roads, bridges, airports and ports were used for military purposes such as supplying Hezbollah with arms, they used the loophole in the International Law for protection of civilian infrastructure. However, by installing a sea blockade with battle ships along the coast of Lebanon and an air blockade with the control of the Lebanese airspace with their F16 and F15 jets, the additional destruction of the ports and airports which had already been paralyzed by the blockade, was unnecessary from a military point of view. Also the bombing of the roads were largely exaggerated, as it is very likely Hezbollah knew what to expect and had made preparatory provisions of rockets and arms. During the entire bombing campaign there was no evidence that the IDF ever bombed or intercepted a truck that was transporting rockets.

The second target was the large and small scale industries of Lebanon. The Lebanese governments estimates that the unemployment rate in the country is currently around 75 percent, because of the closure of damaged factories and stores:

“The production facilities of companies in key industrial sectors, including Liban Lait in Baalbak, the country’s largest dairy farm; the Maliban glass works in Ta’neil, Zahleh; the Sada al-Din plastics factory in Tyre; the Fine tissue paper mill in Kafr Jara, Sidon; the Tabara pharmaceutical plant in Showeifat, Aaliyah; the Transmed shipping warehouse on the outskirts of Beirut; and the Snow lumbermill in Showeifat, Aaliyah, have been disabled or completely destroyed. Industry minister Pierre Gemayel said that nearly two thirds of the

industrial sector had been damaged, and at least 23 large factories and dozens of small and medium-sized factories had been bombed."¹³⁴

The third tendency in the bombing campaign was the targeting of residential areas of the Shia community. As I have pointed out before it is very difficult for a regular army as the IDF to fight against a militia such as Hezbollah. I have also argued that it is impossible to hurt this militia only through aerial bombing. Consequently the destruction focused on the social and political institutions of the organization which are mainly located in the targeted areas: the South of Beirut, the South of Lebanon and the Beka'a Valley. If the Israeli government sought to pressure the Lebanese population, then they were being highly selective in only targeting the Shia community, the community represented by the Hezbollah.

In their official statements the Israeli government and the leaders of the IDF never really concealed the fact that they were targeting the Lebanese civilian population. To justify the wide scale attack on civilian areas and the high number of civilian casualties, they stated that Hezbollah was using the civilian population as "human shields", but in other statements they talked openly about punishing the Lebanese people for allowing Hezbollah to attack Israel. Especially the Chief of Staff of the IDF gave some warnings for the population of Lebanon during the first days of the attack:

"[i]f the soldiers are not returned, we will turn Lebanon's clock back 20 years."¹³⁵

With this threat he put pressure on the civilians of Lebanon, promising them the large scale destruction of their facilities. He was not addressing the abductors of the Hezbollah. In the statement he made on the 24th of July 2006, he went further:

"Army chief of staff Dan Halutz has given the order to the air force to destroy 10 multi-storey buildings in the Dahaya district (of Beirut) in response to every rocket fired on Haifa."¹³⁶

And the Israeli Air Force confirmed that day that they had indeed destroyed ten multi-storey buildings in the southern suburbs of Beirut. So it is clear that buildings with no military purpose have been destroyed from the air. On the 19th of July the IAF tried to kill Nasrallah in the Southern suburbs of Beirut, dropping 23 ton of bombs on a single target. One ton will destroy one house if the target is fully hit. This is an enormous amount of explosives that exceeds the military goal. The normal procedure for killing individuals with precision ammunitions is the use of the lightest bomb available and to trace and aim for the target as accurately as possible. New technologies and researches on these techniques focus on the production of much smaller bombs, instead of larger ones. Nasrallah was no longer in the building or in the immediate environment when the bombs were dropped. The effort the IAF goes through and the scale of destruction they bring without any military advantage certainly suggest that the IDF violated the

¹³⁴ Israel/Lebanon. Deliberate destruction or "collateral damage"? Israeli attacks on civilian infrastructure. the 23rd of August 2006, In:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engMDE020182006>, consulted the 26th of August 2006

¹³⁵ Labott, Elise: *Israel authorizes 'severe' response on abductions*. 12th of July 2006. In: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/07/12/mideast/index.html>, consulted the 20th of July 2006

¹³⁶ *10 buildings for each rocket*. 24th of July 2006, In: <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/285B14DF-5EE4-4733-ACB4-F2EE55F3E0BA.htm>, consulted the 20th of August 2006

International Law of Warfare. It also brings us back to the concept of urbicide as I have defined it in the previous chapters.

As argued above, urbicide is characterized by the excessive and logic destruction of buildings and public places as an attack on the living environment of a certain group, or to destroy a political forum. I believe that in the southern suburbs of Beirut the IAF first targeted the political space of Hezbollah when they destroyed their headquarters and the entire neighbourhood surrounding them. This developed into an aerial attack of all Shia property in cities and villages. This means the special focus on the destruction of the goods of one religious community. As the conflict evolved this destruction assumed such proportions that the “buildings became the enemy”:

After a few weeks some areas in the southern suburbs that were targeted regularly had become so dangerous that all the inhabitants were evacuated. This was mainly organized by Hezbollah itself and people were not authorized to enter these zones, to prevent accidents and looting. This reminded me of the story of Themistocles who evacuated the city of Athens during a war with the Persian army:

« Le guerre en ville demeure longtemps exceptionnelle, parfois même rejetée avec fureur. Lors des guerres médiques, des villes sont évacuées afin d'être certain de ne pas s'y battre. Pour affronter les Perses commandés par Xerxès, le fils de Darius, mort en 485 avant J.-C., Thémistocle choisit de vider Athènes de ses habitants au lieu de la défendre. »¹³⁷

While in Athens this prevented any destruction to the urban fabric, in Beirut the IAF kept on bombing the residential areas, disregarding the fact that they were (almost) completely empty. This is urbicide.

¹³⁷ Dufour, Jean-Louis: *La guerre, la ville et le soldat*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002, p. 58

“Wars inside the city remained an exception for a long time. Sometimes they were even furiously rejected. During the Persian wars entire cities were evacuated just to make sure no fights would take place inside the cities. To face the Persians under leadership of Xerxes, Darius’ son, dead in 485 BC, Thémistocle chose to empty Athens of its inhabitants instead of defending it.”

t h a n k s

First I would like to thank Nabil Menhem and Pascal Tarabay for giving me work in their office, Flat. Nabil, I also would like to thank you for showing me around in your country and inviting me to a family dinner on Eastern. The next person I would like to thank is Rita Mouzanar, not only for being a fantastic colleague, but also for dragging me everywhere, particularly to the swimming pool in the hills and escorting me during every supermarket visit. Obvious tasks become real obstacles in a strange city. Thank you Rabih Khalifé for making me laugh at work from behind the computer, and thank you Antoine Soued for making everybody else laugh with me at work, Ghenwa Ghanem for the delicious dinner in your restaurant and my other colleagues Joseph Barakat, Christie Bassil, Lauren Kassouf, Nadine Rasheed, Rita Stephan and Ziad Azar for the continuous help and the guided tours in the nightlife of Beirut.

Thank you Rani Rajji and Ismael Hassan for stralling around with me in Beirut, the overall company and the severe critics.

Thanks to my promoters and readers Bruno De Meulder and Lieven De Cauter, Hilde Heynen for support, to Nurhan Abu-Jidi for the numerous books and articles you gave me.

Thank you Kristof Cloetens for spoiling me and for the two visits to Lebanon and Philip Marnef for giving me numerous nervous breakdowns while correcting this thesis. And thank you Ellen Van Huffel for translating the French quotes into English.

Bibliography

Books

Abirached, Zeina: *Catharsis, Beyrouth*. Imprimerie Naccache, 2002

Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life..* Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998

Agamben, Giorgio: *State of Exception*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005

Baumann, Bommi: *Terror of Love? The personal account of a West German urban geurilla*. John Calder, London, 1979

Bevan, Robert: *The Destruction of Memory*. Reaktion Books, London, 2006

Burton, Anthony M.: *Urban Terrorism. Theory, practices and responses*. Leo Cooper, London, 1975

CDR : *Habitat - Evaluation des dommages, etude financière et juridique*. Commission de L'union Européenne, aout 1995

CDR : *Habitat - Evaluation des dommages, Synthèse et Analyse*. Commission de L'union Européenne, mars 1996

Chassaigne, Philippe ; Largeaud, Jean-Marc : *Villes en Guerre*. Armand Colin, Paris, 2004

Crow, Dennis (ed.): *Geography and Identity*. Washington 1996

Dufour, Jean-Louis : *La guerre, la ville et le soldat*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002

Fisk, Robert: *Pity the nation: Lebanon at war*. André Deutsch Limited, London, 1990

Graham, Stephen (ed.) : *Cities, War and Terrorism. Towards Urban Geopolitics*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004

Hauben, Theo; Vermeulen, Marco: *Fear and Space. The View of Young Designers in the Netherlands*. Nai Publishers, Rotterdam, 2004

Hitti, Philip K.: *History of Syria. Including Lebanon and Palestine*. Macmillan&co Ltd., London, 1951

Hollier, Denis: *Against Architecture. The Writings of Georges Bataille*. MIT Press, London, 1992

Huybrechts, Eric: *Des Quartiers de l'ancienne ligne des combats de Beyrouth et sa proche banlieu*. CDR-IAURIF, Schéma d'Aménagement pour la Reconstruction I et II., 1991

Kasparian, Robert; Beaudoin, André; Abou, Sélim: *La population déplacée par la Guerre au Liban*. Editions L'Harmattan, Paris, 1995

- Kouyoumdjian, Zaven: *Lebanon. Shot Twice*. Printing and publishing Chamas, Beirut, 2003
- Kundera, Milan: *The unbearable lightness of being*. HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1999
- Mallin, Jay: *Terror and Urban Guerrillas. A Study of Tactics and Documents*. University of Miami Press, Florida, 1971
- Moss, Robert : *Urban Guerrilla Warfare*. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1971
- Niezing, Johan (ed.) : *Urban Guerilla. Studies on the theory, strategy and practice of political violence in modern societies*. Universitaire pers, Rotterdam, 1974
- Recht Gewapende Conflicten, Kandidaat BM: Koninklijke Militaire School, Directie Militair Onderricht
- Sarkis, Jean: *Histoire de la guerre de Liban*. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1993
- Schneider, Jane ; Susser, Ida : *Wounded Cities. Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World*. Berg Publishers, Oxford, 2003
- Shaw, Martin: Genocide as a form of war. Second chapter of book War and Genocide. Polity 2003
- Shultz, George: US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs. Uitgeverij door/bij, 1983
- Solidere: *Annual Report 2004*
- Tabet, Jade (ed.) : *Beyrouth. La brûlure des rêves*. Editions Autrement, Paris, 2001
- Van der Leeuw, Charles: *De vermoorde onschuld*. Uitgeverij KRITAK, Leuven, 1990
- Vidler, Anthony: *Warped Space. Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. The MIT press, London, 2001
- Virilio, Paul: *Ville Panique. Ailleurs commence ici*. Editions Galilée, 2004
- Virilio, Paul: *War and Cinema. The Logistics of Perception*. Verso Publishers, 1989
- Vocke, Harald: *The Lebanese War: its origins and political dimensions*. Hurst, London, 1978
- Zizek, Slavoj: *Welcome to the desert of the real*. Verso, London, 2002

Articles

10th Joint Doctoral Seminar in History and Theory of Architecture. Heverlee, 5th of May 2006

Berman, Marshall: *Among the ruins*. New Internationalist, issue 178, dec 1987 In: <http://www.viewint.org/issue/178/among.htm>

- Burger, Kim: *US Urban Warfare: Fighting in the streets*. In: *Jane's defence weekly*. volume 38 nr 21 (20/nov), 2002
- Coward, Martin: *Community as heterogeneous ensemble: Mostar and multiculturalism*. In: <http://www.isanet.org/archive/coward.html>
- Davie, Michael F: *"Beyrouth-Est" et "Beyrouth-Ouest": territoires confessionnels ou espaces de guerre?* URBAMA, 1997
- Davie, Michael F: *A Post-War Urban Geography of Beirut*. Abstract for the EURAMES Conference, Warwick, 1993
- De Zayas, Alfred: *The status of Guantanamo Bay and the status of the detainees*. 2004 In: <http://alfreddezayas.com/Lectures/GUANTANAMOlecture2.doc>
- Elhefnawy, Nader: *Defensive Armor Deployments in Urban Areas*. In: *Armor*. volume CXII nr.1 (jan/feb), 2003
- Grubbs, L.K.: *In Search for a Joint Urban Operational Concept*. In: Cdrom 298 (2003)
- Hitti, Philip K.: *History of Syria. Including Lebanon and Palestine*. quoted in Beggiani, Seeley: *Aspects of Maronite History (part 10): The 19th century*. In: <http://www.stmaron.org/marhist10.html>
- Hollis, P.S.: *Second Battle of Fallujah. Urban Operations in a new kind of war*. In: *Field Artillery*; (mar/apr/2006)
- Hollis, P.S.: *The 1st Cav in Baghdad. Counterinsurgency EBO in Dense Urban Terrain*. In: *Field Artillery*; (sep/oct/2005)
- Labott, Elise: *Israel authorizes 'severe' response on abductions*. 12th of July 2006. In: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/07/12/mideast/index.html>
- Lemkin, Raphael: *Genocide as a crime under International Law*. 1944 In: <http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/ASIL1947.htm>
- Marques: *Guerrilla Warfare Tactics in Urban Environments*. In: Cdrom 298 (2003)
- Moore, J.C.: *Sadr City: The armor pure assault in urban terrain*. In: *Armor*; volume CXIII nr 6 (nov/dec/2004)
- Møystad, Ole: *Morphogenesis of the Beirut green-line: Theoretical Approaches between Architecture and Geography*. June 1999
- Scales, Mj. Gen. Robert H.: *Urban Warfare: A Soldier's View*. In: *Military review*. volume LXXXV nr.1 (jan/feb), 2005
- Scales, R.H.: *Urban Warfare: a Soldier's View*. In: *Military Review*; volume LXXXV nr 1 (jan/feb/2005)
- Shatz, Adam: *In Search of Hezbollah*. *New York Review of Books*, April 29, 2004 In: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/17060>

Sun Tzu: *The art of War*. Chapter 3. In: <http://www.sonshi.com/sun3.html>

The future of urban warfare. A challenge for the US armed Forces. In: *Strategic Comments*. volume 5 nr.2 (Mar), 1999

Thomas, Lt. Gen. Timothy L.: Grozny 2000: Urban Combat Lessons Learned. In: *Military Review*. volume LXXX nr.4 (Jul/Aug), 2000

Internet sites

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/middle_east/710645.stm

<http://www.albawaba.com/en/countries/Palestine/200711>

<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/69331.htm>

<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB0B10FC3F5B0C718EDDAE0894DE404482>

<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/fisk/article1219684.ece>

<http://www.lebanonmaps.org/>

<http://www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=EN&id=7&docid=56765.EN>

<http://www.cbc.ca/story/canada/national/2004/09/17/conwestterrorist040917.html>

<http://www.cbcwatch.ca/>

http://www.bbcgovernors.co.uk/docs/reviews/israelipalestiniangovernors_statement.pdf

<http://secure.britannica.com/>

<http://www.geography.dur.ac.uk/conf/urbicideworkshop/Overview/tabid/866/Default.aspx>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

<http://english.aljazeera.net/>

<http://web.amnesty.org/>