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ARMIES ARE BACK IN TOWN

URBAN WARFARE AND THE URBANIZATION OF VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1980's, a worldwide urbanization process has lead to the drastic rise in both the number of metropolises and their spatial imprint. Along with their generalization, inequalities and low intensity violence have both intensified. In some contexts such as Brazil or Mexico, their extent questions the traditional divide between a conventional and external use of military forces and their intervention in so called "internal wars". Far from being a passive context of engagement, metropolises have become both epicenters of social violence, warfare targets and leveling environments for the military. Drawing from its experience in urban battles in recent years and flowing several regular armies, the French military has incorporated urban combat into its doctrines in an attempt to avoid the tactical trap metropolises represent. This research paper delineates these evolutions as well as their implications for military functions in several countries.

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION[1]

In their article "Military operations and urban planning", researchers Eyal Weizman and Phil Misselwitz point to the major transformation that took place in the middle of the twentieth century, when "the battlefield shifted from the open field to the city walls, to the interior of the city, to the point of becoming a battle for the city itself."[2] By highlighting this evolution, the two researchers specify that urban spaces are inevitable in recent and future forms of conflict. Their observation is now widely shared, so that it has become a common theme in military strategy forecasting.

However, a problem remains, which has to do precisely with the division of scientific fields into strategic thinking and social sciences. Studies in international relations, foreign policy and military strategy focus on symmetrical or asymmetrical conflicts in their own geopolitical contexts, most often on an international scale. On the other hand, social sciences, particularly geography, explore the political construction of cities in Western countries and its intersections with security policies. These two fields generally remain separate and thus deprive themselves of fruitful cross-fertilization, both in terms of the construction of research objects and the scales of analysis. For a long time, this division has meant the quasi-supremacy of linear factors determining international and urban conflicts.

This research paper intends to analyze the security implications of a worldwide urbanization process, by making two observations: firstly, the generalization of the urbanization process, defined as the extension to almost the entire planet of practices and representations emanating from urban populations, as opposed to a classic vision of the delimited city;[3] secondly, the transformation of urbanization since the 1980s, called metropolization, and the development of socially fragmented "global cities."[4] Metropolization encapsulates one of the political consequences of the transformations of the global economy, as metropolises become major producers of financial capital surpluses and places of competition for the appropriation of resources. These characteristics make them privileged contexts for the expression of violence. Taking this into account, French military strategy has incorporated the urban terrain in its doctrine: securitizing[5] a city from the predation of local armed groups, or a metropolis from an environmental disaster implies specific knowledge, and an acute understanding of metropolitan socio-spatial dynamics. This paper aims to go beyond the analysis of conflicts in the city to the analysis of conflict and the security responses that metropolization entails. This allows us to move away from an interpretation of the city as

1. This research paper is a preliminary version of a forthcoming book untitled *Prodromes, les promesses de la guerre*, edited by Edouard Jolly.

2. E. Weizman and P. Misselwitz, 2003, "Military operations and urban planning," *Mute*, URL: https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/military-operations-urban-planning, accessed August 25th, 2021.

3. Y. Chalas, 2000, *L'invention de la ville*, Paperback. This observation leads Yves Chalas to speak of the end of cities, replaced by continuous urban spaces. Of course, the administrative city does exist, but the space over which these cities have influence, either in terms of population mobility, capital or *soft power*, goes far beyond administrative limits. In this sense, we can say that cities produce an urbanized space of which they are the center.

4. Global cities are defined by Saskia Sassen in her 2001 book, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, as financial centers that have a worldwide influences.

5. S. Graham, 2010, "Laboratories of War: United States-Israeli Collaboration in Urban War and Securitization," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 17(1), 35–51.

a passive context of engagement. This paper therefore proposes to understand how the metropolis has become a privileged context for the expression of violence and the appropriation of resources by actors who challenge the legitimacy of the State, and delineates how military strategy has integrated the metropolis into its doctrines.

In order to understand how metropolises are becoming unequal and privileged contexts for forms of violent predation it first examines the urbanization of violence process. It then seeks to return to the construction of the city as a strategic object and as a tactical constraint by the French army. It seeks to understand how changes in the forms of urban conflict have transformed the operational preparation of soldiers and their understanding of urban conflicts.

THE METROPOLIZATION OF WAR: A GENERALIZATION OF LOW INTENSITY VIOLENCE

Since the 1980s and the generalization of economic policies driven by the Washington Consensus[6] on the one hand, and the disintegration of the major geopolitical blocs on the other, traditional geopolitical categories have been transformed, affecting, notably, urban areas. These transformations have led to the emergence of a number of intermediary actors entering into widespread competition for the appropriation of resources: material (raw materials), economic (financial capital) or symbolic (political influence). At the same time, an intensification of criminal violence linked to banditry, drug trafficking or human trafficking, affects many weakened States, which tend to use their armies as a last resort. In France, the use of the army on the national territory is strictly regulated through the "4i's" rule[7] which stipulates that Civil authorities can only call in the army in the case of "inadequacy, unavailability, insufficiency or non-existence of civilian means." While it is rarely called up on national territory in the case of France, this line seems to have been crossed in several contexts.

The case of Brazil is certainly the most prolific in terms of research and scientific publications,[8] as the increase in gun crime has skyrocketed. In his book *The Future of War*, Lawrence Freedman, Professor of War Studies at King's College London, stated that

> It has become reasonable to ask whether the more ferocious forms of gang warfare, hidden from view in the slums of modern mega-cities, should now count as armed conflict […]. In an examination of the situation in Rio de Janeiro in early 2017 Robert Muggah asked

6. The term "Washington Consensus" refers to a set of economic transformations imposed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the U.S. Treasury Department since the late 1980s. It includes "structural adjustment programs" for countries that would like to benefit from financial aid for development.

7. Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale, *Instruction interministérielle relative à l'engagement des armées sur le territoire national lorsqu'elles interviennent sur réquisition de l'autorité civile*, N°10100/SGDSN/PSE/PSN/NP, November 14, 2017.

8. For example, one can refer to M. Misse, 2006, *Crime e violência no Brasil contemporâneo. Estudos de sociologia do crime e da violência urbana,* Rio de Janeiro: Lumen Juris; M. Nery *et al.*, 2014, "Homicídios dolosos na cidade de São Paulo: fatores associados à queda entre 2000 e 2010," *Revista brasileira de segurança pública*, 8(2), 32-47, or G. Feltran, 2012, "Governo que produz crime, crime que produz governo: o dispositivo de gestão do homicídio em São Paulo (1992-2011)," *Revista brasileira de segurança pública,* 6(2), 232-255.

> whether the violence in the city had reached a stage where it deserved to be considered as "armed conflict". Over 6,000 people had been assassinated in 2016, a rate of 41 homicides per 100,000 residents. The military police were involved in killing 920 residents, while the casualty rate among the city's security forces was described as being higher than combatants in recent wars.[9]

Between 2011 and 2015, the Brazilian Public Security Forum[10] estimated that the police and military police killed nearly 278,839 people, slightly more than the Syrian conflict in the same period. In this context, the term "war" is commonly used to describe the very high level of internal violence in the country,[11] while the State is engaged in widespread combat against drug trafficking. Meanwhile, Lawrence Freedman points out that the approximately 120,000 deaths related to the fight against drug trafficking in Mexico are the result of the so-called "total war" waged by successive Mexican governments. These internal "wars" reflect competition for the control and appropriation of space, and for the maintenance of forms of local criminal sovereignty,[12] which are reflected in the fight against gangs, particularly in the United States. But these crimes are also committed, particularly in Brazil, against political figures;[13] this reinforces the idea that territorial sovereignty *per se* is at stake in the war underway in Brazil. The metropolization of war is thus concomitant with an increasingly violent competition for power in metropolitan spaces, while the social state and political cohesion are weakened.

In these circumstances, security measures implemented by several States tend to blur distinctions that have long been the basis for a separation of the missions of military and internal security forces. In Mexico and Brazil, these have consisted in a multiplication of anti-drug internal security forces whose equipment, hierarchy and aesthetics are borrowed from the regular army. Consequently, both countries have seen a diversification of the missions of the armed forces; this is particularly so in Mexico, where the recent creation of a national guard to replace military interventions on national territory has led to massive recruitment among retired army personnel. The example of France is also significant, as the use of the army to fight terrorism on national soil through Operation Sentinel points to the possibility of increasing recourse to soldiers in conflicts on national territory, essentially in urban areas.

Borrowing from the examples above, Metropolises have become the target of multiple violent attacks, whether from the inside (gang violence and drug trafficking, social movements) or the outside. The choice of a target in an urban space involves strategic reasoning on symbolic places. Whether in incidents of urban riots such as those in the United States (Los Angeles, 1992); in conflicts around international summits (Seattle in 1999, Genoa

9. Lawrence Freedman, 2017, *The future of war*, New York: Hachette Book Group, p. 293.

10. Data are available on the organization's website, URL: https://forumseguranca.org.br/estatisticas/, accessed June 9, 2021.

11. G. Feltran and D. Chaigne, 2016, "La guerre au quotidien," *L'Homme,* 219-220, 93-113.

12. A. R. Barbosa, 2016, "Studies on violence and crime in Brazil and the processes of 'pacification' in two Brazilian metropolises," *Brazil(s)* [Online], 9, accessed May 30, 2016, accessed June 9, 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/bresils/1829; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/bresils.1829.

13. L. Machado da Silva, 2016, "Favela, violent crime and politics in Rio de Janeiro," *Confines* [Online], 28, uploaded October 2, 2016, accessed June 9, 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/confins/11260; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/confins.11260.

in 2001); in the terrorist attacks that affect Western Europe; or in demonstrations against domestic policy measures in France, urban spaces are strategic targets to be controlled or destroyed. The motivations are obviously multiple, but the metropolis itself has become the object of violence. Attacking the urban maximizes the material effects, civilian casualties and infrastructure damage; it also maximizes the symbolic impact of weakening the bridgehead of international financial trade, the best example being the *World Trade Center* in New York City.

Consequently, the army tends to be considered as a last resort, asserting a form of territorialization of the State when the latter is disputed. The targeting of the urban by hostile foreign individuals as well as by national protesters has led US military and homeland security strategic thinking since the early 2000s to consider the urban itself as a battlefield on national land. Military interventions in the city are seen as "low intensity" operations, as moments of "irregular warfare", alongside episodes of counter-insurgency warfare in the streets of Baghdad.[14] This recent reinvestment of the military apparatus in urban spaces points to the anticipation of conflict in the near future. The recourse to the National Guard on several occasions in American cities (Los Angeles in 1992, Katrina in 2005) testifies to a redeployment of military actions on national territory, in urban spaces.

The diversification of military missions in urban environmental disasters

Concomitant with this diversification of actors in economic and political competition, the increase in military interventions in environmental disasters or for humanitarian and security missions concerns first and foremost cities, whose particularity is to concentrate vulnerabilities.

The example of the military management of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 is certainly one of the most publicized urban environmental disasters. It has shed light on the vulnerability of urban spaces to environmental disasters and the security issues they represent. The case of New Orleans highlights the increasing entwinement of environmental disasters and military interventions, even in cities in so-called developed countries. Katrina was in fact a telling example of the American conception of the response to urban environmental disasters during the 2000s:

> U.S. military officers debated the very highly militarized response to the Katrina disaster as an attempt to 'take back' New Orleans from the 'insurgencies' of African Americans: instead of organizing a massive humanitarian response that would have treated Katrina victims as citizens in need of immediate assistance, policymakers organized a largely militarized response.[15]

14. S. Graham, 2011, *The New Military Urbanism*, London: Verso books, p. 139.
15. Ibid., p. 25.

Katrina still functions today as a warning of the increasing management by armies of environmental disasters,[16] made all the more complex because of social disparities and the spatial concentration of poverty.

As a comparison, French Armed forces have been called upon in contexts of environmental disasters. The IRMA operation on the island of Saint-Martin in 2017 represents the largest French military deployment for this type of mission. Although this operation differs from Katrina's, it still shows one possible evolution of military environmental missions while climate change-related disasters are expected to become more frequent, notably in urban areas. The IRMA military operation was, in the words of one of the officers who commanded the operation, "sized like an external operation."[17] It involved several thousand men, and the deployment of equipment and buildings from both the Caribbean and mainland France, on a scale that the French army had never known in the context of an environmental operation. The operation, essentially humanitarian, consisted in the evacuation of the inhabitants whose houses were destroyed by the cyclone. It also included a security component, since in the first hours of the intervention, the legionnaires of the second company of the 3rd Foreign Infantry Regiment, mobilized for operations against illegal gold mining in French Guiana, were deployed in order to secure the urban sectors of the east of the island.

The exposure of urban areas to the risks of marine submersion, flooding, cyclones or earthquakes is tangible, particularly in the case of large metropolises whose population growth far exceeds that of their infrastructure: this is the case, for example, of the city of Lagos.[18] In France, recent natural disasters such as the Xynthia storm in La Faute-sur-Mer in 2010, have directly affected urbanized areas, requiring a large deployment of military capabilities. The latest IPCC reports indicate that these events will recur and notably affect urban infrastructures, pointing to the crucial role that the armies will play in the mitigation of urban disasters.

THE CITY AS A STRATEGIC OBJECT AND TACTICAL CONSTRAINT

The city has been a classic object and a common place of confrontation for military strategic thinking since the end of the Cold War. Urban theaters of operations have been elevated to the symbolic rank of "urban battle", and as Captain Ronan Hill points out, "the term is evocative, because it shows that combat in urbanized spaces remains chronologically delineated and psychologically significant for both civilian and military minds."[19] Showcases for the processes of globalization and places of concentrated inequality, cities

16. R. Keucheyan, 2018, *La nature est un champ de bataille: Essai d'écologie politique*, Paris: La Découverte.
17. Interview, Lieutenant Colonel, February 2020.
18. Guillaume Josse and Margaux Salmon, 2016, "What future for precarious neighborhoods in Lagos?", *Metropolitics*, URL: https://metropolitiques.eu/Quel-avenir-pour-les-quartiers.html, accessed October 13, 2021.
19. R. Hill, 2018, "Conception du combat urbain par l'armée française (1936 à 1996)," *Cahiers Pensée mili-terre*, Centre de Doctrine et d'Enseignement du Commandement, p. 29-39.

become "lightning rods for the world's political violence": they concentrate conflicts, channeling them into a specific time and place, which leads Stephen Graham to observe an "urbanization of violence and war."[20] This process is in line with a "re-scaling of both violence and urbanism [as] the world's geopolitical struggles are increasingly articulated around violent conflicts on local and urban strategic sites"[21] since the 1990s.

French military forces in "urban battles"

Armies have elevated the the city to the rank of "theatre of operations" as they made it an object for strategic thinking. Although the authors of strategic treatises have long expressed a lack of interest in urban combat, urban warfare and poliorcetics have tended to merge over time.[22] Thus "in pre-modern times, cities and city-states were the primary agents and targets of warfare. The sacking of fortified cities and the killing of their inhabitants was a central event in warfare."[23]

While the Second World War saw a concentration of military action on cities, particularly because they became strategic objectives to be destroyed by bombing, urban conflicts were rare in the context of the Cold War, so focused was the attention of the Western bloc military staff on the possibility of a large-scale nuclear attack.[24] However, during that period, the armies of western countries were employed in a number of urban conflicts, notably in Algiers in 1957. It was during this battle that the central model of military action in urban areas was produced, often subsumed under the term "counterinsurgency" until the 1990s. In 1964 David Galula, an officer in the 45th Colonial Infantry Battalion during the Battle of Algiers, produced his treatise *Counterinsurgency: Theory and Practice*,[25] in which he laid the foundations of his theory of insurgency stages which was widely used in the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.[26]

Nevertheless the construction of urban combat as a problem by French doctrine took time, even though European armies were engaged in several operational contexts whose urban specificity was not in doubt, as the following examples show. The conflict between the British Army and the Irish Catholic insurgency is perhaps the best example of the adaptation of regular forces in an urban conflict between 1969 and 2006. As British forces entered the conflict in 1969, capabilities and doctrines quickly proved obsolete for a confined urban area and insurgent context. Three years after the beginning of the military operation, the British army opened a specific training center, NITAT (Northern Ireland Training Assistance Team). In this "several villages perfectly reproduced the operational

20. S. Graham, 2011, *Cities under siege. The new military urbanism*, London: Verso, p. 4.
21. Ibid., p. 6.
22. Joseph Henrotin, 2008, "Pensée stratégique classique et combat urbain: introduction à l'historiographie d'un combat rejeté," in T. S. De Swielande, 2008, *Les interventions militaires en zones urbaines: paradigmes, stratégies et enjeux*, Bruxelles: Editions Bruylande, p. 23-37.
23. S. Graham, *Cities under siege*, p. 10.
24. D. Lobry, 2019, *Les interventions militaires en zone urbaine: enjeux et défis*, Paris: Editions du Cygne, p. 37.
25. Ed. Jolly, 2017, "From terrorism to civil war? Notes on David Galula and his thinking on counterinsurgency," *The Philosopher*, 48, 187-199.
26. T. S. De Swielande, *Les interventions militaires en zones urbaines*.

conditions of Northern Ireland",[27] creating a training center model that would be reproduced by "almost all the armies of the Western world before operational deployment. […] That is why this professional army has been a reference for many other armies."[28] The long-term commitment of the British armed forces in Northern Ireland allowed doctrine to be adapted in real time, and was considered a "model of its kind."[29] Since one of the characteristics of urban combat is the great lability of operating modes, rapid adaptation is one of the keys to maintaining military dominance. It is notably this characteristic that pushed the British armed forces, and more recently the French, to build urban combat training centers, for a constant adaptation of doctrines and tactics.

In parallel with this commitment, the entry of French forces into Beirut in August 1982 marked a turning point in the French doctrine's understanding of urban theaters. While the operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) since 1976 had essentially adopted an interposition function, the French, American and Italian armies intervened in Beirut in August 1982 "to control the evacuation of Palestinian fighters."[30] Concomitantly, "the French forces of UNIFIL followed Israeli tactical innovations and the adaptation of the use of weapons in the western part of the Lebanese capital (use of howitzers, anti-aircraft guns, etc.)."[31] The need to take these theaters of operation into account became more and more pressing, the 1990s representing a multiplication of urban conflicts engaging the French military.

This was the case for the engagement of French forces in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1992, with Operation Oryx. French troops were engaged in the streets of the capital from June 10 to 18, 1993, under the command of UN forces, and conducted "a street fight for almost seven hours on June 17."[32] The engagement of the armed forces in Grozny in 1994 marked the entry into a new era, that of asymmetric urban battles, with their own characteristics. "For the first time in 1994, a conventional army, which benefited from an a priori overwhelming balance of power and which, moreover, did not bother with collateral damage, was held in check by an asymmetrical adversary, comparatively weakly armed."[33] Like the fighting in Grozny, urban space was both a strategic goal to conquer and a context that leveled the dimensions of military action. The Russian army learned the major characteristics of urban combat at its own expense, which makes this battle the matrix of subsequent urban strategies.

In tactical terms first, the Russian army set up two approaches. The first was to advance in columns, positioning itself on strategic sites, but the Russian army was quickly caught in repeated ambushes and "in two days of agony, the four columns were almost completely destroyed."[34] In addition to this first tactic, a second one, this time more methodical, allowed

27. F. Chamaud and P. Santoni, 2019, *The ultimate battlefield. Combattre et vaincre en ville,* Paris: Editions Pierre de Taillac, p. 184.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 177.
31. R. Hill, 2018, "Conception du combat urbain par l'armée française (1936 à 1996)," p. 29-39.
32. D. Lobry, *Les interventions militaires en zone urbaine*, p. 39.
33. Haicault de la Regontais, 2018, "Grozny: matrice et contre-exemple du combat urbain contemporain," *Cahiers Pensée mili-terre*, published August 30, 2018, URL: https://www.penseemiliterre.fr/grozny-matrice-et-contre-exemple-du-combat-urbain-contemporain-_489_1013077.html, accessed August 27, 2021.
34. General Michel Yakovleff, *Tactique théorique,* Paris: Economica, p. 118.

a "piece by piece" progression,[35] which allowed the conquest of the city in two weeks, with heavy losses on both sides, as well as among civilians.

In addition, despite the extensive logistics available to the Russian army, the battle of Grozny showed the importance of logistics in urban combat, and in particular the difficulty that the terrain represents in supplying the front lines. Load breaks were necessary in the rear of the battle, and slowed down the arrival of food and fuel. These difficulties led to very severe losses, particularly psychological damage. Finally, as far as weaponry was concerned, the battle of Grozny underlined the importance of infantry in confined spaces, supported by engineers and cavalry, to deal with light, mobile, independent units with a perfect knowledge of the terrain on the Chechen side.

This confrontation illustrated the worst features of urban combat and informed subsequent battles, particularly those involving France. Urban combat during the Yugoslav war, notably during the siege of Sarajevo in 1995, or the battle of Mitrovica, represented a strong commitment of French forces, and initiated strategic thinking on the specificity of urban combat, calling for an "urbanization of the doctrine".

As Dorothée Lobry[36] points out, several features of these conflicts highlight the specificities of urban combat. First of all, it is three-dimensional, taking into account air, ground and underground defense. Furthermore, combat is asymmetric and "leveling", in the sense that it relativizes the importance of the technological and numerical superiority of a regular army over an irregular army. This context makes the psychological dimension of the armed forces' actions towards the local populations crucial. The forces involved, which must be mobile and light, are in addition confronted with a high level of intensity. Finally, involvement in urban areas requires knowledge of the terrain and makes intelligence gathering crucial prior to combat.

The city as a tactical trap: military training and adaptations

For the French armed forces, engagement in the Balkans triggered an in-depth reflection on the evolution of forms of combat and the adaptation of doctrine. In 2004, the "AZUR" (Action in Urban Zones) mandate was launched to strengthen the French army's ability to intervene in urban areas. It provides for three main areas of development: updating the doctrine for the use of armed forces in urban areas; training executives for urban fighting; and providing infrastructure to prepare for combat.

This mandate led to the construction in 2004 of the CENZUB (Training center for action in urban zones) Centre d'entraînement aux actions en zone urbaine) in the Sissonne military camp in northeastern France, which provides the training of joint tactical sub-groups, in order to meet the requirements of urban combat in realistic conditions.[37] It is similar to the

35. Ibid.
36. D. Lobry, *Les interventions militaires en zone urbaine*.
37. K. Andrea, 2021, "Artificial cities as spaces of political order formation: training for apocalyptic scenarios in European police forces," *Carnets de géographes* [Online], 15, online April 30, 2021, accessed August 27, 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/cdg/7154.

training center created by the British forces during the confrontations in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, and anticipates the crucial importance of urban combat by 2040 for strategic thinking. In parallel with the creation of the CENZUB, the armed forces published the *Manual for the Use of Land Forces in Urban Areas* in 2005, and an *Addendum to the manual* in 2007.[38] These two documents laid the foundations for urban combat training and formalized the future evolution of combat in confined areas, and were subsequently transformed and expanded by the "Doctrine for the Use of Forces in Urban and Peri-urban Areas" on July 9, 2012. This new edition includes the urban form with the most spatial coverage: urban sprawl, generally referred to as the "sub-urban area." This new focus echoes the transformation of operations in metropolises, where conflict is situated outside the centers, in areas where informal housing is also the seat of social and political violence.

The "AZUR" mandate has finally brought about a transformation in the training of soldiers, particularly in their training in hand-to-hand combat techniques. The Close Operational Intervention Technique (COIT), introduced in the early 2000s and supplemented by "C4" training (Close Combat adapted to High Intensity Fighting) in 2009, anticipates the involvement of soldiers in confined areas and trains them in close combat techniques.[39]

These adaptations are the result of an evolution of military interventions in cities, of which the Israeli army is certainly the best example. In March 2002, only one month before the Israeli operation in Nablus, the commander of the Israeli paratroopers Aviv Kochavi discussed the offensive on the Palestinian refugee camp Balata:

> The Palestinians have set the stage for a show, a fight in which they expect that in attacking the camp, we will follow the logic they have defined... They think we will land the old-fashioned way, in mechanized formations, in tight ranks and columns, and that we will follow the geometric order of the street network.

This quote is symptomatic of the Israeli army's planned attack on a refugee camp, an attack which staged a classic siege war as a diversion. In doing so, it rendered obsolete a way of thinking about war in the city in which the city was thought of as a fixed object, delimited both by its external boundaries (the city walls) and by its internal geometry (its plan, its buildings, its traffic axes). Then, the Israeli commander added:

> We completely isolate the camp in broad daylight, to make it seem we are preparing for a systematic siege operation...then we apply a fractal maneuver, arriving simultaneously in swarms, from all directions and through the different dimensions of the enclave...Each unit reflects by its mode of action the logic and form of the general maneuver...Our movement through the buildings pushes [the insurgents] back into the streets and alleys, where we chase them.[40]

38. TTA 980, 2005, *Manuel d'emploi des forces terrestres en zone urbaine*, N°000570/DEF/CDEF/DEO/B.ENG Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi des Forces, Armée de Terre.

39. A. Tisseron, 2007, *Guerres urbaines. Nouveaux métiers, nouveaux soldats*, Paris: Economica.

40. Excerpted from: Eyal Weizman, 2015, *Through the Walls: The Architecture of the New Urban War*, Paris: Editions La Fabrique, p. 33.

The tactics of the Israeli army differ from a siege war, even though this is what the Israeli army simulated. On the contrary, as they redefined the city's layout, Israeli troops avoided the axes systematically trapped by the Palestinians. With these modes of operation, urban warfare has fully entered postmodern thinking on the urban. This strategy hijacked the city's plan, delineating what Stephen Graham calls a "new military urbanism."[41] By doing so, it acknowledges the fragmentation of the metropolis and the precariousness of its infrastructure by overriding it. Most importantly, it made clear that the concentration of poverty and informal housing is also a concentration of forms of political protest and resistance. The Balata refugee camp in fact functioned as a life-sized test, and allowed for the application of military urbanism that pierced walls and redefined traffic routes. The attack directly contradicted Ariel Sharon's criticism of the army since 2001: he had stated that the army was not capable of bringing order to the refugee camps. Indeed, the Balata intervention made it clear that by redefining urban geography itself, the military intervention had overcome the tactical trap.[42]

The thinking behind this military intervention also seems to have fully appropriated the texts of an urban geography that, in the writing of researcher Mike Davis, warned as early as 1990 about the generalization of fragmented cities. In his book *City of Quartz*,[43] Mike Davis described the city of Los Angeles as an assembly of city-states in permanent competition torn by conflicts between racial and religious communities, social inequalities and social anomie. In the Los Angeles described by this author, inequalities and violence evoke the riots that the *National Guard* had to put down two years after the publication of the book, in 1992. It functioned as a premonitory account of what awaits contemporary metropolises: a generalization of low-intensity violence, and an increasing recourse to military know-how, techniques and materials, in hybrid forms, to contain it.

CONCLUSION

Since the 1990s, the French armed forces have largely taken into account the urban component of warfare, based on their own and foreign experiences. By adapting the doctrines, strategies and types of operational preparation of the armed forces, the French Armed Forces have caught up with other armies that were trained earlier in urban combat.

By broadening the focus on metropolization rather than only focusing on cities as the context of engagement, this text has proposed to point out the concomitance of the growth of inequalities in metropolises and the violence they contain. If metropolises are multiplying and spreading out, forms of resource predation are also intensifying. This urbanization of violence reinforces hybrid forms of conflict, in which the armed forces will necessarily be involved.

41. Stephen Graham, 2011, *The New Military Urbanism*, London: Verso books, p. 60.
42. The book by Eyal Weizman (*Through the Walls*) reports Ariel Sharon's words on page 29.
43. Mike Davis, 1990, *City of Quartz, Excavating the future in Los Angeles*, New York: Verso Books.

The socio-spatial reading of conflicts allows us to point to a tendency towards increased conflict in cities, and more precisely in the spaces of the diffuse urban, also called the 'urban margins'. In these margins, the weakening of the State and the predation of resources linked to the proximity of metropolitan wealth could very well lead to an increased use of the military and a specialization of some of its units.

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