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LESSONS IN URBICIDE

I N APRIL 2002 the Israeli Defence Force bulldozed a 40,000 square-metre area in the centre of the Jenin refugee camp in the Northern West Bank. A UN report estimated that some 52 Palestinians were killed in the attack, about half of them civilians. In a detailed investigation, Human Rights Watch found that several civilians, including a disabled man, were crushed to death in their homes, because Israeli forces failed to allow relatives time to help them escape; others were used as human shields by the advancing Israelis. Operation Defensive Shield left 140 multi-family housing blocks completely destroyed, 1,500 damaged, and some 4,000 residents homeless, out of a population of 14,000.[1] During the operation, lesser demolitions were also carried out in Nablus, Hebron and Ramallah. Destruction of material infrastructure and cultural and administrative facilities was also widespread.

Such actions made a mockery of official Israeli claims that the IDF's operation was designed purely to dismantle the 'terrorist infrastructure' behind Palestinian suicide attacks, which had left scores of civilians dead on the streets of Israel's cities. The evidence suggests rather that its real purpose was to take advantage of the favourable context of America's global 'war on terror' to destroy the urban foundations of a proto-Palestinian State. Learning from setbacks in Lebanon in the 1980s, the Israelis seem to have targeted, as IDF analyst Dov Tamari put it, 'the social infrastructure, the welfare infrastructure, out of which combatants have grown and on which their families rely'. The appropriate term for this strategy was coined, more or less simultaneously in the early nineties, by Marshall Berman and a group of Bosnian architects: 'urbicide', or the deliberate wrecking or killing of the city.[2]

The weapon that dominated Operation Defensive Shield was the D-9 armoured Caterpillar bulldozer. Weighing 60 tons and 'built or retrofitted

with steel armour plates, tiny bullet-proof cabin windows, special blades and buckets optimized for concrete demolition and a powerful asphalt-ripper in the rear', the D-9 has been deliberately designed to plough through built-up Palestinian areas with impunity. An Israeli Chief of Staff has made no secret of the fact that 'the Caterpillar D-9 bulldozer is a strategic weapon here'.[3] Yet urbicide by bulldozer is only one element in a four-pronged geopolitical and military strategy.

Firstly, the demolition of houses and cities is linked to a broader trans-formation of the landscape, designed to reduce the vulnerability of the growing archipelago of Jewish settlements and highways to Palestinian attack. 'What is most striking in Palestine now is the violence wrought against the land', writes Christian Salmon of the *Autodafe* writers' collective:

> Houses are destroyed, olive trees uprooted, orange groves laid waste . . . The bulldozer one runs across at every roadside seems as much a part of the strategy in the ongoing war as the tank. Never has such an inoffensive machine struck me as being more of a harbinger of silent violence. The brutality of war. Geography, it is said, determines war. In Palestine it is war that has achieved the upper hand over geography.[4]

This process is now being extended by the construction of a massive 110 km military barrier—something like a Mediterranean version of the Berlin Wall—along a large part of the 1967 'Green Line', on land seized from Palestinians. On its eastern side, the barrier will have a buffer zone several kilometres wide, cleared of all traces of Palestinian habitation.

Secondly, the forcible 'de-modernization' of Palestinian society has been accompanied by the expansion of Jewish settlements at strategic military sites within Gaza and the West Bank, laced together by new high-tech road, water, energy and waste networks, which sustain high levels of

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[1] UN, *Report of the Secretary-General Prepared Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution ES-10/10,* New York, 30 July 2002; 'Jenin: IDF Military Operations', *Human Rights Watch*, vol. 14, no. 3, May 2002.

[2] Dov Tamari, 'Military Operations in Urban Environments', in Michael Desch, ed., *Soldiers in Cities*, Carlisle, PA 2001; Marshall Berman, 'Falling Towers: City Life after Urbicide', in Dennis Crow, ed., *Geography and Identity*, Washington 1996, pp. 172–92; Martin Coward, 'Community as Heterogeneous Ensemble', *Alternatives*, vol. 27, 2002, pp. 29–66.

[3] Mark Zeitoun, 'IDF infrastructure destruction by bulldozer*', The Electronic Intifada,* 2 August 2002; Amos Harel, *Ha'aretz*, 28 December 2000. See also Yael Stein, *Policy of Destruction,* Jerusalem 2002.

[4] Christian Salmon, 'Sabreen, or patience', www.autodafe.org

mobility and interconnexion, and excellent modern services for their Israeli residents.[5] Thirdly, Palestinians are facing economic, social and cultural strangulation, as they are trapped by a tightening combination of curfews, raids, checkpoints, walls, sieges, road blocks and surveillance systems into a growing *immobility*. The ever more extensive Israeli appropriation of land, water and air affords new vistas of panoptical vigilance.

Finally, urbicide by bulldozer is also intricately linked to a maze of discriminatory planning and building regulations, which ensure that virtually all new Palestinian housing is constructed 'illegally' in cramped and poorly serviced conditions. These are then reviled by Israeli politicians as uncivilized nests of terrorism. The cumulative effect of this four-fold regime is stark. Billions of dollars have been poured into the creation of Israeli 'facts on the ground'—the upwards of 160 strategic Jewish settlements in the occupied territories—while the Palestinian population has been steadily immiserated. By May 2002, 70 per cent of Palestinans were living below the poverty line of $2 a day, and 30 per cent of Palestinian children were chronically undernourished. By the end of that month, the UN was feeding half a million Palestinians to keep them from starving.

Targeting infrastructure

The flattening of whole districts of cities by the IDF in the past year is not in itself a new development. Bulldozing has been used as both an instrument of ethnic punishment and a means of territorial re-configuration, ever since Israel's independence in 1948. Since 1967 around 7,000 Palestinian homes have been levelled in the occupied territories.[6] Up to the late 1990s, the pretext was generally that they had been constructed without a building permit. But more recently large numbers of houses have been bulldozed—in acts that are, in many cases, technically war crimes—to improve IDF monitoring of Palestinian spaces, create buffer zones around Jewish roads and settlements, and exact retribution for acts of Palestinian resistance. Jad Isaac, Director General of the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem, notes: 'These sites are meticulously selected. They are for the bypass roads or new zoning for the settlements, to increase Israeli control'.[7]

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[5] Eyal Weizman, 'The Politics of Verticality', www.opendemocracy.net
[6] According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, 2001 estimate.
[7] Chris Smith, 'Under the Guise of Security', Middle East Research and Information Project, 13 July 2001.

Ariel Sharon—himself long nicknamed the 'Bulldozer' by his compatri-ots—set out his personal philosophy on these matters in an interview with *Ha'aretz* on 26 January 2001. Asked how he would respond to Palestinian sniping at the new Jewish settlements of Gilo, implanted into the Palestinian neighbourhood of Beit Jela, south of Jerusalem, he answered: 'I would eliminate the first row of houses in Beit Jela'. The reporter enquired: what if the shooting persisted? Sharon replied:

> I would eliminate the second row of houses, and so on. I know the Arabs. They are not impressed by helicopters and missiles. For them there is noth-ing more important than their house. So, under me you will not see a child shot next to his father [a reference to Mohammed Al-Dorra]. It is better to level the entire village with bulldozers, row after row.[8]

Urbicide involves not just the demolition of homes, however, but inten-sive infrastructural destruction. In May 2001 Israeli Labour Minister Ben Azri called for the dismantling of Palestinian roads, utilities and cultural institutions as a way of 'making the Palestinians' life hell'. Operation Defensive Shield put his words into action. Water tanks were riddled with bullets. Electronic communications were bombed and jammed. Roads were dug up and ruined. Electricity transformers were destroyed. Computers were smashed; hard discs stolen. Any cultural or bureaucratic symbol of a proto-Palestinian state was ransacked. Financial damage to infrastructure from the first major offensive alone has been estimated by donors at some $360 million.[9] Amira Hass described the wreckage in *Ha'aretz* on 24 April 2002:

> It's a scene that is repeating itself in hundreds of Palestinian offices taken over by IDF troops in the West Bank: smashed, burned and broken computer terminals heaped in piles and thrown in yards, server cables cut, hard disks missing, disks and diskettes scattered and broken, printers and scanners broken and missing, laptops gone, telephone exchanges disappeared or van-dalised, and paper files burned, torn, scattered or defaced—if not taken . . . This was not a whim, or crazed vengeance. Let's not deceive ourselves—this was not a mission to search and destroy the terrorist infrastructure.

Hospitals were bombed and medical equipment looted or smashed. During IDF operations ambulances were prevented from entering the

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[8] Cited in Michael Jansen, 'The Bulldozer Baron', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 8–14 February 2001.
[9] 'Israeli official calls for striking Palestinian infrastructure', *Arabic News,* 6 May 2001; Rita Giacaman and Abdullatif Husseini, 'Life and Health During the Israeli Invasion of the West Bank: The Town of Jenin', *Indymedia Israel*, 22 May 2002.

war zones, condemning many to a slow, avoidable death, as their blood, literally, seeped away. In some cases medical staff getting through were deliberately attacked: at least five were killed.

This sweep followed earlier assaults by Israel on the developing infra-structure of the Palestinians, much of it financed by EU and UN aid. In January 2002 Josep Pique, President of the EU Council of Foreign Ministers, complained that Israel had repeatedly bombed Gaza airport and harbour, and Palestinian TV and radio transmitters, which together had received around $20 million in EU support. Under the guise of win-kling out sniper lairs, the IDF has also laid waste many fields and olive groves, factories and greenhouses. Economic restrictions have been fur-ther tightened since Defensive Shield. On 22 October 2002, Effi Eitam, Minister for Infrastructure in Sharon's coalition, banned olive picking at the height of the harvest, on the grounds that Israeli troops could not protect Palestinians from armed Jewish settlers stealing their yields. On the same day, Eitam made it illegal for Palestinians to bore for water in the West Bank.[10]

Viewed against the background of earlier occupation policies, the IDF's campaign to crush the second Intifada has marked a significant shift of emphasis, from ongoing 'pepper-pot' demolitions to more thorough-going urbicide. Behind this new posture lie three interwoven ideological constructions that motivate and justify it in the eyes of Israel's military and political elites.

Demographic anxieties

First, there is a deepening Jewish fear of Arab population growth across the whole territory of the former Mandate. The rapid and spontaneous urbanization that has accompanied this demographic explosion risks jeopardizing long-standing aims of Zionism, by threatening to overwhelm efforts by Israel to promote in-migration of Jews into both Israel itself and the new settlements. Statistical fuel for existential anxieties comes from a range of demographic projections and analyses. For nowhere else in the world are two populations with such contrasting demographic and fertility profiles found so juxtaposed and intermingled. Israeli Jews born in Europe are barely replacing their population (at 2.13 babies per family); Palestinians in Gaza have the highest demographic growth in the

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[10] Chris McGreal, *Guardian*, 23 October 2002.

world (7.73 babies per family).[11] Yasser Arafat has called the discrepancy between the birth rates of the two communities a 'biological time-bomb' which he believes is the Palestinians' ultimate geopolitical weapon.

Arnon Sofer, a leading Israeli demographer who has undertaken many analyses for the IDF, has predicted that by 2020 the overall population of the former Mandate—i.e Israel and the occupied territories—will have risen from 9.7 million to 15.2 million. The Palestinians, numbering some 4.8 million in 2000, will grow by 3.5 per cent a year to about 8.8 million. Jews, numbering 4.9 million in 2000, will grow by 1–2 per cent a year to reach around 6.4 million by 2020. Over the next two decades, therefore, Sofer believes that the proportion of Jews in the territories now under their control will fall from 50.5 to 42 per cent of the total population, threatening little less than 'the disappearance of the Jewish-Zionist state' unless 'preventive measures are taken'. His own preference is for a massive wall to be built, allowing Israel to opt for 'unilateral separation' along the Green Line of the 1967 cease fire, and for citizenship and voting rights to be denied to Israeli Palestinians. For, he argues:

> The process of urbanization around Israel's borders will result in a large Arab population, suffering from poverty and hunger, surrounding the Jewish state. These areas are likely to become fertile ground for the evolvement of radical Islamic movements . . . In the Arab zone the urbanization process takes on a wild nature, stemming from the absence of planning policy and, in particular, a lack of supervision and enforcement of construction law. Everyone builds as he sees fit, and the result is hundreds of illegal villages spreading in all directions.[12]

Medical imagery

A second ideological construction medicalizes the problem of Palestinian urbanization as a 'cancer' whose spread is undermining the organic constitution of the modern State of Israel. The leading contemporary spokesman of this metaphor is retired Brigadier General Eitam, a former commander in Southern Lebanon, who represented the National Religious Party in the Sharon–Peres coalition. Eitam is now the most prominent military-religious figure on the right of Israel's political

[11] Philippe Fargues, 'Protracted National Conflict and Fertility Change among Palestinians and Israelis', *Population and Development Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, December 2000.
[12] Arnon Sofer, *Israel, Demography 2000–2020,* Haifa 2001.

spectrum, where he is sometimes even touted as a future Prime Minister. In February 2002, Eitam spoke at a major international conference in Haifa on war and cities in the twenty-first century. In his address, he argued that Israel faced what he called a 'jihad of buildings'. The spontaneous construction of Palestinian housing and refugee camps, within both Israel and the occupied territories, was a 'cancerous tumour' destroying the orderly body of the Israeli State.

> Even today, within fast-growing Arab cities of Israel like Galilee a de facto [Palestinian] autonomy is being created, which could in practice turn Israel into the bubble of Tel Aviv, into a kind of pipe state—a country between the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv–Haifa road. Therefore I say that the State of Israel today faces an elusive threat, and elusive threats by their nature resemble a cancer. Cancer is a type of illness from which most people die because they were diagnosed too late. By the time you grasp the scale of the threat, it is already too late to deal with it.

Developing the notion that buildings could be weapons, Eitam went on:

> Uncontrolled spontaneous urbanization is a threat of war! The attacks against us are not physical but are aimed at our very order. The threat is not conventional or terrorist, but invasive. In the context of the global War on Terrorism, this is very important. It is destructive not through direct damage but through its invasive spread which will eventually kill off the host state. As of today we have a tumour installed within the Israeli system. This is a cancerous threat; the cells multiply. We see a mosque appearing there; a mass of buildings here. Thus we see order destroyed.[13]

The medical-corporeal metaphors of 'cancers' and 'orderly bodies' that Eitam regularly employs to describe Arab settlements are, of course, strikingly similar to those of *Mein Kampf*, where Hitler describes 'the Jew' as 'a pernicious bacillus' which 'spreads over wider and wider areas'.[14] For Eitam, only one cure is possible for the sickness that now menaces the integrity of the Jewish state: excision.

> If the alternative is the suicide of the Israeli State and war is forced on us, then in war—behave as in war. I can definitely see that in consequence not many Arabs will remain here. As a result of war many Palestinians may find themselves again refugees, on the other side, the eastern side, of the river Jordan. They have to be given a choice between enlightened [non-citizen] residence with us or dark citizenship in the Arab states.[15]

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[13] Efraim Eitam, 'The Future of Land Warfare'. Presentation at the conference *The City in the 21st Century and War*, Haifa University, 12 February 2002.
[14] *Mein Kampf*, trans. James Murphy, London 1939, p. 172.
[15] Eitam, quoted in Ari Shavit, *Ha'aretz*, 22 March 2002.

Eitam argues that ultimately Israel should strive to persuade or force all Palestinians to leave the former Mandate and find accommodation in Jordan and Sinai. This is a policy, euphemistically labelled 'transfer', that enjoys wide support in Israeli public opinion, and was the subject of a major forum at the Herzliah interdisciplinary centre in March 2002, convened to discuss strategic options for Israel in the context of the 'war on terror'. Mustering 'three hundred prominent personalities from the core of Israel's political and defence establishment', the forum concluded that: 'It will be necessary to find some place for resettlement outside the State of Israel (perhaps to the East of the Jordan) for the Palestinian population of the territories'.[15] An American attack on Iraq could provide an opportunity to begin implementing such schemes, although Jerusalem would no doubt move carefully to avoid embarrassing Washington too publicly.

Israeli leaders have on occasion expressed regret at failing to take advantage of major turmoil elsewhere to put transfer into motion. In 1989 Benjamin Netanyahu told students at Bar-Ilan University that 'Israel should have exploited the repression of the demonstrations in China, when world attention was focused on that country, to carry out mass expulsions among the Arabs of the territories'.[16] Opposition to this prospect within the political establishment, voiced by parties to the left of Likud, is pragmatic rather than principled—concerned at the potential cost in external support for Israel, rather than the fate of the Palestinians themselves. But since the Israeli state was founded on the most successful ethnic cleansing of the post-war world, which drove some 700,000 Palestinans out of their homes, contemporary hawks can appeal to a powerful folk memory in calling for realization of 'the second half of 1948', as transfer is now widely labelled by them.

Unclean spaces

Meanwhile, a third ideological construction has emerged out of the second Intifada, more recent and more far-reaching in its implications. Its exponents are essentially military strategists. They concentrate on the difficulties that the urbanization of Palestinian terrain present to traditional battle manuals. Here Palestinian cities are portrayed

[15] See Tanya Reinhart, 'Israel: the military in charge?', www.opendemocracy.net
[16] Will Youmans, 'Preempting Transfer: Israel May "Transfer" Palestinians During War on Iraq', www.dissidentvoice.org

as potentially impenetrable, unknowable spaces, which challenge the three-dimensional gaze of the IDF's high-technology surveillance systems and lie beyond the reach of much of its heavy-duty weaponry. In this optic, the new urban battlefields render the military doctrines used by the IDF since Independence to fight inter-state wars—artillery bombardments, blitzkrieg tank engagements, mass fighter-bombing attacks—increasingly untenable. Defensive Shield thus represented a significant U-turn for the IDF, which operated since 1948—in line with all military thinking of the postwar period—on the rule that 'entering cities should be avoided, as this offered no benefits whatsoever. Thus, cities and population centres should be bypassed'.[17]

Analysing the implications for Israeli security of his demographic predictions, Sofer explained the need for change:

> It will not be possible for [IDF] armoured force, for instance, to manoeuvre in urban areas within the country or outside it . . . It is unreasonable to think of the IDF going out to conquer lands beyond Israeli territory, especially not large cities populated by millions such as Damascus, Beirut, Nablus and Gaza. In the distant and near past the movement of both civilians and military was facilitated by more or less open spaces, passing through rural villages and small towns. In the future, military movement will need to pass through crowded urban systems . . . [and] will be accompanied by terrible destruction and loss of life of a magnitude that is doubtful that both sides can absorb.

To Sofer, the conflagration since 2000 demonstrates that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now fully urbanized:

> The Al-Aqsa intifada is an urban war in which the distance between enemies is measured in metres. There are shots between adjoining neighbourhoods. Terror is brought to Israeli courtyards by Palestinian suicide bombers. Repeated closures of cities on the West Bank are not effective enough, because of a complicated built-up area. So this is an urban war where the ability to manoeuvre and to move is as limited as the ability to use fire-power.[18]

For his part, Eitam contends that buildings and cities are not just weapons of geopolitical occupation. The alteration they impose on orthodox military tactics means that they should be considered weapons of war. The setbacks of the IDF in the streets of Beirut demonstrated that 'in low-intensity fighting there is a paradox. The weak invasive side

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[17] Tamari, 'Military Operations in Urban Environments'.
[18] Sofer, *Israel, Demography,* pp. 14–15.

addresses the asymmetries of military power by using the building and city as a weapon'. In the new Israeli-Palestinian war, fighters cannot be separated from civilians; they often blend into the civilian population after fighting ceases. Stand-off weapons such as tanks and aircraft are often ineffective, and threaten public relations disasters when they miscarry and kill too many civilians, as in Gaza in October 2002. Surveillance at a distance via satellite systems has diminished power. In these conditions, raids into densely inhabited settlements can become reduced to displays of power largely for psychological effect. The IDF attack on the Khan Yunis refugee camp in early October 2002 was celebrated by Herb Keinon as a demonstration that 'no area—even the most rabidly pro-Hamas or pro-Islamic Jihad stronghold in Gaza—is outside the IDF's reach'.[19]

But combat in Palestinian cities also exposes Israeli soldiers to the risks of sniper-fire ambushes, booby traps and home-made bombs (which on several occasions have even destroyed 60-ton Merkava tanks in Gaza). Urbanized terrain can reduce the superiority of high-tech Israeli over low-tech Palestinian forces: heavy armour, when it can get into narrow streets at all, becomes highly vulnerable to counter-attack. Eitam concludes that 'even if you have the best weapons you can't deal with this. A woman or child turns into a terrorist. Eventually, this could destroy the strongest army in the world'. Aversion to built-up zones is pervasive among Israeli military commanders, trained to develop integrated land and air operations in open territory. Interviews with IDF personnel involved in bulldozing settlements, orchards and buffer zones reveal an obsession with uncluttered spaces. 'If we don't keep this territory clean', the Deputy Head of Israel's Civil Administration, David Bar El, said in 1998, 'at the end of the day there will be irreversible facts on the ground that will reduce our "manouevring space"'.[20] In this telling equation, Palestinian inhabitation is something unclean—to be sanitized and swept away.

Tank streets

In January 2002 Eitam headed a group of retired Israeli generals who presented a plan for dealing with the ongoing Intifada to Sharon. Israel, he repeated to the media at the handover of the document, was 'now like

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[19] *Jerusalem Post,* 8 October 2002.
[20] Eitam, 'Future of Land Warfare'; Smith, 'Under the Guise of Security'.

a person for whom cancer, not the bullet, is threatening its life. This is a first attempt by the right to present a political-security plan that doesn't make do merely with blocking Palestinian intentions but proposes solutions to the situation'. Its prescriptions proved very close to the strategy adopted by Operation Defensive Shield, which duly reproduced even its imagery. In August 2002 General Moshe Yaalon, the IDF's new Chief of Staff, explained that after the success of the first Israeli assaults on West Bank cities, his objective was now a decisive victory over the 'cancerous' threat posed by the Palestinians.[21]

Tactically, the IDF has adopted a whole set of new urban warfare techniques in its drive to crush the uprising in the occupied territories. To avoid exposure to ambushes and booby traps in the streets of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkaram, it borrowed Soviet innovations from the Second World War: the use of electrically-powered carbide discs and explosive charges to cut through a succession of buildings.[22] A new family of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and camera-carrying balloons was deployed to permit real-time monitoring of the complex battles within the cities, and track the movements of key Palestinian fighters and officials, so that missiles could target and kill them. Tanks and infantry worked closely together to minimize the vulnerability of each. Armoured bulldozers paved the way for squadrons of tanks to enter settlements where streets were initially too narrow, and then erased whole districts where resistance was especially intense. The impact of this blue-print was graphically displayed in Jenin. As the IDF attack got under way, armoured bulldozers tore down streets from west to east to allow Israeli tanks to operate, demolishing houses from which gunfire was emerging. Reports of this stage of the battle tell of Israeli soldiers carefully marking houses for demolition with blue markers from detailed maps. Matt Rees, one of the first journalists to enter the camp after the initial wave of fighting had subsided, described the scene:

> The street is a new one, carved by a huge bulldozer out of what was once a narrow alley. It leads to a place where gunmen and tanks forged a new, terrifying chapter in the long wars of the Middle East. The alley was just three feet wide before the Israeli army sent its heavily armoured Caterpillar D-9 down what is now a rutted track.[23]

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[21] Amos Harel, *Ha'aretz,* 1 February 2002; Ewen MacAskill, *Guardian,* 27 August 2002.

[22] Arieh O'Sullivan, *Jerusalem Post,* 8 March 2002.

[23] Matt Rees, *Time*, 5 May 2002.

Reconnaissance drones and balloon-lifted cameras gave IDF strategists an excellent real-time view, both of the newly created tank 'streets' that quickly ripped through the densely built urban fabric of the camp, and of the route of infantry teams who blasted their way through walls to avoid booby traps and ambushes in existing streets. When the IDF lost 13 soldiers in an ambush, the bulldozing intensified dramatically, destroying wholesale the heart of the camp's Hart-Al-Hawashin district—the 'cobra's head' of suicide-bomb planning, according to the public relations branch of the IDF. Retired IDF Brigadier General Gideon Avidor noted that 'as a result of this ambush we stopped playing nice and polite'.[24]

Learning from Jenin

A revealing insight into the psychology of those operating the huge armoured bulldozers in the middle of this second phase of the battle came from a remarkable interview with one of the drivers, published in *Yediot Aharonot*, Israel's biggest tabloid, on 31 May. Moshe Nissim—a middle-aged IDF reservist—spoke at length of his experience at the wheel of one of the dozen D-9 bulldozers unleashed in Jenin when, in a frenzied period of 75 hours non-stop demolition, he completed much of the levelling of the centre of the camp. He recalled:

> Before we went in I asked some guys to teach me [how to operate a D-9]. They taught me how to drive forward and make a flat surface . . . For three days I just erased and erased . . . I kept drinking whisky to fight off fatigue. I made them a stadium in the middle of the camp! I didn't see dead bodies under the blade of the D-9 . . . But if there were any I don't care. I found joy with every house that came down because I knew that they didn't mind dying but they cared about their homes. If you knocked down their house you buried 40 or 50 people for generations . . . [After it was finished] I begged for more work: 'Let me finish another house!' I wanted to destroy everything. To level everything . . . It's not that I wanted to kill. Just the houses. Believe me, we demolished too little.[25]

After the demolitions, all attempts at rebuilding and removing unexploded ordinance were blocked by the IDF. As Jonathan Cook reported in the *Guardian*: 'Keeping the heart of the camp in ruins will make Jenin more accessible next time the tanks rumble in'—as they have done several times since.[26]

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[24] 'The Battle of Jenin: April 2002', www.urbanoperations.com
[25] Tsadok Yeheskeli, *Yediot Aharonot,* 31 May 2002.
[26] *Guardian*, 3 June 2002.

If the IDF's shift towards urbicide denies to Palestinians the fruits of a modernization that Israelis themselves have long enjoyed, it has also been watched as a potentially instructive model by forces abroad. Military planners are matter-of-fact throughout the world. Just as Israeli staff officers had no compunction studying the lessons of the Wehrmacht's attack on the Warsaw Ghetto, as preparation for the onslaught on Jenin, so their counterparts in the Pentagon will have paid close attention to Defensive Shield. Needing to plan for operations in densely built-up Islamic cities—Kabul, Kandahar, Basra, Baghdad—the US military could ill afford to ignore lessons from the West Bank, after its misfortunes in Mogadishu. On 17 June 2002, the *Army Times* reported that 'while Israeli forces were engaged in what many termed a brutal—some even say criminal—campaign to crush Palestinian militants and terrorist cells in West Bank towns, US military officials were in Israel seeing what they could learn from that urban fight'. Lt. Col Dave Booth—who oversees US Marine-IDF exchanges on urban warfare—reported in another article in the *Marine Corps Times* that the Marines wanted 'to learn from the Israeli experience in urban warfare and the recent massive search-and-destroy operations for Palestinian insurgents in the West Bank'.[27]

The Marine's Warfighting Lab has since used these detailed exchanges—which culminated in a Joint Chiefs of Staff delegation to Israel between 17 and 23 May 2002—to 'make changes to the Corps' urban war-fighting doctrine to reflect what worked for the Israelis'.[28] A major consultation then occurred between Israeli and Pentagon specialists on urban warfare at a Defence Policy Advisory Group meeting in Washington in early June. In September the Joint Chiefs of Staff laid out a new doctrine for urban operations, taking account of lessons learnt from Jenin and elsewhere, with a view to an impending attack on Iraq.[29]

But whatever the outcome of current preparations for a second Gulf War, they are unlikely to see the last of the agenda set by the IDF. There is a growing realization amongst US political and military strategists that the Pentagon's reliance on globe-spanning—high-technology and satellite-coordinated—aerial and missile bombardments may

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[27] *Marine Corps Times*, 10 June 2002. Quoted in Mustapha Karkouti, 'Israel pulls the wool over world's eyes', 11 June 2002, www.gulf-news.com

[28] Christian Lowe, *Army Times*, 17 June 2002.

[29] US Defence Department, *Doctrine for Urban Operations*, Washington, DC 2002.

paradoxically enhance the geopolitical significance of urban complexes as a key terrain of resistance to American hegemony. 'As the US's ability to detect and strike targets from remote distances grows,' wrote Richard Sinnreich of the *Washington Post* shortly after the first Jenin battle, 'so also does an enemy's incentive to respond by locating his military forces in cities, where concealment and protection are easier. In an urbanizing world . . . scenes such as those in Jenin are likely to become the rule in war rather than the exception'.[30]

Lairs of resistance

Owing perhaps to the ambivalence of the US military about big cities at home, the nature of urbanization—as a complex sociological and physical transformation of whole societies—is ignored in such preoccupations.[31] Attention concentrates simply on the fact that here opponents don't all stand out in open deserts or fields, to be conveniently annihilated in video-game succession. In many commentaries, a frustration that cities simply get in the way of the latest satellite-driven cruise missiles and aerial weapons, so expensively developed by the US military-industrial complex over decades, is palpable. How many more adversaries will follow the lead of Iraq's hapless soldiers, mown down in the virtualized aerial shoot-outs of 1991, or the Serbian forces dispatched so effectively from 20,000 feet in 1999?

Nostalgia for this clinical scenery construes cities of the Third World as, by contrast, cauldrons of animalistic, medieval opposition to modern forms of warfare. 'When faced with an enemy willing, even eager, to put his own civilian population at risk, all military choices are bad', continues Sinnreich. 'The greater America's military supremacy, the more likely it is that future enemies will seek to win, through deliberate and cynical manipulation of civilian casualties and damage, political victories that they are incapable of winning by force of arms'. Hence current fears, no doubt much exaggerated, that an invasion of Iraq will this time be met, not by any attempted defence of its territorial frontiers, but by a house-to-house defence of Baghdad, along Stalingrad lines.

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[30] *Washington Post,* 7 May 2002.
[31] See, for example, Ralph Peters, 'Our soldiers, their cities', *Parameters*, Spring 1996; James Kitfield, 'War in the urban jungles', *Air Force Magazine,* vol. 81, no. 12.

A staggering hubris runs through this rhetoric. For the most obvious explanation of why resistance to US imperial power—as indeed Israeli occupation—has been, and will be, forced to exploit the defensive possibilities of cities is usually ignored. Prosaically, the urbanization of the poor is unstoppable. The world is becoming a patchwork of cities. Increasingly, there is *nowhere else to go*. In such a setting, cities are indeed the natural habitat of anyone who falls within the ever-widening search for targets and opponents in the war on terror.