International Panel on Exiting Violence

CHAPTER 8

RECONSTRUCTING THE SELF

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Reconstructing The Self

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INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1990s, in the aftermath of several extremely violent conflicts (the genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda, the wars in former Yugoslavia, the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, and many more), a new social and political need has emerged for individuals belonging to populations affected by such violence. Indeed, these conflicts were particularly devastating for civilian populations, which has cruelly raised the issue of psychological reparation for the victims, and sometimes for the perpetrators of atrocities as well. How is it possible to ensure the peaceful coexistence of people and communities who have been so totally and violently divided? How is it possible to prevent reopening wounds on both sides in the face of the impossibility, for everyone, of being satisfied only through a discourse of reconciliation? In other words, how can populations prevent the desire for revenge from fuelling the feeling, often common among victims, that justice does not necessarily diminish hatred?

This is precisely why the idea has emerged that psychological wounds—that is, the traumas from war and violence—must be treated first before populations formerly in conflict can be expected to be able and live together again, since they cannot be asked to forgive or forget what they have endured. It is for this reason that the psychological reconstruction of individuals and social groups in the aftermath of conflicts has gradually emerged as one of the essential components of the political and judicial strategies aimed at ending violence.

Analysing this new aspiration requires placing it in the broader process of political reconfigurations of individuality and the repertoire of collective actions that they mobilize[1] and from which it has emerged. Indeed, if it now occupies an essential place alongside other approaches to restoring a peaceful social order, such as justice and memory, it is also because, in other theatres of public action, the consideration of individual aspirations and individual wounds had just acquired undeniable political recognition.

In our case, the aim of psychological reconstruction in post-conflict situations first appeared as weaknesses in other processes, which require a sort of decentralization from the person and from his or her singular expectations, in favour of a reification of a hypothetical collective destiny. This is the case with justice, including international justice. Thanks to its development and implementation in places that were previously resistant to international laws, it has become the obvious operator of a collective official confirmation of the end of violence, even though violence might persist in some instances. Justice has also become the place where a possible collective reparation can be tested, for a final reckoning, one could say, from which the second process, a memory-related process, could begin. However, if memory processes involve the possibility of rewriting a collective history

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1. From the consideration of suffering at work, to the reparation of psychological victims of attacks and disasters, to all the contemporary mobilisations that focus on individual damage awaiting collective reparation.

that states that no one will be forgotten (neither losers nor winners), they, by definition, are incompatible with singular trajectories.

These are precisely the most frequent complaints and expectations expressed by victims. Most deplore the fact that justice has neglected them, ignored them, or, even worse, mistreated them. They also may condemn the collective history as being written by those who have not experienced it, in order to eliminate the genuine witnesses.

These are some of the reasons why more and more initiatives and apparatuses have emerged that can take into account (or, more accurately, account for) the destiny of each individual. The individual approach to singular injuries was therefore supposed to allow everyone to be reintegrated into the great collective history.

We call these operations "self-rebuilding". It is necessary to distinguish between two different registers, each of them refocused on specific objects, but nevertheless placing subjectivity, or, more precisely, placing the effect on subjectivation, at the core of their modus operandi.

The Self-Restoration Apparatuses

Self-restoration apparatuses are focused on providing psychological care for the consequences of (suffered or inflicted) violence, whether it is trauma (post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD) related to sexual violence and forced childbirth, torture, child soldiers, and so on, or the so-called therapeutic apparatuses involving both perpetrators and victims.

Psychological restoration here involves the idea of subjective reparation of a singular trauma that nevertheless characterizes a possible collective destiny.

The apparatuses for restoring the social space between the dead and the living

Most processes of extreme violence, including genocide, aim to make the deceased disappear, transforming them into simple corpses. Examples of this include the abandonment of bodies, the use of mass graves, the prohibition of funeral rites, and the disappearance of opponents, all of which deliberately deprive the living of their dead. The challenge here is not only to kill in large numbers but also, if not above all, to make it impossible to maintain cultural and ritual nexus between the dead and the living. Indeed, depriving the living of their obligations toward their deceased is part of the ambition and practical modalities of mass violence.

Here, the apparatuses for self-rebuilding is carried out through the repositioning of the dead body in the space of the deceased. Whether it is through the restitution of bodies to the families, the search for DNA traces, or exhumations of mass graves to allow for nominal burials, all these approaches attach the individual restoration of funeral rites to the function of collective reparation.

In the case of both self-restoration and restoration related to the dead, the aim is to specify the nature of these different apparatuses and to question the norms they are supposed to produce. Without claiming to be exhaustive, this chapter will study several cases that are typical, in our opinion, of the implementation of these apparatuses, while privileging the discourse of the users of these apparatuses.

Reconstructing The Self as Political Action Resource

It should be noted at the outset that the idea of self-rebuilding as a resource for political action is not an obvious one. Indeed, without certain recent operating concepts, such as psychological trauma, resilience, or collective grief, the idea of refocusing on the subjective destinies of each person would necessarily have a pathological or pathologizing meaning, which often happens when

concepts from psychopathology or psychiatry are used to characterize social conditions.

However, the imperative of reconstruction is first thought of as the opposite of the pathologic—in other words, it is now considered "psychologically normal" that people who are victims of violence show signs of intense psychological suffering. Even if this psychological suffering can be diagnosed by psychiatry as part of a characteristic condition (such as PTSD[2]), such labelling radically departs from the pejorative connotation of mental illness. On the other hand, it is thanks to the psychiatric identification of the devastating effect of violence on the psychological level that it has become possible to imagine its reversal in a sort of collective therapy for ending violence. Therefore, three things seem necessary in order to guarantee the success of these new endeavours of restoring "oneself". First, there must be a consensus on the use of concepts from the previously depathologized psychological and psychiatric clinic ("trauma" being the standard). This transformation must then be based on a new conception of the person as a social actor characterized by his/her psyche, his/her emotions, and his/her torments (more than his/her reasoning). Finally, there is a need for testing apparatuses—that is, reception facilities, professionals, care procedures, and targeted groups that can either spontaneously present themselves or be identified beforehand and then referred to these apparatuses. In other words, there is a need for screening agents in addition to repair professionals.

The Self-Restoration Apparatuses

The child soldiers apparatus in the Nepal People's War (1996-2006)

The analysis of the relationship between early age involvement in armed groups and subjectivity has been predominantly researched through the cultural category "child soldiers" (Medeiros 2014). This approach is aligned with A. Kleinman's concept of a category fallacy (1977). The category "child soldiers" is grounded on the following assumptions: 1) the armed group experience has a detrimental (psychological) effect on children and young people; 2) culture does not have an effect on the first assumption—so that labelling the child soldier experience as a trauma frames it as universally negative. These assumptions contribute to the framing of the lens used by both academics and policy-makers. Studies have therefore predominantly focused on demonstrating the negative impact of this experience of war or on the way this impact could be mitigated (Kohrt et al. 2008). In recent years though, a handful of researchers have questioned the portrayal of these subjects as innocent victims subjected to external forces and subsequent trauma. Research taking this approach started to question the assumed causal relationship between participation in armed conflict and psychological impact or trauma, often drawing attention to the influence of cultural context on how individuals responded and adapted (Blattman & Annan 2010; Klasen *et al.* 2010; Medeiros *et al.* in press).

However, these assumptions persist. The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) policies and services designed for Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) in Nepal were driven by similar assumptions: the experience had lasting significance for young people's social and emotional health; and they had been kidnapped and were forcibly held captive by the armed group that their families did not ideologically support. Their experience of war stays illegitimate since they could not hold valid positions in their lives as they could not be considered as true social-political actors. An additional assumption was that the involvement of children with politics at an early age was (psychologically) harmful, so the significance of political activism and the *Mâobâdi* in the youngsters' everyday life at the local level was overlooked. A tension exists

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2. The PTSD exists in the North American psychiatric classification since the DSM-III.

between the normativity produced by the apparatus (Agamben 2000) attached to global notions of mental health and children in war, and child soldiers in particular, and many of these young Nepalese's resistance through their political activism.

The following sections will explore, first, the resistance to this normativity through an exploration of intra-psychical effects and trauma among informants and, second, the significance of structural violence in understanding the implication of their armed group experience in these young people's subjective functioning. In fact, there was limited evidence for a psychical impact in the form of trauma or other distress related to their armed group experience; instead, political activism was often central to their subjective experience of the war and in attempting to navigate the structural violence of their environment of return.

Trauma and intra-psychical impact

In Emilie Medeiros's ethnography of Nepalese child soldiers, their war experience did not appear as a prominent determinant of these young people's well-being. A related "trauma" or an intra-psychical impact was absent from the multiple layers of data gathered. When prompted, interviewed, or during informal exchanges about their emotional worlds, the majority of informants did not share any current psychological difficulty related to their experience or exposure to violence when underground. As Parbati, 20, from the untouchable caste, explained whilst cooking:

> I used to feel enraged about [police threats in the schools] and that helped to give me the courage to fight in the PLA [People's Liberation Army]… Even in the PLA, I used to have nightmares about that, that they will finish us… After I left I sometimes thought about it and had these nightmares, especially as my best friend was killed just next to me… but these days I don't think about it that much and I don't have these dreams any longer.

Far from the assumptions underlying the child soldier discourse and the related policies, the psychological positions of many informants indicated positive adaptation overall when they returned home. Signs of psychological distress were often absent, and no particular emotional reactions were observed in response to triggers associated with their armed group experience (e.g., related political programs in the community or on radio; related discussions with neighbours, family, or friends). The observations of these young people's subjective worlds suggest that there is limited interaction with the notion of trauma or distress resulting (directly) from their armed group experience: as it did not capture their subjective experiences after this experience of war. Their distress, when occurring, seemed to be related to other dimensions of their various experiences during the war (prior to and after their Maoist involvement) and to dynamics shaping their daily lives upon their return, from their relationship to their families to their ability to navigate structural violence.

Political activism and structural violence

For many young people who went underground, their psychological position after the war was vitally intertwined with political activism and the heroic discourse that dominated Nepalese society after the Maoist group was democratically elected to lead the government in April 2008. A "New Nepal" was soon to come and this validated some of their sorrows. The Maoist armed group offered them an opportunity to challenge ingrained structural violence and the monarchist government that has always ignored the needs of minorities, low castes, and rural Nepalese. The ideals the Maoists promoted also proposed an alternative trajectory to global values of modernity, enabling their protection from the gross human rights violations that the government perpetrated against

their communities.

Many informants therefore asserted their agency, being vehemently opposed to the normativity imposed by the apparatus associated with the idea of child soldiers. They had strong and articulated positions with regards to their subjective experience of the armed group. Durga, 18, who had been involved when he was 14 and was now heading the political party in his region of origin, demonstrated this when reacting to a media piece that involved him:

> I feel very upset when people really just want to say bad things about *the party*! What they said [about my views] is not what I had told them. I had explained them in details the reasons for my involvement and how I had come to make the choice to join the revolution. Nobody forced me! I had described them my personal experiences and the murder of my brother. But then they say things about me that are completely different from what I had told them and that are completely wrong! It is not at all what I had said. They don't respect my vision of things. They still want to think that, in the end, I was made to join the party forcefully! I really don't like that!

From the globalized child soldiers discourse to the Kathmandu-based government and NGO perspectives, policies and interventions carried out the fundamental belief that this population did not have the ability to be legitimate actors in the conflict. This effectively invalidated these young people's identity and the reconstruction of their war experience they needed to hold onto during this period of their life. Ganesh, 20, who was detained and tortured from the age of 13 for 18 months until the end of the insurgency, illustrated this:

> When I entered politics I learned different types of things. It was a happy moment for me to be involved in the party. It is a truly important aspect of my life as I could contribute to my country and a greater Nepal. When I read in the newspaper about them, I feel this excitement again … but the outsider to the group cannot understand! It was like a dream (elated emotion) a common project to fight for a better society, a New Nepal! … When we were together, the dream was not for me but for all of us. It was about fighting inequalities and changing the country.

The recognition of Ganesh's political identity was central to his war experiences in terms of his attraction, adhesion, and subsequent longing for the affiliation to the armed group as a Maoist combatant and when he became a detainee. His agency transpires in his resistance to the "child soldiers" and the "terrorist" apparatus that is organized around his identity as a political activist. Indeed, it offered him the opportunity to be at the forefront of this social scene with prestige and social recognition, in a fundamentally unequal society where politics shapes daily life.

Furthermore, our capital informants accessed through their *party* involvement further strengthened their well-being by validating the legitimacy of their involvement in the war. The young people felt that their previous actions, sorrows and sacrifices were worthwhile as Bhawana, 25, commented:

> [Involvement] is sacrifice [balidân] indeed, like the example of Nona. She became a *shahid* [martyr] in the battle. She sacrificed her life there, but I couldn't make such a sacrifice… If you sacrifice, your popularity increases. Even if there is sorrow in the family, everybody in the society and community recognises you as the daughter of Mr or Mrs who sacrificed for the country. [pause] I was popular in the society until I stopped working for the party. Now that work doesn't have any meaning or value. But if I had been able to sacrifice, everybody would

have respected me now.

However, the apparatus of acknowledgement could hold for them only when enmeshed with the social, professional, and/or economic capital that this experience could bring to their lives. The Maoist-led government resigned in 2009, and the young people transitioned to a stage where they became important breadwinners for their families (their parents and/or own children) in a social and economic landscape that remained as challenging as ever. This explained why some youngsters argued that it is precisely because they were in this young life-stage that they could sacrifice of their person for a wider collective good. In 2015-16, the government pushed to finalize the implementation of the politics of reintegration (DDR) of former combatants that could provide access to professional trainings and a financial package. The initiative was part of a peacebuilding effort to include the former armed group members, mostly combatants, who had not been enrolled in the various UN-managed cantonments sites after the end of the war. Going through remaining political Maoist cadres, this was the last opportunity for the former armed group to recognize the involvement and sacrifices of its (former) members. Yet this process was rigged by power, corruption, and patronage practices, and most subjects who might have been entitled to such support were never put forward by the Maoist group. The lack of acknowledgement fuelled further anger and disillusion, contributing in many cases to further despair and leading youths to question the value of their engagement with the armed group.

Post-insurgency, young Rolpalese were faced with structural violence that remained as deep as ever, with limited opportunities and infrastructure, compounding their losses. Informants' predominant anxieties therefore gradually shifted toward surviving within this challenging environment rather than on their conflict experiences. For a majority, this constant anxiety and feeling of helplessness crystallized around the idiom *dikka* (boredom, lethargy):

> People experience *dikka* when there are no facilities, no electricity in the village, no opportunities... It is difficult and people don't feel like working and going to the fields... I started to feel it when I returned from the *Mâobâdi*. I feel it every time when I am at home so then I just feel I should go abroad to earn money.

Accessing various forms of capital was crucial to enabling young people to perform their social duties (as husband, father, or older son of the family) while navigating the violence of their social-economic landscapes. This was a central concern for most informants when they returned from their life underground to often impoverished families. Migrating for labour in the Gulf countries was the only trajectory for young people to offer their family a chance to escape from their financial straits. Migration experiences became entangled with abusive work schemes, spiralling family loans, and dilemmas as family breadwinners, but going abroad remained the only way out, which led several to despair and at times to contemplate suicide. This case forces us to recognize that sometimes a way out of structural violence and injustice may involve a turn to violence, which requires us to think about what "exiting violence" might mean in particular contexts.

Moving to a similar context with as strong a normativity around political activism, namely, occupied Palestine, we will in the following section focus on the crucial time when the revolutionary spirit dampens, allowing for important insights into the potential, and failure, of acknowledging people's investment in political activism and in the broader picture, and on what this case tells us about the role of violence in taking up, being involved in and leaving or being excluded from political activism.

Political Activism and the Temporality of the Trauma Apparatus in Palestine

The presence of trauma in Palestine has been documented, analyzed and criticized across the social sciences (Segal 2016a and 2016b; Feldman 2015; Fassin & Rechtman 2009; Fischer 2007). Since the mid-1990s, Palestinian and international psychiatrists have documented the soaring rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression that in some studies are as high as 54 percent in the adult Palestinian population (Madianos *et al.* 2012). Subsequently, discursive and ethnographic studies have critically investigated how psychology and notions of trauma are part of the local vernacular of mental well-being due to both Palestine's time as a British colony and the sheer amount of psychosocial interventions that continue to form a big part of international humanitarian assistance in the Palestinian Territory (Segal 2016a and 2016b; Feldman 2015; Kirmayer *et al.* 2010; Fassin & Rechtman 2009; Fischer 2007). What these studies have revealed is the ambiguity around humanitarian aid when phrased in languages of trauma, in a context where standing tall against Israel's military occupation is part of the normativity undergirding of what we might consider the Palestinian apparatus of resistance (Feldman 2015; Kirmayer *et al.* 2010; Agamben 2009: 2). In one sense, the omnipresence of trauma in discourse and lived experience has meant that the Palestinians are able to acknowledge that violent events such as imprisonment, torture, or incidental bursts of military aggression might have unwanted psychological effects. Given that psychosocial services have been in place in Palestine for 30 years, there is less stigma attached to mental illness than earlier and most notably in comparison with other countries in the Middle East (Segal 2016a; Mittermaier 2014). Meanwhile there are other and more ambiguous ways in which the language of trauma has been absorbed into ways of understanding the deep effects of the occupation upon the well-being of the Palestinian population. The following section will focus on two among these modes of absorbing the occupation's effects into Palestinian social life: first, therapy and the problem of the future, and, second, the problem of irreversible psychological effects of violence.

Glorified pasts and failed futures

Lotte Buch Segal's investigations on families of incarcerated Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank have demonstrated how the more than 700,000 Palestinians who have been imprisoned in Israel since the inception of Israel's military occupation means that every family is marked by incarceration in the form of a current or former detained family member (Segal 2015, 2016a, and 2016b). Less unequivocal are the particular ways in which incarceration has marked a particular individual and his or her family. The reason for such particularity is that the texture of such marks is closely imbricated with how Israeli jurisdiction concerning Palestinian subjects have changed over time. We therefore zoom in on the time from the First Intifada (uprising) from 1987 to the signing of the Oslo Interim Agreements in 1993 throughout the Second Intifada from 2000 to 2005. The argument pursued in this section is that the penal justice toward Palestinians changed in this period to the extent that the experience of imprisonment during the Second Intifada left scars that are irreversible, compared to experiences in the earlier years. Let us unfold this ethnographically.

From Segal's work among Palestinian men and women who have been incarcerated in Israel for their political activism, we learn that those who were imprisoned during the First Intifada speak about their time in prison as a combination of torture, hardship and, significantly, the time of their life (Segal 2016a and 2016b; Meari 2014; Nashif 2008). The coexistence of such allegedly different registers of experience rests on the strong sense of communal political pedagogy that suffused and helped sustain the community of Palestinian prisoners during the First Intifada. As Nashif and Meari have described it, this pedagogy meant that undergoing torture became one of the marks of sacrificing oneself to the Palestinian resistance struggle—indeed, both Meari and Nashif name

such experiences as a specific revolutionary subjectivity (Nashif 2008; Meari 2014). Anyone who had themselves or had relatives who had participated in the First Intifada would proudly mention that they too were imprisoned and that they were tortured. Although brutal, participation in this golden era of Palestinian resistance was thus a mark Palestinians proudly wore. Importantly, those forms of collective acknowledgement took place in a context where every single prisoner was given a job in the Palestinian National Authority, and if that were not possible, a lifelong pension. Thus, the heroic discourse was part of a larger institutional apparatus that worked to honour and compensate former prisoners and to include them in the coming into being of the Palestinian state. This changed after the signing of the Oslo Accords, which involved a changed jurisdiction for the Palestinian occupied territories, also in terms of penal justice (Kelly 2006 and 2008; Allen 2012; Segal 2016a and 2016b).

In order to understand how entrenched in Palestinian subjectivities Israel's occupation was, we look at Israeli practices of securitization (Segal 2013; Holbraad & Pedersen 2013). Whereas administrative detention was widespread during the First intifada, the years after Oslo testified to the use of longer sentences. Moreover, the families of the detainees had formerly been able to visit their relatives because the prisons were less securitized. Yet the decisive factor to a curbed relationship between detainees and their families was the tripartite division of the Palestinian territory into Area A (administered by the Palestinian Authority), Area B (administered by both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli state), and finally, Area C (administered by Israel only). As has been described by both Tobias Kelly (2006) and Amahl Bishara (2015), Palestinian mobility is severely restricted—an individual who resides in Area A is not allowed to go to Area C unless they have been given a special permit, for instance in the case of urgent hospital treatment. Among Buch Segal's interlocutors, some had not seen their husbands for more than five or ten years, nor did they always know which prison they were incarcerated in due to the practices of securitization, that make up the building blocks of Israeli penal justice (Segal 2013; Matar & Baker 2011). This turned the period of imprisonment for both inmates and relatives into an experience that was altogether different than was the case during the First Intifada.

Also, the formal documentation of acts of torture in Israeli detention of Palestinian prisoners meant that physical torture was minimized, only to give way to what Darius Rejali has termed "stealth torture", namely, torture that leaves no marks but targets the detainee's psyche in ways that reveal themselves only over time (Rejali 2007). A husband of an interlocutor sadly exemplies the wide-ranging effects of this: upon his release after seven years in an Israeli prison, he refused to leave the bedroom save for mealtimes and took up drinking, which led him to act violently toward his wife and children. Whereas his wife recognized that the time in an Israeli prison had not been pleasant, she blamed the Palestinian Authority as well as the Israeli state—while the First Intifada prisoners had been welcomed back as heroes and given jobs in the Palestinian administration, this practice had changed with the general decline in the Palestinian economy after the Second Intifada. The discourse of heroism was still in place, but the other elements of the apparatus of acknowledgement had slowly disintegrated due to the tightening grip of Israel's occupation. Whereas this particular man was clearly tormented by his past in prison, his pain was also, at least according to his wife and children, the failure to see a viable future materialize for himself and his family. The Palestinian psychologists and counsellors who took part in Buch Segal's study acknowledged this particular challenge: they could facilitate the way in which their clients understood and narrated their past, yet none of them could change the bleak future that has become Palestinian society, without a state today and none in near sight. In an article comparing how people living in compromised circumstances in Sierra Leone and Palestine imagine the future, Jefferson and Segal conclude that these people regard the future with foreboding rather than hopeful orientation (Jefferson & Segal 2019).

Concluding this section on the apparatus of acknowledgement of political resistance in Palestine, we wish to underline that such ambivalence rests not only on the intricate apparatus created by Israeli colonial policy and practice and Palestinian responses hereto, but also on the ways in which this apparatus makes it difficult to acknowledge permanent damage to Palestinian hearts and minds.

Discussion—the value of political life in reconstruction of the self

If we juxtapose the insights from Nepal and Palestine, one thing in particular spring to mind, namely, the importance of Nepali and Palestinian interlocutors being acknowledged as political actors by the apparatus in place to do so in the respective contexts. Complicating the striving for and perhaps even the wish to offer such acknowledgement is the place of violence in political activism across the two sites. Whereas the productive force of violence has been studied in the social sciences for a long time, violence as a form of political activism still places a particular kind of pressure on social scientific analysis. How do we as researchers think about the fact that sometimes, even often, disagreement about what constitutes political activism and terrorism, respectively, means that acknowledgement of political actions is necessarily held back? A radical instance of this might be historian Faisal Devji's argument that global Jihad constitutes a form of humanitarianism from the point of view of Muslims who consider themselves victims of globalization, secularism, and Christianity (Devji 2011). As the late anthropologist Saba Mahmood astutely observed, empathy is rallied in different ways in very diverse contexts and is often interlaced with calls to violence against a common enemy, whether it be in the context of trying to keep the Muslim other out of fortress Europe in the wake of the refugee crisis (Fassin), or of Western states being seen to have oppressed people in and beyond the Middle East in the name of Christian civilization (Asad 2007).

In order to bring this intricate discussion to bear on forms of reconstructing the self in the process of exiting violence, we consider whether Fassin's proposal to understand the difference between the value of life and the worth of life is a useful perspective. In an insightful chapter that asks how political life might be as important as the singular, biological life that is held sacred and must be saved at any cost according to a Western biomedical paradigm, Fassin argues that we need to understand that sometimes political life is what is at stake, and that sometimes that life is worth the cost of biological life. The cases from Nepal and Palestine are in different ways about the aspiration of having one's political life valued. Bringing the notion of political life into this chapter's final recommendations on reconstruction the self is, we argue, of crucial significance, and it might help us think differently about the difficulties at leaving political activism, even when it is violent, behind.

THE APPARATUSES FOR RESTORING THE SOCIAL SPACE BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING

The transition mechanism of post-conflict periods at the turn of the new millennium consists of standardized procedures, grouped under the category of "transitional justice", which are now being deployed on a global scale. The stated normative objective of transitional justice is to assist in the process of pacification and democratization of countries in political transition. Such justice also constitutes performative rhetoric that legitimizes the implementation of various expertise and is expressed in a full range of reparational, economic, and symbolic public policies (Lefranc 2008). It thus abides by the recommendations of the UN Commission on Human Rights (2005) on the principle of the right to reparation for victims of violations of their fundamental rights. Among the symbolic reparations, the mechanisms for exhuming the dead and missing occupy a prominent place. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of mass graves opened around the world

over the past twenty years. Bosnia, Rwanda, and Peru are just a few examples of countries that have carried out this process. Exhumations therefore fall within the scope of the measures described as "restorative" justice and thus represent procedures that are alternative, or at best complementary, to those of criminal justice. They consist of locating the graves to extract the bodies and proceeding to their ultimate reburial. In some countries—in Peru, for example, but not in Rwanda—the aim is to identify the recovered remains before returning them to the families of the dead and missing. The aim of the international institutions that promote exhumations is formulated in terms of "restoring the dignity" of the deceased, but it is also intended to appease families who will thus take the path of "healing" through their "mourning work". The call for empathy and respect for the dead and the mourning of families is about moral values that are considered superior and universal. The legitimacy of the public expression of exhumations is often made possible by a process of political neutralization of the discourse, which is limited to the "right to a dignified burial".

The mobilization of a compassionate language marked by the pathologization of suffering confirms the value given, nowadays, to the category of "trauma" and the condition of "victim" as well as the priority given to the need to relieve the "psychological" pain of families. Thus, the repertoire of victimization produces new forms of political subjectivities by offering dominated individuals and groups new ways to access, through public recognition of suffering, rights that they were previously denied (Fassin & Rechtman 2009). In this perspective, exhumations have become emblematic of the local modes of deployment of "humanitarian reason", where resorting to moral sentiments is an essential part of public policies (Fassin 2010). The exhumation of bodies primarily concerns the living, whom it is a question of "pacifying", particularly in the aftermath of fratricidal conflicts. That the living can finally begin their individual mourning is considered as the necessary prerequisite for the subsequent development of a national collective mourning that is supposed to allow for the "reconciliation" of all citizens. The "return" of the disappeared mobilizes standardized care modalities for unearthed human remains, from forensic expertise to mediatized funeral processions, which raise questions about the discrepancies and tensions between these models of actions, as conceived and imposed from the top, and the expectations of the recipient groups. The ways in which these policies are received range from relief to ambivalence, from local reactivation of stigma to strategies of rejection or avoidance. Exhumations, carried out just after armed conflicts, thus appear as pivotal events. They are the scene of the emergence of new subjectivations and new statuses resulting from the experience of suffered and/or inflicted violence and the logic of action of the national and international institutional actors. Around the exhumations of human remains and objects unearthed, identities emerge and are recomposed, as are negotiations and memory-related conflicts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop and Strengthen Self-Restoration Apparatuses

Self-restoration apparatuses are those that focus on the psychological care of the consequences of violence (suffered or inflicted)—whether trauma (PTSD), sexual violence and forced childbirth, torture, child soldiers, etc.—or the so-called therapeutic mechanisms involving perpetrators and victims. Psychological restoration here involves the idea of subjective reparation for a singular trauma that nevertheless characterizes a collective destiny. These apparatuses are based on the establishment of individual, family, and collective care facilities, using clinical and psychosocial approaches. This requires the following:

1. developing scientifically validated practices. Focused on the victim's discourse, the main goal of these apparatuses is to enable the victims to be recognized in their pain, to be supported, and to be healed;

2. simultaneously facilitating the exit from this single-victim position in order to place the victims or the perpetrators in the position of acting toward ending violence in the (post-) conflict social space, essentially revolving around structural violence;

3. moving away from the "child soldiers" discourse altogether to allow research to explore the cultural and context-specific experiences of involvement in armed groups and therefore better grasp the array of psychological complexities of the experiences of war;

4. developing a greater scientific understanding of young subjects and political activism without the influence of moralistic discourses;

5. using knowledge developed through the study of individual contexts to inform culturally specific training modules and on-going mentoring of local frontline staff engaging with a particular population and their families and communities;

6. advocating for DDR and other policy-related interventions to be given the means to prioritize addressing structural violence.

2. Develop the Apparatuses for Restoring the Social Space between the Dead and the Living.
Most processes of extreme violence, including genocide, aim to make the deceased disappear, transforming them into simple corpses. Examples of this include the abandonment of bodies, the use of mass graves, the prohibition of funeral rites, and the disappearance of opponents, all of which deliberately deprive the living of their dead. The goal is not only to kill in large numbers but also, if not above all, to make it impossible to maintain the cultural and ritual nexus between the dead and the living. Indeed, depriving the living of their obligations toward their deceased is part of the ambition and practical modalities of mass violence. Dealing with this requires the following:

1. allowing the dead bodies to be re-placed into a space for the deceased;

2. returning the bodies to families, searching for DNA traces, or exhumations of mass graves to allow for nominal burials;

3. encouraging individual restoration through the funeral rites for loved ones;

4. reinstating the central place of the collective in organizing funerals through the participation of the greatest number of people (which ensures some form of collective reparation);

5. ensuring that the relevant authorities support all the initiatives aimed at exhuming the bodies and returning them to their loved ones.

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