

and political boon that *Ayyankali* has granted to both academics and non-academics.

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Cities under Siege: the new military urbanism

By STEPHEN GRAHAM (London, Verso, 2010), 288 pp. Hardback £20.00/\$34.95.

'Warfare', Stephen Graham tells us, 'like everything else, is being urbanized.' But Graham's new book, *Cities under Siege*, demonstrates that one could just as readily say that *cities* are becoming *militarised*. Cities are, at once, the terrain, the instruments and the targets of warfare.

Cities under Siege is densely written, deeply researched, politically urgent and encyclopaedic in scope. Its ten chapters examine a range of subjects, including: the incursion of 'border control' systems into the interior of nations; new technologies of surveillance and targeting; the political, economic, social (and, therefore, military) implications of car culture; and the siege warfare strategy of 'de-modernizing' target cities by forcefully switching off life-sustaining infrastructure.

It is not, at first, obvious what these various topics have to do with each other, but Graham forces us to look at them together, as related symptoms of a broader trend. He unites the various elements less by argument than by metaphor. They are each examples, in some way, of 'Foucault's boomerang', the process by which weapons, techniques and systems designed for use in colonial campaigns return to, and are used against, the citizens of the metropole. Viewed this way, we can see from the state's perspective what crime, terrorism and civil unrest have in common – and why the responses to each so closely resemble one another.

Yet, despite its astute treatment of the politics of warfare, *Cities under Siege* is oddly silent about the warfare of politics. While counterinsurgency theory increasingly focuses on the state's need to establish legitimacy, provide services and ameliorate real grievances, *Cities* is concerned, almost exclusively, with the more direct exercise of power: surveillance, containment, the imposition of scarcity and violence. It is as if, despite his Foucauldian leanings, Graham forgot that philosopher's dictum that 'politics is the continuation of war by other means'.

Graham's conclusions suffer as a result. In particular, the 'new anti-military urbanism' he advocates is little more than a brave liberalism, one combining Keynesian economics, cultural cosmopolitanism and human rights. Moreover, the 'countergeographies' and 'new public domains' he portrays as engendering this vision operate almost entirely in the conceptual or the cultural sphere. He tells us of radical art projects, subversive propaganda campaigns and other attempts at shaping the public discourse. But actual conflict is, somehow, absent.

Graham describes opposition metaphorically, as a process of drawing new maps, but the military forces he describes are already creating, quite literally, new landscapes. Artistic intervention is fine, as far as it goes. But it is not the only way that people react to the militarisation of city life. They also evade the state's surveillance; they sabotage the military infrastructure; they respond to austerity programmes with strikes and riots – and by mobilising community resources to meet their own needs. In other words, people don't just critique, they *resist*.

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