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AUTHOR: ARJUN APPADURAI  
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The per  
global  
of finance  
rule, and the active expansion of  
then in this era of intense globalization, has there  
been a proliferation of violence, of ethnic cleansing on  
the one hand and extreme forms of political violence  
against civilian populations on the other?

*Fear of Small Numbers* is Arjun Appadurai's answer to that question. A leading theorist of globalization, Appadurai turns his attention to the complex dynamics fueling large-scale, culturally motivated violence, from the genocides that wracked Eastern Europe, Rwanda, and India in the early 1990s to the contemporary "war on terror." Providing a conceptually innovative framework for understanding sources of global violence, he analyzes suicide bombings; anti-Americanism; the surplus of rage manifest in televised beheadings; the clash of global ideologies; and the difficulties that flexible, cellular organizations such as Al-Qaeda present to centralized, "vertebrate" structures such as national governments. Powerful, provocative, and timely, *Fear of Small Numbers* is a thoughtful invitation to rethink what violence is in an age of globalization.

Arjun Appadurai is the John Dewey Professor in the Social Sciences at The New School, where he is also Senior Advisor for Global Initiatives.

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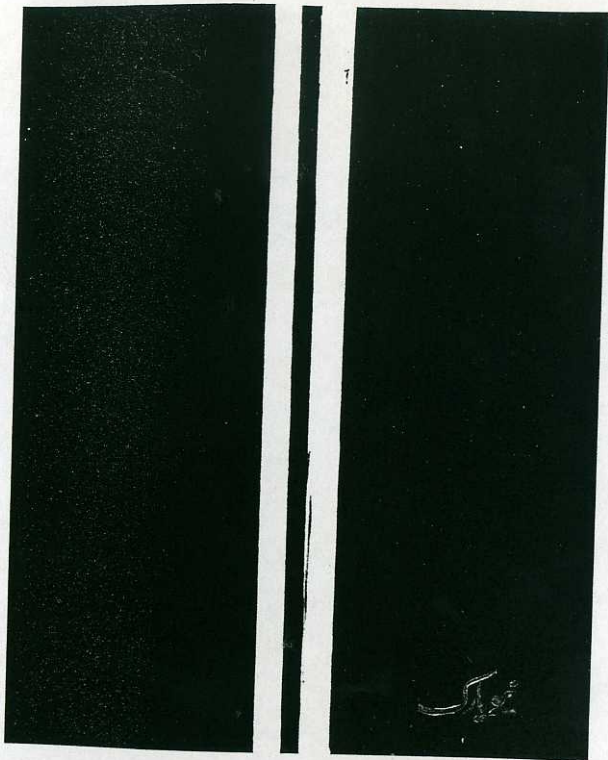
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ARJUN APPADURAI

## FEAR OF SMALL NUMBERS



AN ESSAY ON THE GEOGRAPHY OF ANGER

### 3 Globalization and Violence

**G**lobalization is a source of debate almost everywhere. It is the name of a new industrial revolution (driven by powerful information and communication technologies) which has barely begun. Because of its newness, it taxes our linguistic resources for understanding it and our political resources for managing it. In the United States and in the ten or so most wealthy countries of the world, globalization is certainly a positive buzzword for corporate elites and their political allies. But for migrants, people of color, and other marginals (the so-called South in the North), it is a source of worry about inclusion, jobs, and deeper marginalization. And the worry of the marginals, as always in human history, is a worry to the elites. In the remaining countries of the world, the underdeveloped and the truly destitute ones, there is a double anxiety: fear of inclusion, on draconian terms, and fear of exclusion, for this seems like exclusion from history itself.

Whether we are in the North or the South, globalization also challenges our strongest tool for making newness man-

ageable, and that is the recourse to history. We can do our best to see globalization as just a new phase (and face) of capitalism, or imperialism, or neocolonialism, or modernization or developmentalism. And there is some force to this hunt for the analogy that will let us tame the beast of globalization in the prison house (or zoo) of language. But this historicizing move (for all of its technical legitimacy) is doomed to fail precisely in accounting for the part of globalization that is unsettling in its newness. Recourse to the archives of prior world systems, old empires, and known forms of power and capital can indeed soothe us, but only up to a point. Beyond that point lurks the intuition of many poor people (and their supporters in the world) that globalization poses some new challenges which cannot be addressed with the comforts of history, even those of the history of bad people and nasty world conquerors. This hazy intuition is at the heart of the uncertain coalitions and uneasy dialogues that surround globalization, even in the streets of Seattle, Prague, Washington, and many other less dramatized locations.

Where exactly does this newness lie and why do many critical intellectuals fail to understand it better? In my opinion, there are three interrelated factors which make globalization difficult to understand in terms of earlier histories of state and market. The first is the role of finance capital (especially in its speculative forms) in the world economy today: it is faster, more multiplicative, more abstract, and more invasive of national economies than ever in its previous history. And because of its loosened links to manufacture and other forms of productive wealth, it is a horse with no apparent structural

rider. The second reason has to do with the peculiar power of the information revolution in its electronic forms. Electronic information technologies are part and parcel of the new financial instruments, many of which have technical powers which are clearly ahead of the protocols for their regulation. Thus, whether or not the nation-state is fading out, no one can argue that the idea of a national economy (in the sense first articulated by Friedrich List) is any more an easily sustainable project. Thus, by extension, national sovereignty is now an unsettled project for specific technical reasons of a new sort and scale. Third, the new, mysterious, and almost magical forms of wealth generated by electronic finance markets appear directly responsible for the growing gaps between rich and poor, even in the richest countries in the world.

More importantly, the mysterious roamings of finance capital are matched by new kinds of migration, both elite and proletarian, which create unprecedented tensions between identities of origin, identities of residence, and identities of aspiration for many migrants in the world labor market. Leaky financial frontiers, mobile identities, and fast-moving technologies of communication and transaction together produce debates, both within and across national boundaries, that hold new potentials for violence.

There are many ways that we can approach the problems of globalization and violence. One could take the United States and ask whether the growth in the prison industry (and what is sometimes called the carceral state) is tied to the dynamics of regional economies which are being pushed out of other more humane forms of employment and wealth creation. One

could consider Indonesia and ask why there is a deadly increase in intrastate violence between indigenous populations and state-sponsored migrants. One could study Sri Lanka and ask whether there are real links between the incessant civil war there and the global diaspora of Tamils, with such results as eelam.com, an example of cyber-secession (Jeganathan 1998). One could worry about conventional secessionist movements from Chechnya and Kashmir to the Basque Country and many parts of Africa and ask whether their violence is strictly endogenous. One could look at Palestine and ask whether the intimate violence of internal colonialism is now so deeply tied to mass media and global intervention that it is doomed to permanent institutionalization. One could position oneself in Kosovo or Iraq and ask whether the violent humanitarianism of NATO air strikes is the newest form of biblical retribution by the armed gods of our times. Or one could identify with the perspective of terrified minorities in many national spaces, such as Palestine, Timor, or Sierra Leone, often living in detention camps parading as neighborhoods or refugee camps, and ask about the violence of displacement and relocation.

Cutting across all these locations and forms of violence is the presence of some major global factors. The growing and organized violence against women, famously in the Taliban regime, is also clearly evident in many other societies that seek to cast the first stone, such as the United States, where domestic violence remains prevalent. The mobilization of youth armies, notably in Africa but also in many other sites of intrastate warfare, is producing war veterans who have

hardly seen adulthood, much less peace. Child labor is sufficiently troubling as a globalized form of violence against children, but the labor of fighting in civilian militias and military gangs is a particularly deadly form of induction into violence at an early age. And then there are the more insidious forms of violence experienced by large numbers of the world's poor as they undergo displacements by huge dam projects or by projects of slum clearance. Here they experience the effects of the global politics of security states as victims of economic embargos, police violence, ethnic mobilization, and job losses. The shutdown of small-scale industries in Delhi in the past decade is a vivid example of the collusion of high-minded environmental discourses, corrupt city politics, and the desperate scramble for jobs and livelihood. This is part of the reason that the poor sometimes subject themselves to the intimate violence of selling their body parts in global organ markets, selling their whole bodies to domestic labor in unsafe countries, and offering their daughters and sons into sex work and other permanently scarring occupations.

Let us pull back for a moment and consider some objections to this line of thought. What does this catalogue have to do with globalization as such? Is it not just one more chapter in the story of power, greed, corruption, and exclusion that we can find as far back in human history as we please? I would argue otherwise. Many of the examples I have cited above are tied in specific ways to transformations in the world economy since 1970, to specific battles over indigenism and national sovereignty produced by the battle between competing universalisms such as freedom, market, democracy, and rights,

which simply did not operate in the same way in earlier periods. Above all, the many examples I have given fit with the major empirical fact of macroviolence in the past two decades, which is the relative and marked growth in intrastate versus interstate violence. Thus, the maps of states and the maps of warfare no longer fit an older, realist geography. And when we add to this the global circulation of arms, drugs, mercenaries, mafias, and other paraphernalia of violence, it is difficult to keep local instances local in their significance.

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Of all these contexts for violence, ranging from the most intimate (such as rape, bodily mutilation, and dismemberment) to the most abstract (such as forced migration and legal minoritization), the most difficult one is the worldwide assault against minorities of all kinds. In this matter, every state (like every family) is unhappy in its own way. But why are we seeing a virtually worldwide genocidal impulse toward minorities, whether they are numerical, cultural, or political minorities and whether they are minorities through lack of the proper ethnicity or proper documentation or by being visible embodiments of some history of mutual violence or abuse? This global pattern requires something of a global answer, and that is the aim of this book.

The existing answers do not take us very far. Is this a clash of civilizations? Not likely, since many of these forms of violence are intracivilizational. Is it a failure of states to fulfill the Weberian norm of monopolizing violence? Partly, but this failure itself requires further explanation, along with the concomitant worldwide growth in "private" armies, security zones, consultants, and bodyguards. Is it a general world-

wide numbing of our humanitarian impulses, as someone like Michael Ignatieff may suggest (1998), due to the effect of too many mass media images of faraway wars and ethnocides? Perhaps, but the growth in grassroots coalitions for change, equity, and health on a worldwide basis suggests that the human faculty for long-distance empathy has not yet been depleted. Is it the concomitant growth in a huge global arms traffic which links small arms and Kalashnikovs to the official state-to-state trade in rockets, tanks, and radar systems in a huge and shady range of deals? Yes, but this tells us only about necessary conditions for global violence and not about sufficient ones.

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Or are we in the midst of a vast worldwide Malthusian correction, which works through the idioms of minoritization and ethnicization but is functionally geared to preparing the world for the winners of globalization, minus the inconvenient noise of its losers? Is this a vast form of what we may call econocide, a worldwide tendency (no more perfect in its workings than the market) to arrange the disappearance of the losers in the great drama of globalization? A scary scenario but fortunately lacking in plausible evidence, partly because the world's biggest criminals and tyrants have learned the languages of democracy, dignity, and rights.

So what is it about minorities that seems to attract new forms and scales of violence in many different parts of the world? The first step to an answer is that both minorities and majorities are the products of a distinctly modern world of statistics, censuses, population maps, and other tools of state created mostly since the seventeenth century. Minorities and

majorities emerge explicitly in the process of developing ideas of number, representation, and electoral franchise in places affected by the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century, including satellite spaces in the colonial world.

42 So, minorities are a recent social and demographic category, and today they activate new worries about rights (human and otherwise), about citizenship, about belonging and autochthony, and about entitlements from the state (or its phantom remnants). And they invite new ways of examining the obligations of states as well as the boundaries of political humanity, falling as they do in the uneasy gray area between citizens proper and humanity in general. It is no surprise that humans viewed as insufficient by others (as for example the disabled, the aged, and the sick) are often the first targets of marginalization or cleansing. That Nazi Germany sought to eliminate all of these categories (iconized by the figure of the Jew) is useful to contemplate.

But minorities do not come preformed. They are produced in the specific circumstances of every nation and every nationalism. They are often the carriers of the unwanted memories of the acts of violence that produced existing states, of forced conscription, or of violent extrusion as new states were formed. And, in addition, as weak claimants on state entitlements or drains on the resources of highly contested national resources, they are also reminders of the failures of various state projects (socialist, developmentalist, and capitalist). They are marks of failure and coercion. They are embarrassments to any state-sponsored image of national purity and state fairness. They are thus scapegoats in the classical sense.

But what is the special status of such scapegoats in the era of globalization? After all, strangers, sick people, nomads, religious dissidents, and similar minor social groups have always been targets of prejudice and xenophobia. Here I suggest a single and simple hypothesis. Given the systemic compromise of national economic sovereignty that is built into the logic of globalization, and given the increasing strain this puts on states to behave as trustees of the interests of a territorially defined and confined "people," minorities are the major site for displacing the anxieties of many states about their own minority or marginality (real or imagined) in a world of a few megastates, of unruly economic flows and compromised sovereignties. Minorities, in a word, are metaphors and reminders of the betrayal of the classical national project. And it is this betrayal—actually rooted in the failure of the nation-state to preserve its promise to be the guarantor of national sovereignty—that underwrites the worldwide impulse to extrude or to eliminate minorities. And this also explains why state military forces are often involved in intrastate ethnocide.

Of course, every case of internal violence against minorities also has its own realist sociology of rising expectations, cruel markets, corrupt state agencies, arrogant interventions from the outside, and deep histories of internal hate and suspicion waiting to be mobilized. But these only account for the characters. We need to look elsewhere for the plot. And the plot—worldwide in its force—is a product of the justified fear that the real world game has escaped the net of state sovereignty and interstate diplomacy.

And yet, why are minorities targets of this worldwide pat-

4 tern? Here we may return to the classic anthropological argument by Mary Douglas that “dirt is matter out of place” and that all moral and social taxonomies find abhorrent the items that blur their boundaries (1966). Minorities of the sort that I have described—the infirm, the religiously deviant, the disabled, the mobile, the illegal, and the unwelcome in the space of the nation-state—blur the boundaries between “us” and “them,” here and there, in and out, healthy and unhealthy, loyal and disloyal, needed but unwelcome. This last binary is the key to the puzzle. In one way or the other, we need the “minor” groups in our national spaces—if nothing else to clean our latrines and fight our wars. But they are surely also unwelcome because of their anomalous identities and attachments. And in this double quality they embody the core problem of globalization itself for many nation-states: it is both necessary (or at least unavoidable) and it is unwelcome. It is both us (we can own it, control it, and use it, in the optimistic vision) and not us (we can avoid it, reject it, live without it, deny it, and eliminate it, in the pessimistic vision). Thus, from this point of view, the globalization of violence against minorities enacts a deep anxiety about the national project and its own ambiguous relationship to globalization. And globalization, being a force without a face, cannot be the object of ethnocide. But minorities can.

Put more generally, and this is an argument more fully elaborated in chapter 4, minorities are the flash point for a series of uncertainties that mediate between everyday life and its fast-shifting global backdrop. They create uncertainties about the national self and national citizenship because

of their mixed status. Their legally ambiguous status puts pressures on constitutions and legal orders. Their movements threaten the policing of borders. Their financial transactions blur the lines between national economies and between legal and criminal transactions. Their languages exacerbate worries about national cultural coherence. Their lifestyles are easy ways to displace widespread tensions in society, especially in urban society. Their politics tend to be multifocal, so they are always sources of anxiety to security states. When they are wealthy, they raise the specter of elite globalization, working as its pariah mediators. And when they are poor, they are convenient symbols of the failure of many forms of development and welfare. Above all, since almost all ideas of nation and peoplehood rely on some idea of ethnic purity or singularity and the suppression of the memories of plurality, ethnic minorities blur the boundaries of national peoplehood. This uncertainty, exacerbated by the inability of many states to secure national economic sovereignty in the era of globalization, can translate into a lack of tolerance of any sort of collective stranger.

It is difficult to know who might emerge as the target minority, the ill-fated stranger. In some cases it seems obvious, in others less so. And that is because minorities are not born but made, historically speaking. In short, it is through specific choices and strategies, often of state elites or political leaders, that particular groups, who have stayed invisible, are rendered visible as minorities against whom campaigns of calumny can be unleashed, leading to explosions of ethnocide. So, rather than saying that minorities produce violence,

we could better say that violence, especially at the national level, requires minorities. And this production of minorities requires unearthing some histories and burying others. This process is what accounts for the complex ways in which global issues and clashes gradually “implode” into nations and localities, often in the form of paroxysmal violence in the name of some majority. One classic case is the process by which the Sikhs in India were gradually turned into a problematic minority (Axel 2001). This was not the outcome of any simple form of census politics. It was based on a long twentieth century of regional and national politics and was finally produced in the violence of 1984, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the state’s counterinsurgency campaign against Sikh separatists, and the carnage of the 1984 riots in Delhi and elsewhere. It could be argued that it was in fact the massive unleashing of state and popular violence against Sikhs in 1984 that produced the Sikhs as a cultural and political minority, whose own small terrorist component acquired a general sacrality after these events. So, within a century (and some would say within a decade) a category that was considered a militant auxiliary of the Hindu world turned into its most dangerous internal enemy for at least a decade after 1984.

Consider one last reflection on the links between globalization and violence against minorities. This connection forces one to perform the hardest of analytic exercises, which is to show how forces of great speed, scale, and scope (i.e., the processes of globalization), which are also in many ways very abstract, can be connected to bodily violence of the most inti-

mate sort, framed by the familiarity of everyday relations, the comfort of neighborhood, and the bonds of intimacy. How can friend kill friend, neighbor kill neighbor, even kinsman kill kinsman? These new forms of intimate violence seem especially puzzling in an era of fast technologies, abstract financial instruments, remote forms of power, and large-scale flows of techniques and ideologies.

One way to unravel the horror of the worldwide growth in intimate bodily violence in the context of increased abstraction and circulation of images and technologies is to consider that the relationship is not paradoxical at all. The body, especially the minoritized body, can simultaneously be the mirror and the instrument of those abstractions we fear most. Minorities and their bodies are, after all, the products of high degrees of abstraction in counting, classifying, and surveying populations. So, the body of the historically produced minority combines the seductions of the familiar and the reductions of the abstract in social life, allowing fears of the global to be embodied within it and, when specific situations become overcharged with anxiety, for that body to be annihilated. To be sure, we need to understand a great many specific events and processes in order to get from the vertiginous spin of the global to the intimate heat of local violence. But here is the possibility to consider: that part of the effort to slow down the whirl of the global and its seeming largeness of reach is by holding it still, and making it small, in the body of the violated minor. Such violence, in this perspective, is not about old hatreds and primordial fears. It is an effort to exorcise the



new, the emergent, and the uncertain, one name for which is globalization.

The relationship of the categories of majority and minority, especially in liberal democracies, is slippery and volatile. Their special relationship to globalized violence is more closely examined in the following chapter.