2
eng

Nation and Philosophical Frontier

Alexandra Ivanova

*MA in Philosophy;
independent researcher;
Velikiy Novgorod*
E-mail: alexandra3069@gmail.com

Nation and Community in Relation to War: a Philosophical Investigation into the Frontier

Abstract:

The language of war, especially the legal one, is state-centric. However, there are possible analytical approaches that could center around other actors and aspects of war that are otherwise overlooked and disregarded. In this article, I analyze two of such approaches: collectivity and territory. Combining these two languages of war can present a more holistic view that creates a unified front against the state-centric method of studying and understanding war. The article starts by explaining territory and its discontents, arriving at the idea of how a frontier interconnects different non-state phenomena in the most explicit way. Then, I analyze collectivity in several forms: nation,

community, and no/us, a term introduced by Frédéric Neyrat based on the writings of Jean-Luc Nancy. These forms are ordered in their scale of representation of different subjects and non-subjects, and are based on the paradoxes at the heart of ideas, which result in the inability to include the multiplicity. I conclude with an example of no/us being used to make the language of territories and the language of collectivity cohabitate.

> Warfare is a cosmopolitan experience, a shared bane of humanity. Yet somehow, in social and political inquiry, war as a concept is imagined primarily in provincial terms, those of the West and its major wars. (Barkawi 2016: 199)

The language of war is usually the language of states. Especially in the legal order of approaching war, the state, understood as a governed territory which is permanently populated, is the main actor, and non-state actors may even see the state as the ultimate goal and destination (Fraser 2019, Ryngaert 2016, Daboné 2011). State-centric war language, however, is insufficient. Wars are a complex phenomenon that include various non-state actors, such as non-human nature, communities, NGOs, technology, and even spirits.

At the same time, the language of war through different critical research fields is being infiltrated increasingly with the languages of nations, communities, bodies, territories, and territorialities. Recent as well as not-so recent studies within critical international relations or political geography are drawing attention to the fact that the totality of state-centered discourse of war is to be dismissed due to its insufficiency in covering all the issues related to the sphere of war and peace (Gregory and Pred 2007, MacKenzie and Wegner 2021, Griffiths and Redwood 2024, Puar 2017, Flint and Dempsey 2024, Grove, 2019). However, this dismissal leaves unoccupied a space for interpretation, as usually happens when the state leaves. While international law and juridical language around war remains state-centric, spaces that challenge such an approach can be found, such as the language of territories and the language of communities. It is their intersection that will be the main focus of this article.

In this article I therefore question the relation between the collective body (e.g., nation or community) and its territorial expression in the context of war, and how this relation may be understood to its fullest. I will draw upon findings of critical international relations scholars, political philosophers, philosophical anthropologists. I aim to build bridges between the belligerent languages and interpretations of war, as well as attempting to bridge different methodologies: political philosophy, political ontology, and philosophical anthropology, through weaving these narratives and methods together in a single narrative to support the intersection of languages of war with the methodological intersection. To investigate, I first focus on the question of territoriality along anthropological lines, then the interpretation of the nation, and finally the idea of community serving as an ontological newfound basis for the interconnectedness.

I use two definitions of what can be called "war." First of all, the classical definition by Carl von Clausewitz: "War is. . . an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will" (2007 [1832]: 13). Another useful definition is sociologist Siniša Malešević's "organized violence," referred to here as a synonym to "war."

> Thus I define organized violence as a scalar and historical social process through which social organizations, including organized collectivities, find themselves steeped in situations or influenced by structural conditions that, intentionally or unintentionally, foster some substantial, coercively imposed behavioral changes or produce physical, mental or emotional damage, injury or death. (Malešević 2017: 20)

Territory

On state-centricity and the state's territorial dimension, Lea Ypi argues that "the term 'territorial state' is. . . linked to a collective's exercise of political power over a bounded geographical area through an artificial political agent such as the state" (2012: 5). However, all states are more or less territorial, because territorality is an integral part of being a state. The state boils down to a populated territory. War, too, is always territorial.[1] The connection between territory and power, and thus, the state, was highlighted by Michel Foucault in his course of lectures *Security, Territory, Population* (2007 [2004]).

---

[1] Even if we are to analyze cyberwarfare, we would always have to rely on servers that are firmly standing on the ground.

Foucault discusses the projects of cities and points out the bond between sovereign power and its territorial deployment:

> Sovereignty capitalizes a territory, raising the major problem of the seat of government, whereas discipline structures a space and addresses the essential problem of a hierarchical and functional distribution of elements, and security will try to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements, of series that will have to be regulated within a multivalent and transformable framework. (ibid: 20)

So, Foucault identifies three possible iterations of "territory": a milieu, a space, and a territory itself. All of them are being constantly transformed by governmental bodies as part of the nation-state, which happens for three reasons: the need to situate a governmental seat; to establish a hierarchy; or to regulate spontaneity (bring separate and even random events together).

Moreover, not only does a territorial state regulate all possible variations of territories but it also always presupposes its own expansion, and this law lies in the link between governing people and governing territories. As the number of citizens rises, for any reason, the territory should also increase in size and borders should move further and further away (Elden 2013: 322, 329). That is why the state needs to engage in war. Stuart Elden (ibid: 326) mentions that cartographic techniques and geography led to violent actions of states and even to war.

When people become population and land becomes territory, war ceases being war of the people and transforms into war of the state. Foucault (2007 [2004]: 291) identifies the 1648 Peace of Westphalia as the threshold for this transformation due to its importance in the process of the European states defining themselves through war. Interestingly enough, Foucault also notes that after 1648 the instrument of war was no longer juridical but only diplomatic, meaning that the legitimization of war comes from within the newly created realm of international politics (ibid: 296–303). Justification for war moves from the domestic to international realm of politics, inverting the idea of what and how governing is. The international now serves as a continuation of the domestic through the latter's refusal. Moreover, after 1648 the nation-state developed into a full-blown master of all three facets of territory (ibid).

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987 [1980]: 361–74) state that the goal of states is to turn the "smooth" space of nomads into

a "striated" one, meaning to get rid of the void, of that flat and empty space and build tall houses and deep trenches to extract natural resources. I would also add that if the territory is not in fact void, flat, nomadic, it would still be seen as such and brought to rubble to make the reality match the vision. In contemporary times the example of this is Gaza, which has been brought to flatness through the genocidal war waged by Israel.

Deleuze and Guattari propose their own definition of territory. To them, territory "groups all the forces of the different milieus together in a single sheaf constituted by the forces of the earth" (ibid.: 321), so the territory forms the basis of connection between all the particularities, all the different meanings. However, this view obviously differs from the Foucauldian perspective, because Deleuzian territory is one that is liberated from the state (or never yet conquered), whereas in Foucault territory is more or less a dependent variable.

It is possible that these two definitions are just peculiar to different aspects of warring groups. The Foucauldian understanding of governing territory is biopolitical, modern and European, whereas the Deleuzian and Guattarian understanding is nomadic and indigenous. These are just two sides of one coin, and they are both apparent in small colonizing wars, especially in the debates around territorial rights.

In 1896 Charles E. Callwell published his book *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, where he argued that "the term 'small war' was used 'in default of a better' one to describe 'all campaigns other than those where both the opposing sides consist of regular troops" (1906 [1896]: 21–22). Small wars were defined as non-regular conflicts, their conditions somehow differing from the norms of what was considered to be regular warfare, that which is carried out by warring regular troops. Often these wars were part of the colonization process, and happened in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Territorial rights come to light because they are what recognized and unrecognized political communities fight over and fight for. There are several approaches to the problem of the right to territory. First of all, territory can be understood as the grounding of societal relations, culture, and indigenous lives, so territorial rights would belong to life as it is (Ruiz-Serna 2023). Second, there is the cosmopolitan view that is supported, for example, by Ypi (2012: 6). Ypi argues that such rights should be grounded not in the particular interests of certain groups within the state, but through commitment to the universal governmental body that is grounded in the all-encompassing

principle of law. Only those states and citizens committed to it are the owners of permissive territorial rights, as Ypi calls them. Third, such an approach warrants critique, for example, by Margaret Moore (2019), who argues that indigenous rights and interests should come first, no matter what, because only indigenous peoples have real connections to the place and the land. Even cosmopolitanism does not escape the problems of exploitation and stripping of the habitual and the common, and it leads to the deterioration of the relationship with the land. Territorial rights may be understood as something that is always contested, as the different definitions fight and contradict each other, and something that is always reinstated as a result of this struggle. However, this approach would never fly under the radar of the map and the process of drawing borders across the earth.

Moore's approach highlights the problem of place. John A. Agnew (2018 [2009]: 40) recognizes several ways territoriality can be practiced: classifying space; communicating affiliation with space; controlling space. However, one should be wary of a "territorial trap." In concentrating on space one tends to forget about "place." The latter is a relation that does not strip anybody of agency, but provides it in place. It is the allegiance (to place) that creates personal connection to land, air, trees, and so on. It is filled with the personal, the routine. It is *lived through* (ibid.: 45). The question of place highlights the overlooked connection between people and their land. Space would be seen as void by the aggressor, so the invasion would be possible if it were considered that the borders of the territory were weak enough for them to be penetrated.

Douglas M. Gibler (2007) states that the famous international relations formula that democracies do not fight each other should be morphed into one where states with strong (meaning undisputed and universally recognized) borders do not fight each other. It is the result of the establishment of such borders that there exists some redistribution of economical and political investments that leads to democracy. Territorial disputes, especially multi-sided ones, lead to prolonged and bloodier wars and conflicts (Johnson and Toft 2014). At the same time, the need to defend the territory from invaders also indicates that it is of high importance that the borders are protected. Even a suicide bombing can be explained through this lens, justified by protection of the borders (Pape 2005).

An example of a border would also be a frontline. Sometimes a frontline is imagined as straight and clear as it is depicted on a map. Clauzewitz's theater of war is a theater because it has a stage, which can be represented by a straight line defining it. It is also theatrical

in a sense that it does not really exist. Another term by Clausewitz, "the fog of war" (2007 [1832]: 89), helps us realize that the frontline is never as straight as it is drawn, as are the borders of war conflict.

One of the characteristics of new wars (and wars in general, but that in contemporary war is accentuated) is the blurred lines between the front line and the territory of civilian lives. The front line will now spread across whole countries that are bombed, sometimes randomly. Civilian lives are not protected there because of contemporary war technology, such as drones. Drones are an example of such a blur, because the drone operators in, for example, Nebraska while simultaneously belonging to the front line (because they are directly participating in war) and to the safe zone of the civilian lifestyle (because they will come home after a long day at work) (Chamayou 2015). They become a definition of a "home front," a front right under the noses of civilians, right at home. Even though the ideas about UAVs (unnamed aerial vehicles) that Chamayou analyzes relate only to some contemporary armed conflicts, it is still an important notion to understand some ways of war because it shows how easily borders and frontlines are diminished. There are no clear civilian spaces anymore, or at the very least there are fewer of them. It becomes even more apparent because of how easy it is for a civilian to participate in warfare: financing, for example, can now be done with the swipe of a finger.

However, the front line and a protected home front still persist as distinct categories. To illustrate, the drone operator is sitting in Nebraska just because there is an incentive to defend their body. They are safe from shelling, gunfire, and flak. They become a cyborg soldier, forged with the technology they are using. They will be seen as a biological resource whose life should be protected (Masters 2010).

This is an example of how the body itself becomes the front line. Drone operators are those whose bodies are strong borders, they suffer from war only vicariously. However, there are bodies that are not even protected. Women in war conditions are often seen as a legitimate target, not only of bombing but also of gendered violence. They are seen as sources of a nation's proliferation, so rape could be perceived as invasion into enemy territory (Mostov 2008: 42) and bodies of different ages and genders could become borderlines.

The human body is now a border itself, but the border can also be described as a human body. Hilary Cunningham (2020: 135) compares borders to skin, both human and non-human (like feathers, fur, bark, etc.). Borders, like skin, can be riddled, stretched, unexpected life can be found at their border (like bacteria and micro-

organisms). Moreover, a border as skin is the Other, if we follow the Nancean understanding of the body as always the Other. Jean Luc Nancy writes that "because it [the body] is the other — the alterity consists in being-thus, in being the thus and thus and thus of this body, exposed all the way to its extremities" (2008 [1992]: 31). At the same time, the Other (the border in this sense) is always a body. Coming back to Nancy: "An other is a body because only a body is an other. It has this nose, that skin colour, this texture, that size, this fold, tightness" (ibid.). Skin is something that which is shown to the world, as a border that is drawn on the map to be shown to others.

What is this liminal space at and around the border, where various lives can exist? It could be described diversely. a useful concept here could be the concept of "borderscape" ("border" + "landscape"), meaning that a border is not a line, but a zone, where different actors and non-actors coexist. Landscapes are not set, they are changed under the impact of human relations (Ong 2020: 191) (and I would say probably non-human as well). If there is war, in borderscapes people achieve peace through peaceful co-existence that is established again and again.

At the same time, the border produces an outsider, who the border separates one from. They become the Other. Even if peace is achieved, it is not permanent, because the borderscape's Other is still the Other, the enemy, so peace can be called negative, peace with the purpose that tension will not escalate (ibid.: 195). Another example is the wall between the USA and Mexico, what Hunninghan calls a "necrotone" (2020: 133), a liminal space that is filled with various deaths, because of the necropolitical policies in both states. The space is destroyed and this destruction is dominating, all is disassembled, both life and death. "The state then falsely wrings its hands as corpses begin showing up in its deliberately designed edge effect" (ibid: 135).

There can also exist a certain zone that establishes not a specific border but an understanding of it. Borderscapes in some way can exist even within the state's territorial borders. Of course, that would mean that the occupants of such spaces are all "others" to a certain power. They could be called "frontiers" even though sometimes it is still a space around the actual border. However, the "frontier" as a moving-forward, as liminal, as a melting pot of different lives and deaths, of biopolitics and necropolitics at the same time, could be used to describe all the borderscapes, all the liminal spaces. For example, a frontier is a ghetto with its own laws and its own re-set, human relations repositioned again and again. a frontier is also

catacombs found around Eastern Europe, for instance in Odessa where they would serve as a sea border inside the country. In 2014–2015 they served as a shelter and a hideout for both Ukrainian and Russian soldiers, making it impossible to be finally claimed by either side (Humphrey 2020: 49). Frontiers are also places of small wars, because they would indicate the European state's never-ending expansion.

Alexandria J. Nylen (2020) uses the concept of "frontier" to describe the lawless spaces of war. They are literally devoid of law, they are stripped of law, despite the Rome Statute, the UN, and other supranational organizations and regulations. Frontiers are homes for collectivities and communities that are continuously killed, tortured, where justice is never served. These acts are legitimized through a continuous warrant for war — the USA or other states fight lawlessness of the frontier. The methods they choose may be violent, but they are excused by this lawlessness because they have no choice but to combat lawless actions with violence. If you do not obey the law, it is unnecessary for the enemy to obey the law as well. And they are virtuous for it because they themselves are considered lawful.

The existence of borders, frontiers, necrotones, autonomous zones, ghettos, partially recognized states, unrecognized states, and many other forms proves that strong/weak border distinction, front line/civilian space opposition and in general the discourse of the governed territory by nation-state are not enough to describe all the possible ways the territory unfolds. Moreover, frontiers are a separate form of life and death, never to be regulated.

Another question that arises with the border-skin comparison is about which skin is compared to the border. Borderscapes include not only human bodies but also landscapes; the original comparison made by Hunninghan also includes non-human animals, which are well represented in war. Non-human animals serve as weapons, as testers, as tested (Cudworth, Hobden, and Kavalski 2018), but the harm to them is not recognized enough, with no clear laws on ecocide existing in international law and in many countries. Some countries, such as Russia, have an article on ecocide in their penal codes but it is never applied to any crimes. Landscapes are also considered weapons, dating back to Clausewitz in the first half of the nineteenth century at the very least. Clausewitz considers them a factor in a possible win or defeat on a battlefield. Moreover, it is on the frontiers that the non-humans will suffer the most because of the constant state of war there.

In addition to non-human animals and landscapes, what Mark Griffiths and Henry Redwood (2024) name "geos" can also be called a prominent actor in war, although one not yet recognized by law or

state-centric language of war as such. Geos are the landscape as an image of the literal ground, earth, soil, and land. At the same time, the impact of war on geos is far greater than is usually assessed. For example, it could result in floods, phosphorus contamination, or oil spills, all which lead to the destruction of ecosystems and biosystems and harm to human bodies. Besides geos, spirits also fill the now grounded theater of war, and not just as masks and performances. In his book *When Forests Run Amok* (2023), Daniel Ruiz-Serna claims that the Colombian civil war resulted in harm done to the spirits that reside in the Choco Province, heavily affected by war. Spirits are afraid of soldiers, they lose their habitats because of bombing, they are angry at not being left at peace. This results in spirits attacking humans, hiding animals in forests, stopping communication with indigenous people, being unable to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants and thus humans constantly being treated as soldiers instead of civilians.

I would argue that all these forms are mostly seen in the frontier because they are overlooked by both the existing legal and state-centric order of war. They cannot protect themselves because they do not talk, their temporality is different to those of humans, they are not and cannot be represented by societal institutions. The body itself cannot communicate clearly enough with its holder, so this Other is always somewhat silent, especially the Other in the lawless territories, because humans there also go unheard.

Collectivity

If the language of war is state-centric and the state is a populated territory, to thoroughly critique state-centricity, it is time to turn our attention from one aspect of the state, territory, to another one, population. There are two possible facets of the population: nation and community.

There are several definitions of the nation. There is the Benedict Anderson's notion that nation is "an imagined political community"; "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991 [1983]: 6–7). Harris Mylonas and Maya Tudor combine several definitions together and derive the understanding that nation is an "imagined community with an 'invented tradition' and that individuals qualify for membership by dint of certain practices, beliefs, and/or inheritable attributes" (2021: 110) They refer here to Eric

Hobsbawm (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983) and his idea of the constant re-actualization of common practices, even if they only recently came into existence.

The concept of national identity is inherently linked to all of these definitions, because for nations to exist certain people have to understand themselves as a part of it. National identity provides physical security, helps to facilitate economic development, consolidate the government, and promote trust (Fukuyama 2018: 9–11). National identity also creates the "Other"—someone who would not be a part of the nation, because they would not share this national identity. Nation consolidates against "the Other." [2]

Max Haller and Regina Ressler (2006: 821) write that there are several components to national identity: 1. a cognitive component, meaning the image of a nation, which consists of strong and feeble characteristics, but that is necessarily different from other nations; 2. An emotional component, meaning attachment and even love expressed toward the nation; 3. Readiness to act in defense of the nation, according to its interests, as well as readiness to support it and contribute to its future. National identity is the practice of a nation, the understanding of being a part of it, an intrinsic cog which makes the nation strong and powerful. While national identity is lived in a multifaceted way and is never practiced rationally or irrationally alone, the nation itself becomes a blur between the rational and the irrational.

Close to the understanding of war as an inversion of the domestic into the international, the nation exists in a similarly two-fold manner. One part of its governing is internal and another focuses on the international. Nation (and war) always "spills" into the outside, expanding toward different planes and spaces. Such consolidation against the "outside" nation creates "Others," a process of constant production of othering. Clausewitz (2007 [1832]: 13) writes about the will to make the belligerent enemy submit, to eliminate its force and power. This is what the nation is willing to achieve through war. Clausewitz's famous formula "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means" (ibid.: 28) contains two phenomena linked together — war and politics (here meaning internal governance, domestic policies), and the latter precedes the former. But this link is somewhat distorted, because war and politics are separate areas of governance, with war being contained in the realm of the inter-national.

---

[2] While national identity and nation are not the same, in this article national identity is understood as a personal and interpersonal dimension of the nation.

Clausewitz's times were yet to see the total wars of the twentieth century. In the aftermath of the totality, diplomatic changes and the clarification of international law inverted the inter-national. It is Foucault (2003 [1997]: 15–16) who quite famously inverted this formula, stating that actually what precedes is war, making politics a façade for the government's warring side. Two facets of a nation (intra-national and international) then become two sides of a coin, war and politics, but none stay the same. The synonymous distinction between the domestic and the international becomes blurred. This idea is further supported by, among others, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who state that in this way war becomes the regime of life in general, which "does not mean that war has been domesticated or its violence attenuated, but rather that daily life and the normal functioning of power has been permeated with the threat and violence of warfare" (2004: 13).

Even the nation's historical roots are closely connected to the war/politics (in)distinguishability. Liah Greenfeld and Eric Malczewski (2010) trace its origin to the rise of modernity and the end of feudalism. They link the birth of the nation with the War of the Roses (1455–1485), because the war created a political vacuum that was filled via the legitimization of a new English aristocracy. The Tudors were affiliated with the imagined unity of the population of England. Now this unity could be characterized as the nation.

Ernest Gellner (1965) also supports the idea that the nation was born in early modernity. Gellner notices the necessity of culture, which would unite the aristocracy on cultural, social, and political planes, and would be inaccessible to the masses. What began as a characteristic of this refined type of culture, nationalism was spread across the globe with the help of educational institutions. As the industrial age came, it moved to the foreground of society and its cultural landscape.

Benedict Anderson presents a different view in his seminal work, *Imagined Communities* (1991 [1983]). While Anderson still links the birth of the nation to modernity and even to wars, he traces it back to the French Revolution. He claims that there are several "waves" of nationalism,[3] the first of which started in 1789 and the last in 1960. The waves correspond to revolutions, which generate a force strong enough to create a whole nation. But, Anderson, notes, they could not have succeeded if not for the printing press helping to spread the word. In his assessment of the role of education and

---

[3] Nationalism in this article is understood in an instrumental way, as an idea that warrants the nation.

culture, Anderson somewhat shares Gellner's opinion. Through the press and education, nationalist ideas traveled from metropolitan France to the colonies — to the USA, to Haiti, to Brazil, and so on. Nationalism spreads like disease, but a disease that helps the revolutionary cause of political community's self-identification, which is now a nation.

Moreover, if we establish that the concepts of nation and nationalism stem from the boiling pot of nationalism-driven revolutionary forces, then we also have to recognize the revolutionary fight against the oppressor, for the order's swift and fundamental transformation. However, wars could also span years and decades, for example local insurgencies in areas like Africa or North America. Metropoles often do not recognize and look down upon such wars and revolutions. They are small wars. Colonial expansion, which is often the case with small wars, is not met with regular troops, so it is somehow "less" than European conflicts. Even though the nation in Europe is brought about with revolution, uprisings generally are not understood as forces of similar significance

An interesting analysis of the small war phenomenon is provided by Tarak Barkawi (2016). Barkawi notes that there exists a binary opposition between war and peace, where peace is achievable only through war, and which is built upon the European ontological perspective, so it actually does not represent the reality of life in the colonies (and ex-colonies). In the colonial era conquered or soon-to-be conquered territories and peoples find themselves in a perpetual state of war, which now regulates everything and everyone. To escape it, Barkawi proposes changing the war/peace opposition to battle/repression, where battle presumes an active stage of violent actions of the enemies toward each other and repression means a situation of danger that exists under the conditions of constant threat of possible violence, even its expectation in a certain sense.

Thus, the contemporary societal condition of war penetrating the everyday that Hardt and Negri diagnose has actually long been present in places many do not find worthy of studying. The idea that small wars are already a symptom of daily life being permeated with death and violence is also supported by Lauren Benton (2024: 6). Benton argues that the logic of infinite violence, which spreads across vast territories, bleeds into the very heart of the global legal world order. The necessity to justify the beyond-legality (which is still legality due to the very nature of the necessity to justify it) of small war leads to a certain understanding of violence, which is basically built upon discrimination against or exclusion of certain types of bodies.

There is an unbreakable bond between nation and war in the heart of the idea of small war. If one war is discarded, it is because this war is not significant enough, not big enough. It happens not between two nations, but between two smaller (in importance) communities or a nation and such communities. This bond is colonialist in the way that the idea of small war is colonialist, due to the practice and nature of the naming.

Because once a nation is born through a revolution or a process of self-identification, it starts to defend itself. The example of France, which, according to Anderson, starts the first wave of nationalism, illustrates how once a nation is formed the state starts to fight other possible revolutions. Though it pretends to be universal, the very apparatus of both the theory and practice of war is colonialist.[4] The language of war is formed in the heart of empire. Partially due to the idea of small war, non-European systems of knowledge about war are either excluded, or made digestible through existing European notions of war. This results in a homogenous understanding of war, which, on the one hand, is somewhat necessary if international law is to exist, but on the other hand overlooks the experience of the Global South. In turn, it results in persistent colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism (on neocolonialism, see Karatani 2018).

The imperialistic nature of war brings us back to the question of Otherness, or even more so to the solution of the problem of the Other that war provides. War exploits the distance between me and the Other. For example, in contemporary times Mary Kaldor (2012 [1999]) argues that one of the main characteristics of "new wars" is "identity politics," which should be understood as grounds for violence which lie in the realm of identity, meaning the uniqueness of one group at the *expense* of others.

Not only does war preserve one group's uniqueness, the relation between the warring parties may as well be colonial. The Global North states have legitimized violence through their tolerance of small wars, mostly not considering them wars at all, even when this term was used to describe vast conflicts in the colonies. The line between "war" and "peace" is now blurred, as Barkawi (2016) notes. Such tolerance to violence and in fact a kind of betrayal of

---

[4] The apparatus of war, as already mentioned, exists in the European context. Even when some theorists of just war, for example, try to turn to non-European systems of thought, they usually still use the European basis of their language. For instance, they may set out on a journey to find "just war" in non-European contexts, but what they are looking for is still a "just war" that has to bear at least some resemblance to the original European meaning. See, for example: Kelsay (2006).

the Western ideas of war and peace leads to "new wars" with their basis in "identity politics." National identity, as a part of it, becomes grounds for war, which is indistinguishable from peace.

Moreover, colonial "small wars" warrant resistance, and the colonized have nothing left but to form a national self-consciousness, through which they, in turn, legitimize the resistance. The paradox of the nation lies in the fact that through the pursuit of homogeneity, the pursuit of a clear-cut group which is ready to go to war at the expense of other, does not find a homogenous social reality, it finds the Other that now is not only the enemy but also the enemy that fights back.

Jacques Rancière (1998) examines this paradox in his work on the Other. Talking about the Franco-Algerian war, or better Algerian resistance, he comes to the conclusion that what the war lacks is "the cause of the Other." Political subjectivity always requires "a discourse of the Other," and in general "politics exists because the cause of the other exists, because citizenship is not self-identical" (ibid.: 31). At the same time, "the primary meaning of the cause of the Other is a refusal to identify with a certain self" (ibid.: 29), so the cause of the Other always implies the impossibility of identification. Thus, recalling Franz Fanon's (1963 [1961]) famous expression, this phenomenon refers to all the wretched of the earth; those who the state (and nation as the identification of it) tries so hard to remove from the political space. The cause of the Other is lost in war, which boils down to becoming a voice and becoming a people. This happens due to the discourse of war's homogenous nature. The war of Algiers with France as its own horizon requires the idea of the perfect future that would provide sense for revolutionary and anti-colonialist action. Politics as opposed to police (in Rancière's terms), of which the discourse of war is a part, (again, to Rancière) welcomes its own dialectics:

> The cause of the other exists only within politics, and it functions there as an impossible identification. To forget that contradiction, which is known as the "Algerian war," is to forget an internal alterity: the difference internal to citizenship that is the mark of politics. (Rancière, 1998: 32)

So, there are a number of paradoxes that may be uncovered. The Other always refers to the impossibility of self-identification, when the nation is based on the necessity of one. The discourse of war is homogenous, but "small wars" may point to the direction that the

discourse of war does not recognize all conflicts as equal in their monstrosity.

Another paradox comes down to the notion of "grievability," introduced by Judith Butler (2009). The ability to grieve and be grieved is, according to Butler, a condition that allows life to unfold. However, on some occasions, such as conditions of war, it is evident that not everyone seems to get the opportunity to grieve and be grieved. This leads to the precarious existence (or even non-existence) of those without such opportunity. The Other here would be the "enemy" framed by war, and consequently the Other would possess a different ethnicity, race, or nationality. It is vital to note that precarity in Butler's terms is a condition of relying on others to live and be economically, socially, and even politically supported in life. The insufficiency of access to being grieved belongs to the Other and even unites different Others, meaning different nationalities suffering from war or colonial expansion, different genders, different sexualities.

It is a brave but not unfair assessment that a nation is born in war and is brought together through war. Nation is practiced through war as well, even in the sphere of grievability. To illustrate this, when a soldier falls at war, after their bodies are grieved over for protecting the nation and serving at war, they still continue to serve the grief reproduction cycle. They either become unknown, marked in an Unknown Soldier grave, which acts as a beacon for showing pride in the nation, or they are subjected to military funerals. Michelle R. Martin-Baron (2014) notes that military funerals are a prominent part of the military complex and they help to situate the corpse within this war machine. Now they serve as a starting point for the perpetuation of war.

Returning to Anderson's definition of a nation as "an imagined political community," so somehow it is community[5] that the nation boils down to. Japanese philosopher Kojin Karatani (2014 [2011]) notes that nation serves as a substitute for community, creates and develops new types of connections, which promote both individual liberty and collective solidarity. Thus, "community" is another type of collectivized body, from which somehow a nation emerges. Geographer Agnew (2018 [2009]) also notices that with the development of the nation, community simultaneously gives way to society. So, society is a national characteristic, whereas community is what

---

[5] I prefer this definition of the community: "a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings" (MacQueen 2001: 1932).

a nation could build itself up from. Community is lived, it is a place, whereas the "imagined" in the title of Anderson's book *Imagined Communities* is the nation.

We come across a common use of the word community in shelters, refugee camps, displaced persons camps. These are communities that resist violence, engage in grassroots activism, participate in NGO action, and help themselves when under fire. All of these realms are accessible only to the community, especially in times of war.

Another example of the common meaning of the word community is in the phrase "international community." It can be analyzed through the ideas of Hardt and Negri (2004) and Karatani (2014 [2011]), among others. The term persists to enforce the idea that community is somehow "less" than nation, that the idea of "international community" presupposes that the international nation could not exist, belonging is not yet nation-like, grief for fallen soldiers is not yet shared; the Unknown Soldier holds a passport.

Benton (2024) writes that before the nation, it was the political community that had to go to war to defend itself. The political community is also something that had to be defended against an enemy. The colonial expansion took place, and Benton writes that the colonizer came overseas and an "agreement" was reached, even though theatrically. For example, this happened during the conquest of the Americas. Even if the colonized were understood as a separate political community, at the moment of colonization and such agreement, they were stripped of the privileges of being seen as a community. The result of such agreement was a "shared membership in a single political community" (ibid: 37), which then led to, among others, the creation of the communities of households that are being governed from the metropole.

Community according to Rancière is built around dissent. The power of the police tries to eradicate all dissent and contradiction, when a true community can realize itself only in the realm of politics, which welcomes the dialectical relations within itself. Community exists as though in two forms, simultaneously a community of equals and a community of unequals. Community is "tied to the act of its own verification, which is forever in need of reiteration" (Rancière 2021 [1995]: 84). Reiteration is vital in preserving dissent, otherwise without constant questioning of itself, politics deteriorates into the police. The problem, though, resides in the representation of community via existing societal institutions, because they do not allow for such dissensus. Rancière writes that

> the effectiveness of the community of speaking beings is predicat-
> ed on a violence which antedates it. The essence of this inaugurating
> violence, which has nothing to do with counting dead and wounded,
> is to make the invisible visible, to give a name to the anonymous
> and to make words audible where only noise was perceptible before.
> (ibid.: 85)

Thus, community rests upon an ever-repeated constitutional act
of violence of speech which creates both consent, dissent, and the
discrepancy between them.

The idea about speech being central for community-building is
also prominent in postcolonial thought. For example, the whole idea
of the subaltern being allowed to speak and talk, which stems from
the work of Gayatri Spivak (1988), plants itself in the soil of com-
munity, meaning that it is through speech and being able to make
oneself heard that community starts to be recognized and, thus,
starts to exist. Moreover, it is communication in a recognizable way
that helps to build a community by community-building strategies
and functioning grassroots communities.

Another prominent understanding of community was developed
by French philosopher Maurice Blanchot (1988 [1983]), who pro-
posed his own view on what community is. It is the view of nega-
tivity, his community is unavowable, unrequired, indolent. It cannot
even be described, because every time it asserts itself, we catch its
existence only as a certain misapprehension. It always slips away
from us, we cannot rely on it. Nevertheless, the community comes
together when all the conditions for it disappear. It happens, con-
tinuing Rancière's (2021 [1995]) idea, when community is lived and
lived through, when community is overcome with death which is,
actually, always, because it is death that is looming around the
community every single second, when it is not yet formed but still
already formed. The funerals may be nationalized, but this type of
grief cannot, because it is grief that is not yet present; it acts as
a horizon for every landscape imaginable. Through it, as Blanchot
writes, community

> seems to propose itself as a tendency towards a communion, even
> a fusion, that is to say an effervescence assembling the elements
> only to give rise to a unity (a supra-individuality) that would expose
> itself to the same objections arising from the simple consideration
> of the single individual, locked in his immanence. (Blanchot 1988: 7)

Blanchot also mentions speech as something that holds the community together. a way to interact with death, through a dying person, is to engage in "the gentlest of interdictions" (ibid.: 9), which is also speech, a word, a sound fired toward the dying.

It is interesting how death becomes a basis for creating community, only for it to in turn be exploited by the nation. I have already mentioned the exploitation of grief through military funerals and the Unknown Soldier, but the nation creates death via a variety of methods, and all of them come down to its warring nature. Another example of such exploitation is the phenomenon of "homonationalism," as defined by Jasbir Puar (2017 [2007]). Homonationalism is when an identification and infrastructure of nationalism rises through the declaration of progressiveness in LGBTQ+ rights. The nation prides itself on the security it creates for marginalized communities, at the same time using it to justify waging war on countries whose politics are not so progressive and the marginalized communities "have to" be defended. The queer deaths at the hands of the state become the justification for war and the nation becomes a harbinger of progress and rights of the marginalized, even though the nation itself was the reason for an abundance of queer deaths. Exploited communities become part of the warring machine, part of the homonationalist structure, regardless of their consent to it.

Moreover, the opposite of death — the creation of life — is also exploited. The idea of the nation conquers the private sphere and the family, and now not only is life reproduced but also the nation itself. Women, who may be perceived as community-builders because of ideas about femininity as peaceful, kind, and nurturing, are those who this weapon is fired against. At least, it is the opinion of Nina Yuval-Davis, presented in her book *Gender and Nation* (1997). Such a mechanism may be used to explain the phenomenon of war rape, so that the rape is a method that prevents the enemy from being reproduced, but the vicious circle persists and such a patriarchal way of life will be then used to justify war, now protecting women and traditional values (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007).

However, such mechanisms of exploitation are not limitless and are not homogenous. his work *The Coming Community* (2007 [1990]), Giorgio Agamben explores the singular, which he sees as *whatever* meaning something with no importance of differentiation, no matter what (and the *whatever* is singular). He argues that Blanchot did not reach the end of his investigation, because he overlooks that there are three ways that community can coming into existence. Agamben asks "What could be the politics of a being whose com-

munity is mediated not by any condition of belonging nor by the simple absence of conditions, but by belonging itself?" (ibid.: 85). His answer is that such politics is the politics of the state, it will not be the language of the state or even states, but a struggle between the State and non-State, so between the State and every-thing and every-one else. He calls it the "insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization" (ibid.). But, however promising this solution may seem, to Agamben the Non-State is necessarily human in this understanding, even when the community and its members are devoid of any identity, Agamben still talks about people and about humanity.

While nation is a form of collectivity, it is a community that seems to be truly interconnected. However, community is still a public form of collectivity, it is always oriented toward the Other and toward others. It has to convey a message that may be recognizable and understandable. Speech is central to understanding and being understood. Moreover, it could be argued that community has possibly always been a public affair, because it is intersubjective, it is human, it is talking. In this sense, community exists only when it consists of humans' belonging to each other, and the form of belonging is preferably speech, or at least easily recognizable expression.

Édouard Glissant and Achille Mbembe hold similar views. Glissant (2020 [1997]: 108) introduces the concept of *Tout-Monde* (Whole-World), which supposes a total unification of the world's physical diversity and our ideas of its totality, which becomes totality only in our own imagination. It, on the face of it, could serve as an opposition to Anderson's imagined community, because imagination also acts as a unifying act of totality, but now this totality includes everything, imagination as well. Mbembe, in turn, cites Glissant in his book *The Earthly Community* (2022). Mbembe writes about such a community that would unify all the hypostases of life on Earth, both natural and technological (he does not talk about spirits). He goes a little further than Glissant by including the technological and also openly includes unification with the earth, land, and soil. Such a community is intended to solve societal problems, such as laws against migration, and reframe our understanding of life itself.

Nevertheless, such attempts to include everything in the community that would bring a totality of peace (or the resistance of the non-State against the State resulting in peace) are too well unifying in their totality. They still rely on speech, even when they seemingly move away from it, because they rely on humans' imagination and humans' totality. They serve humanity.

The way of overcoming such totality is introduced by Nancy and is then retold by Frédéric Neyrat. First of all, Nancy writes that "the concept of community appears to have its own prefix as its only content: the cum, the with deprived of substance and connection, stripped of inferiority, subjectivity, and personality" (2000 [1996]: 35). Nancy (1991: 31) talks about exposition, even ex-peau-sition (*peau* is French for "skin"), so that the skin is something exposed, and "I" is always exposed to the exposition of others. This condition precedes all understandings of totality, and it lies in the prefix "com," which is not Agambean belonging but Nancean simultaneous exposition of everything to everything, touching each other without actual touch. Nancy would support "mélée" (2000 [1996]: 145–59), which does not prompt totality but prompts plurality in the singular, a mixture of lives and deaths that do not blend together, but insist on their own existences and beings. It is not accidental that the word "mélée" also refers to a type of struggle, because in his view struggle is welcomed instead of totalities of war or peace.

Neyrat (2015) continues this analysis and introduces a specific concept that could be used instead of "community" which is "no/us" ("nous" is French for "us," which becomes no us, so us and not us simultaneously). Neyrat turns to Nancy's concept of "struction," which never becomes "destruction" but always stops itself in the movement toward it. But struction is dangerous, it could easily fall into destruction if all lives are considered the same, if the unifying totality equals bodies that cannot be leveled. Neyrat writes that no/us "is a collective form of existence that precedes the constitution of a political collective subject" (ibid.: 83), so it predates community and society, nation and war, and even possibly Agamben's peace itself. Moreover, no/us by definition is silent or at least speech is not a requirement. That is why it spreads across all possible life forms. It does not require a subject, but requires an understanding through skin (in a figurative sense), a feeling of a connection which is never latched onto anything, because it never touches the Other (whatever that may be) fully.

No/us could serve as a unifying but not too unifying ground for all of existing life, but especially for life and death in borderscapes, which does not boil down to only humans. Not only does it include non-human nature but also territory, because it predates it. The borderscape, the frontier, where all the paradoxes come to a shared lived existence, is an example of a sheaf that through its co-existence becomes a crack that falls down to the pre-political collectivity.

Conclusion

In this article, two types of collectivized bodies have been investigated in relation to each other (nation and community). Nation is established to be the warring collectivity, while community tries to defer such a way of existence, through the belonging of humans who master the art of expression in a recognizable way. However, they do not exist without their territorial grounding, which the article begins with. It covers the distinction between strong and weak borders to borderlands, borderscapes, necrotones, and frontiers, with the last established as a category that may combine all the existence of borders-humans connections.

There is a type of collectivity that can be established in relation to frontiers as being something that closely interacts with silence — the silence of law, the silence of the affected. Neyrat and Nancy define this type of collectivity and call it no/us, which means the impossibility of totality, rather a melting pot that never mixes together, a preservation of plurality in the singular. This type of collectivity could serve as grounds for all existence, especially that which is lawless and overlooked.

References

Agamben, Giorgio. (2007 [1990]). *The Coming Community*. University of Minnesota Press.

Agnew, John (2018 [2009]). *Globalization and Sovereignty: Beyond the Territorial Trap*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Anderson, Benedict (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.

Barkawi, Tarak (2016). "Decolonising War." *European Journal of International Security* 1(2): 199–214.

Benton, Lauren (2024). *They Called it Peace: Words of Imperial Violence*. Princeton University Press.

Blanchot, Maurice (1988 [1983]). *The Unavowable Community*. Station Hill Press.

Butler, Judith (2009). *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?* Verso Books.

Callwell, C.E. (1906 [1896]). *Small Wars. Their Principles and Practice*. His Majesty's Stationery Office.

Chamayou, Grégoire (2015). *Drone Theory*. Penguin Books.

Clausewitz, Claude von (2007 [1832]). *On War*. Oxford University Press.

Cudworth, Erika, Stephen Hobden, and Emilian Kavalski, eds. (2018). *Posthuman Dialogues in International Relations*. Routledge.

Cunningham, Hilary (2020). "Necrotone: Death-Dealing Volumetrics at the US-Mexico Border." In *Voluminous States: Sovereignty, Materiality, and the Territorial Imagination*, ed. Franck Billé, 131–46. Duke University Press.

Daboné, Zakaria (2011). "International Law: Armed Groups in a State-centric System." *International Review of Red Cross* 93(882): 395–424.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari (1987 [1980]). *A Thousand Plateaus*. University of Minnesota Press.

Elden, Stuart (2013). *The Birth of Territory*. The University of Chicago Press.

Fanon, Franz (1963 [1961]). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Penguin.

Flint, Colin, and Kara E. Dempseyr, eds. (2024). *Making Geographies of Peace and Conflict*. Routledge.

Foucault, Michel (2003 [1997]). *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the College de France, 1975–76*. Picador.

Foucault, Michel (2007 [2004]). *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the College de France, 1977–78*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Fraser, Julie (2019). "Challenging State-centricity and Legalism: Promoting the Role of Social Institutions in the Domestic Implementation of International Human Rights Law." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 23(6): 974–92.

Fukuyama, Francis (2018). "Why National Identity Matters?" *Journal of Democracy* 29(4): 5–15.

Gellner, Ernest (1965 [1964]). *Thought and Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gibler, Douglas M. (2007). "Bordering on Peace: Democracy, Territorial Issues, and Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly* 51(3): 509–32.

Glissant, Édourard (2020 [1997]). *Treatise on the Whole-World*. Liverpool University Press.

Greenfeld, Liah, and Eric Malczewski (2010). "Nationalism as the Cultural Foundation of Modern Experience." In *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, eds. Laura Grindstaff, Ming-Cheng M. Lo, John R. Hall, 526–47. Routledge.

Gregory, Derek, and Allan Pred, eds. (2007). *Violent Geographies: Terror, Fear and Political Violence*. Routledge.

Griffiths, Mark, and Henry Redwood (2024). "Late Modern War and the Geos." *International Political Sociology* 18: 1–17.

Grove, Jairus Victor (2019). *Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World*. Duke University Press.

Haller, Max, and Regina Ressler (2006). "National and European Identity." *Presses de Sciences Po* (PFNSP) 47(4): 817–50.

Hardt, Mark, and Antonio Negri (2004). *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empir*. Penguin Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. (1983). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press.

Humphrey, Caroline (2020). "Warren: Subterranean Structures at a Sea Border of Ukraine." In *Voluminous States: Sovereignty, Materiality, and the Territorial Imagination*, ed. F. Billé, 39–52. Duke University Press.

Johnson, Dominic D. P., and Monica D. Toft (2014). "Grounds for War: The Evolution of Territorial Conflict." *International Security* 38(3): 7–38.

Kaldor, Mary (2012 [1999]). *New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Polity.

Karatani, Kojin (2014 [2011]). *Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*. Duke University Press.

Karatani, Kojin (2018). "Neoliberalism as a Historical Stage." In *The Radical Left and Social Transformation*, eds. Robert Latham, Karen Bridget Murray, Julian von Bargen, A. T. Kingsmith, 35–31. Routledge.

Kelsay, John (2006). "Islamic Tradition and the Justice of War." In *The Ethics of War in Asian Civilizations. a Comparative Perspective*, ed. T. Brekke, 81–111. Routledge.

MacKenzie, Megan, and Nicole Wegner, eds. (2021). *Feminist Solutions for Ending War*. Pluto Press.

MacQueen, K.M. et al. (2001). "What Is Community? An Evidence-Based Definition for Participatory Public Health." *American Journal of Public Health* 91(12): 1929–1938.

Malešević, Siniša (2017). *The Rise of Organised Brutality: a Historical Sociology of Violence*. Cambridge University Press.

Martin-Baron, M. R. (2014). "(Hyper/in)visibility and the Military Corps(e)." In *Queer Necropolitics*, eds. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, 51–71. Routledge.

Masters, Cristina (2010). "Cyborg Soldiers and Militarised Masculinities." In *Gender Matters in Global Politics. a Feminist Introduction to International Relations*, ed. L. J. Shepherd, L. J., 176–89. Routledge.

Mbembe, Achille (2022). *The Earthly Community*. V2.

Moore, Margaret (2019). "The Taking of Territory and the Wrongs of Colonialism." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 27(1): 87–106.

Mostov, Julie (2008). *Soft Borders: Rethinking Sovereignty and Democracy*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Mylonas, Harris, and Maya Tudor (2021). "Nationalism: What We Know and What We Still Need to Know." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24: 109–32.

Nancy, Jean-Luc (1991). *The Inoperable Community*. University of Minnesota Press.

Nancy, Jean-Luc (2000 [1996]). *Being Singular Plural*. Stanford University Press.

Nancy, Jean-Luc (2008). *Corpus*. Fordham University Press.

Neyrat, Frederic (2015). "No/us: The Nietzschean Democracy of Jean-Luc Nancy." *Diacrtitics* 43(4): 66–87.

Nylen, Alexandra J. (2020) "Frontier Justice: International Law and "Lawless" Spaces in the 'War on Terror'." *European Journal of International Relations* 26(3): 627–59.

Ong, Aihwa (2020). "Buoyancy: Blue Territorialization of Asian Power." In *Voluminous States: Sovereignty, Materiality, and the Territorial Imagination*, ed. Billé, F, 191–204. Duke University.

Pape, Robert a (2005). *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House.

Puar, Jasbir (2017 [2007]). *Terrorist Assemblages*, 2nd ed. Duke University Press.

Puar, Jasbir (2017). *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Duke University Press.

Rancière, Jacques (1998). "The Cause of the Other." *Parallax* 4(2): 25–33.

Rancière, Jacques (2021 [2007]). *On the Shores of Politics*. Verso.

Ruiz-Serna, Daniel (2023). *When Forests Run Amok: War and Its Afterlives in Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Territories*. Duke University Press.

Ryngaert, Cedric (2016). "Non-State Actors: Carving out a Space in a State-Centred International Legal System." *Netherlands International Law Review* 63: 183–95.

Sjoberg, Laura, and Caron E. Gentry (2007). *Mothers, Monsters, Whores. Women's Violence in Global Politics*. Zed Books.

Spivak, Gayatri (1988), "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson, Lawrence Grossberg, 24–28. Macmillan.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (1996). "Women and the Biological Reproduction of 'the Nation'." *Women's Studies International Forum* 19(1/2): 17–24.

Ypi, Lea (2012). "A Permissive Theory of Territorial Rights." *European Journal of Philosophy* 22(2): 288–312.