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- [New & Forthcoming](#)
- [Browse By Author](#)
- [Browse By Title](#)
- [Complete Subject List](#)
- [Complete Series List](#)
- [Out Of Print](#)
- [Catalogs](#)

Shadows of War

Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century

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Prologue

These people say that war is a crocodile which is always hungry. It has dishonest eyes and a thrashing tail. It creeps up quietly while you wash at the river, while you pound your corn, while you rock your old mother in her time of dying.

It is with you always, war, waiting to explode your life and throw you down beside a river to die. War wants death, always; war wants to quiet your mother's songs. War wants your sorrow.¹

War is one of those impossible words: it refers to war as a soldier in Sudan lives it, as a child in Sri Lanka experiences it, as a torture victim in Argentina's dirty war felt it, as a Greek in Troy died it. A mere three letters covers a sweep of hundreds of thousands of events across several millennia. How do we understand so vast a phenomenon while retaining the vibrancy of the lives that constitute it?

There is an image of war that has stuck in my mind for nearly two decades. It seems to point toward some deep understanding, something that stands just outside of conscious grasp, or maybe beyond intellectual thought to a more profound conception of . . . what? Not just war, but something that tugs at the heart of what it means to be human. And in the curious combination that links devastating disasters with the profoundly mundane, this image involves a watermelon amid some of the worst violence marking recent decades. A Sri Lankan acquaintance and I had traveled to the July 1983 Kataragama religious festival in southeastern Sri Lanka. She is a middle-aged woman from the capital city of Colombo, a mother with a ready laugh and a maternal charm that holds a bit of impishness. We had shared a room, and I remember her unpacking her travel bag the first day; she had a towel, food, and other useful items I had not thought to pack. She laughingly lectured me: "Carry what you will need."

The 1983 riots in which thousands were killed in seven days broke out the last night of the festival.² No one knew the violence was about to erupt as they said goodbye to one another and began their journeys home. Almost no one: curiously, the last two evenings of the festival several of the homeless "mentally ill" people spoke at length and with great emotion about the impending violence. One directed his agitated monologue at me, perhaps because I was a foreigner. As a large crowd gathered around us, he launched into an aggressive explanation of the cataclysmic violence that was soon to erupt, the blood that would stain the streets and homes of the country, the screams of pain and anger he could hear, and the ways in which the responsibility for this violence went all the way to my country in cycles of global inequality. The audience around us sought to brush off his belligerent words with a reference to his madness, but a troubling clarity in his speech unsettled all of us.

Just before my traveling companion and I left Kataragama, she found a large watermelon, and bought it to take home to her family. She tried to give me a hug as we parted company to travel to our respective homes and broke out laughing as she juggled her suitcase in one hand and the watermelon in the other.

The bus she took to Colombo arrived at a city overtaken by flames and overrun by mobs. The next time I saw her, she told me of that night:

We left the Kataragama festival that is meant to put the world together and arrived home to find the world being taken apart. We arrived to a nightmare worse than any the mind could conceive in dream. As we took the bus out of Kataragama, night began to fall, and we were lulled to sleep by the rocking of the bus, the camaraderie of sharing food, and warm memories of the festival. Sometime after midnight as we began to near Colombo, we opened our eyes to a world gone mad. Entire blocks of buildings were in flames, and people broke out of these buildings aflame themselves. Buses and cars burned in the roads, some with the occupants locked inside. Crowds of people ran in the streets, some shouting and beating people, overturning cars and setting them on fire, attacking homes and businesses. . . . others running for safety and for their lives. Nothing made sense. As buses were being stopped, passengers being hauled out and killed, and the vehicles firebombed, our bus driver stopped suddenly and turned all of us passengers out onto the street, and drove away. It was nowhere near the bus terminal, and none of us knew where we were.

This fact startles me to this day: I grew up in this city, I know it as home; I know its streets and alleys, its shops and landmarks. I know my way around by a lifetime of knowledge—the pretty wall Mr. Wickramasingham built on this corner, the funny shaped tree in the open field by Mrs. Dharmaratna's shop, the temple my friend took her child to when he fell ill, the movie theatre painted bright blue. But that night, I didn't know where I was, or how to get home. I didn't recognize the city I spent my whole life in. Even that isn't really true: it tore such a cruel wound because I recognized it and I didn't, all at once. Amid the familiar was such horror. Those pretty walls and funny trees, the shops and temples, were in flames or destroyed, the dead and wounded lay there now, and mobs seemed to appear from empty space, overpower all reason, and disappear again, only to be replaced by another just down the road. The police did nothing, or

maybe they did too much.

I had all my belongings from my trip with me, my handbag, my wrap, my suitcase, and that large watermelon. I just set my feet moving and tried to find my way home. Every street I turned down seemed as unfamiliar as the last. The horror never stopped. Fires, mobs, beatings, murder. I was exhausted, and my mind could not grasp what it saw. Nothing was clear: not who was killing whom, nor why. Not where it might be safe nor how to get there. Not how to respond nor whom to turn to, and no way of finding out.

I walked for hours. I grew painfully tired, and the things I was carrying seemed to weigh more and more. At some point, I stopped and set my handbag down on the sidewalk and left it there. It just seemed too much to carry. A while later I took my wrap and wiped the sweat and soot off my face, and left the wrap there on someone's fence as I picked up my suitcase and that watermelon and trudged off again in search of my home. Somehow in my mind I thought I'd go back and collect my handbag the next day—I really thought it would just be sitting there where I left it. That's how hard it is to think realistically when everything around you is unrealistic. I left all my identification, my money, everything sitting there on the road while I carried off that heavy unwieldy watermelon with me. Sometime later, it might have been hours or days to my mind, the suitcase became unbearably heavy, and I set that down too and left it. But I never let go of that watermelon. To this day, I can't explain it. But I carried that watermelon all night long through all the chaos and horror, and finally arrived home clutching that darned thing, having left everything else on the road.

You know, my handbag had all my necessities in it: my identification, my money and bank cards, my glasses and licenses. My suitcase had my favorite saris, my daily necessities and medicines, and presents and blessed religious relics for my family. I have always been considered the organized and responsible one of the family. And yet I left all these beside the road and carried home a heavy watermelon through some of the worst rioting imaginable. I will always wonder at that, at the will I had to get home, to keep walking through hell, and to carry a watermelon. How it is we all survive the unbearable.

This is the image that sticks with me: What made my friend drop her bags, with their familial associations and useful documents, in fatigue and terror, but hold on to a watermelon? "Carry what you need," she had said in Kataragama. In the seven days of the rioting, I watched thousands of people act and react to the events at hand, each in his or her own unique way; and hundreds of these people's responses made a strong impression on me. Each story, each behavior I observed during the riots, was a piece of the puzzle, a call to follow the question. But what was the puzzle, what was the question? Perhaps this watermelon is why I study war.

I doubt she would want me to use her real name. I was speaking with her half a world away, and nearly two decades after the Sri Lankan riots. But she would understand the story of the watermelon: she lives in a warzone where one-third of the entire population have been forced to flee their homes, and one-twelfth of the population have lost their lives to war in the last ten years. She had made time in a very busy day to sit and talk with me about the impact of the war on daily life. As the conversation came to an end, I thanked her for her time and asked her if there was anything I could do for her, to reciprocate her kindness.

Yes, *she said*, there is. We have tens of thousands of internally displaced people in this area who have lost everything to the war. They do any kind of work to try to make enough to buy food and keep their families alive. This often falls on the women's shoulders: Do you know, in most of the camps for the displaced here, the majority of households are headed by a woman? Women and girls scrape together just enough to get some food or goods to sell to make some money to feed their families.

And then you see the police and the military, taking what little these girls and women have. They feel entitled. You see it all the time: a woman will be walking down the street with goods to sell, and the police or the soldiers will just go up and take it.

They have the power, she has nothing now. And she may not make it without that bit to sell—how is she to survive?

What can you do for me? Tell this story. Write about it. Tell the truth of war and what happens to people like these women who stand on the thin line of survival.

For the people standing on that thin line of survival between living and becoming a casualty of war, the impact of these actions is of existential proportions. They may even be cataclysmic. But for most people in the world, these brushes with life, death, and profiteering are largely invisible. They are invisible because militarily, much of war violates human sensibilities; because logistically, the front lines are difficult to document with neutrality; because economically, fortunes are made and lost in less than ethical ways; because politically, power covers its tracks.

The story doesn't end with the women giving up their goods to the police and military. This is just ground zero of the front-line intersections of war and invisible economies that ultimately extend worldwide. Just as these troops demand payment from poor women, so must they pay up the ladder, compensating their commanding officers. And their commanding officers are able to demand far greater goods in their own sphere of work: at the highest levels of power, they may control national concessions over valuable resources, as well as the companies that work the concessions, transport the goods, and oversee the profits. This might be called corruption if it stopped at the national level, but these systems of profit are international. In the shadows, beyond public scrutiny, commanders may partner with international wildcatters who move consumer items, from weapons to cigarettes, into a warzone while moving valuable resources, from diamonds to timber, out to the cosmopolitan centers of the world in less than legal ways.³ More visibly, they may partner with international state-sponsored vendors to procure expensive weapons and goods—exports that peacetime countries are eager to sell for their own profits, but which rarely match the actual needs of the purchasing country and its war.

Systems of partnership, alliance, coercion, dependency, and outright violation variously mark these transactions, from the poor woman who gives up her only food to the foot soldier all the way to the

vast global flows of weapons or resources for hard currency. It is in these intersections that power in its most fundamental sense is forged. In the midst of vast political systems in which riots and wars scar human landscapes and mold global economies, a woman discards her handbags and clutches a watermelon in trying to get home in a city besieged by mobs. This, in total, is the body of war and the hope for peace.

How do we understand, not abstract text-bound definitions of war's violence, but what it lives like, experiences like, tastes, feels, looks, and moves like? Many of the truths of war disappear in unsung deeds and unrecorded acts.⁴ "The war tells us: nothing is what it seems. But the war also says: I am the reality, I am the ground under your feet, the certainty that lies beneath all uncertainties."⁵ What place do we give to the profound good that beats in the hearts of so many I meet on the front lines that "conventional wisdom" tells us are populated with Hobbesian brutes? At the broadest level these inquiries merge into the question: "What is war?" Or perhaps more accurately, "Why would humans engage in one of the most profoundly unpleasant activities imaginable—one capable of extinguishing humans themselves?"

I soon found that there are no theories of war or—depending on what you are willing to accept as a "theory"—far too many of them. Ask a scholar for an explanation of war, and he or she will most likely snicker at your naiveté in expecting that something so large and poorly defined could even be explained. Ask a nonspecialist, however, and you will get any of a dozen explanations, each proffered with utter confidence: It is because of our innate aggressiveness . . . or because of innate male aggressiveness . . . or because of imperialism and greed . . . or overpopulation and a shortage of resources . . . or it is simply a manifestation of unknowable evil . . . Our understanding of war, it occurred to me, is about as confused and uninformed as theories of disease were roughly 200 years ago.⁶

These questions have led me along a continually unfolding set of inquiries, across several continents, and through two decades of research. After the 1983 Sri Lanka riots I began to study riot phenomena; as the war in Sri Lanka escalated, I went on to research paramilitary, military, and guerrilla warfare. Each inquiry prompted further questions. What happens to women, female guerrillas, children, and healers treating not only war wounds but also entire societies bleeding from assaults on their core institutions and values? How do civilians live their lives on the front lines? Who are the true brokers of war? Of peace? After conducting research in Sri Lanka for a decade, I began comparative work in Southern Africa in 1988, focusing on Mozambique at the height of its war. When Mozambique moved from one of the most destructive wars of the time to a successfully brokered peace, my research explored the "good," as well as the violence, that exists on the front lines and ultimately makes peace possible. In 1996 I began work in Angola, a country in many ways similar to Mozambique, but itself unable to maintain a peace accord until 2002. Violence is defined both by local realities and histories and by internationally forged norms of militarization: a large and well-developed set of networks stretch across the globe and into the most remote battlefield localities to provide everything required by militaries, from weapons to training manuals, food, medicines, tools, and state-of-the-art computers. If war is powerfully shaped by the intersections of individual acts, national histories, and transnational cultures of militarization and economic gain, so too are the more profound questions that attach to studies of war: What is power? Violence? In/humanity? Resolution?

These observations set in motion a new set of research issues: much of this trade passes across boundaries of il/legality. In doing the research for this book, I found these "extra-state" exchange systems—what I here call "shadow" networks—are fundamental to war, and in a profound irony, are central to processes of development, for good or bad. Simultaneously, my research showed that their centrality in world economic and power systems is accompanied by an almost inverse proportion of information on them. As this book will explore, a startlingly large portion of the entire global economy passes through the shadows: 90 percent of Angola's economy; 50 percent of Kenya's, Italy's, and Peru's economies; 40 to 60 percent of Russia's economy; and between 10 and 30 percent of the United States economy enters into extra-state transactions.⁷ But a comparable percentage of research and publication does not take place on the non-legal. This of course prompts the question, "Why?"

The repercussions of leaving extra-state realities in the analytical shadows are extensive. Today, trillions of dollars and millions of people circulate around the globe outside of formal legal reckoning. This set of economic and personnel flows ranges from the mundane (the trade in cigarettes and pirated software), through the illicit (gems and timber), to the dangerous (weapons and illegal narcotics).

The trillions generated in these extra-legal financial empires must be laundered to legitimacy, and thus enter global financial markets in uncharted ways. The relative freedom from controls found in warzones and the financial powerhouses found in the cosmopolitan centers of the world combine in ways that tend to merge war and global profiteering.

Complex production, transport, distribution, and consumption systems have emerged to move goods and services through the shadows. Sophisticated banking systems exist to transfer unregulated monies. Highly developed regulatory mechanisms are in place to oversee extra-state trade—from lawyers to conflict resolution specialists. The profits have a substantial impact on the economies of all of the world's countries. And much of this remains invisible to formal state-based accounting systems and theories. We can't, with any accuracy, tell what impact hundreds of billions of dollars worth of illicit weapons gains has on European stock markets; how laundered drug proceeds affect the financial viability of smaller states; how market manipulation of unregulated goods affects interest rates and currency valuations internationally.

Nor, without studying the shadows, can we predict crises such as the Asian market crash in the late 1990s or the September 11, 2001, attack on the USA. The shadows permeate these realms. Extra-state economies are central to the world's power grids.

We have grown used to a world where formal texts on military and economic matters deal only tangentially, if at all, with the extra-state. But this is a dangerous habit: What professional discipline can condone understanding only a part of the scope of its field of inquiry? The consequences of this practice are visible in myriad ways, which the chapters of this book will explore. An example suffices here: the United States intelligence services have taken considerable criticism for not predicting and averting the September 11 attack. But much of what undergirded the assaults took place along shadow channels. The intelligence services, for all their purported interest in the invisible world, function in an epistemological universe that still relies heavily on the classical economic, political, and military texts—texts that take their definitions from the realm of the formal and the state based. If a more developed knowledge of extra-state and extra-legal networks existed, the impending attack—and the activities of those who orchestrated it—would have been more visible. Solutions are predicated on knowing the whole of the problem, not merely the classically visible parts.

This book follows a very straightforward organizational format: war, extra-state realities, and (the problems of) peace—beginning to end. Each chapter is devoted to a stage along this continuum: the beginnings of political violence; the heights of war and the experiences of violence; the nature of power; the shadowy il/legalities that sustain war; the move toward peace; the impediments to resolution; and the reemergence of shadow powers as a central influence in in/stability, peace, and development on a global scale.

It may be that in the past we could understand a locale solely by focusing our gaze on it. Perhaps not. But today, clearly, locales are not islands surrounded by the vast and churning waters of fluid geographical space. Today humans feel the tug and pull of societal waves generated in regions far afield; they share the currents, even the riptides, that move across vast global stretches. For example, my experiences in Sri Lanka took on greater meaning when I began to do research in Mozambique. When I saw the same cast of characters selling arms, profiteering, and brokering peace in Mozambique as I had in Sri Lanka, I realized that these international players were not necessarily ideologically linked to the causes defining either South Asia or Southern Africa, nor were they necessarily drawn into a national drama for a specific set of reasons unique to this "locale." They were international players. In following the networks brokering war and peace across all distinctions of legal and illegal, I realized that these represent anthropological flows that span the globe both physically and epistemologically—at once dependent on locales and local cultural knowledges but also linking across them.

What, then, is ethnography?

The answer is not the same for everyone. But for me, and for this particular research, ethnography *must be able to follow the question*. It must be able to capture not only the site, but also the smell, feel, taste, and motion of a locale, of a people that share a common space and intertwined lives. It must be able to grasp at least a fleeting glimpse of the dreams that people carry with them and that carry people to distant places of world and mind; of the creative imaginary through which people give substance to their thoughts and lives. And quite pragmatically, it must be able to delve into why a soldier pulls the trigger against one human and not another; to illuminate how people suffer the ravages of violence and grieving and still craft humanitarian resistance; to chart the realities of how weapons are traded for diamonds and power, and the lives of those who trade them.

Today, such questions can't be encompassed by studying a single site.⁸ The gun that fires the bullet in Mozambique was made in the USA, or Bulgaria, or Brazil, or China. It was traded through a vast network of agents, "advisors," and alliances—all of whom have a say in how the weapon should be used: who can legitimately be killed (and who cannot, starting with the arms vendors), and how this is all to be justified. Perhaps the weapon was smuggled through the legal world into the shadows, entering another global set of alliances. The soldier who aims the gun aims along years of training, not only on how to kill, but how to draw divisions, hatred, fears, and justifications—a mix of cultural and military lore that has been fed by everything from local grievances through foreign military advisors to global media and music.⁹ All of this intersects to shape the lives of everyone involved in war, from the elite decision makers to the youth-soldiers fighting on shifting and hazy front lines.

"We just got a dead Irish Protestant mercenary, you want to see his body?" the fifteen-year-old said as he propped his AK-47 against a tree trunk, sat down next to me, and asked for a cigarette. It was at the height of the war in Mozambique, itself a long way from Europe and the conflicts in Northern Ireland. The boy and I sat in a bombed-out town in the middle of Mozambique, many hundreds of kilometers from the country's capital and cosmopolitan centers. We were, as traditional scholarship would say, in a profoundly "local" setting. "No thanks," I replied, "but how do you know he's a Protestant from Northern Ireland?"

"We looked at his identity papers," the boy said, looking at me as if I were a half-wit. The boy was thin, and dressed only in a pair of tattered shorts and T-shirt. His gun was strung on an old piece of cloth. He had been press-ganged into joining the military, and had never left his home village region until he walked out as a "soldier" about the time he hit puberty. The boy settled in the sun, and began to talk:

You know, these white guys are often a whole lot meaner than we are. I mean, we fight and we kill and all, but it's like these white guys think killing is the answer to everything. We have so many white guys, so many foreigners, around; training us, getting mad at us, fighting us, making money from us. Some are OK, I got sent to this training camp far away, and there were some who were friendly, tried to make sure we got enough to eat, and worked to teach us. People from all over. Got a whole lot of strange ideas, stuff that sometimes' useful, but a lot of times just didn't make a lot of sense, like it was a lot of trouble to do things that way, and dangerous too. I think fighting like that gives them weird ideas about fighting. Bruce Lee, *he laughs*, now that's who they should send out to train us. That's where it's at. But who knows, it's all beyond trying to guess. Truth is, I don't think a lot of these guys care if we win or lose. We all see them moving on the mines, doing "business." Someone's making a whole lot in this war, and I can tell you, it sure isn't me.

If I were going to understand this war, and this youth's experiences in it, what story would I best follow? I could follow his movements; those of his compatriots and the foreigners he interacted with; the media and movies that shaped his ideas; the war merchants and profiteers from around the world that passed through his life, his country, and its war; the various cultures of militarization that move from warzone to warzone around the world; the vast international systems of economic gain that shape political violence. This "local" youth-soldier was far from "local." The Mozambican war was deeply internationalized. Where does war begin and end?

Ethnography must be able to bring a people and a place to life in the eyes and hearts of those who have not been there. But it must also be able to follow not a place, but "place-less-ness," the flows of a good, an idea, an international military culture, a shadow; of the way these place-less realities intersect and are shaped by associations with other places and other place-less forces. And, as this book will explore in discussing shadow powers, ethnography must be able to illuminate not only a non-place, but also the invisible—that which is rendered non-visible for reasons of power and profit. Power circulates in the corridors of institutions *and* in the shadows. I will in fact argue that ethnography is an excellent way to study the invisibilities of power—invisibility that is in part constructed by convincing people not to study the shadows, convincing them that the place-less is impossible to situate in study, that it is "out of site." Ethnography gives substance and site to all human endeavor, merely by caring about the day to day of human existence.

In a study such as this, some things must remain in the shadows, unseen. And this in turn requires new considerations of what constitutes ethnography. Anthropology developed as a discipline rooted in fieldwork, and as such it named names and mapped places. In the localized settings in which anthropologists worked, every quote was enmeshed in a web of social relations such that everyone knew who spoke, to whom, and why. It was this "factuality" that lent anthropology an aura of objectivity; and alternatively, the respect of the subject.

But war and the shadows change this equation. Local knowledge is crucial to understanding, yet quoting local informants can mean a death sentence for them. When it comes to massacres, human rights violations, massive corruption, and global profiteering, even situating one's quotes and data in a "locatable" place and person can be dangerous. Academic responsibility here rests in protecting one's sources, not in revealing them.

Traditional scholarship might say that leaving out the names and the places behind the quotes waters down the impact of the research. Having struggled with this question for years now, I have come to disagree. Part of the reason so many aspects of war and extra-state behavior are "invisible" to formal accounting is precisely the problems and dangers of the research: people elect not to publish at all in lieu of endangering their work by asking, and then repeating, the "unspeakable." Perhaps even more important than "naming names and mapping places" at this stage of research into the intersections of war, peace, and shadows is understanding how these systems of human interaction unfold across people's lives and global transactions. The systems of knowledge and action that undergird these realities resonate around the world. Exposing the name of the poor peasant who saw his family murdered will not shed light on the circumstances surrounding that murder—it will merely endanger his life; and exposing the name of the general who is profiteering from war will not illuminate the international networks of extra-legal economies and power—it will merely endanger my ability to return to this field site.

This is not to leave a study hanging in mid-air. The field data presented in my work is all firsthand. In lieu of naming specific names, it sheds light on roles found from one conflict to the next; it maps the flux and flow of violence, shadow powers, and peace-building along connected sites to larger transnational patterns. The quotes throughout this work are from people who populate the immediacy of these realities. In protecting these people and their larger stories, I have given considerable thought as to how to present each story: in some cases I situate it in a locale; in others a region, and in those most sensitive I leave the story sans-locale altogether. When asked to provide more concrete and situated data—the names and places of traditional scholarship—I must respond that endangering those with whom we work endangers the very integrity of our discipline. Weaving together these layers and levels is the best way I know at present to explore, and begin to expose, the visible and invisible realities that attend to war, peace, and shadow powers that are shaping the course of the twenty-first century.

I'll never know why my friend in Sri Lanka left her handbag, wrap, and suitcase in the roadway, yet carried a watermelon as she struggled to get home through the rioting. She says she doubts she will ever figure it out herself. But we speculated about this for months:

You know, *she said*, it seems illogical to leave what I might most need in the midst of a life-threatening night. But, when you think of it, it seems illogical to kill people for an identity: are you Tamil, Sinhalese, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist? It seems illogical to target people on their jobs and associations, voter registration designations, and location of their homes. My handbag was filled with such "identity": my registrations and designations, licenses and addresses. It just occurred to me: these are like licenses to kill. Leaving my glasses, my keys? Perhaps I just didn't want to see what was going on; and what are keys but an illusion of safety shattered by mobs who just break windows and enter houses? What did I care that night if I broke my window to get into my home? If I had to break in, that would be wonderful, it would mean my house had not been attacked. My suitcase? It was heavy, and when your life is on the line, all those pretty saris and comfortable shoes don't mean a whole lot. But I think it was more: all around me people were looting the goods of the maimed and the murdered, of the burning shops and the deserted houses. What have we humans become, I believe I worried that night, that we will feast on the dead for a television or a trinket? When did we begin to value goods above good? My suitcase, filled with my goods, became heavy in more ways than one. I left those behind. I left behind the presents I bought for my family. Somehow I think they seemed to embody the religious strife that was tearing my country to shreds that night. But that watermelon. It was heavy, and unwieldy, and I can't imagine what I looked like, an old mother struggling down burning streets covered in dirt and ash carrying a large watermelon in her arms. But it was something pure of violence; a present for my family that cost no one their life; something that seemed to represent sanity and

succor in a world gone mad. A watermelon carries its own seeds for the future. Perhaps that is what I was trying to do.

Notes

1. Patricia Pinnock, *Skyline* (Johannesburg: David Philip Publishers, 2000), 15.

2. The riots reflected larger and more enduring religious, ethnic, and political fissures in Sri Lanka. The population of the country is 30 percent Sinhalese (Sinhala speaking) Buddhists, and approximately 12 percent Tamil (Tamil speaking) Hindu. Government and military positions are predominately held by Sinhalese Buddhists. The Tamils, a majority of whom live in the North of the country, have long sought better representation in government and policy—either by democratic process or by the creation of a separate state. In 1983, an armed Tamil faction retaliated against government repression of Tamils by a guerrilla attack that killed thirteen soldiers. The riots were ostensibly sparked by this: some Sinhalese (including civilians, soldiers, religious figures, and government employees) formed into mobs and attacked Tamils. Tamils did not riot against the Sinhalese in return. The violence spread nationwide and lasted a full week, during which time thousands of Tamils lost their lives and one-sixth of the country's infrastructure was destroyed.

3. *Wildcatting*, as I use the term here, is based in international business concerns that can be legal, indeterminately legal, or downright illegal—but yield quick, and often vast, profits, commonly in the context of political instability.

4. War so little matches classic accounts of war that a truism has emerged for me through the years I have studied violence at its epicenters: if you want to prepare yourself for studying violence and peace, assume that what popular wisdom in society—the prefabricated configurations of "truth" that ripple across the fluid bodies of social talk and text—tells you is exactly the opposite.

5. Mattijs van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars, and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilization and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 30.

6. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites* (London: Virago, 1997), 1-2.

7. Avner Greif, "Contracting, Enforcement, and Efficiency: Economics beyond the Law," in *Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics 1996*, ed. Michael Bruno and Boris Pleskovic (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1996), 239-65. These shadows are not peripheral to a country's economic and political systems, but deeply enmeshed in them, as the following quote addresses: "How has this happened? How has the Cosa Nostra come to play such an important role in the core economy of New York City? . . . It is an astonishing and lamentable chapter in the history of American law enforcement that almost until the end of a half century as Director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover denied the existence of "mafia" or "Cosa Nostra" and refused to devote any special intelligence or law enforcement resources to this species of American criminal. . . . It is not only law enforcement that has failed to come to grips with organized crime. The American political system has not set itself against organized crime, in part no doubt because organized crime is active in politics." Ronald Goldstock et al., *Corruption and Racketeering in the New York City Construction Industry: The Final Report of the N.Y. State Organized Crime Task Force* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), xxvi-xxvii.

8. The work presented here is not traditional ethnography, though it may well become traditional along the course of a continuously interconnected twenty-first century. It addresses questions that flow across borders and neat distinctions. "Ethnography is predicated upon attention to the everyday, on intimate knowledge of face-to-face communication and groups. The idea that ethnography might expand from its committed localism to represent a system much better apprehended by abstract models and aggregate statistics seems antithetical to its very nature and thus beyond its limits. Although multi-sited ethnography is an exercise in mapping terrain, its goal is not holistic representation and ethnographic portrayal of the world system as a totality. Rather, it claims that an ethnography of a cultural formation in the world system is also an ethnography of the system, and therefore can't be understood only in terms of the conventional single-site *mise-en-scène* of ethnographic research. . . . For ethnography, then, there is no global in the local-global contrast now so frequently evoked. The global is an emergent dimension of arguing about the connection among sites in a multi-sited ethnography." George Marcus, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 83.

9. We can no longer separate images of Vietnam from rock'n'roll era music, stories of the rebels in Sierra Leone from the movie *Rambo: First Blood*, Bosnia from the feature-length films set in the war, Afghanistan from CNN.