



ARCHITECTURE AND ARMED CONFLICT

The politics of destruction

Edited by J. M. Mancini and Keith Bresnahan



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ARCHITECTURE AND ARMED CONFLICT

Architecture and Armed Conflict is the first multi-authored scholarly book to address this theme from a comparative, interdisciplinary perspective. By bringing together specialists from a range of relevant fields, and with knowledge of case studies across time and space, it provides the first synthetic body of research on the complex, multifaceted subject of architectural destruction in the context of conflict.

The book addresses several specific research questions:

- How has the destruction of buildings and landscapes figured in recent historical conflicts, and how have people and states responded to it?
- How has the destruction of architecture been represented in different historical periods, and to what ends?
- What are the relationships between the destruction of architecture and the destruction of art, particularly iconoclasm?
- If architectural destruction is a salient feature of many armed conflicts, how does it feature in post-conflict environments?
- What are the relationships between architectural destruction and processes of restoration, recreation or replacement?

Considering multiple conflicts, multiple time periods, and multiple locations allows this international cohort of authors to provide an essential primer for this crucial topic.

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INTRODUCTION

Keith Bresnahan and J. M. Mancini

Carthage must be destroyed.

Cato the Elder, conclusion to speeches in the Roman senate, 2nd Century BCE

Throughout human history, armed conflicts have been attended by architectural destruction, damage, and defacement. Whether practiced intentionally or collaterally, whether wrought by invading forces or internal factions, and whether involving civic, domestic, or sacred buildings, armed conflict has long-term, and even permanent, consequences for the built environment and for human life in interaction with it.

In a general sense, destruction attends on architecture. Along with conception and construction, it is an essential component of any building's life-cycle: the moment when a structure ceases to be—whether crumbling by neglect or the force of time; swept away by natural disaster; or pulled down in the name of development, public safety, or war. However, destruction has been less frequently analysed than other intrinsic elements of architecture. Indeed, it has typically been regarded as an essentially negative act that does not even belong to architecture as such, but which is seen, rather, as the effect of other contexts. And where destruction has been an object of historical analysis, such inquiries have tended to focus on planned demolition and corresponding struggles for historic preservation, as in Haussmann's Paris or Robert Moses' New York City.¹

Of architectural destruction in the context of armed conflict, however, we have relatively few studies—with, as a counterexample, an emerging body of literature on the Second World War including such works as Nicola Lambourne's War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During the Second World War, Mark Clapson and Peter J. Larkham's The Blitz and its Legacy: Wartime Destruction to Post-War Reconstruction, Jean-Louis Cohen's Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War, Richard Overy's The Bombing War: Europe 1939–1945, and Erin Barnett and Philomena Mariana's exhibition catalogue Hiroshima: Ground Zero 1945. But this is only a recent development. As late as 1999, W.G. Sebald's On The Natural History of Destruction noted a near-total absence in German literature and scholarship of discussions of the vast destruction visited on German cities—an observation that would have been apt well beyond Germany. Moreover, the

outpouring of works on the Second World War has not been matched with respect to other conflicts. With the exception of a small number of studies—notably, Andrew Herscher's pathbreaking Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict and the journalist Robert Bevan's The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War—very few attempts have been made to analyse the architectural dynamics of conflicts more remote in time or space than the Second World War (or less central to the hierarchies of English-language scholarship), or to consider architectural destruction from multiple perspectives.²

Architecture and Armed Conflict: The politics of destruction thus participates in an important scholarly turn, but also seeks to open new avenues of inquiry. Unlike most previous studies of architectural destruction, which tend to address a single place or period, and which increasingly risk casting the Second World War as exceptional, this volume will widen the frame to include case studies ranging from the ancient to the recent, and covering disparate geographical contexts. Nonetheless, in our attempt to bring together case studies across time and space, we also insist on the need to recognize the historical specificity of individual times and places, and the specific dynamics that pertain to architectural destruction within those contexts. We have grasped this specificity by inviting individual scholars with particular linguistic, regional, temporal, and methodological expertise to consider in detail case studies of architectural destruction that would otherwise either escape mention in more general surveys, or would be addressed only to a limited specialist audience. In bringing these accounts together here, we hope that the resulting collection will contain original insights both for the specialist reader and contribute to a broader understanding of architectural destruction in relationship to armed conflict, through the varied perspectives and methodological approaches reflected in its 13 chapters.

Following this aim, our inclusion of a range of methodological perspectives is not accidental, but reflects our view that one of the barriers to the analysis of architectural destruction has been the uneasy way that it fits between the boundaries of disciplinary scholarship. We assume that the destruction of architecture—and, to a great extent, architecture more generally—cannot be understood from the perspective of a single discipline. Hence, in addition to scholars in architectural history, the contributors to this volume also represent disciplines as diverse as anthropology, archaeology, history, the history of art and design, and historic preservation.

Rather than taking destruction and its effects for granted, the following chapters engage in the necessary task of interpreting destruction and its representations, through a close-grained analysis of the specific intents and effects of destruction in different historical and cultural arenas. Towards this end, the chapters in the book address several specific questions. How has the destruction of buildings and landscapes figured in recent historical conflicts, and how have people and states responded to it? How has the destruction of architecture been represented in different historical periods, and to what ends? What are the relationships between the destruction of architecture and iconoclasm? If architectural destruction is a salient feature of many armed conflicts, how does it feature in post-conflict environments? What are the relationships between architectural destruction and processes of reconstruction, restoration, and replacement?

Chapters in the first section of the book consider the complex trajectories of destruction and response in two historically recent conflicts. Christina Schwenkel's 'Architecture and Dwelling in the "War of Destruction" in Vietnam' uncovers the buried history of the mass bombings of Vinh City by the United States. In it, she immediately challenges the

exceptionalism of the Second World War—and the tendency of 'academic scholarship...to focus its historical lens on the grander cityscapes reduced to rubble, such as those of Europe during the Second World War, as if the destruction of "higher" civilizations is somehow more catastrophic than that of "underdeveloped" nations like Vietnam' (p. 14). Schwenkel's chapter is not a lament, however, but a probing account of Vietnamese and international responses to the American air war that, notably, investigates 'the liminal period after destruction before reconstruction could begin—indeed, before the air attacks even ended in Vietnam', analyzing the 'modes of habitation corresponding to this intermediary state' and its 'built forms, some of which...came to constitute a distinct architecture of dwelling in war' (p. 19). Schwenkel's approach thus has important implications not only for understanding the intersections between architecture and war in this instance, but also for the much more general question of how architectural practice ought to be conceptualised and periodised.

Darja Radović Mahečić's 'The Case of Dubrovnik-UNESCO World Heritage Site Under Siege, 1991-92' explores a case study from the most destructive instance of architectural destruction in Europe since the Second World War—the violent break-up of the former Yugoslavia. Like Schwenkel, she analyses the underlying motivations for destruction in wartime, in this case by the Serbian-controlled Yugoslav People's Army (INA), but argues that—in contrast to American forces in Vietnam, whose destructive actions were underpinned in Schwenkel's view by 'indifference' and 'lack of understanding'—the JNA pursued a policy of deliberate destruction precisely because of their understanding of the significance of Dubrovnik's architecture. That is to say, 'Dubrovnik was targeted because of its importance'—and, in particular, its architectural embodiment of a 'historical tolerance for many civilizations and styles' that was at odds with Slobodan Milošević's ideal of 'Serbian hegemony' (p. 36). Radović Mahečić also discusses the ineffectiveness of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict to prevent targeted destruction, and the relatively limited degree to which violations to the convention have been prosecuted. Taken together, these case studies illustrate the extent to which architectural destruction has characterised armed conflict in the post-Second World War era—but also the heterogeneity of rationales for, responses to, and representations of such destruction.

Chapters in the next section of the book explore the representation and reproduction of architectural destruction, in images, texts, and material artifacts. Across a wide geographic and historical range, the chapters in this section all focus on the ways in which representations of architectural destruction can take on a life of their own, retrospectively generating meaning and value. Their analyses reveal the extent to which representations of destruction do not merely depict but also construct the significance of acts of violence against architecture (or the destroyed structures themselves) and demonstrate that in many cases, destruction is less an end-point—the straightforward expression of political will—than the beginning of a process of meaning-making. This section begins with Heather D. Baker's consideration of some of the world's very earliest representations of deliberate architectural destruction, from the Neo-Assyrian Empire (c. 911-612 BC). Focusing on the royal inscriptions providing information about enemy cities and palaces destroyed by the Assyrian kings in the course of their military conquests, Baker's chapter places these early accounts of architectural destruction in their historical context, relating them to a much older Mesopotamian tradition. Baker's observations regarding these early representations of architectural destruction—for example, in the formulaic character of many of these descriptions-demonstrates not only that architectural destruction is deeply embedded in the history of war and conquest from

our earliest records, but also that the relationship between destruction and representation, and the rhetorical construction of destruction's significance, is as old as destruction itself.

Continuing along these lines, Keith Bresnahan's chapter, 'Remaking the Bastille: Architectural Destruction and Revolutionary Consciousness in France, 1789–94' explores a seemingly familiar episode of architectural destruction, the destruction of the Bastille during the French Revolution. As Bresnahan shows, the complex afterlife of this event—the subsequent representation, reproduction and dissemination of its material remains—indicates that the Bastille's destruction was less an immediate expression of a pre-existing revolutionary (or proto-revolutionary) consciousness, than a significant site for the production and shaping of that consciousness. The artefacts produced out of the destruction of the Bastille (most of which bore the image of the prison itself) demonstrate the power of representations, and particularly those deploying destruction's physical remainders, to mediate between historical change writ large and individual appropriations of those same shifts. It was, Bresnahan suggests, largely through these objects that the Bastille became, unlike other contemporaneous acts of destruction, a central site of revolutionary mythology.

Melissa Renn's chapter 'Fine Arts under Fire: Life Magazine and the Display of Architectural Destruction' continues this focus on representation in shaping the meaning of destruction, examining the significant role played by Life magazine in publishing paintings and drawings of wartime ruins during the Second World War, and its organisation—with the Roberts Commission (the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas)—of the 1946 traveling exhibition Fine Arts under Fire. Life's depictions of wartime ruins, Renn writes, 'both shaped the reception of American actions during the war and presented the United States as a force for preservation and reconstruction by the war's end' (p. 72). Both Life and the US government constructed a selective history of wartime destruction and the war effort, through the representation of ruins in ways that affirmed the value of certain sites (for example Italy) while omitting others (Dresden, Tokyo, Manila, etc.) that served less well the aim of presenting the United States as a steward of 'culture'.

The third section of the book highlights the complex interactions between architectural destruction and iconoclasm, both in terms of practice and representation. Christine Stevenson's chapter analyses the destruction, in 1643, of the late thirteenth-century Cross in Cheapside, London. As Stevenson writes, this act was the most famous display of iconoclasm staged in the entire English Civil War, one in which image-breaking was, for many parliamentarians, an integral part of the struggle. At the same time, however, it was also a 'spatialised act of war' (p. 92) that targeted not only Cheap Cross, but also Cheapside—a zone which parliamentarians understood as 'a sliver or fragment of enemy territory lying within their own' (p. 93). As such, Stevenson's account of the Cross's destruction as an attempt to 'disorganise enemy territory' (p. 92) pushes us to consider architectural violence—like the destruction of art-not as a practice that exists outside of the context of architecture, but rather as part of architecture itself. In this sense, as Herscher has recently argued, destruction is 'a form of construction' (p. 7): not merely a highly visible expression of larger political shifts lying outside of architecture per se, but an active means of inventing or establishing political power through architecture, that overwrites the material forms of the built environment with new meanings and new significance.

Milda B. Richardson's 'Iconoclasm and Resistance' focuses on another dimension of this relationship: responses to the violent targeting of iconic wayside chapels and shrines and their

attendant landscapes in occupied Lithuania. Like Schwenkel and Radović Mahečić's chapters, Richardson's account of popular resistance to acts of destruction—in the persistent rebuilding of demolished wayside shrines, and the transformation of shrine landscapes from sites of folk religion to sites of political resistance, suggests that the deliberate destruction of architecture may, in fact, be more likely to strengthen the resolve of communities whose iconic architecture is targeted than to demoralize them. Finally, in 'Dublin and its Georgian Legacy: The Battle for Iconoclasm', Ramona Usher considers the powerful role that iconoclasm may play in the interpretation of processes of architectural destruction. She argues that while the destruction of Irish Georgian architecture in the middle decades of the twentieth century was retrospectively ascribed nationalistic overtones due to associations with other iconoclastic gestures during the same period-notably, the destruction of Nelson's Pillarthis destruction in fact was primarily due to economic, social, and political imperatives that had little to do with the historic nationalist struggle against the British Empire or its manifestation in armed conflict.

The fourth section of the book explores the dynamics of architectural destruction in postconflict environments. Jyoti Pandey Sharma's chapter, 'Disciplining Delhi: The 1857 Uprising and Remodelling of the Urban Landscape', examines the aftermath of the 1857 uprising against British rule in India. Focusing on Delhi, a major centre of the uprising, she shows how several post-uprising imperatives—including retribution (particularly against Muslims), the desire to avoid previous and contentious forms of 'social engineering' upon indigenous cultural practices, and (in line with the transfer of rule from the British East India Company to the British Crown) an ideological imperative to pursue 'redemption via modernisation' spurred the victorious but still-embattled colonial regime to pursue architectural and material-cultural approaches to the consolidation of military conquest. The result, she argues, was a three-pronged approach of architectural destruction, coercive seizure of property, and rapid rebuilding that prioritised military security and 'modern' values, all of which 'fragment[ed] the traditional, cohesive built fabric' (p. 135) of the city as well as 'the occupants' spatial perception' (p. 141).

Following this, Rita Harkin's chapter turns to a contemporary post-conflict environment: Northern Ireland after 'the Troubles'. In this case, Harkin emphasises that the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, and the preceding cease-fire, did not bring an end to architectural destruction in Northern Ireland. Rather, desensitisation to architectural destruction wrought by the decades-long conflict, and a corollary loss of confidence, facilitated the emergence of a post-conflict culture that has prioritised 'development at any cost'. These costs, she suggests, include the legal and illegal demolition of historic buildings and neighbourhoods, the weakening of planning regimes, and the reinforcement of spatial divisions between nationalist and loyalist communities as public officials have pushed for large-scale, new-build projects over the rehabilitation of the historic built environment. Thus despite the historical, political, and cultural differences between the two post-conflict environments discussed in this section, they nonetheless bear certain similarities—for example, the accelerated acceptance of ideologies of 'modernisation' and 'development' that legitimatise architectural clearance. More generally, these chapters encourage us to be more attentive to the ways in which armed conflict generates further processes of architectural destruction that persist in post-conflict environments-including processes that, at first glance, might seem unrelated to conflict.

The chapters in the fifth and final section also explore the legacies of architectural destruction, with a focus on the relationship between destruction and reconstruction. Janet