Inside/out: sovereignty as agency of power and its constructive strength – perspectives from states that both are and are yet to be

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Sovereignty is a form of order that operates as part of the dynamics of global power. 'Borderisation', the method of sovereignty by which inside, outside and the process of inside/outside are controlled, is an active, political mode of construction. This paper explores instances where power seems to be at its most stark – armed conflicts – to observe this borderisation. In particular it takes two case studies, Northern Ireland and Western Sahara, which are notable sovereign constructs. Through a series of interviews with present and former combatants, a picture is built of how power is exercised through sovereignty, why combatants engage with the edifice of sovereignty, and what transformative strength power has – a control of the Real, the Normal and an application of the Mundane. Whilst sovereignty may be challenged, it is certainly not absent.

Sovereignty retains a potency. It may be challenged in various ways, but it is a specific form of order. There are of course multiple meanings of order. It is control, is stability (however partial), is an accepted system, and importantly is also the acceptance process itself. Sovereignty follows this, both in its agency and in our need for a wider deconstruction of its meanings. Sovereignty obviously suggests a monopoly of force, a legal framework and a certain system. Yet I suggest it has a further purpose, as an articulation and manifestation of power. Sovereignty is a spatiotemporal agent that performs. The purpose of this study is therefore to primarily contest sovereign power's "commanding silence"[1] and, more broadly, to explore how it may be operating. The paper looks inside and outside its boundaries, but also looks at the dynamics of this inside/outside, to the agency of sovereignty.

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[1] Walker accurately describes it has having an incontestable presence, normatively created, in international relations theory, making it dangerously be taken for granted and reducing articulation of alternatives – R.B.J. Walker, 'Sovereignty, identity, community: Reflections on the horizons of contemporary political practice', in *Contending Sovereignties: redefining political community*, R.B.J. Walker and S.H. Mendlovitz ed.s (Lynne Rienner, London, 1990), p. 159.

This brief exploration, through sovereignty, of power's processes is drawn from two anthropological studies. The approach is not to look directly at power, but tangentially at those who have come violently into contact with it. To explore power through those ostensibly outside it is a method derived from a conceptualisation of power and its Other as being relational and of those relations. As human existence is specifically relational, so too must be the power that operates on these relations and emanates from within them.[2] Relational approaches cut across behaviours, systems and analytical measures to suggest complexity and operationality in the social world. The relational is dynamic, interactive, generative and creative.[3] Accordingly, this study is derived from that which is imminent within those relationships. Power and resistance are immanent to them. Subsequently that sourcing requires them to be imminent within each other.[4] Finally the processes which occur within power are explicitly of those relationships. Herein lies, in my analysis, sovereignty.

As part of these studies, discussions were carried out with members of militarised non-state resistance movements[5], of the Republican tradition in the North of Ireland and of the exiled people of the territory of Western Sahara now living in the deserts of western Algeria.[6] Discussants were from the Irish Republican Army, Irish National Liberation Army, Continuity IRA and Frente Polisario. The liminality of such groups – that they are both dangerous to power yet are also simultaneously within its process – provides useful insights into power and agency in international relations. Of course such research risks observing at frontlines that are "volatile and inchoate"[7] and comes from "fleeting experiences, telltale anecdotes, or aesthetic works that offer glimpses into a fractured, fragmented" world.[8] Nonetheless the specific struggles and interactions are what provide insights into what may otherwise be a (deliberately[9]) confusing picture.

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[2] This analytical approach draws from a reading of Foucault. For an outline of the idea of relationality, see B. Smart, *Michel Foucault* (Tavistock, London, 1985), pp. 122 and 133.

[3] S. Westwood, *Power and the Social,* (Routledge, London, 2002), pp. 3 & 26.

[4] M. Foucault, (Trans. Hurley, R), *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol1* (Penguin Books, London, 1990), pp. 94-6.

[5] Anonymity was offered the discussants, primarily to depersonalise their observations, but also to help facilitate their contributions. All quotations in the present text are direct, and as accurate as translation in the field and transcription allows.

[6] Some presumption of knowledge about these two conflict situations is, due to brevity of space, made. Numerous introductions to the cases exist.

[7] A.C.G.M. Robben and C. Nordstrom 'The Anthropology and Ethnography of Violence and Sociopolitical Conflict', in *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, C. Nordstrom and A.C.G.M. Robben eds, (University of California Press, London, 1995), p. 8.

[8] M. Burawoy, J.A. Blum, S. George, Z. Gille, T. Gowan, L. Haney, M. Klawiter, S.H. Lopez, M. Ó Riain and M. Thayer, *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*, (University of California Press, London, 2000), p. 2.

[9] Power does of course control through knowledge – M. Foucault, 'Disciplinary Power and Subjection', in *Power*, S. Lukes ed. (Blackwell, Oxford, 1994), p. 229. Hence there may be a certain 'false consciousness'

The two case studies analysed – Western Sahara and Northern Ireland – are intriguingly both inside and outside sovereignty, but are explicitly of it. Each is in many ways a state, but has a complex relationship to sovereignty. The Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic is a fully-functioning state, partially recognised internationally, with a government and army, and is a member of international organisations; yet it does not control its claimed territory of Western Sahara. Northern Ireland is an executive-governed mini-state, devolved within a sovereign state. Its government contains, notably, both those with an allegiance to the mother state, and those with an allegiance to an, as yet, non-existent state; yet both are, it may be conjectured, also, conversely, wedded to this mini-state.

What begins to emerge from the analysis is a complex picture. Power is reinforced by spatial imaginings and diverse borderisations. Such power can be both stark and subtle, controlling and transforming. The discussion reflects on how power is exercised through sovereignty, and how any resistance to it becomes framed within its processes. As decontextualisation or contextualisation borders people, sovereign power retains a dynamic agency. It is not absent.

Exercising of power through sovereignty

As a borderisation process, power may be seen to be applied in multiple ways through sovereignty. Certain state practice, reinforcing sovereignty, can be overt; starkly so when in conflict situations. Military enforcement of sovereignty's arrangements has at minimum led to a stalemate in both cases, as well as, clearly, to numerous deaths. However sovereign power is applied in many more subtle, and often more effective, modes. Indeed overt action can be counterproductive. State violence was a highly effective recruiter to the IRA.[10] The present 'intifada' in Western Sahara is felt by Saharawis, in their camp-based colleagues' descriptions to me, to follow directly the attempted Moroccan assimilation policy of them. That the experiences under direct occupation are producing different responses is marked.[11]

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amongst discussants and myself; accordingly this remains purely interpretative. For as useful commentary on such issues see J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990), pp. 77-82.

[10] See for instance the descriptions by senior IRA members Gerry Adams and Joe Cahill – G. Adams, *Before the Dawn: An autobiography* (Brandon, Dingle, Ireland, 2001), pp. 136 & 167; B. Anderson, *Joe Cahill: A life in the IRA* (O'Brien Press, Dublin, 2005), pp. 191, 204-5 and 207.

[11] See T. Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara: What future for Africa's last colony?* (Zed Books, London, 2004), chapter 6, for a description.

Of interest spatially (thereby interesting for a discussion of sovereignty as power), overt power also localised the conflict. At the points at which the military engagements were at their most violently intense, they were fought at street level and state power was least successful:

> "As military intervention in the neighbourhood increased in frequency and intensity, so the local people, out of their own feelings of self-respect, outrage and resistance, organised more and more their own response to the military presence. ... The attitude and presence of British troops was also a reminder that we were Irish, and there was an instant resurgence of national consciousness and an almost immediate politicisation of the local populace."[12]

Where the conflicts dissipated, or were internationalised to be fought transborder, sovereign power was at its most effective in maintaining its order. Indeed violent resistance itself can be borderised. For instance, the Provisional IRA effectively became a Northern Irish arrangement.[13]

More subtle forms of sovereignty enforcement became evident from the interviews for this study. The borderisation of people has occurred in various notable ways – around geography, education, social preferencing, political processes and imprisonment. A specific form of borderisation is of course geographical construction. This may take explicit forms – the watchtowers and checkpoints of Northern Ireland or the extensive 'berm' sand wall running through Western Sahara. Yet more notably their specific strength, it appeared, is where the frame of construction becomes conceptual. By way of example, a member of the Continuity IRA described how Belfast always seemed separate. The border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic had real meaning for another respondent (even though they rejected its existence) as there had been created a "border mindset". Discussants in Algeria were, interestingly, always careful to refer to the 'Occupied Territories' and 'Liberated Territories', the internal frames, rather than to Western Sahara (or even to their proclaimed Saharawi Republic).

By extension, when the overt signs of borders fall, the conceptual grounding of sovereign power is actually more strong. Sovereign borderisations survive beyond, and can for instance cut across other strata that may define a conflict. There was frequent reference to how middle classes in Northern Ireland had transcended any overt sectarian divide and thereby benefited from the unitary mini-state.[14] I was also left with an impression that despite best efforts to maintain a Saharawi identity, the experiences of those living within the territory and those within the camps are so differently-bordered that integration will be highly problematic. Hence sovereign borders become an arrangement that informs conflict and post-conflict situations.

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[12] Adams, *Before the Dawn*, p. 136. Even Operation Motorman could be subverted – Adams, *Ibid.*, pp. 213-4.

[13] E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (Penguin Books, London, 2003), p. 158; Anderson, *Joe Cahill*, pp. 182-6.

As a useful aside, it need not be that borders are static. An anxiety was expressed, in both conflict situations, about regionalism. A member of the Saharawi government chastised me about proposing regionalism as a solution to the conflict, asserting that he could not be African or of the Maghreb without his own state:

> "This does not mean that I am against regional institutions or am against global cooperation or I don't have a global vision of affairs. We have all of that. We cannot materialise it unless we build who we are and take our place."

A Republican became animated on Europe:

> "People can see themselves as European, if that's what they choose, but they still see themselves as belonging to a particular nation, and the Irish people are no different. I would say there are a lot of people who see that right for the Irish people to retain that national integrity."

Regionalism and transborderism may of course pose a threat to sovereign power itself.[15] However, though it is beyond the scope of this discussion to treat in any depth, regionalism, even globalisation, does not necessarily suggest a removal of sovereign power. An agency of bordering is still apparent; perhaps more potent and volatile when borders are not enforced but are instead frames.

Subtle borderisation also occurs with education. This too has been a culturally deontologising process that frames those within, yet marginal to, the sovereign system. A discussant bemoaned that Ireland "was never on the curriculum, nothing like that was on the curriculum. It was only English history on the curriculum." Even where educational access was broadened[16], the normality of local non-sovereign order was subverted:

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[14] Sinn Féin's election strategy, it could be suggested, particularly with regards to the nationalist SDLP, has succeeded from an appeal to the Northern Irish middle classes. Adams had indeed noted how politics seemed to benefit the Catholic middle classes, and that even Unionism could have a rapprochement with the Irish Republic over economics – Adams, *Before the Dawn*, pp. 77 and 55 respectively. See also Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, p. 128.

[15] As a Republican noted to me "I think a lot of things change because they're common – you've got two different health systems on the island; two different education systems in Ireland; two different monetary systems. It doesn't make sense for such a small place."

[16] One interviewee highlighted that "the Butler Act of 1946 ... meant that people like myself, from a Catholic background, could get to university and we actually got a grant". Moloney reflects on such changes – Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, p.45.

> "many of us that would never have gone to university got an education. So that also made a difference, as there was intelligent, articulate leadership outside the traditional framework of the Catholic areas".

There also seemed a certain significance when one Saharawi admitted that those in the territory had different accents from those in the camps, as a consequence of the alternate education systems – that linguistics ostensibly distinguishes them as a people is a bulwark of their identity. It was furthermore notable that, despite the close ties to Spain and the frequent visits of Spaniards to the camps, the language of choice increasingly for young people is English. This is not the power of Moroccan sovereignty, but a global sovereignty.

Preferencing, as a further borderisation by being based on spatial arrangements, has had a particular agency. Again this is both overt and subtle. Psychological support has been extended to the state agents in Northern Ireland, but is limited to others.[17] Immunity for actions had been totally selective:

> "I can remember one of the first times I was stopped at night [by the Ulster Defence Regiment] and they said 'what's your name?' I knew one of them so I said 'you know what my name is'. ... I think that was the first time that I realised that there was a difference; there were two sides. One with all the power and the weapons. They could do anything they liked; stop you whenever they wanted and kick you for nothing, for being Catholic."

Economics too has had a specific spatial borderising role – "Protestants never really had to worry about education, because there was always a job there. ... And of course you had to leave here, because you had no chance."[18] In Western Sahara, the pinnacle of employment, denied to Saharawis, is civil service jobs; it is of course interesting that state employment should be seen as the highest echelon.

Finally, political processes are a clear form of the borderising of sovereign power. Elections have framed resistance within conflict situations, but more significantly also directed resistance in the sovereign order. In the Saharawi scenario, Frente Polisario has sustained an anti-fragmentation process by excluding parties other than itself; a process feasible within the isolation of the camps. However there is potential for political fragmentation.[19] For example, a clear class structure was evident in the camps – descendants of the founder of Polisario seemed to have more opportunities in life, access to English language courses was selective, and the quality of house decorations varied notably, even though these are supplied through international aid and are otherwise standardised.[20] The total de-selection of the Saharawi government by the parliament in 1999 similarly suggests that there will be a major political realignment upon return to the territory.[21] Northern Ireland is at more advanced a position of such borderisation. One discussant commented, without irony, that Sinn Féin's standing in elections meant that it was "more tactical and strategic that the IRA should be on its way out. It also helped that the British Government ... made space for that." Terms are set.[22]

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[17] "We lobbied to get people onto the Health Boards that could advise on the needs of ex-prisoners. The police, the RUC, the state forces were well catered for".

[18] IRA member Joe Cahill also claimed that public housing was allocated on the basis of who would vote for the allocator, electoral registration being based on those who paid rates – Anderson, *Joe Cahill*, p.161.

[19] One commentator goes so far as to say that the situation means their very agency is deprived – Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*, p.2.

Imprisonment has of course been a political process, yet is distinctly about liminalisation. Removing from sovereign structures, yet keeping a controlled distance, was the essential purpose of imprisonment. Much of this is symbolic. The imprisonment of Saharawi activist Mohammed Daddach in Morocco was a cause celebre for example. It was also about sovereign arrangements. Although the Blanket Protest in the Irish case was most potent, it was merely, as one interviewee commented, "against criminalisation."[23] Fascinatingly, as another former IRA member related, senior IRA staff can become ministers, yet their PAs, as former prisoners, cannot be state employees.[24] The aim of resistance is reduced to trying to get in to sovereignty's processes.

In each of the previously discussed borderisation processes, sovereignty is the application of power. This can be direct. It can also be most diminishing of resistance where some access to power is privileged, yet is on power's terms. It was particularly revealing that one discussant felt most burdened by his time in internment rather than when imprisoned, even though the former allowed more privileges:

> "because you never really had a sense of opposition to the regime. You were part of your community in the Cage. But it's when you're opposing the prison regime ... it gave you a sense of purpose. It gave you a sense of resistance. And it gave you a sort of goal. Whereas in internment you had everything; there was nothing that you could oppose".[25]

It is useful therefore to explore the frames for accessing power, and the constructions built.

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[20] For a discussion of the caste system, see T. Hodges, *The Western Saharans* (Minority Rights Group, London, 1984), p.4.

[21] Whether this will mean alignment for some with Moroccan parties will be fascinating to see.

[22] These are more advanced terms, in that power need only be absorptive, rather than direct. Previously, for example, the British Government had had to ban certain Republicans, in this case hunger striking prisoners, from standing in elections due to their electoral success – Adams, *Before the Dawn*, p.300.

[23] See also descriptions of being diminished to minutiae in Anderson, *Joe Cahill*, pp. 293-4 and Adams, *Before the Dawn*, p. 291.

[24] Martin McGuiness created the post of 'Special Adviser' to get round the rules.

[25] For Gerry Adams' comments on such experiences see Adams, *Before the Dawn*, pp. 224 and 241.

Resisters' desire for sovereignty

Does a mere drive for membership of the 'club' of sovereign states have adequate explanatory strength? The continuation of wars for control of people and territory might suggest so. Nonetheless the two case studies here denote the need for a wider appreciation of the apparent nature of power acting through sovereignty. Sovereignty is about identity, a specifically learnt activity. The state is an enabler of action, as well as a unifier of people. Resisters' desire for sovereignty seems therefore to be about the control of their Self, and the bordered mediation of this. Such is an agency of sovereignty.

Identity has a specific sovereign frame. A senior Republican laughed "there was all the Gaelic, nationalist thing. ... we'd all come out parading, the dead generations!". Another commented

> "When there was All Ireland [Gaelic football] on, you could have everybody sitting around the radio, and the Soldier's Song would come on and you'd stand up and there would be this pride thing. It's a bit of bologny now, but then it was something you gripped on to. You had your hand on your heart and you were Irish; but in a quiet way."

Women's groups in the Saharawi refugee camps are charged with documenting and disseminating traditions, as a distinct means of unifying the people.[26] A poet told me he could not write poems of love while the war for nation-building continued, and the displayed icons in public buildings were of the state flag pouring forth from an old well. It was interesting to hear that exile meant the "Saharawi were stolen." To an extent these are inversely-ontological conflicts, over who the people are not.[27] Above all the Self is a manifestation, bordered and thereby defined, of sovereignty.

Other symbols are similarly grounded in sovereignty. Language plays a role here. Many discussants focussed on Irish as a symbol of their liberation, even though Irish would not in reality be the predominant first language in any new Ireland. A post-solution Western Sahara would need to accommodate multiple languages – Saharawi, French, Arabic, Spanish and English – in fact challenging the asserted unity of the people. Further symbols have an added potency. Adverts for Irish passports are posted in Republican Belfast and one respondent was quick to correct me that she had an Irish not UK passport. Saharawis travel on their own passports to states that have recognised their Republic, but must gain others for elsewhere, primarily Algerian and Spanish. Such documents have more than a function of travel, being also assertions of an identity, yet of countries to which they do not wish to belong.[28] This denotes a specific sovereign role.

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[26] It is argued elsewhere that identity is specifically either, in the camps, institutionalised by the prospective Saharawi state, or, in Western Sahara, is defined by its subversiveness of Moroccan control – P. San Martin, 'Nationalism, Identity and Citizenship in the Western Sahara', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 10 (3-4) 2005, p. 567.

[27] San Martin comments "It is not only a (military or diplomatic) dispute about the control of the Territory, but a dispute to hegemonise a collective social imaginary about what it is to be a Saharawi, who the Saharawis are and who the 'others' are that delineate the frontier of 'our Sahara'" – San Martin, 'Ibid.', p. 587. For the Irish case, see Adams, *Before the Dawn*, p.136.

At the root of this is an agency for the state. This is an enabler. Saharawi interviewees for example were repetitive in their belief not so much in the homeland, but in what the state can achieve for them. This even extends to a sense of sovereignty-enabled identity – "To know who I am has to come through my country, recognised as a state". Hence, although the conflict and exile have in fact created a resourcefulness of the self, indeed a sense of the Self[29], when specifically questioned about any settlement and post-settlement plan, the sole expectation was that broader state apparatus would supply. Many Republicans similarly placed faith in the new Stormont for the achievement of their agenda. The state also seems to act as a unifier. Both communities expressed how their unity comes from open power assertions: "There's a wide range of diversity in terms of perspectives and opinions, but I suppose with that history and experience of oppression, of being downtrodden, of being discriminated against, of having injustices, that leads to a sense of being close knit, of coming together" (Ireland); "What we would count on is a nation, people who are aware of the common experiences they have had, throughout the years" (Saharawi). Whilst state agency brings together however, realities of fracturing along different strata intimates that sovereign experiences ultimately divide.

Sovereignty has a distinct agency. Furthermore it performs in how those involved in conflict identify, organise and struggle. This is of course all a determined process, not structural or 'natural'. A high-ranking Polisario member told me, for instance, that "thirty years ago we were not educated, we were not so much people. Now we have an army. Our people are educated about the war and these issues and our children are educated. So we can challenge". As such, the agency would likely be carried forward in to any future sovereign arrangements. Two noteworthy questions may consequently be briefly posed for the future, post-conflict. All discussants asked maintained that their nationalism and nation-building would be different from current states, which are associated with oppression. Will that be? Finally, is there a generational dimension to this? As one IRA member mused "my parents generation kept their heads down. The generation I grew up in refused to keep their heads down. Now my kids generation don't even consider keeping their heads down; it doesn't enter their consciousness." Are generations now post-nationalism, or rather conditioned out of nationalism? This would challenge both power and resistance, but may of course be a function of both.

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[28] Republican tradition is not to join onto the Republic of Ireland, but for a new nation to be created on the island of Ireland.

[29] San Martin, 'Nationalism, Identity and Citizenship', pp. 568-9.

Transformative constructions of sovereign power

A clear sense emerges that, firstly, power is exercised through sovereignty, and that secondly those who violently contest do so within that agency. The terms for such framing within agency are informative. Many constructions may be identified and each are essentially transformative – the role of mundanity; divisive framing of people; narratives of the Real; control of the Normal. Of the first, the perimeters of power may be glimpsed where conflict is at its most intense, localised and immediate. A Saharawi man remembered how, as the initial fighting raged, there was a strong feeling of such force being external; accordingly they as a people internalised and revolutionary violence emanated.

In Belfast, the implications were clear: "[The British Army] were an occupation force and were seen so, as such. That was a great, sort of incentive for people to get involved with the IRA and to oppose these people. It was so stark." The descriptions to me of the Hunger Strikes were highly charged, for they

> "impacted in most communities, Belfast, Derry, Armagh, Tyrone. It was every day. One death after another. There was rioting and protest. By the end of it people had changed, even people who didn't believe in armed struggle, in the IRA, had changed, even to the point where they may not support it but they wouldn't do anything to stop it."

Internment and Bloody Sunday also came across as iconic for the empowerment of resistance.[30]

Power thereby becomes faced with challenges. Resistance can be animated: "when people first came on to the streets there was an excitement, almost a feeling of throwing off the shackles of slavery. There was a liberating feeling about it. We were actually protesting, making a difference, making changes, or starting a process." However power responds, including through sovereignty, with its aforementioned transformative constructions. First, what transpired from my observations was the seeming existence of a role of sovereign power of 'mundanising'. This could be seen in descriptions of imprisonment in Northern Ireland, where the height of subversion was smuggling in reading materials.[31] Post the settlement in the North, the focus has been on schools and local council programmes, not on specifically Republican agendas.

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[30] Moloney even goes so far as to suggest, somewhat plausibly, that Unionist obduracy and British support for Stormont to placate Unionism had actually created the Provisional IRA and expanded it – Moloney, *A Secret History*, p. 92.

The mundane is of course most visible in the Algerian desert. For Saharawi politicians, administration has become a consciousness, however false, of power. The ability of the people to pass time is heart-rendingly sublime. Conspiracies about power abound in each case – UK state funding is withheld for community groups in Northern Ireland because of links to Sinn Féin; international food aid to the camps is damaged or limited to punish Polisario into negotiations. These do not seem so much to be examples of direct power. Rather there performs a more subtle numbness of power, that includes organisational inefficiency, but also more importantly a degeneration of counter-force.

A second transformative response is to frame people in a manner that is divisive. Subsequently people that may otherwise unify behind a counter to power experience different constructions of sovereignty and its benefits. There is a rural-urban split[32]. One Republican talked of the rural being externalised, another of it being less intense in its experience of the conflict and a third adding, similarly,

> "[t]alk to people from Enniskillen, Fermanagh, Tyrone and the back of beyond, and they have a different experience. They didn't see where this discrimination was coming from. ... I think they would have found it hard to understand the towns and the cities."[33]

There is likewise a class strata. One female IRA member, although a supporter of the strategy of Sinn Féin, felt that the working classes of Northern Ireland, to whom she belonged, had actually come off worse. As mentioned earlier, there exists a distinct class structure within the Saharawi refugee camps.

There is furthermore a generational separation. The impression is of a post-sovereignty modernity – "I think most 16 year olds are probably politically disinterested. It's about a job, about girlfriends, holidays, enjoying life, making money." Although I was repeatedly told that young Saharawis were ready and willing to resume hostilities, there interests distinctly seemed to be in (to rhetorically over-simplify) Real Madrid football club and Nike shoes. The question remains however of whether the state has gone[34], or whether the lurking state is merely a normalised, but non-explicit, condition.

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[31] Cahill notes additionally that the Special Powers Act made playing republican songs, flying the tricolour, shouting 'up the rebels' or selling Easter lilies punishable offences and he also eagerly reflects that in "the last few years of my sentence ... we fought for, and won, the right to have parcels of fruit sent in weekly" – Anderson, *Joe Cahill*, pp. 119 and 75 respectively.

[32] The establishment of the Provisional IRA itself was described to me as being based on three, generally incompatible, tendencies – traditional Republicanism, armed rural nationalism and urban youth anger. According to Shelley, Polisario in its earliest days was better organised in urbanised areas – Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*, p. 172.

[33] As an aside, it would be interesting to explore whether such splits are a product of globalisation's determination of urbanisation, and thereby outside the scope of sovereign power, or is sovereignty a manifestation of global processes, so is adaptive to them?

There appears finally to be a strata of division between what loosely may be termed elites and masses. Clearly this is significant for the viability of peace processes. It also denotes the formative strength of sovereignty's frames as the masses get led into state and state practice constructions. It would be mistaken to suggest that people are bystanders. Republican and Polisario leadership were very careful to consult their supporters through processes. IRA prisoners were visited frequently and their opinions sought. When talking to me, Saharawis were extremely proud of how their parliament within the camps keeps the SADR government accountable.[35] Nonetheless the differentiations of political language used with me, where the masses talked of daily chores and at most a trust in politicians, whilst the latter talked of parties, states, state interest and dominant theoretical frameworks, shows, I would contend, more than just what your job is.

Sovereignty is in effect 'given down'. Political rhetoric surprised me in its repetition and cover. Ideas of the benevolence and effectiveness, almost purity (comparative to others), of their respective state authorities appeared in most conversations. Such dynamics are not without risks. For example, whilst the more junior mainstream Republicans I spoke to believed in what came from the peace process negotiations (for example the Council of Ireland), the sustainability of such support may be time-limited. Many interviewees talked of how opposed the people had been to the IRA standing down. A striking disjuncture similarly presented itself to me between the actuality of daily life in the remote, isolated, desolate refugee camps, and a senior Polisario member's construction of 'security' as being about "police and water", so that, in his construction, the people can live without fear of Morocco. There is a distinct centralising rigour within both Sinn Féin and Polisario.[36] Yet the psychological impact of elites negotiating away the beliefs, as well as needs, of the masses is,

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[34] "I can't imagine myself as a 16, 17 year old now. ... There is no longer ... this sense of being second class citizen, this feeling of being suppressed or locked in to an Orange state. That has completely gone."

[35] Indeed the next Polisario Congress, the supreme body, seems likely to be highly volatile. It was due two years ago but has been postponed twice by the leadership.

[36] It is part of current Polisario rhetoric that a split may occur if international negotiations are not favourable. Republicans have been for some time concerned over splits. For instance the secret 'TUAS document' of the IRA declared an aim of its programmes to be the integrity and cohesion of Sinn Féin. When a man was killed in November 1994 during the ceasefire, a reform of the chain of command was instant and a rapid declaration of a need for cohesion was put out – see M. McKee, 'Collection of IRA Statements 1993-2001', unpublished, from Linen Hall collection, Belfast.

I suspect, undermining the stability of communities who are retreating into their localities away from the sovereign structures.

In addition to the role of mundanity and the divisive framing of people, two more transformative constructions emerged from these studies. Certain narratives of the Real are created and there is a control of the Normal. These constructions underlay the former two, and may be the most effective modes of power. Deconstructing the Real suggests it is a political process. Even though the state frames people in these situations, they are distanced from it. 'Reality' of the state is only articulated as violence[37]: "There was an expectation that our area, our street, our housing estate would come under attack from the state, the semi-state forces"; "Between 1969 and now it was all real. What could be more real than people getting shot dead all over the place. That was very, very real." Now it is dissipated: "The border has gone, it has in my head. The border was watchtowers ... there was a big trench around this place that was distinct. That's all gone. As things settle down, I am more of a European. It's more of a normality. There are less fences, boundaries, watchtowers, and all of that; it's all away."

Yet the presence of the state, at least in the Northern Irish example, is strong. 'The North' has a reality, derived from political narratives, regardless of whether this is desirable. Asking one Republican about a sense of this, he reflected

> "I feel you have more in common, life, culture, whatever, with the North, rather than say other places in the South. I've lived in Dublin, which has changed relatively, or I could go down to Kerry or Donegal and feel a closeness there, but in terms of just geography or culture I'd have to say I feel most at home in the North".

Although denying the 'North', another commented presciently that "The fact of the Northern state is obscure, as the Assembly isn't up and running" – it now is with a senior Republican and Unionist as Deputy and First Minister respectively. The Western Sahara case is interesting as they are within their state yet outside their nation. Both are 'real' and yet only one is experienced.

What seems to result for both communities is a decontextualisation nationally, whilst retaining the presence of the state. There is a general depoliticisation, in the sense of separation of any agency from politics – "I thought, injustice. For me it wasn't any political terms. I just got on working. It was about fighting injustice." Instead there is a trap of passivism, of controlled inertia.[38] For example, movement has to come from others. For Saharawis the rhetoric was to blame the UN; for Republicans, Unionism and the British Government.[39] Yet the political processes of sovereignty continue and, as such, people are of them, but passive within. Their realities, which would determine such agency, are controlled.

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[37] Gerry Adams comments that "the north of Ireland state was a state based upon the violent suppression of political opposition. That was why they banned the flag, and that was why they used their violence against the people of the Falls" – Adams, *Before the Dawn*, p. 51.

In many ways this is similar to the final construction, the control of the Normal. Despite a revolutionary tradition, the normal now in these situations is state processes. Economics features here, as the mobilisation of resources becomes a primary motive for each movement.[40] State processes are primarily however about authority and administration. An IRA member asserted, without irony: “that’s what we’re fighting for, a place in government.” A senior Saharawi considered their aim to be “success in building public institutions.” The Normal is accentuated, and as such normality becomes somewhat passive. When I arrived in the refugee camp, there was a mass mobilisation to clean the desert, as this location was, in their articulation, explicitly someone else’s, lived upon in trust. Yet the motivation actually seemed more to be the application of a Saharawi Government plan, a state-organised passing of time.[41] Rather a Saharawi refrain was the wish to get on with life without agitation. An Irishwoman similarly commented “People do want to live in society, to be able to work, to provide for their families, have a decent life, take holidays abroad. People are doing that, you see. People are doing that and, I suppose, a different expectation of life comes about.”

The ‘coming about’ is the agency. These lives are not normal; rather the Normal is determined. That it is changeable (as highlighted by asking questions of people with historical perspective) is illustrative. For instance, colonialism could apparently have benevolent manifestations. Both Saharawi and Irish spoke of certain transformative value of the Spanish and British respectively. Whilst not suggesting prisoners were manipulated, that they were, according to themselves, more progressive, change-oriented, non-militaristic and thereafter at the forefront of negotiations, may indicate a certain framing within the sovereign infrastructure that is prison. Even militarisation can be abnormal, normal and both at the same time: "From my perspective as a 13 year old boy, it was exciting then. It became a lot more serious 1971, 1972. And then it became normal." Fighting could become, it was interestingly articulated, 'consuming' and 'corrosive', and not just "part of your life – it is your life." Another noted

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[38] Shelley argues that the Saharawis in the camps have become sedentary with their sense of statehood, and this has effectively contributed to the undermining of their resistance – Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*, p. 168.

[39] “We still have to see that the two governments fulfil the commitments they signed up to, and not to allow the situation to always be dictated by Unionism. That’s how it has been. The Unionist veto has been prevalent right through.”

[40] A Saharawi man interestingly reflected that economic colonialism can be tolerated more than military colonialism. Notably there is a proposal, articulated as part of Polisario’s proposals to the recent peace talks, that resources of a new Saharawi Republic could be used preferentially with its neighbours.

[41] San Martin raises the striking prospect that if the camps are too well run, this will contribute to them becoming the homeland, with exile normalised. By contrast, and returning to my theme about the ineffectiveness of intensifications of power, he also notes that in the territories controlled by Morocco, the intifada is specifically about attempting to de-normalise – San Martin, ‘Nationalism, Identity and Citizenship’, pp. 576 and 587 respectively.

> "It used to be what happened, and then that became life, what life was about. It became normal, it became what you did. But in the back of your head you always knew this was an abnormal situation. We were reacting in a way, in a way that people do in abnormal situations."

Normality not only shifts, but seems disorienting – perhaps this is the ultimate manifestation of power, as sovereignty commands in ways that are hard to follow.

Sovereignty is not absent. There may be challenges to its constituent parts, as the contexts in which it operates require it to oscillate. The international, for example, should be 'brought in'. My interviews confirmed Cox's thesis[42] that global frameworks, opportunities and outlooks have changed. Globalisation is having as yet uncertain impacts on the dynamics seen here. Ideas of liberation are likewise transforming. As one senior Saharawi pithily commented, "the conflict in Western Sahara is actually a residue of an era". Yet the international does not explain everything. Commentators are right, for example, that there has been a misguided reliance on the dynamics of the Cold War as being explanatory of both conflicts.[43] A belief in an absence is then partly due to sovereignty's 'commanding silence' – it is by contrast more than just international law, diplomatic relations, internal authority and a monopoly of force. It is a construction of power, a manifestation of its agency. Such power can be stark, but subtler forms of framing within sovereignty perform. Constructions of the Self, of the Normal, of the Real and of the Political are informative and transformative.

Hence sovereignty is about control of the inside/outside. It is based on spatial imaginings and diverse borderisations, and accordingly conflict, and the Enemy, become essentially liminal. The 'dangerous' are brought into the frames that set the order. The peace processes in the present two case studies have followed this course. 'Northern Ireland' has not left its mother sovereignty, or entered into another, but is now a distinct statelet, deputy-led by a self-proclaimed IRA member. It is specifically ordered. Western Sahara, if US, French and Spanish diplomats were to get their way in the current round of negotiations (ongoing in New York at the time of writing), would be similarly framed, as an 'autonomous southern province' of sovereign Morocco. The Saharawi refugee camp, and the Arab, Democratic Republic based there are distinctly outside the Real; yet in a way they are less dangerous than the ongoing 'intifada' – liminality recognises danger, but prefers it to be subject to mundanity.

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[42] M. Cox, 'Bringing in the 'International': The IRA ceasefire and the end of the Cold War', *International Affairs*, 73 (4), p. 677.

[43] J. Damis, 'The Western Sahara dispute as a source of regional conflict in North Africa', in *Contemporary North Africa: Issues of Development and Integration*, H. Barakat ed. (Croom Helm, Beckenham UK, 1985), pp. 146-7; Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*, p. 199; R. English, *Armed Struggle: The history of the IRA* (Macmillan, London, 2003), p. 130.

There may be responses to sovereignty's continued presence. There is the Spectacle. Power, as I discussed above, is most challenged when conflict is as its most intense and localised. Hence the means for contesting the Mundane would clearly be the Spectacle. This was indeed expressed to me whilst with the Saharawi – as one man put it, violence seems to be the "tool to solve problem", the ultimate means of entry into the edifice of sovereignty. This of course resonates with the modern day destructive spectacle which is deliberately conceptually framed as 'terrorism'. It seems unsurprising that the sovereign frame of 'Iraq' should presently be being blamed for the insurgent violence, alongside US/UK troop relocation[44], as a step towards normalising the situation – the danger within the sovereign frame, but held without whilst still volatile.

What situations such as these show, and more so than Western Sahara and Northern Ireland are able to show, is perhaps an alternative framing. There is perhaps here some indication of what Agamben has described as *potere* – political power and its control over, and reductions to, bare life – and desperate resistance to it.[45] These can be seen to some extent in the utter numbness of the Saharawi refugee camp and in the Blanket and Hunger protests in Northern Ireland's jails – the camp is bare life administered[46], and the protests were derived from nakedness, cleanliness and the non-ingestion of sustenance.[47] Nonetheless these are not fully externalised, as are present day 'black site' extra-judicial prisons or suicide bombers; in these the control of life, and the stripping away of any potential seems complete.

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[44] The White House Press Service, 'President Bush's View on Iraq's Elected Government Consistent', http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/08/20070822-6.html, accessed 30 August 2007; P. Reynolds, 'British general hints at Iraq pull-out', BBC online, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6954802.stm, accessed 30 August 2007.

[45] G. Agamben, 'Form-of-life', in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, P. Virno, and M. Hardt ed.s (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996), pp. 151-2. On resistance in Agamben's thesis, see J. Edkins, V. Pin-Fat and M.J. Shapiro, *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics* (Routledge, London, 2004), pp. 13-17.

[46] Edkins, Pin-Fat and Shapiro, *Sovereign Lives*, p. 9.

[47] As Adams comments, the hunger strikers "were pitching themselves, with the only weapons at their command – their lives – against the imperial power" – Adams, *Before the Dawn*, p. 292.

This said, more what seems to be happening is power's need for an enemy. The borderisation of enemies is part of the process of reinforcing its strength. As a person closely associated with the Continuity IRA pertinently commented to me:

> "Up to [the end of the Cold War], the two Superpowers were watching each other, striving for advantage with proxy wars. ... Now we are left with an entirely new ball game. Now we have this whole thing, of alleged terrorism."

That the new enemy ('Islamic terrorism') perhaps operates outside many of the frames, that have been observed in this study, could make the enemy more problematic. Whether a real challenge has been found, or whether in fact these similarly reinforce the frames, the potency of sovereign agency still remains.

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