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‘We will utterly destroy them... and we will go in and possess the land’: reflections on the role of civilian-driven violence in the making of settler genocides

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This article seeks, in necessarily limited ways, to shed light on a neglected area by exploring aspects of the dynamic behind civilian-driven violence in settler colonial situations globally. Although civilian-driven violence against indigenous peoples was both specific and congenial to frontier relations, and has been intrinsic to settler society after the closing of the frontier, the concept has not featured in any significant way in either genocide studies or investigations of settler conquest. The focus has instead largely been on the roles of metropolitan and colonial states and their military forces. Civilian-driven violence needs to be conceptualised as distinct from other forms – with dynamics and attributes of its own – to enable a more nuanced understanding of how exterminatory impulses toward indigenous peoples have developed in settler colonial situations. This investigation is thus interested both in how civilians organised themselves

to commit mass violence against indigenes and in the ways civilian, military, and non-military state structures overlapped, collaborated, and supported one another in the perpetration of genocidal violence against indigenous peoples. The underlying question of why 'ordinary' people are so easily capable of perpetrating unspeakable atrocities, often with equanimity, is of course an extremely broad, highly complex, and multi-dimensional subject that one cannot hope to address in any comprehensive way in a piece of this kind. The intention, rather, is to put the issue on the radar screens of scholars working on settler colonial genocide.

Keywords: Settler colonial genocide, civilian-driven violence

Introduction

Major general Edward Braddock, commander-in-chief of British forces in North America at the start of the French and Indian War (1754-63), emphatically asserted that 'no savage shall inherit the land'. With these words Braddock flatly rejected a proposed alliance against the French by Delaware chief Shingas in return for being allowed to retain their land in the upper Ohio Valley. The general paid heavily for his arrogance because the Delawares and several other Native American peoples in the area instead sided with the French. This allied force, consisting overwhelmingly of Native Americans, routed Braddock's army and killed him early on in the war (Barr 2006: 29; Hixson 2013: 49, 52; Anderson 2014: 74-75). Braddock's rebuff goes to the very heart of all settler colonial projects, particularly those that were part of Western global expansion since the 15th century. 'No savage shall inherit the land!' would have served as the perfect rallying cry for settlers around the world, especially those prepared to commit violence against indigenous peoples to secure personal control of acreage, or more expansively, the territory they claimed as their new homeland. Not only does Braddock's pronouncement emphasise the centrality of exclusive control of land and homeland in perpetuity to settler projects, but also the racialised contempt in which indigenous peoples were held. Proclaimed in a time of war by the supreme military commander, the underlying threat of violence was clear, as was the colonial state's backing of settler claims.

More than a century later and on the other side of the world, George Carrington, an Oxford graduate who travelled through, and worked in many parts of Queensland for four years during the mid-1860s, confirmed the centrality of these

values to that settler society and elaborated on some of the justifications behind the murderous behaviour of sections of the civilian population toward indigenes:

It is the fashion usually, to speak of these poor people as 'aborigines': the idea meant to be conveyed that they are a relic, so to speak, of the past, intruders in the path of the white man, and to be improved from the face of the earth accordingly. The argument seems to be, that God never intended them to live long in the land in which He placed them. Therefore, says the white man, in his superiority of strength and knowledge, away with them, disperse them, shoot and poison them, until there is none remaining; we will utterly destroy them, their wives and their little ones, and all that they have, and we will go in and possess the land (Carrington 1871: 143-44).

Sentiments of the sort expressed by Braddock and described by Carrington, that echoed across virtually all settler frontiers through six centuries of Western expansion and conquest, were foundational to the violence visited upon indigenous peoples.

Settler colonial projects do not primarily seek the domination, exploitation, or conversion of indigenous peoples, but rather the reproduction of their home societies or the creation of new ones through migration – more accurately, through the invasion of other peoples' land. Settler regimes typically pursue total control of the newly-claimed homeland purged of any indigenous claims to sovereignty, real or symbolic. In some instances, such as Australia, California, British Columbia and the Cape Colony, prior ownership of the land by indigenous peoples was not even recognised in law (Banner 2007; Ülgen 2002; Dye and La Croix 2018). In these and other cases, the legal fiction that indigenous people did not own their land – retrospectively referred to as '*terra nullius*' (no one's land) – was used to justify colonisation and to stake claims against competing powers (Fitzmaurice 2007: 1-15; Borch 2001: 222-39).

Because settler colonialism is predicated on the invasion and expropriation of foreign land by largely civilian populations, civilian-driven violence against indigenous peoples has always been congenital to frontier relations, and intrinsic

to settler society after the closing of the frontier.¹ There is a sense in which only uninhabited land can be settled, and what is today generally referred to as settlers are actually invaders (Johnson and Lawson 2005: 364.) That such invaders have managed to appropriate the term 'settler' and have given it wide enough currency for almost universal use, is a measure of the degree to which these victors have been able to determine the terms on which their histories have been written and the extent to which voices of the vanquished have been silenced. It also means that the full magnitude of the violence that has gone into the making of settler societies is seldom recognised – colonial amnesia being a phrase that comes to mind. Given the prominent role of settler colonialism in European maritime expansion, civilian-driven violence was clearly integral to the making of Western global dominance. Civilian-driven violence on any significant scale was also specific to settler colonialism, for in other forms of colonialism the violence was of necessity largely perpetrated by metropolitan and colonial states and their military structures. Settler colonialism was particularly damaging to indigenous communities as it sought not only to dispossess indigenes but usually to displace them completely from their habitations, except perhaps as rightless, cheap labour corralled into reserves to be exploited for the benefit of the colonial economy.

In many settler colonies the destruction of indigenous societies was clearly genocidal and violence perpetrated by civilians, especially settlers, a primary contributor to indigenous social erasure. In most settler colonies, especially where frontier conflict radicalised into genocide – in places as far apart as Queensland, the Cape Colony, California, and Tierra del Fuego – the historical record is littered with calls from civilian sectors of the population for the extermination of indigenes. Although not proof of genocide, such demands are an indication of a genocidal mindset and a gauge of colonists' willingness to condone or perpetrate exterminatory violence against indigenous peoples. Subsequently such violence has been routinely denied, minimised, or misrepresented in ways that favour settler claims and self-perceptions (Veracini 2015; Veracini 2010: ch. 4).

Whereas most studies of settler colonial genocide explicitly consider the roles of metropolitan and colonial states and their military forces in the destruction

1 In this study the frontier is taken to be a dynamic zone of complex and interpenetrating social interaction between distinct societies. Although frontiers are often associated with conflict it does not mean that accommodation or co-operation were not possible or common. Settler frontiers, however, tended to be extremely violent as they were predicated on the invasion of indigenous land by alien intruders claiming exclusive occupation of colonized territory as their new home. There is a long and rich historiography of interdisciplinary debate about the nature and meaning of frontiers. The recent surge in settler colonial studies has renewed interest in the concept. For an earlier and influential intervention on the nature of settler frontiers see Lamar and Thompson (1991) and for a recent historiographical overview see Altenbernd E and A Young (2014).

of indigenous societies, specific attention to the nature of civilian-driven exterminatory violence has not featured in any significant way in the field of genocide studies, nor in investigations of settler colonial conquest. Occasionally, analyses have mentioned the phenomenon incidentally, or examined its significance in localised contexts. For example, Alison Palmer's *Colonial Genocide* cursorily describes the near extermination of Queensland's Aboriginal peoples as a 'societally-led' genocide (Palmer 2002: 3, 199). Richard Price in passing refers to the "'unofficial" violence ... of settlers against Indigenous peoples ... [as] baked into the everyday experience of empire' (Price 2018: 25). And Brendan Lindsay's *Murder State* restricts his analysis of how democratic structures were used to propel civilian-driven genocidal violence to parts of northern California (Lindsay 2012: ch. 5). In a seminal piece written in the 1980s Tony Barta, however, recognised the significance of civilian-driven violence by arguing that in large parts of Australia it was a 'relationship of genocide... structured into the very nature of the encounter' rather than government 'policy' or 'intention' that drove the destruction of indigenous societies (Barta 2000: 237-39). This important insight and its implications have, however, largely been overlooked within the discipline.

Civilians as perpetrators of genocidal violence

The term 'civilian' as used here needs some explanation as it has not in any systematic or categorical way been applied to perpetrators in the context of genocide or settler colonial studies, and its usage elsewhere is subject to a fair degree of controversy. In genocide studies, where the category of 'civilian' has entered the discussion, it has been as victims. Even as such, Martin Shaw correctly points out, their role has been sorely neglected (Shaw 2014: 162-66). In general usage 'civilian' refers to non-combatants and anyone outside of a military chain of command, whether of formally constituted fighting forces under state control, or informal offensive units such as rebel armies or terrorist groupings – 'non-combatant' being applicable only in situations of armed conflict (Bellamy 2012: 927). Despite attempts to define the concept as clearly as possible in human rights legislation and formal documentation such as treaties and conventions, there is inevitably considerable ambiguity around the term as military and civilian roles and activities are not dichotomous, and armed forces cannot operate entirely separately from the rest of society (Slim 2016: 11-28; Slim 2007: 19; Jones 2011: 3).

'Civilian' covers very large and diverse categories of people, and being defined in negative terms, as those who are *not* part of the military, hardly helps. Most conflict situations are in any case sufficiently complex for neat distinctions between combatant and civilian to be confounded because a wide range of non-

combatant individuals, organisations, and sectors of society are complicit in a myriad of ways in military operations and in support of armed forces. Civilians are often anything but neutral, their situations ranging from passive hostility toward perceived enemies, through being indispensable to the war effort on the home front, to open resistance toward adversaries which might include joining volunteer defence groups and bearing arms as irregular combatants. A further complication is that combatants sometimes disguise themselves as civilians as is often the case with guerrilla wars and terror attacks. What is more, civilians can become combatants, and combatants civilians, with individuals possibly crossing that threshold multiple times (Coady 2007: 138-39). Civilians can, of course, also be perpetrators of inter-personal and mass violence against purported enemies, ethnic minorities, or subordinate populations, and it is in this capacity that they are of greatest interest to this analysis. In situations of conflict and within perpetrating communities, as in the case of settler invasions, the lines between combatant and non-combatant are therefore blurred, sometimes to the extent that there are fairly broad spheres of uncertainty and overlap between the two.

An important question in distinguishing between combatant and civilian is: at what point should perpetrators who are not part of a formal military structure, but who commit violence, be seen to surrender their civilian status and be regarded as combatants? The standard view is that the transition occurs when such people take up arms or participate directly in military activity (Walzer 2006: 135; Downes 2008: 14; Slim 2016). This approach emanates mainly from contemporary practical and legal concerns with civilians falling victim to violence and abuse, and being in need of protection in conflict situations. The conventional stance is not helpful for an enquiry of this sort which is focused on developing a historical understanding of a particular social phenomenon, namely, the perpetration of genocidal violence against indigenous peoples by non-military personnel – ‘ordinary’ people as it were – in settler colonial situations. Is it, for example, appropriate to regard squads of settler farmers who for a few days, or a week or two, went on periodic killing sprees against indigenous peoples, or on raids to acquire forced labour, as having yielded their civilian status? It makes far better sense in my view to regard such perpetrators as civilian, at least until they abandoned their civilian pursuits and became dependent on military activity for a living.

I thus regard as civilian anyone who is not part of a formal military or paramilitary force. And for those armed groups operating outside of state structures, such as insurrectionary forces or private militia, anyone whose main occupation is of a non-military description is regarded as civilian. Armed units of a temporary nature consisting variously of farmers, miners, loggers, fishermen, slave-raiders, buccaneers, their dependants and employees, and other non-military personnel, as was regularly found on settler frontiers, are therefore

considered to be civilian. While most members of such units were volunteers and part of the colonial establishment, they often also contained conscripts such as slaves, captives, convicts, indentured labourers, or indigenous servants recruited with varying degrees of force. This was, for example: the case with Canarian captives and chattels enlisted in Spanish slaving or conquering sorties in the Canary Islands and beyond; substantial numbers of Khoikhoi servants inducted into boer commandos on the Cape colonial frontier; and indigenous conscripts and collaborators used in various capacities by armed posses on several other settler frontiers (Adhikari 2017: 1-26; Newton-King 1999: ch. 7; Penn 2005: ch.4; Adhikari 2010; 39-43). These bands may well have been state sanctioned, received some form of government assistance, organised military training for themselves, or may indirectly or retrospectively have received payment from the state as, for example, with bounty hunters or Native American hunting parties in 19th century United States. Those perpetrators not primarily dependent on military activity for a living are therefore regarded as civilian. On the other hand, a paramilitary unit such as the Queensland Mounted Native Police force was clearly not civilian as it was officially constituted, financed, and administered by the state and manned by full-time, salaried staff (Skinner 1975; Richards 2008a; Richards 2008b).

It, of course, often happened that civilian and military structures collaborated closely, or armed personnel from both sectors temporarily combined into a single fighting force as, for example, occurred from time to time on the Tasmanian, Queensland, Californian and other frontiers. Or, as with the conquest of the Canary Islands, state agents were also expected to act in their private capacities, and as such wreaked genocidal violence on indigenous communities. At the other end of the temporal scale, the hard-line Hutu government that came to power in Rwanda in the wake of Juvenal Habyarimana's assassination on 6 April 1994 was able to use its bureaucratic and military structures very effectively to mobilise more than 150 000 civilians to kill Tutsi. After the closing of frontiers and in post-conflict situations, civilians in the form of employers, teachers, medical staff, clergymen, state officials, hired assassins, even neighbours, and in various other capacities, inflicted violence or socially destructive behaviour on indigenes or victimised groups.

While this article of necessity focuses largely on the 'sin of the settler', to use Elizabeth Elbourne's phrase (Elbourne 2003), it draws on the broader concept of 'civilian' because the non-military perpetrators of violence against indigenes in settler colonial situations extended beyond the settler category per se. Although settlers were usually the dominant grouping among civilian perpetrators of violence in settler colonies, culprits included sojourners, as well as a variety of other migrants that might have encompassed forced migrants such as slaves or indentured workers. Indigenous people whether captive, coerced, allied, or

voluntary collaborators were at times important agents as well. Perpetrators could include state actors as many public employees were civilian. Thus, staff at state-run residential schools for indigenous children, medical personnel at clinics conducting forced sterilisation of indigenous peoples, reservation officials diverting food meant for starving inmates, or any other members of the civil administration enforcing socially deleterious policies could be civilian perpetrators of genocidal violence.

‘Hordes of English Tartars’: settler insurgency and mass violence

That civilian-driven mass violence against indigenes was evident from the earliest days of European overseas settler expansion is confirmed by its central role in the 15th century conquest of the Canary Islands. While an important part of European settler expansion from its inception, civilian-driven violence became especially prevalent through the long 19th century. During this period industrialisation and the consequent growth of a much larger and more integrated global market accelerated the number of settlers flooding into, and extending the frontiers of, temperate latitude colonies in the Americas, southern Africa, and Australasia. A series of technological advances and successive economic booms, together with a much more positive attitude toward the opportunities offered by long-range migration among Europeans, resulted in what James Belich refers to as the ‘settler revolution’ and its adjunct, ‘explosive colonisation’, from the late 18th century onwards. Though a global phenomenon, the settler revolution was especially marked in the Anglophone world and contributed greatly to Anglo global dominance (Weaver 2003; Belich 2009). Economic opportunities created on these expanding frontiers, especially commodity production feeding industrialising centres, provided the main impetus behind settler land invasions globally – what John Weaver calls the ‘great land rush’ and Timothy Bottoms, in the context of Queensland, more pointedly refers to as the ‘great land theft’ (Bottoms 2013: 45). This stoked conflict with, displacement of, and, in several instances, the genocidal destruction of indigenous communities (Bottoms 2013: 45).

As Patrick Wolfe has emphasised, settler colonialism in the final analysis is a winner-takes-all proposition. More than a story of the total dispossession of indigenous peoples within the claimed homeland, it also sought what he calls the ‘elimination of the native’ – which is not equivalent to physical annihilation as it could include strategies such as expulsion, segregation or assimilation (Wolfe 2016: 36). Settler violence toward indigenous peoples, taken as a whole, has thus tended to be indiscriminate, aimed at the entire community, and generally not mitigated by any sense of proportionality. Unrestrained violence and collective punishment

were among its hallmarks. While I do not regard settler colonialism as inherently genocidal as has been suggested by some (Finzsch 2008: 253; Docker 2008: 97; Moses 2004; Lemkin 1944: xi, 79-80), I would regard what is today known as ethnic cleansing as intrinsic to it because the inner drive of settler colonialism has always been to purge the new homeland of any indigenous claims to sovereignty, and to remove indigenes physically from that locale except perhaps as segregated cheap labour. Ethnic cleansing can of course easily radicalise into genocide, as has often occurred in settler colonial situations.

In many settler colonies civilians were the main agents of destruction. This was of course in addition to, and usually in collusion with, a great deal of violence emanating from the colonial state and its military apparatus. The more remote the frontier, the more influential the role of settlers tended to be. What is of particular interest to this enquiry is how civilian, military, and non-military state actors within the colonial establishment collaborated to act against indigenous societies, and how within this triad civilians organised themselves to initiate violence against indigenes or to participate effectively in state-sponsored violence. While civilian- and state-driven onslaughts on indigenous peoples in settler colonial situations are almost inevitably interlinked, often integrally – and with shared codes of violence and silence – an analytical distinction nonetheless needs to be made between the two. While Patrick Wolfe is correct to point out that: ‘Rather than something separate from or running counter to the colonial state, the murderous activities of the frontier rabble constitute its principle means of expansion’, it would be counter-productive to conflate the two (Wolfe 2006: 392; Wolfe 2008: 108). John Weaver, for example, points to ‘... a tension remarkable and fateful, between defiant private initiatives and the ordered, state-backed certainties of property rights’ as being foundational to Western settler expansion (Weaver 2003: 4). Civilian-driven mass violence in settler colonial situations often had an impetus and motivations distinct to that emanating from their respective colonial or metropolitan states and their military structures even though the two may have been closely intertwined as demonstrated by the case studies described below.

It would be no exaggeration to claim that from the very outset of colonial projects settler and metropolitan interests were rarely aligned, and settlers seldom compliant with metropolitan expectations and demands. Settlers tended to display an independence and an insurgent disregard for metropolitan sovereignty, policies, and restraints from the start, despite usually being highly dependent on colonial and metropolitan states in various ways and regularly appealing for their help. Settlers often operated beyond colonial jurisdictions with the colonial state belatedly extending official boundaries in a game of ongoing catch-up. And the more viable settler societies and economies became, the more

their interests tended to diverge from those of the metropole. This resulted in growing demands for political autonomy, and in extreme cases rebellion, warfare, and revolutionary breaks with the metropole. It can be taken as almost axiomatic that the greater control settlers gained over the colonial state, the more rapid land alienation, and the more intense violence against indigenous societies tended to become. This trend is particularly noticeable when crown control gave way to settler self-government.

This fractiousness was recognised by Edmund Burke, political theorist and British parliamentarian, on the eve of the American Revolution as Native American resistance to settler advances on the western frontier started to crumble and a smallpox epidemic was about to devastate their numbers (Fenn 2001: 16-23). In an oft-quoted parliamentary speech delivered in 1775 he characterised the tidal surge of settlers about to spill over onto the Great Plains as a refractory mass largely immune to government control:

Already they have topped the Appalachian Mountains. From thence they behold before them an immense plain, one vast, rich, level meadow: a square of five hundred miles. Over this they would wander without a possibility of restraint; they would change their manners with their habits of life; would soon forget a government by which they were disowned; would become hordes of English Tartars; and, pouring down upon your unfortified frontiers a fierce and irresistible cavalry, become masters of your governors and your counsellors, your collectors and comptrollers, and of all the slaves that adhered to them (Barta 2015: 233).

His observations about this spirit of insubordination and independence were as true of European and Anglo-American settlers in North America, as they were of Australia; and of Iberians moving through Latin America, Russians advancing into the Steppes, or Dutch-speaking farmers trekking into the southern African interior.

Focused primarily on land expropriation, settler incursions attacked the very foundations of indigenous society and undermined their communal existence in both calculated and unintended ways. Violence committed by civilians against indigenous peoples in settler colonial situations covered a broad and multi-layered spectrum of lethal and harmful activity ranging from the arbitrary and opportunistic to the highly organised and meticulously planned; from the passionately intimate to the cold-heartedly detached; from the ferociously murderous to the calmly bureaucratic; from spectacular mass atrocities targeting entire indigenous collectives to corrosive structural violence embedded in relationships of daily life.

As one would expect, much of the literature on genocide in settler colonial situations focuses on murder and massacre – the immediate physical destruction of indigenous peoples and their societies. Genocide, of course, involves much more than just mass murder. Besides killing, usually to clear land of its original inhabitants or in retaliation for indigenous resistance to invasion, non-lethal means of social destruction such as taking captives, child confiscation, excessive forced labour, sexual violence, cultural suppression, confinement to reserves, and destruction of the natural environment took their toll. Though usually foreseeable, but not necessarily premeditated, consequences of dispossession and expulsion from settler homelands included death by starvation, dehydration, exposure, disease and from increased violence between indigenous groups. Displacement, usually to marginal land, spelt disaster or even death for entire communities as they lost access to vital resources and were often pushed into conflict with neighbouring peoples. Where indigenous peoples gained access to global markets it usually served to foment competition and internecine conflict between them. Edward Cavanagh's study (2015) of the Griquas' genocidal eradication of San societies in Transorangia during the early decades of the 19th century beyond the borders of the Cape Colony provides an interesting example of this. Broken treaties, fraudulent land deals and the peddling of tobacco, alcohol, and narcotics also played a part. The debilitating personal and social impacts of psychological trauma that inevitably accompanied the shattering of their worlds is underestimated in the existing literature. One such consequence, lowered fertility rates, often very severely undermined the ability of indigenous communities to reproduce themselves.

A great deal of scholarly attention, especially within genocide studies, has focused on the frontier and the bloodshed associated with dispossession – and with good reason as so much of the carnage that obliterated indigenous societies occurred during this earlier lethal phase in the making of settler societies. Here, by the very nature of the frontier, the state did not have a monopoly of power, and sometimes was effectively, or even completely, absent. On frontiers settlers thus did have a good deal of opportunity and strong motives for taking the law into their own hands in what was essentially a lawless situation – or to borrow Julie Evans' phrase, 'where lawlessness is law' (Evans 2009). And much of this violence was perpetrated with little restraint.

An idea present in Western thinking from ancient times, even though often disdained by practitioners of warfare and perpetrators of mass violence, is that certain categories of people – the unarmed, the old, the young, women; in short, civilians – should be spared the wrath of rampaging armies and the cataclysm of combat. However, resulting ideas of 'just war' or 'limited warfare' based on principles of restraint and proportionality often did not apply when settlers went

to war with indigenous peoples. The basic reason for this is that settlers, especially in the post-Enlightenment era, regarded indigenous peoples in a profoundly racist sense to be other, not fully human, and that 'civilised' rules, including those relating to warfare, did not apply to 'savages'. Dehumanisation of the 'savage' in effect brought into being, in the eyes of many perpetrators in settler colonial situations, an exceptional moral context in which the killing and maltreatment of indigenous people required little more justification than settler need. With the rise of Social Darwinist thought in the latter half of the 19th century, this exceptional morality was elevated to a new level in that the supposed inevitable dying out of the unfit was attributed to the iron laws of nature, thus further exonerating perpetrators. For some, hastening the process through exterminatory violence where the opportunity presented itself was seen as salutary and perfectly justified, as, for example, Lothar von Trotha did in his exterminatory wars against the indigenous peoples of Namibia between 1904 and 1908.

After the closing of the frontier, violence against indigenes did not, however, cease. Survivors continued to suffer a great deal of violence and social harm at the hands of state and civilian actors to an extent that justifies accusations of 'continuing genocide' (Short 2010; Haring 2015: 273–85). As Peter Kulchyski put it: 'In the minutiae of quotidian life, in the presuppositions of service providers, in the structures of State actions and inactions, in the continuing struggles over land use, in a whole trajectory of policies and plans, the work of the conquest is being completed here and now' (Kulchyski 2005: 3). In settler societies the 'work of conquest' continues for as long as there are survivors, and even when there are no longer any survivors left. One suspects that for as long as a settler consciousness exists there will always be a need for discursive and symbolic 'elimination of the native', indigenisation of the settler, and reinforcement of settler claims to the land.

The post-frontier phase witnessed occasional mass atrocities, as well as interpersonal violence encompassing murder, corporal punishment, sexual exploitation, and forced labour. Assaults on indigenous survivors included child confiscation, incarceration, economic exclusion, cultural suppression, deliberate deprivation of basic needs – sometimes to the point of starvation – as well as death from easily preventable causes, among other abuses. If, in addition, indigenous labour was seen as unsuitable or not needed in the settler economy, the intensity of persecution increased (Wolfe 2016: 25–26; Curthoys 2015). Suppression of indigenous cultures, including forced assimilation, and ubiquitous assertions of settler dominance became the norm. Violence and, importantly, constant threats of violence, against indigenous survivors became institutionalised in post-frontier settler society. Civilian protagonists played important roles in maintaining this state of ongoing genocidal persecution. Violence against indigenes was often seen

as salutary, and routinely used for didactic, coercive and disciplinary purposes by both state and civilian sectors of society. Though post-frontier violence may have been less overt and on a smaller scale compared to the murderous frontier phase, the cumulative impact on the shattered remnants of indigenous societies was devastating to their chances of demographic recovery and cultural rejuvenation. For such people, to survive was indeed to suffer.

This is of course not to suggest that frontier relations were a simple drama of relentless violence and unmitigated settler aggression, and that settler and indigenous societies were not able to adapt to one another, negotiate modes of accommodation, form alliances, acculturate, or display tolerance or empathy toward those from the opposite camp. Nor is it to deny that indigenous peoples had agency or that there was a degree of co-operation, peaceful exchange, and mediation of differences. Such symbiotic, commensal and ambivalent relations were, however, temporary and generally lasted only for as long as settlers lacked the power to dominate and take control of the land, or in instances when settler projects failed. 'Middle grounds' or 'third spaces', where they existed, almost inevitably degenerated into land grabs, race wars, ethnic cleansing offensives and in a number of cases escalated into exterminatory campaigns. The only times this did not occur was when settler communities were not sufficiently numerous or powerful to assert full control of the land they claimed. The inner drive of settler colonialism for exclusive control of the newly-claimed homeland made lasting peaceful co-existence with indigenous communities all but impossible. Bolstered by a range of cultural chauvinisms and racial assumptions with lethal implications, the settler establishment demanded total security from any indigenous challenge (Wolfe 2016: 1-30). The rise of the global industrial economy and its adjunct, the settler revolution, all but put paid to middle grounds. In Western imperial expansion, especially from the early 19th century onwards, settler claims were backed by unparalleled levels of resourcing, including a capacity for demographic swamping of indigenous societies, as well as vastly superior technologies of warfare.

Case studies

Briefly reviewing a few emblematic cases – chosen for their geographical, social and political diversity and presented in rough chronological order – will allow for an assessment of the dynamic behind civilian-driven violence in the making of settler genocides globally, as well as for some sense of their role in the making of Western global dominance. They also demonstrate a rich variety of approaches by settler colonial establishments for taking possession of the land, quelling indigenous resistance, and civilian-driven strategies for perpetrating violence in pursuit of their objectives.

The Western world's earliest overseas settler colonial conquest resulted in the extinction of the indigenous population of the Canary Islands situated off the coast of southern Morocco. The obliteration of aboriginal Canarian societies on this archipelago of seven islands was initiated by marauding freebooters and slavers from the 1340s onwards after European mariners rediscovered the existence of the island cluster, and was propelled to completion by Iberian conquistadors and settlers toward the end of the 15th century. This extermination was to a large extent driven by civilians, if for no other reasons than the scant interest of the late mediaeval European state in acquiring overseas empire, and the limited capacity of its monarchs to exercise power across 700 miles of ocean. The initial conquest of three of the seven islands between 1402 and 1405 was the product of private enterprise, being organised by two minor European noblemen and thus almost entirely a civilian-driven affair. Even after the Spanish crown took formal charge of operations in 1478, conquistadors and other state agents deployed in the Canaries acted as much in their personal capacities and private interests as those of the sovereigns they represented. Ongoing mass violence, land confiscation, scorched earth tactics, enslavement, mass deportation, sexual abuse, child confiscation, and cultural suppression ensured the utter annihilation of aboriginal Canarian societies by the end of the 15th century. It was in particular the enslavement and deportation of entire surviving island communities that made the liquidation of these societies genocidal. And it was especially the development of sugar plantations in Madeira and the Canaries themselves that drove the demand for slave labour. This case establishes the centrality of civilian-driven violence to the making of settler colonialism and Western global dominance from the start (Adhikari 2017; Mercer 1980: chs. 12-18).

The genocidal destruction of the hunter-gatherer peoples of the Cape Colony, or Cape San society as they are also known, provides a contrasting example of civilian-driven violence in a settler colonial situation. Cape San society was almost completely annihilated as a result of land confiscation, massacre, forced labour and cultural suppression that accompanied colonisation – first under the auspices of Dutch East India Company rule in the 18th century, and then under British administration in the 19th. The basic pattern was: incursion into San territory by Dutch-speaking pastoral farmers known as trekboers; San retaliation in the form of cattle raids and farm attacks; followed by mass retribution by armed, mounted, state-sanctioned militia units known as commandos, as well as indiscriminate murder and massacre by farmers. These mass reprisals were often locally exterminatory in nature in that they sought to clear particular areas completely of San. Conflict intensified through the 18th century, with all-out war on the frontier for nearly three decades from about 1770 onwards.

In the 18th-century Cape Colony, the weak and impecunious Dutch East India Company government enabled mass violence by farmers against San communities through sanctioning both officially constituted as well as informal militia as a means of re-inforcing its tenuous hold on frontier society and devolving most of the costs of frontier defence on to farmers. Farmers accepted this burden in return for effectively being allowed to take the law into their own hands when dealing with indigenous people, using the militia to clear new land for expansion, as well as to acquire captive labour. Not only did their destructive farming practices and demographic growth necessitate continuous expansion, but labour was generally in short supply. When the British administration tried to curb frontier conflict in the 19th century, this violence went underground in the form of clandestine militia activity that could be every bit as lethal as its official counterpart. Whereas settler colonial violence against San was often exterminatory in intent, British policies were eliminationist in that they sought to extinguish San society through assimilation, or 'civilising' in colonial parlance. Despite relatively benevolent British colonial policies from 1798 onwards, the San way of life within the Cape Colony was nevertheless obliterated during the course of the 19th century through incremental encroachment on their land, enforced labour incorporation and periodic massacre largely at the hands of settlers (Adhikari 2010; 2015; Penn 2005: chs. 4, 7-9; Newton-King 1999: chs. 4-7).

Australia, with its history of sustained and excessive civilian-driven violence against Aborigines, presents several examples of settler genocide. Tasmania, where the indigenous peoples were completely wiped out in a matter of about seven decades, is the most widely recognised of these genocides. Lyndall Ryan has, however, persuasively argued that the destruction of Aboriginal societies in Victoria and New South Wales are also genocide. In both, a combination of covert civilian-driven assaults, together with state-sponsored violence to promote colonial expansion, cleared much of the land of Aboriginal people as settlement spread inland (Ryan 2015; 2020). A more direct and methodical approach was adopted by New South Wales's northern neighbour and offshoot, Queensland, where the state maintained a paramilitary force for the express purpose of supporting its lethal policies for indigenous removal from the land. Queensland serves as the primary example of genocide on the Australian continent as it had the largest Aboriginal population, the most extensive land suitable for agriculture, and generated the most intense violence over the longest period of time.

Queensland provides an interesting example of the intertwining of civilian and state initiatives for the dispossession and destruction of Aboriginal society. Here the state for over half a century administered and financed the Queensland Native Police, consisting of highly mobile squads of Aboriginal troopers overseen by white officers, ostensibly to protect settlers along its frontier. Native Police

contingents in effect assisted settlers with the displacement of Aboriginal peoples from their land, and often colluded with settler vigilante groups in perpetrating mass violence. It was especially when indigenous resistance flared up and colonists were killed that the Queensland Native Police went on the rampage, slaughtering large numbers of Aborigines indiscriminately in paroxysms of collective punishment. Within little more than half a century from the late 1840s onwards a combination of murder and massacre by civilians and mass violence by the Native Police effectively annihilated Queensland Aboriginal society. The degree to which the state deliberately participated in this carnage and the calculated neglect of its duty to protect the rights of Aboriginal peoples served to aid and abet civilian-driven violence (Evans 2004; Bottoms 2013; Evans and Ørsted-Jensen 2019).

It is well worth noting the comparable example of the destruction of Californian Native American societies precipitated by the gold rush starting in 1848, as yet another way in which civilian-driven violence was integral to the perpetration of genocide in the making of Western global domination. In addition to a large number of indiscriminate murders and massacres, democratic institutions were also used by settlers to legitimate sprees of organised and sustained mass violence against indigenes. Farming communities, often with the backing of larger landholders, became adept at using democratic procedures to organise local, volunteer militia units to seize resources and extinguish indigenous resistance. It was through these paid militia units used to hunt Native Americans, and that usually operated as mobile death squads, that much of the displacement and killing of Native Americans was perpetrated. The Californian state operated as a particularly vicious tyranny of the majority between the late 1840s and the mid-1870s, during which time the Native American population of the state was reduced by more than 80% (Madley 2016: 346-47).

While vigilante parties operated irregularly and sporadically throughout the state, many voluntary militia units were formally constituted by means of petitions signed by male voters and endorsed by locally elected officials such as sheriffs and mayors. These petitions were addressed to the governor, with citizens claiming the need to protect themselves and their property against marauding Native Americans. Governors, being sympathetic to settler claims and mindful of the need to retain the support of voters, endorsed the formation of paid militia units and sometimes used state resources to help them. After clearing a particular area of its indigenous inhabitants, which might take several months, volunteer companies pressed claims for payment from the state government, which in turn passed on these claims to the federal government, which usually obliged. In this way, the killing of Native Americans in California – and many other parts of the American West – was largely a civilian-driven enterprise, sponsored by

state authorities, and partly financed by the federal government. Brendan Lindsay summarises the thrust of this genocide as one in which 'rather than a government orchestrating a population to bring about the genocide of a group, the population orchestrated a government to destroy a group' (Lindsay 2012: 22, ch. 5).

The destruction of the indigenous peoples of Tierra del Fuego exemplifies yet another way in which civilian-driven violence was enabled by the state – in this case two states, and through a combination of inaction and highly permissive policies. The annihilation of the Selk'nam peoples of Tierra del Fuego indicates that by the late 19th century the settler revolution had spread to the remotest habitable regions of the earth. On the 'Big Island' both Argentina and Chile allowed an extreme form of laissez-faire capitalism by giving settlers and commercial companies a free hand in dealing with the challenges they faced, including indigenous resistance. The extermination of the Selk'nam people of Tierra del Fuego from the 1880s onward was effected through the actions of a range of civilian agents including gold prospectors, missionaries, sheep farming companies, and mercenaries, the last-mentioned employed to kill off both guanacos that competed with sheep for pasturage as well as indigenous peoples who resisted settler encroachment. While the gold prospectors were brutal in their treatment of indigenes, their numbers were small and their impact both localised and episodic. It was in particular sheep farming operations that had genocidal repercussions given their systematic occupation of the land, wilful destruction of the natural environment, and ruthless response to indigenous resistance. Hiring mercenaries mainly from English-speaking settler colonies, sheep farming companies embarked on a deliberate campaign of liquidating Selk'nam society through a combination of assassination, massacre, and removal to remote mission stations of those taken captive. Missionaries, falsely lauded in settler mythology as saviours and civilisers of one of humanity's most primitive cultures, presided over the final stages of this extinction. Crowded together in unsanitary and extremely deleterious conditions at mission stations, Selk'nam who had survived the violence unleashed by the sheep farming companies died off rapidly from communicable diseases, especially tuberculosis, until there was but a handful left and the stations became redundant (Harambour 2019; Borero 1996).

Conclusion: ideology, righteous violence and with 'justice on their side'

An obvious question to ask of perpetrating groups in settler colonial situations is what shared frames of reference, ideas and values motivated their communally-held animosities toward indigenes? Or more pointedly, what were the common ideological foundations of civilian-driven violence against indigenes, for it might

be said that ideology was the glue that held imperial ventures together and that helped solidify settler societies. Ideology – commonly understood as a coherent system of ideas, values, beliefs, assumptions, and other attitudinal and normative components shared by a social group which influences their understanding of the world (Maynard 2014; Freedman 2003; Hamilton 1987) – is of fundamental importance for its influence on how individuals, leaders, communities, and state structures frame goals, perceive threats, devise solutions to problems, deploy violence, and through which final solutions become imaginable, and then actionable. It may also be said that ideologies play a central role in genocide as perpetrators do not kill or seek to harm targeted social groups mindlessly. They kill for a reason or a set of reasons, and at the very least with intentions they justify to themselves – and that point to victims as deserving of violence, suffering or death. Perpetrators of exterminatory violence generally act in groups and usually with the sanction of their broader societies, or sections of it. As such they share ideas about their motives and the necessity for resorting to solutions to a perceived social or political problem. Ideologies, moreover, are important enablers of mass violence to the extent that they help perpetrators overcome inhibitions and taboos against taking human life and help mobilise sympathisers to their cause.

A generalisation I feel one can make with some degree of confidence about the mindset of death-dealing colonists in settler colonial situations is that they have by-and-large felt that their actions were morally sanctioned. Writing about violence in general, Alan Fiske and Tage Rai in their book *Virtuous Violence* present a persuasive argument that a great deal, if not most, violence is morally motivated *from the perspective of perpetrators*, rather than the product of psychological or social pathology, or genetic defect as often assumed. They explain that: 'Morality is about regulating social relationships and violence is one way to regulate relationships' (Fisk and Rai 2015: xxii, 15–16, 136). Violence and threats of violence were the most important ways in which relationships between colonists and indigenous peoples were regulated in settler colonial situations, even where ambivalent relations or middle grounds may have existed for substantial periods. Civilian-driven abuses in settler colonies were therefore largely the product of what I think of as righteous violence, where perpetrators believed themselves to have had some moral or principled justification for using force. By 'moral' in this context I mean a set of subjective and culturally-based evaluations of human behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions.

Whether killing for God, country, religion, honour, revenge, liberty, some utopian future, to make a fortune, or simply to make a living, righteous violence is particularly pernicious as perpetrators feel little, if any, remorse and are motivated by what they regard to be honourable goals. This is amply reflected in the mythologies and manifest destinies that settler societies have constructed

to justify their existence, their acquisition of the land, and treatment of indigenous peoples. Theodore Roosevelt, a vocal advocate of settler entitlement at the expense of indigenous peoples, provided the basic reasoning behind such thinking: 'The settler and pioneer have at bottom had justice on their side; this great continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game preserve for squalid savages' (Roosevelt 1889: 90; Hagendorn 1921: 355; Stannard 1992: 245). Walter Hixson provides the unspoken corollary to Roosevelt's premise with his observation that when indigenes 'resisted giving up colonial space "justice" was on the side of military aggression and ethnic cleansing' (Hixson 2013: 70). I would add 'genocide' and 'extermination' to his list and note that a great deal of this violence was committed by civilians.

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